

The Red Hen Essay Collection



Vol.1

THE AT TOME COLLECTION

REGARDING THE  
POTTERVERSE PART I  
The 'Foundation' Essays  
Wide (Wizarding) World  
O! The Times are  
Out of Joint!





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# The Red Hen Essay Collection



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**REGARDING THE**  
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**The 'Foundation' Essays**  
**Oh Wide, Wide**  
**(Wizarding) World!**  
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## The At Tome Collection

### Introduction

There isn't a lot of mystery as to why most people have downloaded any of this quartet of publications.

Admittedly, some of you might be fans of the late Diana Wynne Jones and are interested in having a copy of the FIRE & HEMLOCK essay. Perhaps one or two of you may have heard of the BEAUTY x3 essay and decided to check it out. Or, maybe, you were simply browsing websites of people who have something to say about books, reading, or related subjects, such as fandom. There is a group of such articles in this volume, and we'll explore those first.

But we all know that most of people who have downloaded these publications wanted copies of the Pottermore collection.

This far downstream of the official closing of canon, I can't see any point in keeping things divided according to levels of canon-compliance. And, now, some 15 years and counting after of the closing of canon, I am inclined to suspect that this collection may be reaching the end of its development cycle.

But we all know it's a bad idea to say 'never,' some of the essays online may get additional editing if something occurs to me that seems worthwhile to add. Any significant additions will be noted on the 'What's New' page of the Red Hen Publication website, when they happen. I still get tiny epiphanies on some issue or other maybe once or twice in an average year. So check for updates. I'll probably update these publications to match, although that will be at a bit of a lag in time. I'll post the date of such updates on the 'What's New' page separately.

But don't expect to see this collection brought into com-

### Introduction

pliance with anything that Rowling has had to say since the release of Deathly Hallows. She more than demonstrated that she cannot stick to the same story for than two days running in the aftermath of that, and I flatly cannot see indulging that level of capriciousness by attempting to keep in step.

And that goes double for her transparent attempts to rewrite the series *ex cathedra* on Pottermore. The published books are going to be around for *much* longer than Pottermore.

Besides, the interpretations and theories in this collection are *mine*, and I am *not* J. K. Rowling.

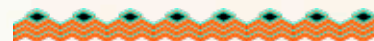


Just to be Clear:

The At Tome Collection of essays are all essays related to the subject of books, reading, and fandom.

Due to some of their titles, one might assume that those essays are specifically Pottermore essays. And, originally those particular essays *were* a part of the Pottermore collection. But that particular sub-collection of; 'Harry Potter and the Reader' was eliminated some time ago. And, besides, upon examination, their actual subjects *aren't* really confined to the Pottermore. Admittedly, Harry Potter series characters and elements are used as the primary examples in most of them.

After all, rather a lot of people are familiar with those characters and elements. So using them saves having to explain things twice over.





## Introduction

### Concerning the Parson's Egg

**T**he tale goes:

A timid cleric was invited to make up the numbers at a posh country house party. All went smoothly until the morning that he was served a boiled egg that had gone off. Not wanting to cause a scene, he tried to eat it anyway.

Eventually his host, noticing him struggling with it, exclaimed; "Good heavens man! Why didn't you say something?"

The cleric, cringing in embarrassment, protested; "Oh, no milord, I assure you, *parts* of it were *excellent!*"



Any theorist needs to keep the story of the parson and his egg very firmly in mind.



## Beauty x 3

Once upon a time in an Apa far, far away... And later, on a listgroup devoted to discussion of the works of the veteran British fantasy writer, Diana Wynne Jones; in one of what had by that time come to be obvious to all was a recurring series of discussions regarding Jones's novel, 'FIRE & HEMLOCK' (a general favorite, but it's difficult to figure out just what happened in the climax), the question regarding the nature (and gender) of heroism was rather more than lightly touched upon. Among the references which came into play in the course of that particular iteration of the Once and Future Discussion were several mentions of Robin McKinley's classic novel; 'BEAUTY'.

I had at that point in time quite recently managed to get an essay based upon McKinley's second retelling of this story down onto paper after two years of good intentions, and mentioned as much. Over the years, the article has been expanded in accordance with each newly released novel on the subject by the two relevant authors. We are now up to something rather more like; 'Beauty Times Five'.



### On "Fictional Dialogue":

**F**irst, allow me to clarify what I mean by the phrase "a fictional dialogue", which is invoked in the course of this essay, I do not mean the art of writing dialogue between fictional characters in stories. I am referring to the cases where a book itself may be interpreted as a response and/or rebuttal of the virtual "statement" posed by the existence of a different book or books by other authors. In the 18th century, Samuel Richardson and Henry





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Fielding engaged in what has been pointed out to be exactly such a “battle of books” throughout an extended, and far from good-natured “dialogue” between them over just what a “novel” ought to be.

This sort of dialogue is far from extinct. While I am not aware of any overt, blatant example in progress between two novelists today, the practice of post and repost between published works by various authors undoubtedly continues, even if it may take place less than intentionally. And, indeed, identifying what appear to be traces of such a “dialogue” is an uncertain process. For one can turn out to be happily deceiving oneself.

One of those things to make you go, “Hmmm?”

This essay examines what I believe may be such a dialogue.

Or, then again, maybe not.

Because it may actually be nothing of the sort. There are certain tales which simply resonate. These particular tales touch something so basic to the human spirit that some version of them is to be found in every civilization that has ever been known to the brotherhood of man (assuming that there is such a thing as the brotherhood of man). Sometimes these stories are mere tale “types,” eroded by use to their lowest common denominators, and serve as archetypes. On the other hand, sometimes they develop with relatively sophisticated themes encapsulating portraits of a specific society. Often a specific version will spin off and endure, having taken on a separate life of its own.



Several of these tale types are easily recognized. For, example: there is the “clever peasant” tale. Essentially these are

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Trickster tales, wherein a representative of the common people gets the better (or makes a fool) of his social superiors. In a lot of variants this representative is a child, most typically the one voted “least likely to succeed” of his or her family. In other variants, “he” may be a practitioner of some occupation or craft generally not regarded as high status. The “masters” may be literally the protagonist’s employers, or they may be stylized as representatives of a foolish aristocracy. Or they may be subjected to more brutal symbolism and represented as some form of monster or ogre. Nearly all of these tales trace a strong family resemblance to the traditional Trickster tales of various mythological explanations for the workings of the cosmos, and this connection is unmistakable.

Just as persistent as the tales of clever peasants are the tales of the dispossessed innocent (usually stylized into a prince or princess) who must by determination, virtue and/or the making of prudent alliances struggle to regain their proper place in the world, thereby reestablishing and confirming the rightness of “things as they are.” Unlike the peasant tale, which seems to generate fairly spontaneously, many representatives of this form are traceable to a specific origin in some courtly “art tale,” although these were, in turn, typically based on older, oral versions.

A familiar subset of the story of the dispossessed innocent is the straightforward tale of virtue rewarded. In this form, the protagonist is not necessarily born to rule, although s/he is usually from a social stratum which is understood to be somewhat above that of a peasant. The persistent theme of this tale type is that whatever the original rank of the protagonist may be, s/he is inherently superior to it. This is acknowledged in the



### Beauty x 3

ultimate conclusion of the tale in which the protagonist is inevitably rewarded by an elevation to an even higher social class than the one into which s/he was born, usually by means of a marriage into royalty. The most recognizable and persistent representative of this tale type is, of course, that of Cinderella, a tale which, traditionally, incorporates the theme of the dispossessed into its starting point as well, thereby maximizing the protagonist's opportunities to display his or her superiority over what are stated to be his or her natural peers.

This tale type has a corresponding dark version, equally recognizable. These are tales which also exist in many forms, across many nations. Sleeping Beauty, in its expanded versions, is one variety of such a dark story. Donkeyskin is another.

All of these "virtue rewarded" tales, both the light and the dark, have proved singularly attractive to modern storytellers who have been bitten by the urge to do a retelling. And, perhaps, one of the most popular of all the variants for this purpose, even more so than that of Cinderella herself, appears to be the story of Beauty and the Beast.



The story of Beauty and the Beast is in some regards so closely related to that of Cinderella that one might as well regard the two as being in the nature of first cousins. Belle is born into a lower estate than that of Lady Ella, being invariably the daughter of a merchant, rather than that of a minor noble. And her mate, once disenchanted, is generally not the ruler of some great nation, but, at best, an isolated princeling or, more typically, a simple, if wealthy, country nobleman. Both young



### Beauty x 3

ladies begin with the handicap of having been dispossessed of their rightful positions in society. In Ella's case, her place has been usurped by rivals. In Belle's the whole family has endured financial ruin and has been forced to remove from their home and even the City which had once stood witness to their former wealth and influence.

But from this point the two tales diverge. Where magical aid is offered to Ella, almost by right of inheritance, magic first arrives on Belle's doorstep not as an offer of aid, but as a challenge and a threat. And, where Ella has only to follow her mentor's instructions and to be her own virtuous self, Belle must, without any instructions, conform her actions into those stated in the terms of the binding of an ancient enchantment (to which she has not been a party) in order to break it.

Over the past few decades there have been several popular retellings of Belle's story. The details have varied from tale to tale. In the traditional version, Belle, like Ella, is one of three young women in her family, three daughters of her father's household. Where Ella's foils are mere stepsisters and spiteful with it, Belle's are her own sisters. But they are (generally) no nicer for that. In the most traditional versions, they have typically been portrayed as shallow, vain and ambitious. Indeed, the most difficult thing to swallow in all these versions is the storyteller's insistence that Belle pined for her family home and her sisters' company. Presumably out of a blind attachment based upon shared blood alone.

Prior to the release of the Disney version, the most well-known cinematic retelling of this story was probably the film directed by Jean Cocteau. In that version, a fairly new (and





### Beauty x 3

highly cinematic) element was introduced into the traditional mix in the person of the Beast's handsome, but vicious, rival. This element was carried over into Disney's version.

Another comparatively recent dramatic retelling of the story was a made-for-television movie in the '70s or early '80s starring Mr. and Mrs. George C. Scott. While this adaptation was not quite so popular as Scott's rendition of Scrooge in 'A CHRISTMAS CAROL', it was interesting in that – for one thing – Belle was portrayed as being almost as snappish as her sisters, giving the three young women at least some family resemblance, and, second, that once disenchanted the beast was not revealed as a blandly handsome young princeling, but as a stately and powerful man in his prime. (Scott, even then, conformed to no one's ideal of a young Adonis.)

But, for those of us who read, the quintessential retelling of this story appeared in 1978 with the publication of Robin McKinley's 'BEAUTY'. For all that there have been multiple retellings by others both before and since, none have come close to displacing it from its position as "the" retelling of this particular story.

And, then, in 1997, seemingly out of the blue, McKinley suddenly chose to retell the same story all over again, nearly 20 years later.

Why? Who can say? We will probably never know the whole truth of the matter. Nor is this knowledge really any of our business. The author's own endnotes claim that the story surfaced as a sidebar to the recent sale of the small New England cottage and garden which had been her home for some years prior to her marriage and relocation to Great Britain. And far be it from me to call the author's own version of events into question.

Still, I cannot but wonder whether there may not be other

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contributing factors to her decision. In particular, I cannot quite manage to dismiss from my own mind the question of whether in 1997's 'ROSE DAUGHTER' (which reportedly sprang onto the page in a bare six months) we might not be seeing yet another example of what I have come to think of as the "Lackey Effect."



The writing of fiction is not really as isolated an occupation as it appears. Online communities (particularly those devoted to fanfiction) appear to have retooled it into a form of social activity. Even in the field of commercial publishing, in some ways this is a factor. In an era when publishers' parent corporations seem to regard the selling of books rather in the nature of the selling of packets of soap flakes it seems to be a highly competitive endeavor. Particularly within such artificially narrowed confines as genre fiction, or the rather specialized field of traditional fairy tale retellings. I may have commented before (elsewhere) on the way such things appear to go in cycles.

For some years now I have periodically groused about the determination of all the world and its aunt to perpetually retell the tale of Tam Lin. I will not subject you to it again here. However I do get the distinct feeling that once the literary pack has gotten its collective teeth into some particular tale, at least some of the versions that result are largely driven by a determination to "tell the story and tell it better, dammit, BETTER than the rest of these people! (That'll show 'em!)" – Or something to that effect.

And there is absolutely no question that Mercedes Lackey is a phenomenon. Within the science fiction & fantasy field I



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have certainly seen other new authors hit big and become successful. I have also seen several authors who became successful early in their careers, either strengthen their craft (or not), and either settle into their niche in the general field with a larger or smaller determined following, or loose momentum and fall by the wayside. But I don't know that I have ever seen anything to compare with the sheer impact that Mercedes Lackey made over a her first 12 years as a professional writer. For that matter, at the time this essay was originally written, I was not convinced that she had quite reached the leveling-off stage of her career yet. (Note; she hadn't. But I think she probably has by now.) Although her momentum had slowed, it remained a juggernaut that appeared virtually unstoppable.

It would be all very well if such a high tide raised all boats, but while Lackey appeared to be doing her best towards sharing the good fortune, even while extending her own influence, by engaging in an impressive number of projects co-written with a circle of writing partners, it can hardly make it easy for anyone outside this charmed circle who writes any story type with a grain of similarity (difficult to avoid) to make much of an individual impact on their own. Within the field, they might as well be going head-to-head with Steven King.

This must be all the more galling due to the faintly sleazy air which seems to pervade some of the work with which Lackey is associated. I cannot help but detect a far-from-faint smugness and a congratulatory tone in the narrative voice (directed at the reader) of her "middle period," which, when contrasted with the self-flagellation indulged in by, or the torment inflicted upon, most of her viewpoint characters was more than a little

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repellent. Frankly, I sometimes found that reading some of Lackey's work of this era was a bit like being forced through circumstances to loiter in an environment in which the video system is perpetually blaring out The Jerry Springer Show. To be quite honest, it was not actually this air of sensationalism in Lackey's work to which I objected, but the sheer unwitting vulgarity of it. Vulgarity ought never to be unintentional.

And, over those 12 first years of Lackey's ascendancy, she had already managed to perpetrate upon the fantasy field some at least temporarily deathless clichés with which it seemed fairly easy for writers of reasonable skill, or subtlety, to have a great deal of fun. This is only one of the noticeable responses to the "Lackey Effect." One which we on the DWJ list have seen in action in Diana Wynne Jones's 'TOUGH GUIDE TO FANTASYLANDS' and 'THE DARK LORD OF DERKHOLM' duo, and their sequel 'YEAR OF THE GRYFFIN' (which I contend is all the more rewarding to those who had the persistence to actually make it all the way through a particular Lackey/Dixon production entitled 'BLACK GRYFFON'). In fact, now that I think of it, The Jerry Springer Show in some ways makes an extraordinarily good comparison in that, either as painful irritant or guilty pleasure, (and, I must confess, my own reactions to Ms. Lackey's work partakes of both extremes) it has the end result of reminding us all of just how embarrassingly short a distance stands between even the best genre fiction and the hair-drier book. (i.e., Something designed to keep you placid and immobile until the torture is over.)

Because Lackey wouldn't be where she is without some very, very real strengths, the greatest of which is that; By ghod, she



### Beauty x 3

can tell a story! The fact that some of these are the kind of stories which never actually reach the brain is, for these purposes, immaterial. And in this regard I can say that Mercedes Lackey unquestionably writes the very best sort of hair-drier book. The sort of book you might casually pick up to browse — and when you finally come to yourself you find you're on page 97 and it is 11:30 at night. But this, and the fact that Ms Lackey has some other, very real, strengths as a writer, is not the real issue.

What matters here, is that in addition to exhaustively exploring her own sub-world of Valdemar, and those other separate or shared realities in which she has made her name one to conjure with, she has also joined the ranks of authors who have taken it upon themselves to retell traditional fairy tales (and has subsequently joined the ranks of writers determined to produce send-ups of traditional fairy tales). If I am to be honest — which I generally do at least attempt — I must admit that I do not find Lackey's fairy tale retellings anywhere near as irritating as some of her other work. Fairy tales already carry a strong aura of the hair-drier about them. Plus, there are so many varied "takes" on them already that one more by yet another fantasy writer, even if one with a virtual cult following, and whose crown seems to have been unaccountably inherited from some successful purveyor of bodice rippers (although if there is anything to the theory of reincarnation, I think we may be witnessing the return of Francis Hodgson Burnett), is hardly worth more than a shrug or a raised eyebrow.

But, in any event, in 1995 Mercedes Lackey had brought out 'THE FIRE ROSE', the first of her series of tales of the various 'Elemental Magicians'. Or perhaps it would be better to refer

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to it as a false start to that series, for, for several years it was usually not listed among those titles. 'THE FIRE ROSE' is a very enjoyable read. It is, of course, yet another retelling of Beauty and the Beast. Having come out in 1995, 'THE FIRE ROSE' was unlikely to have altogether escaped the influence of the 1991 Disney version, with which it shares several elements of greater or lesser importance.

At least two of these elements were directly, if unwittingly, inherited from McKinley's 'BEAUTY'. (Which had been brought to the attention of the screenwriters in charge of the development of the script by a Disney employee as soon as the project was announced.) One of these elements is Beauty's love of reading (to be strictly accurate, in both McKinley and Lackey's versions this quality was actually a love of learning, but the Disney studios no doubt considered that level of eccentricity a little *too* radical), and the second element is the strong presence within the confines of the story, of a horse. Once again, Disney watered down the element to the point of rendering it vestigial, in both printed versions the horse is an almost essential character to the plot's development. Also in common with Disney (and Cocteau), Lackey's version features a handsome but vicious rival to the heroic Beast.

While I hardly think that the existence of 'THE FIRE ROSE' would have been a major moving factor toward giving us 'ROSE DAUGHTER', I do wonder whether the publication of yet another Beauty and the Beast retelling by so dominant a writer as Lackey unquestionably was by that point in time, might not, in conjunction with the letting go of what had been a happy home, have helped to jog McKinley into an exploration of



### Beauty x 3

whether she had, after all, said all that she had to say about this particular tale, and whether or not, over the intervening years, she may have come to some different conclusions regarding the underlying story.

Which certainly appears, to me, to be the case.



#### In the Beginning...

The first thing one realizes upon embarking on 'ROSE DAUGHTER' is how very young McKinley must have been when she wrote 'BEAUTY'. There is a sweetness, an openhearted innocence about 'BEAUTY' which you realize that almost no writer (other than perhaps Nancy Atherton) would be able to get away with in these disillusioned days where most of the world seems to have become resigned to middle age. The contrast is almost enough to make you weep. By yet further contrast, the story of 'Rose Daughter' is told to us in a very similar voice as that which had just previously told us the story of 'DEERSKIN'. And like 'DEERSKIN', however attractive the central characters may be, it is not a particularly "likable" story.

Some comparisons are in order. Both between the retellings and the original source material:



In the traditional version; the version which most modern authors use as their starting point (and which is a parable of a marriage arranged by a girl's family upon financial considerations if there ever was one), Beauty is the youngest of three sisters, the sweetest and the most discounted by her peers.



### Beauty x 3

There is no real reason for this last detail, it seems to be a mere hobgoblin consistency with generic folktale tradition in which the youngest of three is always dismissed as being of no account.

Their father is a merchant who has lost his fortune. The family is forced to cut back its expenses and to remove from the costly city in favor of a humble cottage in the countryside. Since there is no money, the girls must now do their own housework. Beauty is the only one who does not spend a great deal of time complaining of this, which gains her no respect from her sisters.

Into the middle of this situation there comes a glimmer of hope. One of their father's ships may not have been lost after all. He makes the journey back to the city in hopes this may be true. His older daughters greedily ask him to bring them back jewels and luxuries. Beauty, when asked, insipidly begs him for a simple rose.

The hope was false. The merchant's luck is indeed out. In fact, so far out is his luck that on his journey home, he goes astray in a storm and is in danger of losing even his life. By chance he stumbles onto the grounds of a grand, but deserted, palace where he is mysteriously fed and housed for the night. Upon taking his leave in the morning, he makes the mistake of picking a rose for his youngest daughter.

In keeping with his luck overall, this arouses the rage of a monstrous Beast who demands his life in forfeit. Upon begging for mercy the merchant is told that he may instead give the monster his rose-loving daughter. The monster states that she, at least, will come to no harm from him.

To no reader's very great surprise, Beauty insists upon being the requisite sacrifice to save her father's life. The merchant conducts her to the (obviously enchanted) palace where the





### Beauty x 3

Beast welcomes her and sends her father away loaded with treasure enough to reestablish himself and his family.

At this point we all take time out to wallow in luxury for a while as Beauty becomes accustomed to a standard of living that most of us would like to be entitled to, and the Beast repeatedly pesters her to marry him. Despite these unwanted proposals, Beauty grows, over the ensuing months, to be quite fond of “her” Beast.

Then, for no particular reason that anyone has ever been able to discern, or explain, Beauty becomes consumed with homesickness and a longing to see her father (well, that’s understandable, I suppose) and also her nasty sisters (that’s not). She begs the Beast for a holiday. He agrees to it upon conditions. She must return to the palace by the specified time or her coach will turn back into a pumpkin and she will be in rags. (Well, actually, no. That’s not it. In fact he doesn’t always specify any sort of ultimatum. But she, and we, are never left in any doubt that there is one.)

So Beauty makes a flying visit home. She has a wonderful time showing her riches off to her relieved father and her resentful sisters, both of whom have made grand but unhappy marriages in her absence. Of course she overstays her allotted time, and has to make her way back to the palace under her own power, her magical transport having just as well have turned back into a pumpkin.

She finds the Beast’s palace in a complete squalor of neglect with no sign of her Beast. After turning the place inside out she eventually comes upon him dying of despair over her betrayal. She cries out that she loves him and wants to marry him.



### Beauty x 3

Whereupon he turns into a handsome princeling. She demands to know where her Beast has gotten to. He claims to be her Beast and calls up a wedding celebration. Finis.

Well. Okay. That’s the story according to tradition — and a particular lady of the French court. I cannot answer as to whether her marriage was either happy, or arranged by her family on financial considerations.



### According to McKinley’s ‘BEAUTY’ in 1978;

#### Warning! SPOILERS

Beauty is the youngest of three sisters. Her name is not really Beauty. Beauty is a pet name from childhood which has almost become an embarrassment to her, but one which she seems unable to shed. Her older sisters, Grace and Hope, are both beautiful and good, and anybody with a proper way of thinking would value them. Beauty, presently going through a scrawny, spotty stage, has clearly decided that she is the “plain, clever one” of the family. Shortly after her eldest sister’s engagement to one of their father’s most promising young sea captains, the family’s fortune takes a severe decline due to bad weather, shipwrecks and other events beyond human control. The prospective son-in-law’s ship goes missing and no further word of it is heard. The family is eventually rolled up, their properties sold or auctioned off to cover debts. The only bright spot in the picture is the engagement of the second sister to a nice young man who is proposing to return to his county district and take up work as a blacksmith. The merchant, who had originally been a carpenter, agrees to join them and bring the rest of his family.





### Beauty x 3

The world in which this all takes place is a generic “storybook land” one, with the feel of vaguely 16th–18th century. It is also a rationalist world in which magic is scoffed at by any person of education or urbanity and whatever magic is practiced is regarded as silly charms and country superstition.

The family leaves the city with their remaining worldly goods, laden with gifts from well-wishers, the most conspicuous of which is a large, quite valuable horse which Beauty had raised from a foal. The family eventually reaches the village of Blue Hill, and uncomplainingly rolls up its collective sleeves and gets to work settling in. The second daughter and her blacksmith marry and start their own family, and all goes reasonably well for a couple of years. The family appears to have outdistanced its bad luck and they prosper in a modest way.

As always, news of the false hope reaches them and the merchant must travel back to the city to investigate. In McKinley’s version he, as usual, asks if the girls want him to bring them something from the city. The two elder daughters sweetly tell him just to return safely. Beauty, in order to be saying anything at all, asks for rose seeds. From this point the tale follows the traditional version in that the ship was not that of the oldest sister’s fiancée, but a much smaller one. It and its goods were sold off for too small a sum to reestablish the merchant in business. And he finds that he hasn’t the heart to start over in the City in any case. After taking care of his obligations, he purchases a good horse with the little cash left over, but is unable to find rose seeds for Beauty. He returns to the country without them, goes astray in a storm and is sheltered and fed in a grand, but apparently deserted palace. He picks a rose, rouses a Beast and



### Beauty x 3

shows up on his own doorstep at the tail end of a Spring blizzard with the rose and a tale of a monster who demands his daughter or his life.

His formerly empty saddlebags turn out to be filled with treasure. Including a box containing a ring, and rose seeds for Beauty.

As always, Beauty is strong-minded enough to force her father to take her to the palace where she is welcomed by the Beast. She apologizes for her “misleading nickname” — unnecessarily. She has outgrown her scrawny, spotty stage by this time, although with the only mirror in the cottage in her sister’s room, she does not realize this. Nor is she likely to discover it now, for there are no mirrors in the Beast’s (obviously enchanted) palace. Her father is sent off with another cargo of gifts, and it isn’t until afterwards that the Beast discovers with some dismay that Beauty had come with her horse.

In any case we all get to wallow in luxury for a period, as Beauty settles into life in the palace. This segment of the story is enlivened by a running battle between Beauty and her two invisible servants who keep trying to dress her as a princess, which she considers inappropriate for a “plain little thing” like herself. It is also enlivened by Beauty’s project to get her horse to tolerate the Beast’s presence, her exploration of a library containing all the finest literary works of the past (or future!), and Beauty’s steady attempt to figure out just what is going on in this place. After an incident which provokes a mini-crisis, she begins to discover that she is growing able to understand her servants’ language, and by covertly listening to their conversations realizes that she has been brought here to break an enchantment. She is not able to discover just how she is sup-





### Beauty x 3

posed to do this by eavesdropping, however.

The factor which propels us into the next stage of the proceeding is the Beast's revealing to Beauty a scrying glass in which she is able to view her family. More particularly, she sees that her oldest sister, Grace, has received a proposal of marriage from the local clergyman. (Obviously, this is not a Catholic country.) Her second sister, Hope, encourages her to accept since her first love is lost and the preacher sincerely loves her. Beauty idly wonders aloud what did happen to the young sea captain, whereupon the glass shows that he has not only survived, but he has just returned to port.

Well, clearly she must go to her family and tell her sister not to marry the preacher, since she still loves the sea captain — who, it turns out, was not lost. The Beast reluctantly agrees that Beauty may visit her family for a week, but that she must return before the week's end, or he will die.

Despite the warning she allows herself to be persuaded to stay an extra day, nightmares send her off the next morning and she is soon lost in the forest. She and her horse wander the whole day and only find the palace road as the sun sets. They make their way back to the palace by moonlight and Beauty finds the house deserted and the Beast dying. She revives him, he welcomes her home and she tells him that she will marry him. The enchantment is ended her family (including the sea captain!) is brought to the palace for the wedding. Finis.

As a grace note, since the Beast's enchantment had dragged on for centuries, he is no longer young. This Beauty's bridegroom is not the usual young princeling, but a handsome, powerful nobleman in his prime.



### Beauty x 3



**According to Lackey in 'THE FIRE ROSE',  
the story goes as follows;**

**Warning! More SPOILERS**

Beauty is an only child. Her name is not Beauty, it is Rosalind, Rose for short. Her father was not a merchant, but a professor at the University of Chicago. Rose is a graduate student working towards her Ph.D. Her father lost his fortune some years earlier and Rose has been making shift with their straightened circumstances ever since. As the story opens, her father is has just died, his income ended with him and she is now destitute. It is autumn, 1905.

The Beast, Jason Cameron, is a magician. For this particular series Lackey has adopted the interpretation of magick working in accordance with the four elements. In most people these elements are sufficiently mixed that none predominates, but when there is an imbalance, the individual possess a magickal nature and can learn mastery of his or her own predominating element.

Lackey has since produced an extensive series of other retellings of fairy tales which are referred to as her 'Elemental Magician's' series. For quite a long time, this book however, for some reason was usually not included in a listing of them. This may have been due to a change in publisher, but since some of the series's internal paradigms were later modified, I think this one may have been a false start.

Cameron is a Firemaster. Out of hubris he attempted a magic which was not of his own element, and it went perilously wrong. He has trapped himself in a botched spell which has left him phys-





### Beauty x 3

ically half man and half wolf. With paws he is unable to write, and his wolf's eyes can no longer make out the cramped, handwritten text of his grimoires and other books of the arcane arts which he is studying in order to try to find a method of reversing the spell. He has retired to his mansion on his own private spur line south of San Francisco (in public life he is an obscenely wealthy railroad baron). He has also dismissed his human servants and is currently served only by salamanders and Paul DuMond, his secretary/apprentice, a handsome but vicious young man who has proved to be too lazy and undisciplined to learn what is needed in order to further his own magickal education.

The Beast has had his salamanders searching for a young woman whose education would enable her to read his books to him and help him in his research. (He prefers the idea of a female assistant since he believes that a woman would be less likely to prove a danger to him.) Of the handful of candidates which the salamanders have located, Rose's qualifications come closest to his needs. He sends a letter, by salamander, to her mentor at the university asking him for assistance in finding a tutor for a pair of imaginary children. The qualifications requested are of course Rose's. The deal is sweetened by promises of a very good salary, and occasional holidays into the city for cultural events. A railroad ticket is included. Rose, of course, cannot afford to refuse and sets off for San Francisco.

As soon as possible after her arrival at the mansion, Rose is informed of the deceit. There are no children, her employer has been injured in an accident and is no longer able to do his own research, that is to be her job. Since he is also disfigured, she will read his research materials to him through a speaking tube.



### Beauty x 3

They will not meet face to face – oh, and she may find some of the things he asks her to read rather... peculiar. Her salary and the other perks mentioned in his offer remain the same, and, in addition he will have the catalogs from the booksellers in the city conveyed to her so she may order whatever she may require for her own research. Rose who has few options, considers the changed agenda and agrees.

Whereupon we all take some time out to wallow in luxury while Rose becomes familiar with the manor, the library, the grounds and the work required of her. (Lackey is very good at wallowing in luxury, and her stories will do so quite shamelessly given any plausible reason.)

During this period Paul DuMond tries to insinuate to Rose that she is not safe here and should “trust” him to help her. She finds him repellent. Rose also makes the acquaintance of the other significant living creature on the estate, Jason's horse. This is a splendid copper-red stallion, the gift from another Firemaster, who is attended to by Jason's salamanders, but otherwise has been left in isolation since Jason's “accident.” Since the horse will not tolerate DuMond near him, he has been left at liberty in a field without companions. He seems to like Rose, but since she does not ride she is of no help in exercising him and can only provide a bit of company. Meanwhile, the head salamander informs Jason that while Rose has some fire in her, her nature is mostly air. Or, in other words, that Rose also has a magickal nature and could be trained as a Master of Air. Jason suddenly has hope (and a good deal of relief) that he might be able to train her to the degree that she can be an active assistant to him in the work of his restoration, since he can no longer





### Beauty x 3

trust DuMond. (Who he sends off to the city on business for a week to get him out of the way.)

During DuMond's week in the city we follow him and discover that he has already betrayed Jason's condition to a rival who has possession of the spell that Jason is looking for and does not mean to let him have it. He offers to tutor DuMond in other ways to power since Jason is clearly not intending to oversee DuMond's education any farther.

Rose has found the things she is asked to read very peculiar, but can understand how someone who cannot be helped by modern science might very well try to find answers in the occult. Since Jason now knows that she could also become a practitioner, he has the salamander add an elementary apprentice text into the stack of his own researches and waits for her to read it during the week of DuMond's absence. This she does and is shocked to realize that it makes a certain weird kind of sense.

She immediately gets on the horn (sorry, tube) to Jason asking for explanations and he tells her what he is, how his mansion is run and proves it to her by allowing one of his salamanders to show itself. He explains to her that she could also learn if she wishes. She thinks it over and accepts the offer. The chief obstacle now bypassed, they get into the search for the missing spell with a will and burn the midnight oil for several weeks until Jason sends her off to the city on one of the promised holidays, complete with excursions to theater and bookshops.

Rose returns from her holiday to a crisis. Jason has decided to test a possible modification of the original spell while the sun or moon, or whatever, is favorable and has sent DuMond off to dinner away from the estate. The effort (unsuccessful) leaves



### Beauty x 3

him in desperate case and the salamanders (who cannot touch living flesh without burning it) call on her to help. So she finally meets her employer face to face and gets a considerable shock.

Meanwhile, DuMond meets the rival sorcerer over dinner and the rival recommends that he find some reason to be relocated to Oakland in order to further his education.

Rose, although considerably shaken soon recovers and is able to contemplate meeting her employer again. DuMond manufactures a crisis in one of Jason's Oakland companies and gets himself sent off there to deal with it for the next few months. Jason begins to contemplate that if DuMond makes a go of that he might be able to send him off to manage some holding in another part of the world and so be rid of him. With DuMond out of the way Rose and Jason begin her training, continue his research, and deepen their own acquaintance. Over the next few weeks Rose realizes that she has fallen in love with him. He realizes that he has fallen in love with her. Neither, of course says anything to the other.

As a side project, Rose manages to familiarize Jason's horse to Jason's new scent to the point that he will tolerate his master despite the transformation. Both Jason and the horse are touchingly grateful.

The rival and DuMond, meanwhile, have been exploring the paths to power à la Alister Crowley via sex, drugs and general bloodletting (not, of course, their own). The rival wants to get his hands on Rose in case she has learned some of Jason's secrets and can be used. He insinuates a number of suggestions to this effect to DuMond, who, drugged to the gills, decides to take the rival's yacht, land on the beach below the manor and abduct her.





### Beauty x 3

He manages to catch her unaware but she puts up a fight and he isn't having things all his own way. A watchful salamander yells for Jason who is out on his horse. Jason rides to the rescue, the wolf takes over and he tears out DuMond's throat.

Rose is thoroughly shocked. Jason is appalled and sends her away to the city for her own safety. While they are both trying to get their heads in order and figure out what to do now, the rival approaches Rose at the opera and offers her his "help." This is in the evening of April 17. In the morning all hell breaks loose. The manor has been spelled against the worst of the earthquake (by a local Earthmaster — Jason reciprocated by spelling the Earthmaster's shop against fire) but Jason is frantic with worry about Rose alone in the city. He spends a great part of his magic to take himself there to find her. He does find her — struggling with his rival. There is a confrontation, the salamanders are called in, Rose calls up her sylphs and tells them to help Jason and the city goes up in smoke. The bad guy gets roasted, taking the needed spell with him. The good guys are spent and make their way back to the mansion by donkey cart with the exhausted local masters of Earth and Air. Jason and Rose are married. Jason remains half beast. Finis.



**According to McKinley's 'ROSE DAUGHTER' in 1997;**  
**Warning! Yet more SPOILERS**

Beauty is the youngest of three sisters. Her name is Beauty. All three of the girls are beautiful, but in this particular culture one tends to earn one's name by occupation or character, and Beauty, being quiet and retiring does not appear to have any



### Beauty x 3

stronger characteristic upon which to hang a new name. She is very sweet, and the peacemaker of her father's household.

Which needs one. It is not a happy home. Not because the people in the family are particularly bad sorts, but they — and the chief servants — are all fairly difficult people, and most of the time everybody in the household seems to be either angry or unhappy. Or both.

For example; Beauty's two older sisters are both splendid young women, but they cannot be easy to live with. The eldest inherited their mother's intrepid courage and has earned herself the name of Lionheart. The second inherited their mother's brilliant wit and has earned herself the name of Jeweltongue. Both have exceedingly dominant personalities. Their father, by contrast appears to have almost none at all, being distinguished only by being identified as the richest merchant in the city. At the beginning of the story, anyway.

One suspects that Beauty must take after her father.

The first and most major difference between McKinley's two versions of this tale is that while the world of 'BEAUTY' was a rationalist one in which magic was considered to be superstition and folly, in the world of 'ROSE DAUGHTER' magic is known to be real.

Consequently, all of the most ambitious practitioners of magic gravitate to the cities to make their fortunes. There are many levels of magic workers, among them, magicians, sorcerers, fortune tellers and seers. One of the more humble, but most welcome of these are the greenwitches, purveyors of garden magic and small useful spells. It is soon fairly clear to the reader, although never actually stated in the text, that had





### Beauty x 3

Beauty's father not turned utterly against all magic after his wife's pet magic workers failed to prevent her death, and had Beauty been given training, Beauty, a great lover of gardens and all plants, might well have been a greenwitch herself.

A major difference between this world and our own is that, unlike our world in which roses are grown in virtually every country worldwide, in the world in which ROSE DAUGHTER takes place, roses are very rare, since only great love or great magic can induce them to bloom. Due to their father's revulsion of feeling against all forms of magic, all three girls are forbidden to have anything to do with it. Nevertheless, the two eldest still occasionally purchase street spells, and Beauty maintains a friendship with the magical creature of a local retired sorcerer.

And just what is this creature, may one ask?

It is a salamander.

As in 'BEAUTY', the great blow falls after an engagement, but before a wedding. In this version, both older sisters have made brilliant matches and are planning a double wedding. Ten days before the wedding takes place, the word of their father's ruin becomes public. Both suitors break off their engagements, and before the day is out all of the servants have left, many unofficially, taking with them various valuable household goods in lieu of wages, without, needless to say, permission, realizing that the family no longer has the resources to legally pursue them. The three sisters are left alone in the house with their father, who is a broken man. This fall is far harder than the one McKinley sketched out in '78. This time it is not mere financial loss which faces their father, but disgrace and probably debtors' prison. The family receives no sympathy in their misfortune.



### Beauty x 3

Their father's kin no longer wish to know them and their former friends have utterly turned away.

Thrown upon their own resources, Lionheart, who enjoys a challenge, takes to fighting the kitchen into submission. Jeweltongue looks after their father and sees to the running of what household is left to them. Beauty starts sifting through the papers from their father's office to try to discover if there is anything which might offer them some hope of a future. In this manner she discovers a lawyer's document dating from the year she herself was two years old stating that the three girls had been left a cottage in the country. None of the creditors want a piece of property so far from the city, so they girls decide to remove to it.

Their house, and what is left of their valuable goods are put up for auction, hoping that the sale will bring enough to keep their father out of gaol. During their last weeks in the city Beauty visits the many retired servants and other people who had given homes to the dogs, horses and other creatures which had not managed to work out in the family's former life-style and asks their advice on the skills which they will need for living out in the country. This information she writes down to take with her. In the midst of this, her friend the salamander offers her a gift, and grants her "a small serenity".

Their journey is harsh and unpleasant. Their father, still in deep shock, is weak and wandering in his wits and the carters' convoy which they have paid nearly their last funds to join regards them as unwelcome. An early winter strands them all in a small town no more than halfway to their goal. During the winter Lionheart's skill in cookery, Jeweltongue's with her needle and Beauty's peacekeeping finally earn them the car-





### Beauty x 3

ters' respect. At last, at the earliest turn of spring they reach their goal. Not attractively bucolic Blue Hill this time round, but the more dubiously named village of Longchance.

Nevertheless, Rose Cottage turns out to be unexpectedly sound, even though it has stood vacant for many years, and the three sisters throw themselves into bringing it into order. Their father sleeps a great deal but gradually seems to begin to recover his wits. Once the house is brought into order, and the meadow returned to meadow rather than being lost to woodland, Beauty begins the job of recovering the garden. One of the many mysteries about the place is the identity of all the vicious thorn bushes which cover much of the house and have produced an impenetrable thicket in the middle of the garden itself.

Once the basic needs are brought under control, the two elder sisters begin to put their own plans into action. Lionheart cuts her hair, and, disguising herself as a boy, takes a position in the stables of the local squire. Jeweltongue strikes up a friendship with the village draper and eventually manages to get a commission to sew for the squire's sister, which soon escalates into a budding dressmaker's business. The family begins to be able to meet its expenses, and there is hope that they may be able to save enough to have the thatch replaced before the old one quite begins to leak. Beauty has her hands full with the garden and her vegetable patch and the thorn bushes which to all of their astonishment have turned out to be rose bushes. *Blooming* rosebushes! (Once again; in this particular world, only great love or great magic can induce roses to bloom.)

Their life in Longchance is far from easy, but is a vast improvement over ruin in the city. And Longchance is a generally pleas-



### Beauty x 3

ant place. They manage to make friends there. Their father continues to improve and has taken to scribbling, although none of the girls know what his writings are about since he keeps them in his pockets by day and under his pillow at night.

In their second year their father takes up bookkeeping for some of the village businesses. Beauty also learns that the old woman who left them the cottage had been the region's previous greenwitch, although nowadays no magic worker will settle in the area. And the sisters begin to hear rumors of a curse regarding Rose Cottage — but only if three sisters should happen to live there (by this time everyone believes that Lionheart is a boy), and the legend of an ancient sorcerers' battle which had taken all of the magic away from the district apart from the now presumed deceased greenwitch.

In their third year, the letter comes telling of the return of one of the merchant's ships. Against his daughters' advice he makes the journey back to the city. It was a mistake from the beginning. The ship was seized by creditors despite impoundments, and there is nothing left. He had much to do to avoid starving in the City over the winter, and at the first sign of spring sets out on his return with a borrowed pony, empty-handed.

He goes astray in a storm, is housed and fed in an apparently empty palace, given a new suit of clothes and served breakfast at a table with enough food for six and a red rose in a silver vase. He takes the rose with him, rouses a Beast who demands his life. Begs pardon and tries to explain that the rose is for his daughter. The Beast demands his daughter in his place. He is given a month to comply.

In this version, the Beast was once a sorcerer who called him-





### Beauty x 3

self a philosopher and got too close to The Mysteries. The touch of their monstrous guardians made him as they are. In addition, a terror driving onlookers to madness hangs about him.

His exile was originally self-imposed, but initially other sorcerers could still visit him, and it was the wrath one of these which has turned his exile into a prison.

Well, as usual, Beauty insists on being the sacrifice. In this version their father has fallen ill again soon after making his way home, and she slips away, bidding her sisters good-bye, before he recovers, setting forth on foot with a bundle containing slips from her own roses and rose hips full of seeds. The castle's magic sets her on the path and she reaches the palace by midday. The salamander's gift enables her to face the Beast without gibbering into madness.

And, no, for a change we do not take time out to wallow in luxury. Instead, luxury rolls over us like the sea and we are hard put not to drown in it. For the opulence of the Beast's palace is diseased. It is a hateful, shifting, crushingly oppressive penance which he, and Beauty, and the reader himself must just stoically endure. The only mercy which Beauty is granted is that the opulence of her own rooms is stable. It does not shift or mutate into other forms when her eye turns elsewhere and so she is better able to bear it. By some mercy, the part of the enchantment on the place which inhabits her own rooms also lacks the spiteful quality which permeates the rest of the palace, so she can even draw some comfort from it.

And for once, Beauty has not come to rest and recover from honest poverty or to live the life of an idle "lady." She certainly will not be dawdling about in a library. She quickly discovers



### Beauty x 3

that she has come here to work. In fact, she has come here to work like a navvy. The Beast's roses are dying. The one her father stole was one of the last still alive. She has been brought here to save them.

Out of a glasshouse once bursting with roses, only one bush still blooms. The bush from which the rose her father stole had grown. She sets about her task at once. The glasshouse is not like the palace. It is an extravagant, exuberant folly, and here the enchantments appear to be consistently benign and helpful — for which she has ample cause to be grateful, for she has undertaken a backbreaking task. Each endless day of her first week she slaves away in the glasshouse, clearing out dead wood, planting her seeds and cuttings and tending what live plants remain. Although the Beast has claimed that no other creature (apart from Fourpaws, a small, pastel calico cat who sometimes chooses to share his exile) will come near to the place where he is, each day another creature, or class of creatures, appears for Beauty to direct to its, or their, proper place(s). As though in her own insignificant self she is reforging the place's links to the natural world.

At night Beauty dreams of her family. In her dreams their lives have moved ahead of hers, for although she has been gone only a few endless days, in her dreams their lives have hastened on several months, and she sees small changes creeping into Rose Cottage. She dreams that Jeweltongue, to that young woman's dismay, has caught the eye of the squire's eldest son, a handsome, spoiled, spiteful young cub. She dreams that Lionheart's masquerade has been discovered by the squire's second son, a far better young man than his brother. She dreams that Jeweltongue and their father enjoy a growing friendship with





### Beauty x 3

the village's young baker. She dreams that her father has taken to writing poetry.

By daylight she labors in the glasshouse and begins to learn something of the palace and its surroundings. She finds the way into the woods where she makes a bonfire of garden rubbish, and the ways into the orchard and kitchen garden. She learns that the power of the enchantment which holds the palace unchanging, yet ever changing, can touch nothing living, which is why the roses, untended, had begun to die. She also learns to pity the Beast for the clumsiness which, along with his ignorance, had prevented him from tending the roses himself. She also learns that her father was not the first traveler who had sheltered there, and that the others had all at length run away at the sight of the Beast, or had been driven away by the loneliness and silence. She learns that the Beast would not have harmed her father if he had returned alone. And, somehow, no doubt due to the enchantment of the place, before her first week is out she sees that her cuttings have taken and the seeds have sprouted. She does not think to ask herself how this can possibly happen in a week, when the enchantment can touch nothing living.

And in the night before her fifth day she catches sight of the old woman, who even the Beast does not realize lingers nearby, supplying the palace with butter and cheese. The next night Beauty follows her, and finds her in a forest meadow along with her flock of ponies, horses, cows and sheep — and milky-pale unicorns, with silver shadows.

The following day is the day of the requisite crisis. In the midst of what had been an innocent, if somewhat dangerous, investigation of the glasshouse's weather-vane, the enchant-



### Beauty x 3

ment of the place abruptly turns on Beauty and tries to kill her. In the midst of the ensuing storm, fighting for her life, she is thrown into a vision of her father and Jeweltongue — at a poetry reading of all things. The same storm that batters her also rages in Longchance. Beauty's presence is taken for that of a ghost, one that is known to have manifested before. The hostess is cajoled into telling the ghost's story, which turns out to be one of the versions of the legend of the ancient sorcerers' battle, and its connection to the greenwitch of Rose Cottage.

And, then, into the midst of all this "atmosphere" strides young Jack Trueword, the squire's eldest son, with a spiteful grin and a second, cynically mocking version of the same story. He also breaks the news of Lionheart's masquerade, and taunts them all with the curse of three sisters in Rose Cottage. This manages to upset everyone.

The vision ends. Beauty finds herself falling from the top of the glasshouse. She cannot save herself. The Beast saves her. Together they manage to reach the ground in safety and take refuge from the storm inside the glasshouse. There is no more storm once they are inside the glasshouse, and the Beast's roses have gloriously revived. Beauty begs the Beast to send her home, for her task is done, and she must learn the truth of her vision. He agrees to send her, knowing that it means his death. But, telling her that as he brought her to him with a lie, it is only right that he should lose her. He sends her with a rose which will bring her back if she does not overstay.

Her return is a mistake on about the same level as her father's trip to the city, and is all but useless, beside. Jeweltongue and Lionheart, both rush home from the poetry reading to find her





### Beauty x 3

lying on the hearthrug deep in a sleep from which she will not rouse. When she finally does come round, they learn, in the scant hour or two given to them, that time in Longchance has passed as a month to each day that Beauty has spent in the Palace, that both sisters had been escorted home that evening by a cat whose description matches that of Fourpaws, and that if Beauty really feels about the Beast the way she seems to be acting as if she feels, then she had best go ahead and marry him. At which point Lionheart points out that the last petal is falling from the rose, and Beauty knows that the Beast is dying, and her way back is lost.

It takes her the rest of the night and well into the following day to return. The enchantment is now working against her. And, once returned, the shifting palace thwarts her in her attempt to reach the glasshouse. At length, as night is falling, she escapes from the house into the wild wood, and stumbles, lost, into her bonfire clearing where a unicorn has been standing guard over the unconscious Beast. He is not yet quite dead. She speaks the traditional formula and rather than bringing about the end of the enchantment, all hell breaks loose all over again.

Absolutely nothing in *this* version of the tale is *ever* going to come easily.

Beauty is given a choice. She may break the enchantment, return the Beast to what he once was with all his greatness, and with all its temptations, or she may take him, as he is, back to Longchance and be the sister-in-law of the baker and the squire's horse-breeding son. She makes her choice, and she chooses to keep her Beast a Beast.

All the forces of evil magic are ranging against them for a



### Beauty x 3

final confrontation of the sorcerers' long drawn-out battle which was begun so long ago. The old woman — who is of course the long missing greenwitch of Rose Cottage — her unicorns and the two guardians of the Mysteries whose touch had made the Beast what he is stand on their side. As Beauty watches the enemy's forces assembling she finally, at long last, becomes angry, and, taking strength from the salamander's gift, she faces the enemy, avants, and it disperses altogether.

The palace is a prison no longer. The aura of terror which hung about the Beast has departed, and the air is filled with birdsong.

We never find out if the two of them go on tending the roses in the glasshouse.



### Recapitulation:

Certain factors remain constant: in all of these versions it is admitted that, by whatever means, the Beast has gotten himself into this fix by his own actions, whether it be rudeness to the apparently inferior, a falling from grace, or by seeking after forbidden knowledge. Beyond that, it is clear that these are three widely different stories, which have no reason to lean on each other for support. But yet they do seem to connect in some manner beyond that of merely having been spun off from the same base.

And, while there are also some detectable small, amused tweaks at the Disney version to be found in 'ROSE DAUGHTER', even the bad behavior of Jack Trueword is not enough to cause more than a slight nod of recognition.

One is left feeling vaguely that it is a pity that we cannot see the tale over again from the point of view of Lionheart or





### Beauty x 3

Jeweltongue. For these young women are not the sweet, virtuous, but ultimately very conventional girls that Grace and Hope were back in '78. These are two young women of strong character, who clearly have stories of their own. Stories which we will now probably never get to read. But, still, it does definitely seem to me to require altogether too much of a stretch to try to deny some lurking presence of the Lackey effect.

Still, I may be exaggerating it. 'ROSE DAUGHTER' is a powerful work, and whatever the reasons McKinley wrote it may have been, I am unabashedly grateful to have it.

In fact, I will go so far as to hope that some 20 years hence some other event or popular retelling will goad McKinley into telling this tale over to us for yet a third time. I should like to know what further changes may be rung upon this particular theme when she might choose to tell it in the voice of the crone.



#### And, now for something decidedly different:

Oh, come on. Need I still warn you all that —

“Yar be SPOILERS?”

And, as of 2009, only a mere dozen more years down the track, I find myself forced to re-evaluate this matter yet again. Had McKinley done it again? Already?

No, upon consideration, I do not think that what we have now been given is another retelling of this story in the voice of the crone. But she does certainly seem to have retold the story.

Of course I may be wrong about the crone. And if so, then the crone's telling is probably not going to be the last one, either. But this particular example isn't an *overt* retelling by any means,



### Beauty x 3

and just about everything about the setting has changed. Nor does this version of the story seem to be any part of a dialogue with the work of Mercedes Lackey. Instead, if anything, it seems to be bringing us back around full circle to echoing Diana Wynne Jones's 'FIRE & HEMLOCK'.

At the time I added this segment to this article, I thought it might be a little soon to be rolling this particular addition into the essay, for 'CHALICE' had only been out for a few months, and even dedicated McKinley fans may have still had yet to find and read it. But in order to discuss it, there will undoubtedly be spoilers.

Ergo: if this kind of thing bothers you, you might want to put this essay aside and come back after you have had the chance to get hold of the book and read it first. If spoilers are not much of a problem for you, then do as you choose; but it is possible that reading the essay may interfere with your enjoyment of putting the data all together yourself, as the story unfolds when you do read it.

For with this telling you *do* have to assemble the data yourself in order to follow what is going on, much as McKinley's first Beauty needed to deconstruct what her situation was by eavesdropping on her servants.

I am going to have to admit that by the time this story came out, while I had enjoyed McKinley's most recent previous books, I had noticed that she appeared to have got onto a jag of being determined to bury the reader in truly exhaustive detail.

Sometimes it was absolutely necessary detail. There was so much background on how the magic worked in that country, and how its presence had shaped the way the whole society worked, that 'SPINDLE'S END' would have probably been incomprehensible without every bit of the detail that was





### Beauty x 3

determined to pile on us for that particular ride.

With 'SUNSHINE', the narrator clearly dealt with the monumental trauma of that whole story by running off at the mouth about everything which was occupying the periphery — possibly in order to avoid having to deal head-on with the elephant, or rather, the vampire in the room.

But I'll have to admit that I was getting a bit impatient by the time I worked my way through 'DRAGONHAVEN' and we were still being buried in minutia over not very much to do with the central story. Although, considering how totally eaten alive the narrator of that story was by the whole situation, it might have been difficult to imagine what else he might have had to even think about, let alone to talk about — or at least have available in his head to tell us.

With 'CHALICE' one need have no such worries. This is a refreshingly spare, taut, narrative in which you are given no more detail than what you actually need. Or, just possibly, slightly less than one would prefer. We are given *exactly* enough to understand the story. But we are not given enough to feel that we fully understand this world.

But then, McKinley has had plenty of practice in telling us this story. McKinley's already told us this story. Twice, in fact. Yes, once again, for the third time, McKinley is telling us the story of Beauty and the Beast. Or perhaps this time out, one should say; Beauty and the Bees.

(In the back of my head an old quatrain by Ogden Nash was jingling its way all through the novel as well; "The one-'I' lama, he's a priest./The 2-'Il' llama, he's a beast.../And I will bet a silk pajama/There isn't any 3-'Ill' Llama." — at the end of the



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poem it was pun-ishly pointed out to the poet that a "three-'Ill' Llama" was a great conflagration... and this story had already had one of those. In addition to both of the others. Either literally, or figuratively.)

This was also the story in which the penny finally dropped and I realized that in just about all of McKinley's work the real central conflict and challenge is to find your proper *work* and to do it well. Whatever it may happen to be. And while this issue pervades all of McKinley's work, it is never more prominent in the tale than in her two most recent retellings of this same story.

I do have to admit that her first retelling, 'BEAUTY' doesn't really fit the mold of it all being about finding one's proper work. That version is much closer to the traditional source material which is all about being restored to one's proper "place." Or rather — since this is after all a Cinderella variant — about losing one's proper place — and making the best of what one is left with, until eventually one is offered a much better place altogether. Work is just what you do until your proper place finds you — and by the way you do it demonstrates that you are worthy of it. I suspect that McKinley was so very young when that tale was written that I think that once the enchantment was broken, she did not even stop to consider following the narrative any farther than to have Beauty's family magically able to turn up for the wedding.

But the centrality of the issue of one's proper work in McKinley's stories suddenly became obvious to me with 'CHALICE', and, looking back, it's hard to think of any example which contradicts that reading. Although I am sure that there may be something, somewhere, that does.





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Of course part of this yearning for one's proper work (or, one must admit, place) probably hinges upon the opening of all three retellings, and which is insisted upon by the source material, in which the heroine has been displaced from her established niche in society. In 'BEAUTY' and in 'ROSE DAUGHTER' the heroines have been toppled from their high-status position in their local societies. In 'CHALICE', Mirasol has been unexpectedly elevated to a stratum of a traditional hierarchy for which she has been given no preparation whatsoever, and of which she even has little direct knowledge, and must improvise.

What is also made clear is how small the scale of things is, in this iteration of the story. The stage upon which the action takes place is one simple country demesne, to which Mirasol is effectively confined for life by the demands of her new office, and, for all the inherent problems which the cast of characters must deal with, the climactic threat comes from outside it, beyond any of their control.

There is apparently a King's city out there, somewhere. But we get only a glancing reference to it in the course of the story (which is much more comparable in length to 'BEAUTY' than to 'ROSE DAUGHTER'). This makes it difficult to get any kind of handle upon the historical period (or equivalent) in which the tale is taking place, for, being a country demesne, in a world in which the state of the land is quite literally reflected/affected by the state of the Master, everything is so tied up in tradition that you could speculate a date anywhere from solidly pre-industrial to something comparatively modern with hardly a blink.

Except, that is, for the magic. For, as in most of McKinley's worlds, magic is quite active. In the world of 'CHALICE'



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it appears to be based upon the elements, it also seems to be interwoven with the basic cosmos, and more or less constitutes the people's religion — although "religion" does not feel like a perfect analog for the position that it holds. There are priesthoods, however. Elemental Priesthoods of Earth, and Air, and Fire, all of whom live separate from the land's people until they reach the final level of their training and may safely move among humans again, although by that time they themselves will no longer be human. And by the time a priest of Earth, Air, or Fire reaches the 3rd level of his training, he is already no longer truly human. Nor is he fit to live, or even to go about in the normal world among normal humans.

Water, on the other hand, appears to be represented, and locally administered within each demesne by the holder of the office of Chalice, which although it is never overtly stated as such, is effectively also a priesthood, and not a minor one, although, unlike the others, it does not have levels, and its holders do not relinquish their humanity. (One belatedly wonders whether this might have anything to do with the fact that the human body is some 92% composed of water.) In addition, all Chalices are bound within their demesne for life, move among the people of it, tend the land, and the people, and oversee the Master's councils, and his works. All Chalices hold their office "in" a fluid for which they have a strong affinity. Most typically this will be water. Not necessarily always, however. Although that is the most common expression of the office.

Mirasol, the orphaned only child of a woodsman and a beekeeper, holds her office in honey. She is the first Chalice ever to do so and therefore must by her own untrained efforts adapt





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the traditional rituals to fit, which makes her work all the more difficult. Nor is there anyone to assist or train her, for the long-serving Chalice of the former Master's father had died in the fullness of age and her apprentice, Marisol's predecessor, was quite young and had died tragically, and unexpectedly.

And the demesne that Marisol has inherited the office of Chalice for is in dire straits. It has been without a Master for seven months when the story opens. And the circle of counselors are refusing to work together.

From the opening of the story, the demesne is facing a terrible internal crisis. The Master is dead, leaving no heir — which in a world where the land is tied to the ruler is the sort of thing which can destroy a demesne. Even at best one can expect the upheavals attendant upon a transition to a “foreign” Master to last anything up to generations. During which period things seldom prosper, and demesnes have sometimes shaken themselves apart (and I mean that quite literally) and have had to be replaced altogether, even to being given a new name. No one wants to contemplate a failure of that magnitude.

Rather in the manner of an echo of McKinley's first work, the demesne's last Master was in nature and disposition very much in the style of the handsome and wild young man depicted in the painting in the magical castle of ‘BEAUTY’ who Beauty herself judged had “died young”

Here, the former Master did indeed die young. And he took his Chalice, and one of the other ten of his circle of advisers with him. His younger brother, who, having a strong affinity for the land and was of a better nature for ruling it than he — and might therefore have confused the land — had been forced into



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the priesthood of Fire, and had already passed into his 3rd level of training. From which none had ever returned.

The Grand Seneschal who was the senior survivor of the Master's traditional circle of advisors has insisted that his return be attempted for the sake of the land. And the young man does indeed return, and he is indeed no longer human. But he still loves the land, and it begins to respond to him, human or not.

The demesne's Overlord, however, is revealed to be unwilling to await results, and has already chosen a favorite to whom the demesne is to be given, despite the damage that such a change of Master will cause.

The adjustment in the vantage point from which the tale is told, and the shifts in the nature of the world in which it takes place managed to disguise just what story this essentially is for a chapter or two, but the underlying nature and identity of the underlying source story surfaces early. Nevertheless, McKinley still manages to astonish the reader with the eucatastrophic conclusion, for by the middle of the story we have also been assured that whatever this story may *look* like, Masters (human or not) are forbidden to marry their Chalice. Except, as it later is revealed, under very specific, and dreadful circumstances.

Another change to the template is that rather than abandon her Beast on some inserted pretext in order to reconnect with her family and discover what has been happening in her absence, Mirasol is forced to depart from the demesne's Master's presence in order to raise the land, in his behalf, in a desperate attempt to strengthen it enough to hold it together, rather than shattering, against the Overlord's attempt to abruptly remove this Master and replace him with his chosen favorite. Only she,





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as Chalice, can do this, and it may not be enough to save it in the event of the Master's impending death.

Nor is it her absence which will kill the Master, but his rival, who will do so, publicly, in order to inherit the demesne, effectively by conquest. And then he, in order to steady the land against its transition to a new ruling dynasty, will proceed to marry Mirasol and get an heir upon her, regardless of whatever she may think of him. And as Chalice she must comply with this, and thus give the demesne an heir who is tied to it, so it can settle. The urgency of her task in this instance is for her to manage to return in time to support the current Master when he must meet his rival, in the appointed place, and either prevail or be killed.

And, bringing the circle round back to the work of Diana Wynne Jones, this turns out to be a case in which the ending throws us a 'FIRE & HEMLOCK' conclusion.

In fact it throws us *exactly* a 'FIRE & HEMLOCK' conclusion. The parallels are shockingly precise, and the conclusion, at first glance, is nearly as mystifying as in Jones's story. (Upon the whole McKinley did a slightly better job of giving the reader all the necessary information ahead of time. But the conclusion is still a shock.) And as in 'FIRE & HEMLOCK' the conclusion comes about because the whole situation had a deadly sting in its tail. One that someone else was trying to capitalize on, and the resulting victory was only going to stick properly by going against the established order.

The prohibition against Masters marrying their Chalice is deeply traditional, and it reads as being a perfectly reasonable constraint — according to what, by the time the information surfaces, we have absorbed of this world's traditions. It took

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until the middle of the book for us to absorb that much of it, but we do so. The stipulation against such a marriage doesn't spring out of the blue and leave us going "Say what?!" It is a prohibition which makes *sense*.

It is the sudden elimination of that prohibition that nonpluses us.

But then, when you stop and think; this whole situation, right from the get-go, has been a departure from, and a defiance of "tradition" — from a point well *before* the previous Master died without issue, and the Grand Seneschal started insisting upon making an attempt to restore a Master from the demesne's original ruling bloodline — even if the only viable candidate was no longer human.

In fact, the situation started going off the rails even earlier: stemming at least from the point that the previous Master decided to get rid of his brother, rather than let him remain as his heir, *as well as* refusing to marry and get an heir of his own, in short, to defy all tradition, and the devil with what the demesne demanded of him! This poor demesne had been dragged into his rebellion against all established order (and his father's overly rigid rule), and out of its traditional paths for years running. It is no wonder that it had become so fragile.

There had never been a 3rd-level priest who attempted to return to humanity. Indeed, 3rd-level priests are unfit to even live among normal humans.

There had never been a Chalice who held her office in honey, for that matter.

And, getting down to the nitty-gritty of the problem, by the time the matter was finally settled, that demesne had really been through an appalling amount of upheaval. The previous



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Master had dragged it willy-nilly into his personal rebellion, for seven long years, against everything that his virtuous and overly-rigid father had stood for, (and had held him to against his will). And then it lost both Master and Chalice in the same conflagration, leaving the rest of his circle of councilors divided and at loggerheads.

Then the demesne suddenly burps up an untrained Chalice with a totally unprecedented fluid in which she holds her office. A Chalice who simply isn't socially equipped to help to bring the circle back together. And then when the Grand Senechal finally gets his way, and brings back the Master's younger brother, the fellow isn't even properly human any more.

He means well by the land, however, unlike his brother. Which makes a real difference. Within a year the land begins to settle itself and to respond to him. Which is just as dangerous, but in a totally different way. Masters should be human. And they should have heirs. And there is no chance of this one ever giving it an heir from his own bloodline. This is all merely postponing the inevitable.

But by the time that things are finally beginning to stabilize under this new Master, the Overlord decides to shove his oar in and replace him with a stranger, and right there we are looking at a demesne that is doomed to shatter altogether.

And that produces exactly the kind of situation wherein the incoming Master *must* marry his Chalice to bring the demesne back together again, settle it, and to give it a new ruling bloodline to which the land will attach itself.

Which the Overlord has been counting upon, for the benefit of his favorite.



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Well it didn't happen. And the worst had not befallen, either. The land did not shatter.

However, by restoring the Last Master's younger brother to full humanity, the demesne now has yet *another* "new" Master to have to re-adapt to. It was gradually adapting to being ruled by a Master that was not human. But that was never a safe precedent to set, for a Master who is not human will get no heir, and will only forestall the pending disaster for his own lifetime. A healthy demesne needs human heirs, and I suspect it had been through altogether too much by that time to just settle down as if it were passing smoothly from its Master's father to him, as it would have, had the old Master's sons' birth order been reversed.

This whole interpretation may be missing something, for it was based upon a single reading, and while this retelling of the story is much simplified and far less baroque than most of McKinley's other recent stories, it would not be astonishing to discover that I'd overlooked something important. The interpretation nevertheless seems to hold.

Still, there is no question in my mind but that this is, once again, the story of Beauty and her Beast retold by McKinley for a third time.



### And, in the Other Corner:

**Complete with more SPOILERS**

And in the year 2011, Mercedes Lackey weighed back in with 'BEAUTY AND THE WEREWOLF'.

Adding yet another wrinkle to the equation: 'BEAUTY AND THE WEREWOLF' is a "500 Kingdoms" story.





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And, imho, it's a bad fit for that universe.

Lackey's 500 Kingdoms universe is an interesting concept, and it's worked rather well for the previous stories she has written in it. But I don't think Beauty and the Beast is well served by it. Or at any rate, I don't really think that this iteration of Beauty and the Beast is well served by it.

The cast is far too small to give it the scope it needs.

The universe of the 500 Kingdoms works differently from that of most of Lackey's other fairy tale retellings. Indeed it works differently from the way magic works in Lackey's other fantasy worlds altogether. The universe of the 500 Kingdoms is the abode of warped, or fractured, fairy tales.

This is not simply a parody universe — although it does have certain parody elements very much in evidence. But the magic of the 500 Kingdoms is not merely a form of energy to be tapped or adapted and shaped to the magician's will. It is an organic entity which grows and must be harvested.

In fact, one harvests it in one's own self defense and for the good of society. Otherwise things are going to go to Hell in the proverbial hand-basket and no one is going to be able to prevent it.

This universe's magic is organic. It affects things that are organic. Which means the people, too. Physically, emotionally, mentally. It uses them.

But it isn't intelligent.

And like all magic in fantasy worlds, it doesn't just sit there. It wants to *move*.

In some direction and toward a specific goal.

And once it starts to pool and build up in concentration it takes on a specific character.



### Beauty x 3

Which is known as; The Tradition.

And the Tradition takes its shapes from traditional stories. Archetypal stories. And it will push the individuals who are unconsciously serving as a locus and collection point for the magic into the traditional "paths" to enact those stories.

And it doesn't care whether the story has a happy ending.

I have always contended that the Archetype is the enemy of the "character." In the world of the 500 Kingdoms this enmity can be quite literal.

Consequently, in the 500 Kingdoms, there are Godmothers. Originally the Godmothers were Fairies. Or at any rate, they were of the Fair Folk. And they undertook to direct the Tradition away from its most destructive paths into ones which would do the least damage. As time went on, since the Tradition was most meddlesome to humans they trained various humans and authorized them as deputies to carry on this work in human kingdoms.

So which humans did the Fair Folk enlist to carry on the good work?

Why, the ones that were most likely to be messed with by the Tradition in the first place, of course.

And, as well, the ones who were *least* likely to be able to carry out the path the Tradition is trying to push them into.

Because the Tradition takes its cues from the focus's situation. It hasn't actually got a brain to bother to run a check on whether the rest of the elements of the path it recognizes are present to play it out with. Consequently, magic is going to continue to collect around these individuals until it forces them into a path, any path, or drives them mad. Even at best, it uses them as puppets, with their thoughts, feelings, and reactions distorted into the





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directions which will coax them into complying.

Godmothers are trained to use that magic. And to harvest it from other unfortunates that the Tradition is trying to meddle with, relieving the pressure. They are also able to harvest magic from whichever inherently magical creatures are willing to let them do it.

And they use the magic so collected to try to keep things on an even keel. Wherever possible, by redirecting the Tradition, thwarting it, or, most typically, by substituting one path with another, less destructive one.

Which can be a great deal of fun. All the more so when it is necessary to unpick the tangle when more than one traditional path all manage to crash head-on.

But, not in this case. Oh, we do get some references to other well-known tales, as well as some rather nasty potential traditional paths which might turn into pitfalls that are alluded to in passing, and some actions to avoid one of the worst of them are taken (in a form that looks rather like a salute to Lionheart's masquerading as a boy in order to get a job), but to the reader it never seemed that much of a risk.

The problem, to be frank is that the whole story was just so bloody *obvious*.

Particularly if you've read 'THE FIRE ROSE', because it's basically the same story.

And in this case there is only the one basic story. It never morphs, it doesn't intersect with anything else major enough to provoke the necessary confusion, or invoke a need to unpick a tangle. Indeed, there is no confusion for the reader in this story whatsoever.

The characters are confused. And Lackey was just about able to maintain that without having them come across as idiots.



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But, really, by the time the establishing event takes place you know perfectly well who is behind it, why he did it, and pretty much what he wants to get from it.

And then we spend most of the rest of the book trying to see the situation from his point of view, and recognizing that he really does have a legitimate quarrel with the basic set-up.

Not that it excuses his actions in the least.

Admittedly, I was rather charmed at the opening of the story when — right in the first chapter — we got what read as the possibility of a maybe-reference to Nicholas Stuart Gray's stage play of 'BEAUTY AND THE BEAST'. Gray was a stalwart of the British theater — particularly children's theater — all though the mid-20th century, until his death in the early 1980s and his version of the story is predictably charming. It also establishes the three sisters as Beauty, the youngest and most sensible, and her two older, twin sisters, who are very lovely, very sweet, and very very silly.

There was, however, no doddering old wizard or baby dragon in evidence in 'BEAUTY AND THE WEREWOLF', so I suspect that any resemblance exists only in my own mind.

As to the story summary; as in 'THE FIRE ROSE' there are departures from the traditional source. Beauty, whose name here is Isabella, commonly called Bella, is an only child. Her father had remarried some years earlier and gifted her with a pair of very pretty, very sweet and very silly twin stepsisters, some years younger than she.

It also gifted her with a rather indolent and tiresome, but far from evil stepmother.

After an establishing scene in the first chapter, in which we are introduced to the local Duke's bullying rake of a game-





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keeper, the story begins with one of our only flirtations with a secondary traditional tale. i.e., Bella dons her red cloak and sets off in the morning with a basket to visit Granny, a local wise woman, who lives in the woods. On the way she has an acrimonious run-in with said gamekeeper.

She spends the day with Granny — who is teaching her herbalism — and discovers in the course of the visit that the local Duke (quite a young man) is confined to his estate due to an unspecified curse, and that the gamekeeper is generally suspected to be a natural son of the previous Duke.

The visit runs over time, but Bella chooses to risk the walk home through the woods. There will be adequate light, since it is full moon that night..

It will surprise no one to learn that she is attacked by a wolf on her way through the woods.

She does a credible job of defending herself, but she is bitten, the wolf finally retreats and she manages to make her way to the guard station at the City gate. The guards see her home.

In the morning the house is roused by the King's men who bundle her and her clothing into a coach and carry her off to the Duke's castle — where she is to be confined for the following three months to determine whether she has been infected with lycanthropy.

Duke Sebastian is a scholar and a magician. He is also the werewolf who bit her. And the only other human in the place is Eric, the aforementioned gamekeeper/steward.

Duke Sebastian had *not* been bitten, however. No one knows how or where he managed to be cursed with lycanthropy. But the probability is that he is not infectious. So, presumably, at



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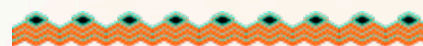
the end of the three months, Bella can go home.

Well, there is a great deal more. We do have the usual spirit servants on tap, which Bella eventually manages to find a way to communicate with. And Godmother Elena — who has been with this series from the beginning — is on the case, trying to figure out what's what. As in *THE FIRE ROSE* Bella eventually begins taking instruction in magic from Sebastian (as well as taking charge of the household), and thereby learns about the Tradition, which hasn't forgotten about her, and with her changed situation seems to be trying to find a different path for her to follow. She hands it one which she decides will do as little potential damage as possible, and basically we hunker down until the grand confrontation.

It's all quite entertaining, but, like I say, I don't think it's a success. And the only point of mystification that I confess to is; why in the whole course of the story, did no one ever bring up the issue that after spending 3 months in a remote palace alone with two young men — one of whom has a well-known reputation as a rake — unchaperoned, Bella is bloody well going to *have* to marry one of them. Unless she wants her reputation in tatters. The society as set up in chapter 1 is not exactly what anyone could call either enlightened or liberated.

And, yes, I will undoubtedly continue this series of examinations should either of these authors decide to retell this particular story yet again. But as of this writing (2021) neither of the principles has yet.

But I won't be surprised if one of them does.





## Fire & Hemlock Reconsidered

If you are not familiar with Diana Wynne Jones's novel: 'Fire & Hemlock' this article may make very little sense to you. Furthermore, if you have not read that particular book, this article is riddled with spoilers. So if that sort of thing is likely to ruin a story for you, then, please do not read this article until you have found and read the book. This is not the typical puff piece review intended to convince people to read the book, and will quite possibly do any efforts in that direction more harm than good.



### So, Just What Happend Here?:

In common with many other fans, on first reading I found the ending of Jones's 1985 novel 'FIRE & HEMLOCK' abrupt and unsatisfying. In fact, I said as much in an APA to which I belonged, and in which a discussion of the book was taking place.

This, by the way, is a recurring scenario. Almost any time you get two or more fans of Jones's work together at any place or time, at some point they are going to start hashing over the ending of 'FIRE & HEMLOCK'. It poses the perennial question that we are forced to ask ourselves. That's *it*? What just happened? What the hell is going on here?

"How would you have ended it?" Nat Case asked me, in response to some of my grouching. Well, that's certainly telling me to put my money where my mouth is. But, after some consideration, I did, in fact, get a handle on my underlying problem with the ending. A handle which finally satisfied me at least. Whether others will be as satisfied is debatable.

My first step, was to reread the Coda and try to pinpoint just

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where, from my viewpoint, the ending started veering off the track. I gradually found myself coming around to the conclusion that Jones, in fact, *has* ended the adventure satisfactorily. But her characters, Polly and Thomas just haven't realized that yet, nor what the ending they've now got actually means. What Jones needed to have done was to have stuck with them long enough for them to finish reasoning their way from point E to point G.

I find that I am with Polly all through her summation of the circumstances which have defined their relationship to the present. But her reasoning has ended in a blind alley. (Very much as her opponent, the deathless Laurel intended.) Then, having reasoned herself into this impasse, she, and the whole book, suddenly take a sidestep into a bog of imaginative wordplay, and that is what, to me, rings false. This is an easy mistake for Polly to have made, considering Thomas's and her background. But I still think she is mistaken. The reader, however, blindly accepts that Polly's estimation of the present circumstances is correct — because, up to that point, Polly's estimations have always *been* correct in such matters.

But there is no longer any real guarantee that Polly is correct about their situation, as it stands, *now*. And I think that, this time, Polly's estimation of circumstances is not correct. And the reason that Polly's viewpoint is no longer necessarily correct is because Laurel has finished with her. Polly's uncanny accuracy in such matters, to date, has almost entirely been due to *Laurel*.

This last statement needs further explanation. Polly, in her character of Hero (of Tan Coul's band), has the magical gift of "knowing" things. Of knowing what is real, of knowing what is needed. And why does Hero have this gift? Why, because Thomas





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Lynn has declared it to be so! (Before witnesses, in Bristol.)

In accordance with Laurel's "gift" to Thomas, whatever Thomas Lynn states, is true. Or, rather, it becomes true and comes back to bite him. In this case, what Thomas proclaimed became true and went on to bite Laurel.

Perhaps the question is more properly "why did Thomas ever say such a thing in the first place?"

Obviously, because it appeared, to him, to be nothing less than the case. Yes, Polly is a perceptive child, but ever since he pulled Polly out of the reading of Laurel's bogus will, at Sebastian's mother's funeral Polly has come up with tales which (from where he is standing) have a unnerving habit of *becoming* true.

In this he is misled. He seems, at that point, not to have realized that Polly's tales only come true when he has *agreed* to them. And, where "heroes' business" is concerned, she and Thomas do seem to have stayed on what is remarkably close to the same wavelength throughout their association. (Polly was able to recognize and pick out the other heroes of his band from a photograph, after all.) But Thomas has very actively entered into this game, and without his willing participation, it would have remained no more than a game. Polly's "epic," written at age 14, Thomas summarily dismissed as sentimental rubbish, with the result that almost nothing of that work of Polly's imagination ever broke through into Here Now.

Mind you, I am not speaking of the ancient cycle in which Thomas is already trapped when Polly meets him. This is the cycle to which Laurel and the King are bound. Polly and Thomas have no control over it. (Not even Laurel and the King have much in the way of control over that cycle.) But the "hero

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tales" were Polly and Thomas's own creation between them. And over those creations their influence is every bit as great, if rather inexpert, as that which Laurel and Morton Leroy have over Thomas and Polly in turn.\*\*

As a side note; Does it occur to anyone other than me that the deathless Laurel is operating under considerable limitations? Within her range, true, she is supremely powerful. (She is also pitilessly resourceful whenever her power, or the cycle is threatened.) But her range is extremely narrow. And has it occurred to anyone else out there, just how small the area is that she hunts in? The characters in this story are only those persons unlucky enough to actually live near Hunsdon House, or to stumble directly into her path.

And, even more importantly, she is not at all imaginative, herself. Indeed, considering her "gifts," to True Thomas — to be unable to speak anything but the truth, and to Thomas Lynn — to have anything he says become true and pursue him — the indication seems to be that Laurel places about the same value upon the works of human imagination as the most rabid of fundies. (Of course, there's a strong argument to be made that Laurel *is* the most rabid of fundies — and with good reason!) Laurel clearly doesn't approve of any of her subordinates having ideas. Indeed, this disapproval may have some bearing upon her preference for preying primarily upon musicians. Music — instrumental music, that is, and Laurel's offerings tend to be instrumentalists — doesn't really deal in ideas, it deals in emotions.

And what can we say about Laurel's chosen offerings? Leslie, who seems very much in the fine, traditional, feckless mode, although witty, can hardly be accused of any overabundance



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of ideas. His father, at least, had just enough smarts (and a wife and a child, of whom he was fond) to eventually realize what was what and haggle his way out. Thomas was a good deal too young and — probably — hormone-ridden to have any idea of what he was being pulled into when Laurel got her hands on him in exchange for his brother. (He was all of, what? Sixteen?) And he's been struggling to get out from under her rule since before the funeral, nearly ten years before the story's cumulation.

Moreover, it never occurs to Laurel to suspect that any of her offerings' actions could actually pose a danger to the cycle. After all, once they have come into her possession, they do not ever escape, unless she agrees to it, and she makes the laws that they live by from the point at which they come under her rule.

Polly — thanks to her secondhand gift — instinctively figures things out just in time. But she never is granted the luxury of enough time to stop and ponder the implications of what she has only just realized. She only grasps that, where Janet could save Tam Lin merely by holding on to him, if Thomas is to be saved, she, Polly, must cut him loose to save himself. What Polly has only dimly realized — because she hasn't yet had the time or the opportunity to think about it — is that once Laurel's rules betray her, she *changes* them.

The moment that Morton Leroy spins off into the abyss, all bets are off. The rules to which we have all been constrained throughout the story, no longer apply. Or, at least, they no longer apply to Tom and Polly. Laurel has withdrawn her gifts. Thomas no longer creates the truth by declaring it, and Polly no longer invariably "knows" what is real. (Laurel, of course, is perfectly capable of letting Polly continue to believe that she

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does, thereby leading Polly to cheat herself all over again.)

Polly also hasn't quite realized that Thomas is now safe from Laurel, without needing any further action or inactions on her part. Or, at any rate, he is now safe from anything Laurel might have thrown at him, because she no longer will. He no longer exists to her. Laurel will no longer protect him, either. Now that Tom's life is no longer sacrosanct, (being no longer required by her) his skill at the wheel may see him lying dead on the M5 before another month is out.

It is entirely appropriate to the structure of the story that Morton Leroy brings about his own downfall by not letting Laurel's safeguards take care of matters themselves. He has a very up close and personal interest in Thomas Lynn's life. But, where Laurel is content to saddle Thomas with one of her "gifts" and let him off his leash until she chooses to whistle him back to heel, Leroy can't resist keeping tabs on him. ("In Laurel's name," he implies, which / say is a fib.) So when he sees Laurel's "gift" go into action, he freaks out. (Does it occur to anyone that Morton Leroy also has a problem dealing with the workings of human imagination?) The only thing Leroy can think of to do is to try to end the association between Thomas and Polly, and it is these attempts that provoke much of the book's chain of incidents, cumulating in Leroy's final effort to murder Polly at the Middleton Fair.

This final act of meddling results in sufficient injury to Thomas (thereby breaking Laurel's law) to enable Thomas to force the issue — by invoking the incident — into bringing Leroy and himself face-to-face in a form of duel arcane, rather than helplessly going out as the appointed sacrifice. A duel is



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not a sacrifice, for all that the end result of both is the paying of the tiend. The laws governing duels are not at all the same. From that point, it is up to Thomas to save himself, if he can, and before he can do so, he must surrender to Laurel all of the gifts which she has given him. And Polly's instinctive arcane "knowledge" is one of those gifts.

Leroy's maneuverings were nearly all made without Laurel's knowledge, and certainly without her approval. The one fatal possibility, so far as he was concerned, was that Laurel might discover his actions. When Polly's growing awareness of Thomas's true situation brings her to the point of overreaching herself, (egged on by Sebastian) and taking the battle into Laurel's camp, she is utterly routed. Fortunately for Leroy, Laurel gives Polly no opportunity to speak of his involvement. Laurel simply, ruthlessly, and efficiently manipulates Polly into cheating herself, and dismisses her. Laurel seems to have been willing enough to let Leroy do the final mopping up afterwards, which he did, no doubt with outstanding gratitude, leaving as little trace of his interference as possible. ("Edited by L. Perry," indeed!)

If Morton Leroy had left things alone, Thomas might well have been lost, Polly or no Polly. For that matter, if things had been left as Laurel arranged them from the point of routing Polly, Thomas would very likely have paid the tiend without further argument. But Morton Leroy had taken his son Sebastian (for whom he has some genuine feelings) into his confidence. Sebastian, all too aware of his own value as a future pawn, and, seeing the effect Polly has had on his father's peace of mind, rounds her up and drags her back into the circle to serve as his own ace in the hole. Leroy, having, as stated above,



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some genuine feeling for Sebastian, is actually quite pleased by this show of resourcefulness. Laurel, on the other hand, is furious. It makes it impossible for her to fully uphold her end of the "bargain" with Polly; i.e., that Polly would forget Tom if Laurel would leave her alone. Laurel is a twisty opponent, but she will keep her bargains to the letter.

Thanks to all of this meddling, Polly's buried memories begin to bump up against their imposed restraints, and her gift starts to work itself loose from the constraints laid upon it. And not a moment too soon. (One really wonders how Leroy had the seriously bad judgment which allowed Polly to retain possession of that book, however much edited. Perhaps this was a part of the same impulse to brag which unwisely led him to taunt her by showing himself during the episode in Bristol.)

The deathless Laurel, however, continues to piously follow the laws into which she herself is securely bound. In this cycle, Leroy has paid the tiend himself. Therefore, Thomas is now free. Insofar as I can decipher, Thomas is free of Laurel forever. (In the ballad of Tam Lin, Tam Lin was successfully claimed by Janet, and belonged to Janet at the end of the song. Thomas Lynn, on the other hand, having saved himself, now belongs to himself.) Even under the somewhat muddled understanding of the rules which Polly has been operating under, Thomas is free for the next nine years.

In that regard, we have from Laurel's own lips that — since Sebastian is young — she may not even be needing lightweight Leslie. Nine years hence she certainly will need no more than an average offering, whether that be Leslie or Sebastian. Thomas Lynn's great strength (and corresponding unruliness)





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was considered to be necessary for the renewal of a king whose life force had gone without replacement for a whole generation. It will not be required by a King who is ten years Thomas Lynn's junior. In nine years more, Leslie, (if Laurel so decides, and who she already holds) will do quite nicely. Beyond that cycle, well, Laurel has very strict standards to which she adheres when choosing her offerings. She wants them young, handsome, fair rather than dark — if given a choice in the matter — and she prefers them musical. Can anyone conceive of Laurel having the slightest interest in a Thomas Lynn who has reached the age of 50-something?



No, I think that Polly and Thomas have a far more difficult row to hoe ahead of them than can be found in any sophomoric word-games. They have yet to discover whether either of them actually still exists outside of Laurel's domain. And how much of who the person that either one of them believes they are is real.

They also have a rather nasty piece of unfinished business standing between them. Polly is quite right in that respect. A grown man who attaches himself to a lonely child and wraps her life around his own to save himself has done nothing laudable. Tom is no pedophile, and has tried very hard not to let her be harmed by the association, which does certainly count in his favor. In that regard, in even the most cursory comparison with the original Tam Lin, he shines as a paragon of virtue — again, the amoral Leslie is far more in the traditional mode. But even in the face of clear evidence that she was being harmed, he was not able to give her up of his own volition. Plus, he has had



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enormous influence on her development, and it is yet to be seen if this has been ultimately for the good.

Polly, on her side, and due entirely to their association, has grown to depend upon always "knowing" what is true, and of always being right, and does not realize that this confidence is no longer warranted. Which suggests that she may be riding for a jarring fall. Those double memories which plague her are unlikely to be easy to adjust to living with, either.

For that matter, how long is it going to take Thomas to adjust to the fact that flights of fancy on his part will no longer boil up from under some rock and come after him? Will he even live long enough to do so, now that Laurel's protection has been withdrawn? Physical recklessness has, to this point, been more of a practice with him than even the most elementary forms of caution. Polly and Thomas each have to move beyond living in Laurel's shadow, by her laws, and dependent upon her gifts. They have not ever done so. It is a valid question to ask whether either of them is ultimately going to be able to survive in Here Now, let alone thrive and prosper.

In fact, they have a task of truly heroic proportions set ahead of them. These two exceptional people must learn what it is to live in Here Now, where exceptions are rarely made, and to live here upon the same terms as everyone else. They can no longer escape into Nowhere, even briefly. That green, pleasant road is closed to them, forever. If the wonder and adventure which has been so much a factor in their association, are necessary ingredients to their continued enjoyment of each other's company, they must now learn to provide their own.

They must also learn to relate to each other as two adults.





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They have never had to do that, either. And that is actually the easy part. The big danger, as we can readily see, is that “reality,” as the world counts it, has had painfully little to do with any of their interaction to date, and they are essentially starting out from considerably less than zero. They’ve got their work cut out for them. And, frankly, I don’t know whether the two of them are up to it. Perhaps it is just as well that Polly has shown herself willing to face the prospect of giving Thomas up forever. She may yet have to.



Back in '85, when the book first came out, It sparked a good deal of discussion among my local circle. Some degree of dissatisfaction with the ending as it stands seemed to be universal. The overall feeling was that the situation was too serious to be wriggled out of with no more than the aforementioned sophomoric word game.

At least one of my friends, however, was dissatisfied on a far more easily accessible level. She was highly offended that, in the resolution, there was no punishment dealt out to Laurel. This seems an odd concept, to be sure, particularly considering who and what Laurel *is*, but that’s what really bugged her. Eventually I commented that having to go on *being* Laurel to the end of time might just about qualify.

All this being said, I will have to admit that I heartily dislike the ballad of Tam Lin — which no doubt shades my own perception of the story. (My viewpoint largely stems from the conviction that two wrongs do not make a right.) I have little respect for the characters in the ballad and do not understand



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the fascination that it seems to have for literary types. Still, over the past 20+ years a number of different retellings have been spun off from it, and some of these have been very good stories indeed. And ‘FIRE & HEMLOCK’ is one of the best of them. For my own part, and from another direction, I’ve also always rather admired the conclusion (if nothing more) of Joan Vinge’s interpretation of this particular source material.

In that iteration, after all the shouting is over, what Janet discovers that she has won by all her efforts is — a young knight. Exactly like all the ones back in her father’s Hall. Any one of whom she might have had for the asking.

No, I’d say that the Fair Folk have never shown to any disadvantage in dealings with cold irony.

But, I will also have to say that, given the narrowness of the deathless Laurel’s hunting range, if Polly and Thomas do get together, and do somehow manage to make a go of it, it might be just as well for the two of them to consider immigrating to Canada.

Or to hope that they will be blessed only with daughters.



**\*\*As a postscript to the above article;** Several years afterwards, in one of the periodic discussions of this work on the Diana Wynne Jones listgroup, one of the other members pointed out the subtle detail which in all my re-readings, I had consistently missed. And which demonstrates just how thoroughly Laurel’s tweaking of the rules for that duel had — horrifyingly — balanced the odds in Leroy’s favor.

In Laurel’s exhortation, she informs Thomas that in the combat he may use anything which is truly his. She then





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assures Leroy of his right to use the exact equivalent to whatever Thomas uses in return. The little sting in the tail of that particular setup would have destroyed Thomas, had Polly not figured out her task and rejected him utterly. (Along with the long-term loan of her own fairy “gift.” Thus rendering unto Laurel that which was rightfully Laurel’s.)

For if Polly had allowed Thomas to use her as a weapon in his battle, then Morton Leroy would have been permitted to call upon Laurel herself in his own defense.

And Thomas fully intended to use Polly. They came *that* close to disaster.

Indeed, the equivalency between Polly and Laurel was so exact that by cutting Thomas and his gifts loose and shoving him away to face his enemy on his own, Polly managed to also break Leroy’s connections to Laurel. The result of this severing was immediate, Leroy, in his weakened state, was no match to Thomas, and the abyss claimed him. In the aftermath of this confrontation, it is small wonder that Polly does not immediately realize that although she was absolutely required to shove Thomas away to save him, she is not required to continue shoving him away to keep him safe. He is finally his own man. He is free.

He is free to choose *her*.



## So, What’s “Literature”? Anyway?

This particular essay, in addition to a couple of others, were originally a part of a sub-collection among the Pottermore essays entitled ‘Harry Potter & the Reader’. That sub-collection was eliminated a number of years ago. Most of those subjects had a lot more to do with books and reading (or Fandom) than they did with Harry Potter specifically.

You can expect to encounter a number of examples taken from the HP series, in any of them however.



### Regarding “Literature”:

Every once and a while someone on an HP board would bring up the rather touchy subject of whether or not the Harry Potter series qualifies as “Literature”. This often sparked a lively debate.

Often enough the proceedings are further enlivened when someone decides to chime in on the matter with the rather fretful query as to why children’s fiction is “never” regarded as “serious” literature. (Which presupposes that adults’ fiction automatically is — which is obviously not the case.) The following, obviously, is my own take on the subject.

This second issue tends to fluctuate with the social perception of childhood. In some eras children’s literature is regarded as more deeply “true” than the general run of (adult) mainstream fiction. And certainly more true than mainstream “popular” fiction of the “best-seller” variety. Unfortunately this is not, at the moment, quite one of those eras.

I think the real sticking point in many people’s minds is that, at ALL times, there is little respect for genre fiction, and there





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is a strong tendency for the uninformed and unreflective to misperceive childrens' fiction as being a genre. Which of course it is not — although the divisions between genres in childrens' literature are thinner and more permeable than they are in books written for the adult market.

Other, even more obviously ignorant and unreflective persons have already decided that children's literature is just all simple exercises for inexpert readers and consequently beneath their notice. These are the people most likely to be blindsided when they do read a "children's" book as a result of a major publicity buzz and are astonished at how engaging it is. There are a lot of current Harry Potter fans who fall into this category. One is led to suspect (wrongly or not) that these people must have never been avid readers when they were children. Otherwise they'd know better.

As stated above; in children's fiction the various genres are not so distinct and well-defined (and definitely not as specialized) as they are in fiction marketed to adults. And, for that matter, so far as the genre barrier goes, that barrier is oh-but-definitely real. You are several hundred percent more likely to find a children's novel classified as "literature" than, say, a murder mystery.

Certainly, if you go hunting, you will find recognizable mysteries, fantasy, science fiction, westerns, horror and even a rudimentary level of romance in the children's section of the bookshop, or the library. But you will generally find them all lumped together in a general fiction area, rather than culled out and shelved in their own little ghettos — as is the case in the library's adult fiction section; so the busy adults can go directly



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to what type of story they have already decided that want to read, grab it and not have to ferret it out from the "sea of books".

But, as has been pointed out elsewhere, by other people, "literary" fiction *itself* is a highly specialized genre. Still, it must be obvious that comparatively little of the published adult fiction available on the shelves of either bookshop or library was deliberately written to any kind of an objective "literary" standard (whatever that is).

Actually, for those who might be interested in the subject; I would like to recommend to those who might enjoy an examination of the hijacking of the tradition of reading matter that people wanted to read, and replacing it with "literature" according to the oh-so-narrow definitions of the term as it was developed over the 20th century, may I direct you to an essay by a gentleman by the name of Tom Simon, of Bondwine Books:

<https://bondwine.com/2013/02/22/why-are-dragons-afraid-of-americans>

You may need to google it from the title. Since I first posted the link on Red Hen it has periodically stopped working, although the essay is still there and findable via search.

Even if you do not agree with Mr Simon, it is well worth reading for the wit and the entertainment value. A number of Mr Simon's essays also exist in collections available from amazon.com.

Occasionally, but rarely, a novel that is written to this kind of "standard" will manage by some fluke to hit the best seller list and everybody makes a big fuss over it when that happens. I think 'THE FRENCH LIEUTENANT'S WOMAN' and 'THE HANDMAID'S TALE' were a couple of such. I pay too little attention to mainstream fiction to be able to recall any others off the top of my head.





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And just how often does anyone remember that '1984' or 'BRAVE NEW WORLD' (or, for that matter, 'THE HANDMAID'S TALE') can be legitimately defined as science fiction? Even academia seems determined to try to represent them as examples of "social satire." Satire, apparently is much more respectable than SF, being designated as a style, rather than a genre.



Which raises the question of whether the current description of "young adult" sometimes applied to various novels marketed to parents and young people is merely a marketing category or actually a genre in its own right. This is a comparatively recent debate, for the designation of YA itself is quite recent. As little as 40 or 50 years ago, hardly anyone had ever heard of YA. It was still a budding marketing term. And in its absence, despite a little pre-existing ghetto of what were designated as "teen" novels, any distinction of the divisions within the broad field of books designed to be marketed to young people were more likely to be dependent upon such issues as vocabulary levels, or reading skills, or whether they were picture books as opposed to chapter books.

The following extract is from a posting, several years ago, on the DWJ Listgroup, a group dedicated to the work of the late Diana Wynne Jones made by a reader named Melissa Proffitt. This group has a history of periodically taking this particular issue out and running it around the block a few times. Ms Proffitt's contention was that a YA book is more about the experience of "being," or functioning as a young adult, than that of being a child. The treatment of its subject and themes are consequently less whimsical and far less subject to flights of fancy than a book on



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the same subject intended for children:

*"When people study children's or YA lit, they are referring to a kind of literature that ironically has little to do with the age of the reader. In other words, calling a book "young adult" is more like calling a book a "fantasy" or a "Western." It is absolutely **NOT** proscriptive, except where insecure people think they need to bolster their self-esteem by not reading "kiddie books." Such people deserve their fate.*

*There are certain characteristics usually associated with a young adult book. The main one is erroneously assumed to be "age of protagonist." This is true, but not a given; 'To Kill a Mockingbird' is not a children's book, and neither is 'Ender's Game' regardless of how old the narrator/protagonist is. Notice that I haven't said anything about whether or not children could read such books; that's irrelevant to this classification.*

*Having talked with others who actually do study this stuff (one of whom is the English department chair at BYU, and I strenuously disagree with a lot of his assumptions, but he is at least current on the literature) this is a partial list of those characteristics, not in any particular order of importance:*

- 1 Singularity of plot line
- 2 Age of protagonist
- 3 Well-defined themes
- 4 Importance of character development, particularly growing up or learning to change
- 5 Relative simplicity of prose style — **NOT** overly simplistic
- 6 Age-appropriate content (not really very important, given that nobody agrees on what "appropriate" for an age means; but many mainstream YA books feature teenagers in typical (or atypical) home and school situations)





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*The real point is that in calling something a young adult book, or a children's book, you're really not commenting on the \*appropriateness\* of the book for any one age group. Particularly since most of us are well out of our teens and yet we're all still devoted to DWJ."*

With an actual list in front of us it is easy enough to see that in most respects Rowling's story of Harry Potter does appear to qualify as falling within the definition of YA novels. I would tend to question the assumption of the "singularity of plotline," however, as well as the matter of character development, growth, or change. But there is nothing about either this list or this definition which would preclude the possibility of the work one day being classified as literature.

Which opens up the can of worms on the question of just what is meant by the term; "Literature."



In general, and in the long run, "literature" is a label which gets applied to something that has "stood the test of time" or, more bluntly, hasn't sunk without a trace in ten or twenty years. So it is still too early to make any sort of predictions on the matter insofar as it relates to Harry Potter.

Particularly given my contention, stated across the rest of this collection, that in the end Rowling failed to satisfactorily pull off what she had undertaken.

"Literature" boiled down to its essentials (or maybe glue) seems to be defined as those works which have enough substance to withstand and endure both the vagaries of the popular market, and subjection to the "critical process"

And every one of these considerations depends a good



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deal more upon the work's commercial viability than anyone involved really wants to admit.

Think of it as an endurance triathlon.

First: the work has to be able to continue to attract readers whether the popular market is hot or not. Right off the top; this is where most 'best sellers' fail to make the cut. A high percentage of these works are marketing phenomena only; they have just enough substance to support one major sales campaign and make enough money for their publishing houses to return their investment. The minute the media hoop-la ceases the whole vehicle loses steam, grinds to a halt, and eventually collapses.

The rare book which continues to sell after its publishers can no longer be bothered to promote it has passed the first step toward being ultimately recognized as Literature. You will notice that most of the works which have been awarded this accolade have rarely been out of print. Their popular demand has remained high enough to make it worth their publishers' while to continue producing new editions. Without the expense of sustained publicity.

This pays increased dividends for the publishers after a work has survived long enough to enter the public domain; when it becomes possible for any publishing house to produce an edition of the text without fear of litigation by rival houses or the necessity to pay royalties to the authors or their estates. This is one reason why most of the recognized "Literature" you have had pushed at you in school is by dead people from at least a generation or several ago.

With the most recent changes in copyright laws (designed to extend the ownership of such properties as media figures used





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as corporate identification for such companies as, say, Disney) it is expected that in the future it may be a good deal harder for a work of fiction to survive as a viable commercial property long enough to ever reach public domain and benefit from that state. It is uncertain what the effect of the hitherto unexamined or analyzed entry of ePublishing into the equation is going to be, either. No new work that has been introduced first in an ePublished edition has survived long enough to be even remotely viable for evaluation of its potential as literature yet. It is quite likely that the essentially ephemeral nature of ePublished works is going to be held against them, rendering them into the equivalent of pulp fiction, regardless of individual merit. It is much too early to assume that ePublishing is necessarily going to prove a game-changer in this particular segment of the applications of commerce upon literature. It will certainly not uncouple the two. Not in my lifetime, anyway.

Second: There has to be enough substance to the story, or the style of the telling of it, to generate a genuine interest in the reader in the motivations and conditions/situations represented in the story or, the technique through which the story is conveyed. This includes the characters, and, in the case of non-mainstream settings, the specific world-crafting also. What this factor comes down to is that there will be people subjecting it to close examination, and it has to be able to stand up to this examination without falling completely apart.

Authors, of course, are fallible; such examinations generally do uncover details that do not hold up to close scrutiny. But if the work resonates deeply enough within its times or the human condition this will only add to the debate. All works which are

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awarded the status of Literature have survived this debate, and have continued to reward subsequent examinations of theme and structure well after the "story" is no longer fresh. It is usually a considerable bonus if the work can reward examination on stylistic grounds as well.

This is the stage at which a work draws the attention of academia. To do so does not automatically transmute a work of fiction into "Literature". A close examination of popular culture is also fair game for academia. Particularly in the context of comparisons with other works of popular culture, or in a dissection of what exactly is the cause of the popularity, and an identification and exploration of the universal themes upon which it draws.

Still, a work which is subjected to this attention may or may not become a candidate for inclusion into the standard academic curricula for that generation, and if so may be retained as such for future generations. In the process of a work's qualifying as "Literature" it is of course almost essential for this to take place.

The primary deciding factor of a work's viability in this regard tends to be the reliability of the text continuing to remain available. Which throws us right back to our first consideration, above. The market.

A publishing house is not going to keep a book in print merely because some teacher in some school might like to teach a class on it sometime this year. Teachers teach classes on works which are already out there where their prospective students will readily be able to get their hands on them. Ergo; stage two depends upon a work's successfully traversing stage one





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Which reminds us that we also need to draw a distinction between "Literature" and a work which is merely regarded as a "Classic."

Third: A "Classic" and a work of "Literature" are not necessarily the same thing. But they frequently tend to occupy the same space. And while comparatively few examples of genre fiction have officially made the cut as Literature, rather a lot of them have been awarded the cachet of being regarded as Classics.

And, for some reason, to qualify as a Classic is a much more attainable goal if the work *has* originally or for an extended period of time been marketed as a work for children.

'ROBINSON CARUSOE' is an undisputed work of Literature. Is it a children's book? Well, certainly not in its original iteration. But has it been regarded as a children's story? Yes, it has. Still is, too. 'PILGRIM'S PROGRESS'? Yup. May have to have been taken apart, retold, and heavily illustrated to be made palatable for modern children, but it was certainly regarded as children's fare in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

What about more recent works that were originally intended for children?

Okay then: 'TREASURE ISLAND' is another Classic. Is it also a work of Literature? Yes. It is. What about 'ALICE IN WONDERLAND'? Yup. No question about that. Well, okay, what about Anne McCaffery's Pern stories? The Harper Hall ones? They are at the very least YA novels. Are they Literature? Er, well...

Only a handful of McCaffery's total output of novels were marketed as children's, or, rather, YA stories, but they've stayed in print. People continue to buy them. They have been being read for the past 30 years. People discuss them. They show up in college English classes. Are they Literature?



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Well, maybe. Someday. It's too soon really to tell. Even if they are not, they are certainly classic representations of a particular kind of science fiction — or science fantasy — of the late 20th century. They are going to be referenced in any overview of the work of the period for that genre. But I can't guarantee that they will ever be regarded as Literature.

But McCaffery is a living author (well, she was when I wrote this essay, and I don't feel like hunting for another example), you tell me.

Well, okay then. What about the works of Georgette Heyer? Heyer died in 1974. That's nearly 50 years ago. She virtually invented the sub-genre of the "Regency romance" and much of her work is still in print, or is still being periodically reprinted. I don't think the benefits of public domain status have kicked in for any of it yet, so we are seeing publishing houses that still have to get permission to reprint these works and pay someone for the privilege to do so. The books are also tame enough to be read by teenagers, and even sub-teens without anyone batting an eye, even if they aren't, strictly speaking, children's stories. Is it Literature?

Well... I doubt it. But it is certainly closing in on "classic" status, and once it is public domain it could start gaining a whole new head of steam which would carry it through another couple of generations. And if Academia decided to adopt it...?

However; regardless of how "classic" they may be, Heyer's work is still regarded as "mere" genre fiction, as is McCaffery's. And finding genre fiction which has been awarded the cachet of being enshrined as Literature is as scarce as hen's teeth. The "genre barrier" is real.

However; it may only be real because literary "genres" are themselves a comparatively recent innovation. The "novel"





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itself is generally regarded as an invention of the 18th century. Recognizable genres are far more recent yet. And the earliest recognizable genre that comes to mind, the "gothic," is not one with a particularly high reputation. Its inherent tendency to take everything to quite ludicrous extremes, and wallow in them, works very much against attempts to award it any status as literature — although there are certainly ample examples of gothic novels which have been awarded Literature status which fly the flag, unashamed.

Detective stories were invented not much later, although the early examples appear to have been rare enough to simply get lost in the crowd. But Science Fiction? Modern Fantasy (as opposed to the endless retellings of folklore)? Those didn't show up until near the end of the 19th century. It's entirely possible that the issue of genre fiction is that it simply hasn't had enough time to establish itself as Literature. But the tendency of genre fiction to be plot-driven rather than character-driven works very much against it. Even in genres where you would expect the story to be weighted towards a character-driven telling, the characters are often modified for the purpose of being masks for the reader to assume, rather than individuals to observe.

In this regard, Rowling, as a writer of fantasy (although for years she accepted that mantle grudgingly, and with a remarkable lack of graciousness) is exceedingly fortunate that her work is marketed as children's fiction. Because I can guarantee you that 5 out of 6 works of fantasy which have made the cut over the past 150 years are ones that were originally marketed to children. And if you can name six off the top of your head you will be doing better than I can.



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Ergo: for at least the foreseeable future, as the third "requirement," to qualify as Literature, a work must outlive, or otherwise shed its original associations with any recognized form of genre fiction.



So, do I think that the Potter series will eventually make the cut as Literature?

Well, I suppose it's not absolutely impossible, however unlikely it may seem at the moment. Up to the release of DHs, the series had most of the necessary groundwork in place. But there is no dodging the fact that whole back half of the series did not live up to the expectations which had been raised by the opening half. And the final book's all but total lack of competent editing completely sank whatever good elements were present in it (and to much regret, one must admit that there were some. The sheer waste is painful). The utter confusion of focus of the final book is probably another kiss of death where academe is concerned. And that is a hurdle which I do not think that the process can readily bypass. Upon the whole, my verdict is, no. But I've only been right about one time out of three at best, so I suppose history will see.

We'll just have to see how well the series keeps selling a decade or two farther down the track, once the publishers, having made their bundle, can no longer be bothered to promote it. Apart from the total failure of the final book, the lack of a strong, individual literary "style" is the series's biggest drawback as far as I can see. That won't do it any favors in the groves of academe, either. And it just plain doesn't have that.





## So, What's "Literature," Anyway?

And it never will.

But, even failing that, despite the shoddy editing and scant attention to any number of fine points of continuity, it is still a damned strong performance for what is, after all, a "first published work" by a new author. But I'm certainly not going to predict that it will ultimately make the cut. I'd estimate that it is going to take another 40–60 years at least before the other shoe drops on that issue. And I'll be long gone by that time.

But, if you ask me whether Harry Potter will become an enduring classic?

That's another pair of sleeves, altogether.

For one thing, the public has a longer memory than it is often given credit for. The Harry Potter series was the point at which a series of (childrens'!) books made the transition into a major media event. There had been blockbuster book releases before this. With blockbuster movies based upon them. But perhaps for the first time, it was all happening in an electronic age, complete with a functioning internet, all more or less concurrently, and it was sustained over the course of more than a decade. There is no way that the public is going to soon forget the media circus which was set off by this series of books.

But that in itself will not instantly turn the books into either Literature, nor will it award them the accolade of being regarded as classics. Or, at least not in any manner other than the sort of loose talk which prevails in the marketplace. A great many movies are made from books which are neither classics nor Literature.

Well, all right. Let's step back a bit. The Narnia books are certainly regarded as classics. They are regarded as Literature,

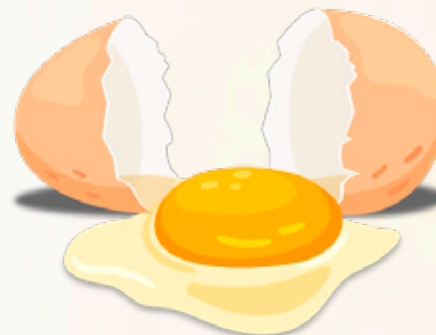
## So, What's "Literature," Anyway?

too, in many circles. Although that last designation is largely dependent upon Lewis's reputation as a writer in other fields than that of childrens' stories, which is an advantage that Rowling does not yet share. How long have we had the Narnia books on hand?

'THE LAST BATTLE', the final (and least successful) book of the Narnia series, was released in 1956. That's over 60 years ago. I would imagine that the Narnia series had been awarded its accolade as a classic some time ago. But it is uncertain just precisely when. There is no specific point at which one can reliably say that; "Oh, it's been in print for 42 years. I guess it qualifies as a classic now."

Consequently, we will probably not have to wait all the way to the year 2057 before it will be clear whether or not Rowling's "first major work" has made the cut.

All I can say with any certainty, is that it will outlast me.





## The Doorstop Effect

This particular essay was not a part of the now deleted subcollection of 'Harry Potter and the Reader', but it follows rather closely on to the explorations regarding the essay of; 'So, Just What is "Literature", Anyway? which very much was.



### Regarding "Doorstop" Novels:

**T**he original version of this essay was an online posting in response to one of the intermittent discussions concerning fanfiction and fandom itself that cropped up on one of my Harry Potter boards. It is actually more applicable to fanfiction in general, or, really, the field of professional publishing than it is to Harry Potter fandom, so I've spun it off here. It still has at least one of its original Potterite references, however.

The post which originally sparked this particular essay, iirc, was a complaint about fanfics which were too long to read in one sitting. Which is to say, a large percentage of them. The problem is exacerbated by the fact that many of these "longfics" are produced by people who are still in the process of learning their craft, often resulting in disjointed or pointless rambles. It is not difficult to see where the tendency to produce longfics comes from, because anyone who has ever ventured into a bookstore in the past decade is given the impression that if you cannot use it for a doorstop when you've finished it, it isn't "properly" a novel at all. There are very few "slim volumes" to be found in the fiction sections of bookshops today. This was not always the case. But In current practice, as the later-20th century era progressed, the earlier standard of "slim volumes" appears to have



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become very much the exception rather than the rule.

Anyone who has ever taken an English class which gave an overview of the inception of the fictional format known as the Novel can tell you; novels were monumental works published in multiple volumes from their inception. 'CLARISSA HARLOW' by Samuel Richardson — who is sometimes credited as having invented the novel format — remains one of the longest works in the English language. And anyone who has ever suffered through various 19th century works under the direction of their local school district will concur that doorstop novels are no new innovation of the late 20th century.

The major paradigm shift in such matters does seem to have taken place during the 19th century, however. At the beginning of that century, virtually all novels were published in sets of multiple "slim volumes." Which could be purchased either separately, or as the set. By the end of the century most, even if not yet all novels, were published complete, in a single edition. One can only assume that the reasons for this change in marketing format were dictated by the improvements in printing and binding technology, and a change in the economy which meant that there was a wider range of potential consumers who could afford to purchase an entire work in one go. Literacy was also more widespread by the end of the century, leading to a larger market being available to support the publishing industry.

People also were purchasing books for a rather different reason at the end of the century than they had at the opening of it. The average person did not casually buy books at the opening of the 19th century. A book was an investment, and one seldom bought books unless one had an actual library, or at





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least a private collection, to maintain. Reading purely for entertainment had been around for a respectable length of time, certainly, but the novel itself was a comparatively recent development. The traditional focus of recreational reading was the “Journal” or in modern parlance, the magazine. And, indeed, at that time a staple item on the lists of printers were bound editions of popular Journals covering a given period.

At the beginning of the century, the primary actual purchasers of the new “novels” were the subscription libraries; private lending libraries which were organizations to which the readers might, for a fee, subscribe and be entitled to borrow the works owned by the Library without being put to the considerable expense of purchasing them themselves on spec. Which in the economy of the day was not a minor consideration. In 1810 a book was a luxury item, not an item for casual purchase. One actually purchased one’s own set of a novel only after having read the work and decided that it was worthy to be added to one’s personal collection.

In some cases however, and more often as time went by, the purchaser was already familiar with the work from having already read it in its original serialized form, as a work in progress (much like fanfic). Indeed, Journals frequently included works of fiction presented as a serial. Richardson’s earliest work had been originally issued as such and the names of such “Literary Lions” of the 19th century as Chas. Dickens became household words on the strength of exactly that sort of exposure. Upon completion, such works were reissued in a bound edition, for the convenience of readers who did not wish to have to reread by hunting through several months, or even years worth of journals.



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Over the 19th century, as ever more people were elevated to the middle classes — who prided themselves upon their “culture” — and, even more importantly, by the spread of literacy throughout the working classes, a popular serial became a major draw for a publication, and it was in the publishers’ interest to draw such stories out for as long as possible. This is one of the primary reasons that it is widely known that the authors of serialized stories were paid by the length of the work they produced. This virtually ensured the creation of “doorstops”. Many modern readers shun 19th century novels, despite their virtues, because of the outrageous levels of “padding” which they detect in their manner of storytelling.

But the average 19th century reader wanted it that way. The story was not competing with the radio or television for the hearts and minds of its readers. In those days, in the absence of an actual social event, what it was competing with were primarily chores. Or gossip. And in order to gossip in the evening with anyone outside one’s own family one generally needs to leave one’s home, and for a middle-class individual, particularly a female, neither the evening streets nor the open countryside were regarded as safe after dark. Often with good reason. Immuring an entire class of women and children inside their own homes once the sun is down produces an almost literally “captive audience” for any commercial purveyors of fiction.

And the telephone wasn’t around yet, either. (Or, once it was around, the person you wanted to talk to wasn’t necessarily on it, and the line wasn’t private in any case.)

Consequently, reading, which we still tend to regard as a solitary activity, today, became, for many middle-class readers of





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the 19th century, a family activity with one family member reading the story aloud to the rest of the family. And taking turns to do so. To read aloud well was a valued social accomplishment, and one which was actively pursued, even if it wasn't one of the accomplishments that conveyed additional status by means of its having to be purchased by the hiring of a dedicated tutor.

And it wasn't only within families that reading aloud was a common practice. Any fairly quiet social gathering might include a stint of reading aloud. Particularly those which were undertaken for another primary stated purpose such as a ladies' sewing circle. From which we can conclude that there is nothing new about the concept of audio books.

A few levels down the social scale; the "penny dreadfuls" were the primary source of low cost reading over this period. And most of the work produced in them was aimed directly at the tastes of the unsophisticated. The middle-class disdain for these publications was not undeserved. Everything about them was cheap, and generally, shoddy. But their very existence highlighted the fact that there was a booming market for cheap reading material out there, and if a market exists, someone will step forward to serve it, and some of these will attempt to serve it well.

It isn't as if even very unsophisticated readers prefer shoddy storytelling. But corners had to be cut in order to serve this market at a low enough price point, and the simplest place to cut was in the length of the work. Even at that, the "penny dreadful" was usually more on the order of a magazine than a novel. It was not until the cost of printing and distribution reached a level that such books could be produced cheaply enough to be purchased casually by a wide range of the public



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that the short novel became a standard offering.

Short novels, or "single-volume" novels were nothing new. But they had never been widely popular. The Brontë sisters early published work included 'JANE EYRE', issued in three volumes (standard for a novel of the day), and 'WHUTHER-ING HEIGHTS', in two volumes issued in a set with 'AGNES GREY' (Gray?), as a single volume "novel." The reading public was accustomed to a novel being in a set of three volumes. And, even over the course of the 19th century when it gradually became standard for a novel to be issued complete in one large volume, the customer was still inclined to regard shorter works as not being quite "real" novels.

But by the early 20th century, the printed story was no longer the only game in town in the matter of "is there life after supertime," and the pace of modern life in general had picked up enough that rather a lot of people didn't have the time or the attention span to devote to wading through reams of 19th century serial-style padding to get to the story. The endless hunt for entertainment became less a matter of looking for something to fill the empty hours than for something to read on the train. And the magazine, or the short novel was a perfect fit. And, as can be seen, over the course of the early 20th century, the short novel pretty well crowded out its longer brother entirely. Once the paperback novel was introduced to the paradigm, the trend became even more solidly established. For a span of at least three generations.

For one thing, a *short* paperback novel was less likely to disintegrate before the reader had finished his first reading of it than a long one. It was also cheaper to produce, and, consequently,





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could be sold for less. Making it a more attractive prospect for someone looking for casual entertainment.

But that trend seems to have reversed itself lately.

At which point, I feel that I really ought to add a disclaimer that this article was originally written at approximately some point between 2005 and 2015, at a period when the mass market paperback was still the predominate form of book to be purchased for “light reading.” Physical books were yet to be crowded out by electronic versions such as those designed for the Nook, or the Kindle, or some other handheld device. These appear to be constituting a considerable game-changer. One which persons, such as myself, who prefer to have a physical book to read are finding disgruntling.

In any case, for as long as physical books *are* still produced, the preferred length of the work is something that is determined by the economics of professional publishing as they currently stand. Whenever “currently” happens to be. This question of economics is directly related to the trend towards “doorstop novels” from which Rowling, in particular, so clearly benefits.

But the question of economics does not actually address the dynamics of writing. Only what a writer is more likely to be able to sell. And, until the advent of Internet fanfiction archives, only what writers actually sold defined the market, regardless of demand.

The thing most people tend to overlook is that “The Market” consists of not merely the demand for product, but the product which is already on offer. You need both ends of the equation. And whichever direction the driving forces try to tweak it a number of the participants are going to be left unsatisfied. That continuing dissatisfaction is also a part of the equation. But not



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one that it is safe for anyone, on either side of the press-room to base all of their decisions upon.

Writing “short” requires a very different skill set from writing “long” and it is a bit unfair to compare the results as if they are equal. Both forms require discipline to do well, but writing short requires a lot more of it. Conversely, writing long appears to require a much clearer “vision” and something to actually say if it isn’t to degenerate into a long, pointless ramble once the initial set-up has been thoroughly explored. You see that a lot in fanfiction.

The publishing biz these days encourages writing long. As does the inherent nature of fanfiction. Most fandoms — by an overwhelming margin — are based upon an open-ended popular series, rather than tidily contained novels. Even the few fandoms with a literary base have almost without fail been translated into film which has generated a different sort of fan. Ergo, the fanon fixation upon the individual characters, and the high fanon tolerance for long, pointless rambles through strings of little incidents with no real advancement of the plot.

The professional publishing biz’s motive is a different pair of sleeves altogether. But not completely unrelated. Professional publishing exists to enrich its owners. Not its employees, not the printers, not the distributors, and certainly not the writers. Its owners. In another era publishing houses were typically founded, owned, and operated by people who loved books, or at least the idea of books. Over the past generation or two, Publishing houses have suffered more than almost any other industry from the current trend in mergers and acquisitions encouraged by a corporate mindset of “bigger is always better.” With the result that most publishing houses, and certainly the





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larger ones (i.e., the ones anyone has ever heard of) are owned by mega-corporations and are no longer headed and managed by book lovers, but by MBAs who frequently approach selling books as if they were soap packets. Over the same period book publishing has also been pretty thoroughly colonized as a fairly minor outpost of the vast “entertainment industry,” encouraging the generating of commodities which are blatant media tie-ins. Particularly when the publishing house’s “overlord” company also owns a studio.

At this point it is still a bit too early to really make predictions of just how the impact of eBooks is going to change the basic paradigm. Only that it undoubtedly will.

So how does this encourage writing “long”? Well, in at least two different ways.

First, look at the numbers: around the 1970s, a standard paperback book was about 200 pages long. It also cost 99¢. I can still remember paperbacks costing 25¢ as a standard thing, but that was 15–20 years earlier yet. By the ’70s it had been determined that people would pay 99¢ for a paperback, and that same 99¢ covered production, distribution and any publicity costs with enough of a profit for the publishing houses to consider it worth continuing to do so.

But of course the economics immediately broke down when you stepped outside that standardized format. It was an acceptable gamble that 99¢ would cover the costs related to mass-producing a given 200-page novel. It wouldn’t cover the costs of mass-producing a 300-page novel. Publishers still always managed to turn a few of those loose, too, with the additional production costs underwritten by the profits on the 200-pagers.



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But since at that point the “paperback original” was only just beginning to be a gleam in the publisher’s eye, it meant that publishing houses generally only bought stories for hardbound production which could *also* be tidily wrapped up and packaged into the neighborhood of 200 pages. Publishing houses employed editors who worked with prospective or contracted authors with a view to bringing those puppies down into a form which would fit the format. Particularly once you were out in the genre fiction ghetto. Popular fiction, in just about all genres tended to fit, more-or-less-neatly into roughly 200 pages.

Well, that was going on 50 years ago. You will have noticed that popular fiction has now bulked up to around 500 pages and that publishing houses show no shame whatsoever at asking \$6.99, \$7.99 and \$8.99 for a paperback. And, given that the prices of everything else has gone up over the corresponding time, and that even minor segments of the entertainment industry are a lot more dependent upon publicity campaigns these days, than they were back when popular fiction, and especially genre fiction (SF, Fantasy, Mystery, Romance and Westerns, mostly) was pretty much expected to sell itself without much additional effort on its publishers’ part, I doubt that a publishing house could now afford to produce books if they went back to a cover price of, say, \$3.99. Even if they were books of about 200 pages.

I also suspect that there would be a major resistance from the buying public if the publishing houses were to try to cut their production costs by insisting that authors tie up their stories in 200 pages while still demanding a cover price of \$6.99. They’ve painted themselves into a corner. They just can’t depend upon





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short novels selling well enough at current prices to cover their own costs. Ergo, publishers now tend to buy 500-page novels, rather than 200-page novels because they know they can sell 500-page novels. And they don't seem to mind if they run over that target length a bit since the longer length is now factored into the equation, and mass production and the public's willingness to pay has adapted to allow for it.

Plus, and this is another contributing factor; they are now also selling books to people who grew up watching series television. i.e., Media fans. People who may have a deep appreciation for a well-crafted "episode" but who are accustomed to the illusion that the characters continue to exist off the screen. Or the page. To such a world-view, a single episode is not the "story."

Which right there explains the proliferation of the boiler-plate "series" product of what I gather in the publishing biz is sometimes referred to as "packager gulch."

And for those writers whose skill set is attuned for writing "short," well, that's what anthologies are for, isn't it? Publishers are still quite happy to sell you anthologies. Especially the ones that weigh in at something around 500 pages.



## On Education & the Internet

### Dateline 1997:

It took a while to make up my mind whether or not to even keep this particular essay in the collection. After all, it isn't precisely concerned with books, reading, OR fandom. But it's hard not to consider it related.

Of course, the original prompt which set it off is a ship that's long sailed, and the ideas it was exploring never materialized — and probably were never really feasible in the first place. But sometimes looking backward to see where one came from helps to define where you are.



### Regarding Flights of Fancy:

Let us all look back to a (not particularly simpler) time, in the days when people attempting to "move with the times" were convinced that the way forward was by teaching children how to actually use computers. Not by encouraging everyone to fake it by living on their phones and pretending that this was the same thing.

A phone is not a computer. Not even close.

In any case; a comment made by one of the other members of my APA (Amateur Press Association) back in early-'97 regarding some of the ballyhoo over the Internet as the savior of modern education started me on a roll. I rolled through a number of different takes on the subject and well before I was through I realized that I had rolled right into the 'gator tank (or something equally hard to get a solid footing in) and that I was going to have to put it all aside until I had more time to deal with it. The original version of this finally got sent through the APA





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in September of that year.

My proposal (a nice big slice of Blue Sky pie, mostly) never happened, although I still think it might have had possibilities, if it had ever been feasible — which it probably wasn't. In the main, the whole thing was a very "3rd-Turning" piece of commentary. But much of what I had to say then, I would still say now. Possibly with more emphasis.

What set the whole discussion off was some comment to do with the push for getting the schools "wired" — which rather a lot of the Powers That Be were not all that enthusiastic about. The basic internet may have already been around for decades, but no one really knew about it but government/military wonks and research centers. And no one but they could really access it, either. The "Worldwide Web" was a user interface overlay for it that was designed to be accessible by the public, and it was a very recent development. Personal computers were still regarded by a lot of people as something of a fad, who didn't really expect them to last.

Plus, getting computers into the schools was going to be expensive, and would require training the teachers to use them as well as the students. A degree of reluctance was only to be expected. And a lot of people were unconvinced that it was relevant.

At that point hardly anybody factored in the issue of obsolescence — which would have been even more of a disincentive, if they had anticipated it. It's just as well they didn't.

Looking back with the 20/20 hindsight available some 25 years later, it's not hard to understand the why. So long as computers were isolated individual appliances in private homes, or workplaces, and used primarily for word processing, spread-

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sheets, or for playing games it was easy to regard a computer in a home as primarily a toy, and one in an office as just a souped-up typewriter. Most Junior and Senior High schools already had typing classes.

Once computers could speak to each other, however, it was a whole other ball game.

The worldwide web was a *major* game-changer.

My own first response to the original comment was a simple one, consisting mainly of a bit of personal recollection, and on the shallow side. But it led me to look at the underlying question which I suspect we need to ask ourselves periodically.

Just what is education for anyway?

I don't mean all the lip service to contemporary middle-class values and all its attendant high-sounding claptrap which one usually gets as an answer to that question. Just; what is the *purpose* of education, today, and what is the internet supposed to be saving education *for*?

Phrase it however you want to, it's clear that some of the main focus of education changes over time. And, yet, in another sense, education, or at least *public* education, doesn't change at all.



As long as education is subsidized by the government, the government is going to set the standards which all educational facilities are going to need to meet in order to be certified, and their students validated as having been "educated" in order to qualify for anything which requires education. Consequently, whether public or private, education is going to serve the government's purposes — in addition to anything else. And there



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ain't never been a government in the history of the world whose purposes would have been best served by a citizenry composed of independent thinkers. So, right off the top you can just forget the theory that the purpose of education is to produce any skills related to the creation of independent thought. Independent thought has always been a byproduct. Sometimes an unanticipated and unwanted one. Why else do you suppose such blatant anti-intellectualism is both so pervasive, so tacitly approved, and solidly endorsed by every segment of the entertainment media?

Government — neither ours nor anybody else's — does not want independent thinkers. Governments want *patriots*. And if that means ignoring history as it actually took place, and teaching a careful selection of myths and hero tales instead, and calling *that* history, then so be it. It isn't really in a government's interests that more than a very small fraction of the populace actually be aware of the facts behind history — warts and all, anyway.

An enlightened government might try to maintain as high a degree of contentment for its populace as a whole as can be managed, since a contented populace tends to let the people in charge carry on with as little interference as possible, lest somebody upset its comfortable apple cart. But most of the governments out there aren't particularly enlightened, and ours is no exception. Control is always more important to most governments, in the main, than a contented populace. Although they all admit that contentment would be nice. It has a side effect of making sure that the general population will voluntarily do much of the enforcing of the status quo in the government's stead [for free] by using the bludgeon of public disapproval on anyone who steps out of line.



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There are at least couple of obvious ways to implement a governmentally approved social trend. The contented populace model, or “carrot” method is to enable a reasonably high standard of living for everyone, down into the solid working classes. It is expensive, and requires high taxes, so you have to really turn up the patriotism dial and continually be congratulating people on how much luckier they are to be a citizen of their country rather than any other country, as well as adopting a moderate degree of isolationism, blurring any conflicting messages that might come in from outside. Within this scenario, it helps to have a recognized outside danger to unite the population against. This worked very well indeed back in the 1950s. If the current cycle goes according to Strauss & Howe and works out satisfactorily, we may see another attempt at it starting up once the current pandemic winds down..

Admittedly, with a functioning internet accessible to anyone with access to a computer or smartphone and a paid-up provider account it would be difficult to maintain the level of national isolation that was standard back in the '50s. But considering the willingness of everyone, everywhere to grouse about their government, I suspect it would probably all even out.

The second, or “stick” method is commoner, and a bit more risky, but cheaper. Much cheaper. It depends less on contentment (or education) than it does on fear. This method enables an extremely high, standard of living for the wealthy, pays a tremendous amount of lip-service, but not very much else, to the concerns of the middle classes, in order to engage their continued support, and pretty well ignores everyone else. You get a lot of unrest at the lower socioeconomic levels in this model,





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so you encourage the local police forces to escalate into paramilitary troops geared to keeping the poor under tight control. Which generates further conflict, which generates the very fear that you then use to keep everyone in line.

To keep everything spinning satisfactorily, you make every effort to publicize every resulting "threat to society"/barbarians-at-the-gate image to the hilt, making the above state of all-but-declared war at least as visible on a daily basis as the fantasy images of luxury and ease (which are another necessary component of this model) — and play on the resulting middle-class paranoia until your target audience is willing to let you do anything you please in the name of keeping them safe. In the absence of a major outside enemy, the poor are painted as ravaging perverts, foreign infiltrators and subhuman savages who must be kept down in the service of national defense.

This may actually play as long as a sizable percentage of the poor really are fairly recent immigrants from places where conditions really are worse than "here." How long this state can be maintained when the poor are overwhelmingly a permanent underclass of native born citizens, whose standard of living is slipping down into 3rd-world levels I would hesitate to say. It probably helps to have the periodic "little foreign war" to distract public attention to. Which will buy you the time needed to acquire an outside enemy. Sometimes a legitimate one.

Under this scenario, the poor are not usually educated to such a degree, or in such a style which would enable them to effectively better themselves in the society of the actual day, but, rather, in a manner which would have been regarded as mostly sufficient a generation or two earlier. The resulting

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backwardness of the lower socioeconomic levels also serves the purposes of the enforcers, since much of their position as the would-be "rescuers/protectors of society" depends upon there always being a highly visible, and visibly inferior, underclass to demonize. (Note; After the original publication of this article, the very next issue of the L.A. Weekly ran a cover article comparing the education given in the AP classes in two L.A. public schools in respectively, the Valley and South L.A. I won't say that they altogether agreed with me, but neither did the journalist voice any clear contradiction.)



But that's more than enough about control theories. There is a good deal more to the education industry than the patriot factory. Even if the patriot factory does keep trying to be the one calling the shots.

From the point of view of the Education "industry" any government's purpose has always been best served by the steady production of a skilled workforce.

This is the focus of education that changes over time, because the type of work performed by a national workforce *will* change over time. And the sort of skills this workforce needs will also change according to current demand.

When this country was founded, most of the Nation's workforce were either agricultural workers or fairly independent artisans. The artisans were taught their specific trades in apprentice programs. The agricultural workers learned their trade on the family farm.

Consequently, the purpose of formal education in those days



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was to teach a truly rudimentary level of the skills of reading, writing and computational arithmetic, and to produce patriots who would support the government without a lot of question.

This model of education served quite well for several generations. There were enough wealthy candidates for “higher education” to retain most of society’s control in the accustomed hands, and the rudimentary educational establishments were sufficiently able to spot a sufficient number of gifted children of humble backgrounds — suitable for encouragement and support into a higher educational and social class (often ending up as future school teachers) — to give the general population something to hope for, and to ensure that these particular “new men” would be suitably grateful for the support and encouragement received to be trusted to toe the party line once they got invited to the party. Please do not believe that I am claiming that this degree of calculation was consciously applied. It probably was not. But this was basically how the social machinery operated.

As the bulk of the country’s work became steadily more industrial, education was forced to adapt. An industrial worker is far more likely to live in a town or city than in an isolated rural farming community, and will be exposed to more outside influences than an agricultural society is likely to produce. And, while an industrial worker performs a smaller range of tasks on the job than a farm worker, the nature of his tasks are also far more subject to change abruptly. Consequently, in addition to the patriot factory, a more sophisticated level of data transfer was necessary in order to prepare a workforce that would be trainable to industrial work, and which would be both adaptable on the job, and better equipped to function smoothly within the



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more distracting social environment of a town. Such a workforce ought also to be able recognize and categorize the extraneous social and cultural information to which it is exposed and to place this information into a recognizable context, so as not to allow this extraneous data to distract it from its duties.

In an industrial society, with its denser population centers, there is also going to be a higher demand for professional workers than in a rural society. Since an industrial society also requires management workers in addition to production workers, general education had to expand enough to provide the rudimentary elements of what was traditionally regarded as higher education, in order to better serve the selection process of determining which children might be best encouraged to follow engineering, managerial or even professional tracks.

In a denser population, there is also eventually going to be a higher demand for the traditional, social parasites employed in the glamour “professions” of art, music and the rest of the tribe of (legitimate) entertainment workers, as well as the even greater number of workers who operate in that particular field’s support structure, behind the scenes.

Training in artistic fields had never been a part of the standard, government-authorized curriculum, but it was usually available as an option in the larger population centers. Consequently, it was during this period that the patriot factory began to incorporate elements of social and cultural history (although not actual training) into the line-up of hero tales in order to give students some contextual frame of reference for the cultural landmarks traditionally used to navigate in “polite society.” Such additions also served as a personal background





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within industrial contexts, and enabled the schools to avoid the appearance of turning out (cultural) ignoramuses. Public high schools were established during this period, and to have graduated from one became a viable qualification for admittance into entry-level management or engineering positions.

For the average factory worker, however, it was still assumed that he would leave a basic primary/intermediate-level school able to carry all the information that he was ever expected to need in his head. And he might very well never set foot inside a High School which, although they were government-supported to some degree, usually required that the students should purchase their own textbooks and materials. Many children from lower income families were unable to attend, or to complete a High School program solely due to such financial constraints. For the working classes in the late 19th century this was typical.

Children were, however, required to *attend* school up to an age where they were considered to be capable of gainful employment. The age at which one could legally leave school varied, and gradually rose. In the early 20th century the legal age to leave school was still 14 or 15. I believe by the end of the century, it was 16.

By the end of the 19th century, the social impulse to mouth platitudes about “art for art’s sake” had fully saturated the awareness of the middle classes, and was steadily penetrating the more comfortably off working class as well. One side effect of this trend was that there was now also a corresponding trend towards the comparatively recent concept of industrial design as a justification of itself as well. The machine had been with us long enough to begin generating its own aesthetic, and the material advantages of a well-designed machine over a poorly



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designed one were apparent to all who had to deal with them. Industrial design was beginning to be a standard component of engineering training programs..

Since the middle classes continued to grow, the decorative/applied arts (as well as the performing arts) also gradually became an established, reasonably respectable professional field which employed more than a few of the children of the middle-class. Since these children of the middle classes — who might very well be expected to enter into such professions, particularly since, by middle-class standards, these were rather high status professions — were still by and large attending the public schools, over the early 20th century the public school curriculum gradually began to incorporate rudimentary instruction in art and music from the elementary grades on up.

By the time I hit school in the early 1950s, a child’s future employment was beginning to be understood to be just as likely to be in an office as in a factory, and the educational shift reflecting that realization showed up in its determination to produce “well-rounded individuals” with an increased emphasis on social cooperation, which was reflected in our “citizenship” grades — although this had nothing whatsoever to do with the traditional operation of the patriot factory. (On an assembly line you aren’t supposed to interact with your neighbor, you are a biocog, interaction with other biocogs distracts you from the work you are being paid for. In an office this is very much *not* the case.)

Not knowing, and unable to predict exactly what information would be required by our future employers, the schools attempted to teach us a smattering of everything, and all of





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it was presented as being amazingly dull, disjointed, and irrelevant. Given the lack of engagement or recognizable context that I experienced while serving my term in the public school data dump I cannot really feel astonished to learn that the SAT scores of my generation declined for 17 years straight..

But the underlying intention of the schools was still to stuff our heads with everything that our instructors believed we were likely to ever need and turn us loose to find our own level. Maybe it worked for some of us, but I'm of the opinion that all school taught most of us was how to succeed at attending school.

At which we were given a great deal of additional incentive to apply ourselves, for the post-WWII baby boom had produced an over-supply of prospective workers, for whom no additional jobs were being created, and with manufacturing already staring its migration to foreign factories, the usual recourse to keeping us out of the labor market was to raise education requirements for even the most entry-level positions.

Permit me to say that there is no authentic need to require an Undergraduate degree in order to qualify one for employment as a Junior Administrative assistant in an office. Particularly not when a generation earlier a High School diploma would have been considered ample qualification.

But, however bogus the requirement, it had *become* the requirement.



So, what was that question again? Oh, that's right. What is the purpose of education today? What kind of work are we preparing this new workforce for? Are they expected to be



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agricultural workers, factory workers, office workers, communications workers, service workers, what? What skills are they going to need? How much, and what kind of information are they going to need to carry around in their heads? And what does the internet have to do with it anyway?

Actually, back when this article was first written, it was beginning to look like the internet might have quite a lot to do with it. While, for the immediate moment, the children of the poor could probably safely be relegated to a future of flipping burgers and juggling other people's dry cleaning, the highest percentage of the children of the middle classes were expected to end up in offices. And, more and more, these were expected to be offices that were "wired."

Which brings us to a related side issue. No few of the children of the working class, and even of the working poor will also probably find their way into offices, eventually, and a fair number of these offices will also be wired, at least after a fashion. It can't have escaped anyone's notice by the end of the 20th century that the highest level of employment that many, if not most of the children of the working poor could reasonably expect had become to enter the ranks of Civil Service.

Now, mine may just possibly be a specifically Los Angeles, or SoCal viewpoint, but I'm inclined to doubt it. From my vantage point, Civil Service today employs a lot of (sometimes very bright) people whose parents never made it off the factory assembly line. (Mine certainly didn't.) It even employs a lot of people whose parents were welfare, or social security recipients. It employs a lot of minorities (and a *lot* of women), and it employs them in highly visible positions.





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And, many of us, frankly, weren't particularly well educated, even if we did get through college, and if you are ever in a position where you have to tangle with us over something, this shows. And Civil Service's available technology and SOP (Standard Operating Procedure) tends to lag behind the private sector's norm by anything up to 10-15 years, so the poor's traditionally slightly backward educational level tends to help make us feel right at home (a home, unfortunately, which does not necessarily equate to a source of great satisfaction, but there is a roof over our heads).

After all, we were all the product of the governmentally-subsidized public school system weren't we? (It was a rare rank-and-file Civil Servant who was sent to private school as a child, although quite a few may have attended parochial schools.) We are its end product, and no one else seemed to much want us. To the point of blatantly artificially raising the bar.

After all, why the hell else do you think there has been such a steadily growing attack on "big government" from a lot of angry, white, male, middle-aged, middle-class and upper middle-class blowhards over the past few decades? (Decades, which incidentally, almost exactly correspond with the era of Affirmative Action.) Our jobs aren't the ones that the blowhards want for *their* kids. Ergo, "society" doesn't really need us. We can be dispensed with. And the sooner the better. (Why, how dare those upstart poor people expect to carve themselves a niche of respectable employment where they can periodically lord it over their betters!)

Although, somehow, I don't really see any corresponding clarion cries demanding fewer elected officials, do you? *Those* jobs are still perfectly acceptable goals for their kids, thank you very much.



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Those future wired offices of the middle class and above, however, were envisioned as being set up to communicate at long distance with other entities, or corporate divisions which may be housed in another state, or country, halfway around the world. It is expected that they will handle information that will change rapidly and that such workers must be able to keep it current. This is the informational worker elite, and whether they will really become the backbone of the American presence in the global market and economy or not is uncertain, but a lot of people seemed to be betting the farm on it.

Indeed, in more recent observation, the Covid-19 pandemic has thrown us a substantial curve in which there is now a strong suggestion that the "office" of the future may well be in the workers' own places of residence. When the requisite equipment is present, telecommuting is a viable model for employment. A model in which the internet is an essential component.

Old-School Management doesn't like that idea at all. I'm old enough to remember when telecommuting was absolutely forbidden, even when the employers refused to provide their employees with the computers needed to get the work done (the transition from working in analog to working digitally was a very bumpy ride indeed, particularly in Civil Service, which had some very old-school managers). The mindset was that if employees were being paid for their time, they needed to be herded into a location where management could keep them under surveillance to ensure that they didn't goof off and waste the time they were being paid for. Telecommuting required





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enough of a shift in the paradigm to prioritize the actual work accomplished over the amount of time spent under management's direct scrutiny. Employers needed to learn to trust their employees to actually do the work that needed doing. And by the time that paradigm was being seriously proposed, Covid pretty much forced the issue in the interests of public safety.

But, in any case, there is no way that an information worker can carry all the data that he needs in his head.

And there is no way that the public school system can teach a student the skills that he needs without being able to provide the technology. Nor can the technology a student needs to learn how to handle necessarily be contained in an individual school. It is also becoming more apparent (at least to me) that in order to succeed, education will need to concentrate upon teaching certain skills in earlier grades, even if at the expense of imparting some of the traditional data.

After all, even if the artificial requirement of an undergraduate degree is retained as a necessary qualification for employment one still only has some 12–18 optimal years in which to accomplish the necessary training. If one has the skills, one can always go and find the data. And it ought to no longer be required that the worker carry that data in his head.

Is it going to matter that much to a child's future if he does not learn that; "In fourteen hundred and ninety-two, Columbus sailed the ocean blue" until he is 9 or 10 rather than to do so at 6 or 7? It may very well matter if he cannot use a keyboard effectively by 9 or 10. It will certainly matter if, by the time he is 9 or 10, he does not have some idea of where information is kept and how to go find it. And while I agree that he can certainly *start*

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to learn the principles of research at that age, it may have a far more beneficial effect upon his future academic and professional success if he already has that skill rather than a rudimentary knowledge of the current principal (legal) exports of Columbia.

What is more, these skills are going to be a lot more transferable and useful to him as information technology itself changes — as it will, and rapidly — and the information he handles is updated and its relevance or accuracy debated, than any mere block of static data. Even if this does feel rather like a devolvement into a newer form of the old technical, or "vocational" schools which were focused on something other than academic performance.

For that matter, the kid may be more likely to remember and to value the information that "In fourteen hundred and ninety-two, Columbus sailed the ocean blue" if he has to go hunt it down and kill it himself, instead of getting it handed to him dried and salted down and served up to him in a textbook.



The one thing that public education is *not* going to be excused from, however, is the continued operation of the patriot factory. That is not under negotiation, and it will continue. This is a constant. How the patriot factory is going to manage to get its traditional message across when its operators are required to keep in mind that the kids who are undergoing the program are likely to eventually be having to spend much of their professional lives dealing with foreigners and foreign companies \*without\* giving offence left, right, and forward, I do not know. But the patriot factory will certainly continue.

There are other constants as well:



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Students still must be taught the basics of reading and reading comprehension, written communication, and rudimentary computational arithmetic.

Students will still need to learn to express themselves in a grammatically correct manner, when required.

Students will still need to be taught the principles of fractions and percentages, as well as be given an introduction to the general concept of the purposes of the various branches of higher mathematics, and to operate, and correctly interpret and deploy the findings of these functions as they are produced by electronic calculators. (The hands-on branches of higher mathematics will no doubt still be taught, and probably as badly as ever. But possibly not to as many people.)

In addition to this, students will still need to be taught basic principles of public and private health, hygiene, and safety, as well as something of the workings of the common social contract into which we are all enrolled, i.e., how modern society works. This is probably an appropriate point at which to connect to some of the patriot factory's functions.

At this point, if history is taught, (and it *will* be taught. It is an essential component of the patriot factory) it is essential to convey the concept that at different points in history the average person did not necessarily think, feel, or interpret information as he does now.

Students will also certainly need to learn how to produce and interpret graphical information (charts, graphs, maps).

They will need to be introduced to the basic tenets of scientific processes and learn something of the operation of the physical world around them. Perhaps something of the solar system beyond that as well..



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They need to learn something of the basic principles of engineering. They need to develop some concept of the mechanically possible — and impossible.

They need to learn how to operate machinery in a controlled environment and to treat it with respect. Ideally, a "life skills" course (including drivers' Ed at the High School level) would instruct students of both sexes in the basics of operating household appliances safely as well as something of being able to take care of themselves, organize and manage tasks and to do rudimentary cooking and cleaning. Certainly by the time they finish middle school.

An introduction to what used to be called shop skills (woodworking, metalworking, auto maintenance) should continue to be made available to all students regardless of gender (unlike in my day). I am not convinced that these courses should continue to be required, as they were in my day (in Middle School, and only for boys). Future employment in these areas can no longer be taken for granted, but there are and will still be jobs in these fields. And hobbies are a thing. Sometimes a useful and satisfying thing.

Students need to learn to use a keyboard, and they need to learn it early. They need to understand something of what a computer can and cannot do. And probably something of how computers work and to recognize what can go wrong, as well as how to get themselves out of minor difficulties, and how to run basic maintenance.

And yes, I do mean *computers*. A smartphone is not the same. And for at least the foreseeable future, companies which pay you a wage are probably still going to want you to earn that wage using a computer.





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Students also need to learn to recognize when they have a real problem. As early as possible. And, some kids will undoubtedly want to be taught how to physically repair and maintain computers. And this should be permitted, any machinery society depends on will always need qualified repairmen. And plumbers.

Since nothing is more deadly to one's assumed social status or credibility than an obvious ignorance of cultural history, so long as lip service is paid to the concept of "improving" oneself though education, students will need some introduction to the background and context of the cultural icons and references which surround them. They need to learn something of how cultural expressions work and what responses they are invoking. They need to begin to understand the different manner in which these examples were produced and what "tools" were used to produce them. They need to learn enough of how to handle these tools to be able to evaluate something of the expertise of those who handle them professionally.

They should also probably learn something of the principles of the production of propaganda and how to recognize and interpret it. And to manipulate it, and to recognize when they are being manipulated. They need to develop *some* basic skills of criticism, even if they don't ever quite aspire to independent thought.

And — above all — in addition to the rest of these basics they will need to be taught to use the tools and methodology of research. They need to know where information is likely to be stored, and how to go there and get it. They need to learn how to filter and evaluate what they find and to determine what is relevant and what is not, They need to know how to organize and present what they can gather.



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And this is where the internet comes in. And this is where the principle of education takes a great leap from where it was when I was in school.



When I was a kid, we didn't even encounter the concept of research much before Middle School/Junior High. I think my entire experience of the subject of research up to that point could be summed up with the usual smug directive to look things up in the dictionary whenever I forgot myself and was fool enough to actually ask a teacher what some word meant. Or how to spell it.

Which, by the way, was an excellent way of ensuring that I would never do that on any consideration. I despised dictionaries. I never looked things up in a dictionary. In the first place, I wouldn't have been able to *find* it because I couldn't *spell* it. In the second place, if I was asking about a word that I had run across in a book — where the spelling was available — I *still* wouldn't look it up because the *story* was more important than the *word*, and that by the time I was finished with the story, I knew damn well that I would either have already figured the meaning out from the context, or I would have forgotten about it, and it would no longer matter. By the time I finished the story I wouldn't bloody *care* what the word meant, and I knew it. In the third place, I wasn't about to look it up now, because the teacher had got my back up by snotting me off and telling me to do so. I mean, really! I wasn't asking the question because I desperately *cared* about the answer. I was asking the question because the teacher presumably knew the answer and the teacher was *there*. From where I was standing, "Look it up





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in the dictionary” was a smartass non-answer which should be treated with all the contempt it deserved. I didn’t ask so many questions of my teachers that I appreciated having the few that I did ask blown off.

Which I still believe, btw. If a child that you are being paid to instruct asks you a question, and you know the answer, you tell him the answer. Or at least you give him a partial answer and encourage him to investigate further. You don’t play snotty “I know, but I’m not going to tell you.” head games at him. That’s not why he is asking you, and it’s not what you are being paid for. Or the horse you rode in on.

Since I do not possess enough imagination to be able to generate much in the way of authentic curiosity, the end result of this kind of “teaching” is that I have very poor research skills, offset only by the possession of a fairly capacious memory. And by the time I reached the upper grades, and “research projects” had become a part of the curriculum it was far too late for the process to become ingrained.

Which brings us to some of the other flies in this particular chunk of amber.

In my day, people didn’t turn children loose in a library with “research projects” much before they were 11 or 12 for what were probably other reasons than the conviction that they wouldn’t know how to use a library. Libraries, especially school libraries, are not perfectly dependable sources if you demand that the young only be exposed to information that has been vetted to their age, nationality and the religious/philosophical bent of their parents social groups. The internet is this problem elevated to about the 6th or 7th power.



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Not least because the information stored there has never been clearly sorted according to “appropriateness” as to age, gender, or intention, but also because there is no way to ensure that there be either a modicum of civility in its presentation, veracity as to its content, or even any assurance that it has not been misfiled altogether. There is no Dewey decimal system on the internet, certainly not one that is universally adopted. Nor is there likely to be one in any foreseeable future. The Net is an international entity. Search engines exist, certainly, but there is only so much a search engine can do when it is up to the poster to state what a given posting is. Not everybody posting on the Net is clear on that concept. Als, which sort things by “popularity” or “algorithms” are designed to generate advertising, and no help whatsoever. And unaccompanied minors are not what any of it was set up for.

Side note. All the clamor about making things “safe for children” has been smelling fishier to me by the year. What it seems to be boiling down to is that what people are demanding is to be able to turn their kids loose in any of a number of hermetically sealed environments, and then go away and leave them there until they have time to deal with them. Preferably once they have grown into adults.

Excuse me, but wasn’t this traditionally what the nannies, and governesses and tutors of the rich were for? They were hired to raise and accompany children while their parents went off and did “real” things, like rule the world. If you are rich enough to believe that you are entitled to have your children raised in your absence, then pay someone to do it. Contribute to full employment. Don’t tell me that all of society has to drop





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everything and babysit your kids for free, out of the goodness of our hearts, if you don't even have time for them yourself. Bully the employers of the middle classes to provide services to make it workable. Form an alliance with your neighbors and keep an eye on each other's kids. Or don't your neighbors have any time for their kids either?

Just go and reread 'LORD OF THE FLIES', Now, there was a bunch of nice middle class kids, choir boys in fact, turned loose in a hermetically sealed environment. What did it produce? It produced savages. It's always going to be at risk of producing savages (never mind that the kids that the real incident the story was based on did *not* devolve into savagery, nor were they choir boys brought up with a sense of middle-class entitlement). If you want your kids to be "safe," provide them with adult supervision. After all, once you do find that fabled place that is "safe for kids" to dump yours in, other people will too. And then how do you expect to protect them from the other kids? In such an environment, the other kids are *always* going to be the most likely hazard they are going to encounter. And the other kids are *not harmless*. Neither, for that matter, are *yours*.

Frankly, I tend to suspect anyone who tries to initiate a flap about not wanting children to have access to information probably doesn't like the idea of *anyone* having access to that information. Or, for that matter, *any* information.

Another big hairy buzzing fly is that teaching a child to use the internet is, like the teaching of most useful skills, a more intensive process than giving them a list of facts to memorize, and quizzing them to see if they've done it. You can no more teach a roomful of 8-year-olds to use the internet by lecturing them for 15 min-

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utes and letting them each take 5-minute turns at the classroom computer than you can teach a roomful of 16-year-olds Drivers' Ed by lecturing them for an hour and turning them loose on the freeway (or even just in the school parking lot). Kids are going to need intensive coaching in very small groups of 2-3 at the most. And while schools are increasingly willing to buy their students computers, I seriously doubt that they are prepared to stump up for a sufficiency of computer coaches.

Besides, "taming" the net to make it safe for children defeats the purpose. The net was not designed for children.

It was designed for Generals and Senators (and University wonks). And you know what they are all interested in. And they kept it all to themselves until a bunch of other people came along and built a "worldwide web" on top of it. It's never going to be "safe for children."



So, let's all sit down and enjoy a slice of Blue Sky pie, and try to come up with some ideas of what a reasonable extrapolation of such an hermetically sealed environment might look like. The pie's a bit stale, since it has been sitting around on the shelf for something like 25 years, but whatever.

Perhaps some other kind of Net *could* be made "safe for children." One that's designed for such purposes from the get-go.

Why the hell not? There might even be money in it. (Note of sarcasm, here.) Well, it never happened, and never was going to happen, and I don't even know whether it would have ever been feasible, but as of 1997 it didn't look altogether impossible.

Consider:



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The current free-for-all, any-number-can-play confederacy of Internet sites, or even just Web sites, may not be sustainable at the current rate of growth. What the Internet started out as is not what it has become, and certainly not what it's going to continue to develop into. Parts of it are getting root-bound and could do with dividing and repotting. When the inevitable cry for a general overhaul gets started up — which should be pretty soon — or even well before that point, I propose that some serious thought be given to how the K-12 educational community is supposed to fit in. Or if it even needs to.

Consider also; learning how to find and retrieve data is only the first part of the educational exercise. One needs also to learn how to sort the data one finds, decide what data is relevant to the inquiry, and how to make a selection of, and to organize the data one chooses to use. One also needs to learn how to manipulate the data one finds, if only to avoid falling into the “I found it on the Net, it must be true” pitfall. This cannot be done effectively when the job is just too big, or there is too much distraction in the way. Nor is it only the children of the poor who may be overwhelmed and intimidated by the prospect. Either the neo must be closely supervised, or the environment must be controlled. At the present point, all kinds of people are proposing various methods of control. I'm not sure that this really means what the people proposing it seem to think it means.

Consider; maybe children do not really need access to the Internet. That maybe what they need is access to a large-scale *simulation* of the Internet which operates according to the same model. Including variations on the sort of built-in non-sense and muddle which serves as an introduction to the sort of



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obstacle course which actually surfing the net entails.

I would like to suggest that some thought be given towards establishing something like a SchoolNet which would link a nation's public (and private?) educational facilities of the K-12 level. This might include some universities as well. Perhaps on a voluntary, or free subscription basis. This network could also link to major public informational sources, such as libraries and news networks.

There might also be some debate as to whether there should also be gateways to commercial online services, or those private informational or recreational sites which would have to be approved and which could chose to subscribe. Families engaged in home schooling their children ought also to be able to establish a presence there. By annual subscription probably.

The main difference is that from SchoolNet, one would not have access to links out onto the real Internet apart from the actual sites which subscribe to it, even though most, if not all of these public or commercial sites may also be accessible from the Internet itself. The SchoolNet, on the other hand, should no more be accessible from outside its own system, than that all schools should have open campuses, regardless of where they are located.

This would indeed require that subscribers conform to some standard of security, or firewall, or whatever is necessary. Which would no doubt eliminate many smaller, otherwise useful or innocuous sites. This is unfortunate, but full access, or even a site's harmlessness is not the point here.

The point is lessening the invitation for future lawsuits.

Actually, the real problem isn't so much that the student will encounter shocking or inappropriate information — despite the smokescreen concerning this possibility which everyone





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is determined to send up. The real problem is that allowing hordes of kids out onto the net without supervision will result in a monumental waste of time and resources for which the schools will be expected to pick up the tab. No one talks about this, but it is a much bigger problem than the existence of some crackpots out there spouting nut-case religions, unpopular politics, or pedaling pornography.

SchoolNet subscribers might also be required to conform to a "no advertising" policy, but given the way schools are perpetually strapped for cash it isn't likely. No one seems to have fully opened the can of worms over the degree of responsibility a wired school is to be expected to bear over what advertising a student may encounter from a school computer.

In the schools themselves, the SchoolNet access could be configured by grade level in the classrooms as to the degree of participation allowed from each site and with some careful planning in the set up and sophistication in the search engines, some control over the level of difficulties encountered by the user could be maintained, depending upon what computer you are logging in from. The school library would have full access for the top grade level of the school, and at least one station in either the library or a special computer lab would have full access to the whole SchoolNet.

Since the students would ideally be taught how to build and maintain their own personal pages, there will be ample experience in distraction and muddle built into the system. And since these sites are student work displayed on what is essentially school property, the usual restrictions and controls would apply.

By High School, there should be at least a few stations at

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each school with true Internet access.

There are probably holes in this synopsis that you can drive a Mack truck through, but at least some of it ought to be relevant to the situation. All the ballyhoo about wiring the schools strikes me as something that people have glommed onto as a classic "magical solution," and I don't think the people out there yammering about it realize what they are letting themselves in for.

(Particularly the endless lawsuits.)





## Fanfic, Electrifying the Oral Tradition

This essay was also originally a part of the now deleted 'Harry Potter and the Reader' sub-collection, and, as such, it also uses Pottermore elements and characters as examples.

But its primary subject is actually the writing of fanfic and a general participation in fandom, which is a much wider subject overall.

Originally, some decades ago, this piece spun off of what later became the essay entitled; 'Deconstructing Miss Granger'. Hardly any of it still pertains to the character of Hermione Granger. Nevertheless, regardless of how irrelevant, the subject of Hermione Granger does serve as a reasonable example for surveying, and makes a very good jumping-off point.



### The Fabulous World of Fanfic:

**A**s stated over in the Deconstructing essay, the character of Hermione Granger is not even remotely close to being presented as "mysterious". Which, ironically, probably makes it all the more difficult for many fanwriters to get a real handle on her. Many of the fans don't seem to have registered this.

Or, if they have, they evidently have few objections to the preponderance of seriously off-kilter "Hermiones" (or 'Miones or 'Myas) which proliferate throughout fanfic. I suspect that a part of this is because most of us recognize that Rowling's version is not a completely realized character to begin with, and that any 3rd-party interpretation is largely the creation of said 3rd-party.

This distinction is one of the major differences between "characters" and character "types". The denizens of genre fiction tend to almost overwhelmingly be character "types". This



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includes most of the people of the Pottermore.

Which right there is a good explanation for why Hermione Jean is so often so recognizably Hermione Sue. As one of what are really only two half-way consistently developed female characters in the series (the other is Luna Lovegood, although one must admit that there really isn't much inconsistency displayed in the characterizations of the female staff of Hogwarts either), and as an alleged authorial self-insertion, Hermione Granger constitutes a positive invitation for the reader to project herself, or an idealized iteration of that self, into the place of the character.

Another thing; and a far more overriding factor that I think accounts for this pervasive "Sueishness" in these presentations is the flattening effect of the inevitable overlay of "popular culture's" social dynamics upon almost all imaginative process; thereby often muddling the "vision" before it even reaches the forefront of the author's brain.

Since all "storytelling" is an aspect of popular culture this risk appears to be all but unavoidable, and the risk is not confined to fanfiction. Professional writers are subject to it as well. Particularly out in the genre fiction ghetto, which tends to get little respect. I suspect that this phenomenon is part of the reason for that.

The trick, for the aspiring "Author" — rather than merely a storyteller — is to attempt to see through the cultural overlay and make the necessary adjustments needed to create a coherent and individualized character, rather than merely adopting a basic "type" wholesale, or taking an existing one and crudely standing it on its head. This is harder than it looks. After all, a perfectly satisfactory "story" can be drafted and told which is populated entirely with repertory "stock" characters, presented





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with no individualization whatsoever. Most folktales in fact are.

Works of literature, however, are not.

Essentially what the aspiring author is fighting against are the demands of the Oral Tradition. And if one ends up feeling very much like a salmon fighting its way upstream, one is probably on the right track.

The effect of the Oral Tradition upon any storyline or character is to distill it down into the lowest common denominator. To generalize rather than to individualize, to translate the particular into the “universal”, ultimately grinding everything down and rendering it back into the archetype — which tends to be too indigestible to reduce any further. Heroines, even female heroes, dwindle into generic “princesses”, heroes into the third sons of either kings or peasants with nothing really left to determine the difference. Antagonistic females morph into stepmothers or witches, and antagonistic males into robber barons, wicked kings, or evil sorcerers. Characters, in short, who are not actually *characters*, and who consequently need no further explanation. They are “types” which bring into the story no personal baggage of their own that will distract the listener from the central story arc.

Contrary to general expectation, and most appearances; not all fanfiction is pure storytelling. No more than all professional publishing is. This has always been the case, and probably always will be the case.

For that matter, in the “official received version” fanfiction has never been openly acknowledged as merely “storytelling” either, since it just sounds so much more high status to attempt to define it as being somehow “literary.” (“What do you do as a hobby?” “Oh,



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I write.” sounds far more intellectual than; “I make up stories.”)

The fanfic community traditionally would have almost preferred to be regarded as an informal thieves’ guild — marauders of published authors’ intellectual property — than as a clot of ephemeral storytellers. To be perceived as a commercial threat at least gave them and their authorial aspirations some degree of credibility. In the era of the worldwide web, this is no longer the case. Nor would it be a viable option. The online community makes what amounts to self-publication far too easy, and has removed much of the commercial component from the equation.

There will always be a segment of the fanfic community who really want to be Authors. For these practitioners it’s not enough just to get the story told and out into circulation. They really want to develop some bonafide writing skill and technique. To not just *tell* a story but to tell it with style, embellished with all the bells and whistles and quirky “literary” tricks that slow down the reader’s headlong rush to the conclusion and give him something to chew on along the way.

The Oral Tradition, however, has no use or patience with this kind of solitary wankage. Nor for stories which can only really be “appreciated” by a self-selecting elite.



Back in, I think the ’70s, there was a fairly popular book which came out and attracted a pretty wide readership. There was even a movie, although I vaguely think it might have been made for T.V., rather than for theatrical release. Like the Harry Potter series, this was one of those really very good, predominantly fantasy stories which periodically somehow manage to





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show up above the general horizon and draw a good deal of attention from people who do not normally read fantasy and consequently are astonished to discover how much they liked it.

The book was 'WATERSHIP DOWN'. The story, in the remote case that you may not be familiar with it, is a classic Heroic Quest-style of epic tale enacted by a group of rabbits; survivors of a warren which was destroyed by suburban development. In the course of their quest, the group travel across the downs seeking a place to establish a new warren. When, after several adventures, they find a suitable place, it gradually dawns upon them that since the group is entirely made up of bucks the new warren will not come into being unless they are able to find some does and bring them to their sanctuary. The second half of the book relates the adventures entailed in doing exactly that. The fact that this part of the tale has been irreverently dubbed The Rape of the Sabine Bunnies is clearly intended to be affectionate in its mockery.

Threaded throughout the story are a selection of "hero tales" represented as the exploits of the rabbits' folk hero, Eleheragh (it has been some decades since I read it, so the spelling here is probably wildly off). These tales, falling somewhere between myth and creed, sustain and inspire the little band, and suggest various practical solutions to the challenges which they meet in the course of their ordeal.

At the end of the book, at the end of his life, the leader of the group overhears some of his own exploits in the course of the founding of the (now thriving) warren related by a group of young rabbits, with the deeds therein all attributed to Eleheragh.

This is the Oral Tradition in action. In a culture of creatures



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who can conceive of no more than one culture hero, all great deeds are, by extension, the deeds of the hero that everybody knows. And this hero is inevitably reduced to an archetype, not a truly individualized "character." He is "Everyrabbit," but no single rabbit individually.

Among more sophisticated creatures, such as humans, there is room in the collective imagination for a dozen or more archetypes. But the tendency is still for those details which individualize true characters to be lost over multiple tellings. Much as the "good" is regarded as the enemy of the "best," the principle of the "archetype" is the enemy of the "character."

Fanfiction has been with us for quite some time. Many of the people currently involved in it now trace it back as far as the original Star Trek in the late 1960s, but it is much older than that. If you tag it onto the tradition of literary pastiche it can be effortlessly traced well into the end of the 19th century and centuries farther back yet if you really try. The most familiar examples which come immediately to mind are the countless "further adventures" of Sherlock Holmes for which A. Conan Doyle can take no direct responsibility, or any of the 200+ apocryphal Oz books that were never published by Reilly & Lee. And, for the record, yes Virginia, there was Tolkien fanfic back in the late '60s as well. Although I do not know whether the phenomenon continued until they made a movie of the work, thereby setting off a whole new generation of same.

For that matter, what else are the traditional Robin Hood tales but a fanfic legacy whose authors' identities have disappeared over time? Or, for that matter, many of the tales of King Arthur's Knights.





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But the price of fanfic's being regarded as an unauthorized form of literary pastiche was for it to be branded a bastardized branch of Literature, usually regarded as very poorly executed, but, nevertheless, subject to all the same rules and regulations to which Literature and the aspiring creators of Literature are subject. And for so long as fanfic was confined to text on paper, this was probably the only really appropriate context in which to relate to it.

In an era when publishing a fanfic usually meant reproducing it in ditto, or mimeograph at best, and selling it to defray one's production costs was clearly treading upon the toes of the copyright holder it is hard to regard the matter as anything other than a lose/lose proposition.

But people still did it.



However, the all but complete migration of fanfic to electronic media over the past two decades or so (yes, the World Wide Web celebrated its 20th anniversary in the year of 2013) has shifted this paradigm. In fact, it has bundled it into a van and moved it all the way into terra incognita. We are not now where we once were. And the bulk of fanfiction is manifestly no longer assumed to be even titulary "literary."

Since fanfic is still typically expressed in text it is difficult to get beyond the impression that we are still dealing with the dynamics of print media. But we really are not. The majority of fanfic is never printed. What is more, it is never really intended to be printed. Its reason to exist is not as a "larval" stage of scaling some great height leading to the pinnacle of professional publication and public distribution. Even the crudest of such



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work is already publicly distributed. It has already been sent out into the world, as is, to succeed or fail on its own merits and to find its own audience. Or not.

And with ever greater frequency the overt demand from that audience is not; "Give me a new book for my *collection!*" It is; "Tell me a *story!*"

And, given the rapidity of the exchange that now exists between Author and Reader, the dynamic of that exchange begins to look exactly like a storyteller addressing a large group of children of various ages who require entertainment.

Welcome to the global village.

And the global village storyteller.



A traditional storyteller will always, if they are to be successful, learn to adapt their story to the audience they are addressing, and learn to read the reactions of that audience as their guide in steering the story into completion. Otherwise their audience will wander off, before the hat gets passed around. The story told is, consequently, at its roots, a *cooperative* venture, not a pronouncement from on high, take it or leave it.

I am about 85% convinced that what we are watching online is a revival, and furthermore, a metamorphosis of the Oral Tradition, transposed, bizarrely enough, into text.

It is happening before our very eyes.

And the result, as always, or, far too often, is to allow the zeitgeist of the times to render the budding story indistinguishable from all the other stories that have preceded it. Because the Oral Tradition inevitably streamlines the elements deployed until they offer





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the very least resistance to the act of transmission. Details and individualization call attention to themselves and slow the assimilation process, therefore they tend to get discarded in the rush.

Classic storytelling always comes down to something less than the characters. The characters are nearly always subordinate to the plot. In fact, we can expand this to include the basic principles of story structure, (or in actual fact, that generic template of the concept of "story" in popular mythos). The issue of "characters" only kicks in with the deployment of the stock character "types".

Where the author of a work of "literary merit" ideally has the leisure to fine tune and customize to their hearts content, attempting to build something new from the ground up, it seems to be very difficult for a storyteller to "tell a story" which does not resemble every other story, both in its structure and in the behavior of its actors. There are all those culturally dictated "must have" elements and the corresponding "must not do" prohibitions that one has to navigate. And the zeitgeist of a given time will always have a major input upon what, inside the story, is considered to be an "appropriate" emotional reaction of the characters to whatever events are deployed in the telling. It's hardly surprising when a neophyte fanfic writer simply follows the most well-marked path.

A further wrench has been given to the mechanism of popular storytelling by the generally plot-free imitation of this process which has arisen over the last century, and which goes by the name of soap opera. These episodic extravaganzas are not properly even stories, in the traditional sense. They are bread and circuses, and are designed to pacify the populace in very



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much the same manner that the original model functioned in classical Rome. In the classical iteration, the purpose was to dissipate the general hooliganism of the lower classes with spectator activities. In the modern iteration the function is to keep us buying soap powder.

My own experience with "daytime television" and its precursor, radio, is meager. However, from what I can gather, its characters still appear to be the traditionally generalized "types" common to storytelling. And their adventures are not driven by the events of an overriding plot, but by their emotional reactions to melodramatic situations into which they are routinely pitched by the unseen puppetmaster, in order for the audience to watch what happens. Once such a situation is resolved, the viewpoint generally wanders off to watch another situation emoted by another group of puppets with precious little glimmer of there being any final goal in sight. Indeed, the only real goal seems to be to offer sufficient distraction to keep the audience engaged (and buying soap powder) until rigor mortis sets in.

Unfortunately this impulse to aimlessly stumble from situation to situation without benefit of story has managed to infect a great deal of fanfic.

This has become particularly evident in what is now looking like a significant minority of the current fanfiction scene, which quite often is not really about literature, or necessarily even about "story" but about "community," and participation, and in which both the reading *and* the writing are undertaken as a form of recreation within a group.





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Long ago when the earth's crust was still cooling, I was active in a group called the Society for Creative Anachronisms. They had a practice, also to be found in Science Fiction fandom — of which the S.C.A. had originally been a splinter group — called the “Bardic Circle.” This usually took place after a tourney or during a revel (or a SF Convention) in which the participants gathered in a circle, and the audience's attention moved around the group, and when it was your turn, you sang a song, or told a joke, or a story, or recited a poem, or whatever you could think of to entertain the company.

In many ways an online listgroup can come to function very much as a Bardic Circle, although the strict rotation of “turns” is typically not invoked. But those who actively participate for any length of time in such a group often feel a degree of (usually self-generated) obligation to contribute a new piece of work to entertain the other members. You have been entertained by the group. It seems only fair to reciprocate.

In such an atmosphere even the act of writing — traditionally regarded as a solitary occupation — is as likely to be undertaken primarily as a social activity as a creative one. In this sort of atmosphere, if the work does not resemble the underlying lowest-common-denominator template common to the group, it sometimes fails to register as a “proper” story. If one is operating within a closed loop it can become very difficult to differentiate the story from the structure, which, if regarded as literature, should only “contain,” but in this context, too often dictates the finished product.

For that matter, in the case of this particular branch of fanwriters, if the writing of a given fanfic is being undertaken as a social



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activity, there is no certainty that the author even has a bonafide “story” of their own to tell. And may not particularly want one.

It eventually becomes evident to any reader of fanfiction who approaches the exercise with a critical mindset that what a startling percentage of fanwriters seem to want to do is not to tell their friends a *new* story, but to retell the stories that they all already know — with different costumes, scenery and dialogue, in a weirdly electronic simulation of the Oral Tradition wherein suddenly you have about 14 different variants of what is obviously Snow White, distinguishable only by minor changes to secondary issues.

Which probably accounts for the depressing number of “cookie-cutter” fanfics that abound in most popular fandoms. Particularly in what are known as “challenge fics” which are all written to the same basic “prompt.” The authors are all tacitly agreeing to tell the same 4–5 stories — with varying minor changes to details and dialogue.

It can be a fascinating exercise to watch a storyteller take what is essentially stock material and make something fresh from it. And that can certainly be done. We've all watched it happen. Sometimes to impressive effect.

But the result isn't necessarily a story about the characters it claims to be about. If, all too often, the author, or more properly speaking, the storyteller, finds it easier to just go with the flow, allowing the medium to dictate the message, their stories, however competent the structure, come across as generic and rather flavorless. Particularly in the case of the neophytes who are just getting a grasp of their craft.

On another head; how often have we seen a perfectly good yarn overbalance and sink without a trace due to an ill-con-





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ceived piece of “dramatic tension” which has been inserted because the author was convinced that any story has to have one and couldn’t get the balance right?

Some degree of tension (of some variety) is required, or a story falls completely flat. But neos do not always have a good sense of scale, in this, or any other matter, and if you cannot rely on your instincts, you have to work the issue out in technique. And developing technique takes time and practice. What is more, technique is something that is more typically demanded from “Authors” than from storytellers. Incompetent storytellers simply lose their audience.



For example; in the Potterverse, we have all encountered any number of fanfics which appear to be no more than a generic teen romance enacted by generic character types wearing barely recognizable “HP-character” masks, and acting, speaking and responding to the demands of the plot in a manner which is a considerable stretch to try to regard as ‘in character’ by any canon-recognizable (let alone canon-compliant) definition. This is the result of the lowest-common-denominator nature of fanfiction as handled by writers who lack a clear vision of either their sources, or what kind of a story they are trying to tell.

It is a fact not always openly acknowledged that not all characters can be successfully inserted into every variety of story. But it is a fact none the less.

Where there is a fundamental mismatch, either very great skill or a truly compelling vision is necessary to pull the exercise off. Otherwise, while the story may work as a story, the pur-



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ported characters will refuse to settle in and take up residence in it and the end result will be branded OoC (Out of Character). In fanfic, this is considered highly undesirable.

This particular type of failure pertains to all fandoms which generate fanfic. Once their “creator” has defined the specifics of the canon source it becomes an uphill battle to force generic “types” to make the transition into plausible iterations of the original creator’s slightly more individualized characters, and to keep them “in” those characters over the full course of the action. Particularly if you are attempting to deploy them in a non-canon-compliant context where they do not want to go.

Most fanfic authors do not make a serious attempt at this. Instead, they substitute the “fanon-approved” facsimiles of the creator’s characters, which retain enough of the original character’s traits to be recognizable (all Harry Potters have glasses and a scar. All Hermione Grangers are bushy/curly-haired and carry books around, All Ron Weasleys have red hair and are a bit hot-headed) but they are far less individualized than Rowling’s characters of the same names and consequently are much more cooperative about being put through maneuvers where their prototypes would never go

Which, right there, probably explains the vast proliferation of Fanon’s Sensitive!Harry, Jerk!Ron, SoapOpera!Hermione and, heaven help us, SexGod!Snape. The biggest trade-off is that the characterization of these facsimiles is inherently even shallower than that of their canon models, and identification may ultimately depend entirely upon the symbolic accessories that these facsimiles tend to tote around. Much in the way that the traditional representation of saints may be completely inter-





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changeable, but if one is accompanied by a pig he is probably intended to represent St. Anthony.

It has become ever more obvious to me over the past few years that with a growing frequency the determination of fanwriters to demand that these “canon” characters behave in a manner that is completely unnatural to them, is because the fanon puppets are standing in, not for the canon originals, but for yet other unidentified characters who simply do not exist in canon. In quite a few cases these show up in the works of authors who really do want to “write.” And sometimes in the work of ones who not only *can* write, but actually have a bona-fide story to tell, to boot.

However, what many of these Authors (and they really do seem to be “Authors”) really seem to want to write is original fiction set in the canon Author’s world with their own characters undertaking the adventure in place of the Author’s originals. Unfortunately they have acquired the underlying conviction that if they write out the story they really want to tell, and base it upon non-canon characters, people will refuse to read it, automatically translating any hint of a “non-canon character” into the dreaded “Mary Sue.”

Too often their fears (both the Authors’ and the readers’) are justified. But that still does not really excuse the practice of claiming that the story is “about” Miss Hermione Jean Granger, when the story is actually “about” some generic soap opera ingenue (often American) in a bushy wig and a Hermione Granger mask. This is popularly referred to as a “canon-rip”, and while rather a lot of fanfic authors get away with it, one can never depend upon being one of them.



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As to the problem of non-canon characters: despite all of the people who immediately claim that they “don’t like non-canon characters”, I have yet to hear any of them continue to apply this statement to the cases where the storyteller has managed to produce a good one.

A good character is a good character. Period. The real problem is that in the hands of tryos in nearly all cases the actual characterization of these “original” characters is simply too shallow to carry the story — any story — successfully. This kind of overly-thin characterization shows up immediately when there isn’t a canon source available, hovering in the background to be visible through the overlay, and thereby mentally fill in the gaps.

In point of fact, the interpretations of the typical fanon characters in most fanfiction (in most fandoms, I suspect) are, almost invariably, every bit as shallow as any of those of the clumsy OCs that most people have no qualms about saying that they don’t like. But this tends to be forgiven because the story has to be about somebody and since the fans all “know” the titular lead characters they automatically fill in the blanks in the characterizations themselves (much in the way that Rowling left readers to mentally fill in the myriad gaps in her worldbuilding). The readers usually only speak up to complain when something clearly contradicts their own underlying interpretation of those characters.

This practice perpetuates itself when storytellers slack off and permit the audience’s expectations to do the work of setting up the premise of the story for them. And they frequently are permitted to get away with that, too. (Rowling certainly was.)





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Which puts any aspiring Author who is trying to develop some actual “literary” chops into a damned-if-you-do/damned-if-you-don’t position. For these aspirants, perhaps a well-realized OC is actually the best direction to go. After all, you may even be able to file off the fandom-specific serial numbers later and sell it. There are rather a lot of fics out there in which the story and (off-canon) characterizations are powerful and evocative enough to carry the reader along, to the point that eventually the attempt to claim that the story is about canon characters is really more of a disservice than anything else. And rather painful to watch.



Another somewhat uncomfortable, but inescapable fact is that with a few notable exceptions, fanfiction tends to register at about the same level of literary merit as a hairdrier book. Like a hairdrier book, it provides a pleasant distraction to keep you settled and occupied until the external misery is over. This is not a criticism. In the Real day-to-day World, one tends to have a greater actual need for a few good hairdrier books than all the “literary” tea in China.

Reading “literature” is a challenge, a hobby, an actual *project* which calls for some conscious and voluntary effort and rewards you with a sense of accomplishment (and, usually, a bit more understanding of where people of a different generation were actually “coming from”). Reading a hairdrier book is what you do to decompress.

And this is the way the audience generally wants it.

In those instances where someone does succeed in producing something of noticeably higher literary caliber, it generally manages to find an audience of its own. But it may catch endless flack



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from the “fangurrls” in the process. The fangurrls don’t want to be offered literature, thank you very much. They want you to tell them a story. In many cases they want you to tell them the story that they have already decided they want to hear. No alternatives need apply. If they are determined upon hearing Red Riding Hood, even the most artistic Sleeping Beauty will not be welcome.



The fact also remains that at its most fundamental level, the Oral Tradition is at least partially a class thing. The Oral Tradition is made up of “peasants’ tales” for all that they are so often supposedly “about” royalty. (They are nothing of the sort. They are about a peasant’s *concept* of royalty.)

The sensibilities of the hairdrier book are those that have been co-opted by the afternoon soap opera. And the afternoon soap is notoriously a constant reiteration of the most recalcitrantly reactionary of working class values decked out in upper-middle class trappings. In the long run all events in a classic soap invariably pan out to support the values of “Mrs Grundy” and all of her narrow-minded, moralistic, conservative status quo, with, typically, no sophistication in its presentation whatsoever.

Or any particular degree of taste or restraint, either. Everything is driven by ‘big’ events and ‘big’ reactions. Anyone who steps outside the very narrowest of acceptable social roles within the paradigm of a soap-opera must be shown to be summarily punished — at great length — for the viewer’s edification, however innocently they may have been misled or even forced into that untenable position. Much stress and bathos





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ensue, and any provisionally happy ending is dependent upon the victim being a good little Cinderella and taking whatever unjust karmic “punishment” is dished out with their “inner sweetness” unabated. This is not “dramatic.” It is certainly not romantic, it is melodrama in its purest form.

And fanfic authors admit as much. Although of course nobody wants to actually admit that they are writing something with such a non-U classification, or as dodgy a reputation as “melodrama”, so they screw with the language and claim that what they are writing is “angst.” There is no such genre as Angst. Angst is an emotional state. You might as reasonably claim you are writing “Ennui.” And, in some cases, with about as much accuracy.

Literature, on the other hand, once it finishes the endurance triathlon which any work seems to be required to run before it will be acclaimed as such, is, at its origins, nearly always attempting to groom itself for the consumption of a “thoughtful”, and educated, middle class, regardless of it’s actual content or subject matter. (Just in case there is anyone reading this who hasn’t twigged to it yet, stories are not necessarily written primarily for the consumption of people of either the age nor the social class of the protagonist.) Usually with some kind of classifiable style, and generally with highly mixed results, which is probably one of the reasons such works manage to survive the experience of being mauled about in literature classes for generations and yet still are able offer something to the reader who has picked them up without actually being forced to it.

It is not that often that this kind of individualized resilience can be claimed by any specific piece of fanfiction, regardless

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of how popular. In the natural course of things, virtually all fanfiction will ultimately be displaced by a later work of similar merit, and similar character which, like the rabbits of ‘WATER-SHIP DOWN’s’ culture hero, will have become identified with and indistinguishable from the original. Most fanfic, after all, is “written in water,” eventually drying into obscurity.

But that takes a bit of time. And in the meantime it’s here for us to enjoy.





## On the Good 'Ship Granger/Snape

This one was *definitely* originally a part of the now deleted 'Harry Potter and the Reader' sub-collection. It also retains rather more of its original Potterverse references than the essay which explores what constitutes "Literature".

However, despite that, its primary subject is the rather tangled issue of writing fanfic romance, and the kind of pitfalls which litter that particular landscape. Which is certainly not confined to the Potterverse.



### Regarding the Writing of Romance (*Must We?*):

It should be clear from the offerings over in the Publications area of this site that my own preferences in fanfiction tend to run to a straightforward, well-thought-out, plotted, and written, G-PG-13 no 'ship, adventure story, a unapologetic Snapefic, or an engaging SS/HG. This marked preference for SS/HG when navigating the 'shipping lanes is a remnant in recognition of what was originally a somewhat higher general level of writing skill displayed in fics concerning this particular pairing.

This advantage is not so obvious now as it was, say, about this time in 2001 when this was still a "rare pair" and a comparatively small and much reviled subfandom, but the quality was still usually at least *marginally* higher than that shown in the 'ships more popular with the middle school set and younger, whose authors are often still grappling with the basics of how to tell a story.

But, then, certain allowances must be made. My introduction to this pairing was Textualsphinx's classic 'A LETTER FROM EXILE ONE MERCIFUL MORNING'. While some of the



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elements in this fic have remained unsupported, or even been contradicted in later canon, it is far too much to expect that the revelations of Book 7, or even the official death of one of the principals will be enough to actually sink this particular 'ship. (Although Textualsphinx's introduction of what Rowling later defined as a Horcrux as a pledge of affection was highly disconcerting, some five years after the fic was posted!)

The 'ship is far too well established by now to merely sink, and of those who have boarded, only the most delusional can be unaware that it was effectively AU from the day it launched.

Interestingly enough, Letter from Exile was actually written in reaction to a fledgling SS/HG fandom as it was at that time developing, by an author who was, in her own words, "squicked" by the concept.

In structure, the story is a pure Snapefic, rather than a romantic interplay between the two main characters. In fact, more accurately it is a love letter to the reader with Hermione serving as a stand-in. But the ideas so explored, and the elegance of the writing was more than enough to open the popular imagination to possibilities not tapped by the fairly crude earlier work which prompted it. A .pdf edition of Letter from Exile can be found in the Publications area on this site.



This would probably be an appropriate place for me to add my own two cents on fanfic romance in general, including the requisite side note regarding slash:

I do not read fanfic for the opportunity of encountering "lemons." I don't give squat for lemons. I'm well over 21 and if I





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want to read smut there is no shortage of mainstream, professional-grade smut out there in my nearest mega-chain bookstore with a name that starts with B. And I don't get off on the sheer outrageousness of reading it enacted by characters from popular childrens' books, either.

I read fanfiction primarily for the fun of seeing how well its authors can tell a story, how solid a story they have to tell, and, as a secondary motive, to see how well they have risen to the challenge of sending recognizable characters through a new adventure while managing to keep them recognizable — and in character, all the way to the end. And, in the cases where the characters have been obviously tweaked, whether they can manage to keep the tweaking internally consistent.

The existence of slash fiction certainly doesn't offend me. I regard the whole [non]issue a bit like that of modern art. I agree that some of it is well composed and very finely executed, but hardly any of it is anything I'd go out of my way to look at on purpose. And that is, indeed, my response to most slash. I have no authentic interest in slash, as slash. And it's existence is very old news to me. I can remember the original Star Trek fandom perfectly well, for heaven's sake.

Which isn't to say that I refuse to read slash, or will not enjoy it if a particularly well written slashfic is pointed out to me. Because I have read a handful of slashfics that were *very* well done, and there was certainly no internal resistance that had to be overcome in order to read them with an open mind.

It's just that in so much of the slash out there, the actual "relationship" is so very *badly* handled... For one thing, they are usually angst-fests as well and I simply cannot imagine those par-

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ticular characters carrying on and flipping out in anything like that style in the first place.

And, moreover, I've noticed that in a the greater part of the [admittedly limited exposure to] slashers' fics that I've found myself suckered into, the authors frequently didn't telegraph their specific area of incompetence in handling "relationships" one minute before the point that they actually decided to go traipsing through the lemon grove —

...whereupon everybody was suddenly wildly OoC. [Out of Character] Which irritated me even more than it would have if the fic had been badly written from the get-go. In which case I would simply not have kept on with it in the first place. The loss of the investment of my time that I did expend on these fics irked me.



As to the depiction of the act itself; well, one of my lists went through a fairly lengthy thread on this particular subject some years ago and came to the general conclusion that for kicking off shoes and unwinding purposes (the traditional function of a hairdryer book) people don't really want to read about sex portrayed realistically. The conventionalized literary "passion dance" is as contrived and artificial as a minuet.

And deliberately so. We suspend disbelief from the point of the virtually automatic arousal (with no more effort than one burning glance. As if) through all the rest of the process, right down to the sweaty afterglow. Looked at with a cool head, the whole business as it is presented often tends to be highly implausible, whether slash or het. Just an unabashed fantasy wherein everything simply *works*, as it is supposed to, without the slight-



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est effort on anyone's part. Now, just how realistic is that?

But it does annoy me when, at the first panting breath, there is an abrupt behavior shift in which the characters suddenly start acting like aliens to themselves. And not just the "selves" that the reader expects to carry over from canon, or even fanon, but the "selves" as they were specifically set up in the beginning of the *same story*.

It doesn't always happen, I'll grant you, but I'm afraid it does more often than most people like to admit. It's as though the story suddenly got away from the author, or turned into something else in their hands. I'm sure this happens just as often — or even more so — in het romances, only with those I generally haven't stuck around long enough to have to deal with it. In most het romances, bad writing, bad plotting and bad characterization are generally quite obviously bad well before anybody works their way up to the first kiss. The author is all too obviously channeling some afternoon soap opera. I do not watch afternoon soap operas.

And I resent being expected to hyperventilate on command.



And, actually, the above is a good definition of what has gone wrong. The author has apparently forgotten that they are writing a novel (or a story) and not an on-going television series. Remembering just what format one is working in seems to be a problem for newbie writers. Most often the confusion is whether they are writing for the page or the screen, but losing track of whether they are writing a single, coherent story or a never-ending saga is even more deadly to the effectiveness of the work.



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Wambling on, aimlessly, for decades, agonizing over one's "relationships," punctuated by the occasional crisis I gather is the heart and soul of a certain form of daytime television. But you truly cannot do that in a novel. A novel requires a coherent \*story\*, with an identifiable beginning, a middle and an end — and you cannot effectively tell a story if you bury it in endless minutia. It loses its internal tension, all of its drive, and misses the point.

From where I have been sitting, the problem seems most acute (and in this regard it does not matter if it is slash or het) when the author has approached the project with an attention span that does not continue beyond the point they get the main characters into bed. I suspect that anyone who has read any appreciable amount of fanfic will be able to call up the recollection of fics which either start with a bang, or do a fine slow buildup right up to that point — and then, practically the morning after, starts wandering aimlessly in circles under the impression that a dissection of the characters' *feelings* constitutes a story. It doesn't. Often, even the reason or motivation for getting them together in the first place tends to fly out the window, leaving the reader with nothing but babble. Usually babble that devolves into titillation or repetitive episodes of hurt-comfort. I have limited tolerance for hurt-comfort. And I never bought the package that titillation constituted romance. *Or* a relationship.

To be honest, I have reached the point that I tend to feel a positive rush of gratitude when an author has the taste and restraint to "fade to black," and return to the story afterward. The authors who have the guts do that, instead of pandering, can then stop stewing over inessentials (who really needs to know a fictional character's specific bedroom technique? I mean, really?) and





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concentrate on that *relationship* (which exists primarily *outside* the bedroom) instead, and making sure that the plot and the story line continue to advance, and still work.

For what it's worth, in my not-so-humble opinion, nothing will throw your characters into OoC territory like a smut biscuit. And it is amazing, the number of promising fics that never quite manage to survive that first trip into the bedroom with their apparent integrity of purpose intact.

Now, if what you, as a writer, are writing is a PWP (Porn Without Plot), well, hey, ignore me. No one who goes in for that sort of fic really cares about tipping over into the dreaded OoC. But if what you are working on is a full-length fic, please remember that you are going to have to keep on writing it — after you haul the characters off to the bedroom. And you are going to need to deal with the aftermath of whatever athletics and pronouncements you put them through while they were there.

And, far too often, for the reader, the experience of watching that process is like having to try to ignore a gasping fish flapping and flopping across the parlor carpet during a formal tea party.

If you aren't absolutely confident that you can pull this off, don't do it. Put your energy into *not* doing it with some *style*. Otherwise, your readers cannot promise to still respect you in the morning.



However:

I have also been reading the works of Georgette Heyer and her imitators for over 50 years, and by extension, historical romances set in the Regency period, so I am hardly in a position to kick up a fuss when I know, going into a story, that it is going to turn out to

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include a romance as a major part of its reason for existence.

And, to return to the titular subject here, the highly conventionalized fanon Granger/Snape dynamics are a thoroughly representative example of one of the most predominant “foundation” story templates that drive the Regency juggernaut. There are some others, as well. But this particular one is solidly one of the top 3 in that paradigm, being only a lightly skewed variant of the “to reform a rake” model.

Which right there probably explains most of the otherwise inexplicable “sex god” hyperbole attached to “fanon” Snape. (In any pairing.)

LupinLover's 'OVER THE SILVER RAINBOW' appears to have the distinction of being the first serious attempt at a Granger/Snape romance to have been posted on ff.net. Or at least no one seems to be able to recall anything — apart from some mild S/M which was about power rather than romance — significantly earlier. LupinLover's fic was posted in September of 2000. I sought it out after reading *A Letter from Exile*, (which was posted in December that same year) and skimmed it.

Frankly, I didn't think it was particularly good. I've since learned that the author was about 13 when it was written, which at that point in the fandom was uncharacteristically young to be dealing with this particular pairing. (The inimitable Mr Rickman had yet to add his unwitting contribution to the popularity of this particular 'ship.)

LupinLover's youth was ample explanation for the clumsiness in its handling. The characters' motivations were thin and the attraction between the principals dumped in without any sort of backstory. Overall, it seemed less of a soap opera than



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a soap bubble. But it does appear to have been the first serious attempt at SS/HG, so far as anyone has since been able to determine. The author removed it from the internet a year or two afterward. She was older by then and the level of purely technical expertise on display in it, more than two decades ago now, was such as might be highly embarrassing.

Textualsphinx's spin-off/response appears to have been the real watershed for this particular pairing. Not all fans may care for Textualsphinx's overtly "literary" style of writing, let alone her distinctly feminist slant on the subject, or her handling of it (although more of them certainly do), but no one can call it unimpressive. And it has certainly inspired far more successful attempts at emulation/contrasting viewpoints/rolling one's own than LupinLover's original fic.

However, I tend to suspect that all of this is really begging the question. I very much contend that 'OVER THE SILVER RAINBOW's' "original fic" status as the "first" Snape/Hermione fic was primarily a matter of chance. The summer of 2000, after all, had seen the release of 'HARRY POTTER AND THE GOBLET OF FIRE'. Once GoF was out, I think that this particular pairing's debut into fanfic became inevitable



By the end of GoF the character of Hermione Granger is a scant 3 months short of her next birthday (whether her 16th or her 15th became a subject of much debate until Rowling unequivocally settled the matter in a website update of 12/2004, in which it is made clear that Hermione is some 10 months older than Harry Potter: this contradicted all of Rowling's earlier state-



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ments on the subject and rendered most of the established online timelines incorrect) and by that point in the series had clearly matured into an adolescent female of unquestionably "dating" age; nubile, by nearly all traditional definitions, even formally marriageable by the standards of the late 16th–17th century, and a formidable witch in her own right.

In the very same book Snape has openly been awarded the cachet of unequivocally (for the moment at least) being listed among the forces of the Light, complete with what is generally assumed must be an overbearingly dramatic backstory. We did not have any of these certainties prior to GoF's release.

It was some years more before I realized that insofar as Severus Snape is concerned, the groundwork for his debut as a romantic lead had already been set up a year earlier with the release of PoA.

I defy anyone to read PoA and not come out of the experience with a raging case of the Snape-Loved-Lily virus.

This in defiance of the fact that there is not one word in PoA to suggest such a reading. The conviction nevertheless seems to leap out of the margins, go for the reader's throat, and hang on like static cling. I still haven't figured out how Rowling did that.

There isn't really anything in the subsequent 3 books to confirm this reading either. But it seems likely that Rowling has heard of Derrida and was playing the "vast absence" card.

Consequently, by the time GoF was released, the fans had already somehow been encouraged to lead themselves up the garden path for the rest of the series, spinning multitudinous Snape/Lily theories. Many of which proved to be considerably off-target when the other shoe finally dropped in Book 7.

For myself: despite a conviction that we were being primed





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to discover some sort of an interaction between Severus Snape and Lily Evans, I was no longer able to seriously entertain the prevailing fanish interpretation of Snape-Loved-Lily after OotP (and, indeed, as I suspected, the actual relationship was something rather more substantial than a case of unrequited teen lurve). But it still took me until nearly a full year after OotP was released to manage to finally peel it off myself, and dispose of it. The majority of fans did not even try.

The fallout of contracting the Snape-Lived-Lily infection is that once you start mentally casting a character as one half of a tragic romantic pairing, to continue to regard him as a potential half of a different romantic pairing thereafter becomes all but unavoidable. And to follow this up in the next book by having the narrative identify him as a White Hat rendered him “eligible.”

And all of Rowling’s interview responses with their rhetorical questions of why are fans interested in the “bad boys” are thus rendered disingenuous in the extreme. She is the one who did it, after all.

So; we now have Snape, whose way with words even Rowling admits she enjoys, abruptly added to the short list of adult, but still comparatively young, heroic second leads, with a backstory which is presumed to rival Black’s, and quite eclipses Lupin’s. In a “universe” with as yet NO unattached, developed, female characters of their own generation. This is the kind of male character that the fans cannot resist trying to pair off with somebody. And if there isn’t anybody available, they will either engage in slash, or they will invent their own. (Cue the Mary Sue chorus line.)

Moreover, in a Rowling interview of about the same date, Snape’s age — and that of his contemporaries (stated as 35 or

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36) — was finally made public along with the, at that point, fresh information that wizards’ lifespans may be much longer than those of Muggles. In short, positively inviting the interpretation that, among wizards, Snape, and his contemporaries must still be regarded as quite *young* men.

It takes very little time before it starts percolating through the collective unconscious that a “perfect match” for someone like “fanon” Snape (a much more attractive romantic prospect than the canon version, even before the release of Half-Blood Prince) would probably be very much like Hermione Granger — only about 10 years older. [Note: a 10-year age difference is pretty standard within traditional Regency conventions.] Factor in the new data of potentially much longer lifespans for wizards, and the 19 year age difference suddenly becomes far less of an issue.

For that matter just about everyone who is old enough to be reading romances is already personally acquainted with at least one apparently happy couple with a 15–25 year difference in age between the husband and wife. Such matches simply aren’t that uncommon. So it really isn’t that big of an issue to wrap one’s mind around, in itself.

Well why invent a copy when you can now enlist the original? Lupin Lover was first to post such a fic, yes. But given a few more months, or possibly even only weeks, there would have been some other. It was ready to happen and all just a matter of time.



As to the ins and outs of the underlying plausibility of a SS/HG attraction; if one sticks to canon evidence, I tend to agree that there isn’t much. Let it be said, however, that it has been



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pointed out, exhaustively, that to a quite late point in the series, the only young man Hermione Granger is known to have formally “dated” for any length of time in canon (if one ignores Cormac McLaggan) was both older than she, and, physically, a pretty fair extrapolation of an adolescent Snape look-alike. That detail hasn’t been lost on the fans, either.

Which is one of the reasons that some of the best stories which explore this particular relationship have the two of them “meeting” as potential romantic protagonists in some context other than a Hogwarts classroom. Usually in some context far removed from the classroom. But even very small differences in location can serve. Even a removal to the Hogwarts staff room is often regarded as quite sufficient.

But the fact remains that one cannot really see much likelihood of even a minimally canon-compliant 'ship launching from the Potions lab. (Certainly not now!)

Not that such couldn’t be done, or that it isn’t, in fact, being done, just that this projection simply isn’t as likely as one which postulates sending them both in different directions for a few years to let Hermione mature and develop a bit more, and to put Snape into a situation where he isn’t defending his home turf. Leveling the playing field, as it were.

I am willing to speculate that in most cases, the germ for the concept of the Granger/Snape pairing is the invocation of the generic cultural ideal of the “Marriage of True Minds.” This particular ideal is one of a standard set of cultural icons (“The Attraction of Opposites/Perfect Counterpart,” and “The Star-Crossed Lovers” are a couple of the others) all of which can be tweaked into a lot of different sub-variants. But the most



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common requirement for this particular class of tale is that both parties must be demonstrated to at least *have* minds.

Well, there is no question that this much is supported in canon. Hermione is at the very least a much brighter than average child, and if Rowling had the guts to fly the flag openly would be readily accepted as falling within the “gifted and talented” range.

It should be noted that Rowling has never actually stated that she does. And her depiction of Miss Granger throughout the series suggests that Hermione is merely a tightly-wound over-achiever, and precocious with it. But then, Rowling only seems to value raw intelligence within rather narrow limits. Rowling’s whole love-fest for the Weasley family strongly suggests that raw “intelligence” or worse, “intellectualism” is emphatically not one of her fetishes. It took until OotP before we met even one Ravenclaw apart from Penelope Clearwater who we glimpsed briefly in Book 2 and never saw again, even though she was still at Hogwarts to the end of the year of the TriWizard Tournament, or Cho Chang who has never been more than a sweetly pretty distraction on the sidelines.

And, keeping this firmly in mind, we can also see that until Book 6, canon Snape was never depicted as being anywhere close to the level of genius that fanon Snape is almost always depicted, either. (And he is still is not depicted as being particularly “culturally-enriched,” which is a widespread fanon Snape trait.) But he has nevertheless always been admitted to be clever — or at any rate, “no fool” — and he has always been a sharp observer of whatever is going on around him. What is more, he usually only goes astray in his interpretation of these observations due to his determination to assign the worst possi-





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ble motives to everything and everyone. Canon Snape is clearly an intelligent man who is blinkered by his own biases. Perfect anti-hero material, in fact..

(I think we can safely dismiss most of canon's characterizations from DHs from consideration. Everyone in DHs was suddenly acting like a cartoon of themselves, with the exception of Neville Longbottom. And we also suddenly found ourselves back in kiddie-lit territory wherein no one was permitted to be brighter or have a more sophisticated thinking process than the presumably 10-year-old reader.)



As a side note to more directly address the attractions of Severus Snape himself: JK Rowling was not being a bit straight with us when the subject of former Professor Snape had been raised in interviews.

Either that or she is an unconscionable fool.

In particular, her steadfast pose of pretending not to understand the fascination that the character holds for the reader, and the deflection of so many questions regarding Snape to counter-questions as to why the readers should be so interested in "bad boys — that's not smart!" appears to be all a part of a delaying tactic, intended to assure that the reader should continue to approach the series strictly from Harry Potter's point of view. To that end, this pose was deliberate, and necessary. In fact, essential. She meant for Snape's true position to come as a grand revelation. Which I am sure that it did. To Harry.

To some of the rest of us, not so much. But that is all water under the bridge by this time.



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Since the release of PoA, not only had the reader been suffering from a viral Snape-Loved-Lily infection, a high percentage of the readers have also consistently interpreted the character of Snape himself as the "geek," the "outsider," the kid who is commonly mocked and picked on by the "popular kids," and nothing has ever been able to deflect us from it. The Pensive junket in OotP gave us a positive wave of vindication on this issue. And I think that this is really the crux of the matter. The relevant issue is not who *Snape* is. It is who the *readers* are.

JK Rowling has been widely hailed as a phenomenon who somehow has been able to connect with "reluctant readers." I will offer no criticism of this particular response to her work. But, allow me to point out that the bulk of JK Rowling's readership, and certainly her *adult* readership are still precisely the same demographic that such fantasy adventure stories have always appealed to. Which is to say; *reading* children. And to an overwhelming extent, the adults who used to be them.

...who still tend to define themselves as the geeks, the outsiders, the ones who were mocked and picked on by the popular kids.

It might astonish a great many people to learn that a quite startling number of perfectly normal-appearing adult women habitually observe society from self-identified positions as "outsiders." The "socialization process" of western society, i.e., male-dominated society, positively encourages this.

In short; to our perception, Severus Snape is *us*. Rowling still does not seem to realize this.

This is also a reading which goes a long way toward explaining the pronounced feminist slant which can be determined in the attitudes applied to the former Professor in a broad range





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of popular Snapefics. There is no other convincing explanation for this. It is certainly not supported by the presentation of the character in canon. But then, until the issue of anorexic body image came up, Rowling never attempted to give the public even the slightest appearance of having any kind of a feminist axe to grind. I'd say that she still doesn't, actually. Regardless of whatever she might try to claim.

Admittedly much of this interpretation is probably attributable to Textualsphinx's work, which, as stated, *does* have a pronouncedly feminist slant. But certainly not all of it. And, imho, persons who attempt to claim that it is impossible for a reader to identify with a character of the opposite gender, clearly have an exclusionary axe to of their own to grind.

Emotionally, of course, canon Snape seems to be arrested in late adolescence and showed absolutely no willingness to mature beyond that point. Much like Sirius Black — without Black's extenuating circumstances. (One does not *mature* in Azkaban.) But, then, our other identification target, canon Hermione, is a fairly neurotic specimen as well. And not nearly as mature as her fans attempt to paint her.



An additional, and major cultural — although *not* canon — contribution to the launching of this particular 1000 'ships (or fics at any rate) is the resemblance that both of the principal players have to two of the most highly identifiable stock character "types" from romance fiction, and, what is more, of two of the types who most frequently play the romantic leads opposite one another in the ongoing puppet theater which is Romance writing.



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Romance writing, particularly the sort that enacts the "True Minds" scenario is a highly stylized form of storytelling. We are talking about Oral Tradition archetypes here. These are types that are as well established — and as recognizable — as those of the traditional *Comedia del Arte*. Overlaying this base, are the specific demands of the True Minds variant; that the dialogue should \*sparkle\*, and the narration be demonstrably clever. In short, we have wandered across the borders into the world of the Comedy of Manners, aka "high" comedy. As opposed to "low" comedy, which has all of the subtlety of a banana peel or a pie in the face — which it occasionally resorts to.

The True Minds scenario is not all that easy a one to pull off. The Lily/Snape=Star-Crossed Lovers model is far easier to handle, if you can be resigned to the inevitable unhappy ending. By contrast, the True Minds model is particularly difficult to finesse, even in a Comedy of Manners setting.

For one thing; it demands a much lighter touch than the "Opposites Attract" variant which can drag in all sorts of love-hate subtexts and whose dialogue can be enlivened by the sort of bickering that is fueled by raw energy rather than requiring actual wit. (The byplay between Hermione and Ron fits this pattern far more closely than any variant of the True Minds scenario.)

The True Minds model also tends to demand a higher level of plausibility and intelligence in the setting up and deployment of the various complications which serve as obstacles for the leads to have to overcome. This variant also has a narrower than average tolerance range for the use of "idiot plot" devices. (i.e., the plot only works if someone — or everyone — suddenly starts acting like idiots.) All in all, it can be a worthy challenge to an





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author who attempts it.

Such authors are assisted in their attempts by the fact that the stock character types who make up the "repertory company" which enacts these puppet plays are all individually specialized as to basic functions, but are not so individualized as to keep any of them from being able to act a broad selection of possible roles within each of their own considerable ranges. Which gives a puppet master a fair degree of latitude.

For example: although the puppet designed to play the younger male sibling might be easily distinguished from the one designed to play the military Captain, there is nothing to keep this young boy puppet from being drafted into service as the clever servant in one story, or the mooncalf-boy-who-wants-to-be-a-poet in the next. Or, indeed, Harry Potter himself.

The female puppets in this kind of rep company have even greater latitude, being chiefly distinguishable merely by age or social class (young ladies as opposed to maidservants) with only a few codified standard variations such as the bluestocking, the spoilt beauty, the hoyden, or the vamp.

With all this in mind it becomes laughably easy to see how the basic cartoon sketch of "Hermione Granger" can easily be shoe-horned into the role of the freshly nubile, clever and "spirited" young heroine. While fanon Snape steps into the (Heathcliff) role of "Tall, dark and dangerous man with a Past" with hardly a more than a quick look-in at wardrobe.



I contend that there is nothing remotely shocking or transgressive here. Nor subversive either, except in the mildest, most



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culturally ingrained interpretation of the term. i.e., that True Love will Conquer All, regardless of any of the capricious social absurdities that it may demand from its participants. These traditions long predate any such earnest modern overlay as that of legal statutes or cavils over the possibility of being thought to encourage student-teacher relationships.

Indeed, despite the fact that for quite a few people who do attempt to write Granger/Snape romance testing the boundaries and exploring the imbalance of power within the relationship is the whole point, such exercises should be more properly classified as "social dramas" than as "romances." To the reader it quickly becomes apparent which one you have fallen into, regardless of the authors' determination to call *everything* a romance. The fundamental dishonesty of pasting a boilerplate "happy ending" onto a social drama which does not deserve one is a loud and clear indication that you have strayed outside the stylized boundaries of romance writing and are wandering in some weird half-world in which its needs are not being met and its rules do not apply. Such hybrids may succeed as stories, but they are not romances.

Within the world that generated them, though, the puppets themselves are timeless, and wear their burdens of expectation so lightly that they might as well have been clothed by the Emperor's own tailors, oblivious to the passage of these censorious centuries. In the purest of executions no one deliberately attempts to be outrageous in these pairings, or at least not any more outrageous than could be accomplished by judiciously painting one's hair pink. Horrified whispers and flutters in the hencoop are not required by the management.





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One could sometimes wish that the authors of these puppet plays were defter in the handling, perhaps. It is painful to see the strings get into too horrific a snarl. One could also wish that the authors had a clearer understanding of the traditions that they attempt to emulate. (Such as which one they are dealing with. A good many apparent "True Minds" openings tend to abruptly morph mid-way into "Opposites Attract" or some other pattern, and the transition is usually jarring.)

All that is required of the audience however, is to sit back and enjoy the show, and decide whether the individual playwright is worth encouraging.

Meanwhile, try not to be surprised if you happen to notice that the black-cloaked "Death Eaters" are hastily re-purposed generic brigands and "Lucius Malfoy" is as often as not to be found mouthing the same lines as in his previous role as the dastardly French spy.



## At the End of Time

This essay is quite unequivocally from the deleted sub-collection of 'Harry Potter and the Reader'. However, not a lot of it is specifically related to reading.

No. This one is about the phenomenon of Fandom itself.

Potter fandom is, however used as the predominant example.



(sings) Now that the Ball is Over... :

**W**ell.

The day that we all knew would one day dawn, has dawned, its sun has traveled across the sky in its course, and, ultimately, has set upon the story of Harry Potter and the Dark Lord.

So. The end has come. The axe has fallen, and it us up to us to decide how we are going to deal with the resultant mess.

Or, whether to simply walk away from it.

Rather a lot of people have done exactly that. These are the readers who were merely readers, and not fans. For them, the story is over. Whether they liked or disliked the final installment of the series is immaterial. It's over. He's dead, Harry. Move on. A lot of them probably wandered back to see the two last movies, but they didn't really intend to stick around. They never did.

Many, if not most, of those whom the publishers have most ardently courted and acknowledged over the past decades will also be in this category. Which is to say the young kids and the Middle-school set. These readers all have some pretty heavy demands on their time and attention without maintaining a continuing reference to Harry Potter as well. They have a whole Real World to figure out, and a limited amount of optimum time





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in which to do it. Along with the considerable challenge of finding their own place in it. No one can fault them for leaving Harry where Ms Rowling left him, and getting on with the job.

But I rather suspect that a great many of the fans that the publishers had determinedly averted their eyes from, and never acknowledged any more than they could avoid, which is to say, the adult fans, aren't going to disappear anything like so conveniently. Not at all. This segment of the fandom has no intention of "going quietly."

Although a number of them have, in fact, gone.

Indeed quite a few of them have already departed as noisily as they could manage. In a sulfurous-smelling cloud, in fact. And upon the whole I cannot much blame them. My opinion of 'HARRY POTTER AND THE DEATHLY HALLOWS' was a matter of public record well before the previous rebuild of the Red Hen site was posted. My opinion has not changed. Indeed, it has intensified.

But, however eager many of us may have been for the day that Ms Rowling would be forced to turn the finished work over to us, we are not by any means finished with it yet. And we won't be any time soon. She sold this series to the public, and quite a lot of that public is determined to keep it. It no longer belongs solely to "The Author."

After all, The Author is dead.

The moment that Rowling signed off the final manuscript, she ceased to be "the Author."

"The Author," is not an actual person, after all, but a function. A function which does not exist at rest. Ms Rowling will, by courtesy, be acknowledged as having *been* The Author for the rest of her life. And as a consequence of having been The Author she is



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the only person (along with her publishers, agents, lawyers, and the rest of the whole conglomerate) who has the legal right to commercially profit directly from the story, the characters, and any other copyright material contained in the books.

But once a book has been published, The Author has no further power to affect it. Not unless the book goes into a new edition which has been rewritten or re-edited. And "The Author" never had the power to *interpret* it. Interpretation is, and has always been the function of "The Reader." *That* function doesn't exist at rest, either.

Once a book is longer *being* written, "The Author" ceases to exist. Ms Rowling is now as powerless to modify the text of the books, as they currently stand, as we are. Regardless of how many *ex-cathedra* statements she may try to make in interviews, if she didn't *put* it in the books, it isn't *in* the books.

And, indeed throughout the first flurry of post-release interviews, one could not help but feel a certain degree of irritation with Ms Rowling's apparent determination to push the Reader around and tell him *how* he should be reading the text (particularly when she couldn't stick to the same story for more than 2 days running, and would immediately contradict herself). From my 3rd-party vantage point, if she has not presented her view of the story arc in a manner in which those views are the ones the reader will effortlessly form — and be satisfied with — then she has not done her job properly.

As of the summer of 2007, the Harry Potter sector of "Fandom" was suddenly more or less at the same point as the following of a popular television series is, exactly at the point that the show has been canceled, and the last episode aired,





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after a successful run of several years. There might be rumors of a movie or a mini-series with the promise of whatever new material those could introduce, but upon the whole the official canon is considered to be closed. Nothing that Ms Rowling chooses to say now will affect any of the text as it exists within the covers of the books.

And we *want* it that way.

If it had to end, we want it to be over. We do not want the former-Author pushing us around and telling us what to decide about her work. It's rude, and it's uncalled for.

We will quite willingly listen to what she has to say about what she *thought* she was doing, but her opinions now no longer weigh with us any more heavily than our own. Nor should they. Particularly not when what she tells us contradicts what she has *already* told us — in writing, inside the books — and, moreover, changes every time she speaks of it. We are The Reader. The interpretation of the text is *our* function. Neither our function nor our purpose ended with the handing of money over to a cashier in a bookstore. That is where it began.

And we are now at liberty to pick and choose just what we will or will not concentrate upon, from the now allegedly complete range of the material that is currently available. Just as are the fans of that now defunct television series.

If we are fic writers, we can dismiss a weak 6th season from our own fanfic's story arc, or choose what we consider promising from it, and dismiss the rest. In Potter fandom, "the rest" certainly includes any off-canon supplemental information contained in either Rowling's statements about the books from interviews, any released notes, official website Easter eggs, the Black family

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tapestry sketch, or the films. Or, for that matter, Pottermore.

In fact, to be strictly accurate, by this point in time, much of the draw of fanfic is that it is *not* canon. Neither The Reader, nor the fans, have the power to affect canon. However, once canon is closed, we are now free to think "outside the box," to the best of our ability, now that we know the actual *dimensions* of the box, without needing to try to anticipate whatever new curves The Author might decide to pitch at us. Canon compliance is no longer a major, or *the* major, consideration.

If we are artists, the same applies. Although artists have always had a reasonably free hand in interpreting the appearance of the characters.

If we are theorists, our already posted interpretations, wherever they diverged from the now revealed completed story arc thread are now unapologetically alternate interpretations, or potential plot bunnies.



And while we are at it: let us disabuse ourselves of the fallacy which attempts to convince us that there are multiple "fandoms" out there. It is all just Fandom. It wears many different costumes, plays in a number of different sandboxes and writes its scripts to different standards on a case-by-case basis depending on just where you happen to be standing and the direction that you are currently looking. But really, it's all the same thing. In fact, it is a very *large* thing, and no one can be everywhere at once in it. Fans explore Fandom at their whim. Sometimes they find one area and stay there for their entire period of involvement, or more usually they shift back and



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forth among a selected range of its general “play areas”.

Fandom operates very much like the food court at a mall. There’s the Chinese place, and the pizza place, and that counter with the logo of a hamburger chain that’s been around since the ’50s, and then there is the yogurt counter, and I guess you would call it an Italian place, since it serves pasta as well as pizza, and there’s somewhere that you can get a salad, and a deli. And maybe one day there is suddenly an Indian place or a Japanese place, or a *crêperie*.

What you get at any of them is all is very much like what you would get at any other restaurant of the same “genre,” but you know perfectly well that you are not actually *in* China, or *in* Italy, and you are certainly not in the 1950s. Everything comes to you at at least one remove from its alleged source, but it’s tasty, it’s in the right style, it’s close enough, and you enjoy it.

Oh, sure, you could always stay home and cook dinner yourself. But sometimes that’s no fun, and if you are out in the mall already, why not let someone else do the dishes? And maybe sometimes you just want to go to the mall with a group of your friends and have *pizza together*.

And, after you’ve been going there a while you may decide that the food at the Chinese place is too oily, and the pizza is too salty, and that the people at the counter at the ’50s place are just plain rude, and you stop going to those altogether.

But nothing says you can’t try someplace else, and there is *always* someplace else. And maybe after a while you notice that the rude cashier is gone so you go back. And Fandom is still Fandom, whether you are dealing with a open-ended series, or one which was always known to be working toward a specific and final conclusion.



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The Harry Potter franchise of fandom was probably at its high-water mark in 2007. The books were complete. There were still two (eventually three) movies to go. It seemed possible that attrition could be delayed during the period that the final movies were in production, since each film seems to have brought in at least a few new fans of the series. But eventually the film series would be complete as well. By then, the casual readers and viewers will have wandered off in favor of whatever is generating a buzz at that point, leaving only the fans.

And there would still be a lot of them around. But they won’t be making headlines. The media will have moved on to monitor whatever is generating that new buzz.

An early salvo in most of the periodic attempts to start an in-depth Literature/Fiction/FanFiction discussion that tended to crop up on most of my lists usually had someone pointing out that most of the fandoms that generate reams of fanfiction are media-based followings tied to television, movies, or anime, rather than to books, and someone generally asks if this says something about the nature of JK Rowling’s work.

It’s a good call. There is a wide, but not often formally defined divide between “literature” and “storytelling”. There is also a wide separation in the reader or viewer’s reaction between having the “whole” story, and having only a part of it.

Book-based followings tend, like the media-based ones, to be character driven. It is the characters that the fans follow. The characters, and the situation, whether the situation is a time, a place, or a whole alternate reality. There are fans who are





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there for the worldbuilding rather than just the leading actors. But plot is usually secondary, and that is the part that the fans are most eager to unravel and rework to their own preferences.

In a media-based fandom, you have only the appearances of the characters, and whatever backstory gets dropped in as exposition. The followers of such a fandom usually are attempting to fill in the blanks. "Literary" fiction, or even most popular mainstream fiction usually already tells you everything you need to know. There is rarely any reason to expand upon it. Only occasionally does a character or a world manage to escape the page and refuse to be confined to it. In most cases the source for these escapees will be genre fiction. Which is to say, fantasy, science fiction, mystery and the like.

Ms Rowling to all appearances has quite deliberately given us a series with a lot of blanks to fill. And, what is more, she has done a less than stellar job of plugging the gaps herself. Even those gaps which really *needed* to be plugged. I think that if she had nailed down the plot and done a sounder job of consistently dotting 'i's and crossing 't's, and making sure that the numbers added up, there would have been a far smaller group of people itching to work out what was going on, themselves. A hole, after all, constitutes an invitation to poke a finger in it. Plus, there is something about a certain level of rat's nest which just makes you want to roll up your sleeves and straighten it out, and some pieces of machinery are so bizarre that they positively scream to be taken apart to see how they fit together.

Most popular media forms tend to fall into the category of pure storytelling. Rowling is a marginally competent writer. But she is a compelling storyteller. And, until the summer of '07,

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probably more to the point, her story arc, although it had generated some 3300 pages of material, was still open. And therefore, to the fanfic community, a great many things still seemed possible in it. And where they were not, the fan author was as likely as not to just give an annoyed huff, and to proceed on their original course into what was now an AU (Alternate Universe).

One of the major differences between literature and storytelling is that in most "literature" the characters are so solidly nailed down that their actions attain a level of the inevitable which leaves the reader with very little wish to "play" with them. You'll notice that although there have been any number of "Tolklones" professionally published in the past 40 years, there were bloody few LotR fanfics sitting around on the web before the first movie came out. Tolkien, after all, had done a very good job of dotting 'i's and crossing 't's (even if whole areas from his secondary world were simply missing).

Although in all honesty I do have to admit that a fair amount of something quite recognizable as LotR fanfic was generated back in the Go-Go-Gandalf days of the 1970s.

In those days this fanfic usually just played with Tolkien's world and culture and generally featured OCs (original characters) in that world, rather than Tolkien's own characters. At that point there was no compelling collective fantasy surrounding the leading characters, as simplified and interpreted by flesh-and-blood actors. Tolkien's characters had not yet been cut down to size through being subjected to celluloid processing.

Admittedly, I do clearly recall Tolkien fandom back in the late '60s through the '70s when the college-age demographic seemed to have gone collectively nuts for LotR. It really did behave very



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much in the same manner that the current lot which has gone collectively wild about Harry Potter. I'm sure that I'm not the only person who can recall that period. But Tolkien's trilogy has been around for close to 60 years by now, *The Hobbit* since 1938, and they have both had time to become absorbed by the surrounding culture. Harry Potter has not. Harry Potter references are still fairly topical references.

Still, this sort of furor is not typically the response to published fiction. Does anyone try to create a world in which Tess of the D'Urbervilles goes adventuring with a grown up Jim Harker to find another pirates' treasure? Or even an AU in which she meets a decent sort of fellow who will take her away from her miserable life? Of course not. It is seldom enough that anyone even manages to write — or, more to the point, to get published — an actual “sequel” to a widely beloved literary work. (‘PEMBERLY’, ‘WIDE SARGASSO SEA’, etc.)

The only exceptions to this rule are almost without “exception” to be found in the field of “popular” (i.e., non-literary) storytelling. How many libraries could we fill with Sherlock Holmes pastiches? Or apocryphal Oz books, for that matter. To say nothing of novels inspired by media-based fandoms like *Star Trek*, or *Star Wars*. Or, if we want to go back to our roots; King Arthur and Robin Hood.

In Literature; even the supplementary characters may be clearly etched miniature portraits without detracting from the principle players. In classic storytelling; the supplementary characters are roughed in with just enough detail to tell them apart. We have their general appearance and their main “schtick” as a distinguishing characteristic, but we typically know little of their inner lives.



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Nevertheless, they are usually still distinct presences inside their “universe”. This is another kind of gap which cries to be filled.

The viewpoint character of the storyteller's craft, otoh, is often a predominantly empty, neutral mask for the reader to observe that world and the story's actions through.

Either method of defining character is a positive invitation for the reader to grab the wheel himself and take that particular universe for a spin. And Rowling uses both methods, extensively.



I've said this before; to my eyes the closest equivalent I've seen to the Rowling phenomenon both regarding the dispersion of the work worldwide, as well as its sheer popularity, and the solid, but unremarkable writing style, was the work of Agatha Christie. Another competent, but really very basic, writer, another brilliant storyteller (note: *plotting* is not *writing*). However, in a Christie novel everything is subordinate to the plot/puzzle *du jour*, and every book is brought to a conclusive ending. She was also much better at plugging her gaps.

It occasionally feels as if that one of the main pillars of the original Mystery genre, the classic “puzzler,” died with Christie, for very few later authors appear to have attempted it since her death. Or at least not with such a resounding success. Christie seems to have been the last author from the “golden age” of the detective story who was still consistently able to pull it off, too.

However, I must admit that I haven't seen a lot of Agatha Christie fanfic floating around the web. Nor have I felt a need to go looking for it. I'm just fine with what Christie claims took place in her stories.





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Until the summer of 2007, with Rowling we were still dealing with an as yet unfinished story arc, throwing us collectively into what would be the same position as a reader who is three-quarters through 'EVIL UNDER THE SUN' or 'TEN LITTLE INDIANS' and coming up with their own theories of what was actually going on. And it was gradually becoming unclear whether our interest in the story would survive Rowling's explanation for how it all worked out. In order for it to do that, the story would almost need to be either very good, or *very* bad.

And, for as long as canon-compatibility was still a possibility or a goal, with each volume of the series, the fanfic authors' field of potential directions in which to take their own iteration of the Potterverse was narrowed further. I expected that it might be interesting to see how well the HP fanfic community would weather the ultimate conclusion of the series. Nobody is writing many fanfics about the murder of Roger Ackroyd these days.

In the event, I'll have to say that I found the explosion of immediate response fics after DHs was released to be very heartening. And very unlike the response to HBP, which seems to have stalled the ficwriters for months afterward.

My own suspicion is that while the Potter juggernaut is far too big to stop on a dime, and that the fandom *per se* will continue for long after Rowling has finished with it, it certainly won't continue forever. Quite probably not even into a whole new generation (although the books themselves may remain popular with new generations of children).

Or at least not as Rowling has left it. Rowling keeps reminding us all that it isn't Star Wars. I rather suspect that it isn't even Oz. Oz, after all, has managed to hold the fans' interest



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for over a century. Indeed, we've passed a full century since that particular Author's quite literal, physical death.

Parts of the Potter fandom will soldier on, as long as the current fans retain interest. There is certainly discussion fodder left lying around to keep the current fans nattering on for years to come. But the bulk of the mainstream of the fandom may gradually become a ghost town.

And the fact that so many of the current fans appear to be actually media fans rather than "book" fans will not help. Movies disappear far more quickly than books. At best dwindling into "cult classics" clung to by what is a usually fairly small following. And frankly, imho, the Harry Potter films are just not good enough examples of filmmaking to justify that. Or at least the first two certainly weren't, and they needed to be.

I'm willing to bet that once we get a full thirty years down the track, those parts of the fandom which will still be functioning most actively will be the die-hard Snapefans — who will probably outlast anything else in the series, with, very likely, a solid remnant of the Snape/Granger crowd tagging along, as well as the Malfoy groupies (father and son), i.e., exactly the parts of the original story that Rowling is most dismissive of. There may also quite possibly be some scattered Marauders' era (and earlier) "historians" and the apocryphal stories about the main series characters' kids. And there will be comparatively few of those. And several of those groupings will be largely overtaken by Slash City.

Plus, of course, a lingering remnant of actor fics and the blatant media crossovers.

In short, all of the segments of the current fandom who





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already know that what they are playing in is an AU where Rowling would never go.

Because, no, except for the thinly disguised actor fanfics, which like the poor are ever with us, I really cannot foresee very many general HP fans signing on, or many new canon-based fanfics being written — particularly not by the Middle school set, who discover the series after it is already complete — now that Rowling has supposedly closed the circle.

Harry Potter has left the building.

But WE are still occupying it.



## Regarding the Potterverse Part I

# The 'Foundation' Essays

Theories need a base to reason from. Unfortunately, J. K. Rowling didn't really provide one. Herein is an attempt to draft some workable paradigms for Magic in the Potterverse. This set of assumptions underpin the rest of the theories in this collection.





## Present at the Creation (well, *almost* ...)

**I**n 1972 a diverse group of people, all with vague ties to Science Fiction fandom, all of whom also happened to be fans of children's fantasy literature, formed an APA (Amateur Press Association). The APA is still going, and I'm still a member.

Participating in an APA is rather like carrying on a pen-pal conversation with a couple dozen other people. It's one of the things fans did to keep in touch before there were listgroups, let alone social media.

In 1997 or early '98 a married couple who were members of the APA took a holiday to Britain and caught the buzz regarding a first novel by a new author which seemed to be a runaway success. Of course they purchased copies and told the rest of the members about it.

So, when the re-christened 'HARRY POTTER AND THE SORCERER'S STONE' hopped the pond, we were waiting.

Having been reading the books since '98, and participating in the online community since '99, it stands to reason that I've drawn a few conclusions



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To build sound (even if incorrect) theories, you need a solid foundation to reason from. Rowling really didn't provide one.

So, consequently, we have to start at the beginning.

The beginning, of course, is magic.



### Regarding the Depiction of History in the Potterverse:

**T**his is a rant: you may skip down past it if you wish, but it lays out exactly where I am coming from as it relates to the creation of this entire essay collection.

Probably one of the most glaring weaknesses (and there are any number of them) on display regarding the construction of the world of Harry Potter is the lack of respect accorded to the contribution that a plausible and consistent history plays in the creation of a well-drawn secondary world.

Rowling on one hand seems to have completely and deliberately ignored the fact that in any living society, things *change*. On the other hand she flip-flops back and forth with her backstory, telling us first one thing, and then the opposite, making no attempt to reconcile the two, or even giving us any indication that she is aware that there is a contradiction. She appears to be determined to have everything both ways, and it comes across as either confused or dishonest.

If the Potterverse is supposed to be a truly separate world, she hasn't built us a viable one. If it is merely an imaginative overlay on our own world it ignores the fact that our own world's societies took \*a very long time\* to get to where they are now. And they went through any number of stages before they got there. In this, she is not doing justice to her readers'





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intelligence by pretending that every moral judgment on display has always been set in stone according to modern sensibilities, and that historical figures can or ought ethically to be judged according to said modern sensibilities without taking their own times and circumstances into account.

I agree that Ms Rowling did not have the time and space to delineate Pottermore social history in any kind of detail, but she could reasonably have dropped some variation of the statement; “Well, it was a long time ago, and people didn’t have all the information they do today” or; “People thought differently then” into the narrative a couple of times in something over 4000 pages, without doing violence to her storyline and the narrative would have come across a bit less smug and hypocritical.

In the world of Harry Potter, the whole concept of history seems to be regarded primarily as a joke. And, moreover, quite *obviously* as a joke, and presented in a manner which makes it clear to the reader that this was a deliberate choice on the part of the author.

The teaching of history in the Pottermore is a particularly broad piece of comedy (and, as represented in the text, reads as a well-established Hogwarts policy of deliberate disinformation, to boot). At Hogwarts, dead history is taught by a dead teacher who drones on about apparently irrelevant events until the student body has no recourse other than to fall asleep. The situation is instantly recognizable and admittedly apt. We have all been there. Every student who has ever been required to study history against his inclination, as taught by a teacher who is incapable of bringing it to life will grin at this depiction.

But this conceit is never examined or even explored to any narrative purpose inside of canon. Even the presentation of

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Pottermore history when it actually comes up in the course of the story, and is relevant to the action, has been treated more dismissively than not.

Worse, the subject is consistently treated shallowly. The series, at least up to the release of *Deathly Hallows*, did not appear to be *intended* as a shallow story — but at no point during the series had there been any recognition paid to the simple truth that at varying points in history, people have not thought about matters in the same way that they do today.

To impart a clear understanding of this overriding truth is regarded as one of the basic tenets of education itself. But, to the end of the final book, nowhere in the story had this truth been even lightly acknowledged. It must finally be accepted that Rowling never had any intention of acknowledging this particular truth.

Which is a piece of fundamental dishonesty. There is simply no excuse.

Welcome to Bedrock. Meet the Flintstones. All historical personages shall be stripped of any sense of historical context, and judged accordingly by modern standards.

This is robbing the dead.

Such a presentation is unfair, untrue, unrealistic and unwarranted. Justice is simply not being served. And Rowling doesn’t seem to care. Indeed, she seems to *want* it that way.

The fallout of this signal failure to acknowledge a basic truth is that we are given no sense of the way in which the historic interacts with the contemporary in the Pottermore. Which in a series that — at least for the first half of it — *appeared* to be driven by past events going back to anything up to a thousand years was particularly infelicitous. All presentations of historic



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personages were made without giving the reader any sense that these personages' experience of their world might have been anything other than as it is being currently undertaken by the characters of the present day. One of the end results is that for all of Rowling's blithe flinging about of phrases like; "a thousand years ago" or the sudden introduction of historical artifacts deployed as plot tokens, we get no sense of the sovereignty of time, and yet the social/moral outlook of the narrative is already sufficiently topical (which is to say, dated) as to eliminate any possibility of the tale ever being regarded as "timeless".

Nor do most of the events which are stated as having happened in "Historic" times necessarily stand up as being plausible — in the form they are presented — against even the most cursory of examinations of what we know of the times these events purportedly took place in our own history. Rowling's narrative voice all too clearly seems to find the notion of any sort of history comical in itself.

But the fact is, that it is not really possible to represent a society which reads as a plausible, livable human community based upon nothing more solid than a foundation made up of jokes. In particular, it is difficult to imagine any convincing historic development of a society as nuanced and complex (or as blatantly corrupt) as that on display in the Harry Potter series within the narrative's unvarying atmosphere of; ha, ha, ha, weren't-our-ancestors-silly? Or the black/white, good/evil moral absolutes in which the story is so often being presented. Particularly considering that by midway through the series, our viewpoint character is more than old enough to have begun to outgrow such a narrow view of his world.

Nor, as the series attempted to become progressively darker

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in tone, was it possible for such a presentation to remain at all plausibly consistent. We have been treated to some harrowing examinations of the very human failings of the characters of the present day. But this courtesy has still never been extended to anyone more than one generation previous, let alone those who reside permanently in history. History, in the Potterverse, is populated only with unimpeachable heroes and irredeemable villains. No human beings live there at all. It was my hope that by the end of the series, I would be able to do an extensive rewrite of this paragraph. But I cannot. Fallible human beings apparently do not exist at any period prior to the Marauders and the elder Weasleys, or at a pinch, within the memory of Albus Dumbledore.

In a series wherein the original motivations driving just about all of the action are rooted at least half a century earlier, it was past time that the Harry filter broadened its worldview to include an acknowledgment that the figures of history were indeed no more than men and women, and sometimes, perhaps, incapable of rising above the biases of their own, somewhat less informed eras. But to all appearances, Ms Rowling's contention is that any such consideration which relates to the figures of history simply does not matter

True, Rowling's work is determinedly marketed with a young audience in mind. Some degree of simplification is understandable. But the books are clearly not written only for the young, and in any case, there are things that youth does not excuse. Her older fans, who are numerous, had expected, or had at least hoped for better from her. She is perfectly capable of it. But she has not chosen to give it to us.

«end rant»



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### Dark Magic and Other Fallacies:

The depiction of history is not the only, or even the most fundamental issue in which Rowling has not given us what the situation she has deliberately set up appears to call for.

This segment of the article also qualifies as a *bit* of a rant. You could skip this one too, but if you do you will miss a number of points that actually matter:

Since the spring of 2003 — when this collection was first posted — I have been publicly grouching about the fact that throughout the series (even as it existed then) any clear sense of the underlying relationship — if any — between Light, as opposed to Dark, magic had been consistently given short shrift; to the point that all Dark magic might be defined loosely as “everything the Ministry doesn’t approve of this week.” A viewpoint that I was seriously inclined to doubt that Rowling ever intended. But, up to about the first third of HBP, she appeared to be perfectly fine with that definition.

Which was the point — inside the series — at which we seemed to have *finally* been tossed a clue. A very *brief* clue. If you blinked you might have missed it. And now, standing in the rubble of the train wreck that was ‘HARRY POTTER AND THE DEATHLY HALLOWS’ I can no longer even be confident that the maybe-clue she finally tossed us was even intentional. For she certainly never followed through on it.

However, in Severus Snape, Rowling finally gave us a DADA instructor who was willing to at least *attempt* to define the nature of what he was proposing to teach his students to defend

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themselves against.

And it really does not sound like something that is inherently evil.

It doesn’t even come across as something that is universally hostile.

But it is clearly, horrifically, perilous.

And inherently completely *unstable*.

In short. It is pure Chaos. Unlike the rather prosaic magic which is taught in the other classrooms of Hogwarts, you get the distinct impression that however perfect your pronunciation of the spell’s incantation, and however consistently you might “swish and flick” your wand, if what you are dealing with is the Dark Arts, you could swish and flick and say the equivalent of Wingardium Leviosa six times in a row, and half the time the feather will levitate to various heights, and once it will burst into flame, once it will simply disappear, and the sixth time it will turn into a blob of raspberry jam. And that’s on a *good* day.

And we still had no corresponding definition which would illuminate the distinction, if any, between it and “Light” magic.

But, at any rate, it was enough of a hint to reassure me that I would not need to totally rework my interpretations of the subject from square 1.

I had evidently — or so I then believed — picked up enough between the lines over the first five books to at least be on, if not the *right* track, then at least a track which would eventually arrive at a viable destination. But I did wish that Rowling could have found it in herself to elaborate a bit further.

With 20/20 hindsight, I am now profoundly grateful that she did not make any such attempt. Given the skill with which in DHs Ms Rowling managed to retroactively transmute so much of the gold that appeared to be scattered throughout in the series into



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dross, stretching all the way back to book 1, any further input from Rowling upon any subject related to the Potterverse seems likely to be nothing less than wantonly destructive. Ms Rowling these days appears to be determined to dismantle her creation, quite possibly with prejudice. I think that even the shallowest and least insightful of fans could do as well at explaining the myriad inconsistencies showcased in the project as well as Rowling would. And many of the neither shallow nor imperceptive fans, have.

And, despite any rumors regarding “the Scottish book” (now, apparently transmuted into Pottermore), I am inclined to believe that we will be seeing no further explanations regarding any distinction between Light and Dark magic from Rowling. Certainly not any coherent ones. Although we might possibly get a few deliberately shallow ones. Rowling, these days, appears to be dedicated to the systematic excision of anything resembling depth that we ever thought we saw in her creation. I am willing to go on record by stating here and now that I do not believe at least half of what Rowling attempted to claim took place in DHs. Those statements simply do not add up. They contradict the information given us in the earlier books and many are not even internally consistent within DHs itself.

Rather a lot of them appear to be either a blatant attempt at corner-cutting, or some lame-and-desperate device to try to imbue such bland and tasteless fare with some ersatz excitement. None of which was remotely convincing. Despite the presence of one or two moments of authentic emotional “resonance” DHs comes across as a thoroughly insincere piece of hackwork; something lazily cobbled together to meet the requirements of a contract.



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Not to put too fine a point on it, I view the anticipated “encyclopedia” to the Potterverse, which she once stated as her intention to provide “someday” with considerable misgiving. I anticipate that should it actually materialize, parts of it may well turn out to be amusing. But in the long run it will make the construction of a plausible and coherent reading of the Potterverse substantially less, rather than more achievable.

But, as the matter stands (from the viewpoint of something like 2010, if one thinks back), the confusion on this issue had compounded to the point that even over the course of 6 books out of seven after being repeatedly given the message that the Dark Arts “are not taught at Hogwarts,” Harry, his friends, and various other students all seem to be rather too frequently accused of performing Dark magic, or at least Dark spells — far too many of which they appear to have learned in the course of their classwork or out of the school library — for this to actually be the case.

Either nobody in the Potterverse has any notion of what Dark magic even *is*, or there really *\*isn't\** any such thing as Dark magic, or somebody is deliberately lying to us.

(In what would have been Harry’s 7th year, Dark magic evidently was taught, and taught quite openly at Hogwarts. But we have yet to hear of anything other than the three noted “unforgivable” curses being taught which differed from anything that had been already featured in the Hogwarts curriculum.)

So is “Dark magic” the same thing as the Dark Arts, or isn’t it? For that matter; is a Dark wizard a practitioner of the Dark Arts, or merely a wizard who breaks the law? We have no clarification on that point either, and throughout the 5th and 6th books it looked very much as if the readers’ confusion was





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shared by the average “wizard in the street”

And, by now, it does not look likely that we will ever be given any further clarification on this issue, either. One is, apparently, just expected to instinctively “know” whether a given piece of magic is Dark or Light.

On alternate Tuesdays.

As the Ministry decrees.

Unless of course you are a friend of Harry Potter, in which case you are incapable of ever performing truly *Dark* magic. Even your use of Unforgivable curses will always be perfectly justified.

This lack of clarity, or of consistent boundaries, makes me very cross.

The fanfic community, as usual, has been diligent in stepping up to the plate and providing the basics (or what certainly ought to have been the basics) omitted by Rowling. My own preference, these days, is for the following, which is a much later addition to the available resources, having been posted in the year 2017, a full decade downstream of the official closing of canon. As such a late entry it has the advantage of a great deal of retrospective information to draw from:

<https://www.fanfiction.net/s/12594999/1/A-Short-History-of-Magic>

But, back at the end of HBP, when one could still live in hope that it might all make sense someday, it had finally begun to sink in for me that this particular point of confusion might be deliberate. Like I’ve said before. I think I’m reasonably sharp. But I’m sometimes not particularly swift. Unfortunately I’m also rather good at seeing patterns, even when it later turns out that I have been connecting dots that were never anything more than spots before my eyes.



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But at that point it had finally occurred to me that I might be asking the wrong questions.

At that point we all still had something invested in believing that Rowling is not stupid. We still do not know that the woman is actually *stupid*, even if she does tend to be incoherent and has a tendency to stick her foot in her mouth in public. We could see that she had an extensive grounding in traditional folklore and in the elements which are common to both folklore and the structure of a workable story. And that while she may be an “instinctive storyteller” she didn’t *seem* to be composing the story off the top of her head by means of automatic writing. Or at least not until the “carpet book” hit the internet.

At the end of HBP I was sure that she had to know perfectly well that a story of the sort that she appeared to be telling typically requires *some* definition of where the invisible line is drawn that one is not supposed to cross, as all such matters apply for that specific story.

And she still had not given us one.

Why had she not given us one? By that time I was beginning to doubt that it was by accident.

And if she had deliberately held back the definition of such a fundamental parameter of how magic in the Potterverse works as to define what specifically makes Dark magic *dark*, until the final book in the series, it began to look to me as if she had a bombshell to attach to it before she lobbed it at us.

Unfortunately. I seem to have given Rowling far too much credit. In the end, she did not ever address the issue of where the boundary between Dark magic and everything else lies any more than she addressed the issue of where the line is drawn in





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the sand that marks where evil begins. In the end, so far as she was concerned, it simply did not matter.

Chiefly because, in the end, the story — despite all suggestions or even the outright statements she had ever made to the contrary — was not about any conflict between good vs. evil at all.

The story *never* had been about that. It had only *pretended* to be.



I was in correspondence with a youngster in Greece after the release of DHs, and had done a pretty fair amount of grousing about the shoddiness of DHs, its structure, its elements, its myriad contradictions to earlier canon, and the half-arsed explanations given for what allegedly took place in it. The exchange forced me to think a bit more clearly about what it was that really bugged me about Rowling's so called "conclusion" to the series.

One part of the problem was that as the series progressed — particularly after GoF — with each book Rowling kept laying in more and more potential threads for further developments without ever making a clear decision of which ones she was actually going to use. And in the end, she used virtually none of them.

A well-known and well-loved political columnist, the late Molly Ivins once wrote an editorial which resonated with this problem. I do not recall just what the original subject of that article actually was, but in it she brought up the example of people who keep deferring making any kind of a decision about anything, thereby "keeping their options open" and in the end, they find they have nothing to show for it but ...unchosen options. They have ended up cheating themselves. It appeared to me that Rowling has pulled a variant of this trick, probably unintentionally, but



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it ended up feeling a bit as though she had cheated us as well as herself. As a result, the whole back half of the series now reeks of burnout and bad faith.

In Rowling's case however, the problem of too many threads was compounded by the fact that many of these threads now appear in retrospect to have been inserted simply with the intent of *distracting* the reader. Concealing from us the fact that she had only one or two really relevant details to insert into the story arc in each of the final books. The rest was all padding. And unlike a proper red herring which turns out to lead you nowhere of any use, these were never intended to lead the reader anywhere at all, since after the current book ended the issue would never be referred to again. It had only been there to distract us from focusing too much attention to the true direction of the story arc between the books' releases. Which is an incredibly cynical and insincere way to string together a story.

This, by itself is certainly a not a minor issue, but the really major problem with it was that one of these dangling threads was what we had all believed for years to be the central story.

In retrospect, it looks now rather as if she had been driving two central stories, or, rather, two central themes, through the middle of this series, and in the end, whether from burn-out or the sheer difficulty of the task she had set for herself, she only chose to complete one of them. And it was not the one we had believed to be the important one.

Consequently, at the point at which Ms Rowling had to finally buckle down and tie the whole thing off, it all came apart on her, and on us as well.

Stringing a story out requires a rather different skill set than





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finishing one off satisfactorily. And Rowling is hardly the only author who doesn't quite have the second. There are a lot of authors out there (and not just in children's or YA fantasy, not by a long shot) who can put together some perfectly marvelous stories and yet are not able to give them really satisfactory conclusions. It sometimes feels like the story simply didn't want to end there, and the author had merely wrestled it to the ground.

But the Potter series, as it developed, finally turns out, in the end, to have never been about what we had *thought* that Rowling's concept of the story was about. We had spent 6 books following what turned out to have been a false trail. And this underlying misdirection did not come across as clever. It comes across as confused. And cheap. Indeed, it feels like bait-and-switch.

The series as a whole was stronger and much more coherent at the end of HBP (even given the extremely flawed package that HBP is) than it is now. With DHs, the whole story arc completely lost any sort of focus, and in retrospect, much of what we had most appreciated from the earlier books, in DHs was rendered completely bogus.

All the more so in that Rowling was suddenly fixated upon a single issue, which although it has been present throughout the whole series, had never appeared to be the issue that was primary to the story's action.

Coming to terms with death is not the premise upon which Rowling sold us this story. And if she had tried to do so, most of us would have not been in the market.

That premise has *nothing* to do with either good or evil. The whole issue of good vs. evil is irrelevant to it, and Tom Riddle's misguided goal to evade death, or Albus's equally misguided desire

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to master it, have nothing to do with either good or evil, *either*.

Albus was *foolish* for wanting to collect Death's "hallows" in order to master it (2 of which Death allegedly created expressly for the purpose of *trapping* people. Didn't Albus realize that? Those items are *cursed*), that goal was certainly not "good", and Tom's desire to forevermore evade death is not in itself inherently evil. And attempting to position either goal in such an opposition is totally unconvincing.

The story turns out to have simply NOT ever been about what Rowling spent years trying to pretend that it was about. The story was NEVER about good prevailing over evil. The relevant article in which we are to keep faith is not that ultimately justice will be done, and good will prevail. It is that; do what you will, Death eventually comes for all.

And that, presumably, being a hero consists of being resigned to meet it.

Dumbledore and Snape ultimately did so. Albus with the advantage of a full year's advance warning and preparation, and no alternate choice on offer, really, AND was able to take charge of the whole production himself to boot! Snape did so with no hesitation or apparent regrets — once Harry miraculously turned up at the 59th minute of the 11th hour, enabling him to pass on Albus's final message, and complete his task. And Harry eventually managed to stand fast and take it as well, when given sufficient outside help and support (and no viable other options, or none which would allow him to save face). Tom, predictably, never learned anything of the sort.

But THIS is, in fact, what the whole 7th book was about, and all the lip service, grand gestures, and going through the



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motions over some supposedly eternal conflict between good and evil, or “saving” the wizarding world, turns out to be just so much set-dressing. It’s finally clear why Rowling never bothered to define the point at which evil begins. The issue simply doesn’t matter in the long run. Not in her universe. Death will ultimately have them all — and probably does not even bother to “sort them out.”

Ironically, Tom Riddle turns out to have been absolutely right, all the way back in PS/SS. In the Potterverse there *isn’t* really any such thing as good or evil. Unforgivable curses are not *really* unforgivable. There is only power. And if you are just “special” enough, all will be forgiven.

In the end, Tom Riddle’s actual acts do not matter either. He could have been the deepest-dyed villain or the most shining saint, and it wouldn’t make a bean’s worth of difference to the theme of this book. His ultimate crime was to believe that he was special enough to evade death, and the 7th book was where Rowling finally stopped farting around, took the gloves off, and showed him otherwise.

The whole, overriding arc of the final book was to bring death to Tom Riddle, and to force him to meet it. If necessary, by *tricking* him into meeting it. The whole DE set-up is local color, the Battle of Hogwarts is sound and fury signifying absolutely nothing — and is completely fake, to boot. Rowling clearly didn’t give a damn about this world or the state she’d left it in. The minute Tom’s AK rebounded, the story was over. Even Harry no longer really matters, and throwing him a nice bone of future domestic happiness cost the author absolutely nothing. It was a completely gratuitous tag-on, and no real res-



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olution of anything. It’s hardly a mystery why Rowling seemingly couldn’t even keep track of what her major supporting characters were doing between the battle and the epilogue.

I’ve said it for years: the *villain* is the *story*.

This time that statement turns out to be true on a much higher level of meaning from the way it usually works in a fantasy adventure, but it is unquestionably the case.

«end rant the 2nd»



### Dark Magic in the Potterverse:

But, the rest of us are not JK Rowling and most of us generally prefer a reading of the series that makes sense. Preferably a reading which is at least potentially consistent with the entire series. Which goes double for those elements that in the hands of any reasonably competent fantasy writer would turn out to be the foundations of the story. Regardless of how it might relate to Tom Riddle’s unwitting murder-suicide pact that ultimately hijacked the final volume of the series and flew it into a cliff.

I have to admit that by something over a year downstream of DHs, I was finding that if the only thing between me and a workable, consistent hypothesis on some issue is information that wasn’t thrown at me until DHs, I was finding it amazingly easy to simply dismiss the information from DHs. Particularly if upon a closer examination that piece of information contradicts or is internally inconsistent with some *other* piece of information thrown at me in DHs. Far too often it does.

I do try to maintain some kind of standards, after all. No one is going to cut me the kind of slack that many have been pre-





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pared to cut for Rowling. That is probably just as well.

The majority of this essay was pretty fully developed before the release of the final volume of the series. And there was still remarkably little in that final volume to have caused me to modify my earliest extrapolations. In fact, Rowling's all but total abandonment of what had appeared to be her central story arc in this instance works in most theorists' favor.

But. For all that the Dark Arts are supposedly not taught at Hogwarts (until we and Harry were no longer in attendance, anyway); there appears to be no obstacle to *learning* them there, even if you are a Muggle-raised student who had no knowledge that the wizarding world even existed before being handed your Hogwarts letter, are still under supervision for underage magic, and exiled to Muggle Hell over the summer breaks. Tom Riddle certainly managed to do so under those circumstances. Unless something along the lines of the hypothesis outlined in one of the newer essays, 'Minding the Gap' are correct. (Don't hold your breath waiting for Rowling to confirm it.)

Upon closer examination, it is apparent that the Dark Arts are not only *not* illegal but that Harry and his friends seem to be picking up bits of them at Hogwarts, without the slightest understanding of what they are. As Tom Riddle certainly did. Severus Snape's homemade schoolboy hexes are even referred to in conversation as "Dark magic." Although given the source, the term may merely be shorthand for "unauthorized magic," which is not the same thing at all, and not a satisfactory explanation in itself.

It also seems to make no sense whatsoever if Dark magic has a specific *nature*. Excuse me, but how did Snape's "Dark" hexes differ from James Potter's and Sirius Black's equally vicious,

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painful, and humiliating presumably *non*-Dark hexes?

You know, James Potter, the boy who allegedly abhorred anything to do with Dark magic.

Did he even know what it was?

So, we are therefore invited to believe that it was in a spirit of righteous indignation that he adopted a fledgling "Dark wizard's" unauthorized spells which were running merrily through the school and used them publicly on their creator for the general entertainment of the student body? Yeah, *that* guy.

So how were these hexes all different? Certainly not in their "intention." You'll *never* convince me of *that*.

It would appear that Sirius Black was an even bigger hypocrite than we had already figured out for ourselves. And so was his best buddy James. Unless they were simply unable to register any distinction between Snape's supposedly "Dark" magic and their own. ("I see no difference.")

It's obvious — and made *deliberately* obvious — to any reader that the whole Black family had been Dark Arts practitioners for centuries. Even if they hadn't ever had an actual Death Eater in the family until Bellatrix finished Hogwarts (unless her father, Walburga's younger brother Cygnus had also managed to get swept up in the movement via his wife's family).

Nevertheless, Dark wizards all, Sirius's great-great grandfather had *still* been appointed the Headmaster of Hogwarts. His grandfather had apparently bought himself an Order of Merlin, from a Ministry that was perfectly aware of who and what he was, and what kind of magic he practiced. In fact, the family's general attitudes regarding the Dark Arts must have been pretty widely known, for they certainly made no attempt to conceal them.



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But for as long as they were trying to push any of their nasty little agendas (whether Isolationist or Supremacist) through the approved, legal channels, no one but Sirius seems to have come straight out and called them Dark wizards. Or looked down on them for it. And Harry is clueless, and parroting the pronouncements of his elders as blindly as Draco Malfoy does.

By OotP it was beginning to look very much as if both Dark and Light magic are used indiscriminately throughout the wizarding world, and in general parlance “Dark wizard” seemed not to refer to a practitioner of the Dark Arts, or *any* other particular *form* of magic. It appeared to mean merely a wizard who breaks the law, and consequently, signified no more than the wizarding equivalent of “felon.” A bit of confusion that was no doubt fostered by the fact that the DMLE employs a team of Aurors whose duty it is to apprehend both.

It sounded a remarkably as though “Dark magic” was turning out to be a term like “computer memory” where you have to figure out from the context whether the speaker is referring to RAM or hard disk space.

This entire series of essays, is an attempt to weave a more sturdy framework in which such contrasting interpretations of Magic itself may be contained, without destroying each other, or too greatly compromising a workable interpretation of their mutual culture. Ms Rowling, who is certainly capable of spinning a story with some distinction, when she chooses to, does not usually weave. She makes macramé. She does it quite decoratively, but you wouldn’t want to use it for sheets.

Since about the year 2000 (well before posting the first iteration of this collection), I have been attempting to fit the varying devel-

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opments encountered within canon into at least some historical and social context consistent with what the majority of us most widely believe to have been the evolution of a “Western”-style, industrialized society, such as the one that Rowling presents as the widely-observed mundane, or, rather, “Muggle,” late 20th century norm. The purpose is for the use of fanfic authors, or for the entertainment of readers who enjoy that sort of thing. What we were shown regarding magic in wizarding society over the course of the series ultimately suggests that the whole attempt is probably futile. But I am not yet prepared to abandon it.

However; a great deal of the following material has necessarily been downgraded from the status of “perfectly reasonable theory” to merely being “not absolutely contradicted.” It *may* yet continue to receive incremental revisions. But by around 2014, these were in the process of tapering off. With the closing of the official canon back in 2007, any further development now depends upon erratic small personal epiphanies sparked from online or e-mail discussions, which are impossible to schedule or to anticipate.

In keeping with Muggle society as shown in Rowling’s work, I am focusing most closely upon that segment of a modern world which composes a predominantly English-speaking society.



### The Study & Practice of the Dark Arts:

Despite the fact that a number of Dark materials and spells have been stated to be unlawful in the wizarding world of Great Britain, or at the very least closely regulated; there has never been any indication in canon that the Dark Arts *in toto* are actually illegal.

The fact that the Dark Arts are openly taught at Durmstrang



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serves as a strong counter-indication that the Dark Arts are more probably still regarded as a legitimate branch of Magical study, at least throughout Europe. Any (originally I presumed heavy, but this was evidently incorrect) regulations on the practice of the Dark Arts themselves are indicative only of their potential for harm both to the community and, it seems reasonable to postulate, to its practitioners as well.

The continuing, openly acknowledged, existence of Knockturn Alley as a supplier of Dark Arts documentation and materials has served as a hint from as early as CoS that the Dark Arts are not under a blanket interdiction even in Great Britain. What is more, with the publication of OotP the depiction of the history and traditional attitudes of the Black family served as a general wake-up call that quite openly Dark wizards remain respected members of British wizarding society to the present day, so long as they break no Ministry law and continue to support the legitimate wizarding government.

By the publication of 'HARRY POTTER AND THE HALF-BLOOD PRINCE' it was made broadly evident that so far as we could tell, in JKR's interpretation, "Dark magic," even the Dark Arts are absolutely all over the map and that Harry and his friends are actually learning scraps of them, along with everything else right there in Hogwarts, with Dumbledore's approval. In fact as one works one's way through HBP, it begins to look very much as if a "Dark wizard" has been downgraded and redefined as merely a wizard who breaks the law.

Which makes complete gibberish of the statement put into Draco Malfoy's mouth in GoF, where, if you remember, Malfoy states that his father had wanted to send him to Durmstrang where he would be taught "proper" Dark Arts rather than just Defense.

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All of which begs the underlying question of exactly what the Dark Arts *are*, and how they differ from what is generally referred to by the fans of the series as "Light" magic.

At this remove it is impossible to determine what Rowling thought she meant by it. For she has spectacularly failed to follow up with any explanation that would read as either comprehensive, or coherent, or indeed, that would "read" at all with anything she has actually *shown* us. She left it to the reader to do all the heavy lifting.

It is possible that this is the flotsam of an original intention which was shot off in the alleged great, post-GoF revision to the original storyline. Around the time of the publication of HBP, I thought it was also possible that, in pursuit of some experiment of her own, she had deliberately held off from giving us any explanation on the subject, whatsoever. Maybe we were supposed to *not* know.

Or, as it now appears to be the case; She really *didn't* understand at the outset that she was writing a fantasy series (she may have thought it was folklore, because that's what she was using to construct it from), or didn't understand that in a fantasy series you *do* need to visibly draw the line for the purposes of the world you are creating, since such secondary worlds *vary*. You cannot merely port over what "everyone" knows from ours, or from someone *else's* fantasy world. Any such world, simply does not work like ours. It has *magic* in it. That *changes* things. And magic requires observable *rules*. Moreover, every fantasy world is *different*. They don't all draw the line in the same place. You have to point out where the line is supposed to be in *your* world before anyone will be able to make sense of it.

Most fans have always tended to take the rather crude approach of defining Dark magic solely according to the "intent"



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of the caster. (The Randall Garrett approach: “Dark magic is composed of symbolism and intent’.) Or of defining it according to whether the end result can be determined to be either passive or aggressive, friendly or hostile, nurturing or exploitive.

Well, that approach worked well enough for Garrett’s Lord Darcy stories. Most of which were short stories, published in magazines. But in a series as long and complex as Harry Potter was shaping up to be something a bit more layered was called for.

There is absolutely no question but that the spellcaster’s intent matters in the Dark Arts — quite possibly it matters a great deal more so than in “Light” magic. But I contend that this is an insufficient distinction on its own. What this approach too often boils down to is that it only becomes Dark magic if you “mean” to do harm with it. By this sort of criterion one could claim to be justified in casting Imperius left, right, and forward in order to control people’s behavior, sincerely convinced that it is for their own good. I rather doubt that the Ministry of Magic would agree to interpret one’s actions according to that criterion. (Although some employees of the Ministry, case in point Dolores Umbridge, would be first in line to be *doing* it.)

And for the average wizarding citizen (i.e., not a personal friend of Harry Potter) to cast Cruciatus or an AK at someone “Because they’re bad.” is unlikely to be regarded as an acceptable defense either.

Nor do I believe that the Dark Arts would continue to remain legal, even if far more heavily regulated than they apparently are after all these uncounted centuries if all the Dark Arts had ever amounted to was magic that was designed expressly for the purpose of exploitation or of causing harm. And, by every

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indication that we have been given in the books, the Dark Arts, in general, do, indeed, appear to be legal. Indeed, it has become evident that they are not only *legal*, they are *pervasive*. Tom Riddle is generally assumed to have learned them right under his instructors’ noses at Hogwarts.

Nevertheless, for a long time I also believed that in any sort of a viable society, anything as potentially dangerous as the Dark Arts were implied to be had to be at least as heavily regulated as, say, Apparating.

Apparently in that regard also, I was wrong. There appear to be no regulations applied to the study of the Dark Arts whatsoever.

The very blackest of Dark magic in HBP is stated to be the splitting of one’s own soul in order to create a Horcrux, not only because an act of murder is required to facilitate it, but because the soul is supposed to be left intact, and to split it is “against nature,” indeed to do so is skirting upon blasphemy. This explanation on the face of it, however, leaves a lot to be desired. Things like logic and rationality for example. To say nothing of a coherent “moral compass.”

I had already begun to suspect that this definition had been overly simplified. Even before the release of DHs, in which Rowling seems to have rewritten all the rules for her own convenience.

And simplified them to the point of rendering it all into gibberish.

Excuse me, but if anyone who has committed a murder has split his soul already, then the “supreme act of evil” has already been done. Without creating anything remotely like a Horcrux. Committing a murder in itself apparently does not do that.

Any Auror who has ever killed a suspected DE has *killed* someone. Are Aurors then to be considered inherently, or potentially



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evil? Casting AK at another Being which possesses a soul is likely to have the same effect upon your own, whatever your justification. So why does the creation of a Horcrux take all of this to a higher level? Is it really the *murder*, which splits the soul that is the act of evil, or is it the separation of the detached fragment into an external housing? Clearly it is the *separation* of one fragment from the rest of the soul that actually creates the Horcrux, *appears* to cause any observed physical changes to the caster, and diminishes the soul of the wizard who does it. From all of the information available (what there is of it) it does not appear to ever be possible for such a wizard to ever get that bit of soul back. If the Horcrux is destroyed the fragment is lost. It does not return to the creator.

We are told, somewhat confusingly that a wizard who has killed another person and has *not* created a Horcrux from that act might, with sufficient remorse, manage to heal the rent in his soul produced by that killing. So is the real abomination the committing of murder, or of deliberately choosing to diminish one's own soul?

And if performing acts, the result of which are "against nature" is the signifier of the very worst sort of Dark magic, how does one justify the performance of ANY sort of magic? How "natural" is it to cause a pineapple to sprout legs and dance across the table?

No. I'm afraid this "official explanation" is a piece of subjective relativism beyond the bounds of morality, ethics, principle, or any kind of common sense. A certain degree of simplification for the purpose of rendering your message accessible to 9-year-olds may be unavoidable, but this is *reducto ad absurdum* in spades. It completely undermines any serious attempt to transmit any sort of a coherently moral "message." The author has just shot herself in the foot.

A closely related issue is the apparent readiness of Dark wiz-

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ards to go "rogue." The identification and apprehension of "Dark wizards" is stated as being one of the primary duties of an Auror. From which we may conclude that, so long as a team of Aurors are employed by the Ministry in the Department of Magical Law Enforcement, it can be assumed that it is generally understood by the Ministry of Magic that there are enough Dark wizards known to be out there practicing at any given time to justify the training of Aurors. And that tracking down those that are practicing outside the Ministry parameters, illegally, or those who have lost control of their experiments will occupy a significant percentage of the Ministry Aurors' time and skills.

The fact that Aurors are, by the simplest definition, employed to apprehend lawbreakers in general, no doubt contributes also to the pervasive confusion of both reader, and the wizarding public itself as to whether a Dark wizard is merely a lawbreaker, or the practitioner of a specific class of magic. It is rather difficult to regard the likes of Willy Widdershins or Mundungus Fletcher as fitting the mould of "dangerous Dark wizards".

Well, I suppose that if that's what you are using as your measuring stick, it's small wonder Tom Riddle rates so high.

With the release of HBP and the (somewhat indignant) realization that "Dark wizard" usually seems to translate into the wizarding equivalent of miscreant, I doubt that anyone blinks and gasps when an Auror, in the course of his or her duties, apprehends a Dark wizard. There might be a line or two in the Prophet, but the Auror is regarded as only doing his job. That, after all, is what Aurors are for. To catch and neutralize dangerous, Dark wizards so the rest of the community doesn't have to.

(Note: the Department of Magical Law Enforcement employs



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both Aurors and Hit Wizards. While it is tempting to conclude that the Hit Wizards are the equivalent of the regular police, or, possibly, the SWAT team, and that the Aurors serve as the equivalent of the Detective division, this has never been confirmed in canon. And, in fact, in canon the bulk of the DMLE appears to consist of various regulatory agencies.)

My initial interpretation, which I'd stated publicly, in more than one forum, over the years was that the Dark Arts were probably heavily regulated, but that only a comparatively short list of specific materials and/or spells are actually illegal.

I am now inclined to believe that while the Dark Arts seem not to be regulated at all, the original consideration of there being a short list of specific spells and materials which are indeed illegal is indeed the case.

I had also stated that I believed that these specific spells and materials are probably illegal for a number of different reasons. Some, because of their extreme potential for harm to others, or due to their inherent violation of "human (or at least sentient Beings') rights". Others may be illegal due to their unacceptably high potential for harm to their caster, and some — particularly such materials as proscribed Potions, because *de facto* illegal acts are necessary in order to obtain the ingredients to brew them.

In the past, I had also suggested, although it was nowhere confirmed in canon, that there was probably a considerable bureaucratic overlay pertaining to the legitimate study and practice of the Dark Arts. Given that what we had been shown of the Ministry of Magic depicted it as a bureaucracy run wild, I thought that this was at least a tenable hypothesis. I can no longer believe this to be an accurate reading of the situation, however, and Rowling

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has certainly never confirmed it.

I do still contend that this was one of several alternative tenable hypotheses if one attempts to postulate a society in which the society actually manages to *function*. But there is nothing that we have been shown to date which would definitely support that particular interpretation. We have been shown almost no regulations upon Dark magic whatsoever, until it crosses the line and conflicts with some specific wizarding law.

My own take on the subject of the Dark Arts, another one which I have stated for over 20 years now, and one which I still believe allows for all of the multiple viewpoints which we have seen within canon — yes even in HBP and DHs — is that the Dark Arts are an *older* branch of Magical study itself, accessing magic in a form that is wilder, more organic, more inherently chaotic, and far less amenable to human control than the forms of magic predominantly taught at Hogwarts. And that this class of spells were only formally defined as the Dark Arts after a later, more stable, less dangerous process of performing magic (i.e., "Light" Magic, aka: "modern wizardry") was developed — *from* them.

I also propose that their somewhat ominous-sounding name is chiefly due to their association with the last historical period in which they were uncontested and unchallenged by any form of competition, which is to say, the "Dark" Ages. (This was a fairly brief period, historically. The information "blackout" from which the era takes its name took place comparatively late. There is ample information and surviving records regarding events among the various cultures of Antiquity.) Indeed, the major reason that the Dark Arts are categorized as "dark" is because it is impossible to fully classify and control them.



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Under this reading; up to, and until nearly the end of the Dark Ages, virtually all magic was “Dark” magic. Modern wizardry was only developed or formalized around the beginning of what has since come to be referred to as the “Middle” Ages, over which period this newer and safer process of conducting and controlling magic was gradually refined to apply to an ever wider range of the spells actually performed on an everyday basis, and was eventually adopted as the primary method of working magic by nearly all formally trained witches and wizards. Such a transition in the way magic was taught and used would have taken several generations. And, indeed, remains an ongoing process.

In short, that “Light” magic, aka; modern wizardry, is essentially *domesticated* magic. Or, as it is more commonly referred to; “wizardry”. Hogwarts is a school which teaches its students witchcraft, and wizardry.

Not all of the spells which comprise the body of “wizardry” are mild or harmless, either. Rather a lot of them are curses, and some of them are pretty brutal. But they are *consistent*, and *reliable*, and, once mastered, they do not usually morph into something *else* when you try to cast them.

According to this reading, the chief problem with the Dark Arts isn’t that they necessarily are inherently “evil”; it is that they are inherently, and inordinately *chaotic*, and, consequently, unacceptably perilous. Dabbling with the Dark Arts is the magical equivalent of playing Russian roulette.

Particularly when compared to the “wizarding” equivalents which have widely superseded them across much of general society. Clearly these “Dark” Arts are more dangerous — both to the community as a whole, and to the individual wizard — than any

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form of conventional domestic magic.

By the standards of modern wizardry, the results produced by the Dark Arts are bound to sometimes be unacceptably unstable and inadmissibly erratic. But the historical significance, and the place in the continuum of Magical development of the Dark Arts is as unquestionable as it is significant. If nothing else, it ensures that many, if not most, of the current spells used in modern wizardry must have been originally developed *from* them. And, if this is the case, the study (if not necessarily the practice) of the Dark Arts cannot readily be abolished, since a grounding in this particular branch of study is still the basis for much of the wizing world’s research in developing modern, reliable magical processes from older, Dark Arts root forms. Rendering this particular issue into a perpetual balancing act in which all of wizing society is eternally engaged.

Once we apply this contextual lens of viewing the Dark Arts as an earlier stage of Magical development, and the raw material from which a wide spectrum of spells in general are created, to the question of just what the Dark Arts *are*, we start seeing a very much more nuanced and sophisticated reading of the ongoing conflict between the current forms of “wizardry” and “Dark” magic as they are shown in canon. Even including a possible explanation for why it seems to be specifically the wizards whose families have the longest history of wizing tradition that appear to be most likely to gravitate toward the older forms. Or at least to be the ones most likely to tolerate or encourage an interest in such study in their young.

Under this definition, while domestic magic would clearly be amenable to an almost unlimited degree of customization and modification, your true “spell hackers” would almost universally tend to be Dark wizards.



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That could conceivably explain the prestige of such families as the Blacks.

For that matter, using this interpretation as a reference point, even when dealing with the Unforgivable curses, one might with comparatively little effort postulate perfectly “legitimate” usages (even if only according to the mindsets of less enlightened times) for all three of them, if one transposes the context to a period when “western civ” and magical technology were both at far more primitive levels. That these curses operate in the manner of Dark magic seems indisputable in canon, for the point has been repeatedly made that the caster’s intent is a critical element in the casting of them. But that their original purposes were intended *exclusively* for evil is open to some debate.

In North Africa, a form of desert hunting which requires only a direct line of sight without the range limitations of a sling or bow, or — whether in North Africa or elsewhere — a means of providing a quick, merciful death on the killing floor of a slaughterhouse, or the sickroom, in the case of incurable illness or irreparable injury hardly needs justification. We also have no reason to believe that the Avada Kadavra curse was originally developed with the intent to kill humans. (I specify North African desert hunting in recognition that the AK curse, unlike the two other Unforgivables does not have its incantation’s roots in Latin, but is of Aramaic origin.)

Even Cruciatius might have once served a useful purpose in sorting the deeply unconscious from the dead in the aftermath of battle, poisoning or magical catastrophe. Affecting the whole nervous system, as it does, anything still alive cannot help but react to it. Even when deeply unconscious. (Or *ought*

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not to be able to avoid reacting so.)

In some cases, centuries ago, such a curse’s shock to the system might have even been regarded as legitimately therapeutic. It seems hardly more inhumane than many other procedures which unquestionably lurk in the corners of modern medical history. For that matter, we were given a big hint in OotP that the history of medi-magic is probably every bit as brutal as that of Muggle medicine. But Cruciatius certainly is not used for any of these purposes nowadays, nor can it be sustained by such semi-benign intentions.

Which may nevertheless have been the *original* intentions. The sadistic intent which is applied by the curse’s modern users to prolong its effect may even be a deliberate perversion of it’s original purpose.

The Imperius curse, on the other hand, appears to have enough in common with a classic definition of “possession” to quite possibly be an attempt to achieve the same result by way of a spell. It could very well be a development from the same underlying principle. Not everyone with magic is capable of possessing others by sheer dominance of will. Plus, one can hardly take possession of someone and then just go off living one’s own life while driving the possessed around like a vehicle. Being able to force instruction on one’s target and then go about one’s own business would be the kind of thing that sooner or later \*someone\* would decide needed to be created. This is not at all a comfortable reflection.

Still, back in a period when a man quite literally, and quite legally, “owned” his wife and children, to the point that he had the power of life and death over them, the use of Imperius



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would have been considered to be within a wizarding husband or father's rights. To the outsider, it must have *appeared* to be a far more gentle and kindly solution to family friction than that of a Muggle neighbor whose wife and children regularly sported visible injuries, or one who would go so far as to execute an adult or adolescent child who refused to submit to his authority. It would have been a solution which was accessible to any wizard who happened to own a family. Or for that matter, one who held slaves. Such "ownership" would have been as little questioned as the ownership of a House Elf is in modern times.

Admittedly, this is a reading which shows even the modern wizarding world in a somewhat better light than is usually possible. And perhaps somewhat better than it deserves.



### A Magical World:

The Following is a postulation on the order in which various types of Magic and Magical studies might have developed; this is my own reading of the subject, and I am an inveterate incrementalist. The whole collection has already undergone multiple expansions and reinterpretations. If something has not been totally contradicted and rendered instantly obsolete, it may, over time be subject to further tweaks or refinements as I think sections of it over in context with points that others may call to my attention, as I have further insights of my own, or, sometimes, as I reconsider the implications of just what I have said. Occasionally adjustments may be made as off-canon auxiliary information comes up. Although, given Rowling's post-release performance of flip-flopping, and her failure to come up



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with an explanation and stick to it for two days running, I am more likely to discount any further information that she might choose to give us in either in interviews or online.

In the matters of Real World historical development, I am very much indebted to a LiveJournalist who goes by the name of Sollersuk for her exceedingly welcome corrections to a number of the inaccuracies regarding Antiquity which had infested the earliest versions of this essay and some others in the collection.

Nevertheless, about a year after the release of DHs, an e-mail discussion with my "fellow traveler" the LiveJournalist known as Swythyv, brought me to conclude that at least one of my postulations on the use and consequences of the practice of Dark magic was probably still a bit over-simplified. It may be necessary to retrace a development path here.

To begin:

My original underlying concept of the following was initially formulated after the release of HP and the Goblet of Fire, but the publication of HP and the Order of the Phoenix did not present any significant contradiction to the general principles, and the release of HBP, although it was not particularly helpful, did not produce any absolute contradictions either. Nor, for that matter did the release of DHs.

As my starting point: I base all speculation upon the underlying premise that "Magic" (i.e., "wild" or "Dark" magic) is a form of energy; a non-sentient force, such as electricity, and that some minerals, plants, species, and individuals within specific species are natural conductors of this energy.

Just about anything on either the material or spiritual "planes" can be affected by Magic, properly focused and directed, but





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only these natural conductors are able to constrain this force into a deliberate form, or to direct it to a specific end. Depending on the circumstances and the actual materials involved in such conduction this may be accomplished either consciously, or otherwise. For example a magical plant will constrain the magic which it channels in a specific way, but it is not doing so through any sort of conscious intent. It shapes the magic it channels into a specific form dictated by its nature. Much the same can be said of other magical species, either those which are fully sentient, qualify as “Beings”, and are assumed to possess both souls and “Free Will”, or those which are listed only as “Beasts.”

It is possible that not only is Magic an energy “like” electricity, but that these two forms of energy occupy some of the same “frequencies” in their transmission. This could explain why electronic equipment fails to operate in environments with extremely high levels of ambient Magic, such as Hogwarts. The localized magical energies are already occupying the bandwidth necessary for the electrical impulses to be transmitted from the batteries to the device. Away from such environments, Magic and electricity will both be operable in proximity, but it is possible that there may occasionally be random interference between the two under extraordinary conditions.

I have deliberately limited my focus to the development of the study of Human Magic. Human Magic has developed along different routes and, upon the whole, I suspect, at a later date than the Magic of most other sentient magical species, or “Beings.”

Human magic, in fact, appears to be a biological aberration within its own species, which may explain why human wizards are so likely to be adversely affected by magical energies in

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their more chaotic forms. Unlike all other magical peoples, only a very small percentage of humans are able to conduct magic. Something on the order of 0.005% of the population. Human beings, in general are not a magical species at all.

Most of my extrapolations up to the aforesaid e-mail discussion with Swythyv failed to take proper account of this factor. It now appears to be turning out to be a fundamental one.

Another thing which I failed to take into consideration is the question of where the Potterverse’s Magic supposedly comes *from*.

I probably ought to feel a good deal more embarrassed by having failed to ever ask this question than I do, but I appear to be in good company.

However, quite a few fanfic authors have stepped up to the plate and made a stab at trying to fill this gap (for gap it is. *Rowling* certainly never thought to ask where the magic in her world came from.)

The varying authorial proposals are not unanimous, but most tend to like the idea of Magic being a product of the earth, and of the traditional four elements, and, given that magic *flows*, are rather fond of the idea of its being associated with ley lines, and nodes. Few of their stories require going into the subject in detail, and as it stands it is certainly an adaptable enough provisional structure to satisfy me. At least for now. I certainly do not think that there is anything in canon to directly contradict it.

Where those magical “nodes” are concerned; I would like to also raise the folkloric concept of “thin places” where magical energies are believed to emerge into the natural (or supernatural) world. There are rather a lot of these in folklore as various local traditions. More often than not there is a water source



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associated with such places, which has earned them the name of being “holy wells”

But in any case we should keep in mind that in a magical *world*; Magic will exist in the absence of magical *humans*.

Indeed, it will probably produce its own ecosystem. Which in the course of such things will attempt to perpetuate itself. The aforementioned magical flora, fauna, and other phenomena will tend to be attracted to, and congregate around such points of emergence.

The interference/contribution of such magical entities may or may not be beneficial, but such a system will inevitably attempt to create a balance. Such balance may not remain upon the original level. A system where the members contribute to the whole will inevitably grow. One in which the members chiefly exist to consume will ultimately dwindle.



Which brings me to a point of considerable digression. And, I'm sorry, but it's likely to be both a longish one, and one which refers to the parts of this historical survey which you haven't properly got to yet. But I think it makes sense to explore it separately here. Where it is concerned I still seem to intermittently get sets of dominoes toppling over on top of me:

In my original interpretations on this issue, some 20 years ago, I had postulated the existence of a condition which I had dubbed Dark Arts-related dementia and interpreted it to mean that the process of channeling Magic in the form in which it is used by the Dark Arts ultimately resulted in organic modifications to the afflicted wizard's physiology. Modifications



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which resulted in the gradual increase of the amount of Magical energy channeled until the wizard was unable to properly direct or control the energies he was channeling. Until the magic he channeled was effectively using *him*.

Upon further consideration of canon and other materials, this seems clearly to have been in error. What appears now to be much more likely is that a wizard who has developed a full-blown Dark Arts dementia, is more likely to expend magic without even *attempting* to retain reasonable restraint. Completely without consideration of his own welfare, or that of anyone else. Whatever progressive deterioration is sustained by the wizard who develops such a form of Dark Arts-related dementia is not truly organic, but *perceptual*.

As stated below. No documented case of Dark Arts dementia has been verifiability observed to have occurred in some centuries, and the historical record may be inaccurate. What remains undetermined is the true scope and progress of this development. And one would hardly wish for the days of such a scourge to return merely to enable one to study it. A few possible related factors do still occur to be worth consideration, however.

The first thing that I had failed to take into account was that while raw “wild” magic itself may be a form of energy without any consciousness of its own, the fact that even common, domestic wizardry is capable of animating the inanimate and conjuring living creatures into existence would tend to support the possibility that chaotic Dark magic itself is capable of spontaneously generating entities which then *subsist* upon it. You might even call it an ecosystem.

My previous interpretation was that such entities may not be





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fully conscious, or truly sentient, but they are sufficiently so to be *aware* that facilitating the uninterrupted flow of the energies which sustain them will be to their advantage. Such a premise is still a possibility. Although it is hardly the only alternative.

If that premise is permitted, however, it would appear that the forms of such entities might well be, as former Professor Snape points out, *various*. And that such entities probably would be more than capable of influencing human perception. In addition to Professor Snape's statements, we have other, more direct canon evidence to suggest that such random, chaotic entities *do* at least *exist* in the Potterverse.

One form of chaotic entities which are \*known\* to react openly with humans are those which I refer to throughout this collection as the prophecy demons. No one reading the Harry Potter series can deny that these entities exist. These are probably not the *only* variety of such entities, nor are they the most insidious. Indeed they are arguably the least so, being comparatively easy to ignore or dismiss.

My postulation was that among the more dangerous entities are some which work in the manner of a bacteria or a virus, psychically haunting the afflicted wizard, latching onto his own generated magical energies through careless channeling of magic by the most direct channeling methods. Distorting the perceptions of he who has undertaken to unwisely expose himself to the chaotic energies upon which the entities depend, in a manner which will encourage them to continue to incite him channel such energies without restraint. Ultimately to a point beyond which he is able to control.

Upon further consideration (and discussion) I am no longer

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quite satisfied with this explanation as it stands. What this variant fails to account for is that there appears to be no corresponding malady that affects any species of magic worker *apart* from wizards and witches of human ancestry. When one also takes into consideration that magical Beings who are not at least partially human are prohibited by law from using wands, and yet are *still* unaffected by any form of dementia related to the direct channeling of magic one is forced to the conclusion that any dementia pertaining to the channeling of chaotic magic is not something that applies to the nature of magic, but is a specifically *human* problem.

Humans, as I have pointed out more than once, are *not* an inherently magical species. Only a tiny percentage of humans are able to channel magic at all. And even those usually cannot properly focus their magic without the artificial "crutch" provided by some focusing implement, to wit, a wand. And it is beginning to surface that humans are really not properly designed to *effectively* channel the magic that they are *able* to channel.

For one thing their whole channeling process is impacted. That's why young wizards have magical breakthroughs in the first place. Their "incoming" magical charge, instead of flowing through them naturally, until needed, too often builds up until something triggers an abrupt discharge of the pent-up energy, like a sneeze. And the only way to reliably use the magic a wizard will naturally generate is, as stated above, to force it out through a focusing device to make it discharge in some manner a good deal less random than a sneeze.

What is more; humans *leak*.

Not magic. If they leaked magic the impacted channeling



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process peculiar to human wizards would be far less of a problem. Humans, however, leak bits of emotional detritus, which so far as I can make it out seems to flake off quite unintentionally. And, which can collect in the immediate environment.

Well, hey, we *know* that it does. And such “residue” has been amply demonstrated in canon to have generated at least one independent entity which subsists on it, and which does everything in his power to sustain and *increase* the manufacture of more such distressing emotional residue.

I refer of course to Peeves. He is not a ghost. A ghost is defined as “the imprint of a departed soul.” Peeves is not the representation of any creature who was ever actually alive. Nor when one stops to consider the matter, does he possess anything that could properly be identified as a soul.

He has manifested from the build-up of emotional residue generated and shed by cumulative eons of large numbers of adolescent wizards collected in one place, all of whose magic is in the process of reaching maturity even as their control over it is still faulty and inconsistent. What is particularly of note is that these are not, for the most part young wizards engaged in a study of the Dark Arts, but wizards who are being taught the comparatively safe practices of modern wizardry.

And yet their control, both magical and emotional, is still lax enough to shed enough chaotic energy for it to manifest as a poltergeist. Which by the way, is identifiably human in appearance. No one has ever mistaken Peeves for the ghost of a Goblin or a House Elf.

One’s soul appears to be the part of a wizard which actually channels the wizard’s magic, and its imprint constitutes

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his deepest identity. Ginny Weasley was only able to communicate with the Basilisk while she was being actively possessed by a fragment of Tom Riddle’s soul. For that matter, Rowling assures us that once the soul fragment of Tom Riddle’s that he was harboring was destroyed, Harry Potter also ceased to be a Parselmouth. That such highly individual magical gifts as the ability to understand and express Parseltongue would seem, therefore, to be qualities specific to an individual wizard’s soul tends to suggest that all magical capabilities are probably aspects of the soul as well. A hypothesis which is further supported by Nearly-Headless Nick’s contention that only wizards and witches are capable as manifesting as ghosts. Non-magical humans evidently are not able to do that. When a Muggle dies, his soul presumably passes directly through the Veil. He is not offered the choice to linger on this side of it.

By most accounts, it is also the soul which is the seat of emotion. Juvenile wizards’ unintentional magical breakthroughs seem typically to have an emotional trigger. It is for this reason that some families have attempted to startle or frighten a child who is suspected of being a Squib into such a breakthrough, just to be certain that he is indeed a wizard.

Consequently, it is reasonably safe to conclude that the sort of emotional detritus which is shed by wizards in the course of performing magic, is, in essence, a direct product of their souls. And, being the product of magical souls, carries a magical “charge” of its own, although it is not in itself, properly speaking, magic. And, as we have been shown in the case of Hogwarts castle, such detritus collects, supporting and enhancing the ambient magical charge of the area. This probably serves as



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an additional assistance to the students who are attempting to learn to more effectively channel and control their own magic in that environment. It supports their efforts despite the fact that they may not be entirely clear on what they are attempting to do, and offers something in the nature of a “boost”

Using the “pooling” of such unintentional shedding of emotional residue by incompletely trained wizards as a basic example, one might postulate that Dark wizards deliberately channeling magic in its most chaotic form through the very center of their souls may tend to shed even more of such residue.

So have we any kind of indication in canon that this is indeed the case?

You bet we have. Even a half-trained wizard like Harry was able to register that the sea cave was a place that had “known magic” once Albus pointed it out to him.

Even after ghod knows how many centuries after the cave fell into disuse (for I do not believe for a minute that Tom created that place. He discovered and later appropriated it) the “residue” of past workings is still detectable.

Which suggests that it might be a good idea to step back now, and take a closer look over our historical survey of magical development, below, and see if we can figure out how we ended up in places like that sea cave.



Back in the days that all magic was Dark magic, and the survival rate for any “great working” was in the neighborhood of 75%. It stands to reason that a great deal of wizards’ time, thought, and efforts would have been expended on attempt-

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ing to find or to create safer sources of magic for their use. In the same period, we, in our own Real World parlance, have an established folkloric tradition of such phenomena as “holy wells” and other locations of alleged inherent magical power. We know that something of the sort exists in the Potterverse since we have been told outright that some places, such as Hogwarts itself, are places of exceptionally powerful ambient magic. What is uncertain is whether the magic of such places is naturally inherent to the place, or if the ambient magic has merely built up over time from the residue of magical creatures, most particularly magical humans.

It could be either. For that matter, it could be both.

If there are indeed such “thin spots” where magic emerges directly into the physical world, it would stand to reason that the magic of such places would be easily accessed both by magical creatures, or local magic workers. Perhaps more easily, and more safely accessed than by the direct channeling of their “own” magic, giving them a welcome boost for casting spells.

Magic workers would seek out such thin spots, and tend to congregate there.

And eventually they might attempt to create such pools of magic deliberately.

Which is the kind of thing that could get really, really ugly, very, very quickly.

A wizard has no proper control of just what kind of emotional detritus he is shedding. He is only cumulatively aware of the general “strength” of the resulting charge of the area.

Somehow I tend to doubt that general feelings of peace and good-fellowship are going to charge an area as quickly or as



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strongly as a frenzy of blood-lust and terror. Particularly when such frenzies are being orchestrated in groups.

And almost at once what such a group will start emitting will be effectively “monsters of the id”

Enter the Maenads, the Wild Hunts and any number of other unsavory chthonic cults.

A “holy well,” if such do indeed exist in the Potterverse, would be a point of entry where clean, fresh, even if still essentially chaotic, magic surfaces in the world.

A “pool” of power deliberately created, is a place where a magical charge has collected due to a consolidation of “runoff” from human emotional discharge.

At first glance, both would probably look (or more properly speaking, “feel”) very similar.

And there is no rule that says that they cannot occupy the same space, either. I rather suspect that there may be a “well” in that sea cave, but over a long period of time an additional charge was built up in that place deliberately, causing it to function as a pool.

And as householders out in the suburbs have been discovering for the past few decades, a pool can turn into a particularly attractive nuisance. For one thing it will tend to dry up if you do not continue to feed it until it reaches some level of critical mass. Once it does that, without a well to freshen it, it tends to go stagnant. And then it starts generating all kinds of far-too-interesting slime. Red caps are one example, and hardly the only one. I am abruptly remembering that nearly all of the half-dozen or so creatures in ‘Fantastic Beasts’ which are categorized as “demons” are identified as being specifically *water* demons. One also recalls the degree of infestation by magical

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pests of the Black house in London after the neglect of a single decade, and belatedly wonders whether this principle may have contributed to that.

It also raises the likelihood that the reason no one at Hogwarts has ever seriously attempted to get rid of Peeves is that he serves to siphon off that excess of magical energy, maintaining the ambient magic of the castle at a relatively safe level, and there is no guarantee that, were he to be eradicated, what they might get in his place wouldn’t be a great deal more dangerous.

Stagnant pools also generate things that don’t necessarily stay in the immediate vicinity, like mosquitoes. Things that can carry other, worse problems, and prey on the uninvolved.

And if the sea cave is any indication, these places can long outlast their creators.

In fact, many may still be out there.

Uneasily sleeping.

One thing that needs to be added is that although the emotional detritus shed by one wizard occasionally engaging in a Dark Arts spell in the modern era will probably not build up the critical mass to do him any noticeable harm, the tendency of wizards to settle into stable dwelling places or working places in which magic is frequently evoked, and may be in use for generations, may well contribute to the site gradually building up a “negative charge.” In the days that all magic was Dark magic this would have happened much more quickly.



As an addenda to this: it has more recently occurred to me that there may be yet another potential source of entry for



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magic into the material world.

J.K. Rowling informed us, in one of her interviews some years back that it was a Dark wizard going by the name of Herpo the Foul who first created a Horcrux. She has mentioned this personage a couple of times. He was attributed to be a wizard of the classical era, he was also said to be Parselmouth. He is also associated with Basilisks.

A Horcrux will anchor a soul to the material plane, preventing it from passing beyond the Veil.

I have never heard it said that it renders its creator immune to the passing of time.

Nor that it will absolutely preserve the creator's physical body.

In the graveyard of Little Hangleton, in June of 1995, Tom Riddle gave his followers a speech relating his ordeal of existing after his defeat on Halloween of 1981. Of an unending struggle to retain his own sense of identity, to *\*exist\** unless he took possession of a living creature and rode them, until their bodies failed.

Tom Riddle managed this for something over a dozen years. Tom Riddle has considerable strength of will and a thirst for revenge which no doubt helped to sustain him.

How long might another such "anchored" soul without a similar level of focus last before they lost the battle and effectively "unraveled"?

His soul, or most of it, would *still* be anchored on this side of the Veil. The souls of wizards and witches generate and conduct magic. I rather think that a conscious *awareness* is not required.

Without a conscious awareness behind it, the magic conducted will not be anything that could be defined as a spell. It's not directed by any emotional impulse. There will be no focus

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nor any "intent." But the energy will still flow, unimpeded by a human body with its impacted ability to effectively channel magical energies. It will be chaotic energy, of human origin, but without any human input or direction it might not have the same sort of negative "charge" of a pool.

And, unlike a "well" it is not necessarily tied to a water source.

And the sort of chaotic entities which feed upon such things will probably be flocking around it like a snack bar.

And just about anyone who has ever been fool enough to create a Horcrux might by this time have devolved into one.

Under normal conditions such a conduction might last until the time that those entities which have discovered it manage to consume the energy so generated to the point that it is no longer able to meet the demand, and ceases to exist.

With a Horcrux to anchor its existence, it would mindlessly continue to emit magic until the anchor holding it is destroyed.



## The Development of Magic as a Course of Study:

It must also be noted that until comparatively recently — say the last 200 years or so — not every person who was capable of conducting Magic necessarily found themselves intentionally doing so to any significant degree. Rare wizards and witches prior to the development of monitoring or locational devices such as the charmed quill currently used by Hogwarts to identify and record the births of magical children, lived out apparently normal lives scarcely distinguishable from those of the rest of their social groups (although they would have been intermittently plagued by "odd happenings" in their vicinity). It



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must be admitted that an obscure and uneventful life, and/or a phlegmatic disposition would be a considerable advantage in enabling such an outcome.

When such a witch or wizard's ability to conduct magical energies remained quiescent, or if, with practice and discipline (certain forms of meditation are said to be helpful), the flow of magical energy could be sustained at a very low level, dissipating the build-up of such energies, their survival rates within these groups might typically be neither greater nor less than those of their non-conductive counterparts, given that they were not exposed to either the dangers nor the full benefits to which their natural conductivity would have otherwise entitled them. They might be resistant to some Muggle diseases, but on the other hand, it is uncertain to what degree of advantage the ability to channel magic might have against topical infections. Which, prior to antibiotics were not to be casually discounted.

These witches and wizards were typically what would today be regarded as Muggle-born. A magical child from a magical family, or a partially magical family, would have had someone at hand who would have known what to watch for, and the child would have been given proper training.

Unfortunately, while magical conductivity appears to be inherited, the ability to dissipate the energies so generated is not. The accidental magical "breakthroughs" commonly observed among juvenile wizards are due to a natural resistance to the energies that their systems are attempting to channel.\* Eventually the buildup of such energies is released suddenly, and explosively, much as in a sneeze. However, while such breakthroughs are typical, extreme breakthroughs of this sort are not universal,



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and there is reason to believe that in a minority of such children whose breakthroughs are more moderate (perhaps 2–5% or so) the young wizard — who might understandably find such breakthroughs alarming — eventually may unconsciously hit upon some method of regulating the channeling of such energies, dissipating the energies at a very low level, by the time he leaves the toddler stage. Such an habitual dissipation of the magical energies has the side effect of leaving the child without enough of a reservoir of magical energy to be able to cast spells. Or at least not until his magical conductivity matures, during puberty.

Such children appear to have either unconsciously found some manner in which to expel the generated energies at a low enough level which escapes general notice, or their systems may have lower resistance to the channeling of such energies, to the point that the energy trickles through them at a steady enough pace that it does not ever build up to the point that it needs to be expelled in a burst. Such children may later find it difficult to actually "connect to" and utilize their magic once the time comes to learn how to control it.

\*It should be noted that in an inherently magical species there is no such resistance. Consequently such species have no actual need of a wand in order to conduct magic in whatever manner is typical of their species. The Ministry's restriction of wands to human wizards and witches has created a false demand where there is no real requirement. It is also those children with at least some non-human ancestry who are most likely to be able to dissipate the magical energy they are conducting at a low enough level to be able to avoid breakthroughs.

Other children, particularly ones with a great deal of such





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magical energy to work with may manage to consciously focus and at least partially control such energies by the age of 9 or 10, resulting in what to an observer would be recognizable as the performance of legitimate nonverbal spells, before reaching the normal age to be fitted with a wand.

However, any untrained magical child may be at some level of psychic or physical risk if he should find himself accidentally invoking a powerful surge of magical energy. Particularly as he approaches his teens, when his ability to channel magic has matured without the proper training to control it. Such a surge might be beyond his ability to dissipate, with possibly fatal results. We were given some suggestion of this being the case in the course of DHs. Ariana Dumbledore, as she is described, is highly unlikely to have killed her mother, Kendra, with a controlled spell, or with the use of a wand. Her own death, following within 2–3 months may well have been from the same cause.

My extrapolation of tracing the development of Magical study is as follows:



### Stage I; “Wild Magic”

In the beginning, there was Magic. Which is to say, raw, “Wild” Magic.

No human has ever, properly speaking, “used” Wild Magic. Any more than they have “used” static electricity. Wild Magic used them. In fact, it tended to use them up, very much in the manner of a lightning strike. Few early wizards survived a spontaneous encounter with a significant burst of Wild Magic. This is the case, in the purest sense, of the situation described above, where an individual helplessly finds himself channeling magic at a level of

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force which he is unable to either suppress or direct.

We are speaking of the very earliest prehistory here. Such incidents were observed by other members of the victims’ social groups. Given that these fatal bursts of uncontrolled Magic typically tended to occur under the effect of strong emotional stress on the part of the individual conducting the magical energy, such observations eventually gave rise to a wide belief that there were unseen entities which took a sufficient interest in the behavior of human beings to reward and/or to punish them according to their own somewhat mysterious standards. These entities were ultimately to be defined as the “gods,” whose interest could be courted, their favor won, or their anger propitiated. The victims of these encounters with Wild Magic were most often judged to have done something that had brought retribution down upon themselves.

[Note: It is plain that these incidents were identical in kind, although not in degree, to the spontaneous “breakthrough” magic commonly experienced by immature wizards. The still incompletely developed nervous systems of magical children typically prevents these breakthroughs from being able to transmit enough magical energy to actually do the child direct physical or psychic harm, although examples of indirect harm, due to random instances of unintentional Apparition or the uncontrolled moving, combustion, or Transfiguration of objects are common enough. Exceptions to this general understanding do exist. Such an “immunity” diminishes with physical maturity, however. Rendering proper magical training of the young into a critical need.]

There are no tenable claims of magical technological development during this period, due to the lack of any sort of reliable social record.

It needs to be remembered that such encounters with Wild



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Magic did not cease after the study of Magic began to formalize a basic understanding of the processes involved. Instead, they continued, with gradually diminishing frequency until the development and wide adoption of the cored wand, which did not take place until a comparatively recent date; sometime around the founding of the Roman republic. Such encounters became increasingly rare after this date. Such fatal encounters, however, are still recorded as having taken place among or in the proximity of untrained, wandless, often Muggle-born wizards as recently as the 18th and 19th century.

It is understood that this sort of encounter has not taken place among the wandless inmates in custody at Azkaban prison only because of the Dementors' practice of "draining" such wizards of their emotional and magical resources. Leaving them too depleted to generate a strong enough involuntary surge of magic to make them vulnerable to such danger. Now that the Dementors have left Azkaban it is unknown whether the wizards in custody there will be subject to such encounters in the future.



### Stage II: "Ancient Magic"

This label refers to the very rudimentary, imperfect and incomplete compendium of what is understood to have been the experiences of those rare individuals who survived being used as a channel for Wild Magic in prehistory. This body of data is further amplified by legendary reports concerning suspected wizards who are believed to have invoked the process deliberately, and who appear to have directed the outcome, even though they may not actually have survived the experi-



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ence. The invocation of Magic in such "Ancient" form today is vanishingly rare, and fatal in most accredited instances.

Actual dates pertaining to this period are impossible to assign since we are still dealing with prehistory. This was a transitional period which overlapped into that which followed it, which is to say about the time that the Sumerians and the rest of their neighboring societies were all just beginning to get their acts together.



### Stage III: Shamans and Priests

The first concern of humans, either individually or as a community, is to gain some degree of control over the natural and supernatural events to which they are subjected. To this end human reasoning and imagination has gravitated toward seeking to discover what will control his environment with an interest toward negotiating the most favorable of possible terms with it. Wizards, being psychically active enough to see and communicate with many of the entities which reside in the spirit world are uniquely well suited to this pursuit.

That animal spirits in the form of guides, totems, and patrons appear to be universal in the belief systems of early hunter-gatherer societies, as depicted in cave paintings from an early date would tend to suggest that the Animagus transformation, which can be performed wandlessly, is probably one of the earliest known forms of advanced magic to have survived to the present day. That the Animagus transformation can go hideously wrong may account for not only some accounts of human/animal hybrid monsters which populate mythology, but





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also for some of the animal-headed gods of various early civilizations, some of these having been incorporated from the long established beliefs dating from pre-agricultural traditions.

From this, we may conclude that the Animagus transformation is not, in fact, accomplished through modern “wizardry.” But is, effectively something that is accomplished only through accessing principles of the Dark Arts. Given the various Ministries of Magic’s determination to rewrite history in their own image, I would hesitate to state that this particular detail is widely understood by persons undertaking this study.

The wizarding Priest, who in the majority of agricultural societies eventually supplanted the Shaman was a development which, in the west, coincided with the rise of bronze-age civilizations in and around the Mediterranean region. The most widely-held opinion regarding this later stage of Magical development is that it was precipitated by the discovery that Magical energy could be channeled into and through a physical object for the purpose of giving it a specific direction and focus. The development of the staff among the Sumarians and the somewhat later cultures developing concurrently with Egypt marks the earliest recognized epoch of this particular stage of the development of Magical studies.

The development of the Staff is likely to have been a reasonably simple discovery and one which may have been discovered concurrently in a great many regions. The widespread use of a walking staff assures that eventually a wizard with one in his hand might point it at an object he intended to affect, in an emergency. The use of a staff reduced the percentage of fatalities in encounters with Magic by transferring the greater part

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of any damage previously suffered by the wizard himself, to the staff. This lowered the risks connected with channeling Magical energy to the point that the desirability of voluntary invocation of such encounters began to outweigh its dangers (survival rate was now at approximately 40%, rising to nearly 75% by the end of this era).

During the earlier, largely nomadic phase of this era, mixed social groups which included wizards (some extended family groups might have been chiefly composed of wizards) regarded these individuals as supernaturally favored, and came to venerate them and look to them as spiritual leaders. In return, these Shamans and (eventually) Priests were the designated “lightning-rods” of their communities and were expected to be willing to sacrifice themselves for the community’s benefit when the need was great enough. In the case of Shamans, their function within their cultures as the gatekeepers and mediators to the spirit world assured that the most effective of such Shamans would always be wizards, since wizards are the only humans in the Potterverse who are noted as being capable of seeing and communicating with the entities who reside on the spiritual planes. Or who, as ghosts, might give advice and counsel to their successors.

That magical conductivity is an inherited quality accounts for such documented ensuing social oddities as hereditary priesthoods. It has been postulated that it was the social function of such wizards, as the spiritual leaders of their groups that initially suggested the practice of attempting to channel magical energy not merely physically, but “spiritually” as well, attempting to maximize the amount of contact and integration



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between his deepest core “self” with the magical energies that he was attempting to direct. This practice was certainly incorporated into all formal magical study from this early point. It did tend to increase the focus of such channeling. But it also generated psychic “residue” and enhanced the vulnerability of the wizard to the distortions of perception inherent in too closely exposing oneself to chaotic energies.

With this in mind it should also be noted that while the practice of traditional aboriginal, or Shamanistic religions is harmless to Muggles, and may even be regarded as spiritually beneficial, it can be extremely dangerous to wizards, and their surrounding communities. The traditions that these religions were initially grounded upon were almost universally formalized before the development of modern wizardry. Consequently, there are no protections in place within the traditional constraints of the religion’s practice. For this reason, we might suspect that all of those Ministries (or Bureaus) of Magic in nations which include a significant aboriginal population might currently contain an extensive Department of Aboriginal Affairs which monitors any surges of wild Magic in the areas where these populations hold territory.

This form of monitoring could be similar in kind to the charmed quill employed by Hogwarts to flag the birth of children who have inherited a sufficient degree of magical conductivity to require training, but is calibrated to the particular “frequencies” of Magic which are more associated with the local form of aboriginal religion as practiced by adolescent and adult wizards and is intended to identify those rare individuals whose magic may have developed, or have been activated at some later point in their lifecycle rather than at birth, or to

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serve as an emergency response system for those individuals who are unwisely attempting to operate wandlessly and may now require assistance. It probably utilizes the same technology as the monitoring devices currently deployed by the Accidental Magical Reversal Department, with the addition of specific calibration attuned to the local influences.

Among modern wizarding practitioners of such religions around the world today, such modifications in the means of channeling magical energies as are used in conventional wizardry have been “retrofitted” into the practice wherever possible.

By the later part of this historical period, as religious beliefs gradually formalized and identifiable sects became more widespread and established, a wizard in society was usually offered the choice of either continuing to function within his society in an independent capacity as a professional magic user, or he might enter one or another form of priesthood. This choice remained open to wizards until quite recently and that both options remained available can be noted right up to the establishment of wizarding Seclusion.



### Stage IV: Philosophers and Scholars

The establishment of cities under various bronze age cultures increased the variety as well as the number of potential partners available to individuals whose bloodlines harbored magical traits. This resulted initially in a decrease in the births of children who were capable of serving as active conductors of Magic due to the dilution of these traits throughout a now much broader mundane gene pool. But as the highly resilient mag-



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ical traits became ever more widely replicated and dispersed throughout the local populations this decrease ultimately corrected itself, and continued long enough to reverse the initial trend. A gradual increase in the birthrate of children who could be determined to have inherited an active level of magical conductivity was the result.

These increases would have been quicker to occur, the smaller the total population of the local society. Societies which occupied major trade routes would have been slower to display such increases due to continued dilution from external, transient populations. It is possible that observers are seeing the beginning of a similar upwards "reversal" trend in the magical birthrate in island nations such as Great Britain today, although the high level of transience of the general population of the modern world would argue against it.

The organized religions and their priesthoods within these societies had, by this time, formalized, and while many magical children were ultimately accepted into these priesthoods, many more, particularly female children, studied under an informal tutelage outside the constraints of their local religions. This tutelage might have been based upon the studies earlier developed by such priesthoods, even occasionally by priesthoods of religions which were not practiced by the local population. It is rare that any technique not developed in the course of ministering to a following such as that between a priest and his flock or the shaman and his tribe would have survived to be taught to others, although there were undoubtedly some unique practices passed down as "family secrets."

Such studies were generally confined within the children's

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families, but the urban environment encouraged greater contact between families whose members had magical conductivity in common. This mingling would have encouraged discussion and debate. Such a pooling of knowledge and experimentation was the inception of the formal study of Magic as it is known today. Ultimately such coalitions of "philosophers" would have contributed the fruits of their discussion to the general knowledge and theories held in common by the majority of the magical population of their cities and city-states.

The most far-reaching developments of this period were, first, the increase in the general rate of literacy among trained wizards; which is to say, wizards from magical families. Magical children occurring in families which contained no other living wizard during this period often remained untrained, or self-trained, and illiterate, if they survived.

The second, and far more significant event was the development of the wand, which is to say the cored wand.

The staff, which up until this point had eventually been destroyed during cumulative use in any but the most trivial of "workings," (having taken the damage which would have previously been taken by the spell's caster), although closely studied in regards to the symbolism of the tree from which it might have been made, had probably not ever been given a core of any secondary material. An uncored wand made of solid wood did not typically have the mass necessary to sustain use in even simple "workings" without taking immediate damage.

At some point it was discovered that the wand, if given a core of some inherently magically-conductive material, would not only generally survive intact, but would amplify the force



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of the caster's intent, and further enhance the focus of his aim. It also provided a much higher degree of safety for the wizard since the magical energy he was channeling now flowed directly from his own nervous system into the wand without meeting the resistance previously encountered in the transition from a more-highly conductive to a less-highly conductive environment, as had been the case when focusing Magic which was channeled through one's own nervous system, into and through a solid wooden staff.

The cored wand served essentially as an extension of the wizard's own nervous system. Any of the potential explosions or combustions due to impacted channeling, which take place upstream of the point of resistance now took place in the wand, since the point of most resistance had been placed at some remove from the wizard's own physical body. This brought the survival rate of Magical practice up to a solid 85%-95% virtually overnight, while raising its effectiveness considerably.

The date and origin of the development of the cored wand is uncertain. It's origins are most commonly — although not universally — attributed to the Persians, although some insist upon attributing it to various other peoples. What is certain is that it was widely adopted by the Romans during the period of the Republic, and the use of the cored wand is credited for many of the Republic's earliest conquests over various other rival states in the Italian peninsula.

The advantage of the cored wand over the uncored staff in a combat situation, was great enough to suggest that wherever the wand was first developed, the secret of its construction would have been jealously guarded for fear of the information falling

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into the hands of enemies. This is a secrecy which was doomed to fail fairly quickly. A wand is more easily broken or lost than a staff, which moreover, conceals no secrets. Any wand to have been broken would have immediately revealed that it was cored with some foreign material. Although it might not be immediately evident what that material was. It is likely that a great many attempts to produce functional wands using very odd materials as cores would have followed, before it became obvious which materials were not well suited for the purpose.

Throughout most of Europe the wand was ultimately to supplant the use of the Staff altogether. Only very rare wizards are noted to have used staffs after about the 3rd or 4th century A.D. And those who did so may have used them only on ceremonial occasions.



### Stage V: Wizards and Witches.

Over the century or two following the development of the cored wand, the increase in the survival rate among the conductors of Magic began to reveal a problem which had not, up to that period, been generally noticed or seriously contemplated, although the indications are that it had been in evidence for ages previous. Hand-in-hand with the increase in wizarding survival rates came the highly disturbing observation that the long-term exercise of one's Magical conductivity appeared to have a discernible degenerative effect upon a wizard or witch's personality.

This erosion or distortion of character had not been immediately evident in the days of the Shamans and the Priests, since the Priest's status of being god-touched had itself covered a



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multitude of pathologies and given the instability of working wandlessly, or with an uncured staff, the fatality rate among such individuals had, even at best, been against the likelihood of his surviving to make “old bones.” The personality deterioration which was now increasingly observed took a variety of recognizable forms. Rampant paranoia being among the most widespread of them.

The common factor of all these forms of pathology appeared to be; first, a certain “hardening” of the individual’s capability for empathy and a lessening of either the willingness or the capacity to recognize the rights and, indeed the existence of other people as either other individuals, or, in advanced cases, as members of his own species. Second; an increasing readiness to regard all other entities as the enemy and to behave accordingly.

These observations became progressively more alarming as the cumulative body of evidence suggested that this mysterious malady ultimately seemed to affect the majority of practicing witches and wizards (in fact, the incidence was something like two thirds).

It was ultimately observed that some forms of Magical practice were more subject to this process than others. The passive study of Magical theory itself, was eventually determined not to have any degenerating effect upon the character at all. It is this factor which explains the comparatively recent discovery that a select few of the traditional names most associated with early studies of magical theory turn out not to have been those of wizards at all, but Squibs from mixed-blood families, or of predominantly magical families, with a bent for scholarship partaking in the various “schools of philosophy” in concert with family members and other members of the local magical community.



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This degenerative condition is today identified as Dark Arts-related dementia and, apart from the absence of any corresponding degenerative physical component, in many regards the symptoms closely resemble the mundane condition currently identified as Alzheimer’s Disease, with, as stated above, a distinct overlay of paranoia. While there were undoubtedly some medi-magical potions or processes which may have slowed this deterioration, at the period at which we speak, the only sure way to avoid the development of this condition was to limit one’s practice of Magical “workings.”

In strict accuracy, it also must be pointed out that there have probably been no really well-advanced cases of this condition available for study in recent centuries, and that consequently, most current understanding of the progression of the disease are based upon extrapolations from historical records. On the other hand, there is an ample apparent evidence of just such a blunting of empathy to be observed among Dark wizards in the modern day. It is undetermined whether this blunting of empathy is, in fact, a component of the progress of the condition, merely accompanies it, or is unrelated to it.

We also have, in canon, at least one fairly widely acknowledged sufferer of paranoia. Admittedly, no one can question the fact that Alistor Moody’s paranoia was to some extent justified. However, it should also be pointed out that nobody questioned the plausibility of his alleged deployment of animated dustbins against what appeared to be phantom intruders. And as an Auror, and a prominent one, Moody might reasonably be supposed to have spent a greater amount of his life grappling with the Dark Arts than the average wizard. Or even the average Dark wizard.





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One must also consider the proximity of his magical eye to his brain and wonder whether there may have been some flaw in the design of that device.

As a sort of footnote to this survey as regards the modern practice of the Dark Arts. If we are to take the late Professor Snape's description of the nature of the Dark Arts at face value ("...many, varied, ever-changing, eternal." "...unfixed, mutating indestructible.") it seems self-evident that getting in too deep might well serve as a positive invitation for developing at least some form of delusional thinking. It does not, however, support the contentions of the unsophisticated that the Dark Arts themselves are necessarily inherently evil. Or even that Dark Arts spells are necessarily hostile.



A necessary note regarding the progress of DA-related dementia: I now generally suspect, based upon empirical evidence, that the majority of those wizards and witches who actively practiced Magic by the methods and procedures which had been established in all formal studies of magic up to the period which we are now examining (which is to say, Dark magic), eventually tended to lose their grip on — essentially — what it was to be a member of the human race. In advanced cases, they had effectively become merely a channel for the forces of chaos. There is no indication that this was in any manner related to any witch or wizard's underlying "intent" regarding the workings in which they had originally engaged. Such a descent was regarded as the price one ultimately paid for being a wizard.

In the days that the only magic was Dark magic, to permit

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oneself to become spiritually "connected" (perhaps one should more properly say; consumed) with the chaotic forces that one was channeling, to effectively "be" one's magic, in accordance with the philosophy and practices of the time, appears (so far as we can determine at this late date, so long after the fact) to have resulted in the afflicted witch or wizard eventually "losing himself" in an amorphous, phantasmagorical alternate reality to which the bulk of human society was blind and deaf; something akin to a walking nightmare, in which nothing could be trusted, nothing was stable, and anything one encountered might suddenly reveal itself to be an enemy, no matter how closely such a chimera might resemble even one's most beloved family members. If, as some theorists contend, the ability to conduct magical energies itself is a quality of the soul, this descent into madness was to be considered a spiritual malady; a warping of the soul. It did not help matters that this interpretation was also often the one applied to the situation by the surrounding community.

From a strictly moral standpoint, there is a considerable difference in one's degree of personal responsibility between choosing to do what one knows to be evil and that of having one's own "Self" gradually eroded, perhaps unwittingly, to the point that one becomes perilous to be around; although the cost to the surrounding community is likely to be much the same in the final reckoning. And, while an intent to harm others might have had no part of the initial motivation, any afflicted witch or wizard would still have constituted a grave danger to anyone in their range. Long before reaching the final stages of this descent, their community would have needed to neutralize such persons for its own safety.



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It must be stressed that the progression of this disorder is not *specifically* a corruption into evil (although that particular form of descent has also been amply documented — although we cannot depend upon the biases of the scribes who documented it) but, more properly, a gradual divorce from one's basic "reality." Not all of the historic wizards who are known to have developed what would today be recognized as Dark Arts-related dementia were necessarily or intentionally evil, since the practice of Magic itself under the methods of that day was not inherently evil, and, at that point in history, there were no other known methods by which to practice magic.

I also suspect that it is currently understood by a number of scholars who have studied writings related to this issue that the wizards and witches who develop this condition, if unchecked, eventually lose any ability to process the concept of what any such purely human constructions as "good" or "evil" entail, since "survival" has become paramount. Which is, if anything, even more disturbing.

This particular epoch of the development of Magical studies was already solidly established by the Classical period and, in Europe, is generally regarded to have continued (depending upon region) until the 7th to the 9th century of the present era. Social perceptions regarding wizards which remain current among Muggles dating from this period include the assumption that all sorcerers and sorceresses are at least somewhat mad, and to some degree inhuman, the assumption that all wizards are evil, and the mythic figure of the reclusive wizard isolated in his tower.

During this period, many wizards with a major project underway almost certainly did voluntarily seclude themselves

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from others, both for the sake of eliminating interruptions to their workings, but also in recognition of the madness which might overtake them.

In an attempt to delay the onset of this madness the majority of wizards and witches, probably carefully limited their active practice of Magic, which enabled them to live for long periods among their mundane neighbors either undetected or without notable conflict.

Perhaps some recognition ought to be paid to the degree of courage, or even heroism displayed by the practicing witches and wizards during this period in the development of the magical processes and spells which they have passed down to the witches and wizards of today. For they knew, without exception, that they were skating on very thin ice, and that their sanity, and their effective lives, might ultimately be forfeit. Their legacy is their memorial. It does them a disservice to claim that all Dark wizards are necessarily evil wizards. For, in their day, there was no "choosing" between Dark or Light. All Magic was Dark Magic. They knew no other sort.



A further degree of attention must also be directed to the traditional methods of neutralizing Dark wizards whose psychic condition had progressed beyond having lost their connection with everyday reality to the point of becoming a danger to the surrounding community.

Given that in the modern day the sort of conduct resulting from even the early stages of this descent has generally landed its subject in Azkaban, the proximity to and the effect of the Dement-



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tors usually renders any further progress of the malady irrelevant.

In the modern day to fully develop such a condition is a virtually unknown occurrence, and if the tendency is detected in the (very) early stages, may be at least partially corrected. Such cases would now be a matter for referral to St. Mungo's, or one's private Healer. Modern instances of suspected early DA-related dementia rarely progress beyond the point of the progressive "hardening" of the subject's capacity for empathy, and/or a manageable if inconvenient level of paranoia, long before any of the more alarming behavior attributed to the condition has become a factor.

In the period of which we speak, however, this loss of control was not a vanishingly uncommon occurrence. It was the ultimate end of two out of three practicing witches or wizards. The knowledge of this contributed to a certain degree of fatalism in outlook within wizarding families, perhaps accounting for the somewhat "morbid" or "gothic" taste exhibited in the general forms of household display widely adopted by many wizarding families with traditional associations as Dark Arts practitioners.

Whereas today most Dark wizards are apprehended and restrained by trained Aurors, in historic periods, it was generally the wizard's own family who were ultimately his jailers. The fact that the monster to be restrained was a once-beloved parent or sibling, and that in all probability the same fate ultimately awaited oneself worked very strongly against any willingness of the hunters to go so far as to kill their target (unless such "hunts" were a part of the activities of one of the aforementioned Dionysian cults, of course — which they may indeed have been).

It has been suggested that the Imperius curse may have been

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developed in an early attempt to control wizards whose own control was no longer fully within their command. The degree of power necessary to deploy and to maintain this curse, however, would strongly suggest that, even if correct, this avenue of exploration was eventually abandoned as unfeasible.

The commonest, and most widespread, solution that was ultimately adopted was, in most cases, Transfiguration into a form in which the afflicted wizard could take no further damage from the forces which were believed to be eating away at him from the inside, and in which he could do no further harm to his family and neighbors. That a number of these acts of neutralization were probably witnessed by neighboring Muggles would go a long way to explain the preponderance of the reports of metamorphosis that permeate Classical literature and mythology. The majority of which can really *not* be attributed to Animagi.

It could also go some way towards explaining the recurrent motif of guardian trees growing from the graves of parents which nevertheless continue to oversee their childrens' welfare that pervade later folklore, even if perhaps only in the spirit of wish fulfillment.

That such tales are to be found throughout the mythologies of such widespread social groups during this epoch over such a widely dispersed range would suggest that this particular solution was adopted concurrently by the wizards of many peoples in many lands.

It must also be added that the Dark wizards whose containment was being sought were undoubtedly responsible for a great many of such Transfigurations, themselves. Such garbled and incomplete reports of these enchantments, or of their eventual correction, appear to have also filtered into folklore



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and are now familiar in the household tales of many cultures. The researcher must be strongly cautioned that not all of such folk tales are actually based upon real incidents. The human imagination is a very active force in itself. Many popular tales are made up of whole cloth, only incorporating elements that their originator may have borrowed from earlier tales and with which occurrences the storyteller has had no real experience.

One of the most widely documented tales of this particular sort, and the one most broadly familiar among both wizards and Muggles alike, dating from the later portion of this era — and the one which is probably grounded the most solidly in the truth — is the story of the disappearance of the wizard known to us as Merlinus Ambrosius.

This particular wizard is most closely identified with the political situation in Britain following the withdrawal of the Roman legions in the 5th century of the Christian era, and which carried over into the period covering the resistance to the encroachment of Saxon influence which followed that withdrawal.

That the wizard popularly referred to as Merlin is recorded to have been actively, in fact, recklessly practicing magic over an extended period of time in connection with the reigns of both Uther Pendragon, and with that of Uther's attributed son, Arthur, strongly suggests that his character might indeed have become quite dangerously unstable by the point that he was removed from the political arena. The manner in which this removal was accomplished is reported variously, but the gist of the story is that he was lured from the Court (possibly with the help of the Imperius curse) by a former apprentice, who went by the name of Nimüe, or in some other reports, Vivian; in any

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case a young witch of considerable personal attractions, and that he was ultimately "confined" in a oak tree.

Merlin's removal resulted in a severe destabilization within Arthur's power base, to which Arthur's eventual defeat by a rival chieftain, and his subsequent disappearance is attributed. That the witch Nimüe did not immediately take Merlin's place among Arthur's supporters is generally taken as proof that she was "wicked," or in the pay of the enemy. It is just as likely, however, that she did not choose to subject herself to the demands of a position which would almost certainly have brought her, sooner rather than later, to share her former Master's fate. (The differences in the manner in which the Court would have attempted to relate to an attractive young witch, as opposed to a powerful and erratic old wizard might have presented her with an additional counter-incentive.)

A very suggestive line of inquiry was brought up in the mid-20th century by one Charlotte Glover, a Muggle-born witch most widely known for her several collections of retold wizarding household tales. Miss Glover claims that the entry on bowtruckles which she read in an early edition of a popular reference book on Fantastic Beasts, states that they guard trees, and that the bowtruckle must be propitiated before it will permit wandmakers to take wood from the trees under their protection. Having been brought up outside the wizarding world, and having also traveled extensively, Miss Glover has been in a position to have observed trees in many National Forests around the world.

Miss Glover has pointed out that most of the world's trees are not under protection by bowtruckles, whose range is limited to



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the north and west of Great Britain and a few places on the Continent. She raises the question of whether the wandmakers of these regions always find the wood of the trees under such protection more suitable for the successful creation of wands than the wood of unprotected trees? She asks further whether, if this is so, the cause for this might not be the same quality which has attracted the bowtruckle's attention to these particular trees in the first place? And whether this quality might not be some residual "resonance" which could be the afterimage from prior conduction of Magical energies?

The (frankly disturbing) implications of the direction taken by Miss Glover's questions have not been given any serious follow up. (Mr. Ollivander of Diagon Alley was not available for comment.) But it seems to be a toss-up as to whether the wizarding world might find it more of a burden or of a consolation to reflect upon the possibility that some wizards and witches, lost to humanity since the "Dark Ages," might indeed still be alive and continue to be contributing members of the Magical community to the present day.



### Stage VI: The Development of Modern Wizardry.

As might be expected, one of the Ultima Thules of Magical study throughout the age of Wizards and Witches had been to discover the cause and a possible cure for the progressive "madness" which affected so many of them. It had been noted from the earliest observations that the onset of this madness appeared to be accompanied by a corresponding apparent increase in the affected wizard's magical power. The memory

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of such observations still linger in various mundane folk beliefs, such as the belief that the insane "have the strength of ten". In fact, from a closer examination of the historical record, it appears that it was not so much an increase in magical power upon which an afflicted wizard might draw, as a decrease in the degree of sensible restraint such a wizard might employ when channeling magic.

Those observers who attempted to follow this line of inquiry ultimately determined a probable cause of the malady. And got little joy of that discovery.

It eventually was determined that the problem was that the underlying practice of Magic itself had perpetuated magic operating in exactly the same manner as it had from the earliest recordings of the Paleolithic era. The magical energies were still "using" the user.

The psychic result of this usage was that gradually as one's perceptions of the world itself, and one's place in it became altered, one's sense of "balance" or "proportion" became severely compromised. Cumulative exposure to the deceptive influences which appear to infest "untamed" magic, distorted the afflicted wizard's compromised perceptions to the point that the forces which he was attempting to control were now controlling him. This distortion of an afflicted wizard's perceptions only made the situation worse by gradually "burning out" all such impediments to his uncontrolled channeling of Magic represented by those purely "human" inhibitions, such as natural affection, considerations of individual sovereignty and self-determination (to say nothing of one's perception of personal risk), regard for cosmic balance, or any such fundamentally artificial



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human constructions as “justice,” “good,” or “evil.”

Pure energy has no conscious state, and no morality. The flowing of energy itself is not consciously directed. To the energy itself, and the entities which are still debated to be sustained by it, all that matters to the flow of Magical energy is “*flow*.” The more deeply afflicted a wizard in the throes of DA-related dementia became, the less restraint he would attempt to bring to bear upon the flow of the Magical energies he was channeling. Ultimately he was completely absorbed in reaction to the varying and deceptive stimulus with which the attendant chaotic forces and the entities which they generated and that had taken him over were taunting him.

It must again be remembered that all of our available examples are taken from the historical record, which in itself may be biased and distorted for the purposes of the recording scribe or their employer. Any extrapolations must therefore be taken as unproven hypotheses.

Since the affected wizard appears to retain a human intellect and consciousness (however distorted) up to a quite late stage of the malady, the form and focus of the Magical forces which he was no longer altogether voluntarily channeling tended to be shaped into what appeared to observers and the affected wizard himself to be human goals, but were, in fact, driven by no more than the natural requirement of the energy surging through him to maintain an unimpeded flow, and an afflicted wizard’s “reasons” for his actions tended to become progressively less rational or recognizably “human” as his condition worsened.

The discovery of the probable cause (and this was a discovery whose widespread acceptance took decades) did not immedi-

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ately offer any possibility of a cure. It took more than a century of additional widespread study and observation before any kind of reliable methods (and there is more than one) of protecting one’s psychic “Self” from the flow of the magical energies that one is channeling and directing began to emerge.

What this required was a complete re-evaluation and revision of the manner in which magic was channeled. Magic still appeared to originate in the wizard’s soul. Or, at least that was how the magic user drew upon it. It still needed to be channeled through his physical body and nervous system. It still needed to be directed and focused through his wand. But the practice of “opening oneself to the Magic” as it had been formulated before wizards had developed wands, and were still experiencing a survival rate of under 75% could be modified. It was a trial-and-error process, but the stakes were far too high not to attempt it.

Drastically reducing the amount of emotional residue produced by using the new methods of focusing and directing magic was a (admittedly welcome) side effect, but might not have been of any significant assistance in those areas in which an effective pool had already formed. However, in a clean environment it would have delayed the onset of the area generating of any secondary entities or parasites which prey upon the fears of magic workers as well as giving such entities less direct access to a wizard’s deepest consciousness.

Much of the resistance to these “new” methods was due to the fact that in order to implement them, one was forced to reject, in fact to reverse one of the basic tenants of all formal magical training as it had been passed down from the days of prehistory. Which is to say, that rather than deliberately opening



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oneself physically and psychically to the flow of magical energy, attempting to become "one" with the Magic, as it were, one must learn to channel the energy at a remove. That one should shield one's psychic "core" and detach one's "self" from being involved in the flow of the energies one is conducting. That, in fact, one should direct the flow only through one's physical body, and directly into one's wand, rather than ever attempting to establish a spiritual connection with the energy itself. One directed the flow from the mind, rather than the heart.

Which is not as easy. One's feeling of control over the magical process becomes less direct as well. It also requires a much clearer degree of precision in defining exactly what one "wants." One cannot make up the difference with the power of one's "intent."

This flew in the face of everything that any trained wizard or witch had ever been formally taught. Most traditional teaching to that date could have essentially have been summed up in an exhortation to "become" one's magic. Unfortunately, this process had turned out to be a clear demonstration of "be careful what you wish for."

But, it was gradually seen, once the newer, less direct methods of channeling had been warily adopted, that the active practice of Magic gradually became much safer for the individual, resulting first in fewer direct physical injuries from magical workings, and over the following century or two showed ample indication that these new, safer procedures not only seemed to be forestalling the onset of "madness" but were resulting in a longer effective lifespan for the wizards who adopted them. This longer, *healthier* life, combined with the prospect of not someday constituting a danger to one's descendants was ample reason to encourage the

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average Magic user to relearn the basics of his craft.

The price of this recalibration of the manner in which magic was channeled was that the removal of the Self from the energy path required a considerable increase in the degree of control that was needed to direct the energy through a wizard's wand. The wizard was now required to direct virtually all of the active magical energy through the wand, rather than channeling it through his own essential "self" and, consequently, his mere "intent" was no longer able to take up the slack for any shakiness of control by his sheer desire for the outcome.

The effectiveness of his magic was also now all but totally dependent upon his having a usable, more-or-less properly "fitted" wand at his disposal. The fineness of his wand control, and the pronunciation and/or understanding of the required incantation was also now an essential factor to producing the desired result. To express magic required a clearer, even if a shallower, understanding of the process. It was no longer fueled almost entirely by the wizard's "desire." "Form" now mattered at least as much as the "intent." As the spells themselves were gradually redesigned to work under the new methods it often mattered more.

The wizard, who was now working at a discernible remove from the source of the energy of his magic, was also far less keenly aware of exactly how much magical energy he was actually transmitting and needed to relearn how to gauge the whole process which he had believed himself to have already mastered.

Fortunately, the greater part of the body of known spells of that time were found to still work, and to work just about as effectively regardless of whether the energies channeled were channeled by the older or the newer methods. Or, at any rate



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to do so once the wizard had relearned how to calibrate his performance of the spells in accordance with the newer methods.

Specific wand movements and formal incantations needed to be discovered or devised for spells which had originally been responsive to little more clarity in deployment than; "I want this." It was gradually discovered that the development of the spells themselves could be further refined for a far higher degree of stability, accuracy, and consistency in their result and which was sufficiently "domestic" in nature to begin to be recognizable as what is now referred to as "wizardry," even though it was at the beginning only a very slight departure from the older, more chaotic, Dark Arts forms.

But there was a significant minority of spells (not all of them even of an aggressive character) which apparently required that underlying "spiritual connection" to their caster, and which ceased to be operative as soon as one attempted to direct them by any means other than the older, direct channeling of magical energy through one's deepest psychic consciousness and emotional "center." To develop new, safer methods of achieving the same results as these spells engaged much of the body of magical development and Dark Arts research for centuries afterward. Some such spells continue to resist conversion to the present day.

But not all wizards did choose to completely abandon the older methods. The trade-off for using this new practice of "wizardry" was that a wizard was unquestionably limited to only the level of magical conductivity that he was born with. The — now widely referred to as — Dark Arts had been widely believed to increase one's psychic capacity to channel power as one grew older and had built up cumulative exposure to using it.



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Even though this premise was almost certainly false, the belief alone was enough to assure that there would continue to be a considerable following of wizards and witches (possibly Salazar Slytherin among them) who would attempt to have it both ways, believing that it should be possible to strike a happy medium by combining both methods in one's practice of Magic. What is also probably undeniable is that to conduct magic by the older methods was \*easier\* in that it required less control to get the desired results.

And this group was not altogether wrong in their beliefs, for the incidence and progression of DA-related dementia became both lower and slower. But, ultimately, many of the next several generations of wizards who continued to practice magic through the older direct channeling methods to any appreciable degree, particularly those working in environments which had already acquired a significant magical "charge" eventually needed to be constrained for the sake of the safety of those around them.

In this matter we can also see a clear demonstration of the fact that the universe is not a place in which the purely human concept of fairness is widely applied. Not all wizards are born with the same capacity to channel magical energies. Some are born with the ability to channel a far greater amount of such energy than the average. Some others can inherently manage to channel somewhat less. And a wizard's capacity to channel magic has little to do with his ability to resist losing his equilibrium under the repeated exposure to the deceptive influences which appear to accompany the practice of the Dark Arts. It is his resistance to chaotic suggestion that has *everything* to do with that.

Those wizards who are most open to suggestion are also





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exactly the ones who will believe that they benefit the most from the practice of the Dark Arts. Often misperceiving the depth of their channeling capacity, as the continued psychic exposure to the deception deludes them into believing their magical power has increased. These wizards are the first to develop some form of DA-related dementia.

Those wizards who are best able to keep their heads in a crisis and to recognize what is actually true, will probably be able to resist the distorted blandishments encountered in the direct channeling methods used in the Dark Arts for extended periods of time before they begin to display any changes in either what they perceive to be their ability to channel progressively greater amounts of magical energy or in the sort of personality disorders which are most commonly associated with DA-related dementia. Indeed, the somewhat hardened outlook generally exhibited by many (although, it must be admitted, not necessarily all) acknowledged Dark wizards may to some degree be a defense mechanism which they have developed in response to their exposure to such influences.

It is now believed that it was these wizards with higher levels of mental discipline who are occasionally noted to have lived long and productive lives, many of them living to what were, for those days, a very great age, and dying peaceful deaths, even before the development of modern wizardry.

Such highly disciplined wizards were probably often called upon in the event of needing to neutralize and contain those who had lost control and appeared to be being manipulated by the wild Magic that was using them as its conduit, for in such cases, the higher-disciplined wizard's inherent power was

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usually as high, or in most cases, was higher than that of the afflicted wizard who erroneously believed his power to have been enhanced artificially. However, even wizards of great natural ability to channel magical energies have, historically been documented as developing DA-related dementias through prolonged indulgence in the active practice of the Dark Arts, or through the habit of recklessly engaging in many "great workings." To neutralize such wizards once they had lost their grip took the magical community considerable effort.

It is widely believed that such disciplined wizards had preserved their sanity by having exercised careful restraint in not exceeding their natural capacity by reckless workings. It has also traditionally been postulated, although never conclusively proven that the distortion of perception as to the amount of magical energy which one is actually channeling is one of the earliest signs of a heightened vulnerability to the rest of the delusions attendant to exposure to such chaotic influences, and that this is most likely to occur when one is attempting to channel more magical energy than one, in fact, can.

This postulation would be difficult to prove in any case, but more recent studies have begun to take greater account of the fact that since the residue which is being shed by the afflicted wizard originates from the deepest desires and fears of his own soul, it is the self-generated, indeed, virtually "custom-built" nature of the delusions which make them so compelling. This has more recently raised the question of whether it is in fact chaotic entities at all which are distorting the wizard's perception, or whether he is allowing himself to be led astray by his own self-delusions, fears, and desires, spun off, and made manifest.



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Since this condition is no longer one which has been observed to occur in the modern day, it seems most likely that this debate will continue unabated, without ever reaching a final conclusion. It should be noted that regardless of the similarity in appearance, the former Tom Riddle's spiritual maladies were not due to the habitual performance of Dark Magic in general. The Mr Riddle we observed in canon may have suffered from a far more direct form of chaotic predation which greatly contributed to *his* condition. I would like to direct the reader's attention to the essay entitled; 'Broken Promise: An Introduction to Horcruxes' for further exploration of the matter



As regards the education of new generations of wizards, however, it was readily agreed upon by pretty nearly everybody, that children should be taught the safer methods of wizardry first, in order that those methods and the fineness of control required by them would become their primary mode of channeling these dangerous energies. The older methods could always be explored after the newer ones had become instinctive.

To facilitate this process, and to ensure that the new generations were trained in these methods rather than permitting youngsters to train themselves in the sort of traditional hedge-wizardry which might put them into harm's way, over the next few centuries the founding of the first of the great wizarding Academies took place throughout Europe and much of the Middle East. The Founding of Hogwarts was a part of this movement.

One unanticipated, and rather unfortunate result of the spread of modern wizardry can be seen in the acceleration in the cycle of



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periods of assimilation punctuated by episodes of widespread persecution against suspected wizards and witches in European history as one moves farther from the period that is now regarded, even by Muggles as the "Dark Ages". Since the practice of Magic was becoming safer for the user, the fear of madness was no longer serving as a restraint upon the discretion of those who were able to practice it. Much of the work of the original Wizengamot, and the Wizards' Council which followed it, in the centuries which followed was an ongoing attempt to establish a governing body with the authority to restrain the sort of behavior which was soon proving to create endangerment to all the wizarding community.

It can be seen by an overview of history that the attempt was not a universal success. Additional factors in this equation will be remarked upon in the companion pieces; 'Wizards & Muggles: Pre-& Post-Seclusion'.



### Additional Notes:

Under this reading of the operation of magical energies, it should also be noted that any form of wandless wizardry, let alone unintentional magic can also be inherently risky. Not only is wandless magic exceedingly difficult to focus and control, but it is largely impossible to remove one's psychic "Self" from the energy path while using it. Attempts to channel more Magical energy than are within one's inherent capacity can also cause both physical and psychic damage, although it is no longer believed that such damage is necessarily connected to developing DA-related dementia.

In some cases, the risks are considered to be outweighed by





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the benefits of mastering a particular wandless procedure. One such is example: Apparition. Apparition, is an ancient magical process which predates the invention of the cored wand. In canon it appears to be performed wandlessly, for neither an invocation nor a wand movement were given us for its use — although the Apparating wizard generally takes firm hold of his wand before attempting it. This is a prudent course of action both to prevent its loss in transit, and to have one's wand available in case of need upon arrival.

Instead, it is the wizard himself who physically performs the codified movement of a partial pivot to initiate the spell. This lack of incantation or wand movement also makes Apparating an extremely difficult skill to master since as is the case with all the traditional Dark Arts it is almost entirely dependent upon the caster's intent. Within wizarding society it is encumbered with further difficulties in that it requires a formal license in order to be permitted to use this skill unsupervised. Many witches and wizards are unable to control this process well enough to be awarded an Apparition license.

Other Magical procedures most typically performed wandlessly today are for the most part within the disciplines of Divination, Arithmancy, certain forms of Healing — most particularly the traditional “laying on of hands” — the somewhat obscure arts of Legilimency and Occlumency, Ligature, the carving and setting of runic spells, and certain specialized forms of “change” Magic such as the Animagus transformation, as well as most customary forms of Potions brewing. (Although the stirring rod is generally regarded to be a wand surrogate, it is not cored) Alchemy also is generally regarded to include a number of wand-

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less procedures. Various techniques used in Herbology and the Control of Magical Creatures also fall under this heading due to the need for the practitioner to keep both hands free.

It is generally understood that all of these disciplines fall under the general heading of “Witchcraft.” Hogwarts School advertises itself as an institution which teaches Witchcraft as well as “Wizardry.”

The degree of risk to which such practitioners expose themselves to dangerous suggestion by these methods varies according to their native capacity to control magical energy. So long as mental discipline and a sense of proportion are retained, by limiting one's conduction of magical energy to levels that are well within one's inborn capacity to channel (wandlessly or not), such practices do no discernible harm to the practitioner, even over very long exposure, since the energy being conducted is meeting no additional resistance to be overcome, producing little residue, nor inviting whatever hypothetical chaotic entities might be piggy-backing upon the energy to attempt to increase the flow by a distortion of perception.

This also accounts for the prominence that the study of Potions holds in any overview of traditional witchcraft. The effects of many spells may be duplicated by Potions, but the amount of magical energy conducted in the creation of most standard Potions is generally much lower than that required by most spells. (There are exceptions.) Witches and wizards of average magical capacity who specialized in Potions during the Dark Ages and earlier, while they might theoretically have taken some degree of damage over a long life, generally retained enough of their grasp upon reality to function normally within society, and many lived



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to an advanced age, dying peacefully in their beds.

It should also be noted that long-term damage of the sort that is associated with DA-related dementia is commonly observed in the victims of certain Magical maladies such as vampirism and lycanthropy. These sufferers are unable, under the current state of medi-magical technology, to remove their psychic Selves from the energy path of the uncontrolled Magic that they are involuntarily conducting.

The social stigma which has traditionally been applied to the victims of such maladies is largely in recognition of the degenerative process of such infections, gradually producing recognizable symptoms of DA-related dementia which ultimately have been documented to affect the vampire during all periods that he is conscious, and the werewolf even while in human form. [Note: This statement was first made in April 2003 and the *last* thing I ever expected to encounter in canon was a direct example of it, in the case of Fenrir Greyback!]

In the case of the Vampire there is no present cause for hope, since it is only the active and continual channeling of chaotic magical energy which animates him in the first place. (The drinking of blood is a secondary factor in sustaining his physical and mental well-being, and, in fact, is believed to somewhat retard the progress of dementia). The lycanthrope is in a more hopeful position in that he typically channels such energies only in the short bursts which trigger his transformations. During which the "wolf" effectively possesses the victim's body and mind. It should be noted that the character and the behavior of the wolf is in itself a working demonstration of one form of DA-related dementia in full cry.



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It has been provisionally established that after the first few years of transformations, once the body has learned the process, Wild Magic does not continue to be channeled throughout the entire period that he is transformed. The character of the wolf, and its hold on the lycanthrope, has some other, as yet undetermined source. It has not yet been determined just what is being invoked, but victims of lycanthropy who have taken part in studies of this malady agree that their transformations become less difficult over time, although it always remains painful and debilitating.

In the case of the werewolf, who is only exposed to these energies at the triggering points of his transformation, there is some hope that the recently developed, Wolfsbane Potion, currently undergoing extended field testing, may, finally, offer an effective means of avoiding the worst of the long-term degenerative effects of his condition. However, it is yet to be determined whether the toxic substances upon which the Potion is based will have equal or greater deleterious long-term effects upon the sufferer.

It should be noted that some of the atavistic horror with which Muggles regard both of these maladies has also in many cases been applied to the practice of Magic itself by normal wizards and witches. It is currently believed by some of the more prominent names in the field of Muggle Studies that this is largely because, among Muggles, it is only as a result of sustaining such infections that a Muggle is able to channel magical energies at all. Muggles have no experience of channeling the forces of magical energies by the noninvasive methods currently practiced by modern wizards.

A side note must be added concerning the members of the





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forementioned chthonic cults of the classical era who, by deliberately invoking states of frenzy and engaging in murder sought to create or enhance ambient pools of magic for their future use. In the first place not all such celebrants were actually wizards. It is, however, only the wizards among them who benefited from the magically charged areas, since such areas provided a source of magic which was less volatile than that which is directly channeled.

However, those historians who have attempted to analyze this phenomenon are in disagreement as to just what degree the resulting spiritual damage sustained by the participants was intentional. Certainly the practice of a group of persons hunting a single person, or a smaller group of persons, to a violent and bloody death is going to be tearing the souls of all the aggressors. Indeed such a practice appears designed to maximize the spiritual damage across as many persons as possible. What is not agreed upon is the hypothesis which has been raised that such torn souls will necessarily produce a greater amount of magical residue than intact ones. If it were a question of simple mechanical abrasion such a hypothesis might well be valid, for the torn soul would present a larger overall surface area to the magic flowing through it, offering more "traction," or edges from which to create residue. But we cannot assume that souls operate by quite such purely mechanical principles. The belief that torn souls (even when all of the pieces are present in the body of their owners) are less stable than intact ones appears to be a tenable hypothesis, however.

Another point to bring up is that, upon rare occasions, small but discernible amounts of documented psychic damage has

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also been observed to occur in under-supervised magical children. Particularly those of great magical potential, early access to a wand and/or extensive magical libraries, or those whose control of their magical conductivity develops precociously. It is highly unusual for a child to be able to bring his magic under conscious control much before the age of 9 or 10.

Such children are in danger of letting their magic "run away with them" and to develop distorted perceptions of their world and of society. A self-taught wizard does not necessarily learn methods which are safe. Only those which are the most accessible, and the principle of "*I want*" is certainly accessible to children of any age. The Dark Arts do not require the fineness of wand control necessary to modern wizardry. What they do require is a psychic connection to the spell, and a highly focused "intent," whether benign or malign. And, perhaps most importantly, such magics are not so dependent upon a well-fitted wand, as are the safer more reliable magic channeled by the methods used in modern wizardry. A child generally does not acquire a wand of his own before the age that he is invited to attend classes at one of the magical Academies.

The sort of spontaneous magical breakthroughs experienced by magical children when under stress are not completely harmless, either. Only the immaturity of the child's nervous system and body chemistry protects him from potentially extensive damage. And occasional cases of lasting damage have been known to occur (the case of Ariana Dumbledore in particular might repay some closer examination.). A child who develops conscious magical control at an early age is also at enhanced risk of contracting some level of damage from directly channeling



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more magical energy than is safe or typical for his age, because he will be more likely to *attempt* to channel such energies, and has no developed sense of his own capacity to channel magic.

In such cases, the greater the inherent amount of magical conductivity, the greater the inherent risk. It is recommended that educators should evaluate children who show signs of having received unadvisedly early training, or children who display an abnormally high level of magical capacity or wandless control at an early age for the possibility of their having been damaged psychically in this manner. It is seldom, however, that such damage will continue once the child has learned the proper, safer methods. In such cases the early damage usually goes no farther than to somewhat enhance the child's overall willingness to channel power, and to retain a slight tendency to need additional guidance in learning appropriately socialized behavior. The instructor's difficulty will be in getting him to adopt the safer methods, since they will require more effort.

Some additional note must be made regarding the peculiar case of Muggle-born magical children during the period that the wizarding world's Seclusion was most complete. Which is to say, the 18th century. The primary concerns expressed by those who had opposed the establishment of formal Seclusion in consideration that these children might, untrained, develop into Dark wizards who would need to be neutralized, turned out to be unfounded. In actual practice virtually all of these unfortunates who did not live in proximity to the half-dozen or so traditional partially-wizarding villages remained unidentified and untaught.

Many of the wizards who had opposed Seclusion on such grounds had not sufficiently taken into account the fact that

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any such children would, of necessity, be operating wandlessly and involuntarily, within a society whose religions were long separated from any shamanistic tradition. Moreover, they were operating within a progressively more rationalist atmosphere which searched for Scientific explanations to the exclusion of any considerations of the supernatural.

The abandonment of such children by the wizarding world was not altogether without consequences, however. The most typical explanation Science offered these children was a misdiagnosis of epilepsy; the confusion of which may have delayed the development of any real understanding and effective treatment of the actual condition of epilepsy. Indeed, there was little advance in such treatment until Muggle-born magical children were once again being identified and packed off to the magical Academies for proper training in the early 19th century.

In addition, potential neurological damage sustained by an untrained adolescent wizard when subjected to the involuntary channeling of a strong, but not fatal burst of magical energy could leave the sufferer subject to seizures afterward, further confusing the issue.

The perceptions regarding such children within mundane society was that they were subject to "fits," and any of them that did not learn to consciously or unconsciously regulate their conductivity of Magical energy tended eventually to have an encounter with a spontaneous burst of Wild Magic which they typically did not survive, sometimes resulting in the bizarre-sounding reports of such phenomena as spontaneous human combustion.

**Endnote:** Alternate, safer methods of channeling Magical



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energies were practiced in the Far East for some centuries before such methods were formalized in the West. Most of these methods, however, have been practiced within the context of specific organized religions which has slowed their adoption by wizards who are not a part of the local culture. The adoption of these practices were further hindered by the fact that the dangerous, more direct channeling of these energies were *also* traditionally practiced within the context of certain Eastern religions, although the latter such practices have been discouraged by the local communities for some centuries.

**Final Note:** That no other species of sentient magical Beings requires the use of a wand in order to direct their conduction of Magic; has any need to protect themselves from spontaneous conduction of Wild Magic, or has been shown to develop any condition equivalent to that of the DA-related dementia which afflicts human wizards, is a strong indication that Magic, in humans is, itself, a biological aberration possibly artificially introduced. It is impossible to estimate in what manner, or at what point in human or pre-human history such an introduction may have been made.



## Magic & Wizards

### Starting Point:

One thing that appears to be indisputable in canon, according to every piece of information we have ever been given on the subject, is the fact that the ability to conduct Magical energy is an inherited trait, passed down from parent to child. Beyond that, until the end of 2004, the mechanics of such inheritance were left completely unspecified.

In her website update of December 10, 2004, however, Ms Rowling threw us a curve. In this update she handed us a statement which if applied to any known scientific principal of Real World genetics would appear to contradict the possibility that any Muggle-born magical children could ever be born at all; let alone comprising one quarter of an average Hogwarts year's enrollment.



It is impossible at this point to determine whether Ms Rowling actually meant what she said, in the manner that she said it *when* she said it or not. That she seems to have reversed her statement in one of her post-DHs interviews would tend to suggest that she did *not*, in fact mean what she actually said. In writing. In public.

But then, the Potterverse is not our world, and clearly it has some additional elements in play in it, apart from and beyond the fact that in our world there are apparently no active human genes for expressing Magic. For that matter, we cannot know for an absolute certainty that the inheritance of Magic in the Potterverse is even accomplished through the medium of purely physical genes of a sort which might one day be identifiable and cataloged in some Potterverse equivalent to the ongoing Human Genome Project.





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Ms Rowling does imply this in her statements. But it's unknown to what degree she simplified those statements for the benefit of her younger readers.

Which introduces a considerable hurdle of discontinuity into the equation for the ever-continuing inconvenience of fan theorists. Many of Ms Rowling's older fans sometimes tend to lose sight of the fact that Ms Rowling has to keep a grasp on the reality that she is required always to explain things in a manner which is accessible to 9-year-olds. But since her statements, as they were stated, do not hold together with either established scientific fact, or with what she had already shown us in the books, we are forced to consider that either something has been simplified beyond the range of any hope of accuracy, or there is some as yet undiscovered (and perhaps undiscoverable) influence present in the patterns of inheritance of both physical and psychic traits in the Potterverse which determines the inheritance of Magic. This may possibly even be some element that is transmitted along with a subject's parents' physical DNA but is not actually a visible component of it.

In the interim, however, we have to assume that the transmission of one's Magical traits to one's children takes place in a manner that is roughly equivalent to that of the genetic transmission of one's physical traits, and that it operates in a manner sufficiently similar to the transmission of physical genes to be explored by the same methods.

Therefore: let's take a look at a basic model before we start extrapolating variations from it. Keep in mind the fact that I am no more a professional geneticist than JK Rowling.



## Magic & Wizards

### Basic Genetic Theory

(i.e., Mundane, much, *much* simplified):

Our current understanding of the inheritance of physical traits is that it is dependent upon those microscopic fragments of DNA which form the genes which combine to form the chromosomes which exist in the nucleus of every living cell.

These chromosomes provide the "code" that forms the template that the body follows in reproducing each individual cell as it dies off and is replaced with a new one. With sufficiently high magnification, science has identified various recognizable examples of genes according to their position in the chromosomes, and can determine something of their behavior in the manner of their interaction with each other.

The Real World human genome consists of 23 pairs of chromosomes each of which contains strings of genes. Since the chromosomes come in pairs, the individual genes on a chromosome are each characteristically "paired" with a counterpart in the "partner" chromosome. Which is to say, another gene which occupies the same position in the partner "chain" that it occupies in its own. These paired genes interact to produce the instructions as to what qualities are to be exhibited by each newly-reproduced cell.

The basic forms of interactive behavior between these pairs of genes are:

Dominant, in which one gene, if present, will always override the building instructions of its partner;

Recessive, which allows its instructions to be overridden, but when paired with a gene whose instructions matches its own will execute those instructions, and;





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Multifactoral, in which both genes contribute their instructions to the final result, which is a combination of, or a compromise between, the two.

Probably the most familiar example for demonstrating all three types of gene behavior in action is the standard textbook illustration of the inheritance of four basic human blood types. You may have already met with this in school. But if not, here it is (or here it is again) for reference.

The four basic human blood types are; Type A, Type B, Type AB and Type O.

If the gene for Type A, which is classified as a Dominant, is paired with a gene for Type O, which is a Recessive, the subject will be born with Type A blood. The Dominant Type A gene has overridden the instructions of the Recessive Type O gene.

The same is true with the gene for Type B. If it is paired with the gene for Type O, the Dominant Type B gene overrides the Recessive Type O and the subject will be born with Type B blood.

The gene for Type O is Recessive. Only if both of a subject's genes are for Type O will the subject be born with Type O blood. With two Recessive genes there is no counter to either one's basic instructions.

However; if you put the ordinarily Dominant genes for Type A and Type B together, neither will give way and their behavior is Multifactoral. Those subjects will be born with the AB blood type. Neither gene allows its instructions to be overridden, so the result is that both sets of instructions are followed.

Recessive genes can be difficult to trace. Short of knowing the family history, or examining the actual genes under a high-power microscope, there will be no indication whether a subject born

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with blood Type A is carrying two, or only one gene for Type A blood. Consequently the recessive gene for Type O may be passed along for generations without any indication of its presence in any of the people who have inherited it and passed it on.

This is the basic pattern for the principles of gene dominance. There are many additional modifying factors which I have not touched upon.



In some comparatively rare cases, the question of whether or not a gene becomes active can depend on where it sits on which chromosome. The 23rd pair of chromosomes in the human genome are not a perfect match. Whereas in females, both of these chromosomes are the same length, in males, they are not.

This means that, in males, any gene that is positioned in the portion of the longer chromosome of this pair which does not have a match — because that whole portion of the corresponding chromosome is missing — may activate independently. Such genes activate independently because there is no partner gene to contradict its instructions. These genes are referred to as being “sex-linked,” because their instructions typically only manifest in subjects of one sex, which is generally to say, men.

In the popular understanding of sex-linked genes few of such genes are beneficial. Red-green color-blindness is probably the most widely known condition related to a sex-linked gene. While it is theoretically possible for the condition to occur in females, the actual incidence of it doing so is rare. The overwhelming majority of the people diagnosed with this condition are male. It is theoretically possible that there are magical traits



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which may also be sex-linked, but we have yet to be told of any. Magical conductivity itself is clearly not sex-linked.



In addition to this, there are genes that are spontaneous mutations. Some of these are not that uncommon, and are relatively harmless, such as the one in which the subject is born with eyes of two different colors, say, one brown and one blue eye. It is not altogether impossible that the basic ability to express Magic is a mutation of this type. But I am inclined to doubt it. Such mutations do not usually breed as “true” as the expression of Magic appears to. However, I will be returning to this issue for a closer look as we get further into the various ramifications.



The first piece of awkwardness we theorists had to juggle was that in December 2004 Rowling stated in her website update that Magic is a Dominant gene. This presented us with a considerable problem.

Because, from what we had observed to date in canon (and since), this simply cannot be the case. What appeared to be more likely is that the traits which relate to magical qualities are passed along in the manner of Recessives, but that they interrelate with each other Multifactorily. Or — and far more probably — that wherever a magical gene is located in a chromosome, it is likely to activate independently — as if it were sex-linked — because there is no known opposing gene to contradict its instructions. (Below you will find an addenda to this essay which, with more recent discoveries in genetic science to back it up, postulates that

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this may indeed be the case.)

Ms Rowling appears to have either had this pointed out to her, or to have changed her mind, since in at least one of the flurry of post-DHs interviews, she stated that most Muggle-borns have wizards far back in their ancestry — which, if true, would go a very long way toward verifying that the “Magical” gene is indeed a Recessive.

At the same time, it also seems vanishingly unlikely that the inheritance of magic — as Ms Rowling has depicted it in canon — could ever be dependent upon any one, single gene. Or, for that mater, that magical inheritance can be \*confined\* to a single gene, since we have already been told that there are various magical gifts which are exceedingly rare even among wizards, and yet these gifts are shown or implied to occur within specific families, and to be passed down by the laws of inheritance just like eye color, or magic itself.

Unless genetic science itself operates in a very different manner in the Potterverse from the way it does in the Real World. To claim, as Rowling once did, that Magic is a single Dominant gene would be rather on the order of claiming that in the Potterverse, the sun sets in the South. (And that if by chance it does, then it must do so for Muggles as well as for wizards.)



### ADDENDA: Some second thoughts, circa 2009, August:

It occurs to me that perhaps this whole particular train of thought might be pushed a bit further down its track.

I hadn't re-examined this issue for some years, but I really ought to have. The first iteration of this essay went up in 2003,



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and there has been a lot of water under a great many bridges since then. Note: I am still not a professional geneticist; but a great deal more is popularly known on the subject than there was back then, and certainly a great deal more is known on the subject now than was when I was originally taught the basics of it, (back when the earth's crust was still cooling).

Admittedly, exhaustive detail would be neither relevant, nor wanted here, but a discussion online with the LiveJournalist seductivedark in the response column to one of her posts added a number of factors to the equation of which I was not previously aware.

It was already generally known that in our world, in the typical human genome, extra chromosomes are usually a very bad thing. Which is what made me so reluctant to endorse the hypothesis that there were verifiable magical "genes" in the Potterverse. But if the ability to express magic and to conduct magical energies is inheritable (which it unquestionably is) then, if the human genome is still the same 46 chromosomes in the Potterverse, as it is in our world, there has to be something about wizarding genetics that modifies it and makes the additional, magical traits both operable, and, at least arguably beneficial to those individuals who carry them.

Originally, as described above; my reading was that we just couldn't be altogether certain that the magical qualities of wizards (which still just cannot be explained by any "single gene" theory, from what Rowling had already shown us over the course of the story — nor could magic be a dominant trait) couldn't necessarily be assumed to be due to genes *per se*, but that these 'traits' were evidently inherited along with the individual's genes.

Now I'm wondering whether maybe there is indeed something in wizard genetics, or Potterverse genetics, which enables

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all of those suspected additional genes related to magic to activate without causing the usual havoc that extra genetic material tends to produce in our world.

Because it now turns out that the typical Real World human genome has been discovered to have strings and stretches of apparently "empty" genes in its 46 chromosomes. Blank "genes" which to all appearances do nothing whatsoever, at all, at all.

Perhaps, in the Potterverse, in wizards, those genes are *not* empty.



As seductivedark quoted from one of her anthropology textbooks (with some of her summarization):

**"Non-coded nuclear DNA. From Human Antiquity: An Introduction to Physical Anthropology and Archaeology Kenneth L. Feder, Michael Alan Park, 5th edition, 2007, page 331:**

*"Most nuclear DNA is noncoding, and this noncoding DNA is especially useful because it appears to be selectively neutral. Thus, mutations that accumulate in it are neither selected against, resulting in their disappearance, nor selected for, resulting in an increase in their frequency. Therefore, nuclear DNA may provide a more accurate record of the genetic history of two or more divergent lineages."*

*"In addition, the entire mtDNA [mitochondrial] genome is known, that is, all the base pairs have been identified, and there are large noncoding sequences."*

**This is about tracing human evolution and presence. There's a chapter earlier on that discusses current (2007) knowledge. Alleles are variants. They influence a trait but can express it differently. Their example: blood type. We all have blood; we have different blood types.**



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There are 3.1 million base pairs in the human genome. Possibly 98% of the genome doesn't code for proteins. Used to be called "junk DNA" but is now known to have some purpose. Some mark the beginning and end of sequences, some regulate function and activity level, some carry DNA to other parts of the chain, which allows things to "reshuffle."

*"Some noncoding DNA is made up of repetitive sequences, some hundreds of thousands of base pairs long, that may do nothing." (77)*

And, "we have learned that the coding sequences are not lined up neatly together but are scattered and interrupted by noncoding sequences. A single coding sequence might code for more than one protein, depending on just which part is transcribed."

For RNA: "Some classes of RNA may have other functions, such as turning on or off some genes, blocking the action of mRNA [messenger] in producing a protein (which may be important in disease research), shutting down genes and this operating as a defense against harmful DNA or viruses, and even shaping the genome itself by keeping and discarding certain genes." (77-78)

From what I understand of my Anthro. book, the thingies (note the scientific terminology ;) ) on the DNA strands need to match up to something in order to produce an effect. Eye color to eye color, height to height. I am guessing that the magical genes in a witch or wizard would be matched with blank genes in a true Muggle. Which would, I am still guessing and may be way off, make the magical gene by default dominant. I mean, something plus nothing leaves the identical something, right?"



I'm going to have to think about this...

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And, yes, "something" plus nothing ought certainly to result in the identical "something".

Now, I'm sure that at least some of those blank genes may be there to modify the behavior of other genes if those other particular genes (either magical or not) are also present, and do nothing if it isn't. But a great many of them are probably not. They appear to just be place holders, and their function seems to be to keep those genes that actually do something in correct orientation to one another, on their paired chromosomes, in order to be able to function properly. To make certain that Gene A, on Chromosome A, is six spaces down from Gene B, on Chromosome B. Not five spaces. Or seven. Six. Only six, and nothing but the six. Nor can the scientists examining this phenomenon be expected to figure out what such genes do if they do not do anything that is observable.

But if they are just sitting there empty of any instructions, then you might imagine that they could make fine vehicles for stowaways.

It is also possible that I was on the right track in the first place, and that none of the magical genes activate unless there is a specific one present, or the number of magical genes reaches a certain minimum number to function. But the discovery of there being so many apparently (to Muggle scientists) "blank" genes in most perfectly normal human chromosome strings really makes that explanation sound rather simplistic and unsatisfactory.



Before continuing, I am going to digress into some additional background material: first, I would like to repeat the definition



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of what I am talking about when I refer to "Magic".

I base my interpretation of Magic upon the premise that Magic (which is to say, raw, "wild" magic) is a form of energy. It is a non-sentient force, such as electricity, and that in the Potterverse some minerals, plants, species, and individuals within specific species are natural conductors of this energy. And that to be such a conductor is to be "magical." This premise is explored somewhat more thoroughly in the companion essay 'A History of Magic'.

I extend this interpretation to include the reading that in the Potterverse most things on either the material or spiritual "planes" are subject to being affected by Magic when these magical energies are properly focused and directed, but that only those natural conductors are able to constrain this energy into a deliberate form, or to direct it to a specific end. This may be done either consciously, or otherwise.

It should also be noted that the effective methods of focusing or directing the force of magical energy in the manner necessary to affect some things on either plane might not yet have been developed, and that, consequently, to affect them may be currently believed to be impossible.

The primary quality that is shared by all magical species, either beast, being or spirit is that they are all psychically "active." I am going to try to limit my focus to human magic. Human beings, in the main, even in the Potterverse are not, properly speaking, a magical species. I suspect that human magic has developed along somewhat different routes and, upon the whole, over a more recent period than the magic of most other sentient magical species, or "Beings."

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A second issue which needs some background is that of the social interactions within the wizarding world as it relates to human magic:

Once again, I will invoke the background material that Ms. Rowling shared with her fans on national television a number of years ago. In these notes it was charted that the population of the British wizarding world, at the end of the 20th century, stood at approximately 25% Muggle-born witches and wizards, 50% halfbloods, and 25% purebloods. In addition, I would like to direct your attention to the statement allegedly made by Arthur Weasley at some point before the series opened, and quoted by his youngest son early in PS/SS that "We would have died out if we hadn't married Muggles." I very much doubt that this statement was made available to us by accident.

So. In the first place; we do not know exactly how long it has taken for the population demographics of the wizarding world to reach their current levels. (Although this issue is explored more thoroughly in the essay: 'Wizarding Britain by the Numbers'.) Nor do we know for certain how many generations decent from a family founder's original presumably Muggle-born origins are necessary before the generality of wizarding society stops regarding his descendants as halfbloods. In the case of the diehard pureblood isolationists, all eternity might not be long enough. But the rest of wizarding society is likely to have somewhat laxer standards.

We have also been given no information that would either support nor contradict the question of whether Muggle-born magical children have or have not been steadily assimilated into the wizarding world throughout the entire period that the



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wizarding world has lived under Seclusion, or if there may have been a period, early in the “experiment” during which this practice had been temporarily interrupted.

The historic background we have been given strongly implies that until the period immediately preceding the formal establishment of wizarding Seclusion late in the 17th century, wizards and Muggles lived side-by-side and interacted with each other as part of the same culture. That, in fact, this had been the case throughout all of human history to that point. Under such a system it would have been far less likely for anyone outside of a certain very narrow social circle to have expended any great degree of soul-searching over whose great-grandparents might or might not have been magical, so long as his or her children were. Or were not, as the case may be.

I have based my own conjectures regarding the social history of the Potterverse upon the premise that with the passing of the International Act of Wizarding Secrecy in 1692, (Or, as stated in later books, 1689) the entire wizarding world formally severed contact with mundane society, and removed itself from it, retiring, as much as possible, behind a “firewall” consisting of Muggle-repelling spells, unplotability, illusions and the prototypes of such portals as those operated manually in the Leaky Cauldron or automatically on Platform 9¾. Or that, at the very least, wizarding families packed up and moved their households to some other district where their magical abilities were unknown, and ceased to allow themselves to be openly identified as wizards.

The only Muggles still to know of this secret, magical “world” at that point were those Muggle husbands, wives, parents, siblings, and offspring who chose to accompany the wizards into

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their new sanctuaries. All others who could be traced were probably Obliviated before the wizards removed themselves. The Ministries of Magic of the day (more properly the Wizard Counsels, the actual Ministries probably were only formed after Seclusion was adopted) would have also taken steps to limit the opportunities for Muggles to encounter wizards — as wizards — in the future, either by accident or design.

In DHs we get a somewhat confusing hint of this, with the passing mention of a handful of traditional, partially-wizarding communities which wizards had gravitated to for mutual protection and support. In a few of these, such as Godric’s Hollow, where wizards had already been known to occur over several preceding centuries, one really wonders how wizarding secrecy could have possibly been maintained under circumstances wherein the neighboring Muggles were already aware that some of their neighbors had peculiar abilities. Presumably, in such villages Obliviate was used with a lavish hand.

Under such conditions it would have been very difficult for any Muggle-born magical child outside the known wizarding, or partially-wizarding enclaves to have been noted or identified. Ergo; while the articles of the International Act of Wizarding Secrecy would no doubt have allowed for the continued recruitment of Muggle-born magical children into the wizarding world, even after Seclusion was formally established, the actual incidence of such recruitments might have become rather rare. Since, at the time of the establishment of statutory Seclusion, the Muggle population of Great Britain might have produced no more than one Muggle-born magical child in an average year this is hardly to be wondered at.

My premise further postulates that by some point, perhaps



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about a century after the statutory adoption of Seclusion, it was becoming apparent to those who were in a position to oversee the wizarding world's welfare, that its population's birthrate was insufficient to maintain its numbers at a high enough level either to survive over the long term, or, in the shorter term, to retain its current position of dominance in the power balance vis-a-vis the other participating species of the magical Brotherhood.

In addition, due to sweeping social changes in the Muggle world, brought about by the enclosure of the commons and the rise of industrialization, a discernible rise in the number of magical children being born outside the wizarding world was reaching the point that they were becoming a security risk. You can only foster the belief among Muggles that magic does not exist if there are no wizards practicing magic out in mundane view. Unintentionally or not, these children were practicing magic.

I postulate that it was ultimately agreed upon among the wizarding world's leaders to make a virtue of necessity and to take aggressive steps to identify, train and assimilate these Muggle-born magical children into the wizarding world, both from a security standpoint by removing them from the general view of Muggles, as well as to lay a claim upon these children's talents to offset natural attrition in the wizarding population, and to increase the magical work force.

It would have been at this point that a cross-section of the secluded population, who had nothing but bad associations with Muggles — dating from the era that Seclusion had been determined to be necessary for wizards' continued survival — would have begun to put a renewed emphasis upon the need to distinguish those who were descended from sound, old, pureblooded

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wizarding ancestry, from anyone who was an interloping mudblood. I postulate that this particular point in time was most likely to have been early in the first half of the 19th century. The wizarding world has been dealing with the ramifications of this situation and the response to it ever since. With varying degrees of success.

A reasonable argument can be made that this inclusive policy may have been adopted anything up to a century later, but this view is difficult to reconcile with the current population demographics. It takes time for an annual intake of 2-10 people to become established as a quarter of the whole population.

And, for that matter, since I did not see the broadcast in which the information regarding the population demographics was given, I am working from hearsay. Consequently, I am unsure whether Rowling's statements were that Muggle-born witches and wizards were a quarter of the wizarding world's population, or only that they made up a quarter of the student body of Hogwarts. The difference is slight, but there is a difference.



All of which pitches any exploration on the inheritance of magical conductivity into an argument of semantics.

For one thing: I believe that while the terms halfblood and pureblood were probably in use long before the establishment of Seclusion, I doubt that the term "Muggle-born" is of any such long-established coinage. That term has, to my ear, the ring of the same sort of Victorian euphemism that rechristened the "breast" of a fowl as the "white meat." Regrettably, I suspect that the original, pre-Seclusion term was probably our old un-friend, "mudblood." A term, which, while certainly no com-



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pliment, at that point, may not yet have acquired many of the pejorative implications that it carries today. In a coarser age, it was probably no more negative a term than that of “native.” Although, admittedly, it had probably also been no less so.

On the other hand, I also have a strong suspicion that in that more distant period the term “mudblood” might not only have been every bit as pejorative, but it may have carried a very different implication altogether. Given the probable odds in such matters, traditionally such children were a good deal less likely to be the unanticipated magical offspring of two blameless apparently Muggle parents than they were to be unacknowledged halfbloods whose true paternity was unknown; raising serious questions and issues of consanguinity once the child had been absorbed back into the magical community. To designate a child a mudblood may well have been just another way of calling it a bastard. Or, as such children were referred to by Muggles, “base-born.”

The real objection in such cases may not have been to the open matter of the child’s apparently Muggle birth, but to that of its shrouded magical ancestry. The application of the slur to today’s legitimately “Muggle-born” magical children is due to these later-day magical children’s unknown magical ancestry being presumed untraceable.

For that matter, the term “halfblood” seems to have also undergone a shift in meaning since the establishment of Seclusion. Whereas, at the time the seclusion of the wizarding world was imposed, the term may well have been applied primarily to those persons who actually were the children of a mixed marriage (or some other, more irregular connection where paternity was acknowledged), we have already seen that this term is far more

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broadly applied in modern day. The presumed need to maintain a distinction between purebloods and everyone else has resulted in the designation of halfblood now being applied to children with as little as one Muggle-born magical parent, grandparent or, quite probably, great-grandparent or beyond. Even though all of the child’s recent antecedents are all, in fact, magical.

It is unclear in canon as to just how many generations of functioning magic are necessary to cancel out the “taint” of Muggledom in the eyes of general wizarding society — which is not the same standard as that of the most rigid of sticklers, such as those which are still upheld by blood-purity fanatics on the order of the late Madam Black.

It is also uncertain what the percentage is of such technical halfbloods as opposed to literal halfbloods that goes towards making up that 50% of the current wizarding world’s population which was referenced in Rowling’s statement. My own suspicion is that it accounts for most of them; since the continuing practice of at least statutory Seclusion considerably limits the opportunities for such attachments which result in literal halfbloods.

Which reminds us: we know of no instance in canon wherein a witch or wizard married, or became otherwise involved with a Muggle in which the Muggle was informed of their partner’s magical status ahead of time. This practice seems not, in general, to have contributed to long-lasting mixed marriages with multiple children.

(Note: we do not have full information regarding the Creevys. Their father is a milkman, and presumably a Muggle, but since Professor McGonagall is heard to be chivvying a Creevy out of the castle (Dennis) during the evacuation of the lower years, before



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the final confrontation, and since we know that Muggle-borns had been presumed to have been banned from Hogwarts that year, I think we must re-categorize them as literal halfbloods.)



But, returning to the question of the inheritance of Magic:

Keeping all of these distinctions in the back of our minds, we will first deal with the unambiguous and the inarguable; the statement made that 25% of the current wizarding world (or at least 25% of a Hogwarts year's average enrollment) is Muggle-born.

The magical conductivity of Muggle-born wizards has to come from somewhere. Rowling stated on her website in 2004 that magic is a "dominant and resilient gene." The problem with Dominant genes, however, is that they are *not* resilient. Once a Dominant gene fails to be passed on, it's gone. It does not skip generations. It is either there, and active, or it is completely out of the equation. Unless Ms Rowling defines magical conductivity as a spontaneous mutation which occurs regularly in about 0.005% of the mundane births within the Hogwarts Quill's sensory range, Muggle-born wizards cannot be the result of a Dominant gene that is not present in their parents' DNA.

Admittedly, I am not a geneticist; and so I cannot tell you whether there is any mutation which occurs in a consistent and recognizable form at this level of regularity, and moreover, one that breeds true, to serve as an appropriate parallel. There may be one, possibly more than one. But I find it difficult, even impossible, to suspend my disbelief far enough to accept that the "exact same" recognizable mutation can spontaneously occur at such a rate that one quarter of the wizarding popula-

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tion carries it, in even such a complete AU as the Potterverse. If this is the case, Petunia Dursley is right. They *are* freaks.

Nor does the human race naturally select to magical conductivity. Humans are not an inherently magical species. Magical conductivity is an *aberration* in humans.

Rowling's more recent statement, that Muggle-borns do have wizards in their ancestry, would support the reading that Magical conductivity is, indeed, a Recessive trait. This is a lot easier to believe.

However, neither can any "single gene" theory adequately explain the broad range of various levels of magical ability displayed throughout the Potterverse, or the existence of those "rare" gifts which have been noted in the story to date. One size quite clearly does not fit all.

And given that wizards, in canon, are also cross-fertile with other magical species, \*as well as\* with non-magical humans, how is one supposed to account for the inheritance of *non*-human magical abilities (which has also been demonstrated in canon) within a "single Dominant gene" model of magical inheritance?

You can't. I'm not even going to try.



Of course, not everyone agrees with me. And there is no guarantee that I am right. Potter fans have been postulating different theories on magical inheritance for over 20 years now.

Besides, much of the context in which Ms Rowling's statements were made make it clear that what she was responding to were questions of whether some people were magical but not magical *enough* to attend Hogwarts. (Stan Shunpike of the



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Knight bus having been the specific case given.)

That is a different issue altogether. Ms Rowling's response that one is either magical or one is not, is a statement with which I readily concur. One can either conduct magical energy, or one cannot. This statement prompts absolutely no argument from me. But her original explanation of *why* one can either conduct magical energy or not simply does not hold water. It is over-simplified, over emphatic, and not only contradicts established scientific findings, it contradicts what she had already shown us in the text. What she has cumulatively shown us simply *\*does not work that way\**.

And whining that; "but it's *magic*" is a cop-out. Even Magic needs to follow observable rules.



That such a high percentage of the wizards currently alive in Great Britain today were each born from two apparently Muggle parents (and that fully  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the rest are still tracing their decent from Muggle-born predecessors) would — first — tend to suggest that the population of the wizarding world, when the decision to aggressively seek out and assimilate Muggle-born children was made, must have been in dire straits.

It also would tend to indicate that, in the Potterverse, there is already a fairly high predisposition towards Magic lurking in the mundane gene pool of Great Britain. That every wizard and witch that we have met does *not* appear to have the same capabilities for Magic would also tend to suggest that the inheritance of Magic is not dependent upon any single gene which is either present or not, but upon some more complex system



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entailing a combination of influences. Although other theorists do have other interpretations of that, of course.

In addition; that certain *specific* magical gifts have been stated outright in canon to be rare, even among wizards, would tend to suggest that there is a whole range of magical traits whose total effect may be cumulative.

Taking all of these factors into account, it is easy to form at least a tentative hypothesis that most, if not all of the traits required for conducting magic are passed down, not as Dominants, but as Recessives. As highly *resilient* Recessives, and that they can be passed along as Recessives through several, untraceable generations of apparently normal Muggles until they are given the proper conditions to activate, producing a Muggle-born wizard. We have already learned in our own mundane science that once a Recessive has been introduced into the genome, either from a different genetic strain than that of the local breeding population, or through mutation, it can stick around for aeons.

And that may indeed be our answer. One thing that appears to be unquestionable is that whatever the "minimum requirement" of magical traits in a child's genetic inheritance may need to be in order for the child to register as magical, it appears to be fairly low. Otherwise you would not have generations of untraceable recessives suddenly throwing out a wizard without shedding some if not most of the additional magical recessives over time in the process. So, while magical inheritance *itself* cannot be due to any single gene, it may require only one of a specific range of magical genes to activate. And that while it may take only one magical trait to activate magical conductivity itself, that conductivity may be further enhanced by any





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number of potential additional magical traits which may or may not accompany it. Or possibly, there is some other factor involved. I will be returning to this possibility presently.

As to the original source of some of those rare, highly specialized magical traits which are floating about in the human genome of the Potterverse; an unpalatable, but unavoidable possibility is offered by the fact that canon has already shown us that human wizards are only one of a broad spectrum of sentient magical species. And that human wizards have been demonstrated to be cross-fertile with more than one of these other magical species — *as well as* with normal, non-magical humans. What is more, we have been shown that some of the descendants of these wizard/non-human-magical crosses are observed to possess magical traits specific to their non-human ancestors. It has not been either suggested nor confirmed whether the same sort of cross-species fertility applies to Potterverse Muggles.

Given that Muggles are typically not psychically active enough to even be able to see magical entities such as those that reside on the spirit plane, Dementors for example, or, even more commonly, ghosts, the question as to whether a Muggle might be capable of producing offspring, let alone fertile offspring, through cross-breeding with a partner from a non-human magical species native to the merely physical plane sounds unlikely. No more than they could produce fertile offspring with orangutans.

Although... given that allegedly, a human being can share up to 25% of his genetic material with a banana, I admit that I could certainly be wrong about that.

In the light of *that*, what seems quite probable is that the bulk of the folktales regarding young men and women who captured

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selkie or veela wives or who married husbands from “under the Hill,” in the Potterverse may relate the stories of unacknowledged wizards and witches in the pre-Seclusion period when wizards lived out among Muggles. Back when all magic was Dark (i.e., chaotic) magic, and they voluntarily limited their use of magic in order to forestall any sort of progressive dementia that might result from overexposure to chaotic influences.

Or, conversely, it is not impossible that such pairings are the origin of human magic *altogether*. In the days of prehistory, when humans were less numerous, such “others” may well have been more inclined to undertake such short-term liaisons with them.

The children of such crosses were sufficiently human in appearance and genetic make up that they were able to find mates and produce offspring within the local community of Muggles and their non-human parents’ highly specific, non-human magical traits were introduced into the mundane human genome at that point.\*

\*This is itself a simplification of terminology. As stated above, it is uncertain whether the magical traits of non-human magical species can be physically incorporated into human chromosomes. What seemed more likely, at the time I drafted out this hypothesis, was that these traits attach themselves to the DNA by some other, perhaps undetectable method. But more recent understanding of genetic structure offers a good deal of leeway in such interpretations.

Given that it appears to only be *human* magicals who are damaged by the conduction of chaotic magic over a long period of time, it is possible that the results of such crosses have some degree of resistance to such.





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It should be noted that from an evolutionary standpoint, these highly specialized traits, indeed, *all* magical traits, appear to be very *late* introductions to the genetic legacy of human wizards. Indeed, these were introduced well after humans had *become* humans. It is chiefly in consideration of the fact that such non-human traits have unquestionably been introduced in human wizards in the Potterverse that I offered my suggestion that the inheritance of magical traits may be dependent upon some element other than by merely physical genes. I have not chosen to deeply explore the possibility that specifically human magic may not, in fact, exist, and that *all* magic in humans descends from an introduction of magic from unspecified non-human origins at some point in prehistory.

What did seem to be a very strong possibility is that the presence of these more recently introduced non-human magical traits increases the chance that any tendency toward an underlying magical conductivity will be activated. So that while it is certainly possible for such conductivity to exist without additional acknowledged non-human traits, as such traits become more widespread in the gene pool, the lower the concentration of raw magical conductivity will be necessary to produce a child who will be psychically active enough to register as Magical. Or, put another way, such introduced traits add to one's total, and they all count toward collecting the minimum requirements necessary to produce a functioning wizard. And, as such traits become both more widely dispersed, and more highly concentrated in a given local gene pool, the predisposition for that community to produce magical offspring rises.

The so-called Dominance of the magical genes to which Ms Rowling refers, is probably meant to indicate that the percentage of literally halfblood wizards actually born is significantly higher

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than the anticipated 50% that basic genetic theory in a single gene model would suggest. Even dismissing three-quarters to five-sixths of the halfbloods of Rowling's world as being more probably technical halfbloods than literal ones, the actual number of such mixed pairings remains far below what was probably the norm prior to the establishment of wizarding Secusion.

Clearly either these literally halfblooded magical children are receiving some magical traits from their non-magical parent, or the magical traits, although they remain in the gene pool in the manner of Recessives, do not function in exactly the same manner as true Recessives in that there is no associated Dominant trait which overrides them. In fact, quite a few magical traits, unlike a typical, non sex-linked recessive gene, may activate even when that specific trait is not inherited from both parents. It may only require that the genetic contribution from the other parent give neutral instructions rather than presenting an outright conflict. In the case of there being no actual conflicting trait, as is almost certainly the case with traits introduced from non-human origins, the trait, once it is present, activates independently. Once the basic minimum requirements are met, any child possessing enough of these traits will be able to conduct magic.

Probably. But we still seem to be overlooking something that could be important.



Which brings us to a closer examination of the final category in the Muggle-to-magical continuum. I am referring, of course, to Squibs. Squibs are identified in canon as the non-magical offspring of magical parents. I am not sure that this is the best



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way of describing what is going on, here.

It is at least somewhat evident to the reader that Squibs cannot be absolutely interchangeable with Muggles.

If the Potterverse is truly parallel to our own world, then the average Muggle can be expected to be completely unaware of the presence of ghosts. They should certainly be incapable of seeing or interacting with other varieties of spirits which are *not* ghosts, such as, for example, poltergeists. Or Dementors.

Argus Filch, the caretaker of Hogwarts, has been identified as a Squib. But, whereas the typical Muggle would probably be unaware of any entity native to the spirit plane, Filch has no difficulty seeing and communicating with the Hogwarts ghosts. He also clearly has an ongoing two-way relationship with the Castle poltergeist, Peeves. He can also obviously *see the castle*. Which we are told flat-out, Muggles *can't*.

However; Ms Rowling also states on her website that Arabella Figg lied when she claimed that Squibs can see Dementors. Given what Rowling had already established regarding the psychic abilities of Squibs in canon, in the case of Mr Filch, this initially seems to be a bit of poor judgment on Ms Rowling's part. But in fact it may well be an indication that one size does not fit all Squibs any more than it fits all wizards. Mr Filch is, demonstrably psychically active to at least some degree, regardless of whether Mrs Figg shares this quality. But no Squib, however perceptive, is able to actually conduct magical energies. Still, in her website update of December 10, 2004, Rowling does imply that Squibs are able to activate and control previously charmed implements. (If they are not, then Filch is confiscating items that he cannot control or deactivate.)



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We don't know for certain whether Muggles can control charmed implements as well, and there are some indications that they can't. Arthur Weasley's old Department would have a lot less work if they could. Rowling hints that a Muggle getting hold of a wand would be an accident waiting to happen. But Rowling digs herself into a deeper hole every time she answers a question on this subject, so it is probably just as well to stop asking her.

Frankly, we come up with more consistent explanations ourselves.

Rowling has also given us the statement in canon that Squibs are very rare. We have only heard of three Squibs in canon. Argus Filch, Arabella Figg, and a connection of the Prewett family who went off to make his fortune among the Muggles. Rowling also claims that one of the names blasted off the Black family tapestry was in fact a Squib. But this information is at least technically off-canon.

However, the evidence is now mounting up that just because wizards in the Potterverse consider Squibs to be rare, the actual likelihood of this actually being the case is receding ever more firmly into the distance. In fact, the whole question of Squibs is now looking not so much like yet another can of worms to have to sort, but as the unacknowledged elephant in the room.

Particularly since no one in the Potterverse, neither wizard nor Muggle, has any way of determining just how widespread Squibs may actually be. No one, after all, knows any simple way to be able to distinguish a Squib from a Muggle.

Or, in other words, it isn't *Squibs* that are rare.

It is *wizards* that are rare.

And that it is *wizard-born* Squibs that are the rarest of all.





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My own earliest theories regarding a social history of Wizards and Muggles are now slightly hampered by Rowling's various DHs monkey wrenches. Because, post-DHs it appears that at least half of the 18th century Muggle-born would have probably been identified and trained, since those particular individuals were most likely to occur in places like Tinworth and Upper Flagley, where there was already a traditionally high concentration of magical traits in the local population. And, more to the point, there were still wizards living there who could identify them.

But as to the origins of magic in the human population itself, I do not see any reason to jettison my original extrapolations. In fact, we may need to expand it. It has become very easy now to postulate that all magic in humans *was* originally non-human in origin.

Or, in other words; they were humans *before* they were wizards. Yes, wizards developed *that* recently, evolutionarily speaking.

And *if* they developed from non-human genetic material being introduced to the human genome, then it's small wonder if there are some problems that come along with it.

I really do think we need to do no more than to examine the local folklore. Just about every culture there is seems to have generated stories about various uncanny "others" who look human, but who really aren't. And, in just about all of such cultures, there are all sorts of stories about young humans who have been deceived by (or who have entrapped) these others, married them, generally had kids by them, and then at the first opportunity the alien husband or wife has disappeared, leaving the kids behind.

In the Potterverse there still are non-human "others" walk-

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ing around by daylight (or moonlight) who various wizards and witches have married and produced children with. Rowling endorses such cross-species interbreeding in the course of her story, demonstrating not only that such crosses produce offspring, but that they produce *fertile* offspring, and that the children of the offspring also are able to express out-of-the-ordinary magical abilities peculiar to their non-human ancestors.

There is no way that can happen under "a single magical gene" system. Plus right off the top we also get those "rare" wizarding talents like the seer's gift, or the ability to express and understand Parseltongue (heaven only knows where those came from). So it would hardly be unreasonable to start speculating that in the Potterverse nature so abhors a vacuum, that it has found something to put into the slots of those empty, non-coding genes...

And, so long as we are looking at folklore, as I point out in various other essays in the collection, in the folklore of the British isles, wizards were never really all *that* uncommon. Most tribes, or clans had at least one, and others could generally be found across the countryside.

My original speculations questioned whether a "true" Muggle would also be able to interbreed with these non-human magical creatures. But if there are "empty" spots on the underlying chromosomes, then there are ready-made placeholders for any additional magical genes just sitting there, vacant, waiting for them to slot themselves in, and no way to identify them, or their carriers, unless the carriers are able to actively express magic.

Which, in a direct wizard/Muggle cross they usually do.





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In any case; I have long proposed that any Muggle in the Potterverse who has ever *really* seen a ghost, is probably what amounts to a Squib. The same may be said for any authentic “psychic” or spiritualist medium — assuming there are any in the Potterverse who are not actually wizards.

In fact, any Muggle who has ever been involved in a genuine encounter with paranormal phenomena, such as, but not limited to, prophetic dreams or seeing visions was probably actually an undocumented Squib.

If we superimpose some of the unexplained psychic phenomena from our own world onto the Potterverse one might also level a degree of suspicion toward at least some of the everyday miracles attributed to their recipient’s faith. I would also add to this list any Muggle who has ever experienced the sort of unexplained burst of strength or speed usually attributed to adrenaline under circumstances of extreme stress. And while we are at it, let us say that most of the people who have experienced those miraculous spontaneous remissions to various medical conditions might also bear some closer examination. As might their physicians or caretakers.

Given that the ability to wandlessly cast a glamour is one of the very commonest magical traits shared by many, if not most, of the non-human magical species whose abilities have been added to the wizarding “genome” of the Potterverse, one might also want to consider the case of various classes of celebrities, with particular attention to those who seem to have managed to become famous despite the fact that they have accomplished nothing in particular, whatsoever (i.e., all those celebrities who are unaccountably “famous for being famous”) as likely candi-

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dates to be the sort of people who, in the Potterverse, would most probably turn out to be Squibs.

Nor is it too much to consider that some cases of what have been diagnosed as mental illness, or some forms of neurological abnormalities may in fact be the result of an impaired ability to conduct Magic. (Ariana Dumbledore, I am looking at you.)

If one wishes to speculate on the likelihood of Squibs around us there is certainly no shortage of possibilities. But none of these are relevant to the big picture. Muggle carriers of magical traits for the most part are indistinguishable from Muggles with no magical component to their genome whatsoever.

The stated rarity of documented Squibs is quite likely to be something that we can take Rowling’s word on — with the prescribed grain of salt. With the magical genotype being as resilient as it appears (and that much Rowling has shown us in canon) it would take a considerable screw-up in inheritance for a child of magical parents not to be magical as well.

While we’re at it, it is also almost certain that “Squib,” like “Muggle-born” is another comparatively recent term in the wizarding world. One that has only been adopted since Seclusion was actually established. When one considers that prior to the formal and “complete” separation of the two worlds, if wizards and Muggles lived in the same communities and frequently intermarried, the non-magical offspring even of two wizarding parents might well have simply been regarded as Muggles, who their parents’ magic had skipped. It was only after seclusion and such children still managed to occur that a specific term was applied to them.

Having now gone out on an unconfirmed limb, however, I



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suggest that there may be a specific reason for the birth of a Squib. For this, we have a variety of possibilities.

It is possible that the magical traits that a Squib inherited from one or other parent have been somehow disabled; possibly due to parental exposure to some form of magical accident, or some particularly damaging form of curse. Or, conversely, that a Squib's natural channeling of magical energies is designed to diffuse the flow of such energies in the same manner that I have proposed some juvenile wizards have unconsciously taught themselves to do in order to eliminate any accidental magical "breakthroughs," leaving them with an insufficient magical reservoir to express a spell.

The simplest explanation of course is that, somehow, one or other of the traits necessary for full magical conductivity simply was not passed on, although both of a Squib's parents possessed it, or that both parents were very low-powered magicals who somehow did not pass on to him the sufficient minimum number of magical traits to produce magical conductivity. But I've come to suspect that that explanation may be a little *too* simple. It doesn't really fit what we have been shown.

A more interesting explanation that I can think of is that in Squibs, we may have the equivalent of those rare brown-eyed children of blue-eyed parents. Let me restate: human beings are not a magical species. To all appearances, these non-magical children's genomes have somehow re-set themselves to the underlying human template of non-conductivity, overriding the instructions of the established Recessives for conducting magic.

Except that under normal circumstances, there is no countering factor to override such Recessives. If they are present, they activate.



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But now suddenly they don't. Something is now preventing it. Apparently, something has been added to that child's genome. Something which *suppresses* magical conductivity.

But, if it works the same way as it does with the eye color, the Recessives are still *there*. If it was just the fact that something went wrong in a single case, a Squib, even when paired with an apparent Muggle would be more likely than not to produce magical offspring, even as those rare brown-eyed children of blue-eyed parents have typically been known to produce blue-eyed offspring themselves. (And indeed, Mafalda Prewett, the Weasley cousin who didn't make it into the final version of GoF was intended to be the witch daughter of the Prewett family's Squib cousin and his Muggle wife.)

Which suggests that the common definition of a Squib may be in need of some slight modification.

In cases where only one parent is magical, any non-magical child will typically be perceived to have taken after the non-magical parent. In a case where neither parent is magical, the child will be assumed to be a normal Muggle.

Given the number of magical traits that are floating about in the Potterverse, however, this may be far from the truth. In fact, I would postulate that, if Squibs are redefined as; "non-magical persons carrying magical traits," Squibs are, in fact, very far from being rare. It is only wizard-born Squibs that are rare. That, indeed, there is a significant number of what amount to undocumented *Muggle-born* Squibs roaming about the Potterverse, and that they outnumber Muggle-born wizards by several hundred percent. In fact they probably outnumber wizards of *any* sort of ancestry by a couple of hundred percent.





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And, to be strictly accurate, these individuals are absolutely NOT magical, since under virtually all normal circumstances they are just as completely incapable of conducting magical energies as is any true Muggle. But, since no one seems to have ever considered that they are out there, no one has ever attempted to identify them. They are, consequently, completely undocumented.

But they are highly significant.

For example;

If this is the case, I would say that every Muggle-born magical child is, without exception, the result of a pairing that involves at least one of these Muggle-born Squibs, and that if such a pairing can produce one magical child, the odds of its producing others are automatically that much higher.

I suppose that — rarely — in the case of two wizards with narrow-ranged gene sets, if something goes wrong, they might indeed manage to produce a classic example of what we spent years believing was a wizard-born Squib. All indications suggest that while there may be no effective maximum number of magical traits necessary to produce a fully magical child, there does certainly seem to be a minimum. In the case of both parents possessing only the barest minimum number of traits necessary to conduct magic themselves, very little needs to go wrong in order to miss this particular boat. We used to think this was the case. The wonder is that it does not happen more often. But it doesn't. And maybe it can't.

But as to the stated "rarity" of Squibs. I originally supposed that Squibs occur among wizards at about the same frequency that Muggle-born wizards occur among Muggles. That it is the

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only difference in the population numbers of these two groups which accounts for the extreme apparent rarity of Squibs. Whereas the Muggle population was large enough to produce between 10 and 15 Muggle-born witches and wizards in any given year, it takes the wizarding world some 15-20 years or more before generating a comparable number of births among which one might expect to produce a single Squib.

Well, with Rowling's statement in July of 2006, that the magical human population of Great Britain and Ireland numbers around 3,000 (and more realistically it would be somewhere between 3,500/4,500 up to about 10,000) the incidence of 1 Muggle-born magical child to some 80,500 non-magical births seems unlikely to be matched within the wizarding population of 1 Squib to anything like that number of wizards, or Squibs would be even rarer than they are already. But the likelihood of 1 Squib in 15-20 years still seems within the range of plausibility.

And, as stated above, the magical equivalent of chromosomal damage as a result of curse injury or exposure to some dangerous magical process or material *might* be another contributing factor for the birth of a Squib.

And it could possibly explain other related problems that wizards might have with their magic. Such a possibility might account for why some people in canon with a normal to high amount of magical conductivity might still show a pronounced weakness in one or another area.

However, I no longer am so willing to adopt any of these as the most likely explanation for the existence of Squibs. I am now of the belief that Squibs are not produced by a lack of inherent magic, but that they are due to the addition to something else.



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Namely, a “single gene” theory of a gene that *suppresses* magic.



If wizards are still, evolutionarily, a recent hybrid, one which may have inherent problems with its magic, it wouldn't be astonishing to speculate whether or not the underlying genome may not have attempted to develop a defense against it.

Or in other words; they were wizards *before* they were Squibs. Squibs are an even *more* recent evolutionary development.

A highly *successful* one, too, from a strictly biological standpoint.

Part of this next is probably based on intellectually flabby thinking. But in the manner of most theorists who have drafted out something that already *\*almost\** works in just about every condition, if you throw them a new condition they can't help but examine whether the already-built theory can contain it. The possibility that Squibs are an evolutionarily recent development needs to be examined against whether such a possibility has any place within the existing paradigm.

And it does. Boy howdy, does it *ever*.

Because I had already extrapolated that magical conductivity, improperly controlled, could result in fatal incidents, wherein an individual whose magical conductivity had matured, but who was working without proper controls, safeguards, or focusing assistance, might manage to (intentionally or not) invoke a magical charge too great for him to survive.

I am now beginning to wonder whether, perhaps, whatever the factor is that causes Squibs is a factor which is attempting to “protect” the basic underlying human genome from the result of all of those foreign genes (many, very possibly all, of

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them originally from non-human ancestors), by disabling the full expression of magic, but doesn't actually get rid of any of the additional, magical traits.

If this is the case, then if my underlying postulation that Magic really is a potentially dangerous form of energy, on the order of static electricity — which in high enough voltages can kill (lightning, after all, is static) — particularly if such episodes are triggered by emotional stress, then for a magical hybrid sub-species of a species which was never designed to conduct such energies, to develop a biological factor which is expressly designed to suppress the conduction of such energies makes evolutionary sense. Squibs are effectively (and efficiently) “grounded” against conducting wild magic. Clearly there would be a considerable advantage in survival rates for a population which harbors the genes which would make the conduction of these energies inevitable, to inherit that one as well.

And the ones who survived usually had.



From the population numbers which we have been given, however, (it is always dangerous to take Rowling at her word on any issue that depends upon numbers), clearly, the majority of the human population of the Potterverse carries neither any discernible magical traits nor the Squib factor which suppresses them. These are the “true” Muggles who carry no magical traits at all. And they comprise, by far, the majority of the human species of that world.

Now, back in 2003; at the point that I hammered out my original theory, I wasn't reasoning from the postulation that there was a legitimate “Squib” gene. I did eventually include a fairly lengthy





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digression from a LiveJournalist named Jehnt, who had laid out such a theory, but I didn't ascribe to it myself, since it seemed to me that if there really was such a thing, Squibs would be *far* more common than they are.

But now I'm beginning to suspect that by taking Rowling at her word, we may all have been in the habit of looking at the whole issue back-to-front.

As stated above; it isn't that *Squibs* are rare. It is that *wizards* are rare.

Squibs are merely uncommon. And most of them are all right out there passing as Muggles. And neither they nor the Muggles have any awareness of the difference.

And the Squib factor *is* Dominant.

Consequently, the minute a Squib descendant shows up who doesn't inherit the "Squib" factor, boom. You've got a wizard. And it also naturally follows that the Squib factor would be *vanishingly* rare in a self-isolated community entirely composed of wizards — who do not have it.

And, until wizards separated themselves out, which has only been in the last few hundred years (not even a blink of the eye in an evolutionary reckoning) there was hardly any way of being able to distinguish a Squib from a Muggle, since most families were perfectly aware that they were of mixed blood already.

And, given the resilience of Recessive traits, there will *always* be wizards. And there will always be new ones whenever the Dominant Squib factor fails to get passed on.

And it *will* fail. Because it is a Dominant trait. They *all* eventually fail.

But, because it is a Dominant trait, one that carries a genuine



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survival advantage to it, there will always be a lot more Squibs than wizards.

My original hypothesis, which still seems fairly sound, was that wizard-born Squibs were rare in the same way that brown-eyed children of blue-eyed parents are rare. It looks like that they may be rare in *exactly* the same way such brown-eyed children are rare.

With the difference that they are rather more likely to pass the condition on.

Such brown-eyed children are completely impossible from the standpoint of rudimentary genetic theory. But it obviously happens, and such kids are definitely the offspring of those particular parents. There is no need to go looking for the milkman. It's as if the genetic material has spontaneously "reset" itself to the standard human default of brown eyes, despite the fact that there was no brown-eyed gene available to be passed down from either of the child's parents. But the recessive blue-eyed gene is still there, even if it doesn't express itself in that particular child. Such kids frequently produce blue-eyed offspring themselves.

But if the Squib mutation (*if* it is a mutation) is there specifically to suppress magic, and is reasonably widespread in the general, rather than the *magical* population, then with all the magical traits that are floating around in the gene pool, it's really not all that astonishing that a full quarter of an average Hogwarts year's intake is made up of kids from families in which there is no known history of magic. These are the descendants of Squibs, in whom the Squib factor to suppress magic has not been passed on.

And since witches and wizards tend to produce only witches and wizards, we can conclude that the Squib factor is a Dominant trait, and that it is at least somewhat pervasive throughout the





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human population. It is impossible to tell at a glance how widespread magical traits are in the Potterverse since, in most cases, the Squib factor is suppressing them.

And like any other Dominant trait, once it fails, it's gone.

Or, it's gone until it spontaneously resets itself. And that may take generations. And the following generations after that may still produce wizards if they manage to shed it again.

In an isolated wizarding society which has self-secluded itself specifically on the basis of *not* carrying the Squib factor, Squibs would be understandably rare. In these individuals the factor has sprung up spontaneously. Neither of the child's parents had it in order to pass it on.



I now wonder whether the frequency of occurrence is anything like albinism? Albinos are certainly rare, in just about any species, but they do occur, and in non-human species the trait is sometimes deliberately bred for.

But, as seductivedark pointed out, when a sport mutation occurs in a species, there is typically a reason for it to perpetuate. It must be generally beneficial, or at least not actively harmful to the species, or the species would either shed it, or it would die out. Suppressing the conduction of magical energies is clearly a beneficial result. But there may be additional side advantages as well.

Rowling, after all, assures us that there are any number of specifically magical diseases which are what carry most wizards off, since they do not die of old age. (Note: *\*le sigh\** neither do we Muggles, really. We all die of identifiable causes,



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and "old age" is not one of them. One really wishes that Rowling would think these things through before she tosses them at us. Or at least consider that she is not, in fact, *only* talking to 9-year-olds.) The Squib factor would almost certainly produce an immunity to any magical malady, since it seems to suppress *any* expression of magic by the individual.

As to any other speculative benefits of suppressed magic, my original hypothesis was that Squibs can see various magical phenomena while Muggles can't, and are able to control already-charmed objects. This is unquestionably true within canon. My observations regarding Filch and the castle (and the ghosts), above, also still stands.

But Rowling also tells us that wizards do not get cancer or various other Muggle health conditions. So it appears that unless this is merely the result of sophisticated medi-magic, it seems to be Rowling's intention that having magic, or perhaps only magical *traits*, can suppress, or produce resistance to various *Muggle* diseases.

So it may go both ways. It is possible that even suppressed magic can convey a resistance to certain Muggle diseases. It might be interesting to learn if either active magic, or the Squib factor, or both, convey a resistance to various auto-immune diseases like Rheumatoid Arthritis, Lupus, MS, or the rest of that catalog. Although it would appear that neither the Squib factor, nor active magic give anyone any immunity to most common human epidemic diseases (or head colds).

But if such should turn out to be the case, I would imagine that in the Muggle Potterverse, most of the Centenarians (of which I am sure they have as every bit many as we do) would, to





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an overwhelming degree, turn out to be undocumented Squibs.



Which introduces another possible wrinkle.

The ww has separated out into a whole community without the Squib factor, but there is no clear and easy way to tell a Squib from a Muggle.

And it doesn't work so smoothly if the Squib factor is Dominant, and reasonably pervasive in the general human population. Which it seems to be.

Wizards within the ww almost universally produce wizards. And if the Squib factor manifests spontaneously, the resulting Squib can still produce wizard offspring, even with a Muggle partner. Perhaps *especially* with a Muggle partner. Mafalda Prewett (the never-introduced Weasley cousin) was supposed to have been the daughter of Molly's Squib cousin and his Muggle wife.

Ergo; the Squib offspring of wizarding parents will still carry the potential of not inheriting the Squib factor, and once a Dominant trait fails to be passed on, it's gone. Mafalda is a witch. If she stays in the ww, her children will most probably all be witches and wizards. She does not carry the Squib factor to pass down to them. The only way for her to produce Squibs would be for the Squib factor to occur spontaneously in her descendants. It does not skip generations.

It would appear then, that Mafalda's mother is most likely to have been have been a true Muggle, with no Squib factor to pass on from her side rather than another undocumented Squib. Statistically, one would expect a 50/50 chance of producing wizards in a Squib/true Muggle cross. But by this time

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there isn't any way to identify "true" Muggles.

The same 50/50 chances stand for producing a wizard if a known Squib's partner is magical. That is not the kind of odds that most magical families are eager to try to beat. Taken with the apocryphal information that the Black family blasted their only known Squib offspring from the family tapestry, this strongly suggests that most Squibs are encouraged to leave the wizarding world and to seek their fortunes out among the Muggles.

Consequently, if an acknowledged Squib leaves the wizarding world, and pairs up with an undocumented Squib, most of their children will probably not carry any possibility to not pass down the Squib factor. Only one in four of their children has any chance of being magical, and there might be a reduced chance of active magic turning up in a grandchild. And then only if their child's partner is either a true Muggle, or magical themselves.

Of course, Mrs Prewett may also have been a Muggle-born Squib with hidden pseudo-recessives for magic. The (titularly Muggle) Prewetts might still produce both magical and non-magical children, but the statistical probability for magical children in that case drops to 25%.

Unlike with the trait for Sickle Cell Anemia, which, when inherited from only one parent conveys a resistance to malaria (and from both produces the condition of Sickle Cell Anemia, which is a very unfortunate thing), we know of no disadvantage pertaining to inheriting the Squib factor from both parents apart from the inability to express magic. The result, in that case would appear to be merely to make the factor rather more widespread in the apparently Muggle population since such carriers have no alternative but to pass it on.



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Since true Muggles do not carry this factor, eventually among Muggles it will be lost when it fails to be transmitted, but in the meantime it may perpetuate itself over several generations. Regardless of whether or not those generations have also inherited the original Squib's potential for active magic. By the time the Squib factor fails to be passed on the magical capability may also be gone, although it is very difficult to say as much with any certainty when you are talking about Recessives. Recessives have real staying power.



### Regarding Magic in Society:

Another element contributing to the rise in the number of magical children being born outside the wizarding world is the underlying truism that a rising tide lifts all boats. It is only to be expected that as the overall number of births in the general population rises, more magical children will also be born, even if the rise in their numbers is statistically insignificant when compared against the total number of mundane births.

According to Strauss & Howe, whose theories regarding the rhythms of cyclical human social history would certainly apply to the ins and outs of mundane history in the Potterverse, cyclical history is punctuated by "great events," which, once resolved, tend to lead into periods of relative peace, prosperity, and population explosions. Strauss & Howe identify these periods as the "First Turnings" of a 4-part cycle.

The earliest of these First Turnings which S & H have identified covered the period of the rule of Henry VII in Britain, continuing into the first part of that of Henry VIII. The second

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such First Turning, initiating the next cycle, took place over the (late) reign of Elizabeth I and James I. A third started with the reign of Queen Anne and continued into the beginnings of the Hanoverian rule. [Note: after, but very soon after formal wizarding Seclusion was established.] In each of these, and in all subsequent "First Turnings" the general population numbers would have surged. Another characteristic of the First Turning is an expansion of the middle classes and an overall improvement in the quality of life of the general population.

It stands to reason that during each of these periods there would have been a larger number of Muggle-born wizards produced, but it would have only been with the lowering of the rates of infant mortality that took place over the 19th century that this factor would have become readily apparent, and increasingly significant.

Once wizarding Seclusion was established, however, these Muggle-born wizards were no longer necessarily being identified, taken under wizarding patronage, and diverted into the wizarding community. Particularly not if their parents had relocated away from the villages in which wizards still lived and could identify them. Consequently, any that managed to survive to produce offspring of their own would have been contributing a fully-operative set of wizarding traits to the local mundane gene pool.

Although it is difficult to try to summarize, persons in Muggle Britain who carry magical traits might make up as high a percentage as persons with an Rh- blood type. Which, in a population of some 60 million, at 15% would come out at around 900,000. It is tempting to extrapolate that this might be a work-



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able estimation of those that might carry the Squib factor today. But probably a temptation that should be resisted.

In addition, every Squib that has ever left the wizarding community to make his fortune among the Muggles has also contributed an inoperative set of wizarding traits to the general population (along with the presumed Squib factor). Every young wizard out sowing wild oats among the barmaids, every undocumented Muggle-born Squib, has seeded the available breeding population with magical traits. Ever since wizards began. And, as I say, once the infant mortality rate began dropping in the 19th century, ever more of these carriers have been surviving to reproduce.

And even more to the point, ever since the Acts of Enclosure started forcing thousands of rural families off the land and into the towns and factories, all of these groups of people who might share the same suppressed set of magical traits with everyone in a ten mile radius of their home village had a vastly higher chance of meeting up and pairing off with someone from a different region who may be carrying a set of additional components. And eventually the Squib factor failed to be passed on.

It is also possible that by the mid-19th century the general population level and the wizarding [whether truly genetic or otherwise] material within it may have reached the critical levels necessary to start producing Muggle-born wizards on a comparatively regular basis in any case. Wizarding traits have been being recycled back into the gene pool for millennia, and Britain is, after all, an island nation. Its population has been inter-breeding from time immemorial, and if the indigenous folk mythologies of Great Britain can be trusted, wizards



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were never all THAT uncommon among the Celtic or Pictish tribes prior to the Saxon and Norse invasions. Nor were they unknown among the Saxons and the Normans, either, although they were rather less common than among the Celts and Picts.

Although these traits would have initially been submerged through dilution from successive waves of largely non-magical invaders (or, at any rate more magically-intolerant invaders), if these traits behave as Recessives, very few of them have actually been lost. By the late-18th century they may have finally perpetuated to the point that they were beginning to reestablish themselves within the mundane population of Great Britain. And except in a handful of villages, there were no longer trained wizards in proximity to identify them.

With the continuing overall rise of the population over the 19th and 20th centuries, the result has been that the births of Muggle-born wizards are steadily becoming more common. The Malfoy/Black et. als. faction actually has some grounds for feeling themselves under siege. Even though the walls were of their own building.

I postulate that there are at least a dozen or so different classes of basic magical traits, and possibly up to couple of hundred minor variations within these basic classes; and that an individual must inherit a minimum number of them (which may be as low as 1 or 2) before the subject will be psychically active enough to be capable of conducting Magic.

And, in addition, they must not inherit the Squib factor.

What is more, any individual subject might carry a LOT more than the minimum. Which would go a long way towards explaining how — possibly even in the absence of a Squib factor





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— some wizard/Muggle crosses consistently produce magical offspring while some others may not.



Returning to the continuing efforts of Human wizards to maintain the population levels necessary to hold onto their position of dominance among the loose confederation of magical Beings; to identify all magical births is only one part of the equation. In the same interview which gave us the age figures upon which most of us calculated the ages and dates of James Potter and his friends, Rowling also told us that wizards have far longer potential lifespans than Muggles.

This last is a claim which is not really reflected in Potterverse wizarding society. Rowling does not show us a society which boasts an exceptionally large geriatric population. She seems incapable of even showing us a plausible number of children with living grandparents. Only Neville Longbottom appears to be so blessed, and he possesses only a single grandmother. Under the circumstances, I have been forced to conclude that while extremely long-lived magicals such as Professor Griselda Marchbanks, or Bathilda Bagshott are not unknown in wizarding Britain, they are vanishingly rare. The usual projected (not actual, obviously) lifespan for wizards is probably somewhere in the range of 90–120 years. Longer than that of the average Muggle, certainly, but not to so significant a degree as to overbalance their whole society in favor of the aged.

That wizards are not shown in canon to have a correspondingly longer juvenile stage before reaching maturity suggests that this longer lifespan is at least partially granted as a side

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effect of the active channeling of magic. It is clear in canon that a child's magic typically does not increase to the point of being reliably trainable until he approaches puberty. Ergo; it would only be after puberty that any apparent decrease in the rate of aging would be observable.

It should be noted however that there is some debate as to whether the apparent ages of the onset of puberty, as depicted in the series really reflects that of the present day. It certainly marches in tune with my own recollections in the mid-20th century, but we are no longer living in the mid-20th century.

It is certainly possible that any increase in wizarding longevity may simply be the result of a greater understanding of those factors which contribute to longevity in general, much in the way that such understanding of nutritional factors in the later 20th century affected the average height and longevity of Muggles. Or it may be a side effect of the medi-magical procedures which all but instantly eliminate most of the diseases which usually kill Muggles.

Such long lives also seem to be a potential which may be seldom realized due to the ww's lack of effort expended upon the prevention of the various potentially fatal magical diseases which seem to plague it.

My interpretation of the way that magic works also allows for the possibility that the active conduction of magical energies (while employing the safeguard of a well-fitted wand and the indirect channeling methods of modern wizardry), may actively promote and preserve the physical well being of the wizard. By all indications, (and certainly all of the examples given in canon) any damage produced by the practice of what is nowadays classified as Dark magic, appears to result in a dete-



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rioration of one's grasp upon reality which appears to have no corresponding component of physical degeneration.

Historically, I propose that such an afflicted wizard's balance of mind eventually would have represented a sufficient danger to his family and neighbors that they would have been forced to restrain him, and typically this required his removal from society. We have no real information on the average lifespans of wizards in the days that all magic was Dark magic. The folk belief among some Muggles that wizards are actually immortal is probably based upon the rarity with which a known wizard was known to have died a natural death.

With the development of modern wizardry, shortly before the rise of the Middle Ages, I postulate that a wizard would be taught how to remove his psychic Self from the direct channel of the energies that he was physically conducting. Such a radically new procedure for conducting and directing magical energy meant that he was now able to get all of the physical benefit without the attendant risk of the deterioration of his perception of the world around him, and his place in it, which had previously been the case. Once so established, such a procedure meant that it was now safer for him to actually exercise his native conductivity to a far greater extent than it had ever been when such an exercise carried a corresponding risk to his psychic health.

In the days that all magic was Dark magic, a wizard might be able to acquire a great amount of magical lore without taking any harm, but, given that the actual practice of magic entailed a far greater exposure to the chaotic elements which accompany the flow of magic itself than modern methods, it was believed to usually end in madness. Consequently, most wizards actually

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conducted magical energy as infrequently as possible in order to extend their effective period of lucid productivity. Consequently, they did not derive the full potential physical benefit that the conduction of Magical energies can convey, even while they remained at full risk of whatever magical maladies might arise from being a natural conductor of such energies.

We have tacitly been told in canon that the ability to conduct magical energy matures with the wizard. Children are not typically given wands and taught to perform spells until they reach the age of 11 and are on the brink of puberty. We were also directly told by the false Mad-eye Moody in Goblet of Fire that a roomful of hormonal 14–15-year-olds would not be able to channel the amount of magic necessary to perform the Avada Kedavra curse. From this we can draw the conclusion that magical conductivity requires a degree of physical maturity to become fully functional. Magical children younger than those of an age to be given wands have been shown to be able to use charmed items such as wizarding toys, and to be able to channel some amount of magical energy through a wand, but until the ages of nine or ten, have only rarely been reported to have done what could be regarded as actually performing a spell.

Such reports do exist, of course. These incidents are not precisely rare, but neither are they common. I propose that the number and severity of the magical breakthroughs which plagued Harry Potter during his childhood were an extreme case and were dependent upon special circumstances further gone into in the article entitled; 'Redeeming the Potterverse'.

In support of my contention that Harry's case is unusual, I would like to direct attention to Dumbledore's explanation at



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the end of Chamber of Secrets in which he shares with Harry his explanation of how Harry came to be a Parselmouth. If Voldemort did unwittingly transfer some of his own power into Harry on the night of his defeat (by whatever method), then we must conclude that since the age of 15 months, Harry Potter has been carrying at least some of the power of an adult wizard, (and a very powerful one at that) *in addition* to his own. This alone is enough to suggest one possible reason for why Harry's childhood was so rich in breakthrough incidents.

I also offer the suggestion that it is not unheard of for a wizarding child (one who is not carrying more magic than he can reasonably be expected to control) to unconsciously learn to dissipate the magical energies that he generates so steadily that it rarely builds up to the point of creating a breakthrough — which a child might understandably find alarming. In fact that a significant minority, perhaps one in 20 to 50, wizarding children, either pureblood or Muggle-born, may have comparatively little history of such breakthrough incidents after reaching the toddler stage due to this ability. Such children probably need some additional time and/or tutoring to unlearn this habit of siphoning-off their magic when it comes time to engage in their magical education. Unfortunately, I doubt that they get it.

Other cases, such as that of Ariana Dumbledore, manage to block conduction of magical energies so successfully that when a breakthrough does occur it is devastating. Unfortunately we do not have the information necessary to draw truly informed conjectures regarding Ariana's particular case. I personally am of the opinion that in addition to any assumed long-term emotional trauma, Miss Dumbledore may have also suffered from

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some form of seizure disorder dating from a head injury sustained in the attack upon her when she was six.

With the increased recognition of the physical benefits of channeling magical energy becoming more common, once the general adoption of the methods of modern wizardry had become widespread, practicing wizards would have begun to see an increase in their lifespans. I believe that by the end of the 15th century, wizards' lifespans (like those of modern Muggles after the 2nd World War), had begun to be noticeably longer than those of their Muggle contemporaries.



Given that the population decrease over the first century of Seclusion would have been a cause for much concern, a great deal of attention must have been directed toward the extending of a wizard's effective life to offset the degree of attrition that the wizarding world was experiencing. It now seems unlikely that these efforts actually came to any great fruition.

Most of the population decline experienced over the first century of Seclusion would have been to some degree illusory, since the greatest loss would have been that of all the mundane family members which had accompanied the wizarding world into its retreats. I think that after untold centuries of living mixed in among Muggles it had simply never been apparent to the wizarding population's leaders just how small their numbers actually were. By the end of the first century of Seclusion all of the original Muggle family members of the community were gone, and even any second-generation non-magicals would have also been quite elderly.



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What is more, most of the surviving original wizards would also now be quite elderly, and the larger percentage of them also would no longer still be alive. By this point, some hundred years or so after the establishment of Seclusion, the wizarding world would have been composed primarily of those who had been born during the Seclusion itself. Given that even in the current day the average Hogwarts incoming class appears to be something around 40 children, representing the entire number of magical births throughout Great Britain and Ireland for that year, of which only 25% are reported as being purebloods. It seems unlikely that a birthrate of what must have been not much more than a dozen births in an average year would have provided enough new members to sustain a viable society. It certainly would not sustain one at the level required to support the services which have been shown to be available to the wizards of today.

This expansion of services is likely to be due to the comparatively rapid increase of the wizarding population over the 19th and 20th centuries. Which has largely been dependent upon the increasing number of Muggle-borns recruited into the wizarding world, and the even greater increase in the numbers of the technical halfbloods who are their descendants.

Extending the total lifespan of its members could have only offset part of the problem, however, even had it been possible. When people's lifespans have been extended they do not necessarily stay young (or fertile) longer. They typically — stay — *old*. Longer. This may slow the natural attrition of the group as a whole, but it does not raise the population in any sectors except those of the old, and of the very old. The developments that would be necessary to further the population's numbers and

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general viability would be those necessary to extend the child-bearing years of witches from its original level at the time that Seclusion was imposed. Which, based upon a lifespan of about a century, might have translated into a fertile period similar to that of a typically healthy and well-nourished Muggle of today; approximately 35-40 years. And, at the same time, to encourage larger families, ultimately spreading the population's actual increase across all age sectors.

We do not know whether this has ever actually been either attempted or achieved. It certainly does not appear to be the case in the wizarding world today. From canon we can see that if average family size ever saw an increase within the wizarding world, that certainly is no longer the norm. Most of the children we meet in canon appear to be from fairly small families, and only children appear to be far from unusual.

However, if the childbearing years of modern witches are indeed longer than those of modern Muggles, some of these perceived only children may in fact have siblings of an entirely different Hogwarts generation, rather than being a part of a Weasley-style family of siblings who are all as close in age as in a large Muggle family. We may speculate, at least, that among witches, a pregnancy in one's mid-40s might be regarded as no more dangerous than one in one's 20s. But it is quite likely that, as among Muggle women, a witch's basic fertility level begins to decline some years in advance of actually reaching menopause. This would tend to encourage the bearing of one's children before leaving one's 30s.





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It is also all too likely that there may be a physiological reason for the rarity of families with large numbers of magical children as well. This issue is touched upon in the companion pieces, 'Wizards & Muggles: Pre-& Post-Seclusion'. A portion of which has been extracted and repeated here:

I have my own pet theory regarding the manner in which the charmed Hogwarts quill actually works. I propose that the reasoning that went into its development progressed along something like the following lines:

Reasoning from the starting point that; although it had long been observed that all magical children do not have an extensive history of magical breakthroughs, the generality is that they all experience at least a few of them. Particularly in their earliest infancy before that afore-mentioned minority learn to unconsciously dissipate the magical energies which cause them.

Allowing this premise; at some point in the R&D stage, one of the project's development team — probably an ex-Ravenclaw — followed that line of reasoning to its logical conclusion and hypothesized that;

If the younger a child is; the more likely he is to be unable to suppress a magical breakthrough, AND;

If the greater the [child's perception of] danger/stress/fear/pain to which such an immature wizard is exposed; the more likely he is to generate such a breakthrough, AND;

The more immature a child's nervous system is; the smaller the amount of Magical energy that can actually be channeled by such a breakthrough, THEN; IF;

The most likely experience held in common by all infant wizards capable of generating such a breakthrough is the stress/

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fear/pain undergone during the birthing process *itself*; THEN;

What the project's developers are looking for are very low-level breakthroughs which channel very small amounts of Magical energy within a specific range of frequencies.



However: such breakthroughs, however small, can hardly be conducive to an easy birth. While, by this time, there are probably medi-magical procedures designed to lessen the risks attendant to both infants and mothers by such natal breakthroughs, which may now be routinely employed by Healers and midwives it is quite possible that the lack of such procedures may have been a major contribution to the low family sizes generally believed to be prevalent within the wizarding community until fairly recent times (this perception appears to have been somewhat contradicted by the information on the Black family tapestry sketch released in February 2006 in which the average family size over the past 150 or so years appears to have usually produced three children).

It is certainly not beyond the reach of possibility that such a natal breakthrough may have contributed to the death following childbirth of Merope Riddle, *née* Gaunt; who gave birth to what is generally presumed to be an exceptionally magical child with no more assistance than that which was available through the mundane birthing practices of 1926. However, now that we actually have the official Riddle backstory, it seems blindingly evident that Merope's death was most probably due to a profound failure of the will to live.

While it is obvious that to birth a magical child does not usually



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result in the death of a witch, it is possible that until comparatively recently, it might well have sometimes resulted in such internal injuries as to make future children a remote possibility. While a fair number of current wizarding families (apart from the Weasleys) appear to have two or more children, there also appears to be a fairly high representation of “only” children among Harry’s current schoolmates, both wizard and Muggle-born. Although our sampling on that regard is likely to be somewhat skewed due to the high number of war orphans in Harry’s age bracket, and Harry’s own general lack of interest in his fellow classmates.

It might be interesting to know whether this appearance is in fact, accurate, and whether this is a recent, or a long-established trend. But the fact that a high number of these only children are being raised by a single parent, or a parent and step-parent, or a grandparent, and their only child status is due to the events of VoldWar I cannot be overlooked.



It has also been recently suggested that by the late 20th and early 21st century, a few Muggle-born wizards may now be falling through the cracks due to caesarian intervention having been implemented before the child has been subjected to sufficient stress necessary to cause the Magical breakthrough which is required for his birth to be registered as magical by the Hogwarts quill (or those of the various European Ministries of Magic, if any). Such a child’s subsequent neurological development would soon render any breakthroughs that he produced outside the range of frequency that such quills are calibrated to recognize. Such a situation may be the explanation for some of the rare, “late bloomers”

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which have allegedly been noted in recent years (i.e., interview statements that never materialized in the actual books). We have no example of such instances within the official canon.

It is, at present, unknown whether any medi-magical procedures intended to extend a witch’s fertile period have in fact been developed or are in fact being utilized. At present we have been given no information that would support this reading. It is quite possible that the early marriages which have been implied in canon may be socially encouraged out of consideration of the lack of such procedures. In which case we may also assume that the magical Academies of the wizarding world today still serve a secondary function in the capacity of a matchmaker’s service. The collection of genealogical references in the Hogwarts Library (those “books of wizarding families” which young Riddle used to finally trace the identity of his grandfather, Marvolo Gaunt) would tend to suggest such a purpose.

Whether this is the case or not, what appears to be incontestable is that until the wizarding world is able to produce and maintain a population in which the young are not grossly outnumbered by the old, neither their continued existence nor their dominant position among the ranks of Magical Beings will ever be truly secure. ever be truly secure.





## Wizards & Muggles: Pre-Seclusion

Rowling claims that she sees the world of Harry Potter as taking place parallel to our own. If this is the case, either Ms Rowling has a very odd idea of how our world works, or else hers is our own world as seen in a funhouse mirror.

That being so, there is no way that I am going to get details right.

But I can at least *try* to assemble some kind of a history that reads as both sort-of plausible, and more-or-less coherent.



### Part 1 Pre-Seclusion Era

#### Exercising in Futility

**W**ell, we cannot say that we were not warned. Rowling is, after all, an author who in the very first book of the series decked out the ghost of a wizard allegedly executed in 1492 in a \*ruff\* despite the fact that in 1492 the ruff wasn't yet even a gleam in a starch merchant's eye. (Although to be accurate, Nick's statement in PS/SS that he hadn't tasted food in some 400 years would set his execution date as 1592, when ruffs *were* actually *de rigueur* in gentlemanly apparel. The 1492 execution date was not pushed at us until CoS, where it bollixed all history and rationality.)

So then perhaps we ought not to be too surprised to discover that in an industrialized 1920s Great Britain, a nameless young woman can give birth in an orphanage, die, and no one makes the slightest attempt to find out who she is or where she came from, not even in hopes that there is a family somewhere upon whom they can palm off her kid. Nor, for that matter, that orphanage children were not evacuated from London during the equivalent of WWII, and that in the summer of 1996 the



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former Prime Minister of England was a man.

Note: the horse-drawn London milk cart we saw in London in the summer of 1938 would not actually have been an anachronism in the Real World. Not quite. Horse-drawn service vehicles were still in use, yes, even in London, until a short time after WWII, due to the Great Depression, as well as wartime, and post-war petrol shortages. Admittedly, we do not know whether any of these conditions applied to Britain in the Potterverse.

The depiction of Tom's orphanage itself seems to owe more than a little to the world according to Charles Dickens, however, which was formalized some generations earlier than the 1930s. I am, however, no expert where it comes to the operation of orphanages, and Rowling's orphanage is clearly an orphanage, not a workhouse.

I do have to admit that Rowling really did initially appear to have done a fair amount of hard thinking when she set up the Potterverse. At least in certain areas. But she did not expend her efforts in all of the directions that were needed if she wanted to create a fully coherent secondary world. Large pieces of the required framework are simply missing, and there are some inexplicable gaps in logic. Most of which seem particularly inexplicable when such gaps are not floating out in the periphery, but sitting squarely in the middle of the frame.

For example; Rowling states that the wizarding population of Great Britain and Ireland numbers about 3,000. She claims that there is only one wizarding school, only one all-wizarding village in the British Isles, and shows only us a hint of a couple of secure mixed-use enclaves such as the apartments above the shops in which the vendors of Diagon Alley and such areas presumably live.





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All other witches and wizards therefore, must needs live out among Muggles. At least to some degree.

It wasn't until early in DHs that Rowling introduced the element of an additional half-dozen or so mixed Muggle/wizarding villages such as, for example, Godric's Hollow, Mould-in-the-Wold, Tinworth, Upper Flagley, and Ottery St Catchpole. We had already suspected as much, since we saw as early as the opening chapters of GoF that there were no fewer than four wizarding families within walking distance of Stoat's Head Hill outside Ottery St Catchpole. But the issue had remained unconfirmed for the following two books.

And yet, despite the fact that, consequently, fully half of all British wizards must live virtually next door to Muggles, they uniformly seem to have no understanding of Muggle customs, technology, dress, or affairs. They have apparently no idea of how to dress convincingly like Muggles to avoid detection when they go out in public, no idea of how to behave, nor have they any real understanding of Muggle society. Despite the fact that it surely can't be all *that* different from wizard society. This is completely implausible. In fact, it is a severe disconnect. Rowling clearly intends that the culture clash be taken as a joke, but such a joke seriously undermines whatever sense she intends us to make of the story.

Nor, once the series is more closely examined, does it seem that Rowling quite took the traditional "low road" familiar to well over a century's worth of children's fantasy tradition by postulating a world "just like" our own, except that it happens to have magic that actually works, either. Once again we find we have been derailed by a series of rather lame attempts to be merely funny.

The Potterverse is not like our world at all. It just plain does

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not share our history.

It has taken thousands of years for our world to reach the point it has. And I cannot see any credible manner in which the Potterverse could have arrived at a point so apparently similar, when it did not start from the same place, or follow the same path. Rowling has quite deliberately excised *our* history from her world, but had nothing coherent to put in its place but a series of rather silly jokes.

However, in point of fact, from what we have been *shown* throughout the series, the Potterverse does not really seem to take place in anything even remotely parallel to our own world. Instead, it appears to occupy a very odd space located uneasily somewhere between Storybook Land and Toontown.



In Storybook Land, all times are one. The only "time" there, is "once upon a time." There is no evolution of thought or enlightenment in Storybook Land. Its society is carved in stone and there is no advance of technology or civilization. Some critics, such as Lev Grossman, seems to believe that the dynamics of Storybook Land is the hallmark of the entire fantasy genre. They are not.

With all due respect, by making such a claim Mr Grossman comes across as a fool. *Fairy tales* take place in Storybook Land. Despite a rather shallow surface resemblance, fairy tales are not *fantasy*. Real fantasy rarely does more than pass through that particular space to get to its starting point. Usually rather quickly. Typically, the conflicts of Storybook Land are symbolic stand-ins for some psychological issue decked out in fancy dress. Fantasy — with its conflicts that are usually actually about



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something which is stated openly and defined in the text — typically finds the level of stylization native to the environment of Storybook Land inhospitable, and far too tempting to burlesque.

In Storybook Land there is no difference between the way that people think today and the way they thought in the Dark Ages. Unless it atypically happens to suit the needs of the plot. In that case everything turns on a dime without reason or plausibility. The allegiance of entire armies (or Hogwarts Houses) flip-flops overnight at the whim of the narrator without considerations of either the individual sovereignty possessed by even the lowliest spear-carrier nor the logistics of medieval (or machine-age) communications.

What is more, in Storybook Land the population does not ever change, either. From century to century the numbers neither grow nor shrink, and consequently, its society is never put under any pressure to ever *need* to change in order to accommodate a shifting demographic, nor even to develop a more advanced technology to serve its people better. It is no surprise that people in Storybook Land are still living in castles. The wonder is that they are not still living in caves.

At the other end of this road, in Toontown, technology is whatever you say it is, whenever you say it is, the pain of others (particularly that of animals) is simply not real, and overt cruelty, particularly physical cruelty, is uniformly presented as *funny*.

The technology of the Potterverse has always borne a disconcerting resemblance to that of Bedrock, and the pervasive cruelty and abuse of helpless animals has been such an openly showcased and continuing thread throughout the series, that it takes us aback (with considerable indignation!) when

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Dumbledore abruptly and sanctimoniously informs us — with a straight face and not the slightest awareness of irony — that young Tom Riddle's strangling of Billy Stubbs's rabbit was most suggestive of an instinct for cruelty, secrecy, and domination, and, all-in-all, a *\*very bad sign\**.

How, one wonders, would he square this with behavior of the Weasley twins — who were at least 14 at the time, and certainly old enough to know better — deliberately force-feeding a firework to a salamander and watching it rocket around the Gryffindor common room from internal combustion? I was not sure that the other shoe wasn't yet to fall regarding the ongoing, prickly and chronically disturbing issue represented by the Weasley twins. But in the event Rowling did not choose to openly deal with that issue at all, settling only for the cheap shot of killing one of them off in passing.

For that matter, throughout the whole series, the students of Hogwarts have been routinely taught Transfiguration, using live animals as subjects, regardless of the probability of the students making painful and inexpert blunders with them, and nobody blinks an eye. Evidently turning helpless animals into inanimate objects and back again (and botching the job) is considered to be one's inalienable right as a human wizard.

This all seems a very dangerous original premise upon which to base one's reasoning, let alone a created world's interpretation of morality, and yet the faultiness of this reasoning is sustained throughout every one of the books.

It is far too late to expect this situation to alter, or for Rowling to offer us a coherent explanation for why she set it up this way. The series is officially finished.



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But any attempt to draw any sort of a parallel to *our* world from either Storybook Land or Toontown is clearly a wash — it simply isn't going to fit. Still, as with the fabled, and evidently (if you expect an answer from Rowling) apocryphal distinction between Dark and Light Magic, I am not yet quite ready to abandon the attempt.

But I cannot promise that it is likely to get much further development.

Take this as a disclaimer...



### Prologue and acknowledgments:

This is not by any means my original reading of this matter as it was posted here on the site in 2003. The current version has been in development along the same trajectory for several years, but it has been a long, and sometimes rather strange trip.

Soon after the site's first comprehensive redesign (even then not the original version of the site) was uploaded at the end of April 2004, I found myself directed to two excellent theory/analysis sites by other people, JK Rowling gave us a fairly major interview (Edinburgh Book Festival, August 2004) and I stumbled across a perfectly splendid little gem of a hypothetical pivotal incident for the possible history of the Potterverse tucked away in the backstory of a fanfic (beautifully scaled and impeccably placed). A Red Hen edition of that fanfic; 'THE PREFECT'S PORTRAIT', can be found in the Publications area of the site.

After taking all of these new sources of information under consideration, the original version of this overview seemed no longer to be even remotely adequate. Some fairly major retrofit-

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ting was in order.

Not much later, I was also further indebted to a LiveJournal user whose online name is Sollersuk for her corrections to a number of the statements made in the collection regarding the history of the classical period and later antiquity depicted here and in the companion piece 'A History of Magic'.

Therefore, this is in the way of being about version 10.5 of my rendering of a projected backstory of the development of the social history of the Potterverse. In it, I am attempting to reincorporate into this world the history that Rowling excised.

This exercise eventually needed to be split into two parts. The division between the two portions has been made at the point of the establishment of statutory Wizarding Secrecy and the withdrawal of the wizarding world from greater Western human society. That seemed the most appropriate place for such a division.



### I. On "Separation" and the Perception of Magic in Human Society:

One thing that is necessary for us to keep reminding ourselves is that the Potterverse is not really a representation of our own world. In our world, there is no functioning system of Magic. Such an element would have retroactively produced sweeping changes. And there is no guarantee that such changes in our world would have resulted in anything like the Potterverse.

However, the fact that the Muggle society shown in the foreground throughout the Harry Potter series is so similar to our own appears to be a clear indication that the development of society as envisioned for the late 20th century Potterverse



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could, and perhaps should reasonably be assumed to have developed along roughly parallel lines to ours, even in the face of Rowling's up-ending or misrepresentation of much of Western history, which would in the normal way of things totally preclude any such development. Consequently, in attempting to extrapolate an historical background for the Potterverse, it is both reasonable and irresistible to try to base it upon the generalities of the historical development of our own society.

Our own Western-style, English-speaking society, that is. What we have been shown of the Potterverse is unapologetically Euro-centric, in fact, quite literally Anglo-centric. Which in itself is bound to have incorporated at least some distortion of its underlying truths. It stands to reason that not all wizards in the Potterverse are British.

Rowling stated in her joint interview with the founders of [TheLeakyCaldron.com](http://TheLeakyCaldron.com) and [Mugglenet.com](http://Mugglenet.com) in the summer of 2005, after the release of 'HARRY POTTER AND THE HALF-BLOOD PRINCE', that *she* envisions the Potterverse as taking place in parallel to our own world. Although from what we had been shown in the text as of the release of HBP, the parallel was far from exact.

Socially speaking; in the Potterverse, wizards and Muggles clearly lived together pretty much cheek by jowl for most of human history, and it turns out that they continue to do so however unacknowledged this fact may be. It is only over the last 300–400 years that there has been any more-or-less enforced separation between the magical and mundane societies. It was only some 299 years prior to our first introduction to 10-year-old Harry Potter that it became unlawful for a wizard to live out among Muggles as a wizard. (It should be noted that for no as yet clear reason, the



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date of the International Statute of Wizarding Secrecy, formerly stated as 1692, was, in DHs arbitrarily shifted to 1689. The reason for this change has not been explained.)

For that matter, it gradually becomes apparent to the reader that this separation not only pertains chiefly — it in fact, may pertain *only* to Europe and those nations whose governing bodies were originally European settlements. But this separation is far less total than it first appears, given that even some such uncompromisingly wizardly types as Mad-Eye Moody lived in close enough proximity to Muggles for there to be a great deal of concern about the behavior of his dustbins. Even the Gaunt's hovel was accessible to anyone who chose to go there. The existence of such portals as the barrier on Platform 9¾ in King's Cross Station and The Leaky Cauldron in London may serve only to lull the wizarding public into the belief that they are somehow safe behind a solid barrier where Muggles cannot find them. But in fact it appears that wizards are far more typically scattered across the Muggle landscape, attempting to hide in plain sight.

However, it is also plain from the statements made by various characters throughout the series, that there has clearly been a faction of wizarding society in Britain which has been determinedly attempting to isolate itself from Muggles since at least the Middle Ages.

I propose that if there was no formal separation between wizard and Muggle in the Potterverse before the end of the 17th century, this is most likely to have been either because the state of magical technology had not yet reached a degree of power and sophistication that would make such a separation possi-





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ble, or that prior to the fallout of the social/religious upheaval brought about by the Protestant Reformation in Europe, there was no widely perceived need for it, save in the views of a small isolationist faction of the wizarding population. That, in fact, most known wizards to that date had probably performed an acknowledged and useful function in greater human society, earning their living as magical “professionals.” As was, in fact, the case in our own history.

This despite the fact that in our own history “magic” has never actually worked.

It is also probably safe to assume that at various periods the lives of wizards and the lives of Muggles would have been closer to one another than at others. And that, in addition, the wizarding community’s own outlook has probably gone through periodic cycles in its level of tolerance for its non-magical neighbors. Or, more probably, that the wizarding community’s tendency to demonize “the other” has periodically shifted from Muggles to other, rival magical species, notably Giants or Goblins.

In Historic times, the two sectors of human society would, at various periods, even have shared their research projects (often, quite possibly, between family members within those families in which only a few members possessed active magic). Few of the results from such early periods are likely to be still regarded as significant in the history of the Science of the mundane world. We have no way of determining whether this is also the case regarding magical research. Among Muggles, to whom any magical component of a study is either inaccessible or excessively hazardous, any remnants of such cooperative scholarly research and philosophy would probably only provide

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historical oddities to modern-day researchers and historians.



It practically goes without saying that a historical cycle of periods of assimilation alternating with periods of persecution was probably as widely experienced by wizards as they have been endured by any other group which has been identified as not comprising a part of the “norm.” But until the level of Magical “technology” reached the point that this portion of the population were able to seal themselves off from their neighbors there would have been no escape from at least some level of participation in Muggle society, and much of wizards’ survival would have been dependent upon their ability to “fit in.”

And, for that matter, the specific and widespread “hunting” of witches was quite a late development in European history. Not that witches had not at various times been arrested, condemned, and executed since — at least — the 12th century, for we know this to have been the case. But, prior to the Reformation, these incidents were usually very local affairs concerning specific crimes, and had not necessarily taken place under government sanction.

In contrast to the inflated and misleading statements made in Bagshot’s ‘HISTORY OF MAGIC’; in our own world, there were no more than about 25 recorded witch executions over the course of the whole 14th century, and witches in England were never burned at any point in English history. They were hanged. And they were typically hanged for conventional criminal offenses which were defined as capital crimes at whatever the given point in time. What is more, they were usually not prosecuted for merely being witches. It was perfectly *legal* to be a witch.



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But being witches didn't do them any favors in a court of law. Those incidents in which a magic user ran afoul of the local citizenry would usually have been those cases where a local wizard or witch had managed to set his or her neighbors off into a mob howling for his or her blood. In which case any such mob justice would have generally been undertaken without necessarily having first bothered to assure that such an act had the sanction of either the State or the Church. In our own world's history, in fact, there is documented evidence of legal sanctions having been taken *against* the persecution of suspected witches recorded in various European nations during the Middle Ages. It is even more likely that this would have been the case in the Potterverse.

And, indeed, before the Renaissance, the primary concern of the law was to keep order, and the primary concern of the Church was not to destroy witches, but to root out heretics. It was not until the rather advanced date of 1484 that witchcraft was formally declared by a reigning Pope to be a form of heresy.

Prior to that date, a solitary witch or wizard practicing their craft on their own authority was usually able to fly under the Church's radar. In most cases it was only those who were more than usually reckless, or vindictive, or who had backed the wrong side politically who drew the Church's attention to themselves.

This was primarily because the Church's greatest concern vis-a-vis heretics was that their heretical doctrines might encroach upon its own authority. The early church had little tolerance for competing religions, and the practice of witchcraft and wizardry, once the original pagan nature worship had fallen out of use, was hardly to be regarded in this sense by persons who had simply been born able to channel magical energy. Most

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witches and wizards were almost certainly regular churchgoers in accordance with the rest of their local communities.

Even the reflection that most of the miracles cited by their priests could have been duplicated with little effort by magic would have only established in the mind-set of wizards that the established Church was also the Church of wizards — who had their own rightful place in it. That one of the House ghosts of Hogwarts is identified as a Friar ought to be indication enough that this was indeed the case. In Britain, the secure, hidden location of Hogwarts School (in what was, until the 17th century, a foreign country) would itself have eliminated most of the danger of any witch or wizard instructing the young in their magical studies being perceived to be preaching a doctrine which conflicted with that of the established Church. It could even go some way towards explaining the complete void of religious instruction available at Hogwarts.

Furthermore the traditional option of choosing between an independent life as a professional magic user or entry into the priesthood remained open to wizards throughout most of European history. A choice in which a life dedicated to the Church was often the option taken. Much of the wonder-working for remarkably trivial purpose attributed to the early Celtic saints was exactly the sort of thing that in the Potterverse would have been readily undertaken by wizards. It was widely accepted that for a priest to use magic was perfectly in keeping with his calling, so long as he did no trafficking with demons.



The issue of trafficking with demons is another pair of sleeves



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altogether. And one which really throws the cat among the pigeons. I find myself going out on a limb with yet another unsupported theory at this point. But if it is on target it would explain something of the underlying attitudes toward magic which not only is in keeping with the changing perceptions of our own history as regards Magic, but which would have contributed heavily to the conditions which ultimately drove the wizards of the Potterverse into hiding.

It has blown right past us, thanks in chief to Rowling's commendable restraint (over the first 6 book, in any case) regarding the presentation of overt dogma and her deliberate choice to only reference the most secularized forms of cultural Christianity in her work, that JK Rowling's Potterverse does, in fact, admit to the existence of demons.

Nearly a half a dozen of the creatures referenced in 'FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM' are clearly identified not merely as beasts, or as monsters, but as \*demons\*: Water demons in most cases. And usually as rather minor ones. Three of these; the Kappa, the Kelpie, and the Pogrebin appear to be identified as demons in the Potterverse because they are identified as demons in the source folklore from which Rowling has clearly imported them. I do not know whether the Grindylow and the Nogtail are also imports from existing folk traditions, but seems very likely that they are.

It is entirely possible that to have imported demons into her world from existing folk traditions without redefining them as something else was merely a lapse of judgment, or a lapse of attention on Ms Rowling's part that slipped past her when she did it, and that what she is implying about her world by having done so was not her intention. But we cannot depend on that having been the



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case. She confirmed the demonic status of the Grindylow (and possibly the Kappa as well) in the actual text of PoA, so her inclusion of demons may have been quite deliberate. And if it was deliberate, we need to admit the possibility that it was also significant.

Admittedly, none of the specific types of demons encountered in these sources are regarded as particularly intelligent, or they would not be listed in a compendium of Beasts rather than Beings. But a precedent has now been set, and the definite presence of unintelligent demons in a fictional universe is a very poor guarantee for an absence of intelligent ones.

Which, if nothing else, has me looking slantways with more than my usual dismay at the probable nature of Dementors. Although since they evidently breed, they can presumably be killed, which is at least some cause for hope that they are not, in fact, demonic.

But, this whole line of reasoning raises a perfectly appalling consideration regarding psychic activity in humans.

Only persons who are psychically active to at least some degree are able to see and communicate with creatures native to the spirit "plane." In common parlance this usually translates as the ability to see ghosts. But this may apply to demons as well. (It certainly applies to Dementors.) And if offered something that they want, it is possible that the demons of the Potterverse will indeed be willing to negotiate a bargain with whoever offers them one. And it might not require the ability to actually channel magic in order to do so.

We know that wizards in the Potterverse have no need to traffic with demons in order to perform magic.

We know that at least some Squibs are able to see and communicate with ghosts.





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It is my contention, explored in the companion piece entitled 'Magic & Wizards' that a great many supposed Muggles in the Potterverse are in fact the equivalent of Muggle-born Squibs.

What if a few, a very few, very rare Squibs (either wizarding or Muggle-born) are also able to see and communicate with demons?

A Squib *would* need demonic assistance in order to perform magic.

And maybe, just maybe, some of them have attempted to try to negotiate a bargain in order to do it.

With just about the results you might expect.

We have been given every reason to believe that in the Potterverse, Merlinus Ambrosius was a real person.

Perhaps so was Dr Johanus Faustus.

Adding demons to the equation opens the likelihood that at least a few wizards over the ages would be sure to have gotten the same bright idea. But the fact that we have heard nothing of demon handling, even among the darkest of Dark wizards suggests that the inability to keep demons under control for any significant amount of time is not a Squib thing, but a human thing. And that it is widely understood in the magical community that trying to bargain with demons is a Really Bad Idea, that no one with a brain in their head would attempt.

Or is it? Just what was the nature of the Ministry's deal with the Dementors?



One thing that we do know, however, is that at a certain point in our own world's History a long-established understanding that to perform magic is perfectly acceptable so long as there is no traffic with demons involved began to give way

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to the view that to perform magic was not possible without the assistance of demons.

This shift in the paradigm did not happen overnight but once it was in play, it slowly gathered support as time went on.

And just when did this new perception of the nature of magic begin to take hold in the public understanding?

It took hold during what is now referred to as the early Middle Ages.

Right after I propose that wizards in the Potterverse had finally figured out the secret of "Light" magic (aka; modern wizardry) and magic had finally become safe enough to casually indulge in. On top of 1200-1500 years of a documented human history of wizards publicly going rogue and having to be restrained, as often as not. The price of losing oneself in Dark magic had finally earned its inevitable payoff in the hearts and minds of the neighboring Muggles.

Or, in other words, modern wizardry had not been developed a minute too soon. In fact it is arguable as to whether its development had not already been too late. This was also, if you remember, just about the point that four well-remembered British witches and wizards decided to find an out-of-the-way location and establish a school.

Nothing, of course, was going to serve as a safeguard for a practicing witch or wizard who had managed to get the local Muggles up in arms against them. Nor would it have saved a witch or wizard who too openly made use of their ability to channel magic to meddle in mundane politics. In our world, the "Maid of Orleans" was burned as a heretic — *and* a witch — in the early 15th century (when the perception that magic is



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a form of trafficking with demons had had some centuries to become well established) for the crime of convincing others to obey the voices in her head. It has not been determined whether the Joan of Arc equivalent of the Potterverse (if such existed) was actually a witch, or merely a Muggle with great charisma. There is a strong probability that if she existed, she may in fact have been a Squib, psychically active to some degree, but unable to actually channel magic. Which might have saved her.

It must also be acknowledged that this matter was to at least some extent a class thing. Where a local witch or cunning man might well arouse the ire of the neighborhood against them, bringing the wrath of the Church down upon their heads for having been perceived to be infringing upon the Church's authority in that region, scholarly wizards (and it was always specifically \*wizards\*, never witches) continued to make a very decent living under the patronage of the royal Court or members of the Nobility for some centuries afterwards. Such official Court Wizards were in a precarious position, however, and by the 16th century were rapidly disappearing from public view.



### II. Wizards in Human Society:

Once one stops to consider, it is obvious that the Modern Wizarding World is an anomaly, made up of a self-isolated group of people who are stated as having been officially out of touch, to a greater or lesser extent, with the Real World for most of the last 400 years. And, as if that weren't enough in itself, this group is entirely made up of people for whom the physical laws of nature simply do not work as they do for Mug-

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gles. This being the case, it would be remarkable if they hadn't managed to develop some very odd notions in the interim. Even their understanding of their own history is likely to be among these peculiar notions.

I contend that one of these odd notions is the modern interpretation of the concept of Muggle-born wizards and witches being somehow different from pure-blood wizards and witches. I suggest that prior to the establishment of wizarding Seclusion, much less concern was applied to such considerations — except among those pure-blooded isolationists who comprised a comparatively small segment of the wizarding population of Europe.

This particular faction has undoubtedly been a continuing source of dissension and, frequently, opposition, to any setting or changing of policy, since well before the Middle Ages. Such individuals and their families were probably originally comprised of descendants of the sort of bitter fanatics who had at some point suffered greatly in one of the outbreaks of persecution against wizards. Their current signature is a refusal to admit that wizards and Muggles are both human, and they are inclined to take strong exception to any wizards or witches who either establish or retain contact with Muggles for any reason. This lunatic fringe's influence has waxed and waned in accordance to external as well as internal conditions and events in what has become the wizarding "world," but the isolationists are an intrinsic part of wizarding culture and they have set their stamp upon wizarding history.

A similarly wizarding-dominant, but subtly opposed faction, harbors the belief that having magical powers qualifies wizards to rule Muggles. They are also currently fixated upon exclusivity.



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The more extreme elements of this faction not only take exception to wizards of mixed blood, but to any magical Being who is not a pure-blooded human wizard or witch, as well as such any human wizards who have managed to become “contaminated” by certain socially disapproved magical maladies.

Where the isolationists are traditionally committed to the establishment and maintenance of a complete separation between wizarding and Muggle societies, the supremacists have a disturbing tendency to adopt ideologies and rhetoric which would ultimately dissolve any such separation. Nor is it always evident which of the two factions with which one is actually dealing, united as they are by their conviction of Muggle inferiority. The supremacists appear not to have been a significant or organized political problem prior to the adoption of the International Statute of Wizarding Secrecy. In its brief history, however, it has demonstrated a great willingness to attempt to legitimize its position by adopting and warping traditional isolationist rhetoric. Both groups tend to attract young people from pureblood families who are of all the wizarding world the least likely to have any real knowledge of either Muggles or Muggle society.

Prior to the establishment of Seclusion, I seriously doubt that anyone had ever attempted to take an effective census of wizards. Given that those who were known to exist were too few, and too widely dispersed to have been truly able to maintain completely self-sufficient households, even with magic at their disposal, and with the state of transportation, — most significantly the transportation of bulk goods and materials — at extremely primitive levels, we can conclude that wizards traditionally (i.e., prior to

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the passage of the International Act of Wizarding Secrecy) must necessarily have lived and interacted very closely with Muggles in order to survive in any degree of comfort.

And at such an early period, most acknowledged wizards, apart from their years in attendance at Hogwarts (or some other wizarding Academy on the Continent), would probably not have known who, or where other wizards in Britain (or whatever their country of origin) were even likely to be found — other than the handful or so others whom they might know of locally. Which, for many of them were limited to the members of their own family. Under such conditions, below a certain socioeconomic level intermarriage with the local mundane population would have been not merely common, but the norm.

Nor would they have had any idea of just how many other wizards might actually exist, given that their only experience of wizards in groups was limited to only those who had also been in attendance at their School during their own years there. The secluded exclusively wizarding districts and Ministry-sponsored conveniences of the present day would have had no real equivalents at such an early point in their history. These are all developments which were forced upon the wizarding world by the requirements of Seclusion itself. The wizarding community most likely did not already have them in place at its establishment. Nor, at that point in history, were all of those who today would be known as Muggle-born wizards ever identified and trained if they did not live in the same communities as practicing wizards. Fortunately, this propinquity was typically the case.

This leads me to suspect that in earlier periods, when the population, both wizarding and Muggle of these islands was far



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smaller, Hogwarts castle and its environs may have held a more prominent and central position for the governmental authority of wizarding Britain than it does today. At least during those portions of the year that those who were able to remove themselves from the generally unhealthy environs of London during the summer traditionally did so.

I will explore the ramifications suggested by this possibility in greater depth, in the following section.



### III. Points of Origin: Wizards in Britain from Prehistory through the Middle Ages

#### A. Early Wizarding Presence in Great Britain

If the traditional folklore of the British Isles is to be considered seriously as an indication of the history of the region that the Romans later identified as Hibernia, wizards had never been all that rare among the aboriginal peoples, or, for that matter, among the earliest groups of invaders who had settled the isles prior to the Romans' invasions. During the period before the Roman conquest, the support of wizards was actively sought by the Chieftains of the Pictish and Celtic tribes (in those cases where the Chieftains were not wizards themselves, which was — as one might suppose — far from unusual) and wizards frequently served as Priests for their communities.

There is a good deal of question as to whether the actual percentage of wizards among the general population was, in fact, significantly higher among the Picts, Celts, and other early Britons than has been the case since this period, but there is certainly enough circumstantial evidence recorded in the leg-

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ends from this era to raise such an argument. It should be noted that the current ratio of wizards (allowing for an overall population of 3,250 wizards. Rowling's estimate of 3,000 is a bit too low, given an annual Hogwarts intake of about 40) to approximately 65 million Muggles in Great Britain and Ireland today suggests that in a period that the population of these islands was around a million, a population of no more than about 50 witches and wizards would scarcely allow for any sort of communication between them. And when you factor in the number of magic workers which show up in the early folklore of the islands, the chances of there having been a higher percentage of wizards within the general population begins to look rather more likely than otherwise.

Wizards were rarer among the Roman conquerors. There was no official function reserved for wizards built into Roman society. But there were, nevertheless wizards among the Romans. In fact, by the time of the Roman Emperors, wizards were experiencing one of the periodic cycles of persecution to which they have at times been subject throughout pre-Seclusion history. The reason for this appears to be that, unlike the way in which such matters were viewed in a later, predominately Christian Europe, although the Emperors of Rome might readily employ various wizards for their own purposes, they had small tolerance for the existence of wizards who were not under their personal control. Indeed, their aim appears to have been to establish an Imperial monopoly regarding the practice of magic, and some of their drive for the conquest of outlying cultures was in the service of eliminating the threat represented by foreign wizards.

Yet wizards continued to be born, both within Roman holdings



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and abroad. It is suspected that by the later Roman era, many wizards from regions under Roman control, believing their gifts to be mark of some God's favor, had exercised their option and dedicated their lives to one or other of the religions which had always proliferated under Roman rule. But, nevertheless, despite the Emperors' official disapproval of independently-practicing wizards, the Romans had a major impact upon wizarding culture. Regardless of Roman society's general hostility toward magic, the greatest part of the everyday social fabric of wizarding society today is, upon examination, a closer extrapolation of the interdependent networks of "Patrons" and "clients" as practiced by the Romans in classical times than it is of any more recent social contract as practiced among Muggles in western Europe since the period that Rome ruled most of Europe, at a distance.

For a more detailed examination of one interpretation of the underlying social fabric of the Potterverse as a Patron/Client system, I would like to direct you to Pharnabazus's excellent 'Expecto Patronus: or How the Wizarding World Really Works'. I am not *altogether* certain that the *entire* series is still available online, but the URL to its opening still worked when I was building this iteration of the Red Hen Publications website.

<http://www.livejournal.com/users/pharnabazus/715.html>

I do not necessarily agree with all of the author's interpretations, but more than half of them look like they have a better handle of the probabilities than most of my own earlier notions did. It dates from the period between the release of OotP and HBP, and the basic tenants still hold up quite well.

In their initial dealings with the Roman invaders, the wizards of Britain may have at first felt that they argued from a

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position of at least some strength, for under the military technology of the day, it would have been difficult in the extreme to counter the British wizards' powers should they choose to mount a determined opposition. And that the Roman Emperors were known to have greatly limited the number of wizards at their own command is likely to have also been a factor. But not a deciding one. The Roman wizards' use of the cored wand rather than the traditional staff would have rapidly disabused the native wizards of their misapprehension that they were in a position of superiority. Nevertheless, the Roman conquest of Britain was a protracted business. And that the Romans did ultimately make, or force a lasting agreement upon the wizards of Britain, which was maintained for a considerable period of time, is reflected by the lingering Patron/Client social order among British wizards today.

After the withdrawal of the Roman legions from Britain, some centuries later, the wizards of Britain appear to have been in full support of the confederation of British Chieftains who governed the islands in the Romans' wake. Wizards seem to have been welcome among these Chieftains, much as wizards had been welcome in the tribal period before the Romans came, and it must have appeared that here was a chance to re-establish the "old order". But the centuries under Roman rule and the continuing migration of other peoples into the islands during the Roman period had thinned the concentration of magical traits within the local gene pool, and it is unlikely that there was as high a percentage of wizards in Great Britain as there had been before the Roman conquest, even though the overall population may not have been significantly higher.



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The most widely-known historical figure of this period is the wizard known to us as Merlinus Ambrosius whose support of the British Chieftain Athor is credited in extending the resistance of Britain against the Saxon invasions (which may well have been a cultural invasion, rather than a military one) for more than a generation. The wizard Merlin, in fact appears to have dedicated his life to the cause of protecting Britain from the English.

The Saxon leaders were a good deal less magic-tolerant than their native British predecessors, but they were certainly more so than the Romans had been. We can readily conclude that the Saxons ultimately also made the necessary treaties for dealing with the wizards of Britain.

Our most obvious cultural relic that such an arrangement indeed existed is shown in the name of the over-government of the wizarding world today. The Saxon Kings were selected from the available candidates, and advised in their policies by a body of (Muggle) nobles/Chieftains/Thanes who were collectively known as the Witenagemote. It requires far more effort than is forthcoming to try to convince oneself that the original Wizen-gamot was not formed to serve the equivalent purpose as advisors to the Saxon Kings serving the interests of British wizards.

Given that the population of the islands was still not much over a million, and, after successive waves of incomers, the Muggle gene pool had probably diluted much of its original concentration of magical traits, the fact that the Wizengamot is a body of some 50 witches and wizards leads one to suspect that it is possible that originally every witch and wizard in Great Britain at that period may have had a family representative who participated in it.



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Which raises the question as to whether a seat on the Wizen-gamot today denotes descent from (or adoption by, or marriage into the family of) one of the original holders. It is a tempting conclusion to draw, but I will not formally do so. Indeed, much of the representation in the Wizengamot today appears to be that of the current holders of key positions in the Ministry of Magic.

It was late in the period of Saxon (and Danish) rule that the formulation of the principles pertaining to, and the initial practice of "Light magic", i.e., modern wizardry, or perhaps more accurately, *domesticated* magic were developed and began to spread across Europe and the Middle East. Over the ensuing generations the benefits of the processes used in modern wizardry toward increasing the physical well-being, and possibly lengthening the effective lifespans of wizards would have begun to be noted. The corresponding lessening of the danger to one's perceptions, to say nothing of one's grip on reality, inherent in immersing oneself in the practice of conducting chaotic magics (i.e., the Dark Arts), and the corresponding lessening of prior restraints upon wizards' willingness to casually indulge in the channeling of Magical energies would have begun to be noted soon afterwards.

The Muggle perception of these developments would probably have been of a sense that there had been an increase in the number of wizards and witches around them. This would have been accompanied by a corresponding increase of opportunities for Muggle anxieties concerning the abilities and good-intentions of wizards or (in particular) witches resulting in the aforementioned local outbreaks of the persecution of magicals.

Factoring in the fairly recent, but steady spread of the Muggle belief that magic could not be accomplished without





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demonic aid, which seems to have become a popular belief among Muggles of this era. It is likely that a tendency among wizards to withdraw, as far as they were able, from Muggle communities may have been the result. Which would have only increased the Muggle perception that wizards were up to some dire doings which were not in the community's best interests.

At this period, such a withdrawal could not have been particularly great. Wizards numbers were far too low for them to be altogether self-sufficient and they could not have lived in an acceptable level of comfort without at least some interaction with Muggles.

A far more sweeping upsetting of everyone in Britain's apple cart would have come with the Norman conquest. Which to modern perception seems to have been unnecessarily brutal. The Normans divided their prize up among themselves and set about to rule it with an iron fist, complete with subjecting the Saxon people to curfews, serfdom — i.e., effective enslavement, and a systematic oppression intended to subdue any attempt at rebellion, all of which prevailed for at least a generation. Nor was the Norman rule particularly stable in itself, leading to its first civil war, between the "Empress" Matilda and her cousin Steven, within the first hundred years after the conquest, and which lasted off and on from 1135 to 1154, and which only ceased with the establishment of the Plantagenet dynasty.

...Which, in turn, without restraints upon the power of the Kings ultimately conducted itself so egregiously badly that the Barons themselves forced the Magna Carta upon King John in 1215, before the Plantagenets had even held the throne for two full generations.

From the standpoint of wizards, whose lifespans had lengthened to the point that they passed their century mark as often as

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not, this political instability may have been regarded as a growing cause for concern. Those families who were ultimately to adopt the stance of the wizarding isolationist faction, would have begun active withdrawal from participation in Muggle society at some point around, or not much following this period. Although, once again, the degree of actual withdrawal would have been slight.

Our most current, close-up, and purest example of this faction in canon; the Noble House of Black, appears, from our vantage point in the late 20th century to have been one of the families to have done this. The Black family's presumed disdain for the Muggle government, and indeed for Muggles themselves, is credited with having prompted them to actively seek to marry only from within the magical community beginning at some point in the 13th century. It is generally assumed that they would have also gone on to withdraw from meddling in Muggle affairs as well.

This last assumption may be at least partially in error, however. That the family's genealogical tapestry includes a family motto in French suggests that the Blacks must have adopted at the very least some degree of protective coloration by mimicking the speech, style, and behavior of prominent Normans, suggesting that their withdrawal from their Muggle neighbors was far from complete and certainly included no attempts to be perceived as "different" from whatever constituted the current "ruling class."

It is also entirely possible that the tapestry itself was, in fact, only created anything up to a century and a half later than the earliest dates recorded on it and that at the point of the tapestry's creation the family history was filled in as a retrofit taken from other sources, even if only from living memory or otherwise unconfirmed family tradition. This possibility would



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place the commissioning of the tapestry by the members of the House of Black as occurring very much in concert with the widely-noted preoccupation over hereditary status, pedigree and “nobility” which was also obsessing upper-class Muggles by the middle of the 14th century.



### B. Considering Hogwarts Castle

However, apart from a few early isolationist exceptions, throughout the pre-Seclusion period, the greater part of wizarding society remained completely in step with mundane (Muggle) society, if only for no better reason than that it still quite actively constituted a part of it.

Even the date of the establishment of the great Wizarding Academies is in keeping with the social dynamics at work in the mundane world. I am indebted to the Fan writer (pen name; Barb) who flagged the following quote as a chapter heading in one of her works;

*The medieval castle originated in the ninth century in the Frankish Empire (what is now modern France, western Germany, and northern Italy) as nobles began building fortifications in response to increasing insecurity in the region... The Carolingians (Charlemagne's dynasty) divided their lands among royal heirs, and this custom led to a multiplicity of kings and to civil wars. The new institution of feudalism (which usually involved cavalry service in return for land — the fief — and political rights) resulted in an increase in lordships held under the kings... Political instability and invasion by outside forces resulted in a breakdown in law and order and a sharp decline in*



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*the effectiveness of central government. Consequently, power fell into the hands of whatever lords or strongmen were able to protect local populations effectively. But the strongmen also had to protect themselves, and the result was the building of defensive structures that over time evolved into castles.*

—Robin S. Oggins, Castles and Fortresses

It is easy to suppose that such widespread instability in local government and the progressive rise in the willingness of such strongmen to war with each other may have had considerable influence upon the four founders of Hogwarts' decision to establish a school where wizarding children could be collected into a secure location for their training, even while Britain was still under Saxon rule. The increasing instability after the Norman conquest might also have heavily contributed to Salazar Slytherin's subsequent and growing concern over the possible breach of security represented by the inclusion of children from backgrounds that considered such dysfunctional social dynamics normal. To say nothing of the fact that the Muggles' problematic growing association of magic with demon handling was continuing to spread. This association all four of the founders must have regarded with extreme disquiet.

And if the possible effects of the influences upon the young examined in the article entitled 'The Pachyderm in the Parlor' had ever been noted at that early a period, Salazar may have felt he had ample reason to be concerned over the advisability of admitting into the wizarding safe zones such as Hogwarts, magical children who had been raised out among Muggles without the advantages of the guidance and protection of trained, adult wizards.





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(I am informed, 2nd hand, that according to a post on Pottermore that the origin of Dementors took place at some point in the 1300s under the direction of a Dark wizard known as Ekrizdis, or something of the sort. I am not inclined to regard Pottermore as canon. But I will not raise any arguments about the claim or the date.)

Another issue which must also be brought up at this point is that the Hogwarts castle of the original Founders is unlikely to have been the same physical entity as the Hogwarts castle of the modern day.

A castle as large and as complex as modern Hogwarts is the product of centuries' worth of development. Castles are growing and "living" entities. Particularly ones which remain in continual use. This is almost certainly even more true in the case of castles which are maintained and occupied by wizards than ones owned and occupied by Muggles. The Founders' Hogwarts, by the end of the 20th century, is bound to be surrounded and probably encased in a collection of additions and reconstructions dictated by the changing needs of a growing population over thousand years of uninterrupted habitation.

Another consideration that we must also take into account is that the current Muggle population of Great Britain is at one of its highest points in history today. With this in mind, it seems likely that the magical population of Great Britain and Ireland may be at an historical peak as well.

Considering this probability, it seems highly unlikely that the population of 270–300 or so students currently served by Hogwarts (extrapolated from Rowling's establishment of an incoming class of 40 students in Harry Potter's year, and

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her recently stated total population estimate of 3,000. Her claim that the school serves some 600 students is completely untenable with a base population that small) has been the case throughout the school's history. It is much more likely that, given the isolation of magical communities and the slowness of communication, as well as the absence of anything like the Hogwarts quill which records all magical births, the original school probably served no more than a few dozen students, if that. Indeed, the entire magical population of Great Britain probably did not number more than a couple of hundred.

(Yes, yes, I know. As I pointed out at the outset of this piece, Rowling's Potterverse takes place in a district adjacent to Storybook Land, and in her mind its wizarding population has probably *always* numbered around 3,000. I am trying to extrapolate a plausible history which isn't completely out to lunch, and takes account of the fact that the population of the British Isles has not always numbered around 65 million.)

Which raises the question of why the Founders chose to house their new school in a castle, when a cluster of cottages in a similarly out-of-the-way location would probably have served the purpose admirably. And what *other* purposes might a fortified castle in a secure, hidden location have served for the wizarding Britain of that particular era? Eh?

Despite the assumptions that the reader has been led to make, there is as yet no certain indication in canon that Hogwarts Castle has traditionally served *only* as a school. In fact, its original purposes may have been far more varied, and that it is only with the fairly rapid increase of the wizarding population of Great Britain and Ireland over the 19th and 20th



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centuries (mirroring the Muggle population explosion over that era) that many of the different former functions served by the castle have gradually been spun off into other locations leaving the School in sole possession of the premises.

The fact that the administration of the School is overseen, not only by its own Board of Governors but at least to some degree by the Ministry of Magic suggests that there may be a closer historic connection between Hogwarts School and wizarding Britain's government than may at first appear to be the case.

It should also be remembered that the practice of magic *itself* was at a less fully "formed" level 1000 years ago. And if my interpretation regarding the development of modern wizardry is relevant to the history of this world, then this development was both a comparatively *recent* event and was still an ongoing process at the time of the school's founding. Much of the known magical lore of the time would *also* have still been in a process of transition to newer, safer methods of storage at that point. Namely, transcription from scrolls, to codexes, to bound manuscripts and grimoires. The castle would have probably housed a scriptorium engaged in this project. A scriptorium which was run and maintained by trained adult wizards. Not by Hogwarts students. Although older students may well have put in some time there.

The Castle may well have been designed to be a secure repository of the collected lore of all wizarding Britain, and to have been used as a research facility by the whole magical population of the islands, and by other researchers throughout the wizarding world. The Restricted Section of the Hogwarts library may have *never* originally been intended just for the use of the current students.



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In addition, at the time of the school's founding, a large part of British wizardry's collective efforts were probably still fully engaged in attempting to devise the correct wand movements and the optimum incantations to enable their existing spells to function according to these new methods of channeling, or to recreate the function of an extensive body of traditional "Dark" spells which did *not* respond satisfactorily to the safer channeling methods used in modern wizardry.

The Founders may very well have prized, and defended their custody of these volumes and encouraged the use of the collection as a research facility from the time of the school's first opening, and offered the use of the library as an inducement in return for instruction of the students of Hogwarts School.

This practice may have generated revenue to support the school, and it would have also ensured that the students would be exposed to some of the finest theoretical minds of their era. Unfortunately, this policy might also have provided an open door for the discord created by those "external deadly foes" cited by the Sorting Hat, which ultimately overran the School, to the point of threatening its very existence.

As a center of learning, Hogwarts might also have served as an active center of other research. Most particularly, medical research.

The mid-18th century appointment of Dilys Derwent, a Healer at St Mungo's Hospital, to the office of Headmistress of Hogwarts seems far less odd and arbitrary if one remembers that as the only hospital in Wizarding Britain, St Mungo's is, of necessity, a *teaching* hospital. And it becomes even less remarkable if one postulates that St Mungo's Hospital and Hogwarts School may at that point in time have both been





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housed in Hogwarts Castle.

Working from the information on Mungo Bonham's listing as a former Wizard of the Month on the official JKR website, St. Mungo's Hospital for Magical Maladies and injuries was founded somewhere around the turn of the 17th century. At this period, the population of Great Britain was perhaps a tenth of what it is now. If the magical population is a stable percentage of the total population there would have been scarcely 300–400 witches and wizards in all Great Britain and Ireland. They would have all fit into the present-day castle, at need. Which, to me also suggests that the castle of that day was not yet the edifice that it is today. Some of the current structure had yet to be built.

As a side note; our own world also recognizes a St Mungo, who is closely associated with the City of Edinburgh, in Scotland. We are also openly told in canon that St Mungo's Hospital was not originally based in London.

For that matter, given the tendencies of Muggles to abruptly take up their cudgels against any known witches or wizards among them, Hogwarts, if one could get to it, may have grown to serve as emergency housing and sanctuary for wizards on the run from all over Britain — increasing the desirability of establishing a hospital there. Particularly around the turn of the 17th century when the social fallout from the Reformation was beginning to take its toll.

From the description of St Mungo's current premises (an apparently derelict London Department Store) it seems unlikely that St Mungo's was relocated to its current location at any time earlier than some point in the 19th century, the era during which most of modern-day London was built. This

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hypothesis is supported, if not absolutely confirmed by Mad-Eye Moody's account regarding the difficulties met in finding a suitable site for the hospital when Harry asked him where St Mungo's was located. i.e., That there was no site large enough in Diagon Alley, and the hospital could not be located underground in the manner of the Ministry of Magic since an underground site was deemed not to be sufficiently healthy. Such information is all likely to be a matter of comparatively recent public record. Within the last couple of centuries, in fact.

It is also very likely that until comparatively recently the Wizengamot itself sat at Hogwarts, at least during the summer months; Scotland being far more salubrious in the summer than London. That the current offices of the Ministry of Magic are described as being "in the heart of London" suggests that those offices may have been located there for a considerable amount of time. But, despite the ease and rapidity of the magical healing of epidemic diseases, it would no doubt have been regarded as preferable to simply leave town during the season that one would be most likely to be exposed to them. I doubt that cholera or typhoid are a casual matter even for wizards.

We have been more-or-less informed that the modern Ministry of Magic, in its current form, was created by the Wizengamot to serve as the administrative body of the combined wizarding government of all magical peoples of Britain, superseding the older Wizards' Council, after the establishment of formal wizarding Seclusion. Which would place it at some date around the turn of the 18th century. The Ministry's current offices' however, seem to date from much earlier.

Or, at any rate, the premises of the Department of Mysteries do.



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Indeed, Rowling states in the joint interview mentioned in the opening to this article that the Hall of the Veil in the Department of Mysteries is centuries old, but not as old as Hogwarts Castle. It is not outside the range of plausibility to propose that the Ministry, or at least the Department of Mysteries, set up its permanent quarters in London not long after the initial crisis at Hogwarts had blown up in their faces.

In fact Salazar Slytherin may have had something to do with that, too.

And so might the Peverill brothers. Who Albus Dumbledore at least appears to believe were notable magical artificers. What would you care to bet against the possibility that the keystone of that archway of the Veil is carved with the symbol of the Deathly Hallows? (We are invited to believe that the 2nd Peverill brother's line of descent joined in marriage with the Slytherin line at some point, after all.) But this line of reasoning could all merely be an importunate plot bunny determined to get underfoot.

For the moment I would merely like to suggest that when the old Wizards' Council was superseded by the newly-formed Ministry of Magic, it was decided that it might be best to enlarge the Department of Mysteries facility to house this new governing body. These offices' extent, and methods of concealment are probably far more sophisticated today than they were originally, and these premises would probably have undergone successive periods of modification and expansion as bureaucracy itself expanded to fill the available resources.

A more recent, and extensive degree of modification and expansion would also have been required at Hogwarts once the aggressive seeking out and recruitment of Muggle-born magi-

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cal children was adopted as Ministry policy, entailing a correspondingly rapid expansion of governmental responsibility and services in order to address the wider duties presented by the need to deal with the Muggle families of these new future constituents, and the now rapidly expanding wizarding population itself. Much of this newly recruited wizarding manpower was later absorbed into the Ministry of Magic once their Hogwarts training was complete with a corresponding increase in the variety of social services which were now available to all wizards.

It is probable that both the evident resistance to the Ministry's inclusionary policy on the part of the isolationist faction today, and the development and adoption of those policies in the first place, reflect the penetration of Muggle-born and half-blood wizards and witches into the Ministry itself, although from our limited observation, pureblood wizards still head Ministry departments at what appears to be a much higher than random occurrence. And, of course, we have no way of knowing whether the DoM is in fact a largely self-determining entity with policies perhaps at variance with those of the Ministry itself.

We also do not know for certain where the Wizengamot or the Wizards' Council which preceded the formation of the Ministry of Magic had their primary seats. It is generally assumed that these had also been based in London. However, this has not ever been conclusively stated in canon, to the best of my recollection. So this could be an inaccurate impression.

Prior to the Wizard's Council's move to London — which, if an actual move ever took place was likely to have been fairly early, possibly about the time the Normans built the White Tower in London in the 11th century — the Wizengamot and



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the Wizards' Council may have also, for at least a brief period shared quarters in Hogwarts castle.

And, at the very least, a castle would have served as an emergency refuge for the villagers of nearby Hogsmeade. Whether it was ever required to serve in that capacity or not. We have no information on that possibility.

I also think that the castle must certainly have served as a refuge for wizards and wizarding families during the "burning times" (never mind the fact that in England, witches were never burned), and probably also as shelter and temporary housing during the period that formal wizarding Seclusion was being established. Not all, or even most, wizarding households had the resources to conceal themselves in place. For a family to be temporarily housed at the school, where the younger members were already enrolled might well have smoothed over what would have otherwise been a very rough transition period until another residence (and employment, in the case of rural farming families) could be arranged in one of the partially-wizarding districts or villages around Britain. The castle may well have also served as the main vocational training and relocation center for the entire wizarding population for anything up to several decades.



### C. "Landed" Wizards in History

In the 9th and 10th centuries, after the development of modern wizardry, wizards were practicing magic more often and (in too many cases) more openly than in the days that active magical practice had presented an inherent cumulative risk to their psychic health. Consequently, it was becoming ever more



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likely not only that a wizard would be identified as such by his Muggle neighbors, but that he would make at least a part of his living based upon that identification. Since the average Muggle's original perception of wizards as priests and spiritual leaders had long ago been overwritten by his experience of wizards as dangerous and not infrequently evil monsters in human form, and was being steadily redefined as persons who trafficked with demons, this placed the magical community at perpetual risk of being targeted by hysterical mobs. The cycle of recurring periods of the persecution of wizards had become firmly established by this era. The oppressive rule of the Norman conquerors would have only added to the overall anxieties of the day.

It is not difficult to speculate that in the days of Salazar Slytherin, the perceived security risk to the school represented by children whose background contained no known wizarding connections might have seemed a reasonable concern. Indeed, it might have been a reasonable concern to more than just those shaken survivors who were ultimately to regroup into the pureblood isolationist faction of wizarding society. Whenever we have heard anything from anyone in canon who is in a position to have actually researched the matter regarding Slytherin's widely remembered opposition to the enrollment of Muggle-born students, it has repeatedly been described to the reader as having stemmed from distrust rather than disdain.

The accompanying legends which claim that Slytherin left a monster behind intended to purge the school of the unworthy has the unmistakable ring of a later-day overlay by people with a very different axe to grind from Salazar's. By all generally reliable accounts, although he certainly favored purebloods,





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Slytherin did not despise Muggle-borns as much as he feared them. And he is never accredited with anything that would translate as a belief that wizards ought to be ruling Muggles.

However, the potential danger to society as a whole (both magical and mundane) represented by allowing children without wizarding connections to self-train themselves into chaos and madness, and thereby to almost certainly perpetuate the common mundane perception that all wizards are Evil Dark wizards, would have ultimately outweighed any considerations of the possibility that one of the Muggle-born children's tales at home might prompt his overlord to attempt to sack the school. Lacking a copy of 'HOGWARTS, A HISTORY', we have been given no information as yet as to whether anyone's presumed concerns regarding the school being subjected to a possible attack by Muggles were ever justified. But there is a strong likelihood. The region now known as Scotland does not have a placid history.

In any event; it appears to have been about the time of the afore-mentioned trend towards widespread political instability in mundane society, and the establishment of fortified castles in response to it, that the wizarding community is noted to have first begun attempting to withdraw itself from full interaction with its mundane neighbors and counterparts.

Such a withdrawal, however, would only have been possible at very odd points of the socio-economic scale. In a world where all are either Earls or churls, only the Earls are presumed to get the luxury of such choices. And upon examination, even the Earls' choices are surprisingly limited.

Even the (presumably very few) wizarding aristocrats of the day, given their involvement in Muggle politics, would have

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been just as likely to marry the son or daughter of a prominent Muggle for the sake of an obvious worldly advantage in wealth or influence as they would have been to attempt to gain some theoretical magical advantage for their descendants by marrying within a far too small circle of known magical families at their own social level.

Which leads us to one of our more interesting paradoxes as it regards wizarding aristocrats. We have been directly shown that throughout history some wizards *have* held Muggle titles. Two of the Hogwarts House ghosts were titled gentlemen of this sort in life. There was for a time also some suggestion that Ravenclaw House's Grey Lady is another such titled personage. Post-DHs we can see that this has turned out not necessarily to be the case.

Titles, even such lesser titles (today) as those of Knight and Baron generally come only by courtesy of a Royal grant. Nearly Headless Nick is a Knight. Baronets, who also go by the honorific of "Sir" were a creation of the Stuarts who did not take the throne until after Sir Nicholas's death. Barons, on the other hand were introduced to England by William the Conqueror, and consequently, have been around since the late 11th century. (The fact that the Bloody Baron is a *Baron* is of some assistance in placing the founding of Hogwarts around the time of the Norman conquest — or any reasonable time afterwards.) There has never been an openly reigning "wizard King" or "witch Queen" in Great Britain or Ireland to grant specifically wizarding titles. On the other hand, it is very easy to speculate how a wizard or witch might readily manage to perform a service to a reigning Monarch upon such a level that a title might well be forthcoming. For that matter there have also been peri-



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odic whispers concerning supposed magical abilities ascribed to various members of the royal family. But, in any case, it stands to reason that any wizard who would perform such a service would have to be of a sort who did not mind mingling with Muggles, regardless of how their descendants might view such an association some centuries later.

What is more, such a wizard might very well choose to *continue* to take an active part in mundane politics, and at the very least would tend to develop a far less parochial view regarding the rightful place of a wizard in relation to mundane society. Such a titled wizard would also be more likely to be a considerable landholder and to have authority over a large district of tenants, both magical and Muggle. These literal wizarding aristocrats would, therefore, be likely to have been the very *last* people in the magical community who would have fallen in with the sentiments and philosophies of the wizarding-isolationist factions, who, in turn, would have necessarily regarded the aristos as blood-traitors and halfbloods.

On the other hand, these wizarding aristocrats would also be the ones who were best placed to be able to attempt to improve the level of security for other magicals, whenever such was possible. A fact that would not have been lost upon the generality of wizards. Nevertheless, although such wizarding aristocrats are shown in canon to have once existed, the probability is that they were always extremely rare. Most of today's wealthy wizarding families are more likely to have originally made fortunes through some more commercial capacity than that of landlord. For prominent isolationist families, the ownership of land is likely to have come much later, once land



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ownership in general had become more commonly a matter of purchase rather than by royal grant.

Perhaps we ought also to take note of the fact that (fanon's insistence on bestowing titles on Potterverse characters notwithstanding) no such titled wizarding personages appear to be alive in the present day. All such representatives of this particular social stratum to whom we have been introduced appear to be ghosts.

Which seriously raises the question of just what impression parading around in public and calling himself "*Lord* Voldemort" would have made upon wizards who one would certainly expect to know very well that there is apparently no extant *legitimate* wizarding "nobility" left.

Don't you expect that 'NATURE'S NOBILITY' would certainly include any references to any *other* sort as well, if there *were* any? Are we just supposed to conclude that all wizards are fundamentally stupid? Rowling really ought to have included at least *one* living titled wizard if she wanted us to believe that anyone ever could have reasonably been hoodwinked by someone going around calling himself *Lord* Voldemort.

Of course, one of the major drawbacks for a wizard who was active in mundane society and politics was that he was required to arrange his life in certain areas in a manner that was consistent with that of his mundane counterparts. In particular, at certain periods he was effectively required to take part in the practice of fostering his children into the keeping of his neighbors as a gesture of good-will and as a guarantee of non-aggression. Essentially, a nobleman's sons were sent as hostages to be educated and trained in each others' households. This meant that an aristocrat's sons could not generally





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be sent to Hogwarts at the proper time. It is possible that in such cases (and it stands to reason that there are not likely to have been very *many* such cases, due to the extreme rarity of titled wizards) Hogwarts was able to provide some assistance in the form of trained wizards who could be employed and sent into the neighboring household as tutors, or witches who could be placed in the noble's own household to oversee the magical training of daughters.



### D. Plebeian wizards

An inescapable fact is that at this point in history, the larger number of undocumented and presumably Muggle-born wizards and witches had probably always fallen through the cracks simply because they were too poor and too obscure to attract notice. Except, that is, in the case of the sort of explosive encounter with Wild Magic that would be interpreted as either the hand of a vengeful God or as one of God's miracles according to the degree of benefit to the local community which was brought about as a result. Trained wizards and witches were simply too thin on the ground to have been able to spot every one of the unanticipated magical children who were born to Muggle families, particularly if such children amounted to no more than 1–2 in an average year. Or even less.

Unless, that is, "Muggle-born" magical children tended to only occur in the areas where there were already known to be active wizards in residence. Given that at least some percentage of these children were more likely to be undocumented, or unacknowledged, halfbloods this is probably not an unreason-



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able expectation.

Which is not to say that all such unanticipated children went completely without notice. Trained wizards and witches were thin on the ground, yes. But most human settlements were within reach of a priest. Over these centuries, no few magical youngsters must have been brought to the attention of local priests after a typical incident of immature breakthrough magic.

How such incidents were interpreted were at the mercy of the local priest's general outlook regarding supernatural phenomena. Some such children were no doubt believed to have been possessed by demons. Others were hailed as infant saints and essentially taken to the bosom of the church. At this point we should probably be reminded that the fourth of the Hogwarts House ghosts was in life a Friar. I suspect that no few of such children across Europe, given the advantages of a cloistered upbringing devoted their lives to the welfare of their Order, and their local communities and may have been ultimately canonized.

Unlike those magical children who managed to escape notice, few of these wizarding clerics left descendants. And, in England, few of them may have received a Hogwarts education. (The fat Friar's vocation may have overtaken him later in life.) The contemplative life of the cloister may have helped to shield these children from the kind of stresses which provoke the most deadly of magical breakthroughs, leading to a simple, generally quiet, and lengthy life, plagued with few incidents. Such cloistered individuals having the best opportunity to have learned the discipline necessary to suppress or dissipate the pressures of the magic which they channeled, harmlessly.

And it must not be forgotten that some of them may have acquired





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a form of magical training from wizarding scholars within the church.



The circumstances and opportunities of the age, let alone the sort of character needed to exploit such circumstances and opportunities to the extent of founding a wizarding Great House, are not evenly distributed. If one in 50 individuals possessing such qualities managed to found such a house which did not disappear within 4 generations, it would be an extremely generous estimate. 'NATURE'S NOBILITY' records the lost names of many of these failed houses. And we must also consider that there is a slight chance that the duration of these generations were shorter than those observed in modern wizards. Wizards appear to be inherently somewhat longer-lived than Muggles, it is true. But even in modern times, extremely long-lived wizards are vanishingly rare. And medi-magic was not so advanced at that point as it is in the present day, either.

Throughout the pre-Seclusion era, as in modern times, the majority of wizards were of plebeian social standing. In a predominantly agrarian society this generally translates into a rural lifestyle engaged in farming. Plebeian wizards in rural areas of an agrarian society were very nearly as isolated as their Muggle neighbors, with whom they most commonly interacted, and with whom they most commonly intermarried. The exception to this would be if a youngster had formed an attachment while attending Hogwarts (those who were identified and sent to Hogwarts, that is; quite possibly not all were) which was acceptable to both families, in which case they would typically marry upon leaving school.

The rare wizarding aristocrats of this period, would have

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had better communication lines, given that they had more resources with which to establish such. After the development of Floo powder, in the 13th century, this group may even have typically maintained their own private Floo stations for the transportation of goods and personnel. But, given that then, as now, most magicals were of plebeian background, it would have been most typical for the majority of wizards to have lived, interacted and intermarried with their own neighbors and the highest percentage, if not virtually all magicals below a certain social level would have been, quite literally, halfbloods, most of them coming from mixed families, including siblings who might be either magical or mundane. In such times and under such conditions there would have been no such classification as Squib. This concept is most likely to have been one of the social developments to have come out of the Seclusion itself, later.

It should also be remembered that in mundane history, women were not typically educated along with men until well into the nineteenth century. There are a few isolated exceptions, but in terms of established mundane schools, the first founded colleges and universities were male only, and stayed that way for centuries. Given that the spells upon the Sorting Hat cause it to sort children into all four Houses regardless of sex, it is reasonable to assume that Hogwarts was established as a coeducational institution from the beginning, and has functioned as such since its inception. Given that spells are placed upon the stairs of the current dormitory towers designed to bar young wizards from entering the female quarters of their own Houses, it is difficult to project any other interpretation.

One might speculate, however, that this may be a somewhat



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more recent addition. What is even more probable is that the current dormitories themselves are a comparatively recent addition to the castle, added within the last 4–5 hundred years, and are not a part of the castle's original structure.

We can also be almost certain that the current model of Hogwarts's 3-term school year with its dates of attendance following, in general, the same dates as the school terms of prominent mundane boarding schools is another a comparatively recent policy. It is entirely possible that prior to Seclusion, and, for that matter, during the first century or so of it, Hogwarts students lived at the school year round until their training was complete. Plebeian families would most probably have explained the absence of their children from home over a seven year period as some form of Apprenticeship.

And not at all inappropriately, either. The Hogwarts curriculum makes it very clear that the School functions much closer in form to a Trade school than to a purely academic institution.

It is also not beyond the bounds of probability for Hogwarts to have historically taken a reasonably active role in the arrangement of wizarding marriages, with the approval of the students' families. In fact, once the isolationist factions began to gain in numbers and influence, and various wizarding families began to actively retreat from mundane society, the school would have been the most likely source of information of just who the available magical children of marriageable age currently were.

Another consideration related to this was probably a wish to determine the degree of family connection between youngsters in order to avoid too close a relationship between marital partners. Such records seem still to be found in the Hogwarts

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Library. Tom Riddle eventually traced his maternal grandfather through a research of the books on wizarding families in the Hogwarts collection. Those books are there for a reason.

Any such matches that were ultimately made might not necessarily have been between current students, either. Particularly if, as I contend, the castle served the magical community as more than just the location of the school.

Although, given that it was customary for the children of wealthy Muggles to be betrothed or even married in their cradles in order to consolidate the interests of their families, we cannot overlook that possibility, either. But it stands to reason that many youngsters would have siblings, cousins, etc, and it also stands to reason that the contacts made at Hogwarts might be extremely important for the children of a magical family which was determined upon finding eligibly *magical* persons for their children to marry. Such a function is likely to have been initiated fairly soon after the establishment of the school itself. It would certainly have been the case by the 13th–14th century when such families as the Blacks began keeping written records of their pedigrees.

Still, any function the school might have served as a possible marriage brokerage was secondary to that of assuring that children would not fall into harm through the practice of the old, chaotic magical casting peculiar to the Dark Arts. Nevertheless, as time passed, and with the growth of the pureblood isolationist factions, the desirability for magicals to marry only other magicals would certainly have grown as well.





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### IV. Kick-Starting Cyclic History: The Renaissance

It would only have been in the three or four centuries that preceded the drive for Seclusion that the concept of having a “pure wizarding” bloodline would have become an issue very much on anyone’s mind outside of the pureblood isolationist faction. We are talking about the Renaissance here. And the Renaissance was an era where, at least in mundane history, establishing and maintaining status was suddenly apparently in the forefront of a great many people’s minds.

In an atmosphere where the rule of the isolated Power centers of the Middle Ages’ strongmen was gradually being shifted out of the hands of local Barons and being consolidated back into the hands of central Monarchies, the possession of monetary wealth had begun to draw even with land ownership as a measure both of one’s personal worth and of one’s family’s importance.

This atmosphere offered vastly increased opportunities for advancement by clever persons whose family background had not lent itself to such advancement in the days when the Barons had ruled everything. Among Muggles this situation initiated an ongoing class struggle between the established landed aristocracy and the moneyed *parvenu* which has continued in some form ever since. Wizards, who, in general, still participated in the wider society under mundane governments to at least some degree, could hardly have remained immune. A related factor which has also remained with us to the present day was the emergence of cyclic history.

The authors Strauss & Howe have identified their earliest observations of the dynamics of cyclic history being enacted in European Society in the mid-15th century. Specifically during the

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period beginning, in Great Britain, with the Wars of the Roses.

According to Strauss & Howe’s theories of how cyclic history operates, these dynamics have driven the rhythms of Real World history to the present day, with no signs of slowing down or stopping. These rhythms follow the progression of individual cycles, or saecula each covering one full rotation of a 4-stroke succession of influences and social perceptions which serve to propel Society from one era to the next. During each such “cycle” Society will enact the same repetition of social models in the same order, but with all details recast, reinterpreted, and given a separate and new opportunity for resolution.

Each complete 4-stroke cycle typically begins in a perceived era of peace and plenty, (the initiating partial cycle noted by Strauss & Howe in the 15th century settled into the patterns of cyclic history, it did not begin from one, but merged into the dynamic on a later “stroke”) this era is followed by a period of great spiritual awaking and corresponding social upheaval. Which in turn is followed by a nasty, cynical era typified by a steadily unraveling social order, which is accompanied by sweeping and disconcerting technological advances. Ultimately, a combination of some of the social conflicts already in play will trigger what is perceived to be a great civic crisis which must be resolved before Society as a whole moves on into the next new cycle. These cycles typically cover a period of time loosely that of a long human lifespan, or 80 to 100 years. It is interesting to note that these cycles only settled into to a steady, roughly 80-year pattern at the end of the 17th century. The point at which, in the Potterverse, longer-lived wizards would have finally stopped interacting with Muggle society in any mean-



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ingful manner. In our own world, Strauss & Howe attribute this to an increase in the speed of communications; in the Pot-terverse, this might be explained more simply by the disappearance of the longer-lived wizards from the equation.

As the rhythms of cyclic history took hold, wizards, whose lifespans, since the adoption of the methods of modern wizardry had already lengthened to some 30–60% longer than that of their mundane contemporaries, might have individually found themselves, as they aged, progressively more out-of-step with their times. That all children, whether wizard or Muggle, raised during each of the four “Turnings” of the cycle are inevitably imprinted with a different generational character — due to shifting and recurring social attitudes regarding the proper way to treat children, and what a child’s place in society should be — would have served to further disorient and alienate the wizard from his neighbors, as he continued to interpret his surroundings from the standpoint of his own ingrained generational type, and Society around him marched to progressively different drummers. Even in old age, when the cycle began to repeat itself, the march of change would have brought little comfort, as he lived to see a return of the social attitudes of his own childhood and youth recast with an different emphasis, and reenacted by strangers while the mundane companions of his own youth were long dead and he had to experience that Turning’s conditions from a very different point in his personal life-cycle. Quite possibly, the intervening changes to society and general knowledge would have concealed the fact that this “new order” even was a repeat of a social dynamic that he had seen before. It would have been rendered unrecognizable.



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Prior to DHs, it would have been interesting to speculate whether wizards had actually managed to escape the pressures and influences of cyclic history. However, the addition to the equation of a collection of semi-wizarding villages in which half or more of the wizarding population appear to live would tend to disallow this possibility.

Still, it would have been interesting to note the inevitable conflict represented by Muggle-born wizards — who would have developed the requisite generational “character” of their Muggle contemporaries — entry into a wizarding culture at Hogwarts which was not subject to such influences.

Unfortunately for such speculations, it appears that some of the dynamics of cyclic history are very imperfectly reflected by much of the wizarding social dynamics we have been shown. I suspect that in far too many cases this was just due to Rowling trying to be funny.

Among Muggles, during the first stirrings of what was later to be dubbed the Renaissance — around the 14th century — the landed aristocrats started deliberately coining fresh new symbols of all the advantages they could legitimately claim (family coats of arms, etc.) in order to publicly demonstrate their superiority to mere moneyed mongrels. In the case of wizarding aristocrats, such families already had a far more inaccessible quality with which to distinguish themselves from their mundane rivals. They had Magic. They now suddenly also had magical rivals as well; as the Renaissance offered ever more unprecedented opportunities for wizards in commercial ventures to make their fortunes. And Magic would have favored the odds.

The mundane aristocracy initiated an enduring competition





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to develop visible ways of promoting their alleged superiority, first in displays of conspicuous leisure, and to use this additional leisure time at their disposal to toady up to the Crown in hopes of yet further advancement. Secondly, they used this leisure time to advance the enrichment and complexity of their social stratum to the point that the merchant's incessant money-grubbing would no longer allow him the time required for active participation. Wizarding aristocrats put their leisure time to the refinement of their Magic and everything to do with it.

It was probably only at this point that titled wizards and the heads of "old families" started seriously tracing back how many generations, and to what degree their families had been magical, and began to deliberately arrange marriages for the purposes of establishing bloodlines free from Muggle throwbacks, or even for attempting to control and predict what their descendants' particular magical strengths might be. It is clear from various documented sources, such as the House of Black's genealogical tapestry, that in this matter some of their nouveau-riche rivals from the ranks of the merchant princes were already ahead of them.

A significant number of these new wizarding fortunes were being built by families whose backgrounds were from the steadily-growing, pureblood-obsessed isolationist factions. The advantages of the landed wizarding aristos were therefore under assault both on the level of cash-on-hand wealth and in the extent of their families' magical heritage. As it became more easy to acquire landed estates by mere purchase, the aristocrats' only unassailable advantage was dwindling into that of political clout in mundane governments. Which, given the general unreliability of political situations to remain constant,

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could not have been an enviable position in which to have found themselves.

Be that as it may; the end result was that, finally, it was more than just the isolationists who were engaged in selective breeding for magical purity. Such an attempt was no longer only the result of a sense of mission on the part of a handful of fanatics but a question of enhancing one's family's status in the eyes of the leaders of wizarding society as well. The isolationists had now permanently set their mark upon wizarding culture. This shift in the paradigm was to have sweeping effects upon the whole of this particular society, cumulating in the establishment of formal wizarding Seclusion some 300 years later.

Plebeian wizards, who (apart from Hogwarts sweethearts) still typically intermarried with the local Muggles due to having fewer local magicals of their own social level in range to choose partners from, were far slower to even consider attempting to do anything on this order. Their magical traits were still being generously shared around with the rest of the local community. The primary exception was among the retainers of the magical Great Houses who would have copied the social patterns of their patrons insofar as they were able.

Once there were enough of these wizarding Great Houses to constitute a viable community in themselves, and, more to the point, once these Great Houses had started up their own eugenics programs, another social factor also started making an impact on the perpetuation of magical traits in the mundane population. Or, rather, began being viewed as a problem.

Controlled breeding through arranged marriages fails to allow for either normal experimentation, natural affection, nor the



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usual human appetite for variety. Even if magical youngsters could be paired off as soon as the young husbands and wives left school, it is not likely that all of these prospective young husbands and wives will agree to be so paired off. Nor that once so paired off, these youngsters, the husbands in particular, will necessarily confine their sexual attentions to their legal partners. The young wives may not have done so either, but that issue is not the relevant one here. The children born to a married woman are always the legally-recognized descendants of *somebody*.

The sort of low-born but magical human retainers which were dependent upon and employed by these Great Houses would certainly be the recipients of some of the attentions of a straying spouse. However, it is much simpler, and much more difficult for others to trace one's behavior in such manners if one simply takes advantage of the hordes of Muggle women (who even their own society does not value at all highly) employed as barmaids or in domestic service, or in brothels and the like, all of whom tacitly exist for such purposes.

And when has any young man ever taken the slightest concern toward lessening the chances of pregnancy among "easy" women? This will have resulted in an undocumented, but no doubt fairly high number of halfbloods whose magical heritages, again, unless identified as wizards and sent off to Hogwarts, were recycled into the local mundane breeding population as a whole.

What is more, in a society wherein the ability to trace one's magical ancestry was becoming steadily more important, the existence of such children would have been deplored specifically due to the fact that their antecedents were so often untraceable. I rather suspect that this may in fact have been

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the original implication inherent in the term "mudblood." The real objection was not to the known fact of the child's apparently Muggle birth, but to that of its shrouded magical ancestry. These children, most typically, were not the unanticipated magical offspring of two blameless Muggle parents. They were unacknowledged halfbloods whose paternity was unknown, raising serious questions and issues of consanguinity once they were absorbed into the magical community.



Prior to the establishment of Seclusion, in any village where acknowledged wizards had been a part of the community for any length of time, I think that comparatively few children were even identified, let alone stigmatized, as being "Muggle-born." It is far more likely that at the discovery of a magical child of non-magical parents, it was merely assumed that the magic had skipped a few generations and that somewhere back in the child's ancestry, somebody must have married one of the Whoevers (the local magical family). In the case of this occurring in one of the villages attached to an estate where the Lords of the Manor were suspected or known to be wizards, this assumption would have sometimes have modified into the supposition that somewhere a generation back or so there had been a pretty dairymaid, or some such, who had helped one of the sons of the Manor sow a few wild oats.

And in general these suppositions were probably on the right track. In these little hamlets, most of the Muggle population had been passing around some of the same set of magical traits for generations, and this would have occasionally resulted in a



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wizard whenever one of the missing links somehow managed to get invited to the party. Or, more probably, an accompanying Squib factor failed to be passed on. We do not know what the minimum number of magical traits is that is required to produce a functioning wizard.

At this point in time, such children in rural areas would necessarily have been identified (if at all) by whatever other wizards might live in the region and would have been formally sponsored by them when attendance at Hogwarts or another of the magical Academies came into question. It is not impossible that the modern “no-fee” model of education at Hogwarts was already in place, due to concern over the threat of allowing mentally unstable Dark wizards to develop, who would ultimately need to be apprehended and neutralized by the Wizarding Council.

A child so sponsored and trained would be under heavy obligation to their discoverer and patron. It is entirely possible that this was another early form of Wizards’ Debt, payable, in most cases, by passing the benefit of education on if an unsponsored magical child were ever to cross the trained wizard’s path.

In the few areas within the vicinity of the Manors of wizarding aristocrats, such children, when identified, were most typically taken under the patronage of their local Lord (to whom they most probably were related, to at least some degree) who undertook to see that they were given appropriate training.

And occupation, once they were trained.

The understanding in this case was that the child, when trained, would be kept on afterwards as a retainer. Such a policy would have been anathema in the eyes of the most fanatic of the purebloods of isolationist leaning, who would have raised vigor-

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ous denouncement of the practice upon any occasion that offered them the opportunity. However, the specter of self-trained Dark wizards, as well as the overall benefit to wizarding society by the addition of these new members would have rendered such objections easily dismissible in the eyes of the majority.

This tradition of patronage was undertaken quite willingly, in most cases, on the part of wizarding aristocrats, or even the merely middle-class. For it provided them with a stable and continuing source of magical servants and allies. Their *only* reliable such source, in fact.

House Elves are comparatively rare, and they tend to be bound to pre-existing properties. Moreover; traditionally Elves are bound to the property, *first*, and only secondarily to the family which occupied the property. At this point in time, it should also be recollected that virtually all House Elves were, in fact, attached to *Muggle* properties. It was very rare indeed for one to be attached to a household of wizards. This dynamic was only to change in the wake of the drive to and establishment of wizarding Seclusion.

To identify and undertake the training of magical human retainers who were afterwards under obligation to your family was really far more desirable, and a good deal more easily accomplished than acquiring an Elf (assuming that to acquire an Elf was considered even remotely desirable at this period — which is far from having ever been established). This was also the favored method in staffing the new households of one’s younger adult children.

In those cases where a Great House was over-generously supplied with retainers, the Master might sponsor a particu-



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larly trusted former retainer's establishment of his own subordinate household allied with his own. Quite a few of the prominent pureblood families of today may have had such an origin, although the die-hard pureblood isolationist faction may still have regarded the bloodlines of even such long-established, sponsored wizards as tainted.

Despite the somewhat casual attitude toward the benefits of pure-bloodedness still held by the handful of remaining wizarding aristocrats, it would have been among the retainers of the Great Houses that the idea of marrying only other magicals and producing pure-blooded offspring would have filtered down most quickly. It certainly would have done so more quickly there than in the rural hamlets where magic was present but not fostered by a wizarding landlord.

Magical children of non-magical parents occurring where no one could trace a probable connection to any known magical family were most likely to be an urban phenomenon. Many of these children may not ever have been identified and trained at all. In the case of those who were, the wizards or witches who lived in the town would have necessarily been the contact points and the ones to see to it that the child was trained, if only to assure that he would not manage to train himself in the dangerously direct methods of channeling magic and need to be contained later as a renegade Dark wizard.

It is suggested that part of the function of the Wizards' Council during this period was to oversee that any town of a significant size had at least one or two resident witches or wizards serving as observers for the purpose of spotting such children. Such observers would have most probably been chosen

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from the ranks of retainers who had been educated under the sponsorship of one the Great Houses, and therefore already under obligation.



### V. The Drive to Seclusion:

It was not until the Reformation, and its attendant religious upheavals and waves of intolerance for the supernatural which raged virtually unabated throughout the 16th and 17th centuries that the isolationists' perpetual harping upon the necessity of establishing complete wizarding separation from Muggle society began to find a wider audience within the magical community. But once it had begun to do so, any wizarding family who could read the writing on the wall, and had the resources to enable their disappearance from mundane society, would probably have bolted into cover as soon as it could be managed.

Upon any sort of reflection, it becomes obvious that the date of the International Act of Wizarding Seclusion did not herald the *beginning* of a drive to Seclusion. Instead, it marks the point at which Seclusion had already been *de facto* established, and that the passing of the Act was in the nature of an ultimatum to any witch or wizard who was still living openly among their Muggle neighbors as a magic user to either comply or to be abandoned to their fate. I do not doubt that some of the primary articles of that act established draconian penalties upon any witch or wizard who might have broken the terms of Seclusion to go to their assistance.

The Roman Church had been no more tolerant of the increasing spread of secular scholarship and the attempts of the fathers



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of modern science to unravel the mysteries of nature and the working of natural law than it had been of heretical doctrines during the Age of Miracles. Such enquiry was regarded as heretical. There is no need to detail the list of scientists who were executed as heretics during the period we call the Renaissance.

Despite the established Church's growing opposition to the spread of scientific knowledge, it had often remained perfectly legal, if somewhat dangerous, to openly practice magic. Most of the Courts of Europe still recognized official diviners and magicians throughout this entire era. This was the last era during which this could be said, however. One of the last, and most famous of these gentlemen that we know of being one John Dee, the court astrologer to Elizabeth the First of England. It may, or may not be interesting to note that Dee, a Welshman, bears a name which derives from "Dhu", a name which in English translates into "Black". If Dr Dee was indeed a connection of the Black family to whom we have been introduced, it is unlikely that his name can still be found upon the family's genealogical tapestry. His willingness to mingle with the Muggles would have probably seen it blasted off. If not at the time, then retroactively.

In mundane affairs, the rapid increase of general knowledge, despite the Church's opposition, and the improvement in the overall efficiency of communications, in addition to the activities of the Church itself — which as the Renaissance progressed was inclined to regard itself as under siege — and was not tolerant of that, either; and to which it made some very ill-considered responses, ultimately increasing to the point of convincing its (still mostly internal) critics that the corruption within the Church's



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ranks was beyond what the flock should be called upon to bear.

When, toward the beginning of the 16th century, a call for internal Reform within the Church found itself as virulently attacked as the worst of heresies, the "great schism" became inevitable and ushered in one of the darkest and most vicious periods of European history.

Whereas the Catholic Church's tolerance for magic had always been limited, (witchcraft had finally been declared a form of heresy in 1484) that of the Protestant Reformation was utterly non-existent. It should be noted that the most virulent of all the pogroms against witchcraft and the supernatural throughout this era seem to have taken place in those regions of Europe which had widely adopted some form of Protestantism; a creed which almost universally operated in accordance with the view that magic is impossible without demonic assistance.

In England, such matters entered a critical stage during the reign of James I, a monarch regarded today as a notorious believer in, and enemy of the supernatural in all its forms. It is in the authorized English translation of the Bible which was produced under his sponsorship that many of the exhortations against all trafficking with witchcraft or any dealings related to the occult with which we are familiar were first introduced. A few of these have since been determined to have been pious mistranslations. Others were deliberate insertions for what is presumed to have been political reasons. Only a minority are consistent with the original text in the original language.

The inevitable social consequences of these inclusions into the standard religious text to be distributed throughout the British Isles upon the magical population of Great Britain were





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not long in coming; although witchcraft was not declared a capital offense in Britain's secular laws until 1653, "witch fever" appears to have hit England well before even the establishment of Parliamentary government. One of the more famous of the multiple executions was that of the Pendle witches (three generations of one family) in 1612. Later, some of the most notorious witch trials were those undertaken by the self-proclaimed Witchfinder General, Matthew Hopkins between the years of 1644 and 1646 in which he is credited with having been personally responsible for nearly 300 executions of supposed witches. (Which, if the representation of magicals within the mundane population was anything like today, would have come close to exterminating the island's total magical community.)

Even though these events pale in comparison with the atrocities taking place on the Continent, such development could only have fallen upon the magical population of Great Britain as the crack of doom.

One possibility, which was floated in the backstory to a piece of fanfiction by an author under the pen name of Arsinoe de Blassenville, and which I mention here because it struck me as being such a thoroughly elegant piece of well-scaled and well-placed reasoning, concerns the Treaty of Westphalia (which had been under negotiation from 1644 to its final adoption in 1648).

The Treaty of Westphalia, in our world, is generally regarded as the watershed document which formally established a cease-fire between the Catholic and Protestant Churches, thereby putting an end to the appalling 30-years war on the Continent. It also established the official state religions of the nations which had been involved in this conflict, and the political boundaries of these

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nations. We have hints in canon to suggest that in the Potterverse it is the political boundaries as established by the Treaty of Westphalia which are honored by the Ministries of Magic across Europe to the present day. It is certainly not the political boundaries as they stand in the mundane Europe of our own world.

In Mlle de Blassenville's backstory it was the discovery by a group of wizards in the court of the Elector of Saxony of secret articles in this treaty, to wit that it was specified that the Catholic and Protestant Churches would agree to cease their armed hostilities against each other, and instead seek out and destroy their common enemies, the witches, that served as the final straw convincing the magical populations of Europe that they must separate themselves entirely from Muggle society.

In any case: it should be noted that the circumstances dictating the necessity for wizarding Seclusion appear to have been particular to Europe, alone. It is entirely possible that the formal "International" Act of Wizarding Seclusion in fact was only adopted across Europe, Great Britain, and their colonies, and that to this day it only applies to Europe, and what were originally European colonies. Much of Asia, Africa (both the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa) and aboriginal societies around the world may not commonly make any such formal demands regarding the seclusion of wizards from Muggles, and may not practice anything beyond a purely voluntary separation of wizards from Muggle society, which is left to the discretion of the individual wizard. Which would explain the presence of all those tribal shamans and witch doctors at the Quidditch World Cup in 1994.





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Which also brings us slap up against an examination of one of the social pathologies which were widespread throughout Europe during the run-up to the formal establishment of Wizarding Seclusion.

Despite the fact that by this time safer methods of working magic had been known among wizards for centuries, among Muggles the pervading recollection and general perception of wizards was still largely tied to their unpleasant experiences with the magical community dating from the days that the practice of magic had inexorably caused nearly all practicing wizards and witches to lose their grip on reality, to the peril of themselves and everyone around them.

This cultural memory, in combination with a thoroughly poisonous atmosphere of growing religious strife, fostered in Muggles the conviction that their very souls were at risk. A conviction which was amplified by a renewed horror of and fascination with anything to do with the supernatural (an attitude which had found active sponsorship under the early Stuarts), and was not in the least offset by the progressive spread of learning, accompanied by neither understanding nor tolerance. All of which still colors our perception of the 17th century to the present day.

This toxic stew had almost certainly resulted in any number of unhappy souls across Europe who, under such an atmosphere of obsession with the supernatural, whether wizard (and there *would* have been a few wizards — very few), or supposed Muggle (probably undocumented Muggle-born Squibs) *were* either actually making the attempt to call up and control demons, or who had managed to delude themselves into believing that they had indeed negotiated an enhancement of their own personal empowerment by trafficking with the Devil. This only wors-



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ened a situation that was already volatile in the extreme.

The greatest resistance to the growing call for a formal wizarding Seclusion would probably have come from the remnants of the landed wizarding aristocracy, whose income still largely depended upon the labor of their Muggle tenants, and who still owed a responsibility to the Muggles under their protection. It would have only been after a wizarding aristocrat or two were arrested and executed — or narrowly escaped capture and were forced to flee for their lives — and their property was confiscated by the aforementioned mundane governments that even this sector of the wizarding community would have finally agreed that formal Seclusion was indeed, necessary. Little as I care for the use of any detail related to *The Celluloid Things That I Try Not To Mention* as supporting evidence for any point of debate in these essays, I was forced to wonder how much input Rowling may have had upon the decision to costume the ghost of the Bloody Baron, in the dress of the later 17th century. (Which in the wake of DHs appears to be a complete non-sequitur, since he turns out to have been contemporaneous with the Founders.)

It is widely agreed that several rounds of acrimonious debate and — probably — an extended period of Magical research and development were necessary before any kind of an enforced Seclusion would have been deemed feasible. A great deal of additional negotiation and compromise among the participating magical peoples would also have been necessary before statutory Seclusion could actually be imposed and implemented. Long before this point much of the magical community had taken matters into its own hands and concealed themselves by any means they could devise.





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All modern accounts of this period state that before formal Seclusion was actually initiated, the magical community came to a bitterly-fought mutual agreement to adopt the strategy of attempting to obliterate any awareness of the reality of Magic from mundane perception, and to encourage the belief among Muggles that Magic, in fact, did not exist, and, moreover, had *never* existed. It was all just a *story*.

It must also be remembered that Seclusion wasn't just about human wizards. *All* magical species were increasingly at risk given the temper of the times. We have been shown ample reason to suspect that the establishment of Seclusion was a project requiring the efforts and cooperation (willing or not) of every magical species of sentient Beings, ultimately resulting in what are essentially franchises of various functions to various species. Giants certainly do not live out among Muggles today. Nor do Goblins. I doubt that either still did so in any great numbers by the time Seclusion was adopted. Some concessions must have been made to ensure their cooperation.

What is more, all of those sentient species of magical Beings who established the secluded wizarding world also took it upon themselves to confine the most conspicuous species of fantastic beasts to this hidden world as well. Continuing efforts to keep such creatures away from any area where they might be seen by Muggles remain ongoing to this day.

One thing which I think has never been widely admitted within the wizarding community is that the seal between itself and the outer mundane world has probably always been a good deal more permeable than the Wizengamot's, or later, the Ministry of Magic's statements to that effect would have had the wizarding public

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believe. This overstatement of the facts may have been even greater at the beginning of the Seclusion period than it is today.

For one thing, even if at the time Seclusion was imposed the magical population would have still been able to fit into Hogsmeade, Hogwarts, and the secure wizarding enclaves like Diagon Alley, they didn't *do* it. Close to half of the population at least was still living in villages which were still predominantly Muggle. The Seclusion itself was a patchwork, undertaken over the course of a century and a half using whatever means its initiators had at hand.

For another thing, given that the establishment of Seclusion was undertaken to ensure the safety of the whole community, to make a *complete* break with all mundane society would have been its stated aim, whatever the actual truth of the matter might have been. We've had ample demonstration of the wizarding determination to believe that stating that a thing is so will make it so. To this end, once the formal Act of Wizarding Seclusion was actually passed, all forms of wizarding contact (as wizards) with Muggles would have been "officially" abolished.

I would expect that in order to ensure that security, a system of draconian penalties for identifying oneself as a wizard and mixing with Muggles would have probably been initiated and very actively enforced.

For so many of the wizards, or at least so many of the pure-blood wizards of today to be so completely out of touch with the mundane world as they are depicted, given that they are actually *living* in it, is completely implausible. We are forced to engage in a retrofit, even if canon does not really supply the makings of one.

Such complete ignorance strongly suggests that there must have been a point at which any direct knowledge of the mundane world



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simply was no longer made available, and continued to be unavailable for a long enough period to establish a break. This situation must also have been sustained over a long enough period for the average wizard to grow completely out of the habit of considering anything to do with Muggles as having anything to do with him.

This also argues in favor of at least some degree of physical separation. At least during the earliest part of the Seclusion period.

This much is easy enough to postulate, given that every wizard who was *known* to be a wizard would have been obligated to pull up stakes and relocate to some new location where his identity as a wizard was not known. Even if small clusters of them took up residences in what were still predominantly Muggle villages.

I rather suspect that all such partially-wizarding villages were chosen largely upon considerations of both remote location, and the lack of any local features which would attract further development by Muggles.

The century following the formal establishment of Seclusion is the period most likely to have provided these conditions. What is more, mundane society and mundane thought have changed more than enough since the end of the 17th century for the wizarding world's continuing discontinuity in perception to be at least somewhat accommodated and sustained.

While a significant minority of wizarding children (close to 1 in 4) are now enrolled in Muggle primary schools and those children's experience may eventually go some way towards eradicating some of this gap in understanding, it is likely that it may take at least a couple of decades before such information penetrates very far into general wizarding awareness. Putting wizarding perception of Muggle society and Muggle technology



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at a lag of about a generation behind the reality.

We have seen that in the Potterverse public perception and the "official" version of their reality do not always correspond with the truth. I think that the gap between what the wizarding public is told, and the manner in which their community is actually served by Seclusion is yet another illustration of the sort of paternalism which is routinely adopted by the Ministry of Magic and extended toward its constituency to this day. It was not only the Muggles whose history was deliberately overwritten.

At the establishment of Seclusion, a considerable part of the Ministry's exceptional arrangements must have been in recognition of the peculiar difficulties experienced by those few remaining wizarding landholders attempting to engineer their retirement from the public arena without forfeiting the worldly advantages that they brought to the common table.

Without the resources at these wizarding landlords' command it would have been much more difficult to tide the Secluded population over until other means of providing the necessary goods and services required by the wizarding community could be arranged in such a manner that these materials might be discreetly delivered to it without interruption.

An additional requirement of a wizarding society in Seclusion would have been the development and deployment of the required re-training necessary and the creation of new employment for the now displaced rural wizards whose prior occupation had been that of farming.

From our observations of canon, the official party line of the modern wizarding world appears to be that the proper business of all magical persons is Magic, not such workaday concerns





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as the production of non-magical staple goods which are as readily, and in a wider variety produced by Muggle labor. But this kind of a division must be far easier to maintain today than it was 300 years ago. 300 years ago, the majority of wizards' primary form of employment was farming, with magic-using as an additional sideline, almost in the manner of performing a community service. But while it is certainly desirable for a secluded household to maintain a kitchen garden, it is not really possible to hide an entire working farm, or a farming community in plain sight. Or at any rate, not one in which many of the day-to-day functions are performed by magic. Most wizarding agricultural workers would have needed to be trained in some other capacity in which they could make a larger contribution, a magical contribution, to their new society. Such an isolated society requires a larger contribution from its members.

The following supposition may yet turn out to be a miscalculation, but if the general population of Great Britain at the end of the 17th century was a scant tenth of what it is today, and if the magical population of Great Britain followed suit, then we are talking about a wizarding "world" comprised of scarcely 300–400 wizards and witches. Even if you include up to 150–200 additional Muggle spouses, parents, grandparents, siblings and offspring along with the actual wizards, we are talking about numbers that might very well have been able to simply pack up their worldly goods and take cover in Hogsmeade or above the shops in Diagon and Knockturn Alleys and their equivalents, if any, in other urban centers. Many may indeed have done so. At least temporarily.

Not all wizarding families would have had the resources to immediately establish new residences and careers, however.



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Whether by hiding in plain sight, or within the secluded world. For them, the strategy that was probably adopted was to pull up stakes and take quarters in some wizarding enclave for a period of time, until it was possible for them to relocate to a different area out in the Muggle world where it was not known that the family was magical, possibly to adopt new names and identities and to guard the knowledge of any development of magical abilities in their children with their lives. A brief stay at Hogwarts castle or in the village, until a new location for the household could be found may have been standard practice. Some, particularly those with marketable skills, may have simply decided to remain in the vicinity of the urban centers.

With the release of 'HARRY POTTER AND THE DEATHLY HALLOWS', however, we have been given an additional link in this particular chain of evidence. Although Hogsmeade village is the only completely wizarding settlement in Great Britain, there turn out to be in addition a half-dozen or so traditionally partially-magical villages which have a long history of magical presence. Some, as in the case of Godric's Hollow, have a history of magical presence which long predates the establishment of wizarding Seclusion.

It is stated that wizards tended to cluster in and around these settlements for mutual assistance and support. It is likely that many of the current wizarding residents of these villages simply traded places, settling into a new area where their magical nature was not known to their Muggle neighbors.

In the case of the larger wizarding estates, it is likely that a widespread dummy form of absentee landlordism would have been set up wherein the properties were overseen by stewards and bailiffs while the family was believed to have taken up their





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primary residence at one of their other holdings. The produce of the estate was funneled into the wizarding world for final sale through a series of business transactions designed to make the tracing of the goods difficult to impossible.

In some cases the family did indeed remove itself from the estate in favor of a townhouse in one of the secure wizarding districts in the older portions of established Muggle towns. In others, the supposedly closed house was shielded by Muggle-repelling spells until the illusion of a ruin could be reasonably superimposed while the family remained in residence, as is the case with Hogwarts Castle itself. In a number of cases, the site was further secured by being placed under unplotability charms.

I would propose that some of these early arrangements are still in place, with the property's ownership currently recorded to various dummy companies or, in a few cases, the National Trust. In fact, in the Potterverse, a number of such properties may very well be owned by the National Trust. Some of the principles of the more sophisticated concealments which were developed and utilized for the hiding of such properties have since been re-purposed and enhanced in the development of other spells and charms, most notably in the Fidelius Charm.

Some of the landed families may have also traded places, such as, say, just for argument, the Malfoys of Northumberland setting it about that they were returning to France (well, their neighbors had always suspected they were secretly papists) and their estate was reportedly purchased by a family named Crouch about whom nothing was known. While meanwhile, the Crouches of Wiltshire set it about that they had come into property in the North, sold out, and their former holdings were taken over by a family named

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Malfoy who kept themselves strictly to themselves.

It would have been during this period that a cadre of wizarding merchants, under Ministry sanction formed trade Consortiums, which effectively operated as coalitions of importers of such staple goods as foodstuffs, textiles, building materials and most other consumable products that were neither magical in themselves nor magically produced, for the purposes of serving the needs of this newly secluded society.

In a few cases the wizarding landowners may even have gone to the extent of breaking the entail on as much of their property as they could, liquidating their holdings, and using the proceeds as capital with which to establish themselves in the new wizarding Consortiums inside the secluded world. Many of the present day fortunes of prominent wizarding families were founded in this manner. Membership in these Consortiums are probably the source of most of the more notable wizarding fortunes of the present day. And might not be unassociated with eligibility for the Wizengamot. The formation of new, more specialized Consortiums may well be the source for the more notable wizarding fortunes of tomorrow.

The production of goods from estates which remained in their owners' hands were, and continue to be, managed at some remove by their original owners' descendants, and are ultimately transported to, distributed, and sold within the wizarding world. But, although the more recently-developed spells sealing off such wizarding districts as Diagon Alley from Muggle access had attained a reasonably high level of sophistication by that time, throughout the rest of the country most wizarding families had to make do with older, more primitive methods of hiding themselves.



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Rather a lot of them seem to have chosen to simply educate their children at home and hide in plain sight.

I speculate that another of the Wizards' Council's chief priorities at this point would have been to set up a means of monitoring events outside the Secluded wizarding world in order to assure that the wizarding world's continuing security remained uncompromised. To this end they would have needed not only to be able to locate areas where magic was definitely being used outside the ww, but also to keep track of what Muggles were taking notice of.

This would have required monitoring by a small number of agents employed by the Ministry of Magic who would be active in the field, as observers.

Consequently, much of the separation between the wizarding and mundane worlds was largely a matter of public perception, maintained chiefly by officially sanctioned and fostered ignorance of the outside world, and enforced by fear of the draconian penalties imposed by the Ministry on any unnecessary form of magical contact with Muggles by anyone other than the authorized traders and the Ministry agents who for many years periodically entered the mundane world, undercover, to monitor the wizarding world's security, and, wherever possible, to redirect the trend of mundane perceptions.

Such ignorance continues to be actively fostered by the wizarding world's Leaders to the present day. By, say, the year 1695 the wizarding world believed its safety to be finally assured.

In reality it was nearly as fragile as a soap bubble.



(Continued in Part II)



## Wizards & Muggles: Post-Seclusion

We continue in our attempt to extrapolate a viable social history for the Potterverse.

It's a vain hope, of course, and what results is at best, a paraphrase. But let's persist...



### VI. The Seclusion Era: Muggles

#### Good Fences Make Good Neighbors

A set of simplified definitions which fits my own reading of the matter is:

SCIENCE is the progressive expansion of accurate observations, analysis, and understanding of the working of natural law.

TECHNOLOGY is the craft of constraining these workings to serve the purposes of its developers.

MAGIC consists of giving the natural world instructions in terms that it cannot ignore.

One of the enduring beauties of the wizarding world's Seclusion has been the generous endorsement that it has showered upon the mundane development of science, technology, and the evolution of human thought. This is a beauty which the Ministry of Magic has been at considerable pains to cultivate insofar as it has ultimately worked to the overall perceived benefit of the wizarding world. It serves as the clearest practical demonstration of the concept of "enlightened self-interest" as one is likely to find anywhere in the Potterverse.

Possibly one of the *only* such examples readily accessible to the wizarding mindset.

In the first place; about ten minutes after the wizarding world





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slammed the door, Muggles were making accurate scientific observations of the operation of the natural world. Observations which included no tampering on the part of some loopy wizard who wanted rainbows for his daughter's wedding regardless of whether the sun was shining from the correct direction to produce rainbows or not. There was no contamination of scientific experiments by some self-centered magical who doesn't happen to bloody care whether this is the way the world works naturally or not, so long as it does what he wants it to do, when he wants it to do it. The scientific process was now largely unimpeded by magic — the “anti-science.”

After about a generation of observing the world behaving as it was originally designed to behave, educated Muggles started rethinking rather a lot of the superstitions of their youth, witch-fever *gradually* abated, and the mundane world saw the first glimmerings of the Age of Reason. Which could hardly have gotten off the ground so long as wizards were out and about and meddling with everything in range. (It is arguable whether our own world would have ever had one of these had we actually had any functioning system of Magic.)

Oh yes, there *were* still witch trials throughout the 18th century. But there were progressively fewer of them as time went on, and quite a few, even if not most of the victims of these latter-day pogroms were those aforementioned deluded souls and declared Satanists who really *did* think they had made a pact with the Devil, or the rare, psychically semi-active Squib who had actually managed to call up a demon — to the usual disastrous effect. (We are talking about the Potterverse here, such things are hypothetically possible in the Potterverse.) In



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the England of our world most of the statutory Acts against witchcraft were repealed as early as 1736. Which considering that witchcraft had only been declared a capital offense in 1653 reflects an amazingly quick turn-about for the legal profession.

And, as time went on, more and more of the educated classes began to adopt a firm stance that magic simply does not exist; that superstition is a failing of the ignorant and of the credulous, and that the world behaves as the world behaves, with no exceptions. A great deal of what we think of as modern thought got its inception during this period.

When the groundwork set by the Age of Reason was amplified by the technological developments of the early Machine Age, it became easier to convince even the commonest, most uneducated Muggle to accept the idea that there was, somewhere, a *scientific* explanation for any and all observed phenomena, whether anyone had quite yet discovered what that particular explanation was or not.

From the Ministry of Magic's point of view, these developments could hardly be improved upon. If Muggles were firmly convinced that magic is not real, they will not go *looking* for magic. If they are convinced that science has an explanation for all mysteries, then anything that seems mysterious must, *ipso facto*, have a scientific explanation. Somewhere.

Once the Ministry's agents twigged to the direction that mundane thought was taking — and they would have realized this fairly promptly. They would have happily done whatever they could to tweak such viewpoints along their new trajectory.

If my postulation of a Ministry-approved wizarding import cabal and Ministry-sponsored undercover monitoring of the wizarding





## Wizards & Muggles: Post-Seclusion

world's security is on target, they would have been watching for exactly this sort of development, and they would have recognized that The Plan was *working*. Some of the Ministry's agents may even have taken the rôle of *agents provocateur* in fostering it.

Here and there an observation of mundane science probably even crept into wizarding experiments and was incorporated into magical technology. Although the flow of information in that direction would have necessarily been sluggish in the extreme.

Still, while the Department of Mysteries probably took little interest in Muggle scientific progress, it would be a bit much to suppose that there wasn't some rather more workaday R&D department that *did* take such an interest. The roots of what is now referred to as Muggle Studies undoubtedly got its beginnings during this period, for there had been no need to study what ones own neighbors thought or did prior to this point. After all, such would have been common knowledge. It was probably not until the wizarding world was forced to accommodate an ongoing influx of Muggle-born magical children in the 19th century that these findings started filtering out to the rest of the population, however. The rest of the population (apart from those who still lived secretly among Muggles in semi-wizarding villages) would have been understood to have had no need of such information.

[Side Note: it is uncertain whether the post-Freudian development of thought which insists that literary fantasy and fairy tales are actively bad for children's emotional development — which has recurred several times throughout the 20th century in our world — would also be a creation of the Ministry of Magic's propaganda mavens in the Potterverse. It would cer-



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tainly result in an ever-growing unfamiliarity with wizarding phenomena and a rapid dwindling of those traces of awareness of the hidden world which had been common "country" knowledge prior to the Seclusion.]

In any case, the benefits of wizarding Seclusion upon mundane society and technology is so all-encompassing that it is obvious that the very worst thing that could possibly happen would be for it to be abolished now. Although it has to be admitted that much additional benefit to both societies might well be accomplished by a very careful program of cooperative research between wizards and certain key "informed" Muggles.

This, however is a debate for another time and another generation. It is much too early to be considering such a project in the shadow of VoldWar II.



## VII. The Seclusion Era: Wizards

### Be Careful What You Ask For

If the current population of the wizarding world is estimated at 25% Muggle-born, and 50% halfblood (information as given us in a televised interview with Rowling some years ago) and that if — as some of us have been supposing — Muggle-born magical children have *not* actively been sought out and trained to be wizards throughout the entire period of Seclusion, then when would Muggle-born wizards first have started being aggressively sought out and recruited into the wizarding world? And how long has it taken for the current wizarding world population demographics to reach their present rates? What are some of the implications of all this?





## Wizards & Muggles: Post-Seclusion

In particular, how did the imposition of wizarding Seclusion affect the population of the *wizarding* world?

To me it seems all too likely that the effect of Seclusion upon the wizarding population was devastating.

In the first place; outside of a half-dozen or so semi-wizarding villages, there were suddenly virtually no Muggle-born magical children identified and assimilated into the magical community. Despite the fact that magical traits were as prevalent in the Muggle gene pool as they had ever been. The wizards and witches who had formerly served their community by identifying such children had relocated to other areas or retreated within the secluded world, and if any other wizards had taken their places in the local vicinity they were so determined to conceal their identities as wizards that they dealt with the surrounding community of Muggles as little as they possibly could. Since the smaller population of Britain at that time suggests that there would have been a correspondingly smaller number of Muggle-born magical children born, several of the one or two per year that were born may have slipped through the cracks undetected.

Of far more importance, however; there were suddenly next to no new *halfbloods*.

This, allow me to remind you, in a society which, below a certain point in the upper-middle classes, had previously been almost *entirely composed* of halfbloods.

Wizarding security was now tight enough that any number of isolated witches and wizards who would formerly have married one of the neighboring Muggles, now often simply did not marry at all rather than to allow their identity as wizards to become known

## Wizards & Muggles: Post-Seclusion

outside their own family's households. The Ministry short-sightedly appears to have strongly encouraged, if not actively enforced this practice. Hogwarts, once again, probably was serving as much as a marriage brokerage as a magical training center.

We have seen something of the residual effects of this stance in the fact that a dismaying number of witches and wizards even to this day have been noted as marrying or otherwise partnering Muggles without informing their Muggle partners that they are magical. From Rowling's website and from within the books we know of at least three separate confirmed uninformed magical/Muggle pairings, and a suspected fourth. This is probably only the tip of the iceberg. In the early days of Seclusion when revealing your identity as a witch or wizard to a Muggle may have seemed tantamount to suicide, few would have risked such a marriage.

It also seems probable that truly and completely unanticipated magical children of non-magical parents had only tended to happen in those specific rural hamlets in which there already was a documented history of such occurrences, and, with about the same degree of frequency, in the towns. These births (or, rather these children's discovery. Prior to the Hogwarts quill's development, not all magical children of non-magical parents ever were identified) were rare enough that the Wizards' Council ultimately decided that the present danger to the wizarding population as a whole was great enough that to lose these few children to the witch hunters was a price they would just simply have to pay in exchange for the safety ensured by a general seclusion of all known magical peoples.

It was the resulting loss of the halfbloods, who had always



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been the largest segment of the population, that resulted in a population crisis which had become apparent to those who were setting official Ministry policy at the time the aggressive identification and recruitment of all magical children into the wizarding world was officially adopted as a top Ministry priority — despite the considerable potential security breach which the contact with such children's mundane families entailed.

Wizarding lifespans had increased somewhat since the days when the only magic was Dark magic, and this may have tended to encourage later marriages than were typically the case among Muggles of comparable social levels. At least to the point of allowing most witches to complete their magical educations. But the fact that wizards were no longer marrying Muggles, who not only tended to marry younger, but had never had a really reliable method of control over their fertility, concealed the fact that the birthrate of magical children was dropping.

In a magical/Muggle marriage, such as had been prevalent in rural districts before Seclusion, the number of magical children *might* be less than half of the total number of children, (not typically, however. Once a pairing demonstrates that it *can* produce magical offspring, the likelihood of producing additional magical offspring automatically becomes much higher. Typically, the magical children would have outnumbered the non-magical) but the total number of children produced by such a mixed marriage was usually considerably higher than was the case in a Seclusion-era witch/wizard marriage. Whereas a pre-Seclusion era wizard/Muggle union might produce a Weasley-sized brood, of which perhaps four or more children were magical, and a Seclusion era union of a witch and wizard might produce

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three magical children, the *rate* of magical children might now be 100%, but the end result is still one fewer magical child.

And even more than that, where before you might have had perhaps six wizard/Muggle couples raising six families, any of which would probably produce a wizard or two, you now had only three wizard/witch couples raising three families in which all children might be magical, but there are fewer potential children overall.

But, then, the above reasoning also assumes that to produce a magical child presents no more inherent risk than does producing a Muggle child. And that is not necessarily a safe assumption to be making. It is just as likely to be possible that under some circumstances once a pairing has produced a magical child, the likelihood of it's producing any additional children at all may well be drastically reduced. If the principles that I speculate are being drawn upon in determining just how the Hogwarts quill operates are an accurate reading (examined below), there may be a very good reason why most of the wizarding families that we know about have been comparatively small.

A more limited number of potential partners for young magicals to choose from, combined with the knowledge that they were individually likely to live to what was accounted a great age in a world that was now safe from mundane persecution, but which still upheld the permanence of the institution of marriage, might have tended to contribute to a feeling that there was no particular hurry about settling down with one partner and starting a family. Particularly since I rather suspect that even at this time a witch had access to some fairly reliable methods of contraception, and felt no pressure to produce any more children than she chose to. Unfortunately, this reasoning does not take into



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account that while their lifespans could be reasonably expected to be significantly longer than that of the Muggles of that time, their fertility rate was not similarly enhanced.

This realization would have come soon enough. Medi-magical developments have probably made some attempt to correct this imbalance, but although the birth of non-magical children among wizards was now becoming *extremely* rare, the total number of magical children born was discernibly lower than in the days when wizards had lived openly among, and married Muggles. It is entirely possible that the wizarding world may have lost anything up to half the numbers it had originally claimed at the time of the formal establishment of Seclusion over the first century that they lived in hiding. Which, in those early days, had probably started from a distorted population count which had included a goodly number of non-magical family members in addition to the actual wizards.

And, by the end of the first century of Seclusion, it would have been evident to the bean counters, that their birthrate was vastly insufficient to sustain their population at a viable level. And that if they could not sustain their current population, they were toast as a culture. Because, if the population continued to dwindle at the rate it had done so over just the first century of their isolation, in another generation or two their numbers could be expected to fall to the point that the Goblins would finally overthrow them.

Forgot about the Goblins, didn't you?

So had they.

*Big* mistake. The Goblins, who are very sharp, hadn't forgotten *anything*.



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And; given that Professor Binns typically has his 4th years writing weekly essays on the Goblin rebellions of the 18th century (i.e., the first century following statutory wizarding seclusion), it sounds to me as if the Goblins had been watching the decline of the magical human population of this secluded world with a great deal of interest, and were doing their part to assure that this downward trend would continue.



### VIII. Redrawing the Boundaries:

By the early 19th century it had become imperative that human wizards stabilize and increase their numbers. Moreover, it was becoming evident that circumstances in the Muggle world were beginning to make it more difficult to keep their presence concealed. It was ultimately proposed that they must begin to aggressively seek, train and absorb into the wizarding world any magical child that could be identified.

That Muggle-born magical children were suddenly raising havoc out in the *mundane* world, producing highly noticeable outbursts of spontaneous magic to the point that such disruptions were beginning to require Ministry intervention, was an excellent rallying point for justifying that the wizarding world's current practices as regarded their Seclusion be retooled to admit limited contact with these children's Muggle families in the outer mundane world in order to remove a growing threat to wizarding security.

Particularly since there suddenly seemed to be *so many* of these children. And they were causing such a disruption of "natural processes" that they really *were* endangering the





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wizarding world's continued security.

You can only maintain wizarding secrecy as long as there are no wizards out practicing magic in the full sight of Muggles. Intentionally or not, these children were setting off magical disruptions left and right in those newfangled factories, and this kind of thing was eventually going to seriously compromise the viewpoint among mundanes that magic does not exist — which the MoM had been at such pains to foster over the course of the 18th century. There is a very real limit to how much paranormal phenomena that even people who have been encouraged to anticipate a scientific explanation for all unknown phenomena can be expected to overlook...

For, meanwhile, outside the wizarding world, not all of that scattering of Muggle-born magical children being born outside the wizarding "world" had been discovered and executed by the witch hunters. And their fully functioning magical genomes had been being seeded back into the general mundane population for the past hundred or so years rather than having found patronage from some Great House, to be trained and absorbed into the wizarding population. All of which had somewhat raised the concentration of magical traits which were now being passed around the mundane gene pool in those particular districts.

And, then, around the turn of the 19th century, the Parliamentary Acts of Enclosure were forcing these people off the land and into the towns and factories. Where anyone carrying a partial set of magical traits had an exponentially higher likelihood of meeting and marrying someone from a district that had been passing around a different partial set that provided all of the missing bits. We still have no idea how few magical traits it

## Wizards & Muggles: Post-Seclusion

takes to produce a functioning wizard.

Well, we do all know about the kind of bursts of spontaneous Magic that can be produced by a magical child when startled or frightened. And even the most cursory look at the kind of dangerously unsafe conditions of the early factories suggests that this was a positive invitation to the creation of such breakthroughs. Children as young as four or five were regularly employed in those factories.

But by that time the road to actively seeking out and recruiting these children would have been a bumpy one. In isolation, the wizarding world had grown accustomed to feeling that it would remain safe for as long as it had nothing to do with Muggles, and the wizarding public was probably a good deal more concerned with the threat of the dangerous Muggle mob than the threat of yet another Goblin uprising. I am not altogether certain that it did not actually take that last few Goblin uprisings before the danger represented by wizards' precarious position of dominance became apparent to all. I tend to suspect that the average wizard, by this time was frankly terrified of the idea of opening their borders to *any* kind of Muggles. Even magical ones.

At this point in history any remaining descendants of the former landed wizarding aristocrats would, predictably, have been the group most in favor of the renewed recruitment of magical children born in the outside world. This segment of the population would probably still have remembered their long-standing tradition of *noblesse oblige*. Their attitudes on the subject were probably something on the order of "Muggle-borns? Well we really do need the additional workers, don't we? And a fresh crop of capable retainers could hardly come amiss."



## Wizards & Muggles: Post-Seclusion

But the few remaining descendants of wizarding aristocrats had lost a good deal of their traditional level of influence over policy in the century since Seclusion had been imposed. The governing body of the wizarding world was now quite solidly the Ministry of Magic, under the direction of the Wizengamot, whose centralized authority and bureaucratic underpinnings had already expanded to the point that it contained a high percentage of career civil servants descended, in about equal parts, from quasi-aristocratic younger sons of Great Families — which now also included the descendants of the most prominent and wealthy families of wizarding isolationists; the descendants of these Great Houses' retainers, and the brightest and most talented children of plebeian wizards, "cherry picked" from among the newly qualified Hogwarts graduates. There was no longer a built-in consensus, nor were all of these groups prepared to follow the few remaining aristocrats' lead.

Not to mention the potential public relations nightmare inherent in having to deal with some of the accumulated social consequences of a century of wizarding self-isolation. Which were not inconsiderable. Particularly given the underlying irrationality of the wizarding mindset.

You had not considered that, either, perhaps? Well, let us do so now.



As a case in point, shall we consider the significance of robes?

We have been told that wizards in the late 20th century typically wear robes. In fact, we are given every invitation to believe that wizards have *always* worn robes. That, in fact, a traditional, pureblood wizard cannot imagine wearing any-



## Wizards & Muggles: Post-Seclusion

thing *other* than robes.

Until you stop and take a reality check: consider that wizards still lived side-by-side with Muggles until at least 1690 or thereabouts. That by that point in "western civ" their lives sometimes depended upon how well they managed to blend in, and that by the year 1690 virtually *nobody* still wore robes.

Indeed, the common dress of the 2nd half of the 17th century is generally regarded as the point in time that the forerunners of Western modern dress (coat, waistcoat, trousers) had become firmly established — and have continued as such until the present day. The only persons still running about in robes by 1690 were the practitioners of a few established professions which had retained, as their badge of office, a traditional form of deliberately *archaic* dress! Surely not all wizards at the time of the establishment of Seclusion were practicing barristers and academics?

Of course not. Wizards must have adopted their robes at some point after Seclusion was established, probably in some muzzy-minded attempt to connect with what they believed to be wizarding traditions, and they have since managed to convince themselves that robes have always been the traditional wizarding costume. And even at that, such a practice would have only flourished among those wizards who lived in full seclusion away from any Muggle neighbors. Certainly not those who settled down in places like Godric's Hollow or Tinworth.

In fact, I suspect that "costume" is probably the most accurate and applicable term. Another applicable term would probably be "eclectic muddle." Wizards, after all, are demonstrably a class of people capable of convincing themselves of six (to us) impossible things before breakfast. I rather suspect that the mental image





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of wizarding society one should be carrying around is not all that far off of, say, the illustrations of Arthur Rackham.

Which is not to say that there had been *no* contact *whatsoever* with mundane society over the period that Seclusion was most rigorously enforced. Rather a lot of the wizarding population was clustered in and around those half-dozen or so partially-wizarding villages. And even in Hogsmeade, Diagon Alley, and any other fully secluded enclave the Ministry's agents and the wizarding Traders' equivalent of the East India Company would have kept at least a minimal pipeline open.

These agents would have needed to blend in whenever their duties took them beyond the safety of the wizarding districts. Nor would the divergence between underlying clothing styles of the two societies have been all *that* wide over that most critical first century of the Seclusion. It is obvious to anyone who has ever done costuming for historical reenactments that beyond a few stylistic differences in what you put on your head, and how long your pants are, the costume of the working man or working woman in Western Europe is pretty stable from around 1600–1840. It is hardly necessary to change the basic shirt pattern — at all — when going from American to English Civil War reenacting. Or to Medieval reenacting, for that matter. Nor is it necessary to alter the chemise pattern. The outer costume's basics also remained fairly stable. At least among the working classes.

Where fashion did dictate the form, was among those upper-classes which jockeyed for position in the shadow of the Royal Courts. I suspect that few wizarding agents attempted to infiltrate the Royal Court.

But, around 1840, mundane technology started heavily

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impacting the development of mundane fashion. Fabric became cheaper, the sewing machine was invented, and printed publications about fashion became far cheaper and more widely dispersed. Yee-hah! Mundane fashions, all the way down to the poverty line begin to change every six months or sooner. Leaving even semi-involved wizards behind in the dust.

For example: to modern eyes, 18th century fashions look pretty much of a muchness in their underlying shapes from the beginning of the period up until the last 20 years or so of the century. There was a lot of variation in hairstyling and at least 2–3 different silly methods of pouffing out one's skirts at varying times, but an underlying principle of bodice/skirt/sleeves for women and breeches/waistcoat/coat for men seems to have held remarkably steady.

And even these had all evolved fairly smoothly from the styles which were worn at the opening of that century, and with which the wizarding world would have been quite familiar. Consequently, by the end of the 18th century, I suspect that any wizards and witches who had not adopted robes, or who still wore their robes over other serviceable clothing, would have been perceived by mundane eyes to be fitted out like rather eccentric country people, woefully out of fashion, but still dressed in a manner that was both somewhat recognizable and perceived as respectable. Some mundane trends may even have crept into wizarding usage over this century without anyone even being all that much aware of it. Particularly among any wizards who were living out among Muggles and concealing their magical natures.

At this point in history, both mundanes and magicals were



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also still typically turned loose to create their own styles. Apart from a few tailors and dressmakers patronized by the Courts of Europe the fashion industry was still solidly “pre-industrial” and operating at a fairly rudimentary level, and, as such, the reign of “fashion” applied primarily to the hangers-on in attendance at the various Royal Courts, all of which had their own dress codes that had little to do with the dress of average people. Any Ministry agent or Trader who adopted what he thought to be a clever design noted in his ventures out among the Muggles might well have seen it copied inside the wizarding world. I suspect, however, that the 18th and 19th centuries saw mostly the wizarding adoption of the mundane world’s new machine-spun threads and machine-woven fabrics which were both plentiful, varied, and cheap rather than actual mundane dress styles, *per se*.

The 19th century would have been where the styles really started diverging. Although short-lived, the styles of the Napoleonic era were disruptive, and sieged into forms that were a considerable departure from what had persisted over the previous century. The mundane fashion industry also had finally gotten off the ground by the 1840s which is generally regarded as the dawn of the era of the great Couturiers, and mundane communications were now good enough to have most of the precursors to the international jet set all pretty much in step with one another.

And the demands of “fashion” were now being honored by a far wider segment of the general population, too. Comfortably middle-class Muggles who never had the slightest expectation of ever coming within hailing distance of a Royal Court in their entire lifetimes, were now assiduously following the fashions as depicted in broadly-circulated publications.



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It also needs to be pointed out that it was the 19th century during which the largest divergence developed between *fashion* and *clothing*. Where, during the 18th century a certain number of mundane style innovations might have had plenty of time to creep into wizarding usage, in the 19th century, mundane styles came and went too quickly for anything other than the basic colors or materials to make very much of an impact upon even the most tolerantly-disposed wizards. Which may, when one thinks of it, have been what finally encouraged the adoption of all-purpose robes.

Still, the Dumbledore family portrait described in DHs would tend to suggest that among the wizards of villages like Mould-on-the-Wold contemporary mundane fashion was far from unknown. However, it should also be recalled that Madam Dumbledore was rumored to have been Muggle-born, and perhaps conversant with mundane fashion trends. For she certainly seems to have dressed herself and her children in the fashions of their day without making any of them look any more foolish than their Muggle neighbors.

However, by the end of the first third of the century it seems evident that the recruitment of young Muggle-born wizards and witches would have already been underway, and these youngsters would have brought some of the styles of their own upbringing into the wizarding world with them. Much as the jumpers and trousers of the mid-20th century have infiltrated even the dress of some of the young purebloods of Harry’s day. (It should be pointed out, however, that the jumpers and trousers produced by Molly Weasley for her children are almost certainly more stylistically consistent with those of the Muggle





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1940s and '50s, harking back to the ones a young Molly Prewett remembers being worn by her parents generation, or those worn by her brothers' Muggle-born or halfblood friends during her own childhood than those of the Muggle 1990s.) Increasing the amount of muddle and anachronism which were soon being exhibited in wizarding clothing styles.



But robes are essentially a minor issue. A far more important issue of wizarding mindset was that after a century of isolation even most of the plebeian wizards, ones with no direct connection to the faction of wizarding isolationists, had started thinking of themselves as purebloods (like the great wizards of history!), and generally dismissing the consideration that their own ancestry was quite thoroughly mixed.

A particularly self-deluded sector of plebeian families which could have readily pointed out Muggle and mixed-blood family members at the beginning of the Seclusion, had gradually stopped thinking about that part of their bloodlines, as the original Muggle family members who had accompanied them into seclusion died off, and as fewer and fewer of their children failed to be magical. The first century of Seclusion would of necessity have seen the deaths of *all* of the Muggle husbands, wives, elderly parents, siblings and even the non-magical offspring which might originally have accompanied the wizards and witches into their isolation. It would have also seen the deaths of nearly all of these families' original wizards, who would have been identified almost universally as halfbloods.

In their absence, gradually, all of these Muggles' and half-

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bloods' living mixed-blood descendants began to regard themselves as now being effectively pure-blooded wizarding stock.

They did so not altogether without reason. The birthrate during the first century of the Seclusion was far too low to maintain the population at the numbers it had claimed at the establishment of Seclusion, but there was, indeed, a far higher rate of wizarding blood purity in that society's numbers as fewer and fewer of their children failed to be wizards. Rowling herself has confirmed that halfblood status is perceived to gradually fade out over ensuing generations. By the end of the first hundred years of Seclusion, virtually every child that was born in the wizarding world would have been a magical child. Those few exceptions which cropped up were now being referred to as Squibs. And they were understood to be rare. And they were indeed, *exceedingly* rare.

The descendants of the old-school isolationists might have been quick to depress any such presumption of pure-bloodedness on the part of such plebes, but these diehards had never been numerous enough to see their higher standards of pedigree adopted by the majority — who, after all, stood to benefit not in the least by doing so — and, for as long as strict seclusion had been the case, it had scarcely mattered except in their own tiny minds.

It was among the descendants of the pureblood isolationists and the pure-blooded retainers of the great wizarding estates that the most determined resistance to the widespread recruitment of the children of Muggles into the wizarding world arose.

The isolationists' stance needs no further amplification — apart from pointing out their severe disgruntlement to find such a possibility even being raised after a century of believing their



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battle won. This point in wizarding history was the high-water mark for the pureblood isolationists. At that point, their numbers stood at a higher percentage of the total wizarding population than they had ever done since the beginning of the world, and it was certainly higher than it has been at any time since the gates were thrown open to Muggle-borns.

Even at that point the isolationist faction still probably stood at less than a third of the total wizarding population. Their subsequent bitterness in seeing their influence and their representation in society being whittled away by successive waves of interlopers has a very real basis. If they perceive that the official policy of inclusionism is gradually forcing them into a position of social irrelevance, it is because this is, in effect, true.

By contrast, the Great House retainers' descendants, who the most fanatical of the isolationists still probably regarded as some degree of halfblood, opposed such wide-scale recruitment of Muggle-born magicals in very much the manner that the first residents of a suburban development with a fine view of the countryside will oppose the development of a newer housing estate which will deprive them of it. They also had a point, just not an especially defensible one.

This particular class of wizards, unlike their aristocratic sponsors, did not have any entrenched tradition of the patronage of those less fortunate to draw upon, and they had no intention of sharing their own advantages with nameless mongrels whose magic came from who-knows-where. Some of this resistance (which was shared by the isolationists) was also based upon the very real fear that these children of Muggles would be bringing dangerous Muggle-think, no respect for, nor any *true* increase

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of Magic into the wizarding world, and would, moreover, compete with their own children for positions of influence.

It must also be pointed out that since — so far as the wizarding public was aware — at no time during the period of Seclusion had Ministry Aurors ever been called upon to go out and neutralize a self-taught Dark wizard who had gone rogue outside the wizarding world, the possible danger of leaving the magical children of mundane parents untrained was considered to no longer be an issue. It was, understandably, not widely known within the magical community that such children were being misdiagnosed as epileptics, or even dying in violent, spontaneous encounters with Wild Magic.



At this point, one must also wonder about the looming social presence of Bethlehem (Bedlam) Hospital and all the rest of the wild confusion of psychiatric problems that existed in mundane society throughout the 1600–1800's. Could the sudden reduction in the number of people in madhouses by the end of the 19th century be due not only to vitamin deficiencies being corrected and some more effective treatments for syphilis developed, but to the early identification and intervention in the lives of magical children before they were diagnosed as insane from a mismatch between their perceived realities, or by their sustaining neurological damage from a surge of Wild magic? It is certainly not beyond the bounds of possibility.

Mind you, Muggle-born magical births have never been exactly common. Using the 270–300 students at Hogwarts estimate; even now when they represent 25% of an average



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Hogwarts year's intake they only account for some 10 or so children per year in all of Great Britain and Ireland (and wherever else is within the Hogwarts quill's range).

But once these children are again being located, trained and absorbed into the wizarding world, it means that wizards have to deal with these children's families over at least a seven year period, and often longer.

In addition to the very real potential for a security breach, this sort of interaction was perceived by the isolationists to be bound to result in the sort of attachments which end in mixed marriages and a new influx of literal halfbloods (as opposed to technical halfbloods like Harry, whose parents were both magical, but whose ancestry is half Muggle).

There is no question that sustained contact with the families of Muggle-born magicals could prove a serious threat to the wizarding world's continued security. (Otoh, it also provides a climate furthering the likelihood of such attachments which might result in a new crop of literal halfbloods. Which, in the long run can be a Good Thing.) I tend to agree with those who hold that there would have been a considerable groundswell of resistance to any reintroduction of Muggle-borns into wizarding society over the course of the 19th century, and that this might very well have come into an open conflict once it was clear that these newcomers and their descendants *were* indeed encroaching upon the preserves which those more pure in bloodline considered their own (i.e., anything that wasn't actually menial work).

There was also the unpalatable consideration within the Ministry that if contact was reestablished with Muggles it would entail some form of more active negotiation with the mundane

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government. Hardly a consummation devoutly to be wished for.



Additional major contributing factors to the widespread — in some quarters — perception of the wizarding world in threat of being subject to an invasion of Muggle-borns would have come about as a result of the expansion of the middle classes, propelled by the Industrial revolution and supported by the rise of literacy across all segments of the mundane population. Even without overt wizarding interference, there was now an ever higher likelihood for any Muggle-born magical child to be identified as... *different*.

The 18th century had made great strides in bringing literacy to the working classes, and even though universal literacy was not yet a governmentally-sponsored priority of the British Commonwealth, the concept was generally being widely regarded as a Good Thing. (And might this not also have been a cumulative effect of the work of the Ministry's agents? Encouraging people to send poor children into infant schools where any magical breakthroughs were likely to be witnessed chiefly by other children, rather than putting them to work in those dangerous factories? I could easily see a forerunner of Arthur Weasley being engaged in such a mission.) Once you start herding the children of the poor into classrooms, it becomes easier to recognize exceptional children.

And, also, once more common people start gaining affluence to the extent that they are able to afford to give their children the sort of education previously only offered to gentlemen's sons — with the corresponding entrance of these people's sons into the recognized professional classes, where they are also more noticeable on an individual basis, the identification of the talents of another



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sector of Muggle-born wizards also becomes more assured.

And, let us also not overlook the fact that the popularity of boarding schools themselves virtually took off like a rocket over the course of the 19th century. And that the offer of a place at one — particularly a non-fee paying one — was a mark of distinction that few Muggle families above the poverty line would have been inclined to refuse.



The crucial piece of information that we do NOT know, however, is just when the charmed quill that now records all magical births went into commission. Nor do we know who thought that piece of technology up, and what kind of situation was going on which allowed it to be implemented?

Because, right there, you have what was probably the single most paradigm-shifting element to have been introduced into the British wizarding world since wizarding Seclusion itself. (At the end of the series there is still no clear indication that the Hogwarts quill has Continental counterparts. Nor of when it went into commission.)

Because the ONLY purpose which that quill could have served, that was not already *being* served quite adequately within the secluded wizarding community already, was to identify every Muggle-born magical child to be produced within its sensory range.

This is why I have such a gut-level conviction that the quill was a piece of Magical technology which went into effect concurrent with and as a result of the Industrial Revolution as it developed in Great Britain, early in the 19th century. Because that period was the one in which Britain experienced a popula-



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tion explosion which was unprecedented. The fallout from the general stirring up and recombination of the available genetic potential as a result of the Acts of Enclosure, the higher birth-rate, and the beginnings of getting a handle on reducing infant mortality, all occurring in quick secession are exactly the elements which would have contributed to a proportional increase of magical births, and, more to point, the survival of magical infants within the mundane population.

Given the generally crowded and unsafe conditions that the working class Briton lived in during this period, I would imagine that the (perhaps newly-formed?) Accidental Magical Reversal squad was being given a real workout and targeting potential trouble spots may have become a Ministry priority. I rather think that the Ministry's Accidental Magical Reversal Department is a far more likely client to have originally commissioned that quill than Hogwarts School. That the quill, which chiefly records potential trouble spots, is now in Hogwarts' keeping only indicates that the AMR now has some later, more finely-tuned monitoring system in place to flag the sort of surges of Magical energy they are most often called upon to deal with.

I also have my own theory regarding the manner in which the charmed quill actually works. I propose that the reasoning that went into its development progressed along something like the following lines:

Rowling has described the magical breakthroughs of juvenile wizards as magic gradually "building up" in the child until it explodes out of him, all at once, as in a sneeze. Reasoning from the starting point that; although it had long been observed that all magical children do not have an extensive history of magi-





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cal breakthroughs, the generality is that they all experience at least a few of them.

Allowing this premise; at some point in the R&D stage, one of the project's development team — probably an ex-Ravenclaw — followed that line of reasoning to its natural conclusion and hypothesized that;

IF the younger a child is; the more likely he is to be unable to suppress a magical breakthrough, AND;

IF the greater the [child's perception of] danger/stress/fear/pain to which such an immature wizard is exposed; the more *likely* he is to generate such a breakthrough in the first place, AND;

The more *immature* a child's nervous system is; the smaller the amount of Magical energy that can actually be *channeled* by such a breakthrough, THEN; IF;

The most likely experience held in common by all infant wizards capable of generating such a breakthrough is the stress/fear/pain undergone during the birthing process *itself*; THEN;

What the project's developers are trying to identify are very low-level breakthroughs which channel very small amounts of Magical energy within a specific range of frequencies.



From there it was only a matter of experimentation and monitoring to determine just what those frequencies were, and the trial and error needed to calibrate the monitoring spell to register and identify only breakthroughs occurring within that range of frequencies. Further development and testing was necessary to design and perfect the combination of secondary spells necessary to tag the source of each of these break-

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throughs with a location spell and to record the identity of the transmitters, once they were given names. The children so identified would have soon (i.e., within a matter of weeks, or at most, months) developed neurologically beyond the point that they would produce breakthroughs within the target range of frequencies, but, by then, the AMR Department would know who they were and would have been able to set up some more exact monitoring system, if necessary.

Side Note: Such breakthroughs, however small, can hardly be conducive to an easy birth. While, by this time, there are probably medi-magical procedures designed to lessen the risks attendant to both infants and mothers by such natal breakthroughs which are routinely employed by Healers and mid-witches it is quite possible that the lack of such procedures may have been a major contribution to the low family sizes generally believed to be prevalent within the wizarding community until a fairly recent date (this perception appears to have been somewhat counter-indicated by the information on the Black family tapestry sketch released in February 2006 in which the average family size over the past 150 or so years appears to have typically produced three children, with only children being quite rare).

It is certainly not beyond the reach of possibility that such a natal breakthrough may have contributed to the death following childbirth of Merope Riddle, *née* Gaunt; who gave birth to what is generally assumed to be an exceptionally magical child with no more assistance than that which was available through informal mundane birthing practices of 1926. However, now that we have been given the official Riddle backstory, it seems blindingly evident that Merope's death was most probably due



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to a profound failure of the will to live.

While it is obvious that to birth a magical child does not usually result in the death of a witch, it is possible that until comparatively recently, it might well have sometimes resulted in such internal injuries as to make future children a remote possibility. While a fair number of current wizarding families (apart from the Weasleys) appear to have two or more children, there also appears to be a fairly high representation of “only” children among Harry’s current schoolmates, both wizard and Muggle-born. It might be interesting to know whether this impression is in fact, accurate, and whether this is a recent, or a long-established trend. Or if it is merely a blip in the continuum introduced by the 20-some years of an escalating wizarding war.

It has also been suggested that by the late 20th and early 21st century, a few Muggle-born wizards may be falling through the cracks due to caesarian intervention having been implemented before the child has been subjected to sufficient stress necessary to cause the Magical breakthrough required for his birth to be registered as magical. Such a child’s subsequent neurological development would soon render any breakthroughs that he produced outside the range of frequency that the quill is calibrated to recognize. Such a situation may be the explanation for some of the rare, “late bloomers” which have reputedly been noted in recent years. (This assertion is based only upon interview data. It is not to be found anywhere in the official canon as it stands.)

Of course, once the quill actually went into commission, the result would be that even Muggle-born magical children who would otherwise have remained unidentified were now known

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and marked for recruitment into the wizarding world, at a higher rate than ever before.

And, once you stop keeping the Muggle-borns out, you find it increasingly difficult to keep the wizards in. By the end of the 20th century a fairly high percentage of wizards (even including such conspicuous examples as the afore-mentioned Mad-Eye Moody) have once again taken up residence in or adjacent to the Muggle world.

As we have already tentatively established in the preceding essay, at the start of Seclusion, those wizards who could do so, undoubtedly had taken up residence in Hogsmeade, or behind the barriers of wizarding-only enclaves in towns. But by the end of the first half of the 19th century, space within such fully secluded wizarding enclaves was probably at a premium. Although the overall wizarding population over the first 100 years or so had seriously declined, with Muggle-born recruitment and the sustained population explosion over the 19th century, the magical population of Britain would no longer have been able to maintain complete physical separation from Muggle society, even had it chosen to attempt it.

As time went on and as the wizarding population gradually rose over the 19th and 20th centuries, more and more magical families found themselves forced to take up self-secluded residences within Muggle towns or out-of-the-way parts of the countryside, where they proceeded to have as little as they could do with their Muggle neighbors. All of this is in addition to those who have traditionally clustered in the areas in and about those half-dozen or so traditionally, partially-wizarding villages. However, even those traditional partially-wiz-



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arding villages would eventually become insufficient to absorb the increase, since those villages must necessarily remain both small enough, and isolated enough to avoid drawing attention to themselves from the wider mundane world. Or attracting the sort of interest which would result in suburban development.

Those purebloods who have married incoming Muggle-borns may have increased the spread of this outward migration by raising their own families away from the secluded enclaves. Ultimately, even some purebloods of pronounced isolationist tendencies have been shown to currently maintain residences in proximity with those of Muggles, possibly only by default as the expansion of Muggle towns and cities overtook formerly isolated hamlets and villages in which the wizards' residences had long been established.



### IX. Pseudo-“Racism” in the Potterverse; Isolationists, Inclusionists, and Supremacists/ The Rise of the Death Eaters:

Of course the most fanatical of the isolationist faction can't stand any of this. Even leaving aside that purebloods — in their sense of the term — were never numerous enough to keep the wizarding world running smoothly, and still aren't, and never will be.

It is at this point that we abruptly, and finally come to a full realization that Rowling has misled us again. Although it is not certain whether this was deliberate on her part. It is entirely possible that we have chosen to lead ourselves up the garden path due to an unwitting limitation in Rowling's vocabulary of metaphor. She may have used the term “pureblood” to signify rather more



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than what it is actually relevant to. We have come away with the impression that within the Potterverse there are only two major opposing factions. One which is spearheaded by a certain type of pureblood, and one which is supported by everyone else.

This is a fallacy. There are not two opposing factions within the wizarding world, there are, at the very least, three. And whether or not you are a pureblood has very little to do with the matter. The only connection that I can see is that a certain *type* of pureblood tends to be arrogantly loud and snotty about whatever side of the issue he has decided to back.

Nor are these three distinct factions necessarily the “traditional” ones. Indeed, it is clear that at least one faction is undergoing a long and painful transitional period and another has not yet fully developed into what it is trying to become.

Wizarding Isolationists are a faction with a long history. They are also dwindling into an anachronism, and careening into irrelevance. Their single, overriding issue is the separation of wizard and Muggle societies. And they are absolutely committed to it. Nothing, in their purview is worth the risks attendant to revealing the existence of wizards to Muggles. With the adoption of the Ministry policy to recruit and absorb every identified magical child born in Great Britain and Ireland, the Isolationists' private war was irrevocably lost. Even though the ww continues to practice a reasonably high degree of seclusion from Muggle society, the borders are now permeable, and *known* to be permeable. Essentially, the Isolationists have lost the battle. And over the ensuing centuries their numbers have dwindled to an alarming degree. The families who were and remain committed to complete separation from Muggles are, by this time, indeed, almost





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universally purebloods, even if they might not have been so at the inception of this movement. Among some of them, the issue of blood purity has been conflated into that of continued avoidance of Muggle awareness, but not yet enough of them have adopted this stance as to promote another split between factions.

The policies of the Inclusionists over the period since the Hogwarts Quill went into commission has something to do with this. The Inclusionist faction are the inheritors of the position of those wizards who never objected to living among Muggles, or to dealing with them, and who had to be convinced against their continued resistance that seclusion was ever necessary. But that does not necessarily imply that the inheritors of this outlook are viewing the issue with the same clear understanding of their fellow humans that their forerunners did. The Inclusionists have also developed blind spots behind the barriers of seclusion, and they have developed into something their forerunners might not be best pleased to recognize. Their understanding of Muggles or mundane society is all too often laughable, for all their apparent good intentions. Their approach to Muggles is in many ways as insulting as Miss Granger's mission to free the House Elves, against their will. This has had unforeseen results.

The Ministry of Magic, to the best of our knowledge, has been consistent in its intention to seek out and train all magical children in Great Britain and Ireland. To this end it has fostered a policy of deliberately soft-pedaling the risks of dealing with Muggles. Which has in the long run deliberately diminished wizard's understanding of just what, or how much, Muggles are capable of. We do not know for just how long this particular policy has been in place. But the distorted "history" of the inter-



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action between the two cultures as presented by Bathilda Bagshott has certainly been in use in the classroom since 1947. With such a background it is not astonishing that wizards find it all too easy to regard Muggles with contempt.

The third and most disturbing faction are the wizarding Supremacists. They are the new kids on the block, and they are not yet what they will eventually become. The misguided disinformation policies of the Inclusionist Ministry has gone a long way in creating them, and the Ministry appears to have not yet realized this, nor does it appear to have any clear idea about addressing the situation.

The mindset of a wizarding Supremacist is hardly new. I am sure that long before Seclusion, or most modern nations were ever established there were occasional wizards (not invariably evil Dark wizards, either) who took it into their heads that being able to conduct magic qualified them to rule everyone in their vicinity. Some of them succeeded. Some of them even ruled well. Many, however were tyrants, and eventually needed to be deposed. Their stories are the basis for any number of folktales. In those days they did not ever quite manage to group into a recognizable *political* faction, since they were not really interested in ruling as a group. Although it is possible that they came close to it a few times.

Within the secluded wizarding world they are now showing a disturbing tendency to do exactly that. They have merely not yet managed to succeed to the point that they have been able to *legitimately* put themselves into power.

And being a pureblood has nothing to do with it. In fact their wholesale adoption of pureblood isolationist rhetoric is probably





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the main thing that is still holding them back.

While it is fair enough in this day and age to refer to the Isolationist faction of the ww as the “pureblood” Isolationist faction, blood purity is not truly relevant to the underlying Supremacist agenda. And its current preoccupation with appropriating the status perceived to be held by the Isolationists within wizarding society has served their goals ill. Where the Isolationist is concerned primarily only with who should properly be regarded as a qualified member of the magical community, the Inclusionists and the Supremacists are at loggerheads in their beliefs of what should be the appropriate treatment of Muggles.

The wizarding Inclusionist typically believes that Muggles should be strenuously avoided but for the most part left to their own devices and not interfered with. The Supremacist believes that they should be brought under subjection and ruled by wizards.

Which is utterly impossible under *any* form of wizarding Seculsion. The Supremacists’ aims, therefore, while they may be in opposition to those of the Inclusionist, are absolutely inimical to those of the Isolationist.

Nevertheless, at this stage of their development, the Supremacists have adopted the Isolationists’ rhetoric. And for some generations they have been winning the hearts and minds of the Isolationists’ children. Rowling has never openly acknowledged this truth within either canon nor in her interviews. But it is nonetheless the case that while the Isolationist mindset has become irrelevant, Considering where Rowling left this world, the ever-growing Supremacist view is still in its developmental stages and eventually it will manage to legitimize itself. And by then it probably won’t give a damn about blood purity.



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Where the Isolationist might legitimately, and historically view the Muggle-born as a threat, the Supremacist sees only a convenient scapegoat. He also (probably quite rightly) identifies this as the sector of the magical population least likely to support his aims.

A major current factor in this equation is the form that the initial fallout over the conflict generated by the Ministry policy to assimilate every magical child has taken. In her 2004 Edinburgh interview Rowling claimed that she did not originally have any particular model in mind for her Death Eaters and their interpretation of blood purity, but that an exhibit mounted by the Museum of Tolerance including the definitions set up by the 3rd Reich in Germany were very much in the style she had envisioned.

Some of the 3rd Reich’s guidelines in their exercise of attempting to define Judaism as a race went as follows:

From the First Supplementary Decree to the Nuremberg Laws:

### ARTICLE 2

(1) The provisions of Article I shall apply also to subjects who are of mixed Jewish blood.

(2) An individual of mixed Jewish blood is one who is descended from one or two grandparents who, racially, were full Jews, insofar that he is not a Jew according to Section 2 of Article 5. Full-blooded Jewish grandparents are those who belonged to the Jewish religious community.

As for who was to be regarded as a Jew in the first place:

### ARTICLE 5

(1) A Jew is an individual who is descended from at least three grandparents who were, racially, full Jews...

(2) A Jew is also an individual who is descended from two full-Jewish grandparents if:





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- (a) he was a member of the Jewish religious community when this law was issued, or joined the community later;
- (b) when the law was issued, he was married to a person who was a Jew, or was subsequently married to a Jew;
- (c) he is the issue from a marriage with a Jew, in the sense of Section I, which was contracted after the coming into effect of the Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honor of September 15, 1935;
- (d) he is the issue of an extramarital relationship with a Jew, in the sense of Section I, and was born out of wedlock after July 31, 1936.



However; regardless of how despicable the above unquestionably is, it is far more liberal than the legal definitions, and slave codes adopted across much of the antebellum American south which were used to define "Negro"

In which it was stated that a  $\frac{1}{16}$ th portion of "Negro blood" — i.e., one great-great-grandparent, or two great-great-great-grandparents — was sufficient to classify an individual as a Negro under the law and to be subject to enslavement and \*sale\*, unless he could produce documentary proof of having been either freeborn or legally emancipated.

Permit me to point out that it is *these* codes that would have been the established precedent that would have been the most widely known and accessible of such statutes of exclusion at the date the Hogwarts Quill was put into commission.

(Demonstrating that if you really want to see statutory evil in action, you would be better advised to look for it among the



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interests of commerce than in the service of dogma.)

It does need to be noted, even if only in passing, that however comparatively liberal the 3rd Reich might have been in the identification and definition of "undesirables," they were a good deal more exacting on the standards used to admit anyone to the inner circle of their ruling class. It required no fewer than nine generations of "Aryan" descent in order to qualify as representative of "pure" Aryan stock. Which does certainly set off echoes of Ernie MacMillan's 2nd year boast that his family had been witches and wizards for nine generations.

Still, the American model, when translated to the wizarding world also thoroughly fits the requirements of what Rowling has shown us of the matter. Indeed, rather better than the policies of the 3rd Reich.

For one thing, for a full half of the current wizarding population to still be counting its decent from previous Muggle-born witches and wizards who have been absorbed into wizarding society over at least 150 years, would appear to require something more than a mere two generations worth of tracking. Particularly given that we get no indications that wizarding "breeding" generations are any longer than Muggle ones.

For another; the American model also owes some degree of its origins to a fairly widely-quoted (in more historical days) biblical exhortation stipulating that certain issues were to be extended "even unto the fourth generation", which is certainly more in keeping with what is most likely to have been the kind of influences to have held sway at the time Seclusion was imposed, and to have remained current within the wizarding world throughout the period of "full" Seclusion.





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And there is yet another rather closely related apparent American influence strongly in evidence regarding this whole issue, as it is presented in canon as well. One that it is not difficult to guess.

*Intimately* associated, in fact.

To be sure; the European model of the Nazi regime is the closest one to Rowling's own vantage point when the time came for her to set up the basic template of the Death Eaters. And the IRA would probably also serve as a reasonable model for some of the Death Eaters' public activities. But it is the United States model of racial relations, as observed over the past 150+ years which her construction's philosophical basis and mode of operation most closely seems to be reflective of.

Say whatever you will about the Nazis; for most of their history they have been a legitimate and recognized political party which has typically functioned openly. They were a duly elected government and their leaders showed their faces publicly and you knew their names. They stated their objectives and they openly solicited public support.

Rowling's Death Eaters resemble the Nazi party a good deal less than they do the post-bellum, and indeed most of the 20th century's Ku Klux Klan. Which seems to have been founded expressly as a terrorist organization, dedicated to the suppression of the legitimate legal rights of those persons who fell outside their approved demographic. And, historically, although certain of their Leaders *have* been publicly known, they have most typically operated as terrorists, behind masks, even cultivating the practice of leaving a burning symbolic "calling card" at sites where the residents have attracted their disapproval.

Of course, being Muggles, the fire that they leave behind

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them burning doesn't burn green.

Regardless of the continuing confusion in canon produced by the (possibly deliberately) contradictory statements concerning the period, until the release of HBP, it was generally believed that over much of the initial portion of his first rise, Lord Voldemort had managed to attract a great deal of popular support. Which would support the Voldemort = Hitler association that Rowling has admitted attempting to encourage.

However, once we were given a reasonably detailed overview of the first rise of Lord Voldemort in HBP, it became clear that this parallel could *never* have been the case. In HBP Rowling didn't give Tom Riddle a Hitleresque backstory or history. Despite Rowling's determination to abruptly flip-flop, and try to unwrite the HBP backstory in DHs, her subsequent assertions are not in the least bit convincing. I cannot believe that Tom Riddle and his followers, or their blatantly anti-Seclusion rhetoric, had ever enjoyed any degree of open public support inside the wizarding world. There is absolutely no suggestion that the \*Death Eaters\* had ever been a legitimate faction in wizarding *government*. The Ministry may not have stepped in to shut him up, until it was already far too late, but Riddle was not spearheading a legitimate *political* movement. He was rabble-rousing. If Regulus Black was making scrapbooks of Riddle's newspaper cuttings, it was with reports of his statements that the Ministry had allowed to be printed in order to *frighten* people.

There is no reference, no, not one, *anywhere* in any of the six previous books of any legal restriction on Muggle-born participation, at any level in wizarding society, regardless of how solid the "glass ceiling" they need to navigate around in



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order to get ahead in the Ministry. Muggle-born wizards and witches are and have apparently always — at least on paper, or, rather, parchment — been fully enfranchised members of the wizarding world. The DEs had never been legally “in power,” even if some of their (covert) members probably held prominent positions in the Ministry. And over the whole course of HBP it was revealed that they are a *criminal* organization and their position within the wizarding world is, and has always been, that of wanted *criminals*.

Tom Marvolo Riddle is Public Enemy #1.

And when you pause to think about it. Something like the Klan could only have come about after the *real* war was fought and lost, and for the group to have been subsequently cobbled together by a lot of diehards who had seen their pet agenda snatched away, but who refuse to be denied, and are willing to force the issue, outside the law.

There had probably been forerunners of the Death Eaters who bore the same attitudes about incomers to the wizarding world. But I suspect that most of those *did* continue to support an Isolationist agenda. And others may have lacked a charismatic leader. Although we do have a couple of references in the first couple of books about a dangerous Dark wizard about 100 years earlier. But we are not going to get any further information on that head in official canon. That reference probably is a bit of flotsam that was originally supposed to lead us to Grindelwald before Rowling revamped the timeline.

The DE's mindset also resembles that of the Klan in that it appears to be based upon of the losing side of a major social conflict which has conflated all of its anger, resentment and

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opinions about what is wrong with the world into a single issue. Society in general simply cannot sustain that sort of intensity of focus over an issue which has lasted 1000 years. Over 1000 years you get the kind of attitude you see from Ron Weasley regarding werewolves, or Fudge's knee-jerk suspicion of Parselmouths. Something that's thoroughly unfair, yes. But also totally accepted, to the point that no one born inside the wizarding world even *thinks* to question or examine it. And no one gets worked up about it.

Appearances, however are deceiving. The Death Eaters as defined by Tom Riddle himself are not the losers of some recently fought wizarding social conflict. They are something else altogether. They are a splinter group which is effectively attempting to overthrow wizarding seclusion and make war upon the Muggles.

A war which they haven't the ghost of a chance of winning.

If this much had ever been admitted *inside* of canon, right there we would have had all the explanation for all of those otherwise inexplicable comments made in passing about Lord Voldemort revealing his “true goals” and thereby rendering himself unmentionable that we ever needed. We might even have had something to pin Albus's precious “11 years ago” reference upon.

But, no. This was never actually *admitted*. And to the final page Tom is lying in his teeth and claiming that his target is only Harry Potter.

Mind you, there might well be a wild card factor in play in the Potterverse related to the development of sociopaths. If the influences related to this factor operate as they have been postulated in the article entitled ‘The Pachyderm in the Parlor’, then there might readily be some widespread anxiety related



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to Muggle-raised wizards which could easily be tapped into. Particularly if Lord Voldemort is in fact not the first such to have troubled the wizarding world since the Hogwarts Quill was put into commission. But if this is the case it would not be Lord Voldemort or his supporters who would be raising this issue with the wizarding public.

No. The rise of the DEs is a fairly recent development, and their numbers are a good deal less than they appear. This is a group which has latched hold of a spuriously similar historical line of rhetoric, and is using that as justification to give their own views some pseudo-historical legitimacy. Much the way that Rowling tries to legitimize her plot lines by mimicking Real World issues.

No one apart from a few Muggle-borns (and probably not even Albus Dumbledore) even consider that keeping House Elves enslaved might be wrong. I am sure that any DE worth his salt can quote you chapter and verse as to exactly why Muggles, and Muggle-borns, and Muggle-thought must be expunged from the Wizarding World with fire and sword, and why Purebloods are qualified to rule over all humanity. That kind of effort put into what intractably remain demonstrably unsound justifications can't be sustained over 1000 years by any viable society as a whole.

Societies will retain the *memory* of such biases, yes. And society will undoubtedly include individuals who continue to uphold such biases in defiance of all common sense. But even a cursory overview of history will support my contention that society does not maintain a practice of this kind of pogrom over sustained periods of time. I think you'll see if you investigate the matter, that the actual practice of genocide has always waxed



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and waned depending on some other factor which is going on in a given geographical area at the time. The most obvious parallel to this sort of cycle can be readily traced over a couple of millennia's history of anti-Semitism.

Nor is it difficult to recognize where the foundation impulses for such biases come from. This is a completely natural response within the Them/Us reflexes that seem to be hardwired into the human psyche. Rogers and Hammerstein notwithstanding, you do not "have to be carefully taught" prejudice. Actually, it is wide-scale tolerance that must be taught, and taught *repeatedly*, before it has any possibility of ever sinking in.

To the Self, the 'Other' will always be a potential threat. The most basic method of reducing the threat represented by the existence of the Other to a manageable level is to diminish the Other as an individual entity. If he is inferior he is therefore less capable of being able to harm the Self — except when he is assembled in large numbers.

The developing Self first becomes aware of its Mother figure, then of the members of its immediate family, and later, over a subsequent period of association, socialization, and habit, of the tribe. All these levels of association are perceived to be to some degree extrapolations of the Self and are recognized as legitimate connections with whom the Self might reasonably identify, and toward whom some level of personal responsibility on the part of the Self is owed.

Anyone outside the tribe is automatically, at least upon first encounter, the Other.

In practice, after a period of adjustment and familiarization, many such Others are accepted as being additional members





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of one's own tribe. Typically these are those Others who by appearance, speech or behavior give off the same unconscious signals as are given by the current members of the tribe. People with a significantly different appearance or those who send unfamiliar cultural signals typically remain the Other and are viewed with suspicion, and generally kept at a distance. Or they find themselves "colonized" and regarded as something in the nature of an exotic pet.

What is more, most humans actively go *looking* for artificial distinctions by which to distinguish the Other, and to thus limit the number of persons to and for whom they must admit some measure of personal responsibility. The typical human's social awareness does not seem to be particularly well-calibrated for accepting large numbers of randomly encountered separate individuals as legitimate connections to the Self.

It has been the work of millennia to attempt (and NOT to succeed, or certainly not yet) to suppress the impulse to automatically read Other as "enemy," and to attempt to derail the process of reading Other just as automatically as "inferior." And we simply are not there yet.

Why should wizards be any different?



Targeting the obvious outsider is a very cheap shot, but the behavior of society over time does tend to settle into exactly that kind of lowest common denominator. And, when you get a specific and recognizable group whose own internally mandated traditions pretty well demand that they openly demonstrate their *difference* from their neighbors, the combination is



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guaranteed to go toxic at irregular intervals. In the specific case of anti-Semitism, the history has always been one of periods of social assimilation alternating with periods of persecution. And the responsibility for this, to a large extent, falls upon both sides.

In every single case, the understood reasons justifying the individual rounds of persecution all probably boil down into "because They are not Us." But while the actual claims invoked by each cycle have almost certainly differed from period to period, I suspect that the rhetoric of earlier periods has virtually always been revived, refurbished and echoed by later ones — again, in order to give the current pogrom some additional veneer of historical legitimacy.

And the anti-Semitism parallel is a particularly good one, too. For, again, there is no more outwardly visible difference between a Jew and his gentile neighbors, than there is between a wizard and a Muggle. Rhetoric and the delusions of the 3rd Reich aside, we are not dealing with issues of race here. It is the individual's culture and practices which demonstrate his differences. In the wizard's case, sometimes involuntary behavior such as a juvenile breakthrough of spontaneous magic.

But, if we intend to follow this parallel to its logical conclusions in search of further supportive data, we need to direct our attention, not *only* to the historic experience of the Jews in Europe and around the world, but to the development of policy within the modern day Nation State of Israel. Where, at least until fairly recently (and probably even as I write) just to be born and raised as a Jew is not enough to automatically make you an acceptable candidate for citizenship.

The official state religion of Israel, to the best of my under-





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standing, is Orthodox Judaism. Reform Jews (who are hardly an insignificant percentage of the whole) or Conservative Jews, let alone the followers of Reconstructionist Judaism were/are not officially recognized as being Jews at all insofar as eligibility for Israeli citizenship is concerned (or at least not according to a classic rant from one of my oldest friends). But, at least in the case of the Nation State of Israel, one has the option of converting to the accepted State form of their co-religion. You cannot convert to being a pureblood if you are Muggle-born or of mixed ancestry.

Yes, by all means, I think that if we chose, we could indeed find several various real world parallels for the wizarding world and it's opposing major factions...



Speaking of which; the DE's opposite number, those blood-traitors generally understood to be represented by Arthur Weasley and his cohorts with their dubious Muggle Protection Act, are probably another comparatively recent social phenomenon. They represent a polarized opposing faction to the developing Supremacist movement. And in a way, for all their apparent good intentions, their agenda is every bit as dangerous to their society as a whole as that of the Death Eaters. But, although comparatively recent in development, they are not exactly newcomers.

Cornelius Fudge's most recent handlers notwithstanding, this is the faction which has held the upper hand in general Ministry policy, or at least among the Hogwarts Board of Governors since Albus Dumbledore was a boy, and they are beginning to lose their grip. Which means there is a power vacuum

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in the making. Bathilda Bagshot's 'History of Magic' (c. 1947) with its watered-down official claptrap of how "We hid ourselves away to avoid being exploited" and its assurances that almost no *real* witches were actually burnt (actually true, if we're talking about England), is an obviously distorted piece of whitewashing intended to reassure the young wizard (and, quite possibly Rowling's perceived young reader) that the big bad Muggle is no danger to *him*. I have a strong suspicion that by the end of the 17th century (not Western Civ's finest hour, shall we say?) the average wizarding view of Muggles was probably not all that different from its present opinion of Giants.

It needs to be pointed out that this crude and condescending attempt to rewrite their *own* history is surely no more of an inherent distortion than the rewriting of Muggle history that the Ministry appears to have already accomplished, in which the very existence of Magic in the world seems to have been successfully overwritten.

The resulting benefit to the development of Muggle society, and the improvement of Muggle welfare is unquestionable. But is it really just?

*Do the ends really justify the means?*

The corruption at the heart of wizarding society has reached the point that truth is something that no one will take the responsibility for preserving. Nor does anyone in authority recognize that truth even *needs* to be preserved. And that can only lead to disaster.

By the end of HBP I thought that the situation could only worsen. The removal of the threat of Lord Voldemort would not solve this problem. If anything, his removal would accelerate it.



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Which in the end will result in a society without truth, without justice, without any of the virtues which merit upholding. At the very best, a society of “nice” will have replaced whatever value is understood to be inherent in the concept of “good.” Let alone that of “best.” And all judgments will be subjective.

As it turns out, the situation at the end of DHs was even worse than I could have anticipated. Rowling has deliberately pushed the ww into the worst position it has been in living memory, and summarily left it there.

And then threw us a smarmy little epilogue in which it has been made clear that even 19 years later *nothing* has changed.

There should be a new Dark Lord coming down the track in about another 20 minutes.

Another factor that has also usually been called to general attention by this stage of an examination of the matter is that the point at which all these Nazi/Klan/IRA parallels irrevocably break down is when we take a reality check and admit that where the Nazi/Klan/etc. rhetoric can usually be said to be *obviously* in the wrong, given that there is absolutely *no* provable human quality in which their defined-as “inferior races” are deficient, from a wizarding standpoint, there is no question but that Muggles really *are* inferior in the *only* quality which distinguishes wizards.

At which point the issue resolves itself into the one overriding question of;

Who gets to define what constitutes “human”?

## Regarding the Potterverse Part I

# Oh Wide, Wide (Wizarding) World!

Topics pertaining to general subjects related to the Wizarding World itself, as it is portrayed throughout the series.

Which is to say, modern-day Wizarding Britain. In general, how things *appear* to be done there. This touches upon various social issues and the Art of Wandmaking.



## Wizarding Britain, by the Numbers

### Historical Note:

This article, being concerned with variations of the population demographics of Wizarding Britain, originally was two separate essays, entitled; 'Estimating Wizarding Population' and 'The Rise of the Mudbloods'.

Both of these were among the original essays first posted in April 2003. But even at that time it has to be admitted that it was basically an exercise in spinning a web without any wool.

Rowling simply can not be relied upon anywhere that numbers are in play. It's left up to us to try to cobble something together ourselves. Even if we do use some of her statements as our departure point. Only... one has to ask, *which* statements?

This becomes even more problematic when one attempts to determine what percentage of modern Wizarding Britain conforms to which degrees of "blood purity." Which is yet another can of worms to need to sort.

Let alone trying to extrapolate how long it took Wizarding Britain to reach these percentages.

JK Rowling never confirmed my original theory that upon the passing of the International Act of Wizarding Secrecy in 1692 all interaction with Muggles became expressly forbidden; only for that ruling to be modified about a century later to allow for the discreet identification, training and recruitment into the wizarding world of Muggle-born magical children.

For that matter, I am no longer altogether convinced of it myself. I have come to suspect that the formal Act of Wizarding Secrecy hadn't all that much to do with the issue.



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Okay. We've got a major disconnect on our hands. In the joint interview which followed the release of HBP, JK Rowling revised her earlier statements that the enrollment of Hogwarts Academy was about 1,000 students, down to about 600.

Unfortunately she *also* made an unhelpfully vague-sounding guess that the entire wizarding population of Great Britain was about 3,000. This flatly does not work, either. Nor did she ever correct, or modify, or contradict either of these statements later, in the course of DHs.

Rowling admits that she is bad at maths. In fact she is so bad at maths (even where they intersect with common sense!) that it is ridiculous. If we want to start from a base that is even remotely plausible, we are just going to have to do the retrofit, from scratch, ourselves. And to just try to keep it in something like the same ballpark on one end of the equation, and forget about the other.

Because an enrollment of 600 is *far too high* for a population of 3,000. Certainly if we are talking about an enrollment of *only* the children between the ages of 11 and 17/18. If we were talking about all the *school-aged* children from about the age of 6, yes, *maybe*, or *everybody* under the age of 17, that might about work. But not if we only start counting them once they reach the age of 11.

And certainly not if Rowling's statement that wizards may have much longer life spans than Muggles is to be taken seriously. The statement was made long enough ago that it might reasonably be dismissed as a "cool idea" that she never managed to actually incorporate into the story, but she still *made*





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that statement, and expected us to *believe* it.

In point of fact, she has since scaled back what she actually shows us to a considerable degree. There does seem to be a fair minority of wizards who live into their 2nd century. But my own extrapolation of an estimated potential wizarding lifespan of 90–120 years still seems to be about right.

It is clear that lifespans on the order of that of Griselda Marchbanks, or Bathilda Bagshott (who must both be, or have been, about 135–150) are vanishingly rare, but she did finally bring herself to depict a few of the “Wizards of the Month” on the official site as having comfortably passed their century mark reaching the ages of 110–120. So we cannot simply dismiss the statement altogether.

We probably should continue to scale it back, however. For all of my own calculations I will be working from the basis of a projected wizarding lifespan of about 90–120 years. This corresponds to a presumed “natural” wizarding lifespan, without any additional enhancement by lifestyle modifications or medi-magical procedures which I had been postulating to be the case since this site first went up. Clearly such artificial extensions to a wizard’s life are not available.

However what Rowling has failed to take into account is that if you have a population which lives, in the main, around 100 years, you have to have an “age cohort” of individuals in *every* representative year. And this age cohort will reflect, to at least some extent, the number of individuals who were born in that particular cohort’s birth year.

Assuming relatively constant age cohorts, an enrollment of 600 students will need an annual intake of about 85 students.



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Ergo; a Hogwarts enrollment of 600 would imply that roughly 85 magical children are born every year.

If you project a lifespan of about a century the bulk of this age cohort will be supposed to have survived for that century.

That does not add up to a total population of 3,000. It adds up to 8,500.

That’s nearly three times as many.

And if the wizarding population is only 3,000, then the projected wizarding lifespan is certainly nothing even close to a century. Your whole population either winnows out alarmingly across the board, or the average wizard doesn’t make it to the age of 35.

And no, we cannot factor in the wizarding war. We are trying to calculate the results of *natural* processes here.

So which of these statements do we throw out?

From what we are shown in the course of the series, it seems improbable to suppose that more than half of all the wizards born abruptly start dying off as soon as they leave school.

And an enrollment of 600 in a society in which people live to the ages of 90–120 ought to have a total population of between 8,000 and 9,000. Which *would* actually fit what she shows us of their general standard of living.

But to be honest, she has never really shown us a Hogwarts enrollment which would have plausibly “read” as being as high as 600, has she? Not in the day-to-day matters where it counts.

Oh, sure, she occasionally pans the camera over a crowd scene as a background prop, but there are still only 12 subjects taught at the school, and only one professor to teach each subject, and class sizes run to about 20 students per class, and no more than about 6 classes are held in a day. This doesn’t add up





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to 1000 students. It doesn't add up to 600, either.

Rowling consistently shows us far fewer students (about half as many) than she claims are actually there, which has finally forced me to simply dismiss any of her statements about the total Hogwarts enrollment.



Up to a point. On this subject, for a number of years I was more inclined to take Rowling's stated word for the matter over the impression that we are given in the books themselves. But that attempt to dodge the issue no longer works.

And I also think that had she really *intended* to depict a student body of 600 we have been *particularly* ill-served by the Harry filter. Admittedly, Harry is not a child who takes a great deal of interest in other people. In ideas, events, mysteries, puzzles, yes. Sometimes. He has a keen, if inconsistent, interest in all of these — once they get his attention. But not *people*. Or not people *in general*. He does not particularly notice people unless their existence is forced on him, or something about them has caught his attention. If there are really supposed to be 500–600 students at Hogwarts then where Harry is concerned we have simply never had the whole story.

For example; how likely is it that the only 6th year student in Gryffindor House in the year of OotP was Katie Bell? But have we ever, in the first five books, some 2,600+ pages, ever heard of another? Nope. Not until HBP, wherein we were suddenly introduced to Katie's friend Leanne and year-mate Cormac MacClagen, only because Harry now had to personally deal with them.

Okay then, how likely is it that the only students in the year



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following Harry in Gryffindor House are Ginny Weasley and Colin Creevy? Really? Who are they? In fact who were the Prefects for their year. Ginny didn't make the cut, and we never heard that Colin did either. Are there any students at all in the year after Ginny and Colin? Well, yes, there are. Romilda Vane and a whole raft of other girls. But when did we ever get a hint of that? For that matter neither Romilda nor Cormac sound like the kind of kids to keep themselves quietly in the background, but they certainly never showed up on *Harry's* radar until HBP.

Were the only 7th year Gryffindors in OotP Lee Jordan and the members of the Quidditch team? For that matter who was the Gryffindor male Prefect in the Twins' year? (Clue; it's not Lee Jordan. Harry would probably have noticed *that*.) Are we even sure that we know all of the students in Harry's *own* year, if it's five to a dorm, and any others were assigned to a different dormitory? And this is just in Gryffindor House!

If you were only attending to Harry's impressions, you could be excused for assuming that there are no more than a hundred or so students in the whole school. And yet even Harry is supposedly aware that there are hundreds of students in the stands at a Quidditch game. At one point I believe he even registered that there were a couple of hundred of them in Slytherin green. Which would assume at least 800 total students right there. There were allegedly also an inordinately large number of students cited as having attended the Yule Ball in year 4. (About 1200) But none of this is convincing on a day-to-day basis.

No, I'm afraid that our Harry's-eye-view of the population of Hogwarts is just not good enough, or comprehensive enough to be going on with. Harry is simply too unreliable a witness in





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this particular subject. We can't just take his "word" for it. We get no usable picture of the student population from Harry's PoV. Not if there is a student body of 600.



Let me repeat: Ms Rowling shows us a 7-year school with only ONE instructor of each subject offered (at least until Firenze showed up), dorms which house no more than five boys or girls per house per year, and combined classes with equipment enough to only serve 20 students. Having allegedly trained as a teacher herself, one might have expected her to have a better grip on the logistics than this. And this makes no sense at all when stacked up against 200 people in Slytherin green at a Quidditch match, or close to 1200 students at the Yule Ball.

She knows better than this. It is positively insulting to blithely hand us a school of 600 students wherein there are 12 subjects taught and yet there is still only one teacher for each subject for the whole school, and expect us to accept it.

To teach 600 students, prepare lessons, oversee classes and mark papers, all on your own is not humanly possible even if these are wizards. A teacher in a Muggle secondary school carrying a full course load doesn't deal with more than a couple of hundred. If that.

And, on that day-to-day level, what she actually shows us is dormitories that house about five for each year (one for boys and one for girls), and combined classes numbering about 20. That does not add up to an enrollment of 600 students over 7 years. Particularly not against a total population of 3,000.

Assuming that the attendance at Hogwarts is reasonably



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constant; if approximately 600 students represents seven years of the entire wizarding population's births for all of wizarding Britain and Ireland, then you must get around 85-86 new students each year, which, given that the charmed quill records all magical births in its range, right there tells us the total average annual number of Magical births within Hogwarts territory. If there are any children who do not attend they would be rare. In HBP we were shown some of the sort of maneuvers that are gone through to ensure that any magical child would be enabled to attend Hogwarts.

From Rowling's statements in the joint interview of July 2005 she seems to be trying to "over think" the problem, and has hit upon the number 600 because wizards are a rare breed, and she claims that a school of 600 would be tiny for all of Great Britain and Ireland.

And it probably would be. But if the total population is around 3,000 it isn't tiny *enough*.

Although from any reasonable standpoint, a total population of 3,000 still sounds a great deal too low for their standard of living. At the time of that statement, Rowling also compounded the problem by making some comments about the actual number of magical people being filled out by magical beings that look basically human (hags, etc.) but aren't. Which makes her estimate even more implausible.

But we will try to keep this in the back of our minds. First we have some other factors to consider.



Frankly I think we may need to dismiss both of Rowling's





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statements as stabs in the dark and calculate from the prep work that she tells us that she actually *put* into the books, and that we *know* that she has put into the books — because she has shared some of it with us, and that part of it she has gone on to *show* us in the books.

Rowling tells us when she sat down to plan out the story, she created 40 individual students in Harry's year.

And she did. Some years ago in a televised interview called something like 'Harry Potter and Me' she showed us a list of their names with various marginal notes.

And by the end of the series we've met most (although never quite all) of them. Or at least herd their names mentioned in passing. So I think we can absolutely take her at her word on this statement. That statement is true. Those 40 students existed in the story, even if we never did meet a handful of them face to face.

And, consequently, if we know the Hogwarts enrollment for *one* year, we ought to be able calculate the total enrollment for 7 years well enough to extrapolate at least a ballpark figure for the total wizarding population that fits what we see. Kind of.

The Hogwarts enrollment estimate is an easy one. It has been out on the web ever since that televised interview (which I think may have been in the year 2000) despite all of her statements otherwise. If there are 40 students in an average year, then there must be approximately 280 students at Hogwarts. This number probably varies by 6–12 in either direction year by year. Harry's birth cohort, having been born at the very height of VoldWar I may be slightly smaller than average, but the variation is probably well under a dozen.

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And, surprisingly enough, just about everything Rowling has ever *shown* us (rather than *told* us) about life at Hogwarts, supports this number.

If we calculate a standard birth cohort of 40 with a projected lifespan of 90–120 years you get a total population of 3,600–4,800.

Offset against a Muggle population for Great Britain and Ireland that is now up to around 65,000,000 that doesn't really look proportionally *that* far off from Rowling's estimate of 3,000.

And it's clear that most wizards don't actually make it to the age of 90–120. There are a lot of magical illnesses out there that tend to carry them off before they realize their full potential life spans. And besides, magic is *dangerous*. Wizards are remarkably good at blowing themselves up.

There was also a terrorist war going on among them for over 20 years. The current population of human wizards may very well *be* around 3,000 by now. Although I doubt it. I don't think the casualties of VoldWar I were anything like as high as the fans would like to make them.

For that matter, it is difficult to imagine a wizarding population of 3,000 managing to survive at all, let alone to survive and enjoy as high a standard of living as is clearly the norm by Harry's day, but what Rowling actually shows us at Hogwarts supports this projection. Sort of.

We just have to ignore what she keeps trying to say about the matter..



The most recent adjustment which has been forced upon us is whether one can safely factor in a projected lifespan of some



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100+ years. In interviews made around the time of the release of HBP Rowling stated her contention that wizards normally live until some magical ailment carries them off. Which is to say that they rarely die of old age alone.

They do, however, die of accidents and foul play with somewhat alarming frequency, and magical ailments appear to be fairly widespread. An outbreak of dragon pox carried off Abraxus Malfoy at some point recently enough for his grandson to be claiming to remember statements which he is supposed to have made. Given that anything with a "creature-pox" name has all the potential to produce a virulent epidemic, it is not impossible to reflect that the same outbreak, or a similar one, may have also removed the Princes, Severus Snape's maternal grandparents, explaining how he comes to be living in what I suspect to have been their house. Or even the elder Snapes. We have no reason to believe that a Muggle living with witches or wizards would have a significant resistance to all magical maladies. They are both human, after all.

Rowling also informs us that James Potter lost both of his aging parents, quite suddenly, by means of yet another outbreak of a magical ailment which, if the dates of that silly tapestry are to be taken seriously, turns out to have been in 1977. (And excuse me but 57 is not what I would call elderly, even if Rowling does.)

It has also belatedly occurred to me that by splitting off from general human society around 1692, it is rather unlikely that wizards have yet groked the concept of immunization, which was only introduced to England toward the end of the 18th or in the early 19th century. Wizards may be able to treat Muggle diseases very quickly and completely, but it occurs to me that

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they probably do little or nothing to prevent them.

And most of the wizards whose birth and death dates are known to us (from Rowling's Wizard of the Month notations, and Famous Wizard Chocolate Frog Cards) seem to have rarely managed to attain an age much past 90. Although, as I say, she is getting better at that. Never mind the examples of Griselda Marchbanks and Bathilda Bagshot, who lived to be very old indeed. And are also unique.

Which makes any sort of population projections dicey to say the least.

Because while Rowling may be perfectly accurate in stating that wizards *can* live to more advanced ages than Muggles, it is beginning to look as though a comparatively small number of them actually manage to do it..

And we do not know what that percentage may be.



A key issue that almost all subsequent speculations on just how the wizarding world actually operates depends upon is the question of just how many wizards and witches actually populate this secluded wizarding world. Because most of the visions as to how these people must manage things hangs upon whether, first, there are enough people to actually do the work that such a service requires, and second, that there be enough revenue to underwrite the living expenses of the people who provide such service. Up to the release of 'Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince' Rowling made no solid statement on this issue, apart from a comment in one of her early interviews that Hogwarts is not a fee-paying school, although books, materials



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and uniforms are the responsibility of the students and their families. Ergo; Hogwarts probably amounts to the equivalent of being state-supported. Its running expenses and staff's salaries paid by some as yet unidentified sector of the wizarding world itself, presumed until further notice, to be the Ministry of Magic, with additional funding via the Board of Governors, although additional private (alumni?) donations are, of course, always very welcome. Assuming, that is, that there is not some degree of funding from the *Muggle* government. If so, Hogwarts may indeed *be* a state-supported school.

Post-HBP, we now know that there is also a special fund for students with severe financial hardships.

Rowling has also stated that there are no wizarding universities, and that if wizarding children are not taught the basics at home they are sent to Muggle primary schools. Clearly *general* education is not a concern of the Ministry of Magic. The *magical* training of young witches and wizards, however, is. Hogwarts, is, therefore, effectively a vocational, or *trade* school. And that one's attendance is effectively a modern version of an apprenticeship system.

Of course, about a year or so after making that previous statement, Rowling amplified it with the information that wizarding parents typically do *not* enroll their children in Muggle schools due to security issues. And that, consequently wizard-born children are all but universally educated at home; typically only *Muggle*-born wizards are educated in Muggle primary schools.

We have been given at least a few other clues regarding this issue as well. From which we may determine that the wizarding population of Great Britain and Ireland (or, rather, the area within the range of the Hogwarts quill, which covers Great Brit-

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ain and Ireland) is probably not much more than would support a rather small town. If even that. If the total human magical population of Great Britain and Ireland really *doesn't* exceed 3,000, close to half of them could be living in and around Hogsmeade.

My earliest calculations were based upon the statements that Hogwarts, *act*o all of Rowling interviews on the subject, is the only magical training center in Great Britain. (Otherwise, one might expect most of the Slytherins to be off at Pureblood High or some such place.) And it is the Hogwarts staff which has custody of the charmed Quill which records all magical births in its catchment area.

So. Rowling originally told us that there are about 1000 students in attendance. She has since modified this number to 600, which is still too high to correspond with what she has shown us in the books. This newer estimate is taken from the joint interview with the founders of TheLeakyCauldron.com and Mugglenet.com immediately following the release of HARRY POTTER AND THE HALF-BLOOD PRINCE.

I would not count upon this information remaining stable, either. Rowling openly admits that she is weak on the number thing. One of the better descriptions online is that her grasp of numbers is "impressionistic" rather than accurate. This seems a very fair summation.



We have only been told of two schools of comparable size (and presumably age) to Hogwarts in Europe. There is a great deal of suggestion that there may be other, smaller schools on the continent in addition to Beaubatons and Durmstrang. But



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we have no indication of how many or what size these might be. In any case, the wizarding population on the continent must be more widely dispersed than it is in Great Britain and Ireland, which are, after all, island nations.

Support for this last hypothesis can be read in the fact that Viktor Krum, from Bulgaria (A Balkan State, sharing boundaries with Greece and Turkey) is a student of Durmstrang, which from its climate and Germanic name one would most likely expect to be located somewhere in the northern part of Europe, possibly on the Baltic Sea, i.e., Scandinavia. This alone strongly suggests that any geographic division between the catchment areas of Beaubatons and Durmstrang is that between Western and Eastern Europe, rather than that between North and South.

However, we have also been told that Muggle-born students are not admitted at Durmstrang, which would tend to suggest that if Muggle-born witches and wizards are not simply left untrained on the Continent, there must be some other school, or schools, which serve them. If the 25% Muggle-born demographic that is the norm in Britain is also the norm in Continental Europe, one might expect such a school, at most, to be about one third the size of Durmstrang.

Or maybe not. We don't know how many schools may be in wizarding Europe. Only that Durmstrang and Beaubatons are the two closest in size to Hogwarts, and are the two schools which traditionally take part in the TriWizard Tournament. Which hadn't been held for a couple of centuries.

This also strongly suggests that the Hogwarts quill may be unique. The student body of these two leading European schools is clearly not determined by such methods. Nor are they likely

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to be administered by such a conveniently "state-supported" principle of inclusion. A moment's reflection will remind us that if, unlike Hogwarts, their student body routinely draws from multiple nations and the jurisdictions of several European Ministries, they cannot be managed by such a simple all-inclusive selection process as that of Hogwarts which is supported and to some degree overseen and administered by the British Ministry of Magic. It could very well be that Beaubatons, as well as Durmstrang are both effectively schools for the elite, within the magical community. This would go some way towards explaining the initial haughtiness of the Beaubatons guests as well.

At this point we cannot simply make a blanket statement as to there being X many additional European schools of Magic that we have been given no information on. But the indication seems to be that Great Britain and Ireland, being island populations, may have a more highly concentrated level of magical traits within the general (mundane) population, resulting in a higher number of magical births, per capita than on the Continent. With the Hogwarts Quill in the equation, the British Ministry certainly may be able to keep more accurate records of what the magical population of those islands actually is.



As to attempting to make a general estimate of a worldwide wizarding population, it stands to reason that an estimated number of wizards could be extrapolated by determining what fractional percentage Great Britain and Ireland's possible 3,250 magicals (a general ballpark estimate chosen strictly for convenience. It is within the general parameters, and by using it, the



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numbers come out even. We are still basically weaving a web without wool, after all) is of the total recorded mundane population of those nations, and to apply that percentage to the total worldwide population.

To make such an estimate, we will have to agree to be resigned to assuming that the result of such calculations will almost certainly result in a miscount, possibly a considerable miscount. We cannot automatically assume as high a ratio of wizards to Muggles worldwide as can be found in Great Britain. Which itself may be an overestimate due to the uncertainty over the length of the average, rather than the extrapolated potential wizarding lifespan. At this point we have absolutely no canon support for believing that the per capita representation of wizards to Muggles is necessarily as high on the Continent as it appears to be in Great Britain.

Note: This "high" ratio is relative only. According to the internet, the combined Real World population of Great Britain and Ireland is estimated at something around 65 million. Of which, in the Potterverse, only some 10 or so births per year are Muggle-born magicals. It is at this point uncertain what percentage of the 20-so estimated annual halfblood magical births would be recorded in the mundane birth records. It is also only assumed that the 10 or so purebloods born inside the secluded wizarding world may not also appear in the mundane census. In point of fact, they very possibly may.

Given the growing evidence to suggest that for all their apparent ignorance of Muggles, and Muggle culture, the majority of wizards actually live out in the world among them, the assumption that their births go unrecorded becomes an unten-

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able hypothesis. However, we cannot resolve this conflict with the information at our disposal..



A further complication is added by the existence of the Hogwarts quill. It really does seem likely that this particular magical artifact is unique and that due to its existence the wizarding census of Britain and Ireland is a good deal more accurate than those of Continental Europe. Even if only due to the opportunities for mistakes due to the difficulty of sharing data over the jurisdictions of multiple Ministries. In the absence of something like the Hogwarts quill, it seems very probable that there are Muggle-born magical births which go unrecorded there and such children are only identified, if at all, when they have public magical breakthroughs strong enough to be detected by whatever means of monitoring for magical activity (if any) are utilized by the different European Ministries.

But I could be wrong in this supposition. It is entirely possible that it is the Continental Ministries who possess such quills, rather than the schools.

I suspect that if the proportion of Muggle-born magicals to the total population seen at Hogwarts (allegedly 25%) is anything even close to a worldwide estimate, then areas with large mundane populations might generate a higher number of magical births as well. It is difficult to factor how much more thinly spread the sources of magical traits in the general population might be over large geographic areas, however, and how this dispersion would affect the number of magical births.

Which may be why Rowling says there is no wizarding uni-



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versity. The wizarding population in Europe is not quite high enough to really support one yet.

Plus, the logistics of the matter do not indicate that such an institution would be performing a function that offers an adequate return for the resources necessary to support it. If we estimate that even as many as one out of every 3 Hogwarts NEWT students would choose to continue their education into something comparable to a conventional 3-year university, that would only give this hypothetical institution a British student body of under 50. Such a low number of students would severely limit the number of instructors such an institution could afford to retain, which would limit the number of subjects that would be available for study. Which would further reduce the number of students who would seek such instruction.

Which at the very least would suggest that if such a university is ever founded, it will almost certainly be multi-national, serving several countries across the European Union.

What is more, the wizarding world, unlike our own, does not have such a surplus of newly-qualified young people that it needs to establish such artificial standards as the demand for advanced degrees in order to delay their entry into the workforce. The standard within the wizarding world at present appears to be to accept candidates into a number of specialized training programs and then to train them in the specific requirements for their chosen profession, directly.

For that matter, since we have already been directly told in the text that at NEWT-level a Professor can refuse to accept you into their class if your performance on the OWLs was substandard, it seems quite likely that the last two years at Hogwarts

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already constitutes the equivalent of an undergraduate degree.

As the total wizarding population of Europe continues to increase, it is possible that there will be a (small, international) University in their future within the next several generations. But there is no need for us to go there right at the moment.



So: first to calculate the percentage of magicals to mundanes within Great Britain and Ireland and apply the findings to the known worldwide Muggle population, and try to get some idea of just how bad the situation really is:

These estimates, again, are based on the Rowling interviews which have stated that Hogwarts is the only magical training Academy in Great Britain and Ireland, and the calculation above that there are currently just under 300 Hogwarts students (estimate adjusted for common sense). Consequently, apart from those hypothetical Muggle-borns whose parents do not permit them to attend, the wizarding youngsters whose parents send them overseas to Beaubatons or Durmstrang, or those hypothetical rare cases who, due to some overriding (health?) consideration continue to be educated at home, those 300 or so kids represent all the wizards and witches who were born over a 7-year period, and are, ergo, a representative 7-year slice of the total wizarding population of Great Britain and Ireland.

At the other end of this equation, we have an overall Muggle population estimate of about 65 million.

What we need to remember is that these are the estimates for Great Britain and Ireland. We have a number of clues in canon that the political boundaries between Muggle Europe



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and wizing Europe no longer exactly correspond with one another and that in wizing Europe, whose establishment predates the uprising of 1916, Ireland never split off from the UK.

Taking the 65 million figure as a base, approximately 3,250 wizards would come in at 0.005% of the total population at a rough (very rough) estimate. That is: five thousandths of one percent.

$$65,000,000=100\%$$

$$6,500,000=10\%$$

$$650,000=1\%$$

$$65,000=0.1\%$$

$$6,500=0.01\%$$

$$3,250=0.005\%$$

(Now you see what I mean by having chosen to use numbers that come out even.)

Therefore, if we apply this formula to a current overall estimated world population which, according to the wikipedia online encyclopedia just tipped the 65 billion point in February of 2006, we can project a ballpark estimated worldwide wizing population of 325,000. Which is probably extremely inaccurate. I very much doubt that thinly populated areas produce as high a percentage of magical births as heavily populated ones, and much of the world is not all that heavily populated. It is extraordinarily convenient for our purposes that the worldwide numbers fall out to being almost exactly 100 times that of Great Britain and Ireland, but this really is a coincidence, and largely a result of rounding off.

So, even ignoring the unknown attrition rate, and its attendant miscount; we can only project a worldwide wizing population of under half a million. Trying to resolve an overcount

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could reduce this by as much as a third.

It should also be noted that some of this population may consist of as yet unidentified Muggle-borns, and that part of it will be spread very thinly over a large geographic area, making it more difficult to identify, contact and train, rather than collected into organized enclaves within mundane settlements. Indeed, much of sub-Saharan Africa's magical population appears to operate openly on a tribal level, out among it's Muggle neighbors, as may well be the case in some other geographic locations with an appreciable number of aboriginal peoples.

It also seems clear that the although the worldwide wizing population is probably at the highest point that it has ever been, it is dangerously low when compared to the non-wizing human population. And, that the increase in Muggle population and Muggle longevity over the 19th and 20th centuries may well be crowding the wizards out. More to the point, the wizing population may be even more dangerously low when compared to that of other presumably highly efficient magical races, such as Goblins. Unless Goblin birthrates are significantly lower than human birthrates. Of which we have been given no indication whatsoever.

Which renders the pureblood fanatics' ongoing debate over whether or not Muggle-born magicals should really be given the right to be admitted into the wizing world into exactly the sort of a piece of monumental stupidity and short-sightedness that it appears to be to the reader.



The second part of this exercise is to estimate the magical birth-



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rate in comparison to the mundane birthrate, and to try to determine the Muggle-born birthrate within the mundane birthrate.

These calculations are going to be even more abstract, arbitrary and inexact. They are also probably completely hosed since I have begun to suspect that the numbers I was able to find for Ireland are actually only the numbers for Ulster. But I'm going to leave it as is. They will at least give us a rough estimate. And it does not affect the calculations above.

Back to that Hogwarts enrollment: we have an annual intake of some 40 students. Rowling has further stated that the percentage breakdown comes to 25% Muggle-born students, 25% purebloods and the remaining 50% halfbloods. Or 10:10:20.

Given that literal halfbloods are probably still comparatively rare, we may assume that most of the "halfbloods" referred to here are the descendants of Muggle-born magicals. According to Rowling's statements it seems evident that she does not envision any significant differences in birthrate between purebloods and halfbloods. In order to eliminate the maximum confusion from any considerations over pureblood/halfblood as opposed to Muggle-born parentage we will concentrate on determining the birthrate among pureblood families and use that as our base estimate for the magical birthrate.

Crude birthrates are generally estimated by the number of births per 1000 population. However, to do so for the whole wizarding population may introduce a slight distortion due to the allegedly longer projected life spans of wizards. Muggle birthrates are based upon a population with a theoretical age range of 0-100 years, which for all practical purposes abruptly diminishes and all but disappears after the age of 85-90. The

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total wizarding population, with its theoretical age range of 0-120 years (diminishing and disappearing after the age of around 95-105 in practice) would skew the results just a little.

What I propose is to limit these calculations to the general segment of the wizarding population which is of the same approximate age range (0-80) as that of the effective mundane population base. While this may be eliminating a handful of wizards over the age of 80 who may be married to witches still of childbearing age, it is still a better representation of the wizarding world's effective breeding population, which is what this part of the exercise is all about.

Calculating from an annual birth cohort of 40, the total population (not counting attrition) between the ages of 0 and 80 would come to 3,400. Divided by 4 to determine the numbers of purebloods within this population we reach a total of 850.

Well, that introduces a slight snag. We do not have a base example of 1,000 from which to calculate.

We do however already know that the average number of births among purebloods per year is about 10, since it roughly matches that of Muggle-born magical births. In order to determine the birth rate per 1000 population, we need to extrapolate the number up. So if there are roughly 10 births a year within a population of 850 that comes to 1 birth for each 85 individuals represented within the population. Which, scaling the population up to 1,000 individuals gives us a total of 11.764 births, or roughly about a dozen a year.

Is this in fact lower than the birthrate of Muggles? Well, yes, as a matter of fact, it is. But not as much lower as we might have suspected.



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Of course that varies by the year.

In 1975, back when the Marauders were in their 4th year (acto Rowling), the crude birthrate for the British Isles was 17 per 1000. That of the UK alone, 12.5.

In 1980, the year of Harry's birth, the combined crude birthrate for the UK and Ireland was 17.7 births per 1000. That of the UK alone was 13.5.

By 1990, the year before Harry started Hogwarts, this crude birthrate for both had dropped to 14.5 per 1000, but that of the UK alone was 13.9. The Irish birthrate, on the other hand had dropped from 21.9 the decade earlier to 15.1. (As I say, this may turn out to be only the Ulster birthrate.)

As of November (i.e., incomplete data for the year) 2004 the crude birthrate for the UK and Ireland stood at 12.7 per 1000, that of the UK alone, 10.9.

The pureblood birthrate of approximately 12 per 1000 is not really all that much off from that of the UK, although it appears to not reflect the higher birthrates earlier shown in for Ireland, despite the fact that these numbers are bound to include pure-blood Irish wizards.



As to the magical birthrate within the mundane birthrate, which is to say, the Muggle-born birthrate as a percentage of the mundane birthrate: this requires a whole different set of calculations. And here we are seriously hampered by the uncertainty of whether or not pureblood and halfblood births are recorded in the mundane census, as well as the widely fluctuating actual birth numbers on a year-to-year basis over the

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20th century. These have varied as widely as a high of 1,126,800 births recorded in the year 1920 to a low of 657,000 in 1977. Nor have I been able to find a readily available listing of what the actual birth numbers were for my example dates above (1975, 1980 & 1990). It is most unlikely that the Muggle-born births remain a steady 10 per year regardless of the fluctuating trends of the Muggle birthrate. It is far more likely that they have fluctuated just as widely as the total birth numbers have.

It should be noted that it has been at the point that the first children born when the Muggle birth rates were at their highest (the 1920s and the "baby boom" of the 1960s) were of an age to begin showing up at Hogwarts that the pureblood supremacist movements have been depicted as becoming most strident. This, at least, is completely understandable.

Unfortunately, without specific numbers, if we are forced to work from an abstract, using the approximate population numbers above (65,000,000) we just end up with a mathematical "proof" of the hypothesis above; that the Muggle-born birthrate as a percentage of the mundane birthrate, is generally the same percentage as of the magical population within the mundane population, which is a clear distortion, since it does not take account of a possibly undocumented birthrate within the wizarding world. Nor are we necessarily working from the correct numbers from the Muggle end of the equation.

It can, however, give us a broad estimate of the number of magical births to mundane births, but I would hate to have to answer for this estimate's accuracy. In any case:

Starting from a base of 63,000,000 (2003 figure. Let's try to make the birthrate stats roughly current to the most recent



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crude population number), we divide by 1000. Giving us 63,000. At a birth rate of 12.8 per 1000 this would imply some 806,400 births for that year (which I will not claim was actually the case. Maybe it was in the Potterverse). Of this 806,400, approximately 10 can be estimated to have been Muggle-born magical births. Dividing 806,400 by 10 we get a rough estimate that there was approximately one magical birth for every 80,640 mundane births. Or, round that down to 80,500 for convenience.

(If all 40 of the annual wizarding births regardless of blood status are recorded in the official census, this ratio drops to one magical to 20,160 mundane births. But I am not using those figures in this reckoning.)

Either of which seems so statistically insignificant that I'm not going to even try to figure the percentage. Particularly given the built-in inaccuracy.

But, as I say; I'd hate to be held to it for anything beyond an approximation. The following section on 'The Rise of the Mudbloods' is also pretty approximate, but it sheds a bit more light on a few more assumptions that the fandom has been harboring.

And my recent realization of the probability that half to 9/10ths of the wizarding population almost certainly lives out among Muggles anyway (which was largely confirmed in DHs) and that their births are probably recorded right along with those of Muggles makes me just throw up my hands in despair.

This particular essay is not going to get any further modification from this point. The issue has just too many variables for me.

I'm not a mathematician either, you know.



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For a more professional viewpoint on wizarding life spans, however, I append the following which was posted in 2003, or early 2004, By a Mr Will Pratt, in reply to a discussion of the above on one of my listgroups regarding the hypothetical 200-year lifespan generally used for convenience in calculating estimated population at that time. Although the conclusions were based on an outdated interpretation of the Potterverse, the information is still of interest and some of it may still be applicable. To wit:

*"Emerging from lurk mode for the first time, I suppose I should introduce myself. I'm a professional biologist, nearing retirement, a university museum curator working in areas of taxonomy, zoogeography, and pertinent to this post, ecology.*

*It's possible to fine this estimate a bit by using normal human age pyramids (see F.F. Darling, 1951, *The ecological approach to the social sciences*, \_American Scientist\_, 39: 244-254 for the grungy details; E.P Odum, *Fundamentals of Ecology*, 3rd ed, p.179 repeats the graphs.) Assuming the normal convex mortality curve and an age pyramid stretched to accommodate a maximum age of 200 the population essentiality vanishes beyond about 160 yr. More importantly, the age classes will each constitute about 1/2 the same class in the normal pyramid, with a maximum age of 100 and an effective vanishing point of 85-90. In this "stretched" pyramid, the age classes below age 20 will make up about 10 percent of the total population.*

*We have as given that the age class between 11 and 17 is approximately 600, whether Hogwarts actually accommodates them all, or whether JKR misspoke and it is actu-*





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ally a smaller school, educating the elite of that 600, as implied by class sizes shown in the book.

Each age class below age 20 will then contain  $1/2$  of 1% of the total population, and the 1000 secondary school students make up  $7 \times 0.5$  or 3.5% of the total wizarding population, yielding a total population  $(1000/3.5 \times 100)$  of about 17,143.

Varying our assumptions, in the unlikely situation that we have an increasing population, we would have a current total population of 15-16,000. Making the more likely assumption of a decreasing population, we would get a current population of as much as 20,000 but with a birth rate disastrously less than the death rate.

What we have seen of family structure suggests that we might have a situation with corporate families much like Stuart England, with marriages determined almost exclusively by the heads of the extended families. In this case, of course, the existence of a very different marriage system in the Muggle society in which the wizarding population is embedded is going to produce lots of lovely tensions. (Lovely from the viewpoint of authors, that is, it'd be Hell for the participants.)"

Will Pratt



### The Rise of the Mudbloods:

From canon we know only that the Act of Wizarding Secrecy ended the practice of wizards living openly — as wizards — out among Muggles. We also know that the British wizarding world today aggressively identifies, trains and recruits Muggle-born magical children into the wizarding world as a matter of course.

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We do not know for a fact that this last has not always been the case; although the statutory restrictions upon magical/Muggle interaction still makes it sound slightly unlikely.

If nothing else, the enforced secrecy would introduce a considerable roadblock into the process. How are you expected to convince people to allow you to train their children as wizards, when you are not permitted to tell them that you are one?

But I concede that it is still only my own interpretation which proposes that it was the security risk inherent in the increasing incidents of accidental breakthrough magic generated by frightened Muggle-born magical children in the early factories that convinced the Ministry of Magic that the risk of contacting such children's families and letting them in on the secret was less dangerous than the risk of leaving matters as they were. Nor is it likely that the Hogwarts quill, now in the keeping of the Deputy Headmaster (or Headmistress) could have ever been invented for any other purpose than that of finding those Muggle-born magical children who would otherwise have been in danger of falling through the cracks. Rowling has not confirmed this reading of mine either. Nor will she.

Still, at first, or even second glance, everything we have been shown in canon appears to support this interpretation.

But, it somewhat belatedly occurred to me, that an updated after-the-fact redefinition of the term "Seclusion" was not absolutely necessary to this interpretation of the history of wizards vis-a-vis Muggles in the Potterverse.

For one thing, it seems obvious that at any time since the Seclusion of wizards was established, any Muggle-born magical child who was *identified* would have been offered a place at



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Hogwarts, and a future in the wizarding world. The catch is that; since most wizards no longer lived at random out among Muggles, or interacted with them any more than could be avoided, once Seclusion had been established, apart from those in the vicinity of the half-dozen or so semi-wizarding villages in Great Britain, such children had almost no chance of *being* identified.

Consequently, the real watershed would not have been the date of any hypothetical "relaxation" of the statute, but the date at which the Hogwarts quill went into commission.



And even then the resistance to the inclusion of a sudden influx of Muggle-born wizards into wizarding society may have been far less than the modern day isolationist attitudes might suggest. For it is likely that, at the beginning, there may not have been nearly so many Muggle-borns to contend with.

Or it may have looked like simply one large group to be incorporated all at once, and take care of all of the backlog in one fell swoop.

However; over the course of the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries the exponential rise in the Muggle population of Great Britain would have dictated a corresponding rise in the Muggle-born magical population of those islands as well. To the point that by the end of the 20th century Muggle-born magical births roughly match those of pureblood wizards 1:1. Now, admittedly, with each successive generation the pureblood segment of the total wizarding population probably diminishes. But the pureblood isolationist faction turns out to have ample reason to feel itself under siege.

Particularly if one factors in the possibility that with the

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burgeoning rise of Muggle population over the last 300 years and the increase of Muggle longevity in the last century, the Muggle population is in danger of crowding the wizards out, and making it ever harder for them to live in *any* kind of isolation, without detection.

Indeed, given that with every generation more young pure-blood wizards and witches take the option of marrying outside the ever-narrowing pureblood sector of the wizarding population, Muggle-born births can be expected to begin routinely outnumbering those of the hard-line purebloods in the foreseeable future, since the numbers of the hard-liners will have decreased.

And the births of varying degrees of halfbloods will outnumber *everything* else.



In the above exercise on estimating wizarding population we can determine that if Rowling's statements on the current wizarding population of Great Britain and Ireland is to be accepted, the numbers total somewhere in the neighborhood of 3,000–5,000 individuals. Against a Muggle population of roughly 65 million.

At the time that the International Act of Wizarding Secrecy was passed at the end of the 17th century, the population of these islands was roughly 6 million. Which, assuming that the magical representation within the population is generally constant would dictate a magical population of no more than 300–500.

These witches and wizards were probably no more exclusively pureblood than the magical individuals of wizarding Great Britain and Ireland today. Then, as now, most wizards were of mixed ancestry. What is more, to that point they had



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traditionally lived openly among Muggles and fully interacted socially with their non-magical neighbors. Consequently, when Seclusion was established, those (estimated) 400+ witches and wizards were probably “accompanied” into their secluded world by anything up to 100–250 non-magical family members. Husbands, wives, elderly parents, offspring, and quite possibly siblings, cousins, or other reasonably close extended family members and dependents.

Given that (as Rowling has indicated in interviews) halfblood status is something that wears off after a few generations, by the end of the 18th century most of the infant wizards being born in this “secluded” world would have been some 4–5 generations from their last known Muggle ancestor, and by nearly everyone were regarded as purebloods. We do not know what the population figures for human wizards might have been by that time, but it is unlikely that with so small a base population it would have grown high enough to equal the number of persons the wizarding world had claimed at its establishment when the human “wizarding population” had included the wizards’ Muggle family members as well. From a bean-counter’s point of view, there would have been a traceable population decline over the period of seclusion.

At that, human wizards were still (even if only barely) the dominant magical race within that world. But it might have looked as if they would not long be able to retain this particular edge without taking some form of action. The fact that Professor Binns sets his 4th years to writing weekly essays on Goblin uprisings that took place over the course of the 18th century is suggestive.

From a base number of, say, 450, if we extrapolate the cur-

## Wizarding Britain, by the Numbers

rent pureblood birth rate of approximately 12 births per 1000 over 100 years, (approximately 540 live births) and assume approximately half the infant mortality rate of Muggles at that time (which at that time was close to 50%) we get 405 witches and wizards born after Seclusion was imposed.

Of the original 450 founding magical members of the secluded world, all but a handful would be expected to have succumbed to misadventure or magical malady by that time, as would virtually all of their accompanying Muggle family members. Resulting in 405 plus an undetermined number of surviving witches and wizards over the age of 100. Down from an originally approximated population of 550–700. Add in a double handful or so of possible Muggle-borns from the semi-wizarding villages who had managed to be identified and you still have what appears to be a declining population.



Outside the wizarding world, assuming that the incidence of Muggle-born magical births is anything like that of today, a population of roughly 6 million would have produced perhaps 1 or 2 magical children a year. It is not really possible to make a sound estimate of the survival rate of these children.

Undeveloped and untrained magical conductivity in itself appears to offer no additional health benefits. Where I contend that a trained wizard’s active conducting of magical energies enhances his physical well-being, and may convey a resistance to some Muggle diseases, a magical infant is not a trained wizard and has no such advantage. Nor does an ability to conduct such energies appear to protect one from epidemic diseases, food



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poisoning or topical infection. Among Muggles in an era without antibiotics, and where infant mortality was near a ratio of 1:1, I suspect that without the advantages of magical healing methods such infants had about as much of a chance to survive as their non-magical counterparts.

Some of these children unquestionably did survive, however, and lived to produce young of their own, perpetuating their magical traits within the mundane gene pool. Over the course of the 18th century the general population rose from 6 million to roughly 11 million, reaching 12 million around 1815. Of which by that time perhaps 75-150 were untrained Muggle-born wizards and witches — and undocumented halfbloods, since many of the surviving Muggle-born's children will have also been magical. And with the larger population base, the annual birth-rate of genuinely Muggle-born magical children of non-magical parents would have risen to 2-4 per year. *Every year.*

And they and their families, along with their non-magical neighbors were now being forced off the land and into the towns and the factories by the thousands.

Between the years of 1760 and about 1840 over 4,000 Acts of Enclosure were enacted by the British Parliament. At even so small a rate of magical births as 2-4 a year, given that children as young as 4 or 5 were employed in those factories the dangerous working conditions alone would ensure that their involuntary magical breakthroughs would begin to be noticed. And there is only so much of that kind of thing that can be put down to explosions, or mechanical failures.

As much of the wizarding population of Great Britain at this point who could afford to, lived in the secure enclaves such as

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Diagon Alley in London and possibly similar counterparts in other large towns, or in the all-wizarding village of Hogsmeade. The rest were scattered across the countryside, generally in areas without close neighbors, or even more generally clustered in proximity to only a handful of semi-magical villages.

For security's sake, both the wizarding importers' consortium (which I propose was formed to supply the needs of the newly secluded wizarding world) and the Ministry of Magic would have actively made it their business to monitor the trends in Muggle society over the previous century. Whereas in the rural communities of the early 18th century a magical breakthrough might pass without a significant number of witnesses, a breakthrough in a factory would be witnessed by many, and it would be talked about. It might have taken the wizarding observers a few years to realize just what was going on, particularly since most of it would have been going on up in the Midlands, rather than in London, but once it drew their attention, the matter would have been one of great concern to the people in charge within the Wizengamot. The wizarding world's continuing secrecy could only be maintained so long as there were no wizards performing magic in the full sight of Muggles. And, obviously, that was no longer the case.



In our own world, the population of Great Britain was to nearly treble over the course of the 19th century. One reason for this is that over the first half of the 1800s the medical profession finally began to get a handle on the problem of infant mortality.

The population of Great Britain reached 12 million around 1815.



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By the 1850s the mundane population was around 21 million. By 1910 it was some 37 million. It had risen to 49 million by 1945.

If the analogs between our own world and that of the Potterverse remain constant, this would have been reflected with very little variation.

And the birth of Muggle-born magical children had probably also kept pace, with approximately 1 magical birth in about every 80,500.

Or perhaps it has not. That last figure may be a reasonably accurate representation today; but it is likely that since Muggle-born magical children have been routinely identified, trained and absorbed by the wizarding world for at least the last century or two, this figure may not accurately reflect the rates of magical births in the mundane population at the time the Hogwarts quill went into commission.

At that time, any magical child which turned up in the mundane population remained in the mundane population, contributing to possible further magical births in the following generation. This 2nd generation by wizarding standards would have been halfbloods, not Muggle-borns. And their offspring would have also had a strong predisposition to be magical.

Taking the same, arbitrary total current magical population estimate of 3,250 as was used in the above exercise on estimating wizarding population; since around 1800 the pureblood population has increased from an assumed 4?? (which for convenience in calculating we will claim was 425) to approximately 815 today.

Whereas the overall wizarding population has increased roughly tenfold from an estimate of 425–450 c. 1800. This increase alone explains the preponderance of wizards and witches who

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live secretly out in the Muggle world today. I very much doubt that the all-wizarding secluded enclaves could have absorbed the significant building boom needed to accommodate the increase in the wizarding population. Even if wizards can increase the available space inside a container, for storage or transport, I doubt that they would choose to actually live full-time in such artificially-created spaces. (Trunk fics notwithstanding.)



The pureblood sector of the overall wizarding population's birthrate is now matched roughly 1:1 by Muggle-born magical births outside the semi-secluded wizarding world. We do not know how long this has been the case. But Rowling informs us that the current demographics at Hogwarts stand at: pureblood; 25%, halfblood; 50% and Muggle-born; 25%. Rowling also implies that these demographics apply to the population of the wizarding world as a whole as well.

Which gives us one of our few potential base numbers upon which to extrapolate just when the Hogwarts quill did go into commission. One quarter of the (ballpark estimate of 3,250) current British wizarding population constitutes 815 individuals. All with projected life spans of 90–120 years. At a rate of 10 individuals per year, it would only take some 81 years for the Muggle-born individuals to increase to that level within the population. However, that rate of 10 individuals per year is generated by a current Muggle population of some 65 million. It has taken a long time for the Muggle-born birth rate to reach its current level.

Of course Rowling does not take this into account at all. Rowling's Potterverse is a world in which the population never



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changes, and has never been subjected to demographic pressures or imposed change of any sort. But Rowling is not immune to her own cultural context and her vision cannot help but reflect the world in which she actually lives. What we are attempting here is an overlay in which a Potterverse such as Rowling attempts to depict would have developed from an historical context similar to that from which our own world developed.

All such actual calculations, however, must be taken purely as an artificial exercise.

And as with all such artificial exercises, one tends not to ask the question until one has already convinced oneself that one has the answer. I have already identified the period of the early industrial revolution as the time in which external social conditions would have been most likely to make the removal of magical children from mundane society a priority. Would — without making major obvious adjustments to the available data — a projected increase of Muggle-born magical wizards from that date to the present result in a number roughly that of one-quarter of the ww's population today?

Well, let's just see about that.

And test the hypothesis.



In our own world, in 1815, the population of Great Britain was 12 million people.

And at the current rates, and estimating an average projected Muggle lifespan of 60, would have produced perhaps 2 Muggle-born magical children a year.

By the time that Harry was born in 1980, (and by which

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time an average projected Muggle lifespan was about 80) the Muggle population of Great Britain produced approximately 10 magical children a year.

I cannot think, off the top of my head, of any convincing reason why this increase would have been anything other than more-or-less steady and gradual, although it would have probably seen some peaks and valleys dictated by outside circumstances such as wars or possibly sweeping epidemics.

Therefore, it appears to have taken roughly 165 years for the annual number of Muggle-born births to increase fivefold. This increase has taken place within the mundane population and reflects the increase of a stable percentage of births within the increasing mundane population. Since any magical children so identified have been siphoned off into the magical population, consequently, their offspring are not contributing to this increase.

But we cannot be altogether sure of anything. The year 1920 was the year with the highest birth numbers recorded in Great Britain for the whole 20th century, with a total of 1,126,800 recorded births. At the current rate of Muggle-born magical births within Muggle births, that year ought to have produced about 14 Muggle-born magical children. Maybe it did.

The population estimates above give us a little bit more to work from. Assuming an average projected Muggle lifespan of 70 in the year 1910, the Muggle population of 37 million ought to have produced between 6 and 7 Muggle-born Magical children a year.

In the 1850s assuming an average projected Muggle lifespan of, maybe 65, the Muggle population of 21 million ought to have produced about 4 Muggle-born children a year.

So; how to calculate the progression.



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Well, we have no choice but to be arbitrary and artificial.



Estimated Muggle lifespans are included as additional data points. They have impact upon the total population numbers, but they have little impact upon birthrates, except insofar as they may be indicative of a lowering in infant mortality rates and deaths in childbed.

In the 40 years between 1815 and 1855 the incidence of Muggle-born magical births doubled. 40 years at the 1815 rate would have produced 80 individuals. 40 years at the 1855 rate of magical births would have produced 160. The the mean average between the two would be 120 magical children born between 1815 and 1855.

There are 55 years between our next two checkpoints, 1855 and 1910. In this interval the incidents of Muggle-born magical births went from 4 per year to about 6.5.

In 55 years at a rate of 4 per year the Muggle population would have produced 220 individuals. At a rate of 6.5 per year it would have produced about 358. The midpoint between these two extremes is 289.

Add to this number the 120 individuals who would have been born between 1815 and 1855.  $289 + 120 = 409$ .

After this point, however we need to begin to factor in mortality rates since the oldest individuals, born around 1815 will be reaching the limits of their projected life spans of 90–120 years.

We have 35 years between 1910 and our next checkpoint, a population of 49 million Muggles by 1945. An average projected Muggle lifespan by that point might have been about 75. By this point (and overlooking possible glitches such as the 1920 baby

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boom) the Muggle population could be expected to produce 8 magical children per year.

Over 35 years, at the 1910 rate of 6.5 magical children per year, the Muggle population would have produced about 228 Muggle-born magical children. At the 1945 rate of 8 such children per year it would have produced 280. The midpoint of this period would be 254.

Add the previous total of  $409 + 254 = 663$ . And at this point we need to subtract our original 120, most of whom have reached the end, or are reaching the end of their projected life spans.  $663 - 120 = 543$ . This is probably an undercount, since it might be supposed that a number of particularly hardy wizards born around 1855 will survive beyond 1945, but they will probably be gone by our next checkpoint of 1980.

In 1980 the rate of Muggle-born births per year was 10.

35 years at the 1945 rate of 8 magical births per year would have produced an additional 280 Muggle-born magical children. At the 1980 rate of 10 per year the Muggle population would have produced 350. Our midpoint is 315.  $315 + 543 = 858$ .

Factoring in mortalities resulting from accident/misadventure, magical illnesses, and the hostilities of VoldWar I, the actual surviving number of Muggle-born magical individuals may come in at something under the target number of 815, but, at the same birthrate, since 1980 the Muggle population of Great Britain and Ireland would have produced another 175 or so magical children by the end of DHs. So I really do think that we are in something like the right ballpark to postulate that the Hogwarts Quill would most probably have gone into commission at some point between 1815 and, say 1835. It is unnecessary



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to attempt to estimate the number of surviving Muggle-borns and unidentified halfbloods who may have been alive at our start point of 1815, since it is not to be expected that any of these individuals are still alive today.



The overall wizarding population has most greatly increased within a new and continually expanding sector of halfbloods. (There were almost no recognized halfbloods left in the wizarding population when the Hogwarts quill began recording Muggle-born magical births.) This sector now totals the combined populations of both the dwindling pureblood sector and the Muggle-born sector of the wizarding world today. We do not have a definitive description of exactly what portion of Muggle ancestry constitutes a halfblood in Rowling's wizarding world today, or whether this portion is the same standard that was being applied at the time people started codifying such distinctions.

The society which practiced racial-based slavery in the American south up to the mid-19th century — the period which most closely corresponds to the probable time that the Quill would have gone into commission — defined any person as a Negro who could be proven to have  $1/16$  "Negro blood." Which is to trace ancestry back some 4 generations. The 3rd Reich, in Germany in the mid-20th century, in their exercise of attempting to define Judaism as a race, counted back only to grandparents who were members of the "Jewish religious community," or, a mere 2 generations. (It took nine generations, however, to qualify as a member of their Aryan "master race.")

For fully half of the wizarding population today to still be

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counting its descent from Muggle-born "immigrants" suggests to me that the wizarding world traces Muggle descent farther than a mere 2 generations. For that matter we also do not know if there is any formal classification of such anomalies as the children of a Muggle-born couple, who are the offspring of a wizard and a witch but whose grandparents would all be Muggles, or of the magical children of a Muggle-born wizard or witch who might have chosen to marry a Muggle. But at first glance it would seem to be difficult to regard any of these children as being Muggle-borns, themselves.

In any case, the demographics of the halfblood sector of the population would be most closely tied to the pureblood sector, since without purebloods, there can be few literal halfbloods, and the Muggle-born birth numbers outside the wizarding world are largely unrelated to the birth numbers within it. It would seem to be well within the bounds of plausibility that at least half of the (estimated 425) purebloods of around 1800, were the forbearers of the halfbloods of today. Leaving the remaining half, or possibly some segment well below half to have served as the ancestors of today's remaining purebloods. Not all of whom, as we know, are either supremacists or isolationists. But who do seem to be disproportionately represented among the leaders of the wizarding world, even today. This last is unlikely to continue indefinitely.

If nothing else, the above considerations appear to put paid to the built-in premise underlying the influx of "Marriage Law Challenge fics" which inundated us over the past couple of decades. It may make for a useful McGuffin for neophyte authors of "arranged marriage" fics (which is a cultural legacy



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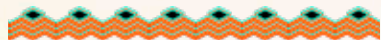
that is inherently scary enough to ensure that some variation of it will probably keep cycling in a wide variety of fandoms. It's rather like picking at a scab), but clearly any rise in physical/magical/intellectual problems due to excessive inbreeding should only show up within that 25% of the population which has been rigorous in maintaining its pureblood distinction. The wizarding world of Britain as a whole is more genetically diverse now than it has probably been at any point since the International Act of Wizarding Seclusion was passed.



But, given the above; it is easy enough to see just where the pureblood isolationists are coming from; as they see their numbers within the wizarding population being steadily overwhelmed by these apparently endless ranks of Muggle-borns from outside.

But one still has to wonder at just what they think that barring the wizarding world to Muggle-borns is going to accomplish. After all, it's essentially been tried before. It didn't work.

True, five-year-olds no longer work 12-15 hour shifts in factories, but they still have magical breakthroughs, and they still grow up to be wizards. And if their magical traits are not siphoned off and put to use within the wizarding world, they will be recycled back into the Muggle population, producing even *higher* numbers of untrained Muggle-born wizards in successive generations. So just how do the isolationists expect to be able to maintain a state of wizarding secrecy in the face of *that*?



## The Art & Science of Wandmaking

Well, in DHs Ms Rowling threw us a curve. She blindsided us with the whole completely loopy issue of wand ownership and mastery which, although, if you squint, you can just *about* say wasn't *completely* out of left field. But it was certainly poorly handled enough to be the source of a great deal of irritation on the part of the readers.

Indeed, the issue was poorly set up, poorly executed, and inadequately explained. And it didn't need to be. There had been ample opportunity over the course of the series to have laid some groundwork regarding this particular issue in a manner in which it would have played without reproach, and have even been considered clever.

The fact that Rowling didn't do so suggests to me that a sizable portion of it was a "cool idea" she pulled it out of her hat and cobbled together at the last minute. And then pasted on a lame explanation for why it was supposed to have worked — without even considering that she already had a perfectly good explanation right under her nose and didn't use it.

Not that I expect her to ever admit any of that, you understand.



**W**hat IS clear to any reader who paid attention, is that Rowling always *did* intend *some* kind of rigamarole to do with wands choosing their owners to figure in the final confrontation between Tom and Harry. I'm just not convinced that what she intended was the version that we got. But I'm not going to explore the issue of the Elder wand here, much as it would seem to fit. This article is only concerned with the



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construction and behavior of *normal* wands.

The whole point of the Elder wand is that it is *unique*. So I'll talk about that one elsewhere.

In this article I examine wands in the context of what they are made of and how they work — and just ignore the fact that, apparently, we are suddenly, at the 11th hour, supposed to understand that they are semi-sentient little wooden bimbos which are capable of acting on their own initiative, and will betray you in a heartbeat.



For quite a while, in the early days of the fandom, it seemed like every few months or so on one or other of my discussion lists somebody would raise the question of; what are the components of this, or that, or the other character's wand? Most typically, the question was brought up by someone who was trying to write a fanfic and wanted to find out if anything was officially known. Given the lists that I hang out on, the character under investigation was usually Severus Snape, although there were no few inquiries as to the components of Miss Granger's wand as well, or that of other supporting characters, like Neville.

Ms. Rowling never did tell us anything of the components of (Headmaster) Snape's wand, and up until December 10, 2004, while we knew both the wood and the core types of Harry Potter and Ron Weasley's wands, we still knew nothing of Hermione's.

Up until that point some fans reasoned that; given that Ron's wand seems to mirror the known qualities of Lily Potter's, someone with a mind for patterns might reasonably wonder whether Hermione's wand mirrored James's. Or, conversely: Given that

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Harry's wand is cored by phoenix feather and Ron's is cored with unicorn hair, symmetry would seem to demand that Hermione's be cored with dragon heartstring. We could, however, reasonably assume that all three of these characters' wands were purchased from Ollivander's shop. Which assumption, in Ron's case proved to be somewhat inaccurate. The wand may well have *originally* come from Ollivander's shop. But it was not originally purchased for Ron, and possibly not even for Charlie.

Well, as of December 10, 2004, we knew that we were on the right track in some of our reasoning. Ms Rowling posted an update to her official website (the old official website, that is) upon that date in which she confirmed the theory that Hermione's wand was indeed cored with dragon heartstring.

Ms Rowling also went on to spin us a rather charming holiday story regarding a "hidden connection" between the wood types of the trio's wands. As she stated it on her website (on Dec, 10, 2004). I suspected there might be some alteration of these statements once the conflict was pointed out to her, but it never was:

*"I gave Harry a wand made of holly wood back in 1990, when I first drafted chapter six of 'Philosopher's Stone'. It was not an arbitrary decision: holly has certain connotations that were perfect for Harry, particularly when contrasted with the traditional associations of yew, from which Voldemort's wand was made. European tradition has it that the holly tree (the name comes from 'holy') repels evil, while yew, which can achieve astonishing longevity (there are British yew trees over two thousand years old), can symbolize both death and resurrection: the sap is also poisonous.*

*Some time after I had given Harry his holly-and-phoe-*



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*nix wand I came across a description of how the Celts had assigned trees to different parts of the year and discovered that, entirely by coincidence, I had assigned Harry the 'correct' wood for his day of birth. I therefore decided to give Ron and Hermione Celtic wand woods, too. Ron, who was born in the February 18 - March 17 period, was given an ash wand (I think I had originally marked him down for beech), and Hermione, who was born between September 2 and September 29, received a vine wood wand (I can't remember what I originally stipulated for Hermione; possibly I had not specified a wood for her at that stage).*

*I have only used the Celtic assignments for Ron and Hermione. Hagrid, for instance, has an oak wand though by this Celtic system he should have a wand made of elder; in Britain the oak is 'King of the Forest' and symbolizes strength, protection, and fecundity; what other wood could 'choose' Hagrid? In any case I liked having a hidden connection between Harry, Ron and Hermione's wands that only I knew about (until now, anyway).*

*For those who are interested in the trees assigned to the different parts of the Celtic year, below is the chart that I used. I apologize to any Celtic tree experts out there for any inaccuracies I may have reproduced (I have found slight variations between sources since I first came across this information).*

*December 24 - January 20 = Birch (Beth)  
January 21 - February 17 = Rowan (Luis)  
February 18 - March 17 = Ash (Nion)  
March 18 - April 14 = Alder (Fearn)  
April 15 - May 12 = Willow (Saille)  
May 13 - June 9 = Hawthorn (Huath)*



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*June 10 - July 7 = Oak (Duir)  
July 6 - August 4 = Holly (Tinne)  
August 5 - September 1 = Hazel (Coll)  
September 2 - September 29 = Vine (Muin)  
September 30 - October 27 = Ivy (Gort)  
October 28 - November 24 = Reed (Ngetal)  
November 25 - December 23 = Elder (Ruis)''*

Unfortunately, as any attentive reader will notice, in the story above Ms Rowling has confused Ron Weasley's wand with Cedric Diggory's. Cedric's wand was indeed stated as being made of ash and unicorn hair. And Ron was indeed born in the portion of the year that the Celts assigned to ash.

But, Ron quite clearly informs Harry (and the reader) early in PoA (Pg. 56, American pb) that his new wand is not ash, but willow. Since PoA came out in 1999, I suspect that the period at which she assigned Ron a Celtic wand "Some time after I had given Harry his holly-and-phoenix wand..." was in fact several years after she had given Harry his wand. *And* after she had already publicly assigned Ron a willow wand in PoA, too.

In that regard, the story above must be regarded as merely a story. From where I am standing, until she either changes the information in the books in a new edition, or gives Ron yet another wand in the course of the story, his wand, in canon, is willow.

In point of fact, Rowling *did* give Ron a new wand in the course of DHs. He captured and kept Pettigrew's chestnut and dragon heartstring wand. Hermione was also now in need of a new wand. We were not told that she got one, but it is expected that she probably would have after the shouting was over. She might not be expected to keep the walnut and dragon





## The Art & Science of Wandmaking

heartstring wand that Harry took from Bellatrix. Although it must be admitted that it gave her no further trouble once it had been through the Goblins' security dowsing.

Evidently that water not only removes enchantments, it resets wands to their original state. Hermione was using that wand against Bellatrix herself in the final showdown and holding her own quite competently with it, too.

A bit more information regarding the trees of the Celtic calendar can be found on a number of websites. I used to include a link here, but that particular site appears to have disappeared since the original iteration of the site was uploaded. So you will need to do a web search for another one.



In the course of our first introduction to him, Mr Ollivander of Diagon Alley assured us that his wands are produced using cores of only unicorn hair, phoenix feather or dragon heartstring. He implies that wands cored with other materials tend to be temperamental, unreliable, or otherwise unsatisfactory. Clearly Mr Ollivander and his predecessors have limited their wand cores to those three materials, because those have proved to be the most effective and consistent in quality of response. Other wandmakers whether British or otherwise, may not be quite so discriminating, however. Rowling has also stated (although not in the books) that in some other parts of the world other reliable core materials may be available that Olivander has never specialized in.

But then; Mr Ollivander also assures us that a wizard will never get as fine a result from a wand that did not specifically

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“choose” him as he will from one that did. This has since turned out to actually be the case, although I think that the balance of the illustrations used for presenting examples of the statement was seriously off-kilter. But, given that both of Harry Potter's dorm mates who came from pureblood families were sent off to Hogwarts with “legacy” wands, we may conclude that this is an assertion that not all wizarding families are prepared to accept merely on Mr Ollivander's say-so. I — who had been suggesting for years that part of Neville's problems in school might have been due to his having been sent off to school with one of his parents' wands, which did not “fit” him properly — felt extremely smug upon discovering that I was absolutely correct.

Another thing that we don't know for certain is whether Ollivander really is the ONLY wand maker in Britain as Hagrid asserts, or whether he is simply the most prominent one in Diagon Alley and the one that Hagrid was instructed to take Harry to. Hagrid's sweeping statement of Ollivander's being the “only” place for wands sounds like a bit of typical Hagridian hyperbole, but Rowling's statement in the joint interview following the release of HBP that the entire population of the British wizarding world is about 3,000 suggests that the market may not really be large enough to be able to support more than one or two wandmakers. This being the case; there is a very good chance that Ollivander's establishment is the oldest in that location, or indeed in Britain claiming as it does to date from before the Roman conquest (quite possibly Olivanders have been making wands that long. But not necessarily always in Britain), but we have no certainty as to whether his is the only one, and in HBP are given strong suggestion that he may not be.



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That he was the “expert witness” called in to perform the Weighing of the Wands for the TriWizard Tournament only establishes that he and Dumbledore have some degree of association, which had already been confirmed in CoS by Dumbledore’s statement that Ollivander had alerted him when Harry was chosen by the second of the Fawkes-cored wands.



A more debatable subject is the question of just why we are given a choice of three predominant core materials, and just what influences are at work in the “choice” of a specific wand for a particular wizard. Rowling implies in her story above that it is the wood, rather than the core, that actually does the choosing. I find this difficult to swallow. For that matter, I find the whole proposal of a conscious choice being made by a stick of wood to be preposterous.

Clearly, Mr Ollivander is speaking in metaphor.

My own interpretation, which is shared by a number of others, is that magic, like other forms of energy, can be channeled at different “frequencies” over a fairly broad spectrum, and that, as in music, each individual has a different “range” in which he works (or resonates) most effectively.\* The three standard wand core materials are those which have proven over the ages to be capable of channeling magical energy across the broadest portions of the total “harmonic scale” with the best “signal to noise” ratio.

[\*Under this interpretation, a Squib would be analogous to the tone-deaf. Able to hear the *sounds* and to communicate with the world around them, but unable to hear the *music* and

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unable to effectively “sing.”]

The reason that all wands are not all cored by the same material is that while magic operates across a broad range of potential resonance, individual wizards are likely to work most effectively when channeling magical energy in only one specific portion of the overall “scale.” Some wizards probably have a broader inherent range than others. But none can access the full scale unassisted. That is one of the reasons they need wands.

The core of a wand, as modified by the wand’s wooden casing, will respond most readily to the wizard whose inherent harmonic range is the best match for its own base “resonance.” Much in the way of determining a proper fit for eyeglasses. That a wand “chooses” the wizard is a misnomer. The wand amplifies and focuses the wizard’s channeling of magical energies. The better the fit between wand and wizard, the clearer and more focused these energies will be. While the potential range of any wand is likely to be greater than that of any specific wizard, with a good fit the individual base resonance of wand and wizard will match. Making it easier for the wizard to access the full range of the wand. Including sections of the “scale” that he simply cannot access unassisted.

Unlike with eyeglasses, however, an experienced wizard should be able to channel magic through a wide variety of wand types. But a proper fit of wand to wizard is essential for young wizards who have yet to master the skill of channeling magical energies through a focusing device, such as a wand. Following this analogy; Charlie’s old wand fit Ron reasonably well, since they both needed the same general type of focusing adjustment, whereas Neville, with his father’s wand, could not see the blackboard.



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In addition, since very young wizards may not yet have fully grown into their adult resonance, their first wand must be able to allow for such variations which may be expected to occur over the next few years. The measuring tapes used by reputable wand makers are probably charmed to measure for such potential.



A wizard, so far as we have seen, typically uses only one wand, and performs all of his spells with it. He does not use one wand for one sort of spell and another wand with different properties for others. His wand must therefore be able to channel his magic at the correct resonance for a given spell without interference and must be able to amplify and focus his intent over the full magical "scale." Magical spells are not living entities, and they only engage and execute at their own specific magical "pitch." Consequently a wand must be capable of enabling a wizard to perform spells which may lie outside of his own natural range without unwanted "feedback" or other forms of transmission error.

I propose that the reason why Ollivander uses three different wand core materials, is that while all three of these materials are able to transmit magical energy over a broad range, each of these materials is particularly effective within a different sector of the overall magical "scale."

That Ollivander is able to so confidently state that a given wand will be good for a specific type of magic is a strong suggestion that the operative "itches" of different classes of magical spells tend to group within different portions of this scale. Consequently, while all well-constructed wands are capable of

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transmitting a spell at any point along the Magical scale, the components used in each of Ollivander's wands are naturally calibrated to be most effective for channeling and modulating energies at the equivalents of either upper-register, or lower-register resonances.

I postulate that spells within the same general class of magical processes will naturally group within specific registers across the total harmonic range of potential Magical resonance. I am currently inclined to believe that these registers correspond roughly with the degree of involvement that a particular class of spell has with its object. And that by an application of the laws of Similarity, this is reflected by the degree of involvement that the most consistent of the standard wand core materials had with their original source.

### Upper Register Magics:

I propose that the uppermost level of the magical scale is that most associated with the performance of Charms. Charms can be extremely powerful, and the generality of them, expertly cast, are quite permanent. Some may be fairly easily countered or canceled, however. Moreover, some are *designed* to be temporary, or in some cases are semi-permanent, and *intended* to gradually wear off. The basic function of a Charm is to constrain and compel the behavior, appearance, perceptions or state of its subject without altering the subject's underlying nature. A Charm may enable a pineapple to tap dance across a desk, but the pineapple remains a pineapple.

Most of the charms that we have seen demonstrated in canon have tended to be temporary, or semipermanent. But this is far from being universal, one needs only to consider the example of



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Memory charms to realize that upper register magic is every bit as likely to be as powerful and as permanent as that of lower register.

For the sake of symmetry, I assign unicorn hair to the upper register of Magical harmonics. There is at least some canon support for this, given that much of the Weasley family seems to have an affinity for charms and we have been told outright that at least two of the Weasleys (Charlie and Ron) were “chosen” by unicorn hair wands. I suspect that Ron and Charlie are not the only Weasleys whose wands are cored with unicorn hair, either.

The hair of a beast is a superficial attribute. It may be removed with perhaps some discomfort, but no actual harm to the creature.

The traditional method of capturing a unicorn is for a maiden to wait seated upon the ground in a location that unicorns are believed to frequent. If all goes according to plan, eventually a unicorn will approach, kneel down and place its head in her lap. What is notable about this particular folktale is that whenever such a scene has been depicted in manuscript illuminations or tapestries, in nearly all of the most typical examples the maiden is shown to be holding a comb, or is actually grooming the unicorn’s mane.

According to all traditional accounts, unicorns are exceedingly dangerous. And, popular culture of the 1970s notwithstanding, they are *not* equines.

Nor do they even particularly resemble horses in any manner other than that their heads are much the same shape. In strict accuracy they are composite beasts (by the standards of the science of Heraldry they are classified not as beasts but as monsters), and they are shy of humans, but they can become accustomed to being handled, more readily by witches than by wizards. I suggest that while some wizards, such as Mr Olli-



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vander may insist upon collecting his stock of unicorn hair personally, it is more common for a wizard in need of unicorn hair to purchase it from a supplier.

The manner in which modern suppliers are likely to come by their stock of unicorn hair (apart from simple gleaning, the way that Hagrid’s harvest of unicorn hair was acquired) is thus: witches who live in proximity to forested areas known to harbor unicorn herds might annually (or monthly, or whatever) take a set of grooming brushes and go out into the forest in search of the glades which show evidence of unicorn presence, find a comfortable spot to sit, and wait for them to show up. Once the unicorns have been coaxed into coming near enough, the maidens will start grooming them. Any hairs which are collected in this manner would have none of the nasty consequences pertaining to harming a unicorn for personal gain. The unicorns, in fact, probably grow to enjoy being groomed and look forward to it. The herds would gradually become accustomed to being approached by witches with brushes and it would become a win-win situation all around.

The only question remaining is whether this unicorn harvest is managed as a cottage industry or whether the witches who undertake the collection of unicorn hair are employed by a consortium. It stands to reason that there are many more uses for unicorn hair than merely the making of wand cores, so the business is probably fairly lucrative.

### **Magic by Degree:**

The feathers of a bird have a deeper involvement with the bird than the hair of a beast does with the beast. A bird’s feathers are not merely its covering, but its tools. Without its feathers, a bird cannot fly.





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I seriously doubt that wands cored with Phoenix feather are cored with anything other than those feathers that are necessary to flight; namely the quills of the wings and the feathers of the tail, which help to stabilize the bird's progress through the air. The smaller, body feathers of a Phoenix, and the down undercoating, although inappropriate for wand cores, are probably highly valued for other purposes, such as Potions brewing, or as a component of other magical artifacts.

A fairly compelling counter-indication to my original reading — that midrange magic is most closely concerned with “change” magic — is that Harry Potter who was “chosen” by a Phoenix feather wand showed no inherent excellence in either of the two most widely-practiced change magics as they are taught at Hogwarts School. His performance in Potions through his 5th year was seen to be quite genuinely sub-par and his performance in Transfiguration is stated as being inferior to his performance in Charms. Even his enormous improvement in Potions in his 6th year was less due to any true understanding or feel for the subject than the fact that he had now proved that he is capable of following detailed instructions if you engage his interest and leave him alone to do it. Clearly it is not change magics that occupy whatever range of the magical scale is best conducted by Phoenix feather.

At first glance it appears to stand to reason that there must be some other magical processes native to this part of the magical scale that are more relevant to Harry's affinity to the frequencies of magic as channeled by a Phoenix feather wand core. By all of the indications we have been given in the series, we might provisionally assume that this range is the portion of



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the scale in which one is most likely to encounter spells used in magical combat and defense. These are certainly the spells at which Harry has been seen to excel, beyond all question.

However, an alternate reading might also be suggested by examining what we know of the abilities of the only other wizard in canon who is identified as the holder of a Phoenix feather wand. Which is to say, the former Tom Riddle. The most cursory examination of Mr Riddle's abilities, however, immediately reveals major anomalies in that Mr Riddle's most striking abilities are ones which seem to have little to do with *any* sort of wand. We have seen, both in PS/SS and in OotP that he does not need a wand to perform expert Legilimency, nor does he require a wand to establish dominance, or to take possession of the wills of others. Not even the grounding of a physical body was required for him to be able to overcome young Professor Quirrell — who was a wizard of considerable skill, if not, perhaps, raw power — nor is a wand required for understanding or speaking Parseltongue.

Which raises the question of whether it may not be magic of a specific “type” which resonates best to a Phoenix feather, but magic of a certain “degree.” Magic of a caliber which requires a greater amount of amplification of the necessary power in order to be channeled effectively. Magic, in short, which might benefit from being channeled through a hollow quill rather than a solid hair.

We have already been warned that the Unforgivable Curses require greater power than the standard spells taught to students. The Patronus Charm is also defined as an extremely advanced piece of magic, for all that its classification as a “Charm” would indicate that it falls somewhere in the upper





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register of the magical scale.

It is not unreasonable to suspect that the real advantage of Phoenix feather is not one of “range” but of “force.” This would be very much in keeping with what Mr Ollivander had to say about the wand that he sold to Tom Riddle.

For that matter, Phoenix feather wands may be uncommon enough that not even Mr Ollivander can identify their particular strengths for certain.

If one examines the logistics, Phoenix feather wands are almost certain to be comparatively rare. There are not a great many Phoenixes in the first place, and few of those have chosen to live as companions to wizards. For that matter, those that have chosen to do so are no more widely generous to wandmakers with their feathers than those in the wild.

However, birds groom themselves regularly and they DO lose feathers and they have favored places to roost. It stands to reason that anyone in the wizarding world who hears rumors of a Phoenix sighting is going to either go, or send someone to try and find the favored roosting spot. And once the bird is away will investigate the area for shed feathers.

It doesn't always have to be tail feathers. Fawkes is described as being about the size of a swan. Swans are BIG birds (I would have expected him to be more in line with the size of a pheasant, or, at most, a peacock myself. Shorter tail, though\*). A quill feather would also core a wand quite effectively. Even a tertiary quill feather, or smaller.

\*In strict accuracy what is generally identified as a peacock's “tail” is, in fact a \*train.\* A peacock does *have* a tail, but it is fairly short and being underneath the decorative train, is only



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viable when the train is spread in its traditional display.

In addition, a Phoenix also goes through a period of limited moult before immolation. We witnessed one such immolation in Book 2. Fawkes also immolated from his perch, not from a nest of shed feathers. Feathers gleaned in this manner would be a nice monetary bonus to their finder. But I do not believe that there is any way of managing a controlled harvest of Phoenix feathers, and there is almost certainly no way to “ranch” them. Which would make the feathers which are discovered or contributed all the more rare and valuable.

And, for the record; I sniff at some of the wilder theories that I used to occasionally see posted stating that a Phoenix feather will burn or disappear when the Phoenix next immolates. That would make Phoenix feather totally unsuitable as a material for wand cores altogether. This theory is directly contradicted in canon as well. Harry watched Fawkes immolate in Dumbledore's office in his second year, and his wand went on working just fine. And, no, the feather does not have to be “given” it only needs to be released. A shed feather will work just fine. I suppose it is possible, however, that donated feathers are particularly conductive.

And, also for that record; it is probably not possible to pluck a feather from an unwilling Phoenix. For one thing, they CAN simply disappear at will. Feathers and all...

### **Magical Bass Notes:**

Which brings us to Magic's lower register and dragon heartstring. Unlike the harvesting of feathers or hair, to collect a dragon heartstring requires the death of the dragon. The number of wands which can be cored with a single heartstring





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probably varies with the breed of dragon and its age or size. And, coming from an internal organ, some form of preservation is probably required before it can be effectively used.

Because this core type requires a death before it can be harvested, many fanon writers seem to believe that dragon heartstring is the core of choice for Dark wizards. This is unlikely to be the case. Quite a few Dark wizards probably do use wands cored by dragon heartstring. But just as many probably use wands cored by unicorn hair.

Given that I believe that the primary distinction between Dark and Light magic is that of the method of channeling the magical energies rather than specifically the intent of the caster, I do not agree that a wand component that requires a death in order to harvest must necessarily affect the channeling method used for the magic which that wand will someday be required to conduct, any more than I believe that all “good” wizards must necessarily be vegetarians who wear wooden shoes.

And, for those who do not agree with this interpretation of Magic itself, the source of the core material still will not affect the intent of the caster. If this were so, to restrict the production of dragon heartstring cored wands would be the obvious step the Ministry would take in order to regulate the use of Dark magic. Which certainly does not appear to be the case.

But, I do believe that Magic at this level demands a total involvement with its object. This is no surface make-over. Nor is it merely a question of attack and defense. At these lowest of resonances we are dealing with deep, authentic, from-the-root, from-the-seed growth. Or with a level of change that *will* affect its subject’s underlying nature. At this level the wizard brings



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into the physical world something that did not exist before, or he promotes its growth or development at a rate, or of a sort, which is outside the parameters of natural law. This is not about compulsion or protection. This is the magic of creation itself.

My initial reading was that Transfiguration and other “change” magic, occupied the mid-range of the Magical scale. Upon consideration, (and due to what appears to be a direct counter-indication in canon) I realize that this class of magic is more likely to occur within the lowest register. Transfiguration, Alchemy, and Potions are the three “change” processes that come most readily to mind. There are undoubtedly others.

Transfiguration changes the very nature of its object, rather than merely its appearance. A matchstick transfigured into a needle is a needle, and it will remain a needle until the spell is reversed, unless there is a time constraint built into the spell, or the spell has been inexpertly cast. Transfigurations may be partial or total, permanent, semi-permanent or temporary. But this is determined by the parameters of the spell and the skill of the wizard, not the register at which the magic operates. Transfigurations, by default, tend toward the permanent. Potions are impermanent due primarily to the fact that they will work themselves out of the taker’s system, given time, and need a fresh application. It is the most complex potions such as Polyjuice or Felix Felicis which have an incorporated specific time limitation. We saw that when a dose of Polyjuice, which normally lasts only an hour, went wrong it took several weeks for the effects to be eradicated. Alchemy, of course, virtually always produces permanent results.

Magic at this level may also sometimes be initially some-





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what slower in response than the magic of the upper register or mid-range. It's action, however is inexorable, like the gradual encroachment of a root system which will split rocks. Magic at this level will take a concerted effort to halt once it is well begun and will be difficult to redirect once invoked.

We know that there are several breeds of dragon, of different sizes and degrees of rarity, and that there are still dragons in the wild. But most dragons nowadays are confined to officially managed colonies, such as the one in Romania where Charles Weasley is employed. The population of such colonies must be strictly controlled or the colony would get out of hand, and quite possibly its members would start exhibiting some (probably damned dangerous) social pathologies in reaction to overcrowding.

Therefore, given that there is an ongoing and highly lucrative market for dragon products in the wizarding world, it stands to reason that in addition to those dragons that die natural deaths, the colony is also routinely culled of elderly, infirm, injured or redundant members (of the more common breeds, at least) and that these are the source of the dragon products which are used throughout at least the European market. These are effectively "ranch" dragons.

We do not know who owns or operates these colonies. It seems inevitable that they represent a fairly major source of wizarding income to somebody, whether it be private families, wizarding consortiums, various national Ministries, or the International Confederacy of Wizards.

Regardless of where or how the core materials of wands are acquired, it is evident that there is some sort of discernible quality evident in all wands that are in good working order, and that

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a master wandmaker can both recognize this and gauge where along the magical scale a given wand is "tuned." For example, in the sequence depicting the weighing of the wands at the opening of the TriWizard Tournament, Mr Ollivander can tell at once, by handling it that Viktor Krum's wand — made by a competitor, not one of his own, Mr Ollivander has no prior familiarity with this wand — is cored with dragon heartstring. He can also tell at once that Fleur Delacour's wand, an obvious custom job made specifically for her, (possibly commissioned as a gift from her Veela grandmother) is cored with something quite non-standard.

### Putting it All Together - the Wooden Casings:

If we are limited to only three predominant core types, then it would appear that many of the shadings and nuances of character from wand to wand across a wand maker's total output is likely to depend at least as much upon the wooden casing as it does upon the core material. For that matter, one might well stop to ask why, apart from tradition, wands appear universally to be made from wood, or let us be more specific, from plant material.

I rather think that something of the Laws of Similarity might be being invoked here. Originally a wizard channeled magical energies through his own body. Which is alive. Before wizards developed cored wands, they used staffs. These were most commonly made of wood. It is likely that at some point there were attempts to channel magic through staffs that were not made of wood. Through metal perhaps. I suspect that these attempts did not work out very well.

While no one would be able to maintain a wand which was made from a living plant for any length of time after the plant



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was cut, it is very likely that wood became the material of choice, both for the fact that there are a lot of different varieties of woods, and that wood was once a living material.

Indeed, the fact that wood when still alive once directed the flow of moisture and nutrients through its host from root to branch to leaf, in only one direction, might not be irrelevant. Such a factor might well serve to help to enforce the “polarity” of wands, which are also designed to allow the magic to be channeled through them in only one direction.

That wood has at least some degree of resilience and flexibility is also an advantage, and the fact that wands appear to be most commonly cored with animal products is probably also a factor of the underlying trade-craft of wandmaking.

I would not care to hazard a guess on the possible behavior of a wand which might be made from an animal product directly, such as, for example, bone, or horn. Such a wand would necessarily be very uncommon. And I’ve no idea what such a wand would even most effectively be cored with.

There is an amazingly wide range of potential wood types from which such casings might be made. Some of them (like the canon noted holly and yew) are heavily loaded with symbolism. Yew in particular has long association with magic, as is noted in the following;

Yew (Voldemort’s wand);

*“It is often found growing near churches’ graveyards and it represents eternal life and the cycle of life and death in pagan religions. Magic wands were traditionally made from yew. The foliage and seeds of a yew contain highly poisonous alkaloids that act to stop the heart of an animal*



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*so suddenly that no symptoms are seen, the animal simply drops dead.”*

Kudos to “mitchbailey” of the Harry Potter for Grownups list who looked this up and passed it on.

As a side note regarding the perennial question of what sort of wand might be carried by Severus Snape: On one of my lists, [\*Note: it was *many* years ago and I’m too lazy to go digging to find the poster’s name. Assuming that the site is even still online, which is uncertain.] someone on HP4Grownups posted a link to a site listing the symbolism and associations of various trees native to the Caledonian forest. I read through a number of the wood types posted there, and think a good argument could be made in favor of juniper. Like elder, it is a bush or small tree which produces berries, and is native to the British isles (and much of the rest of Europe, I suspect). Its most widely recognized use is that of the fruit for flavoring liquor, and in addition, it has a reputation of being favored by people distilling illegally since the wood burns with very little smoke (stealth brewing?) and, what I found even more interesting, what smoke it does produce is very aromatic and in folk remedies is used medicinally for purification. All of which sounded just terribly appropriate for a Potions master. An added kicker is that Juniper is commonly referred to as “Scottish yew.” But some of the other trees listed had some fairly interesting symbolism attached to them as well.

The Celtic tree astrology page which I used to have a link for did not list juniper, (and Severus Snape’s birthdate would assign him to birch) although it is a native of the region and period that the Celtic culture was dominant. Kate Greenaway’s late-19th century compendium of the Language of Flowers lists juni-





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per as symbolizing Succor or Protection. In Greenaway, yew merely signifies Sorrow.

Ron Weasley's lost wand, one of the few whose components are known, was made of willow. Hagrid's broken wand was made from oak. Rowling implied that it is largely the wood of the wand which directs its "choice" of wizard. I postulate that the issue of "choice" is more a question of "fit," and there is no conscious process involved, nor should such be assumed. To do so is to be intentionally misleading (which, to be frank, is likely to be Ollivander's intent in using such a term).

We now are given to believe that were she to do it over again, Ms Rowling would assign Ron a wand made from ash. The Celtic symbolism is quite different from Greenaway's late-19th century symbolism. In Greenaway's 'THE LANGUAGE OF FLOWERS', Ash Tree = Grandeur. Which seems rather inappropriate for Ron Weasley. In fact, almost laughably so (although certainly no more so than Chestnut = Luxury). Miss Greenaway turns out to list several varieties of willow, however;

Creeping Willow (which is probably not a tree) = Love Forsaken

Water Willow = Freedom

Weeping Willow = Mourning

Willow Herb (also not actually a tree, I suspect) = Pretension

French Willow = Bravery and Humanity

Somehow one suspects that Ron's and perhaps other Weasleys' wands are probably made from French willow. Or possibly water willow. Lily Evans's wand was also stated as having been of willow.

According to Greenaway; holly symbolises Foresight. And although oak leaves are for Bravery the oak tree is Hospitality. White oak is Independence. Live oak is Liberty which somehow



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seems appropriate in that Hagrid's wand had "officially" been long broken. Even though he was finally absolved from all blame in the matter of Myrtle's death, he seems not to have been permitted to acquire a new wand and live openly as a wizard.

There is no listing in Greenaway for the mahogany that James Potter's wand is assigned, sorry. And definitely no listing for it among the Celts. Mahogany is an exotic wood, not native to Great Britain.

As to some other wood possibilities;

Acacia = Friendship

Apple = Temptation

Mountain Ash/Rowan (I believe) = Protection

Aspen Tree = Lamentation

Barbury tree = Sharpness

Bay Tree = Glory

Beech Tree = Prosperity

Birch = Meekness (one rather doubts that Professor Snape's wand is birch, regardless of his birthday. Rowling does tell us that she only gave the trio Celtic-associated wands)

Blackthorn = Difficulty (Hm...)

Box Tree = Stoicism

Cedar = Strength

Cedar of Lebanon = Incorruptible

Chestnut Tree = Luxury

Cherry Tree (common) = Good Education

White Cherry = Deception

Cypress = Death, Despair

Dogwood = Durability

Ebony Tree = Blackness





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Elder = Zealousness (!?)

Elm = Dignity

American Elm = Patriotism

Fig Tree = Prolific. An individual fig by itself signifies an Argument. (Well perhaps not ALL the Weasleys use willow. Molly Prewett wasn't a Weasley yet when she got chosen by her wand.)

Filbert/Hazel = Reconciliation

Fir, Scotch Fir = Elevation

Hawthorn & Flowering Almond = Hope

Hemlock = You Will be My Death

Hornbeam = Ornament

Larch = Audacity, Boldness

Mountain Laurel, = Ambition

Linden, or Lime Tree = Conjugal love

Locust Tree = Elegance

Magnolia = Love of Nature

Swamp Magnolia = Perseverance

Maple = Reserve

Mulberry Tree (black) = I Shall Not Survive You

Mulberry Tree (white) = Wisdom

Myrrh = Gladness

Myrtle = Love (Oh, really!?)

Olive = Peace (Although not, I suspect, in association with "Hornsby"..)

Orange Tree = Generosity

Pear Tree = Comfort

Pine = Pity

Spruce Pine = Hope in Adversity

Plane Tree = Genius



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Plum tree = Fidelity

Wild Plum = Independence

Black Poplar = Courage

Privet = Prohibition (!?! Has JKR read Greenaway?)

Spindle Tree = Your Charms are Engraven on my Heart (phew!)

Strawberry Tree = Esteem and Love

Sycamore = Curiosity

Walnut = Intellect

I probably have missed some, but these all seemed semi-reasonable woods for wands. The addition of the Celtic assignment of "vine" would dictate the addition of some further entries.

Most flowering garden vines do not produce wood sturdy enough for use as wand casings. Nevertheless, there are some vines which will produce a very woody base if they are permitted to. I am reasonably familiar with one particular example of a quite common wisteria vine which grew to eventually crush the original house it was planted next to (back sometime around the year 1900), and has been trained to completely cover two suburban residential lots. Grapevines which are generally cut back almost to the ground at the end of each year's season produce a very massive root system which would be more than capable of being used for any number of wands. There are probably other vine types which will do the same.

Neither Greenaway nor the Celts seem to have been aware of wisteria, which I believe to have originally been native to Asia. However, grape — wild grape, that is, in Greenaway signifies Charity. Generic "vine" signifies Intoxication. Ivy, which the Celts included in their tree zodiac, and which also will produce enough wood for a wand, given time, in Greenaway signi-





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fies Fidelity or Marriage. Reed, also a part of the Celtic system, in Greenaway signifies Compliance, or Music.

The Celtic symbolism for various "vines" is;

Blackberry = Prosperity, Protection, sacred to Brid;

Blueberry = Spirituality; Dream Magic (Sounds like Trelawney);

Grape = Fertility, Inspiration, Prosperity, Binding;

Thistle (query; since when is Thistle a vine?) = Courage, Protection, Strength.

While we are at it; The Celtic symbolism (act to the sites above) for Ash is Prosperity, Protection, Healing. The symbolism for Ivy = Healing, Protection, Cooperation, Exorcism. For Reed = Fertility, Protection, Love, Family Concerns.



There is also a notation that while the current calendar year starts from the closest full moon to Yule, it is possible that in the earliest times the cycle started with the full moon closest to Samhain; since before the influence of the Norse invaders became widespread, it was Samhain which marked the Celtic New Year. If this is the case The moon of the Birch Tree which begins the cycle might be reassigned to the "Reed" moon's time-slot of October 28 - November 24. But probably not.

If this is done, Ron's birth date does reassign to willow, but Harry's holly assignment shifts to vine, and Hermione's vine shifts to reed. Neither of which fit particularly well. Mind you, since the Celtic symbolism for willow is Romantic Love, Healing, Protection, Fertility, and Women's Magic, it doesn't come across as the best possible match for Ron anyway. Whereas Greenaway's French willow seems quite acceptable. As pointed

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out above, her Ash Tree = Grandeur seems just as silly when applied to Ron as Celtic willow does.

Another question which newbies seemed determined to raise is whether in order for two wands to be "brothers" it is necessary for the core material to have been collected from the same animal or whether it is only necessary for the two wands' cores to be of the same type. A moment's reflection should be sufficient to remind us that if nearly all the wands in Great Britain are cored with only one of three basic materials, if all that was required was that the cores match in type, there would be Priori Incantatums going off just about every third time a couple of wizards got into an argument. Which is clearly not the case.

In order to set off the Priori Incantatum as demonstrated in GoF, not only must the wand cores have come from the same donor animal, but the two spells must also have been cast at exactly the same moment. Had Voldemort's Avada Kedavra and Harry's Expelliarmus not been cast at the same time, the first one cast would have gotten in first. Had the two wands cores come from two different Phoenixes, at best we might have seen a repeat of Harry's impromptu duel with Draco Malfoy, with the spells colliding and ricocheting in midair. Although, given that the AK curse is "unblockable" it is more likely that it would have simply overridden the Expelliarmus and hit Harry if he had not been able to duck out of its way. (We have been shown repeatedly that the much-touted unblockability of the AK curse can be readily overcome by the intervention of any solid physical object.





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In the figure of Mr Ollivander of Diagon Alley we get our only glimpse of what may be a professionally neutral party. But even there I think Ollivander's allegiances are more likely to be with Dumbledore than they are with maintaining his carefully neutral status as a non-combatant. Ollivander is effectively the British wizarding world's primary munitions manufacturer, and he supplies everybody, regardless of their alignment. He also appears to be a personal associate of Albus Dumbledore's, although that may simply be a reflection of Dumbledore's effective position as one of the most well known and influential figures of wizarding Britain. Ollivander's disappearance by the opening of HBP was disquieting. He might indeed have voluntarily taken himself and his stock out of the equation, but since we already know that Ollivander's shop remained open through Voldemort's first rise (otherwise how would Muggle-born Lily Evans have purchased her wand from him?), its sudden closure now was ominous.

(It is also hard to understand why, if Ollivander had disappeared, and his shop is reported to be empty, he would have been forced to create a new wand for Peter Pettigrew soon after he was kidnapped by the DEs. Couldn't he merely have fitted him with one from his stock? For that matter, if Ollivander's stock also disappeared, why should there be any question about Bellatrix having managed to get a new wand after Harry stole her old one?)

We also do not know just when it was that Dumbledore's companion bird, Fawkes, donated those two tail feathers to Mr Ollivander's craft. But it must have been at some point before the Autumn term of 1938, when the young Tom Riddle purchased his 13-inch yew wand, and well before Albus Dumbledore

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was much more than a rather well-known wizarding scholar and researcher, a member of the Wizengamot, and currently working as a teacher (and possibly Deputy Headmaster) at Hogwarts. The 11-inch holly wand would probably have been made about the same time, but waited unsold until Harry Potter showed up to claim it (or be claimed by it).



It may have been around the time of Riddle's first disappearance from Britain that Dumbledore might have thought to consult Ollivander to get whatever information was available concerning him. Although what is almost as likely is that Ollivander, who received both feathers from Dumbledore's own Phoenix, presumably at the same time, would have already informed Albus that one of the wands had been purchased by young Tom. Ollivander, who remembers every wand he has ever sold may have also reminded Albus that that particular wand happened to have a "brother" which was yet unsold.

At the time of his first disappearance, Riddle had been working in Knockturn Alley for at least the previous year and a half, and he may well have been a popular member of the London shopkeepers' little community. It is also likely that Tom had been in the habit of picking up various random bits of information from his fellow vendors and the various local craftsmen. Ollivander may have known him reasonably well at that period of time.

From our collection of evidence, it is apparent that Pettigrew\* removed the yew wand from the Potter's house, at some point before heading off to Albania. Whether he did so when he originally staged his disappearance in 1981, or just before he headed



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overseas in 1994, is uncertain, now that we know the house to still be standing, and unguarded. The wand's ID might otherwise have rested entirely upon Mr Ollivander's say-so until the *Priori Incan-tatum* in the Little Hangleton graveyard confirmed the matter.

\*Peter Pettigrew seems to have been in a position to have made quite a collection of other people's wands. We saw him try to make a snatch for Lupin's at the end of PoA, although Harry managed to get that one away from him. That he turned up at Godric's Hollow, and removed Voldemort's wand at some point is also a certainty. There is also Bertha Jorkins's wand still unaccounted for, as well as, for that matter, both James's and Lily's. While we are at it, Barty Crouch Sr escaped on Pettigrew's watch, and he clearly fought his way to Hogwarts overland, without a wand, so Pettigrew probably has Crouch's as well. And, I am sure that after the shouting was over, Pettigrew almost certainly helped himself to Cedric Diggory's, in addition. Harry Potter recovered Cedric's body, but Cedric and Harry had both had their wands out in the cemetery before Pettigrew turned up with BabyMort, and when Cedric died the wand was probably dropped.

Nobody seems to have thought to search Peter for a wand in the Shrieking Shack, either, so he may have been carrying Voldemort's even then (although that less likely since it would be difficult for a small man such as Pettigrew to conceal a 13-inch wand) and he probably even still had his own original one, although he seems to have lost it by the time Ollivander was abducted early in the summer of '96. He may have been bullied into loaning it to one of the DEs who took part in the Raid on the DoM a month or so earlier. But it is abundantly clear that Pettigrew helps himself to any wand that isn't nailed down.

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It would be highly embarrassing to the Weasley family if it should be discovered that Pettigrew's stash of wands, including Voldemort's, had been stored for safekeeping in their own attic over the years of Voldemort's absence. But the fact that the Weasleys seem to have removed to 12 Grimmauld Place over much of the duration of year 5 would have made it a simple matter for Pettigrew to have infiltrated the Burrow to collect anything that he might have left in keeping there under the guardianship of the Weasley family Ghoul. If the Weasley family, which we already know is accustomed to recycling family wands, had any others in storage there, Pettigrew is likely to have appropriated those as well.

In any case, since it was known that Riddle's wand had a brother, once he was the object of an investigation, Ollivander was probably asked by Dumbledore to let him know when the brother wand found a buyer, and Ollivander did indeed do so.

Although, given Albus, he had probably been fully confident that the brother wand would go to Harry Potter long before there was any question of Harry turning up to claim it.



Despite my own tendency to suspect that the Dementor attack at the opening of OotP, which would have gotten Harry expelled and — incidentally — his wand snapped, was simply Dolores Umbridge's very own Bright Idea, it is almost as likely that she may have been led to come up with that particular bright idea through the deft prompting of Lucius Malfoy. Getting that particular wand out of circulation might have struck someone on Voldemort's side of the game board as a Good



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Thing. They had nearly all witnessed the kind of mess that wand could make of their Leader's plans. And it would have been much easier to lure Harry into the DoM if he had been living in London with Sirius than if he was at school.

But Umbridge's exile to Hogwarts soon afterwards suggests that it may have been decided that her tendency to exceed her orders was better exercised somewhere other than within the Ministry itself. At least during that particular year. Matters in the Ministry were rather delicately balanced that year, and there was far too much of a risk of her upsetting someone else's rather more subtle strategies by leaving her to barge about on her own authority.

The constant threats of expulsion which Umbridge indiscriminately flung around Hogwarts throughout her year there do not have the feel of any sort of organized plot. Just of Umbridge's general stance for trying to intimidate anyone who might attempt to defy or oppose her by throwing out the worst threat that she can think of at the moment. And we can take our measure of Umbridge from the fact that this particular threat was invariably grossly in excess of the requirements of the situation.

However, we were also given a strong reminder that expulsion from Hogwarts is a much more serious thing than expulsion from, say, Eton or Rugby. It is not merely a case of being permanently sent down from that particular school. If that were all, it would only be a question of finding another school which would accept the child and would carry no further lasting consequences.

Quite apart from the fact that Hogwarts is the *only* accredited magical training school in Great Britain; in expulsion from Hogwarts one's wand is also snapped. Raising that particular penalty to what effectively amounts to expulsion from ever

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attaining the subsequent rights and privileges of being a full citizen of wizarding Britain. Expulsion prior to having qualified as a wizard by sitting the OWLs and receiving a passing score on some undetermined number of subjects is effectively expulsion from ever being accepted and legally recognized as a wizard. i.e., Second-class citizenship, forever.

We do not know the actual minimum acceptable number of OWLs, only that the Weasley twins received 3 each, which was enough for them to qualify for Apparition licenses, and left them in possession of their wands, despite never having sat the NEWTs.

As pointed out above, even though Rubeus Hagrid was cleared of all suspicion of involvement in Moaning Myrtle's death since the end of Harry's 2nd year, his unquestionably having brought an acromantula into the Castle seems to have permanently denied him any possibility of replacing his broken wand and living openly as a wizard.

Had Umbridge's ploy with that Dementor attack succeeded in its secondary objective, a similar wandless fate would have awaited Harry. Assuming that the Dementors hadn't simply removed him from the equation in the first place.

If to disqualify Harry from ever achieving full wizard status was in fact "Professor" Umbridge's aim, it is one that failed. Harry has clearly received a sufficiency of OWLs necessary for him to qualify to try for an Apparation license when he turned 17. (Even though by that time for him to attempt to do so was out of the question and he Apparated illegally all through the course of DHs.) Even though he did fail to return to Hogwarts for classes, or to sit the NEWTs he had still qualified as an "ordinary wizard"

Little as Rowling seems to think that description may suit him.



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### Note:

This article, originally was composed of two separate articles, entitled; 'Hogwarts & Muggles' and 'On Hufflepuff (& Ravenclaw)'.

Both of these were among the original 30 essays first posted in April 2003. They have both had some additional development since they were first uploaded, but for the most part, I still think I had hold of the proper end of the stick from the start.

The enrollment of Muggle-born students at Hogwarts is the point at which the underlying principle of Wizarding Secrecy fails. Selected specific Muggles (the parents of such children) *have* to be informed of the existence of the wizarding world, in order for the Wizarding world to lay a claim upon their children.

We have been left to assume that this policy of recruiting the Muggle-born was the underlying cause of what the fighting of repeated wizarding wars over the course of the twentieth century was all about.

I am inclined to suspect that this is a vast oversimplification.

However, in the common view both of the pureblooded die-hards, as well as among the wider wizarding population, this assumption appears to be the case. And the Ministry of Magic appears to have very little invested in convincing anyone that this reading of matters might be incorrect.



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### On Hufflepuff (& Ravenclaw)

Until the events recorded in Order of the Phoenix, one of the more persistent fanon misconceptions regarding Neville Longbottom was that it must have been only by some fluke that he ended up in Gryffindor.

There was an equally persistent determination to misread both his character, and the priorities of Hufflepuff House in order to claim that Hufflepuff “should” have been his proper place. Some very ingenious and unnecessary backbends have been indulged in to explain Neville’s presence in Gryffindor.

Other unreflective people who have bought wholesale the myth of the ever-glorious (and apparently terminally butch) Gryffindor House have even raised the question of what such “girly” girls as Miss Brown and Miss Patil are doing there.

What I suspect is that the people who raise such questions were being carried away by Gryffindor House’s own image of itself (a legend in its own mind). This is not difficult, as Gryffindor seems to be the Gilderoy Lockhart of the Houses — and I strongly suspect that Mr Lockhart was an alumnus of it, too.

As to Misses Brown & Patil; I suspect there is probably a fine, long-established tradition of heedless Gryffindor airheads that Lavender at least fits right into. Why else would those fans who have not bought the package of “ever-glorious Gryffindor” be so disparaging toward the Gryffs, as they have been presented in canon in general? There are certain kinds of foolhardiness and something that usually ends up counting as a “form” of bravery that just seem to go hand in hand. Hagrid seems to have it in abundance.





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We have at least seen that Brown & Patil aren't actually cowards at any rate. They may squeal like little piggies with or without good reason but we don't often see them running for cover, and Parvati, at least seems magically quite competent.

Nor do either of these girls timidly avoid behavior which they know will get them into trouble if they are caught.

By midpoint of the series most of their poor showing had been because we had only seen them thorough the Harry filter, and Harry, still mostly sees females through the Weasley-patented "Macho Dude" lens. Only Hermione has consistently been able to make herself visible as an individual through that lens, and she first showed up through it only by a fluke when she covered for them by lying about the Troll in the bathroom incident. Luna later showed up through the lens by virtue of sheer weirdness, but kept falling off the radar. Ginny finally managed to make herself visible by acting the vicious little bitch to all and sundry. One, with difficulty, resists drawing comparisons to her distant cousin, Bellatrix. (Harry Potter certainly does not seem to bring out the best in the people around him.)

The proposal has been raised on certain lists that it may actually be "glorious Gryffindor" which truly serves as the "default catch-all" House rather than "humble Hufflepuff", and that reading is not at all a bad one.

But I would still say that it is just not that simple.



It is certainly true that Neville Longbottom (unlike Miss Brown and Miss Patil) does not display your "typical" Gryffindor manner. Neville seems to be curiously lacking in the character-

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istic Gryffindor thirst for attention and public admiration.

But the persistent misreadings insofar as they regard Neville are very far from the mark. There was really no other fitting place at Hogwarts for somebody like Neville *but* Gryffindor. Gryffindor was not his "best" default placement, it was his *only* default placement.

And post-DHs it is obvious that his placement there was not by default at al.



But as to the rest of the Founders, and their sorting criteria:

In the case of Helga, the issue is not quite such a blatant contradiction as with Salazar. Helga would teach any child who needed teaching. But, regardless of what *she* taught her students, the lesson that her *House* now teaches them is how to work together as a team. Not every child is inherently capable of that kind of cooperation. Nor is that a lesson that all children will agree to learn. (Just try to imagine young Tom Riddle in Hufflepuff. Go on, I dare you.) Clearly the Hat must have some criterion for being confident that the children Sorted into Helga's House *will* learn its lessons.

And, really, look at everything everyone says about the 'Puffs when they are trying to be nice, or at least neutral. All of those very particular virtues are exactly the ones that best grease the wheels of *cooperative* efforts.

Modern-day Hufflepuff is emphatically NOT the house that you get sent to if you lack any distinguishing characteristics. Where that particular misreading is concerned, the problem is one of perception, in that the 'Puffs identify themselves so



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completely with their “peer group” that to most outsiders’ eyes they all blend together.

It’s a vanishingly small wonder that an arrogant, immature, Slyth-to-the-bone like an 11-year-old Draco Malfoy regarded them with contempt and ill-disguised horror. Or that an immature dyed-in-the-wool Gryff like Ron Weasley dismissed them as a bad joke.

A Hufflepuff back-up team is every hero’s, every statesman’s, every brilliant ivory-tower innovator’s dream. But, by definition, as the hero, the statesman or the innovator, you are not a *part* of that team — so you have to earn their respect before they will willingly back you up. And if you do manage to enlist such a support group and then overstep yourself with them and turn them against you, they will withdraw that support, and they will bury you.

(You WILL notice that everyone in canon who sneers at the Hufflepuffs is careful to do so behind their backs. The ‘Puffs in their standard formation are formidable.)

It has also been noted that if you ever do manage to cut one of the more talented ‘Puffs out of the herd and let him carry the banner for the honor of his House, he shines. Cedric Digory was close to honestly winning the TriWizard Tournament. It’s no wonder that Barty Crouch Jr stepped in to make sure he didn’t. And there are a lot of very talented or very admirable wizards in Hufflepuff. Every tribe has a chieftain, after all.



At Neville’s Sorting, however, Gryffindor was the only real possibility. I suspect that the (very long) time it took to get Neville Sorted was not, as in Harry’s case, due to any debate as to which House to send him to, so much as in getting the boy (who I



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contend didn’t truly want to be a wizard at all) resigned to going into *any* House. Let’s look at the choices, shall we?

Slytherin? It is to laugh. If ever there was a child with absolutely no wizardly ambition, Neville Longbottom at the age of 11 was that child. Nor does he have any secret hankering for power over others. This choice wasn’t even on the menu.

Ravenclaw? Hardly. The canon Neville of the books is comfortably within normal IQ range, but he doesn’t value cleverness purely for its own sake, and he lacks the ‘Claws’ requisite bloody-minded determination to be proven *right*. Nor has he the sort of mental quickness which is all that would have kept him from being trampled by his housemates in Ravenclaw. Despite the fact that the ‘Claws are probably the most determinedly individualist of all the Houses, they can be an overbearing lot with it. In that particular House, above all, it’s everyone for himself. Neville’s “duffer” act would have cut no ice in Ravenclaw. And he altogether lacks the sort of unshakable faith in himself that so effectively armors those odd ducks and misfits in the style of Luna Lovegood.

Hufflepuff? No. Again. We’re in deeply tribal, “group think” territory here. The Hufflepuff’s motto really is; “nobody left behind,” but that only applies if you visibly pitch in and do your part for the rest of your “team.”

The Hufflepuffs generally come in last because they move at the speed of their weakest member — but they *always* finish the course. And the ‘Puffs have zero tolerance for loners or “odd ducks.” They also have a nasty tendency to gang up on outsiders, slackers, or people who are perceived to have deliberately let their side down. [Note: you do NOT want to alienate the Hufflepuffs. There are a lot of them. And they stick together. Far more solidly





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than the Slytherins, whose alliances are tactical, strategic — and temporary.] For his own sake, it's a damn good thing that Neville is not in Hufflepuff.

So what real possibility was there ever for Neville, but Gryffindor?



My own take on the question of Sorting is that the primary criterion that the Hat uses for sorting the students (who as adolescents, or pre-adolescents have hardly developed “fully-formed” personalities yet) is the child's own wishes and values.

Though Hermione claims that the subject was raised in her Sorting, observers saw no prolonged period of discussion attempting to convince Hermione Granger that she might be better suited in Ravenclaw (which she probably would have been; she would certainly have been more welcome there, even if not better liked). Having read up on the subject, Hermione had already decided that she wanted to be in Gryffindor, so she was put in Gryffindor. The Hat pointed out an alternate possibility, but it didn't really care. From the Great Hall's viewpoint, it took very little time to Sort Hermione Granger.

The Hat would have seen as little reason to put Malfoy anywhere but Slytherin. (Who else would have wanted him, and could you have convinced him to go there?) From their comments in Madam Malkin's shop and on the Hogwarts Express, it is clear that Draco Malfoy and Hermione Granger both were mentally shouting their choices to the Hat even as they put it on, and the Hat complied without much argument. It didn't waste any time in Sorting them. Nor are they the only ones.

Ron and his siblings probably reached Hogwarts hardly able

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to conceive of landing in any House other than Gryffindor, and there was nothing in their heads to make the Hat ask them “Are you sure about that?” even though Percy would probably have been a good deal happier in Ravenclaw, (Particularly once the twins arrived at Hogwarts) or even in Slytherin, where he would have had an *extremely* awkward time fitting in, but ultimately would have at least been respected there. It would have been a lot more difficult for the twins to get “at” him had he been in another House. But, no, even Percy was determined upon Gryffindor. And, in the long run, it wasn't a *bad* fit, however bad the timing. Percy *is* one of the classic Gryffindor “types,” he's just not successful at it. None of his peers admire him.

And in HBP we get it pointed out to us by Slughorn that House affiliations often do run in families. No doubt because the children Sorted approach the process with pre-established House associations. Even Harry, by the time he was Sorted, had picked up enough to be averse to being sent into Slytherin and, if anything, predisposed to Gryffindor.

I think that the real state of affairs is that, by this time, in three-quarters of the cases, the Hat permits the students to Sort themselves. And this is usually done according to a child's family associations and the Houses' reputations. It is comparatively rare that a child raised inside the wizarding world approaches the Hat prepared to let the Hat make its decision unprompted.

It is in those cases where the child has no definite expectations that the Hat will step in to discuss the matter with them in any degree of depth as it did with Harry (and probably with Neville). And these are most likely to be the children who are Muggle-born, or Muggle-raised, who have no family



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House associations to draw from, and probably don't know the Houses' reputations. Once the Hat recognizes what the child really deems important, which it seems to do by playing Devil's Advocate, it sends him to where he is most likely to learn to achieve that goal. Every Sorting song we've had to date tends to support this reading.

The students who are determined to "win", to advance, to reach the top, to make theirs a "great success story", whatever has to be done, whatever it may cost, even at the expense of public opinion, just so long as they "win" — even if they simply define "winning" as living off of their daddy's investments, land in Slytherin.

Or so it appears. There may be more to it than we've been shown.

Draco Malfoy has been brought up to have no doubt that this is his destiny. Nor is this a difficult aspiration to apply to even such unpromising examples as Crabbe and Goyle. Slytherin teaches its children how to "win." To gain and to keep the upper hand in their dealings. To work from a position of strength. Regardless of the means, regardless of the cost, either to one's self — or to anyone else. The really promising and large-minded Slyths it teaches how to win in a way that other people will gladly help them to go on winning. Some Slytherin leaders have probably been exceedingly well-loved, and deservedly so. This doesn't altogether match my own somewhat more "driven" definition of ambition, but it is easy enough to identify. Even for a Hat.

By the time OotP was out, I had come around to the viewpoint that regardless of Salazar's own reputed preference for accepting only those students with established family ties to wizarding tradition, the "pureblood thing" has very little to do with a modern Sorting. At least not on the Hat's part. The



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main reason that purebloods of a certain type have gravitated so steadily into Slytherin House is because, over the past century or so, purebloods from families with any sort of isolationist or supremacist tendencies are likely to show up at Hogwarts convinced that only Slytherin House is an acceptable destination. They have already pre-Sorted themselves and the Hat lets them get on with it. The Riddle effect has only magnified this tendency.

And even then there is still no guarantee that such children will have any predisposition to gravitate to the Dark Arts.

Nor does that keep the Hat from sending other children from other backgrounds there as well. It was Tom Riddle's single-minded determination to "win" that sent him to Slytherin House, not his descent from one of the Founders — of which Tom was completely unaware. Or even the fact he was a Parselmouth.

Children who want "admiration" or "acclaim," whether they actually win or not, land in Gryffindor. Misses Brown & Patil, anyone? Hermione? To the Gryffs, simply "winning" is not enough. They want to be *admired* for winning. Indeed, to be admired even if they *don't* win. To a Gryffindor, the glory matters more than the power. If they win they must do so in a manner that ensures that they will be applauded for it; or conversely, they are determined to go out and do something which *deserves* admiration.

Not love, necessarily. Or even personal liking. A Gryffindor certainly won't disdain either of those, but in a pinch he will do without, if the admiration is present. Where the Slytherin is content with winning, in itself, the Gryffindor wants it to be acknowledged that he *deserved* to win.

This tends to constrain most Gryffs to a range of popularly





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accepted and recognizable styles of “admirable” public behavior. Behavior which is theoretically rewarded according to its deserts.

Although Slytherin certainly has its “drama queen” side, Gryffindor is the true house of the “grand gesture.” Leaving aside the occasional oddballs like Neville, or the professionally humble, like Lupin, one’s public image deeply matters in Gryffindor.

In Gryffindor a gallant failure is to be preferred to a “dishonorable” victory. The Slyths don’t care *how* they win, or whether they win and are disliked for it. The ‘Claws don’t particularly care whether they’re disliked, period. So long as they are acknowledged to be *right*. (Ravenclaw would have taught Hermione not to bloody *care* what the likes of a Ron Weasley thought of her.) The ‘Puffs would rather be liked even if they finish last.



Which is not to say that any individual Gryffindor’s publicly “virtuous” manner necessarily goes beyond skin deep. Applying the general litmus test of looking for a thirst for “admiration,” it is very easy to see that both Ludo Bagman and Gilderoy Lockhart probably Sorted into Gryffindor. And quite possibly Cornelius Fudge landed there as well.

For that matter, once Harry had been told a few bits and pieces of how fine and beloved his parents had been in this strange new world of theirs, it was his clear desire to be found “worthy” of them which tipped him so easily into Gryffindor.

For that matter, Gryffindor is also the House of the faithful sidekick. Sidekicks do not come in mobs. They do not group into teams. They are “one-man dogs” totally devoted to their Leader. And they are pre-eminently valued and admired by



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those Leaders in return. Yes, Sirius Black, I am looking at you.

For that matter, I really doubt that Peter Pettigrew is the first “lone wolf” subversive to have gone through Hogwarts decked out in scarlet and gold, either.

Gryffindor subversives are a bit of special case. But Pettigrew was pushed into that role. It was certainly not his original intention to become one. He put on the Hat intending to be James Potter’s very best friend, for life. I think that it was already clear that James (who still had yet to be Sorted) did come to Hogwarts with family associations, through his father, for Gryffindor House (assuming that Dorea and Charlus Potter were his parents, his mother was almost certainly a Slytherin). Peter put the Hat on with a rosy view of he and James shoulder-to-shoulder, best friends forever, and the Hat, recognizing that mindset, sent him off to Gryffindor.

The true Gryffindor subversives are mercifully rare. And I suspect that they may often have their role thrust upon them when something or other has blocked them from their natural position as Leader or Lieutenant. Being balked of one’s chosen position as Leader or Lieutenant will not recalibrate one’s goals into a desire to be a part of a team, like a Hufflepuff. A Lieutenant after all, is above all an officer, not one of the troops.

Nor will being balked of one’s original goal as Leader, or adjunct to the Leader, suddenly imbue one with a value for cleverness for its own sake, like a Ravenclaw.

These shadowy figures would usually have been delighted to be admired publicly as a Leader, or as the trusted Lieutenants of a worthy Leader, or by posterity, but once they retool their priorities, they are just as likely to be satisfied if they are





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heroes only to themselves. One seriously has to stop and wonder whether Barty Crouch Jr could have possibly been a Gryffindor.

Many times those priorities retool into something very close to the Slytherins' desire merely to win, although they typically lack the Slytherins' specific skills for doing so. This tends to make them far better equipped to undermine or to destroy something that already exists than to put something else in its place.

Sometimes such subversives have proved invaluable to their world, when there was an existing injustice to be addressed. Typically they have a cause to which they are dedicated, but sometimes — as with their more outgoing housemates (\*cough\* Gilderoy Lockhart \*cough\*) — these causes may turn out to be utterly selfish at their core. In Pettigrew's case the "cause" is his personal survival. Which brings us to:

There are Gryffindors, of all types, who eventually manage to lower their objectives to a level that makes them extremely dangerous individuals. Pettigrew, for example, was forced into Lone Operator mode, and it was not his natural style. He only managed to sustain it by dispensing with any sort of attempt to uphold any degree of personal honor, and ultimately seemed to be willing to define "victory" as mere "survival" and to be a hero only in his own mind. His complete dismissal of outer appearances was rare even among subversives. This made him a very dangerous and unpredictable man.

By such an example of what happens when a Gryffindor is denied his "proper" role we can easily recognize that both the traditional Slytherin and the traditional Gryffindor House "goals" represent two only slightly contrasting styles of standard "leadership" models.

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As is, in it's own somewhat less well-socialized manner, the following;



Those individuals who are determined to be proven "*right* — at *whatever* cost" tend to end up in Ravenclaw.

I rather suspect that the Patil twins were squabblers rather than players of the kind of "double act" that Fred and George Weasley perfected. Otherwise they would have both landed in one or the other of their houses rather than being split. I also suspect that a remarkable number of traditional Ravenclaw "leaders" are perfectly satisfied with a following consisting only of themselves. This is the traditional House of the "different drummer." It is also the traditional House of the *poseur* (although those do crop up elsewhere). And they occasionally tend to be both aggressive and competitive about it.

Eagles are not gentle birds. Professor Flitwick notwithstanding, I seriously doubt that consideration for the feelings of others is a universally held Ravenclaw trait. In fact, given the caliber of what passes for "wit" among adolescents, there is much more likely to be a pronounced tendency among the eaglets to call a spade a bleeding shovel in the harshest manner possible. On any and every opportunity. And the only person whose feelings are routinely considered are one's own and perhaps that of a close friend.

And such friends are usually not regarded as Lieutenants, but colleagues. Ravenclaws are, of all the Houses, the least wedded to hierarchal social structures. The duration of Ravenclaw associations are also likely to be inherently unstable as well. Neither



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devoted Lieutenants nor dedicated teams abound in Ravenclaw. Nor do the Slytherin-style specific, and purposeful, patron/client alliances rule there, although they may be occasionally entered into. This does not argue for a high degree of permanence in one's associations, although since every Ravenclaw is in for a 7-year stint with these particular housemates a "pecking order" usually does manage to emerge. Eventually.

In addition to that; among the worshipers at such a temple to "individuality" as Ravenclaw House constitutes, one can probably also find a sliding scale of styles in "sensibility" from the hair-triggered and thin-skinned all the way to purest rhinohide. This is not an easy combination, and tends to be as volatile as an unsupervised Potions lab.



And, finally; those children whose most deeply-held desire is to "belong" to a group that values them; to have a place that is their own, within their own "tribe" become the Hufflepuffs.

Neville already knows that he belongs to and is valued (it says in the fine print, anyway) by his family. And his family has managed to make this more of a burden than any form of support. He would not have been looking for more of the same when he got to Hogwarts. If anything, what Neville probably wanted most was to be left alone for a change.

As we can see by squinting around the edges, with the apparent exception of Hufflepuff, there is an accepted "loner" style in all of the Hogwarts Houses. But the underlying Sorting criterion of each House still takes precedence. There is no true House that is just for loners. And without that overriding



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determination to be proven right, and that fundamental admiration for cleverness for its own sake, a tendency to operate as a loner will not send you into Ravenclaw.

Gryffindor was the House most likely to accept Neville exactly as he was, so long as he didn't rock the boat or try to steal anyone else's thunder.

Mind you; stealing other people's thunder is perfectly acceptable behavior in Gryffindor. Expected even. But you have to act like you actually *want* it, and be willing to fight to *keep* it. Otherwise you are not *playing the game*.

But nearly every game readily welcomes spectators.



It is seldom taken into account by younger fans that Neville also has a far larger share of purely "social" courage than either Ron OR Harry did up to the end of Book 5. Courage doesn't always mean that you go looking for dangerous situations to throw yourself into, after all. And, at that, Harry's dangerous situations were usually forced on him.

Up to the end of GoF, no one had ever chosen to force such a situation onto Neville. But you will notice that it was Neville, who *knows* his place in the pecking order perfectly well, who was the first of the three of them to speak up, risk rejection, and ask a girl to the Yule Ball. If nothing else, Neville has grocked the purpose of the rules of a formal etiquette in a functioning society.

Unlike just about any of the Weasleys, including Ginny. Or, for that matter, her mother.





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It will also be noticed in the above survey, that the goals to “belong” and the goals to “succeed” are not so very widely removed from each other as all that, either, thus closing the circle.

In fact, the signature goals and methods of coping most typically displayed by each of the four Houses usually strikes off some sort of echo or reflection in those of (at least) one of the others — with some critical difference in emphasis and interpretation.

For example; a Slytherin — who is encouraged to make use of any advantage he may find to hand — and who happens to have the requisite background, will shamelessly play the “family” card, without hesitation, in any situation that seems to merit it. A Gryffindor, or a Ravenclaw who typically are inclined to value personal achievements more highly than personal associations will be much less likely to do so. A Hufflepuff, however, who deeply values his “group identity” will play the family card just as readily as any Slytherin. A Slyth without such a background never volunteers family associations in case they be used against him.

A Ravenclaw’s determination to be proven “right” is, if anything, even more ruthless than a Slytherin’s determination to “succeed” and if to attain that goal will — as it often does — cancel out the possibility of worldly success he will *still* do it. The quintessential Ravenclaw will sacrifice mere success with no more than a passing sigh. (Admittedly he may grouse about it for decades afterward.) Thus the major underlying distinction between the Slyths and the ‘Claws.

The archetypal Hufflepuff will routinely sublimate the personal for the communal and be guided by the consensus. The mature Slytherin will (usually discretely) sacrifice the personal as readily as any lawyer if it brings him closer to his goal, and there is some-

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thing significant to be gained by it. And in the case of many a “true” Slytherin that goal may quite genuinely be for the common good.

A Gryffindor will make such a sacrifice as well, particularly if his public image can be adjusted to showcase it, or if it is openly acknowledged that the sacrifice is a grand gesture made in return for the cooperation of those he seeks to influence. In which case he may make a parade of it. More rarely, he may make the sacrifice privately without fanfare, the admiration which sustains him self-generated, secure in the knowledge that he has done the “right thing”. Admittedly, he usually covers his bases by sharing the knowledge of this act with his Lieutenant. (An acknowledged Leader is expected to fully acknowledge such acts on the part of his Lieutenant. *Always.*)

The Ravenclaw will usually make such a sacrifice only if given absolutely no other choice. (I doubt that either Professor McGonagall or former Professor Snape look forward to teaching Ravenclaws. Once they absorb the initial concepts they argue over each subsequent modifying ramification.)

I have also been long convinced that — given that the Ravenclaws are the most “individualist” of the four Houses — it almost certainly follows that the occasional 4th-7th year ‘Claws have been making a byword of themselves for generations for their insistence upon making themselves utterly ridiculous as they try to differentiate themselves from everyone else by playing the “more eccentric than thou” card, or, at the very least, by dressing all in black and stridently demanding to be “taken seriously”:

(\*I am SO pleased with myself. This statement, in its first iteration was made in April 2003, before any of us ever *heard* of Luna Lovegood. Go me!)



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I also suspect that the Ravenclaws are not necessarily always the top academic achievers (although they are often enough). Rather, they are most typically the sort of people who simply admire the quality of cleverness for its own sake and venerate “individuality” to the point of exaggeration, even if they do not personally possess either great cleverness or great individuality to any exceptional degree, themselves. (It is one’s choices; not one’s abilities...) Although the ‘Claws will certainly go to almost any length to make you *believe* they possess those gifts. Cutting off one’s nose to spite one’s face has been refined into an art form in Ravenclaw.

Young Severus Snape’s dress and manner (to say nothing of his abilities) would have fit into Ravenclaw very comfortably, but a “real” Ravenclaw would have taken any such pose of intellectual superiority a good deal more to extremes.

And the Ravenclaws are every bit as much the Hufflepuffs’ “opposite number” in that regard as the Gryffindors and the Slytherins. I suspect that the classes that pair those two Houses are every bit as stressful for their instructors as the Gryff/Slyth configurations.

Think about it: Whereas among the Gryffs and the Slyths you have the volatile “fire and ice” confrontations of two different leadership styles ceaselessly butting heads, with the ‘Puffs and the ‘Claws you are stuck having to endlessly negotiate around or through the “oil and water” barrier where the “prove to us that you are worth respecting” types perpetually run up against the “whaddaya *mean* no man is an island?” types — who may not care about being disliked, but who demand respect as their due; both types permanently, intractably, and magnificently unin-



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telligible to one another, with mindsets and demeanors that are guaranteed to push each others’ buttons.

Here you have, on one hand, the ‘Puffs, who not only close ranks against outsiders but will turn into an opposing army as soon as they decide that you have injured one of their own (when you take on the Hufflepuffs, you take on the *whole House*) and on the other, you have the ‘Claws, who — with a distressing level of frequency — disdain conformity, have fairly high levels of social ineptitude, frequently cruel tongues, no common sense, and not enough experience to recognize when a battle is not worth fighting, let alone starting.

Off of the Quidditch pitch, and quite possibly even on it, trying to get Ravenclaws to “pull together” is rather like herding cats.

The fact that we have never, to date, seen two such potentially volatile Houses as the Gryffs and the ‘Claws sharing a classroom may be no accident, and as House heads; Professors Snape and McGonagall may not have the worst of all possible bargains.

[Note: WE have never seen the Gryffs and the ‘Claws share a classroom. But they allegedly do. Luna drops this information in passing in HBP. In Ginny and Luna’s year the two houses are combined for Transfiguration, but for Harry’s year this has never been stated, although it may, in fact, be the case.]

The down side of Hufflepuff, of course, is rampant cliquishness and mob rule. I strongly suspect the disciplinary problem that the Hufflepuffs present to the staff of Hogwarts is a pervading tendency to gang up on whoever they decide has offended one of them. Inside the House, this problem is recast as intermittent squabbles between rival subgroups and the determination for each to demand that all onlookers take





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sides. There is also a nasty underlying tendency among poorly-socialized 'Puffs (oh, yes, those also exist, Zacharias Smith seems a good example, I was amused to note in HBP that if he is not literally the "Heir of Hufflepuff" we are, evidently, supposed to believe him to be at least a descendant) to regard the application of those wonderful, traditional Hufflepuff virtues of fairness, patience, generosity and above all, loyalty as only being owed to one's own particular "tribe," and the rest of the world bedamned.

I suspect that there might have been no few Hufflepuffs who would have quite happily chosen to support Voldemort. Or Tom Riddle, anyway. Fortunately for everybody, Tom doesn't seem to have done a lot of targeted recruiting in that House.

The Gryffs, for their part, play a more or less perpetual game of "follow the leader," and the "leader" role is the prize for anyone who chooses to grab it and manages to keep it. The Slyths by contrast, are perpetually re-examining and fine-tuning their collection of strategic — and assumed temporary — alliances. Although mutually beneficial Slytherin associations can last for decades, and be deeply valued by all parties.



In Potter fandom there is no shortage of Slytherin apologists, so I will not go into the big song and dance on that account here. But I agree with those who contended that unless Rowling introduced at least one or two unequivocally "good" Slytherins by the end of the series, or accounted for the pervasive imbalance of her presentation in some other manner, her whole "vision" becomes morally indefensible. You do not slap



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a label declaring immature 11-year-olds to be "irredeemably evil" merely because they got Sorted into a particular House. It simply is *not true*, and it is Not Done.

And Rowling apparently finally got the message, even though she responded with what looks like too little, too late. But that is a matter for another day and another essay.

However, I do tend to think that not enough (dis)credit has been paid openly to Gryffindor House for its tendency to keep turning loose sets of "popular" bullies. And in Gryffindor, they usually do seem to come in pairs. Fred and George Weasley are undoubtedly just the latest in a long tradition of such.

And ghod help you if they happen not to "like" you, because no one else will.

Nobody, whatsoever, would stand up to the Weasley twins on someone's personal account if the twins decided that they were an assigned target. Not — as in the case of Dudley Dursley and his gang — because everyone else was necessarily *afraid* of them. Oh no. But because they were so "popular" that their judgment as to "who" was to be treated "how" simply *stands*.

People who wondered why Neville wasn't in Hufflepuff overlooked an awful lot. Neville is about as far removed from being a "team player" as you can get. He appears to be that slightly uncommon animal, a Gryffindor loner without being one if its subversives. And, in the end, when it was required of him, he turned out to be a far better and more contentious Leader than Harry ever was. The Hat took a long time placing him. The more typical loners usually tend to gravitate into Ravenclaw, but Ravenclaw would have been a very poor fit for Neville.

He certainly always had enough bravery for Gryffindor





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(mostly the quiet courage of the variety that endures a bad situation without utterly giving up), but not the confidence required by Ravenclaw. Nor was Neville ever up to the perpetual political jockeying for position of Slytherin. Gryffindor was the best pick of an awkward assortment. For Neville. At age 11, anyway.

Although, mind you, up to the middle of GoF I think he would probably have traded places with Harry in a heartbeat so long as he could have stayed with the Dursleys and attended the local Muggle comprehensive.

### Hogwarts & Muggles:

#### On the enrollment of Muggle-born students.

Way back in a very early interview, Rowling stated that every year Professor McGonagall consulted the Hogwarts enrollment list and sent letters to everyone who was turning 11 that year. At that point we did not know whether Ms Rowling was referring to the academic year or the calendar year.

Since an update to Rowling's original website of December 10, 2004, the question is tacitly resolved. Ms Rowling meant the academic year. Which is to say; September 2 to the following September 1.

Since it is unlikely that Hogwarts would have any Muggle-born students at all, let alone as much as 25% of its enrollment, if all letters were delivered by owl, I — and rather a lot of other fans — thought that we must assume some simplification had been applied to this explanation. Ms Rowling later confirmed that this was indeed the case. Muggle-born candidates' letters are hand-delivered by a special messenger.

Apparently as recently as the late 1930s this task was performed by the Hogwarts staff. As the British population, and

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presumably, the Hogwarts enrollment have increased it is uncertain whether this is still the case. Rowling's adjusted population estimate, scaling the total wizarding population of Great Britain back to around 3,000, suggests that it probably could be. It is amusing to wonder whether Minerva's occasional visits at #12, looking rather odd in Muggle dress, during the early chapters of OotP were drop-ins made during her summer delivery schedule of Hogwarts letters to prospective Muggle-born students. But we will probably never be told for certain, one way or the other.

Given the course of scientific rationalism that Muggle understanding has been encouraged to adopt over the past 300 years, the current-day discovery among the Muggles of Great Britain of magical ability in one of their children is far less likely to "freak them out", than might have been the case a couple of hundred years ago. Particularly if the person to contact them is careful about selecting euphemisms which march in step with current buzzwords. In the course of *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* we were shown that — at least back in the late 1930s — rather more devious methods were also employed to assure the cooperation of these children's guardians. Hogwarts and the wizarding world definitely *wants* these children.

Of course our own view of the matter was of how *Albus Dumbledore* was demonstrated to operate. Albus has probably always been a law unto himself.

In Tom Riddle's day, and almost certainly even now, in addition to the Hogwarts Quill which records magical births onto the enrollment list, the Hogwarts Library also included a collection of books of wizarding families, i.e., genealogies, from which Tom was able eventually to trace his grandfather Marvolo Gaunt. It is



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probable that at that time, and perhaps to the present day such reference books are also used to determine which of the children recorded on the enrollment list are likely to be Muggle-born, whose families will need to be contacted in person.

Such reference books are probably also used to determine if or to what degree a pair of youngsters who might have formed an attachment may be related to one another. Although the gene pool of the British wizarding world is probably more varied today than it has ever been, among a significant minority of even the present day students this is still likely to be a very real consideration.

I've always been of the opinion that Harry's was probably rather a special case. Even though he was raised in the Muggle world, by Muggle relatives, those relatives were assumed to be "informed" Muggles and Harry himself is not Muggle-born. Consequently, when it was time for his Hogwarts letter to be sent the usual wizarding procedure was followed. Which seems to have been a mistake all round.

In Harry's case, the failure to receive a return owl set whoever was in charge of the matter (and it really does not sound at all as if this was Professor McGonagall, it's not at all in her style) into silly-ass bureaucrat mode; escalating a repetition of an action that is clearly not getting a response to the point of absurdity. It is possible that no human agency was actually involved once the original message was sent. It could have been generated by a complex charm which repeats until a response is received. I rather expect that it was Mrs Figg on the other end of the communication line, who alerted Dumbledore from Little Whinging that the Dursleys were being inundated with owls and that Vernon Dursley had taken his family, and Harry

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off on holiday to get away from them. Prompting Dumbledore to send Hagrid to settle the matter in person.



In the case of authentic Muggle-borns, such as Hermione Granger, there would have to be a different procedure. One that would cover all of the ramifications in more depth, since their families can be presumed to know nothing of what sending a child to Hogwarts entails. We were told (in another early Rowling interview) that about 25% of the student body is Muggle-born, so, taking Rowling's statement that she invented an incoming class of 40 in Harry's year, this would entail about 10 new students every year.

In the 1930s, as we have seen, the staff of Hogwarts itself took this duty on themselves during the long summer break. If we really are only talking about a dozen or so students, this may still be the case.

An alternate possibility, however, is that since Hogwarts is administered — at least to some degree — and its test scores overseen by the MoM; in these days there may now be a small (i.e., 1 person) Division of the Educational Dept. or a Unit of the Muggle Liaisons office (perhaps a little larger, 2-3 people,) which now research the names recorded by the Hogwarts quill to identify, flag and contact the families of the actual Muggle-born candidates.

Such a Ministry Division, if such a Division exists, would need to be in correspondence with the Deputy Headmaster/Headmistress, at some point earlier in the year, so there would be no duplication of effort. The Deputy Head sends out the standard



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Hogwarts letters to the wizarding families, the annual supplies list to families of currently enrolled students, and the families of “informed” Muggles and halfbloods. As has always traditionally been the case.

Conversely, Professor Marchbanks and her colleagues in the Examinations Department at the Ministry (which definitely exists in canon) may be in charge of sending out all of the owls to all of the current Hogwarts students as well as their test results, leaving only the prospective first-years’ letters inviting them to attend Hogwarts the responsibility of the Deputy Headmaster or Headmistress.

The letters to new Muggle-born candidates are most likely to be sent out either the summer before the child is old enough to start school or at a point shortly before the prospective student’s 11th birthday. At this point we do not know for certain which method is currently in use. It is not likely that Rowling will stop to clarify this matter now that she has finished the series.

In the case of children with summer birthdays, this initial letter is combined with the annual school supplies list, as it was in Harry’s case, and that of Ginny Weasley. In the case of a child with a winter birthday, it is possible that the initial Hogwarts letter is sent out at or about the time of the child’s last birthday prior to their first Hogwarts term (their 11th) and the supplies list is sent out separately the following summer, along with those of the other students who are already enrolled. In the case of wizarding-born candidates this would be a fairly routine matter.

It is strongly suggested that all prospective Muggle-born (or Muggle-raised) students’ letters are delivered in the summer. This was certainly the case in the late 1930s. Or, at any rate,

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we were shown that Tom Riddle, who we know to have been born on December 31, received his Hogwarts letter, along with his first year books and supplies list, upon a day for which there was no mention of snow, rain, cold, or Christmas decorations, when Albus Dumbledore appeared at his orphanage, in person, which would not very well have taken place at a time that classes were in session. He might perhaps have done so during Christmas (or Easter) break, but he would have hardly included the supplies list and the funds to purchase those supplies some 9 months before Tom would have been able to start school.

In the case of Muggle-born students today, the child’s family may be contacted in person prior to the child’s 11th birthday and the first visit into the wizarding world is arranged soon afterward, the student’s first set of standard texts (which, except for that year’s DADA text, has probably been formalized for decades), and the student is encouraged to take the books home and familiarize themselves with the material in advance. This may have been the case with Miss Granger, whose claim to have memorized all of their course books is more easily believed if she had been given most of the previous year to do it. Since most such children’s birthdays would be taking place during the school year, such interviews, if conducted by school staff, would be conducted on weekends.

Whoever the responsibility falls upon, the messenger’s duty is to hand-deliver the Hogwarts letter and give the family a soothing and encouraging talk about their child’s “rare gifts”, informing them that a place for him has been reserved at an exclusive boarding school in Scotland where he may learn valuable training for the proper use and control of this talent. In



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most cases the family is flattered and intrigued, if bemused. As Rowling pointed out, the child's family will have usually been aware of at least something strange happening related to this child over the past 10 years.

Under normal circumstances, upon a family's agreement to permit their child to attend Hogwarts, the representative makes another appointment with the family to escort the child and his or her parents to Diagon Alley in order to lead them through the procedure of changing currency at Gringotts, and to buy the child a wand and either some background materials concerning the wizarding world, and/or their first set of school supplies. This escort also teaches the child how to get into the wizarding world himself for future trips.

Typically, the only people who still freak out are the bona-fide religious (or some other variety of mixed) nuts, and even some of those may sometimes be persuaded with a little additional care and finesse in handling. As we saw in the case of Tom Riddle, some of these measures may approach extreme levels of manipulation.

In the rare cases where the family adamantly refuses to permit their child to attend Hogwarts, the Ministry representative casts an Obliviate; and a notice is forwarded to the Department of Accidental Magic Reversal to monitor the site. It is possible that upon attaining his majority, the child of such a family will be approached again, individually, and informed of the KwickSpell correspondence courses. Given the effort that Dumbledore expended on ensuring that Tom Riddle should be permitted to attend Hogwarts, it is unlikely that many magical children are denied their magical training. Except perhaps in



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cases of physical infirmity or other medical issues.

Rowling does state, however, that not all magical children in Great Britain do attend Hogwarts. Which may mean only that they are sent to Beaubatons or Durmstrang instead. Or even those uncommon magical children who are educated at home. It is probable that in this case, the child still sits the standardized tests for qualification as witches or wizards. Probably by appointment at the Ministry.

### Regarding Hogwarts Term Dates and Cut-off Ages:

It is now clear that the current 3-term system, its dates and the cut-off ages for each year's students have been set to coincide with the term dates and cut-off ages of the most prominent mundane British boarding schools.

Over the "3-year summer" between Harry's years 4 & 5, various Brits on my discussion lists were diligent in explaining that under the regulations of the English educational system, all children must have reached the proper school-starting age (6 years, I believe) by September 1 in order to commence school in a given year. If the child's birthday falls on Sept 2, they must wait to start in the following year. It is almost unheard of for a child's family to manage to get the educational authorities to make an exception. The child's entry into secondary school follows upon the same principle.

Prior to December 2004, almost all of Ms Rowling's statements seemed to have been geared to the reading that Hermione was the youngest of the trio. Indeed, in her World Book Day interview of March, 2004, she went so far as to state that Hermione had started school early because of her intelligence (and, evidently, the fact that she had parents willing to





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jump through the proper hoops to make it possible).

If such had indeed been the case, it would have added another layer of complexity to the situation in that the Ministry representatives would need to notify the parents of any Muggle-born witch or wizard who started early during the year before they would have normally been eligible to enroll. The ww has no advance warning if a child has started Muggle school early.

In view of the above information: as of March 2004, we concluded that we had been unambiguously informed by Ms Rowling that Hermione is the youngest of the Trio. I personally was inclined to believe that this may have been an unfortunate decision on Ms Rowling's part. But she had apparently made it plain that she meant it like that, so we were forced to accept it.

Since that point Ms Rowling evidently rethought that statement, for in her website update of December 10, 2004 in the FAQ entry asking whether Hermione was nearly 11 or nearly 12 when she started Hogwarts Ms Rowling even more unambiguously stated that she was nearly 12, since you have to be at least 11 to attend Hogwarts. Which, if taken in conjunction with the March statement that she "started early" only suggests that Hermione might have had an extra year of Muggle secondary school before starting Hogwarts. Ergo: Hermione is not the youngest of the trio. She is the oldest. All timelines claiming the contrary had now been rendered simply, wrong.

Unless, that is, JKR decides to flip-flop on the issue again. (Given that she has now shown Hermione passing her Apparition test in the middle of 6th year, I suspect we can safely accept that she is the eldest of the three.)

This statement also complies with what she had already



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shown us in the text. Both Cedric Diggory and Angelina Johnson were 17-year-old 6th year students by the time of the commencement of the TriWizard Tournament at the end of October, and Angelina, at least had her birthday just the previous week.

Otherwise, any discontinuity with the academic year and birthday "cut-off" dates — which would occur with at least some regularity — would be bound to have led to at least occasional conflicts with the Muggle educational system, and if this is the case, it would be astonishing if nothing was done to remedy it and bring the Hogwarts academic year into compliance with what has been standard practice for at least a quarter of its students.

In the theoretical, and very rare case of wizarding children (halfbloods) attending Muggle primary schools, this might well be facilitated by a Ministry requirement that any family which enrolls its children into the Muggle school system should file this information with the Ministry, which would ensure that the proper measures should be taken to coordinate the dates of Hogwarts attendance, as well as to alert the Department of Accidental Magic Reversal that they should have some form of monitoring set up at the school in order to run damage control in case of breakthroughs. For a few months this indeed seemed to be a possibility. Rowling did state that some magical children did attend Muggle primary schools.

As has so often turned out to be the case, Ms Rowling did not stand by this statement either. Ms Rowling has since indicated that virtually all wizarding children who end up attending Muggle school are, in fact, Muggle-born.

We have also been given some indications either in inter-





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views, or on the original official website that a wizarding-born child in a Muggle primary school may not be not merely rare but actually prohibited. Given the determination of the Ministry to keep it's constituency separate from Muggle society, despite the fact that the majority of wizards do not, and are unable to actually live completely separate from it, it very much appears that any wizarding couple who produces children is automatically constrained to educate them at home at their own expense and on their own responsibility, or to make other arrangements for their education without Ministry supervision or assistance, in the absence of any recognized wizarding primary schools.

In short, the Ministry of Magic takes no interest whatsoever in education, *per se*. Only in its constituency's magical training. Except, of course, in the case of Harry Potter.

It was perhaps due to some oversight that no monitoring of his school site appears to have taken place, and that Harry Potter, a known wizarding child was actually permitted to be enrolled in a Muggle school.

But then, there is always the possibility that Potter's exact whereabouts were being kept under wraps and information concerning his location was not released to the relevant Ministry departments until after Potter was formally enrolled at Hogwarts. As Professor Snape so frequently has pointed out, the normal rules do not always seem to apply to Potter.

### Regarding Early School-Leaving:

This particular issue has nothing to do with the Muggle-born experience of Hogwarts, but it is the most appropriate place to tuck it into the collection.

It has been speculated that since one must receive qualifying

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scores in the standardized OWL exams in order to continue study in most of the subjects offered by Hogwarts at NEWT-level, it is probable that at least some Hogwarts students do not continue their formal education beyond 5th year.

Ms Rowling does not ever openly state this particular option within the course of the text until Book 5, when she hands us the Weasley twins' flamboyant school-leaving before sitting the NEWTs, and later, Harry's stated intention to not return to school for his 7th year.

Nevertheless, while Harry may have chosen to drop out, he did not flunk out. Nor has his family withdrawn him, as was briefly the case of several of his classmates at various points of the series.

Squinting between the lines, amid the usual brangle over the scrambled statements regarding the birth dates of the Weasley children, it is possible to speculate that the twins may not have been the first children in the family to have left school after their OWLs. If Charlie had done the same, with the blessings of Professors McGonagall and Kettleburn, in order to take a prestigious trainee post at the Dragon reservation in Romania much of the contradiction and muddle over the Weasley children's ages evaporates. This is examined more closely in the essay entitled 'The Weasley Calendar'.

And, for that matter, it is virtually *required* to speculate that Andromeda Black must have eloped with Ted Tonks and not returned to school after her OWLs if we dismiss the dates on the Black family tapestry sketch in order to fudge matters enough for Bellatrix to have still been at school, even if for only one year, at the same time as a Marauder cohort which was born in 1960.

Rowling also gives us a strongly-implied example of at least



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one other possible Hogwarts dropout. Probably a more representative example.

And yes, I do mean poor, feckless Stan Shunpike.

Stan Shunpike has never had any difficulty recognizing Harry Potter once he was introduced to him. Stan is quite chuffed about knowing such a celebrity as Harry Potter, in fact.

But he *didn't* recognize him the first time Harry boarded the Knight bus in the summer before his 3rd year, and identified himself as Neville Longbottom.

Why not? Harry had not exactly kept a low profile throughout his first two years at Hogwarts. In the first place, like every other student, he was Sorted in the full sight of the entire school, by name, AS a major celebrity, upon whom everyone's attention was fully focused. And then he was brought to public attention again as one of the three students who had lost Gryffindor 150 points by being caught out of bounds. He was also brought to the attention of the whole school at the end of the year by Dumbledore's grand points reward after the Philosopher's Stone brouhaha. The outcome of which had been known throughout the entire school by the time Harry woke up in the Hospital wing.

He was also the youngest student to have become a Seeker on a House team in a century.

In year two he was thrown into the limelight again by the Heir of Slytherin nonsense, and again at the end of the year after destroying the Basilisk.

And only a few weeks later Stan doesn't recognize him.

Well, hey, Stan's out of school, right?

Absolutely.



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*But* if Stan was only 21 at the time of his arrest in '96, at the beginning of Harry's 6th year, he would have only been 18 when Harry first boarded the Knight bus in the summer before his 3rd. i.e., he would have only just finished his 7th year at Hogwarts. He would have been right there at Hogwarts for Harry Potter's first two years.

But Stan didn't recognize him.

If he was only 21 in 1996, Stan Shunpike ought to have been starting his 6th year in Harry's 1st year. Stan's 7th year ought to have been the Year of the Basilisk. Harry Potter got a lot of attention during those two years.

And Shunpike flatly didn't recognize Harry Potter.

He'd never seen him before in his life

Ergo: Stan was no longer at Hogwarts by the time Harry started there.

Well, hey, he's a young fool, but he isn't subnormal. He's a qualified wizard. He probably scraped an Acceptable in a couple of his OWLs. But an Acceptable won't butter any parsnips if you want to study Transfigurations, or Charms, or, ghod help us, Potions at NEWT level.

We don't really know for certain whether there is much that a meager Acceptable on the OWLs *would* qualify you to continue studying. Although we do learn in passing that remedial classes are available for *some* subjects, so it is hypothetically *possible* for a student to return for a 6th, or possibly even a 7th year in order to study to sit the OWLs again in hopes of passing them on a second try. But such remedial classes seem to be held separately from the regular 5th year classes, for we never actually encountered such a student. Perhaps, above the 5th year,





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rather than being split by House, there are only two classes available, NEWT-level, and remedial OWL-level. And we do not know just which fields offer remedial OWL-level classes. Not all of them are likely to.

And I suspect that not all students are prepared to make the attempt, either.

Well, after all, the prospect of returning to Hogwarts to sit and listen to Binns drone on about Goblin wars is hardly a compelling prospect, is it?

Indeed, even the restriction of being unable to openly use magic for the a few months of one's first year after one drops out after sitting the OWLs in one's first attempt is less likely to feel unproductive than that.

### Ruminations on a Hat:

My own reading of the matter is that any "default" placements at Hogwarts are probably judged on a one-to-one basis on the part of the Hat and the student under examination may end up being sent anywhere. Despite Helga's stated willingness to train any child who needed it, if modern Hogwarts has anything like a "catch-all" House it is certainly not Hufflepuff, whose requirements demand a degree of willing self-effacement that is really not all that common in adolescents.

For that matter, Helga \*herself\* didn't just adopt the students that caught none of the other three founders' attention. I'm sure that when she was given any say in the matter, Helga, like Godric, Rowena and Salazar would have actively *selected* her students, and Helga didn't select for duffers. If modern Hufflepuff is at all to the pattern, Helga was very carefully selecting for "team players" and "team builders" from whom

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her collection of defaults could learn by example. Neville, amiably off inside his own head, is not even close to being Hufflepuff material. The off-in-their-own-little-world types, like Neville, do much better when thrown to the lions than to the badgers, who tend to regard non-participation in peer activities in the light of a mortal sin.

What is more; *regardless* of how the Founders may have selected their students during their own lives, when it came to "programing" the Hat, we have already seen what appears to be some indication that the Founders' personal preferences were forced to undertake a certain degree of translation, and to recalibrate to select from a broader interpretation of each Founder's underlying priorities.

Every Founder was alert to spotting the exceptional students of their own day. But, even among wizards, the majority of children are not particularly exceptional. Or, not at as early an age as 11. When it came time to develop a "selection engine" to be installed in an inanimate object, it was ultimately necessary to distill each House Founder's selection criteria through a definition of what each House actually *taught* its students about the way to get on in life. And — from that — to attempt to reverse-engineer the willingness and ability to absorb these particular "lessons" into something that would show up as a subject's overriding personal goal in a form that would be identifiable even by the definitions of a pre-teen child of yet unformed taste and immature personality.



Before any child could be assigned to any House, it must be



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clear to the selection “engine” what it is that the child wants from life, and how well his desire matches up to the four Houses’ individual lessons. The surface interpretation that the Sorting Hat is a personality identifier falls apart immediately upon any sort of close examination. After all, it is obvious to any reader that all of the children in any of the Houses are not all of the same personality type.

Clearly what is being Sorted is not the sort of person you *are*, but the sort of qualities you value, and the kind of things you *want*.

The results in both Helga and Salazar’s cases came out looking very different from the conscious judgment that either of those Founders had actually used themselves. And even Godric and Rowena’s priorities underwent a considerable degree of redefinition. I rather imagine that all four of the Founders came out of the Hat project feeling a little bemused.

In Slytherin’s case the result of this refining process seems to have been particularly inconsistent with his alleged personal preferences. Unless Rowling is playing some form of double-bluff with us. She is at her most conspicuously self-contradictory best when she is laying out the values of Slytherin House. For example:

Slytherin is presumably the “house of the pureblood”. We have been told repeatedly that Salazar himself preferred to teach only those students whose families came from the longest tradition of magical ability. However, it took until Harry’s fifth year before the Sorting Hat ever bothered to mention that criterion when it sang about the qualities that it used to sort the new First years. Or at least mention it in our hearing.

And how often do we remember that the Hat long predates the

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establishment of any sort of magically hidden wizarding world?

So just what does the Hat do? Look into the kids’ heads to see if it can find a genealogy chart? I tend to doubt that. And if it does, why has it never come out and said so before?

I suspect that if wizarding background is used as a sorting criterion at all it takes a distant last place in priority. Particularly since the Hat is known to have sorted at least one Muggle-raised halfblood who could have known no more about the wizarding world than Harry did when he first arrived, into Slytherin House. It took Tom Riddle to the end of his 4th year before he finally traced his mother’s family. Not much of a chance of the Hat Sorting him by the knowledge of his illustrious wizarding heritage.



Never mind. There is more confusion to come. The whole problem of defining the “quintessential Slytherin” obviously cannot be served by an examination of bloodlines alone. It is much more complex than that.

Slytherin is also said to be the “Dark Arts” house. Well, that’s okay too. No particular contradiction there, either. In fact it tends to support my own contention that the Dark Arts are a largely-obsolete wizarding tradition which has been superseded by the safer methods of modern day wizardry. Consequently, it *would* usually be only those families with the longest established wizarding traditions who still tend to gravitate toward them.

More recent implications in HARRY POTTER AND THE HALF-BLOOD PRINCE, however, suggest that Rowling, and indeed the wizarding world itself draws NO well-defined distinction



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between “Dark” and “Light” magic. That, in fact, Harry and his friends may have been learning Dark magic right along with everything else with the full approval of their instructors. Ms Rowling also now appears to have never had any intention of clearing this issue up. Which leaves us with a distinct impression that “Dark” magic is whatever she and the Ministry of Magic happen to disapprove of in a given week. Apparently you are just supposed to *instinctively* “know” whether a given spell is Dark or Light; on alternate Tuesdays.

And, then, Rowling outdoes herself and tells us that the primary criterion the Hat uses for sorting these kids is “ambition.” *Ambition?* WTF?! Explain to me, please, what ambition has to do with either the Dark Arts specifically OR with being of pure-blooded ancestry? In particular, what possible association can ambition have with one’s *ancestry*?

It would seem to me that any effect that being a pureblood might have upon one’s ambition would most likely be to lessen it. If you have already “arrived,” at the pinnacle of existence just by being born into the proper family, what more is necessary? A sense of *entitlement* is not ambition. (“Ambition should be made of sterner stuff.”) And it is this indolent sense of entitlement that shines right through what we’ve been shown of the current members of the House’s behavior.

“Ambition” seems to be diametrically opposed to the kind of “Slytherin manner” demonstrated by Malfoy and his goons. Now, the Twins’ statement that Percy Weasley is ambitious I can accept with alacrity. No question about that at all. But Draco? I don’t get it. What is Rowling thinking?

And not being satisfied with that, Rowling has managed to

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further muddy the waters by confusing the issue even further over the course of the series by further conflating the Slytherin “ambition” with the willingness to use any means to hand in order to “win.” For, from where we have been standing the students of Hogwarts who seem to be the most obsessed with the idea of “winning” are the Gryffindors!

It is enough to make one wonder whether Slytherin himself was *already* gone from the school by the time the Hat was “programed,” and the other three cobbled the sorting criteria for his House together in committee. That would hardly have made it any more contradictory.

Or, alternately, to make one wonder whether something has gone a bit screwy with the Hat.

Hold that thought.



Since the release of HBP, we have finally been given a clear indication of why the Slytherin House of today is so thoroughly screwed up. It’s clearly still suffering from the Riddle effect. Tom Riddle waltzed into Slytherin House nearly 60 years ago, and proceeded to enthrall not just everyone in his own year, but everyone in the adjacent years, reel in kids from a 2-3 years ahead of him, and serve as a role model for everyone who came afterwards. As well as to pretty thoroughly bamboozle the staff.

Not all of those other Slytherin kids at that time were Death Eater material, any more than all Slytherin kids are Death Eater material now. But it seems to have never occurred to them to oppose him. And there were enough of them who were of the proper temperament for him to chose to cultivate, and to ensure



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that they and their descendants would be the dominant faction in that House for generations to come. Slytherin House today is not what it was in 1937, before Riddle was Sorted there. And he, and his followers, and their descendants are not a true portrait of what the House typically produced prior to that date.

And I began to think that the fact that this distortion was still in operation as late as the 1990s could well be a clue to a possible discovery slated for Book 7

Well, that was no such luck. Nevertheless, it was a fun theory while it lasted. It lives over in the 7th Son collection now. But I'll give it a bit of a reprise, here.



Now that we've met Slughorn, it's become even more obvious that Tom Riddle waltzed in and stole his House right out from under him.

He intended to do it literally, too. How long do you think Slughorn would have continued to be Head of Slytherin if Dippett had given Tom the DADA position when he first asked for it at the age of 18?

For that matter, how long would Albus have survived as Deputy Head?

Or survived at all?

But there are more ways to skin a cat than swinging it around by the tail. Dippitt listened to Albus in '45, and sent Tom off to get some experience in the field. By the time Tom risked his return to the Wizarding World (his appearance was deteriorating beyond the point that he could readily continue to move openly among the Muggles), he discovered that he had tarried



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too long, and that Dumbledore was now Headmaster. There was no way that Albus Dumbledore would have permitted Tom Riddle to run at large in his school.

But Tom had made important plans for the school. It held a crucial role in his design to dominate the wizarding world by subverting its young. And he wasn't prepared to give those plans up. I think that he was forced to make alternate arrangements.

Potterverse axiom #1: whenever anything has been shown to have taken place over the course of the series. It is exponentially more likely than not to be shown to have happened again.

In Goblet of Fire Barty Crouch Jr allegedly hoodwinked a powerful magical object; Confunding it into forgetting that only three schools compete in the TriWizard Tournament, to enable it to select Harry's name, which was entered as that of a student of a bogus fourth school. Or at any rate that is how he claimed the ruse must have been accomplished.

I thought we might have another powerful magical object suffering under a Confundus, or other misdirecting charm.

I suspected that Tom Riddle had nobbled the Sorting Hat.

For that matter, I thought we may have watched him do it, when he came to ask Albus for the DADA position. The Hat sits on a shelf behind Albus's desk. Harry thought he saw Voldemort go for his concealed wand at one point during the interview.

At first we all thought that he was jinxing the DADA position. For that matter; until Rowling pooh-poohed the idea, I seriously thought that he may have been turning the Hat into a Horcrux (a theory which no longer works with how I now believe a Horcrux is created, but that was then).

Well, Rowling publicly called a halt to the Sorting Hat Hor-





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crux theory in her Christmas day update of her official site in 2005. The Sorting Hat is definitely not a Horcrux.

But, it took another six weeks before it finally sunk in that she never said that the Sorting Hat had definitely not been *tampered* with.

(For the record, it still may have been. We've never been told it wasn't.)

And I also suspected that by the end of Book 6 out of 7, we probably already had all the puzzle pieces we needed to figure it out.

In fact, we'd had some of those pieces for a Long Time now. And we had done nothing but *complain* about them.



Readers have been carping and creebing for years about the depiction of Slytherin House and it's alumni. Ever since about Book 2. (We mostly just accepted it in Book 1. Despite Hagrid's grumblings on the subject, Harry saw very little of Slytherin House in book 1. Just Malfoy and his goons, and the Quidditch team. And Snape who went out of his way to be combative.)

We have, since that point, been told outright that people tagged along after Riddle for a pretty wide variety of personal reasons.

With that in mind, doesn't it begin to look just a bit suspicious that despite a wide variety of reasons to cluster around young Tom Riddle, such a *large* percentage of Voldemort's "future followers" have been Sorted into only *one* House?

In my own case I have been grouching for years that Malfoy's assumption of "entitlement" hasn't *anything* to do with ambition. Not by my reckoning.

It finally caught up to me that this might not just be shoddy



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reasoning; it could be a CLUE.

Or it certainly *ought* to be.

Tom isn't a bit like Harry. Harry just rolls with the punches, Tom makes *plans*. Grandiose, complex, *elaborate* plans. Even back when he was Harry's age he made plans. The only thing those two really seem to have in common is dark hair, Parseltongue (which in Harry's case was pasted on) and an attachment to Hogwarts.

Oh, and they both are descended from the Peverill brothers, which may not be all that unusual by this time. They also both look just like their fathers. But they are hardly the only boys in the Potterverse to do that.

But in this case, I think that I may have slightly overestimated young Tom Riddle's degree of wickedness. I have since conceded that when he first asked Dippet for the DADA position he may indeed have wanted no more than to forever remain at Hogwarts.

Oh, well, yes, he eventually wanted to be Headmaster, too. And he fully intended to become so as soon as he could manage it. But at that point he may have had no definite plans related to World Domination.™ He was a sociopath, a murderer at least three times over, had at the very least orchestrated the death of a fellow student, *and* had already performed the ultimate evil of creating a Horcrux thereby, but there was still something a bit like innocence left to him. He may have still had the vague intention of making everyone fear him *someday*, but he had clearly developed a taste for being lauded and admired, which wasn't really compatible with that, so inspiring fear was not his first priority, at the present. I also rather think that World Domination™ was a bee that only got into his bonnet once he





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left school and realized just how few wizards there are. While he was still at Hogwarts, his Ultima Thule was to stay there.

While I *am* inclined to think that Albus was probably correct that Tom eventually would have chosen to move on, Albus might just as easily have been mistaken. The Headmaster of Hogwarts is a position of considerable power in the wizarding world, after all. Tom wanted it. He intended that Hogwarts Castle should be his own.

And in any case; it's pretty clear that, at Harry's age, Tom Riddle had no intention of ever leaving the school. He wanted to stay there forever.

We need to ask ourselves the same question that Albus asked Riddle. Why did he travel so far on a nasty winter night to ask for a teaching position that he didn't really want, and could have no expectation of being given?

And for that matter, why did he jinx the DADA position? What did he accomplish by that apart from petty spite?



As to the first question; For several months I thought his original intention may have been to kill Dumbledore that very night and create a Horcrux from his death. And that he'd gotten cold feet.

It's still a possibility. He had been away for quite some time, hadn't he? And for that matter, he shows a definite pattern of liking to have other people do his dirty work. So far as we know, at that point he had never yet killed a wizard face-to-face, had he? He'd killed at least three Muggles. He'd caused the deaths of two witches, by indirect means, but we don't know of any point that he had stood up in front of a witch or wizard and



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tried to kill them in a fair fight.

But by the time DHs came out I was no longer so sure. Tom had to have had a reason to set up that interview. He had something to accomplish by that meeting. And murdering Albus Dumbledore would have been an awfully chancy thing to try to carry off. Even if the Horcrux-creation spell does typically destroy the body of its victim (as it did his own body in Godric's Hollow) leaving no trace of the death. And simple hit-and-run killings are not really that much in Tom Riddle's style. If he intended to murder Albus Dumbledore he would have spun some kind of a long-range, Byzantine plot about it. (Well, he *did*, didn't he?)

He also must have known he wasn't going to get that teaching position.

So what did the interview accomplish? What did he get from that interview that he would probably not have been able to get without it?

Well, that's an easy question to answer:

He got access to Hogwarts.



For some as yet undisclosed reason, he needed access to Hogwarts. He had something planned that he had to get set up at the school.

So he had to make some kind of arrangement that would enable him to accomplish what he intended to accomplish (i.e., setting a trap; hiding a Horcrux; setting the school up as his recruiting base, whatever) at long-distance.

So why should he curse the DADA position while he was about it?





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How about as a diversion?

He couldn't count on Albus not noticing a twitch of his hand toward his wand, so he needed to give Albus some other reason to account for it. He slung the Diadem into the Room of Hidden Things on the way to or from the main staircase, and cursed the DADA position (or maybe just the classroom) on his way down the stairs to the Entrance Hall, but that is not necessarily what we saw him do in Albus's office. What we don't know is whether Albus really bought the story of the curse being the purpose of that visit or not. Although he claimed to.

But the jinx on the DADA position would have become apparent by the end of June, whereas the Sorting Hat wouldn't be used until the following September. And Albus is a busy man. If Riddle did tamper with the Sorting Hat, he may have slipped that one past Albus.

So. How does this work? Is the Hat aware that it has been tampered with?

Indications to this point suggest that it probably is not. And the tampering was, in this case, a remarkably subtle piece of work for Riddle, whose usual style is generally much more flashy.

I think that whatever it is that Riddle did convinces the Hat to read a desire for power *over others* as "ambition."

That would cover most of the bases.

"Power over others" is not a traditional sorting criterion. All four Houses teach their students how to *influence* others, each one through different techniques. Either through ties of trust and affection, or from acknowledged intellectual superiority, admiration for "worthy," or daring deeds, or just the sense of sticking with a winner. Crude power over other people in itself



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is not something that I think any of the Founders considered a worthwhile goal on its own. Their attitudes all seem to have been much more akin to; "if you build it, they will come."

But Riddle *does* consider it a worthwhile goal. Power over others is what Tom Riddle is all about.

The truly ambitious would still be Sorted into Slytherin, anyway. Riddle's tampering doesn't do anything to make the Hat read *only* the desire for power over others as ambition.

And from the outside, a desire to put others in your power probably does *look* like ambition, but it really isn't the same thing. And while it could perhaps be interpreted as a *form* of ambition, it isn't either the purest, or the highest form.

But since Tom meddled with the Hat, quite a number of potential bullies land in Slytherin who might otherwise have landed somewhere else. Not all bullies, by any means. The ones who indulge in bullying chiefly for the attention it attracts, and the admiration of the crowd — rather than for the actual power involved — still usually manage to land in Gryffindor. These are probably also the ones who most quickly outgrow the tendency to bully as they get older. Although not always.

More to the point: a hell of a lot of *damaged* kids who read "power over others" as the surest form of protection for themselves and control over their own situations (which accounts for a fairly major percentage of the aforementioned bullies, too) now landed in Slytherin who really might have otherwise landed elsewhere.

And those are kids that Voldemort can use.

And, had he got that DADA post, when he first asked Dippey for it, once he had managed to edge Horace Slughorn out





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of the way as Head of Slytherin they would all have come to him.

Quite a few of them still do. Eventually.

Tom Riddle absolutely didn't learn the lesson that poor Sluggy tries so hard to teach his kids. Riddle totally misses the whole point of *noblesse oblige*. But he learned the technique. He saw how it was done. He would have set up his own club.

Well, after all, he did. Didn't he?

The fact remains that despite anomalies like Pettigrew, and probably a handful of others, that for such a high a percentage of all of the Death Eaters who have ever been were originally Slytherins for it not to start looking a bit suspicious. And enlisting a "hereditary" following by signing up the 2nd and 3rd generations of the same few families does not altogether account for it. And, at that, even though while just about all DEs are ex-Slyths, not all ex-Slyths are even close to being DEs. In fact only a minority of them are.

But, close to forty years of that kind of very slight shift in the priorities for Sorting kids has set its stamp on the character of the House.

The Hat has to go.

Or at least be returned to its original state.

Rowling claimed that the Founders would have some part to play in Book 7..

And the only real way to the Founders is through the Hat.

(ETA: I guess this was another mostly abandoned intention on Rowling's part, the story of Helena Ravenclaw and the Baron hardly qualifies as tales of the Founders.)

## Transit & Communication

Another of the original essays devoted to exploring the Wizing World.



It is obvious that much of the functionality of any society is dependent upon the efficiency of their forms of communication, and the shape of the society is dependent upon the directions in which these forms develop.

When you stop to think about that, you have to seriously doubt that magical technology and communications were at anything like their modern level when the statutory Seclusion of the wizing world was formally imposed in 1692 (or 1689 as it's stated in other sources).

The very fact that wizards and witches were legally no longer able to casually travel openly (via carpet or broom) where there was any possibility that Muggles could see them must have been the spur to developing, or refining any number of the transportation and communication procedures which are now in common use within the wizing world.

It is also fairly self-evident that some of the more common methods of both transit and communication in use today were only adopted in their current forms after the British wizing world adopted an aggressive widespread recruitment of Muggle-born magical children, enabling the presumably limited contact with the mundane world necessary for the training and assimilation of Muggle-born wizards and witches into wizing society. And the corresponding adoption and recalibration of Muggle technology for magical use.

Such as, of course, the Hogwarts Express. A steam train



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could not have existed prior to the laying of mundane railroad tracks across Britain, starting in the 1830s, or the construction of King's Cross Station in 1852.

In particular; despite the probable use of messenger birds from the time of antiquity, the use of the Owl Post has a "modern" feel to it. To exploit the nature of animals is hardly high tech. However, traditional messenger birds would therefore be primarily only species of birds which have natures that are readily so exploited. Owls are not among such birds.

One may postulate that Owl Post might be loosely based upon the official "pigeon post" used first during the Franco-Prussian war of 1870-'72. And that it was only the truly compelling usefulness of a comparatively recently developed "Post Owl"\* which has driven such a very traditional wizards' familiar as the toad "out of fashion" in comparatively recent decades.

\*The Post Owl itself seems to be either a magically modified class of bird, or they are under some form of enchantment. Their speed of delivery and level of intelligence are implausible in any natural bird, particularly owls — which, mythology notwithstanding, are not known for intelligence — and a Post Owl's tendency to eat whatever people offer them is completely off the map for any sort of raptor. Owls in nature are raptors, which is to say they are birds of prey. They do not eat bread. They do not eat fruit. Evidently whatever modifications are necessary to convert a natural owl into a Post Owl also gives them a dietary requirement for additional carbs. The fact that during his brief exile during the early portion of GoF, Sirius Black was sending his post by way of various tropical birds further suggests that an enchantment is laid upon the bird rather



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than that the bird is a specially-bred sub-species. Although the probability of there being specifically wizarding owl breeders is fairly high.



A similar argument can also be made regarding the Hogwarts Express, which, we are informed, is pulled by a steam engine. In this case, the window of opportunity is fairly wide. Covering about a century, in fact. In our own mundane railroads, although the first appearance of diesel engines took place some years before the second world war, these new engines were only widely adopted in the 1940s. Consequently, the Hogwarts Express may have gone into service at any point between the establishment of mundane rail travel, beginning in the 1830s and the appearance of diesel some 100 years later. At present it seems impossible to pin it down any closer than that.

As a rather belated item of note: despite the impression given by the official canon — wherein one would easily be led to believe that the Hogwarts Express's only purpose is to transport students between London and Hogsmeade a half a dozen times a year — once one gives the matter some consideration, one concludes that this impression is based merely upon this particular *service* being named the "Hogwarts Express."

Once one examines the matter from a couple of other angles, one realizes that the Hogwarts Express is most probably only a specific service, which is contracted either by Hogwarts itself, or by the Ministry, to run on those particular days. The actual *train* may be owned by neither, and undoubtedly runs all year, is not usually an express, and constitutes the primary freight





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hauler for all of Wizarding Britain.

Not all items can be shrunk down and charmed to be transportable by an owl. Nor can all things be safely transported by Floo. For that matter, I would imagine that Large-capacity Floo stations are a good deal rarer across modern day Britain than are railroad stations. And I think it would be safe to include in that particular inventory, any number of presumed disused stations, which are never served by Muggle trains.

The actual train's normal route, may indeed be every bit as erratic as that of the Knight bus. And in fact, they might even both be run by the same parent company. Further considerations regarding the Floo network and the Knight bus are examined below.



Widespread use of Portkeys is a method of transportation which appears to be somewhat uncommon in the modern wizarding world and is subject to strict Ministry control despite their apparent ease of production. Our impression is that Portkeys are usually only deployed for closely regulated and scheduled foreign travel, or for special events. This form of transit may be another comparatively recent development. Or it may be so closely regulated due to some issue which has only cropped up in recent times. In either case, we have not been informed of the matter.

Apparition, to be sure, is clearly a very old technology, and one that was developed long before the Seclusion. But Apparition is a difficult skill to master, and to this day not all wizards can manage to do it well enough to be granted a license.



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It should be noted that in HBP when we finally saw Apparition taught, neither a specific wand movement nor an incantation were specified. This suggests that Apparition may be another form of magic which can be performed wandlessly, despite the strong suggestion that the Apparating wizard must maintain hold of his wand.

However, to keep hold of one's wand while Apparating may be no more than a guard against accidentally leaving it behind, or as a precaution in case one should land in a situation where one might immediately need it. It is certainly old enough technology to date from the days when all magic was Dark magic, making it a dangerous process to master.

And indeed, it may still qualify as such. I would hesitate to assume that it is a process which could be readily recalibrated for "domestic wizardry's" methods of indirect channeling.



We ought probably also to take at least a couple of moments to consider the issue of flying carpets which are another highly traditional means of wizarding transportation, and one which was only banned in England in comparatively recent memory. Barty Crouch Sr, who, if he is indeed the "Is" notation appended to the record of Charis Black's marriage to Caspar Crouch, might have been born around 1940, recalls his own grandfather's Axminster which could seat 12. It does not matter whether that would have been either his Black or his Crouch grandfather since both families were purebloods of fairly equivalent status. But this would suggest that the ban has probably been imposed after the start of the 20th century.





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Once so considered, my first thought was that perhaps the post WWI building of skyscrapers had prompted the ban, or that the growing suburban development across the British countryside might have made the possibility of spotting a flying carpet more likely.

It was pointed out to me however, and very reasonably too, that to disguise a flying carpet would have probably been easier than to disguise a broom. The underside of the carpet would need only to be charmed to reflect the sky above it to conceal it from being spotted by anyone on the ground.

However, I had overlooked the fact that, in our world at least, Muggles developed heavier than air flight themselves by 1913, that aircraft had reached a fairly useful level of sophistication during WWI, and that commercial air travel was in place by the end of the war. So perhaps it wasn't just the fact that there were more Muggles on the ground that was the deciding factor in banning flying carpets. Muggles in the air, were a whole new problem that no one had encountered much earlier than say, around 1920 or so. And, unlike with hot air balloons, which could be readily avoided, I doubt that a flying carpet is capable of moving at a speed which would make it possible to get out of the way of an aircraft. Even before Muggles developed jet propulsion technology.

And pushing back the ban on flying carpets to around 1920 or 1930 might explain the reason that people no longer discuss them much. That's an argument that has been over for a long time.



Ministry oversight appears to be a hallmark of most of



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the more common forms of transportation in current use in the wizarding world today. The Floo network, one of the more widely used modes of casual transportation in modern Wizarding Britain, is administered and maintained under such a bureaucratic overlay which constitutes a strong counter-indication against the likelihood that such a widespread network would, or indeed could have been set up and maintained in the absence of a centralized authority. The old Wizards' Council is unlikely to have been able to command the resources necessary to establish such a network.

However, given that the invention of Floo powder dates from some time in the 13th century, we have ample reason to suppose that some earlier form of transit and communication by way of fire, operating on the same underlying principle as the modern Floo network may have developed quite some time before the Seclusion.

Such systems would have been a haphazard affair, privately owned and maintained at the destination point to which authorized individual fireplaces might be briefly connected by prearrangement, or through a shared connection among a closed ring of associates. In a central, privately-owned service there would be a common destination to which all travelers are bound. In the shared "ring" there would be a limited number of destinations, none of which is accessible to outsiders. Neither of these duplicate the semi-public "network" service theoretically available to all, overseen and maintained by the Ministry itself, as is the case today.

We are told by way of her chocolate frog card that Floo powder was invented in the 13th century by one Ignatia Wildsmith in an attempt to address the slowness and physically exhausting





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effects of conventional (broom) travel. It is my own contention that Floo transit in this earlier form was probably also soon widely adopted and utilized as a “sure-fire” means of quickly transporting a wizard, who might be seriously endangered to a place of safety by way of a route that no Muggle would be likely to attempt pursuit. The unfortunate result of this practice is that it would have tended to reinforce the growing Muggle contention that only through demonic assistance is magic possible.

Floo travel was probably also quickly adopted as the favored method of transporting students to the Wizarding Academies prior to the development of less subject-to-misadventure forms of Muggle-compatible technology such as the Hogwarts Express and its continental counterparts, if any. The various references in some of the more virulent of documented Puritan rantings to the practice of passing one’s sons or daughters “through the fire” as being anathema suggests this to be the case, as does the lingering accusations of cannibalism which has traditionally been applied to witches in folklore.

It is very likely that wizarding households characteristically maintained significantly larger than average hearths or fire-pits leading to such an assumption. The inspiration of the witch’s “oven” immortalized in the Muggle household tale of Hansel and Gretel may have been no more than an hysterical Muggle’s misinterpretation of the use of an early Floo station.

Such Floo travel would have been difficult to coordinate over the full range of the Hogwarts catchment territory on an ongoing basis, however, and might have been a considerable drain upon the resources of the school — unless my speculations are correct that, until comparatively recently, Hogwarts Castle

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served wizarding Britain in other capacities, in addition to that of being the location of wizarding Britain’s predominant School. Any such problems would have been even more acute over the broader catchment areas of Beaubatons or Durmstrang.



The information given us in DHs that much of the wizarding population of Great Britain once wizarding Seclusion was imposed had tended to cluster in the vicinity of a half-dozen or so semi-wizarding villages would tend to have facilitated the travel by Floo of children from such communities to Hogwarts, since all children in the neighborhood would be able to gather at a single, outlying area at an arranged time and transfer smoothly, one after another.

The modern adoption of the Hogwarts Express has reassigned and redistributed the responsibility of transporting students to the school between the Ministry of Magic and the students’ families, leaving the school to concentrate upon the students’ training once they have arrived.

I will mention the Knight Bus again at this point, only to state that this particular service in its current form is clearly of at least early-20th century origin. Omnibuses, however, go back to around 1890 or so. The modern Knight Bus may have replaced some earlier form of service, but it is difficult to see how such a service might have been operated prior to mechanized transit. Post Owls may fly faster than their natural counterparts, but it is difficult to imagine any sort of a practical operation of a magical omnibus drawn by magical creatures which would be expected to operate without being noticed by Muggles.



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Although such a service might have used Abraxans or Thestrals, the general comments regarding the Hogwarts Thestral herd (flock?) which has been acquired and trained under Rubeus Hagrid's tenure as groundskeeper implies that it is both of recent development and unique, and Beaubatons' team of Abraxans are all too visible.

Which as mentioned above, appears to have ultimately been the problem with flying carpets, as well. Although prior to the 20th century it would have been easy enough to conceal the presence of a flying carpet by camouflaging the underside to reflect the surrounding sky. It is unknown whether similar bans on flying carpets have also been imposed by the other Ministries of western Europe, but such a possibility seems likely.

It should probably also be mentioned in passing that we have seen that the Ministry of Magic currently owns and operates at least a small fleet of conventional-appearing automobiles.



A Floo connection, however, is not always a particularly effective means for the transfer of large items such as bulk supplies or the transportation of large shipments of merchandise in order to stock shops. Which observation leads me to assume that the most common method of such goods transport today is probably by rail.

However, bulk transit by Floo would certainly have been possible in such special cases as castles, where there are fireplaces large enough to roast whole oxen\*. But apart from a few early wizarding landowners (on a large scale) most wizards probably did not have such facilities available to them.



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\*It should also be noted that the development in Muggle architecture of the domestic fireplace and chimney is a comparatively recent one, generally dating to the 15th century. Prior to this period, the heating of large interior spaces such as a Great Hall was accomplished by means of a fire-pit in the middle of the Hall with a smoke hole in the ceiling above.

Such an arrangement via an unenclosed firepit would have been vastly more convenient for transit by fire, but the very name of "Floo" transit suggests that this form of communication and travel was developed, or widely adopted, only after the popularization of the chimney, or "flue." Which calls the 13th century attribution of the development of Floo powder into some question.

Wizarding architecture, however, may have incorporated the chimney somewhat earlier than the constructions built by Muggles, and, indeed in the Potterverse may have provided the model from which later Muggle structures were taken. In addition, this observation may not necessarily apply to the kitchen fireplace, once the kitchen was separated from the Hall, which was a reasonably early development. The kitchen's fire was primarily intended for cooking rather than simply heating. Its function would have been very much assisted by being placed in an enclosure which contained the heat generated rather than allowing it to disperse throughout the room. Such an enclosure would have required an escape route for the smoke thereby generated which would lead it away from the rest of the room.

Most wizarding fortunes also appear to have been made well after the era when heavily fortified structures were being commonly built. The traditional Manor house, intended to house





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only one extended family and their retainers, rather than a small village, plus livestock, during any local emergency, typically does not run to quite such a scale, although it is possible that wizarding manors which were built as such, by such, may have incorporated this feature specifically for this purpose. It is reasonable to suppose that such Floo transport stations are still commonly in use in any wizarding-inhabited castle, by whatever family or institution may now be housed in it.



A distinction probably also needs to be drawn between Floo transit and Floo communication. The modern variant which appears to combine both functions may be a conflation of two separate earlier technologies which originally had very different requirements and methods. And for that matter Madam Wildsmith's development of the Floo powder now used for transportation may have been an adaptation of an earlier communications aid.

If this is the case, the original form of Floo communication might have not required a full deployment of a managed "network" for simple station-to-station contact. All that may have been necessary was the correct powder or potion and an active fire at both ends of the link. If so, merely to speak through a Floo connection may have been quite common at quite an early date. Such communications may have been the template upon which Madam Wildsmith based her more advanced technology.

And a very reliable form of contact it would have been, too. In an era when almost all household functions were performed at an open hearth, it would have been reasonable to expect

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to be able to find a lit hearth with someone in attendance at nearly any intended destination, at nearly any time of day, and within call at night.

The popularity of such a process would have rapidly evolved into a rather dangerous situation, however, giving a whole new level of meaning to the term haphazard. Such a "user-friendly" technology would soon have developed frequent complications due to collisions when two parties were attempting to access the same station. Inadvertently butting heads would have been the least of it.

Some form of managed network would have needed to be initiated before the process could be really regarded as safe. To send a written message through such a connection might have been an alternative, however, if some method could have been developed to safeguard the parchment from the heat of the fire. It needs to be remembered that even at so early a period the majority of trained witches and wizards were at least semi-literate. However, I would suspect that rather a larger percentage of messages landed at the wrong destination, than was really optimal.

We do not at present have any indication of just when the communication mirror was developed, but this is also has the feel of an old technology, given that references to such communication may be found readily enough in Muggle folktales which long predate the Seclusion of wizards. This is likely to have originally been a device only used by wizards and witches of a more exalted social level than that of those who could have been expected to usually be found tending their household fire in person. Given the cost of a really good mirror, particularly a glass mirror, in Muggle society up to the Seclusion period, I



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think the assumption that this was primarily a wealthy wizard's form of contact may be safely taken as a given. We have no information as to whether it is possible to actually network mirrors, or if they are designed to work only in pairs.



An addition to the subject of variant forms of communication in use in the wizarding world was introduced on JKR's first official website in July 2005.

As the answer to a recent FAQ poll question we were informed that the Order of the Phoenix communicates with each other by means of their Patroni.

Say what?

Well, as a messaging system which would be extremely resistant to tampering by 3rd parties, such a form of communication would probably be beyond compare. Of course to either send or to receive such a message would make you stand out like a sore thumb. The blooming things are as conspicuous as all get out. You might as well send a running footman. In livery.

And until the release of DHs, as a means of sending any message more complex than "sender needs assistance" it would appear to be utterly useless. Rowling never established in canon that a Patronus can speak until we were solidly into the final book. Lupin certainly didn't inform Harry of *that*.

And the way the whole issue was finally handled was pretty clumsy.

Although I will admit that Kingsly Shacklebolt's lynx delivering the message that the Ministry had fallen, in his voice, was fairly impressive.

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The implied message (back in HBP) that Tonks's Patronus had become a wolf because of Lupin, which was kinds/sorta confirmed by the (interview, not canon) statement that Lily's Patronus became a doe because of her relationship to James was tacky but comprehensible.

But, will you please explain to me where the "single, very happy memory" comes from that would explain *Snape's* doe?

We've been given to understand that Dumbledore taught the speaking Patronus to the Order, and he taught it to Snape as well, but Snape had no direct contact with the Order members (apart from, presumably, Minerva) until Harry's Year 5.

And, besides; we are now supposed to believe that a silver doe in memory of the woman whose death he believes he \*caused\* is produced by a \*happy\* memory? Sorry, Jo. You've fumbled the logic ball again.

By everything we have seen to date, Patroni are normally a manifestation of a personality facet of the wizard who casts it, much as an Animagus form would be (we saw that Minerva's Patronus is identical to her own Animagus form, that of a tabby cat with spectacle markings), and capable of existing temporarily on both the physical and the spiritual "plane." (A Patronus is the recommended protection from both Dementors, a spiritual menace, and the Leithfold, which is classified as a Fantastic Beast, or Dark Creature.)

But until DHs they did not appear to be capable of carrying a physical message. Nor was there any indication to that point in canon that they were capable of producing any sort of vocalized sound, or of communicating by telepathy or perhaps one should rather suggest, by transmitting a message through Legilimency.



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Indeed, even in the wake of DHs I'm afraid that the "message-bearing Patronus" strikes me as a very good candidate for classification as balognium — particularly in the light of Snape's silver doe, which, however evocative, makes not the slightest bit of sense.

Which is a classification which the Patronus has avoided up to now in that up to DHs it served only a single purpose, which it served with some distinction. The \*speaking\* Patronus of DHs is another pair of shoes. It does however manage to narrowly evade the full balognium classification in that it has not yet been demonstrated to be absolutely necessary for the plot to function. No, it still hasn't. Useful as several of the message-bearing Patroni were over the course of the book, only Snape's doe served the requisite pivotal function. And Snape's doe was mercifully silent.

But even now that we know that they are capable of speaking, I'm afraid that I am still inclined to be very rude about the message-bearing Patronus.

In the manner of all those bad "Lassie" send-ups, in fact:

*"Honey! It's Lassie! She's come back alone!"*

*"Lassie! What is it? What's wrong, girl?"*

*"It's Timmy, he's in trouble!"*

*"The bridge over White Gulch is out! She wants us to follow her!"*

*"No! First she wants us to call the rescue squad, find the first aid kit and write a letter to our Congressman!"*

## The Poverty Issue

A recurring question about the inner workings of the Potterverse is that if you can transfigure anything into anything, and you can conjure up any sort of food you want (which Rowling only contradicted in DHs to make the winter camping trip more "difficult," there's no trace of any such difficulty earlier in the books), why do you need to have money at all?



It isn't only the reader who finds themselves confused on this issue. Even Harry brought the question up himself in reference to Merope Riddle's destitution, after her unloving husband had abandoned her. Albus certainly did not offer any contradiction to Harry's contention that Merope *could* have supported herself by the use of magic.

Rowling evidently forgot about this particular reading of what magic could or couldn't do. Harry's protest in HBP that Merope Riddle could have got herself food by magic was not met with any reminder of Gamp's Law of Elemental Transfigurations or its five exceptions.

Yet somehow, neither Harry and his friends on their endless camping trip, nor Neville and the DA were able to keep themselves fed by means of magic. Despite all those the plates of endless sandwiches and magically refilled bottles of wine to which we had been treated in canon prior to DHs, it seems clear that somewhere, someone had, once again, fumbled the logic ball.

The following is an exercise in an attempt to haul this issue back into something that passes for a rational interpretation of what we had previously been shown over the course of the series — yes, specifically the first six books to that point — and



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to extrapolate something that isn't too complex to be workable.



Clearly, it would appear that if some form of housing is available, a witch or wizard seems to need a minimum of actual funds in order to live in a reasonable comfort in the Potterverse. Depending upon one's skills, in a modified degree of luxury even.

So why don't they? Or do they?

Or, as the question is usually stated more baldly, why are the Weasleys supposedly so poor?

I am inclined to think that where the Weasleys in particular are concerned, the matter does boil down to economics. But it does not necessarily boil down to finances.

It also, as one of my correspondents pointed out to me, probably boils down to the conservation of resources. And I think he is right. Indeed, this factor probably applies to a lot more than just the Weasleys' standard of living.

There is a finite limit to just how many spells any given wizard or witch is going to be able to learn and memorize. Or how many spellbooks one can reasonably house and still be able to search efficiently enough to find whatever specific spell one is looking for, at any given time. Particularly in an emergency. A master database probably would be enormously helpful, but, insofar as we know, any random British wizard does not appear to be able to instantaneously Google the correct spell to produce sunglasses, a tube of sunblock, and a bottle of mosquito repellent at need.

Because at some level, eventually you hit the wall. The devil is in the details, and the tendency of spells to specialize will

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ultimately stymie you.

For example; up until DHs when Rowling decided to abruptly invent difficulties, just to make the endless camping trip even more of a hassle, we saw that wizards *could* to all appearances conjure food. Admittedly, Rowling had stated, on her official site that things conjured from thin air do not last (a bit of poor judgment on her part, given the contradiction inherent when applied to foodstuffs, imho, but let it pass). But existing real materials can also presumably be transfigured into edible foodstuffs which do not disappear before they finish digesting.

However the spell to transfigure a cobblestone into a potato is unlikely to be the same spell as the one to transfigure it into an onion. The same may be said for every separate ingredient in a recipe. Or for conjuring a finished dish. In most cases, it is probably just plain simpler to purchase what you need if you possibly can. Even if, theoretically, everything a wizard needs in order to live comfortably can be produced by magic.

The Weasleys, for their part, seem to eat very well. And their house is kept clean and tidy. However, Molly does not seem to have also had the time and energy to master a host of sewing and tailoring spells in addition to all the ones she needs to keep her house clean and her family fed. Apart from her hand knits (which may or may not be produced with magical assistance) the Weasley family's clothing seems to all be purchased. Madam Malkin, on the other hand clearly did master those spells and makes an apparently good living from them. But we don't know whether Madam Malkin takes the trouble to cook.





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My own interpretation of this specific issue is that the Weasleys are not especially poor. Admittedly, they do appear to have a cash-flow problem. Which is not exactly the same thing. And, for that matter even that may well prove to have been temporary.

But the family's actual circumstances has a great deal more to do with their personalities than anything more tangible, like money.

As stated above, you will notice that the Weasleys seem to eat quite well, there is always enough at their table for guests, and they seem not to be lacking any of the real necessities of life. They sent seven children to Hogwarts without resorting to the fund that is available for children in financial hardship.

They also seem to own their home, as well as enough property to buffer themselves against the inconvenience of any close Muggle neighbors. The fact that that home seems to be a rickety old place clearly held together by magic probably owes as much, or more, to a disinterest on Molly and Arthur's part in the principles of engineering than to not having enough money to do something about it.

These are wizards, remember? What would they do with the money, hire a restoration architect? Hardly. If anything, they might hire a specialist wizard. Well, hey, there's certainly no shortage of wizards in that household! So what if the place is obviously held together by magic? How do you know that Arthur and Molly don't prefer it like that. Regardless of how much it may embarrass their teenaged kids.

(Oh, like *that's* a major consideration.).

And whenever they *do* get a bit of money ahead, they tend to blow it on travel abroad.

I suspect that Molly and Arthur simply don't care about the

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aesthetic or structural state of the house so long as it keeps the weather out. A simple lack of hard cash does not typically result in so obvious and so profound a lack of the understanding of basic structural principles, aesthetic taste or engineering design as is apparently so demonstrated by the Burrow. In fact, Arthur, being Arthur, probably prefers to do-it-himself, with his own unique interpretation of what is needed. The current state of the place says much more about Arthur's character than it does about Arthur's presumed poverty.

And in any case the place was probably quite unremarkable before Arthur enlarged it to hold a family of nine. He and Molly may even have always intended to undo the additions once all the chickens have flown the coop. They're wizards, remember?



For that matter, the fact that the Weasleys haven't much in the way of savings does not automatically imply that they are exceptionally poor, either. Rather a lot of people from the blue-collar end of the socio-economic spectrum count it as almost a point of honor to live right up to the last penny of their income without ever tipping over into debt. And I definitely get blue-collar vibes from Molly, who also seems to be the one to handle the family's finances.

With seven children (five of them still at home at the beginning of the series) the Weasleys do indeed initially appear to be "cash poor," which was later confirmed by Harry's glimpse into their vault at Gringotts, and with an income which would probably be quite comfortable for a family of four having had to stretch to cover a family of nine for most of the past decade,



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they do not have the wherewithal to purchase everything shiny and new, replace everything that wears out at once, or to buy every fad item that the kids are likely to decide they want.

But indulging children is probably not so widespread a practice among wizards as it is among Muggles. The wizarding world as a whole takes a good deal less interest in children than the Muggle one, and the young Weasleys all have the books and robes they actually need for school, even if at second hand. (And if you expect the kids to grow out of them by the end of the year, why do they have to start out new?)

In addition, throughout the series, every child in the family who manages to pull off a socially recognized “achievement” is materially rewarded for it. Percy and Ron were respectively given an owl (and new robes), and a new broom upon becoming Prefects, the twins almost certainly got that matched pair of Cleansweeps for Christmas right after making the team at the beginning of their 2nd year, and it is safe to assume that Bill and Charlie were also both rewarded upon their becoming Prefects (and in Bill’s case, Head Boy) as well. In fact, Charlie may have gotten his current wand after either making Team Captain or upon becoming Prefect, for he managed both. (Yes, Charlie was a Prefect, even if he did not go on to become Head Boy. We saw Molly being volubly overjoyed at Ron having become the fourth Prefect in the family.)

No, I really don’t think that the Weasleys are as poor as all that.



But that does not seem to go very far in answering the question as to why currency is required in the wizarding world, and

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used as a standard of wealth in a society which is assumed to be able to transfigure whatever is available to whatever it needs. And I cannot fully answer that question either, although, as I say above, I can easily see where there might well be some limits to attempting to live by magic alone.

(And while the fact that such an exclusively *magical* family as the Gaunts don’t seem to have managed, or to have even thought to attempt to achieve even some degree of basic cleanliness — despite the known existence of such charms as Scourgify, Evanesco, and Tergio, requiring no monetary expense whatsoever, and little physical effort — may be intended to symbolize some profound level of moral turpitude. In the event it merely introduces yet another logic hole for us to tumble through. Just what exactly was Rowling attempting to illustrate there?)

On this issue I may be very far afield from Rowling’s intentions. But then it is getting more and more evident that Rowling’s interpretation of magical technology, or indeed almost any kind of technology, is strictly from Toontown. Still, I’ll continue to soldier on until I’m told otherwise.

In the first place, keeping Rowling’s statement above in mind, you probably can’t get something from *absolutely* nothing. Or not and be able to keep it. Which would tend to disallow conjuring food that you could live upon from thin air (marvelous aid for Bulimics, though, I suppose. Much less of a strain on stomach lining and tooth enamel). There are almost certainly some principles of transference or exchange in action.

At a guess, I’d imagine that you can probably transfigure a pot of plain boiled potatoes into a savory stew, and the stew will stay in the pot until you eat it all. And it will nourish you



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when you have eaten it, too. But I suspect you may end up with a noticeably smaller volume of stew than you started with of potatoes unless you are willing to put more of yourself, or your own energy into it than you might prefer. You need to work from some sort of a starting point. And if you really are working from nothing then what you are putting into the process is entirely yourself. Your energy and possibly even a part of your physical (caloric), or magical "substance." Which will renew itself in time, but will leave you somewhat depleted until it does.



Plus, I suspect that magically-produced goods (which is what you will be purchasing in any wizarding shop) have been deliberately made resistant to any further transfiguration or charms. It would not be in a magical artisan's best interests to produce items which can be readily converted to replace other items which the shopkeeper may also wish to be able to sell you. For that matter, the charms upon many magical items appear to be semi-permanent, requiring the subsequent purchase of replacements when the charm wears off, to increase volume of sales.

Muggle-produced goods probably lack this particular resistance. Which is a major part of what makes the practice of charming Muggle artifacts so very tempting to wizards. For example, A skilled witch could reasonably expect to be able to put together a very nice wardrobe of Muggle fashion by purchasing once-stylish rags from second hand shops, restoring them to something close to their original condition, transfiguring them into a custom fit and adjusting whatever variables (color, fabric, etc.) she chooses. And these changes would all



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"take" and be quite permanent if she has the skills to make them so. But second-hand robes from Diagon Alley would strenuously resist such treatment.

Hogwarts student robes (and probably teaching robes as well) are almost certain to be particularly resistant to user-initiated spells, since they are probably already heavily charmed to resist spell and potion damage, damage from scorching in the lab, and are probably even charmed to grow, in at least some sort of pace with the child through the duration of an academic year. We've not had to accompany Harry and Co. back to Madam Malkin's for new robes more than every 2-3 years, anyway.

At least not until HBP and the acknowledgment of a sustained growth spurt (which we were told had started by the beginning of OotP). Transfigurations may work on wizarding wear, but they either do not last, or there is some other unwelcome side effect. Wizarding tailors, after all, want to sell you new robes.

In fact, much of the reason that there even is a Department of the Misuse of Muggle Artifacts may not be so much for the protection of Muggles, or even the security issues attendant upon charmed items falling into Muggle hands, but as an intrinsic part of a system set up for the protection of wizarding trades.

All of which would tend to make Arthur Weasley and his co-worker Perkins rather unpopular should they get too zealous in performance of their duties.

Since it is probably impossible to attempt to trace all potential modifications to Muggle artifacts, I suspect that many wizards and witches do routinely charm Muggle purchases to suit their requirements. It is only the act of charming the items to do things independently which the Ministry has any hope of





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being able to prove and prosecute.



From many indications, Muggle-produced goods are continually entering the wizarding world, but wizard-produced goods are not supposed to leave it. There is a whopping “trade deficit” in action here.

Foodstuffs, I suspect, unless purchased outright in Muggle shops, are typically brought into the wizarding world by wizarding consortiums, from Muggle suppliers (who have no idea that they are supplying wizards) and are generally accepted to be fair game for whatever modifications the purchaser may choose to make on them. Foodstuffs are particularly well suited for such magical enhancement. You will notice throughout the books that everyone in the wizarding world seems to eat very well indeed, regardless of their economic station. (Unless you are a half-deranged pureblood, living rough and wandlessly in an attempt to fly under everyone’s radar, like Sirius Black during Harry’s 3rd and 4th years.)

The classroom exercises which we have seen the characters engaged in are exactly that; exercises. And it is very likely that the objects and creatures used in those classroom exercises are almost certainly specially provided ones produced, or brought in from Muggle sources, specifically in order to offer no additional magical resistance in those classes.

As to the practice of conjuring items from thin air; I suspect that in many of the cases where we have been shown of this, up to Book 6, what is going on is actually an instantaneous retrieval of items from their usual storage locations. This would be a charm considerably more advanced than Accio! which merely summons

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the item and enables it to make the trip on its own.

In some apparent cases of “conjuring,” such as Molly Weasley’s white sauce, what is going on may be a far more complex and specialized spell which summons the necessary ingredients and combines them into the finished product without the need for intermediate steps. A magical “macro” in fact. Something like creating a white sauce (the example shown in the books) would be a particularly suitable procedure to simplify by a piece of specialized magic since it is basic to a wide range of cookery and is a tiresome chore to have to go through every single time before you can move on to the main task.

One would expect that any true conjuring of an item “from thin air” should reasonably be expected to be accompanied by some modified form of thunderclap, caused by the remaining atmosphere slamming together across the sudden vacuum previously occupied by either a solid object or the now-transfigured block of air — such as is the case when a wizard Disapparates. And the loudness of the clap may be related to the density of the item and the volume of air necessary to create it. (Particularly loud reports upon Disapparition may be due to a practice of not only transporting oneself, but also all items — including the air — for some distance around one’s body in hopes to avoid splinching.) I have no explanation for the corresponding report at the point that a wizard (or House Elf) Apparates. (Although we have already a disconnect on this issue, where the DEs’ appearance in the Little Hangleton graveyard was accompanied only by the swishing of cloaks.)



As to the matter of actual currency; we already know that



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the wizarding world only formally split off from the mundane one some 300 years prior to the opening of the series. By that time wizards would have become fully accustomed to the advantages of dealing in a regulated currency for business transactions, rather than a barter system. It is noted that wizards do not appear to have made the further transition to the use of some form of treasury "script" or paper money, but continue to do their business only in metal coinage.

I also am inclined to suspect that some materials may be very difficult to reproduce magically. Gold, for example, or the idea of a Philosopher's Stone would not have been so very attractive to the avaricious for its ability to transfigure base metals. This would tend to reinforce the continued use of such materials for anything that you wish to ensure will retain a widely agreed upon stable value. Particularly in those cases where some form of currency really is the simplest and most broadly-applied solution, such as paying the rent, or the actual purchase of goods from wizarding shops. A barter system has drawbacks. You cannot really get change from a goat. (Or not without using a truly inappropriate Charm...)

I suspect that it is almost certainly possible to magically produce a metallic substance with all the beauty of gold for the express purpose of adornment (and one which probably does not turn your skin green, either) but this false gold would be detectable as such by fairly simple revealing spells, which for the sake of counting coup in status-oriented pissing contests would totally defeat the purpose. But it might explain the Hogwarts table service.

Such revealing spells would also be used as the first line

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of defense in a safeguard against counterfeit. Otherwise the wizarding world would be swimming in false Galleons. It is likely that the silver used in sickles is also of a specific alloy with a magical "authenticity" tracer for the same reason. I am less certain that the bronze knut is similarly protected, but I would not put the possibility beyond the Goblins who oversee the ww's monetary welfare. It would be a very careless shopkeeper who failed to cross-check any of the coins he accepted to determine that they were genuine.



What is far less clear, because until this point it has been completely ignored within the series, is how does finance within the wizarding world actually work? Is there a counterbalance to the aforementioned trade deficit? How is the taxation of wizards accomplished? And at what rate?

For there must be some form of taxation. Or else where does the money come from which pays the salaries of the Ministry employees? It is obvious to the reader that the largest single employer of trained wizards and witches in wizarding Britain is the Ministry of Magic. Their services are not being paid for by Muggle imports. Or does the British Muggle government wittingly or unwittingly subsidize the Ministry of Magic?

We have been informed in interviews that there are no fees required for Hogwarts attendance, although books, materials and uniforms are the responsibility of the students. And post-HBP we know that there is a fund available to children who are in financial hardship.

But the funding to operate such state-supported schools and



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government agencies must come from somewhere. The most likely source would be the Muggle government through some treaty or subterfuge, but we do not know this to be the case.

Surely this isn't all being underwritten by the Goblins of Gringotts!

Or is it?

Certainly discovering and recovering treasure was one of Bill Weasley's responsibilities as a Gringotts employee. Do the Goblins not only manage the wealth of the wizarding world, but provide it as well?

If that's the case, small wonder Cornelius Fudge is painted as having ambitions to control them!



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My own take on one of Rowling's more problematic imports from folklore.



*Farewell, rewards and fairies,  
Good housewives now may say,  
For now foul sluts in dairies  
Do fare as well as they.  
And though they sweep their hearths no less  
Than maids were wont to do,  
Yet who of late for cleanliness  
Finds sixpence in her shoe?*

— Richard Corbett, 1628

It is obvious to almost every reader of Harry Potter that with her House Elves JK Rowling is deliberately tapping into an extensive wealth of traditional mundane folklore. A source to which she has admitted. However, unlike her adoption of such other traditional magical creatures as the phoenix, the unicorn and the dragon, with the House Elves she has made some sweeping departures from the folkloric models.

As can scarcely be mentioned too often, the Potterverse is not our own all-too-mundane world. But the analogs are so many, and in some cases so exact, that some degree of application between the two is simply too difficult to resist. In almost every way the world of JK Rowling's wizards is as parallel to our own as that of Mary Norton's *Borrowers*.

Her wizarding world seems particularly parallel to the world that peeks through folktales dating back to a pre-Industrial England around the time of the Parliamentary wars. Fittingly



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enough, this was the last period that Potterverse wizards lived more or less openly, *as* wizards, out among Muggles.

Moreover, her House Elves themselves are almost instantly recognizable as being based upon the class, or tribe, of Fairies once known throughout Britain as Hobs. Those small, usually friendly, domestic spirits which perform various tasks for humans and have taken up residence in human habitations.

Hobs have historically been called by various local names such as hobmen, hobgoblins, fenoderee, phouka, bwbachod, bwca, bodach, and most widely, in more modern times as brownies. Some of these entities have also been known by individual names although as often as not these have been names that were assigned to them by the humans with whom they allegedly shared their homes. One variant of brownie once believed to be found in Yorkshire and Lancashire was even known as the Dobby. (Not to be confused with a Dobie, another variant of North-country brownie which, although willing, is too stupid to be trusted with anything that matters deeply.)

My primary source in these matters is noted folklorist, Katharine M. Briggs, chiefly from her work; 'AN ENCYCLOPEDIA OF FAIRIES' [in Great Britain; 'A DICTIONARY OF FAIRIES'] c. 1976. Ms Briggs is the author of a number of other books on folklore, an excellent retelling of the traditional Northern tale of Kate Crackernuts, and the original novel, 'HOBBERDY DICK', relating the story of an Oxfordshire hob, set in the early 1650s.

There is a good deal of continuing confusion in our own world over the nature of Fairies, which makes folklore, in some regards, a very inexact source of information. But one apparent "fact" that does work its way through the fog is that most

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"fairies" are not limited to the physical plane, and are at least to some degree regarded as spirits. Traditionally, the adoption of a particular human household or farm as their chosen "place" by any of them is openly stated as being a 'haunting'. And, being 'spirits', their sub-tenancy may last for generations. Indeed, it usually lasts until someone goes to the effort of exorcising or 'laying' them. Typically by offering them clothing. Which they do not *have* to accept.

There is also considerable lingering confusion as to why a Hob should be driven away specifically by a gift of clothing. That this is almost always the case is generally agreed upon; but the reasoning behind it remains unclear. The 'fact' has been variously explained as that the acquisition of proper clothing makes a hob too vain to do menial work any longer. Or, conversely, that the hob quits his "job" in anger over the poor quality of the clothing offered. Or even by the theory that hobs are Fairies who have been exiled from their halls and sent to work among humans until such time as the humans should consider them to have earned a reward. In any event, the clothing must always be *new* clothing, deliberately *given* to the hob. It is not human clothing appropriated by the hob.

The only real conclusion to be drawn from this is that humans do not really understand what motivates hobs.



Through several centuries of intermittent interaction with hobs, a number of generalities in dealing with them have been noted in folklore. First; that hobs dislike to be watched at their work, generally only venturing from their hiding places at night



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and performing their tasks while the rest of the household is asleep. For that matter, hobs are very rarely seen by anyone apart from beasts and very young children, although they are occasionally overheard by adults.

Second; that hobs like things to be done in accordance with tradition. Given that the origins of the whole concept of hobs is probably lost in a bog of sundry nature religions dating from the Neolithic era, if not earlier, this is probably not to be wondered at.

Third; that they do not like to be openly offered payment; but that what they *are* given for their own use should be of the best quality that is available. Usually the best bread — and cream — if it is to be had, set aside in a place where they might find it for themselves.

Fourth: they will not endure insults or mistreatment. They will either leave or they will retaliate, and given a choice between the two, they are much more likely to retaliate. And they can be very nasty about it, too. To the point of often driving away the humans who have offended them. To the hob, that house is *his*.

Fifth; a hob will work most eagerly in a household where the humans do their part willingly and effectively. The lazy or slovenly members of the household are likely to find that the hob has repaid them by creating additional disorder for them to deal with, even when it has not already subjected them to corporal punishment, generally by way of pinching them black & blue. Conversely, hobs have also been known to reward the diligent, and to attempt to smooth their way.

Which leads us to another common observation; once a hob has adopted a property, he tends to sit in judgment upon the human owners or tenants of that property, and if they do not meet the hob's standards he will take it upon himself to punish them

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for their laxness. Furthermore, an offended hob can turn quite vicious, making the lives of the humans in 'his' house miserable.

In some of the folklore of our own world the hobs that have slipped over this particular border are said to have become boggarts. The behavior of a boggart (in folklore, although obviously not according to Rowling) is indistinguishable from that of a poltergeist. Interestingly, where a brownie is said to have almost no nose, to the point of there being almost nothing but two little nostrils in the middle of a face, a boggart has a very long sharp nose. But given that neither one is commonly seen by the humans whose house he haunts, this is probably even more of a fable than the rest.

Some hobs, most specifically brownies, are attributed as being playful, mischievous and fond of practical jokes.

And many hobs have been reported as being shapeshifters when they wish to be.

In our world that is.

Doesn't sound much like being the case in Rowling's, does it?



There is, obviously, no Potterverse precedent of a House Elf turning into a boggart if subjected to insult or mistreatment. Although you could perhaps make a reasonable argument that that is what did in fact happen in Dobby's case, or even Kreacher's.

The most significant difference between the traditional hob of our world's folklore and that of Rowling's, however, is that her hobs are not even remotely immortal.

For that matter, for a couple of years it seemed that if the Black family's tradition of mounting the stuffed heads of outworn



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House Elves on the wall only began with Sirius Black's Aunt Elladora, then unless that particular household served as the repository of all the House Elf heads of the whole extended Black family, then modern House Elves would seem to be painfully short-lived, for there were already several heads on that wall.

This impression was demonstrated to be inaccurate, or at least incomplete when, in HBP we were informed that the late (and elderly) Madam Hepzibah Smith's devoted House Elf, Hokey, had been with her since she was a girl.

The release of the sketch of a section of the House of Black's family Tapestry for the Book Aid charity auction in February, 2006 finally clarified the matter to at least some degree. It turns out that "Aunt Elladora" was, in fact, several-times-great Aunt Elladora, sister of Phineas Nigellus, Sirius's great-great grandfather, and some four generations upstream of Sirius Black himself. Presumably the House Elves' heads mounted on the wall of #12, have collected there over the course of about 150 years.

It also interjects a certain degree of context to the display, removing it from the realm of callous cruelty to servants, and rendering it into a piece of morbid Victorian sentiment, on the order of having one's dear little lap dog or favorite kitty stuffed after its demise and displayed in a glass case in the parlor.

This lack of immortality calls for a major paradigm shift when one attempts to draw comparisons between Rowling's pitiful House Elves and folklore's independent — and highly eccentric — hobs. But some broad similarities are likely to still be applicable, since Rowling who allegedly was at one time a Girl Guide, has admitted that the hobs (or more specifically, brownies) were indeed, her original model.

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For one thing, given that Harry and his classmates lived in Hogwarts castle for over three full school years before they discovered that the School's cooking and cleaning were done by House Elves suggests that, like hobs, House Elves are not to be seen if they do not choose to be seen. (This is confirmed by Hagrid's statement that not being seen is the mark of a good House Elf.) This is not so likely to be a case of true invisibility as it is likely to be due to some form of unnoticability, or a reverse form of the glamour which is so frequently attributed as one of the gifts of non-human magical races. (Note: this does not refer to their habit of "popping" in and out of places. Such "reports" are probably due to the "thunderclap" of displaced air resulting from the Elves' version of Apparating and Disapparating.)

If House Elves are mortal, however, then they cannot very well be truly solitary, as traditional hobs are said to be; for then there would be no new generation of House Elves, and we have direct canon evidence that assures us that House Elves have mothers and children. Although they may not precisely have families. Or not two-parent families, anyway.

In the days before Seclusion, I think that like the hobs of our own folklore, most House Elves were bound, or had bound themselves, to Muggle properties, and conducted themselves much as the hobs in folklore are reported to have done. Since they did not choose to show themselves, the Muggles did not ever realize that there was more than one Elf on the property even if, in fact, their household was being shared by a she-Elf with an Elf child, or even a small nuclear family of Elves.



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And, if given any choice in the matter, House Elves would have quite deliberately chosen Muggle over magical households to settle into, since in that case it was the Elf who had the upper hand and controlled his or her circumstances. And, given what we've been shown of the general volatility of Elf behavior, when in control of the situation, some Elves would have been as mischievous as any hob, and as spiteful. Perhaps not quite on the same level as Peeves, but damned close.

But, at that, the additional work done by even a disruptive Elf, in an era when every additional pair of hands was regarded as a blessing, it would have been a rare family which would have been willing to drive the Elf away, however capricious his behavior.



*Lament, lament, old Abbeys,  
The Fairies lost command!  
They did but change Priests' babies,  
But some have changed your land.  
And all your children, sprung from thence,  
Are now grown Puritans,  
Who live as Changelings ever since  
For love of your demains.*

*At morning and at evening both  
You merry were and glad,  
So little care of sleep or sloth  
These pretty ladies had;  
When Tom came home from labour,  
Or Cis to milking rose,  
Then merrily went their tabor,  
And nimbly went their toes.*



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Which brings us to that pesky question of how and why House Elves are "bound" to their households. For this binding appears to be quite real.

The next obvious question is why the acceptance of proper clothing as opposed to dressing oneself in general household linens should break that binding.

A third question, more rarely asked, is; what are the consequences to the Elf of a broken binding? For I think there is more to it than we've been shown or told. And I'm not sure JK Rowling knows the answer either. Her sources certainly can't seem to agree on the matter.

Well, okay; Theories 'R' Us:

In the first place, we need to remember that, unlike human witches and wizards, House Elves are members of an authentically magical species.

We keep forgetting that despite the fact that human wizards appear to be the dominant magical Beings in the wizarding world, magical conductivity is an aberration in humans. Only a very small, statistically insignificant percentage of humans are capable of conducting magical energies. Only human wizards require wands to properly focus those energies, and (according to my own theories which are neither fully supported — nor contradicted outright — in canon), only human wizards require wands as focusing devices to protect themselves from taking harm from the direct conduction of these energies as they manifest either as "wild" magic or in their less domesticated form, popularly known as the Dark Arts. Furthermore, to all appearances, only human wizards apparently *can* be harmed by conducting such energies.





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The physical and psychic requirements of a truly magical species may well entail conditions or propitiations to the natural order which simply do not apply to humans. Particularly given the consideration that most magical species are usually in some sense nature spirits.

Conversely the presumed appearance of the whole situation may be a human overlay, or projection upon behavior which is entirely due to other cultural dynamics that have developed from underlying Elfin instincts, which are grossly misunderstood by humans.

We have already been made aware that there are representatives of several "nature-bound" magical races in the Pot-terverse which in folklore are dependent upon proximity to various natural features such as rivers or lakes. It is not beyond reason to provisionally suppose that House Elves may also require a form of connection to some feature of the material plane to ensure their well-being as well. Or that at the very least they firmly *believe* that such a connection is necessary for their well-being. The requirement may well be cultural, or even instinctive, rather than literal.

Following this particular line of inquiry: since according to tradition the hob felt compelled to serve a whole *property*, rather than specifically one *structure* on a property, we may also need to postulate that the Elves almost certainly came before the Houses, and that they in fact are something along the lines of being a form of Earth sprite, attaching themselves to territories which they claimed for their own family unit, in perpetuity, at some point beyond the reach of memory, probably before the invasions of men.



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Consider; there is absolutely no indication that Elves, although they are at least marginally social Beings, have ever had a tradition of gathering into communal groups such as villages or cities among their own kind. Instead, they seem to have adopted a practice of spreading themselves out over the countryside, with a solitary Elf, or a nuclear family of Elves staking out a claim on a large enough freehold property to support them, and thereafter they seem to have dedicated their lives and energies to the tending of their own tract of land.

I postulate that in the earliest days, one of the offspring would inherit the tenancy from the parent, or parents, and any additional offspring, once grown, would have left to stake a claim upon some other, vacant property. One supposes that most often they would hope to lay claim to a property which had lost its Elf, due to a lack of heirs of the previous freeholder. For that matter, it seems unlikely that there are very many additional offspring. We have certainly never heard any House Elf mention the existence of siblings to this point. Although on that issue our sampling to date is too small to base a lot of reliance upon.

In fact, once examined, the basic social patterns of house Elves do not conform to those of humans at all. Left to themselves, they clearly have no more formed the basic strategy of grouping together for mutual protection than Giants have. (Right there we ought to register a strong hint that they are not simply funny-looking little humans who cannot talk straight.)

Unlike with Giants, it has been demonstrated that House Elves are able to adapt to living in reasonably large colonies





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and functioning together in a state of mutual cooperation. But I believe that the practice of doing so has been a comparatively recent development which has been imposed upon the majority of modern Elves since the formation of a Secluded wizarding world and their subsequent titular enslavement.

Quite possibly their traditional "solitary" behavior is a side effect of their being inherently magical. Their entire reasoning processes follow different patterns from those of humans, who in general cannot simply Apparate away from any threat, and undoubtedly the Elves have developed an entirely different cultural range of symbols and associations which bear little resemblance to ours.

That they "bound" themselves to their ancestral territories suggests that either their existence required that they reinvent themselves as a *part* of their territories; namely that they had very early formulated a cultural conviction that this is the case, either based upon some instinctive imperative; or that there really is some accrued benefit to the Elf in his relationship to his property that can be attained by doing so.

Although based upon our necessarily external view of the matter, it would appear that to survive without any "base" or form of domicile would be sure to be an exercise in uncertainty, or at least discomfort. Before the advent of humans upon their properties, Elves do not seem to have ever built themselves structures in which to house themselves; living rather along the lines of those aboriginal peoples who, having settled in areas with ample resources and mild climate simply failed to develop those solutions which would have been necessary to survive in more meager or harsher environments (Elves are magical after

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all). Such cultures have until recently been regarded as exceptionally "primitive," whereas, in fact, their needs simply were already amply provided for. No human claims to have ever come across a prehistoric Elf-built structure of any kind. (The rumored "Underhill" halls of the Sidhe are a different culture, of a different species altogether, assuming that in the Potterverse they even exist.)

Although Elves dedicated themselves entirely to the welfare of their territories, and tended them without pause, they appear to have carefully added nothing to these territories that did not occur there naturally. In the course of identifying themselves with (or to) their domains, they seem to have clothed themselves only in such materials which their territories provided. Bark, leaves, cobwebs and the like; natural materials, naturally occurring, possibly in some attempt to symbolically become an inherent "part" of their "place". Although this line of reasoning is still all a matter of conjecture.



And then humans came and built themselves houses. Right in the Elves' various "freeholds."

At first glance, it seems a bit of a reach to assume that all House Elf lines of descent first became attached to their original households when a family of Muggles came and built a house on the property that an Elf had already claimed for his or her own, and that of his descendants. But, perhaps they did. Such an extrapolation does certainly fit what can be observed.

If this is the case, then the Elves seem to have quickly decided that living in houses was greatly to be preferred to living in a



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hollow tree or a burrow, and took up their residences there almost from the houses' beginnings. Traditionally their sleeping/hiding places within the houses were generally in garrets, attics and various odd corners where their presence would not be easily detected.

House Elves do not seem to think like humans and their priorities don't match up to human priorities particularly well, but folklore seems pretty much in agreement that traditionally the Elf serves the House (or, rather, the property) rather than the family that merely lives in the house. And while there are some reports of hobs who have taken a particular human in affection or who have stowed away in the family's baggage when a family they like has been forced to remove, such reported incidents are rare. It is quite possible that the original Elf on a property was convinced that the Muggles had built the house for him. So, being a part of his demesne, of course he and his line have dedicated themselves to the tending of it.

That the Muggles who built the house used it to serve their own comfort might well have been interpreted by the Elf as a taking of their rightful payment and share from the property as well. As co-tenants they were entitled to maintain themselves in as much comfort as they could devise since they were also servants to the land that the Elf claimed. They thus may have been perceived by the Elf to be serving the land, themselves, and, incidentally, serving the Elf who permitted them to do so, at his discretion.

If this is correct, I am inclined to believe that it was almost universally Muggles who built the houses which were ultimately adopted by what were soon to be designated as House Elves. A wizarding family might have had the ability to determine ahead

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of time whether the property upon which they were contemplating building their house was already occupied by a magical Being, and, given hobs' tendency to engage in pranks or to apply pressure to ensure that things in "their" Houses be done their way, would, upon finding an Elf *in situ*, have either gone elsewhere, or seen to it that the Elf was removed from the property before the building was started.



Which brings us to another point:

We have been given exceedingly little real indication in canon that to "own" an Elf is necessarily a long-established mark of distinction among wizards. In fact, given what we have seen of House Elves, and their general behavior to date, there is every indication that any wizard who wants a quiet and orderly life, would probably be much better off being served by other human wizards, and having nothing to do with the creatures.

What we have been told is that House Elves tend to come with big old manors and castles, and that the families who own these properties will be old, and generally rich. This is not quite the same thing as claiming that a House Elf is a universally desirable asset. To have inherited an Elf might be regarded as no more enviable than to have attracted a family Ghoul.

We have also been told that there is a House Elf Relocation Office in the Ministry, and that the enslavement of House Elves has gone on "for centuries"

Before going further, I would like to suggest that the iteration of that "peculiar institution" which we see depicted in the wizarding world does not predate the Seclusion of the



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wizarding world from the rest of human society, but was one of the developments to have come out of it. That, in fact, it is a comparatively recent development of the last 300 years.

The tendency of a modern Elf to cling to his “place” even in the face of appalling abuse raises the question of whether there is indeed more to their binding than such a recent development as formal enslavement would account for. Because this is clearly not simply a species-wide tendency to develop Stockholm Syndrome. It appears to be a universal trait of virtually all House Elves, Dobby alone appearing to be free of it.

This was *\*never\** the case of any *human* group which has ever suffered enslavement. These Elves have not been conquered, captured, and forcibly enslaved by wizards and sold for profit. What is clearly going on is that the wizards are opportunistically exploiting a deeply ingrained element of Elfin character. This form of enslavement is not remotely commercially motivated. No more than that to acquire a cat to hunt mice is enslaving the cat.

We need to keep in mind that when House Elves haunted Muggle properties, an Elf and his or her descendants would cling to the same property for centuries and except for rare instances could only be forced to leave it by exorcism, typically in the form of a presentation of human-style clothing, and convincing the Elf to take it. Consequently we are dealing with a piece of thoroughly non-human symbolism, here. One with the weight of millennia of instinct and tradition behind it, and one not easily derailed or amenable to being convinced that it is based upon erroneous convictions.

It is also obvious that our own widespread Muggle-folklore interpretation of clothing as a *reward* to the Elf is very far from

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the truth. Certainly Barty Crouch Sr was very well aware that to present Winky with clothing was no reward. And if Elves were indeed bound to the properties before there were houses, then we may be messing about with some very heavy symbolism indeed. And probably with all the tact, empathy, and long-range success as a herd of bullocks in a china shop, too.

Particularly if the interpretation of Elves as being at least in part “spirits” is at all close to the truth. Everything in House Elf behavior to date suggests that the average Elf is absolutely convinced that he requires a binding to some specific place of his own on the physical plane in order to continue to exist. Or, in other words, that to “liberate” an Elf is to effectively *kill* the Elf, unless he can find a new place to which to attach himself.

(It must be repeated that even if this is not true, the Elves’ culture strongly suggests that they may firmly *believe* it to be true.)

In which case, Dobby, by the time we first met him, had clearly reached the point of being what has to be interpreted as suicidal. It really does not require any great stretch of the imagination in order to accept this interpretation. I honestly think that by the Year of the Basilisk, Dobby would have rather died than to have gone on working for wizards such as the Malfoys until the end of his natural life. But he had, up to that point, been unable to annoy them to the point of releasing him, instead of simply punishing him, or, rather, of ordering him to punish himself.

And yet, at that, for Dobby to seize upon a carelessly thrown human sock (which didn’t even belong to Malfoy) as an excuse to free himself, rather than to have been formally offered clothing that was intended for him (as Crouch clearly did with Winky) sounds like an attempt to set a dangerous precedent



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which was entirely outside the rules. One which may explain why he is still attempting to punish himself when he speaks ill of his former masters. (And renders Hermione's Elf hats into an even more futile exercise than ever. She has no authority to free *any* of them.)

Once "freed," Dobby also seems to have become determined to never be in so utterly powerless a situation ever again. Hence his demand to be paid for his work. It is clear from what he has to say of the matter in GoF, that he has almost no grasp of the usual (human-centric) point of being given payment for labor, (i.e., that the more payment you can manage to negotiate for the least amount of actual work you do, the more successful you are) but he has groked the fact that his being given payment allows him to be the one in control of his contract. Which is a rather frightening developmental leap for an Elf to take. It is against everything anyone in the wizarding world has ever observed or reported of Elfin behavior.

It has been suggested on some lists and forums that Dobby was not originally the Malfoy's elf, but had been assigned to the family by the House Elf Relocation Office. It's a rather sweet idea, but it does not really fit what Dobby has to say for himself, and it is certainly not necessary to anything shown us in the apparent story arc of the series. Dobby clearly went through VoldWar I in the household of Voldemort supporters who, moreover, "treated us like vermin."\* If that statement alone is not enough to convince us, from his comments in general he seems to be under the impression that Voldemort was actually "in power" by the end of the previous conflict, which clearly was never truly the case — although it might certainly

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have appeared so to the Elves of a household of his supporters. Particularly from their vantage point behind the lines, trapped in the "enemy camp."

(\*The evidence is mounting up that to have an Elf *may* be a mark of distinction, but is not the unalloyed boon to a wizarding family that many younger fans assume it must be.)



My current hypothesis regarding the significance of clothing; which may very well change — radically — if I come across some reasonably convincing competing interpretation elsewhere, is that we need to take a closer look at just what House Elves do clothe themselves in, in the absence of "proper" garments. Folklore's hobs, when one managed to catch a glimpse of them, traditionally were clothed in either rags (i.e., random pieces of fabric, or clothing that was no longer "clothing" in any human estimation, having descended to the state of being regarded as cleaning supplies) or such natural materials as cobwebs. Or they simply went naked. In the Potterverse, Elves seem to wear conventional household linens. Dobby wore a grubby pillow slip. The Hogwarts Elves wear tidy tea towels. Both of these examples of standard "household linens," as cited above. (It is not possible to determine what the rag that Kreachur uses for his loincloth's original purpose was.) It is possible that by adorning themselves as if they are literally "parts of the House," i.e., *furnishings*, rather than as autonomous entities with an existence beyond the confines of the House, they are fulfilling some symbolic purpose, or complying with some magical law of similarity underscoring an Elf's identification with his physical environment. Hold that thought.



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It is very clear in canon that there are multiple forms of geasa imposed upon House Elves. Otherwise they would be able simply to refuse to accept whatever clothing may be offered them (as is apparently the case for folkloric hobs). The major geas regarding clothing, in particular, appears to be of far longer standing than any close association with wizards, and wizarding households, and I do not have any really compelling suggestions as to its specific origins, or how the Elves actually interpret the matter. But it really does seem to be possible that the form of this geas as it operates in the ww today is something that has been overlaid upon some older, traditional form, wherein the Elf *did* have a choice in the matter.

However, modern House Elves' wizarding Masters clearly exert a level of control over them which was certainly never the case when House Elves typically haunted Muggle properties, and laid down the law to the humans of the household. These latter forms of control have clearly been imposed upon the Elves far more recently.

And the House Elves permitted it.

It stands to reason that there must have been some truly compelling, perceived need in order for the Elves to agree to allow this.

There also seems to be a good deal of ignorance among wizards as to just what geasa are actually imposed upon House Elves, and that what may simply appear to be a geas, isn't. As we saw in OotP, most House Elves' general reluctance to leave their Houses was assumed to be an actual component of their binding, which Harry was able to say with confidence (although possibly not with accuracy) is not actually the case.

Upon no more than our current information, this seems far

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more likely to indicate merely some racial/cultural tendency to agoraphobia, unless the family has actually superimposed this "House-bound" limitation upon their Elf. Some families may well have done so.



*Witness those rings and roundelays  
Of theirs, which yet remain,  
Were footed in Queen Mary's days  
On many a grassy plain;  
But since of late, Elizabeth,  
And later, James came in,  
They never danced on any heath  
As when the time hath been.*

*By which we note the Fairies  
Were of the old Profession.  
Their songs were "Ave Mary's",  
Their dances were Procession.  
But now, alas, they all are dead;  
Or gone beyond the seas;  
Or farther for Religion fled;  
Or else they take their ease.*

It should be obvious to everyone by now that at the point that the temper of the mundane world started to become implacably opposed to all traces of the supernatural, that of all magical Beings, it would have been the House Elves who were suddenly the most at risk. Giants had not lived within range of human settlements for centuries before Seclusion. Neither had Goblins. Nature sprites such as veela, usually live well away from the towns.



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But House Elves actually lived, not merely among Muggle neighbors, as did human witches and wizards, but actually in their very Houses. And the Muggles who owned those Houses were now desperate to attract no attention to themselves from the elders of the Church. There would have been an unprecedented wave of offerings of clothing.

What were such dispossessed House Elves to do other than to throw themselves upon the mercy of wizards?

Particularly if they *do* believe that their continued existence depended upon their being able to attach themselves to a new household in the material world. (And no, for the third time, we do not *know* whether this is the case, but the behavior of House Elves throughout the series certainly suggests that they may very well *believe* this to be the case.)

Only, wizards, unlike Muggles, had been actively avoiding having to deal directly with Elves and their nonsense since before the beginning of recorded history. There are limits to Charity, and to voluntarily offer a perpetual place in their own homes to a species of mischievous little monkeys who are accustomed to laying down the law to their house's legal owners without demanding some level of concession was rather beyond that limit.

On the other hand, if wizarding secrecy was sincerely believed to be the only way that *wizards* would be able to live their lives in safety, it would have been imperative to get as many other magical species, whether Beast, Being, or Spirit, behind the barricades with them. Otherwise it would be far more difficult to convince Muggles that magic does not exist, if they keep tripping over it.

House Elves are a magical *species* with a long history, and

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they are clearly Beings and not beasts, and wizards were at serious risk themselves. If either group was to survive it might well be more likely by mutual effort, and it would undoubtedly take the effort of all magical peoples to establish and maintain the secret world which would ultimately protect them.

And if they did manage to establish that Ultima Thule, that Secluded world; it was going to overturn the way nearly everything had always been done in the way of a division of labor..



If wizards lived in retreat, away from the eyes of Muggles, then Muggles would also to a large extent be away from the eyes of wizards. There'd be very few Muggle-borns discovered, educated, and sponsored into the wizarding culture by the heads of Great Houses to be kept on afterwards as retainers who were under obligation to their patron. i.e., the traditional source of new servants will have dried up.

For that matter; apart from that handful of magical holders of large enough estates who could manage to facilitate a "property swap" and set up a new identity in a region where they were not known to be wizards, wizarding landowners were being forced to put at least some of their holdings' administration in Muggle hands and to cut themselves off from their own tenants' services. Or, more typically, wizarding tenants were being forced to remove themselves from their overlord's direct protection.

The magical retainers of such landowners were also effectively being turned off those country estates and forced to scatter themselves across the countryside in order to find



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other places to live and other forms of employment by which to support themselves as the estates were abandoned by their owners, and the owners liquidated or rented out their assets, and retreated into townhouses in the secluded wizarding enclaves of London or other cities or a household in Hogsmeade village or one of the partially-wizarding villages dotted across the countryside. It would have been during these early years of capitulating to formal Seclusion that the wizarding world's current cultural paradigm that the proper occupation of magical persons is Magic would have been adopted. Prior to that point many, perhaps even most, had been engaged in the same sort of rural/agricultural lifestyle that occupied their Muggle neighbors, and had only practiced magic on the side. This more casual arrangement was no longer regarded as an effective deployment of wizarding manpower.

Manpower that was probably a tenth of what it is today.

The isolationist faction, whose fortunes had typically been made in commerce were also being cut off from their own direct involvement in the most basic step of their operations, that of the acquisition of any Muggle-produced staple goods that their more sophisticated magical products required — unless they were a member of the (hypothetical) new Ministry-sponsored Consortium. The Consortium which was adding at least one additional layer of complexity to any business model.

No, in such a time of the general upheaval of everything that had ever gone before, the sudden availability of the House Elves' purely domestic labor was not altogether unwelcome.



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*A tell-tale in their company  
They never could endure!  
And whoso kept not secretly  
Their mirth, was punished, sure;  
It was a just and Christian deed  
To pinch such black and blue.  
Oh how the commonwealth doth want  
Such Justices as you!*

But not without concessions. Wizards were far too well aware of the kind of disruption that a House Elf could cause if he took a mind to. As well as the kind of merry dance the Elves had been leading the Muggles whose homes they had shared for centuries. And they were not going to put up with that kind of thing.

And Elves simply don't *think* like humans, making it a frustrating and highly unsatisfactory business to try to work with them. (There has yet been no equivalent of a wizarding Dr Jane Goodall, making a study of House Elves.)

The Elves had no choice but to agree to submit to additional geas which would prevent them from working against their new Masters, or of chattering about their Masters' secrets. And given what the Elves believed was at stake they were glad to do it.

This was the real reason for the formation of the Ministry of Magic's House Elf Relocation Office. Since the Elves often could not be persuaded to voluntarily abandon their ties to their original households, the date of the Act of Wizarding Seclusion could not really be applied to them. In fact, if Potterverse folklore went parallel to ours, although most known Elves were "freed" over the course of the 17th and 18th centuries, a few were probably not exorcised until the early 19th century. A few, (very few) may





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even still be haunting Muggle properties to this day. Although this last seems unlikely, for their lines would almost certainly have died out by now. Their potential mates would have long ago disappeared within the boundaries of the wizarding world.

Elves, as they were freed, were assigned by this Office to those wizarding families who agreed to accept them, and a certain preference was undoubtedly made for families whose Houses were of an age, type, and remote location such as was compatible with those properties with which the Elves were familiar. There would not have been as many of these still available as all that. Many wizards had been forced to give up their ancestral properties in order to remove themselves from the proximity of too many Muggles who knew of their abilities, and to take new residences either in the secluded wizarding districts of towns, or in new holdings in regions where they were not known or suspected of being wizards. While most of these secluded residences were in the oldest part of those towns which had wizarding districts, House Elves were generally not accustomed to town living, and preference was given to those families which had managed to retain a country residence.

Since the Elves were now actually bound to the Family, rather than just the House, one might assume that it did not take long for both the Elves and the wizards to realize that an Elf could be constrained to accompany their Masters to any new residence. And in some cases, such as with the Blacks, this does appear to have happened (keeping in mind the possibility that the Black town-house is in fact older than the town around it, but its address, with its simple London street number argues against that).

But in general, this does not seem to be the case. Rather,

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it seems likely that, once relocated, the Elves merely transferred their attachment to their new holdings and should the family which owns those holdings die out, the new owner of the House will essentially inherit that family of Elfin retainers along with it. In the final reckoning, House Elves belong to the house. They are not the personal property of the house's current owners. Not even that of the head of the family, although they can be transferred along with the rest of the family property by the terms of their prior master's will. There is no reason in canon for us to assume that House Elves may be sold. They may only be freed.

That neither Dobby nor Winky seem to have resorted to the services of the Relocation Office after their dismissal may indicate that this office now only serves the interests of Elves whose human Masters' families have died out in the case of their being no collateral heirs, or Will on record.

Or, it is possible that Dobby and Winky simply did not know about this resource. Winky would probably have gladly accepted being assigned to another family if one would have agreed to take her. Dobby's insistence upon being paid, however, would have assured that he would rapidly have been shown the door.

The fact is that when Seclusion was established, probably not all wizarding households of the proper type *would* agree to take on an Elf, or family of Elves. Elves probably did not have the best of reputations for being easy to live with, and the exact status value of having an Elf, even today is debatable. Nor, I suspect, were there all that many households which were considered suitable.





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Let's take a reality check here: from what we have seen of the ones we've met, working with a House Elf is almost certainly an exercise in frustration. If you had magic at your disposal already, how eager would you be to take an Elf on? For this reason, rather a lot of Elves seem to have been ultimately assigned to institutions, rather than private families, where their descendants serve to this day, Hogwarts and St Mungo's Hospital being two of these. The building maintenance workers at the Ministry may also be House Elves, although the head of the Maintenance Department probably is not.

Which brings us to another issue which demands a reality check. Just how many House Elves are we talking about here?

Most readers' attempts to analyze the information actually given us in the books are severely hampered by the distortions inherent in living in a modern society. We simply cannot conceive a world in which the dominant race/species of magical people in Great Britain and Ireland number at most about 3,500 – 5,000 people. For convenience here, I will say 4,000.

And if Rowling is to be believed, that is a generous estimate of the current population of human wizards and witches. Furthermore, the dominance of that 4,000 probably is almost certainly based upon numbers, rather than inherent power.

Those 4,000 human wizards and witches are assumed to outnumber the populations, either individually or in combination, of all the other populations of the other races/species of magical Beings in Britain. It is not a case of the humans having better weaponry; although the human legislators in the Ministry of Magic seem to believe that it might be. Non-human magical peoples are forbidden by law to use wands, for example.



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But non-human magical beings do not *need* to use wands. Only magical *humans* require wands in order to reliably control their own magic. Human beings are not an inherently magical species, they need their crutch.

What we have been told is that Hogwarts, with its staff of about 100 House Elves is the largest single employer of House Elves in Great Britain. St Mungo's Hospital almost certainly has a sizable staff of House Elves as well. (All that bedding to wash and meals to be prepared, plus all the floors to scrub and bedsteads to polish.) There will probably be another group maintaining the offices of the Ministry of Magic itself, and perhaps some other Ministry properties, if any. The rest are probably scattered out as Elves still attached to private households.

And not all that many private households, either. As with all societies, the working classes (laboring and Artisan) of the wizarding world substantially outnumber the affluent. Nor does one get the impression that the middle classes of the wizarding world (rank & file Ministry wonks and others employed in larger wizarding businesses, up to the level of middle-management) typically are the holders of the sort of big, old, wealthy properties that the Weasley twins identify as the typical holders of House Elves.

And when the \*whole human society\* numbers, at a generous estimate, around 4,000 individuals (not families) just how many of those families are really likely to be viable candidates for House Elf ownership?

We are probably talking about 300-500 Elves maximum. Probably far fewer.

Not that keeping them enslaved is any more excusable. Slavery is still wrong.





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But as with terms like “war” and “army” I am beginning to suspect that the House Elves’ actual experience of slavery inside the wizarding world does not at all conform to what a 21st century Real World Muggle’s understanding of the term slavery entails.

For one thing, the “Old Plantation” model is right out. Within the Old Plantation model you have a large estate, dedicated to producing one major cash crop, populated by dozens of slaves of some easily identifiable (usually darker-skinned) physical type, overseen by a few hired (usually paler-skinned) overseers to force them to fulfill their quotas, all of it owned by one (pale) family. This is simply not how it works in Britain in the Potterverse. The wizarding world is not an agrarian society. The wizards vastly outnumber the Elves, and there is no need for overseers to force the Elves to work. The House Elves *like* their work. It is also beginning to look very much as though the majority of the house Elves in the Potterverse are assigned to institutions where they are treated quite decently, and perform their duties with their dignity intact.

For that matter, the Old Plantation model is not the way formal slavery has ever really been implemented inside Britain, either. Certainly not the nation of “England” itself. Or not since the time of the Saxons and the Danes, if even then. And that is also a relevant consideration.

We need to remember that at the time that formal wizarding Seclusion was established, slavery was still *legal* in the British Isles. The fan theorists who look to America, or to other European colonial societies for their model of slavery in the

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wizarding world are off-base. They should be looking to slavery as it was practiced in *England*. And for that matter should probably concentrate *specifically* on England, rather than the whole of present-day Great Britain.

And, legal or not, by the end of the 17th century England did not function on a slave-holding *economy*. Oh, yes, English fortunes were still being made by slavers — in the colonies, but inside England itself, slavery served no real economic function. It was an archaic tradition which had simply not yet been legally abolished.

English commerce and society had already transitioned from feudalism into a wage-slave economy. Particularly in the towns. And even in the country, the English peasant was no longer bound to the land as in the days of serfdom. He was usually reluctant to pull up stakes and leave his native parish in the hopes of bettering himself elsewhere, because, if he failed, he could find himself in very desperate straits. All of the social services of the day were bound up in The Parish, and thus were not readily offered to persons who were not known to have been born within its boundaries. “Foreigners” need not apply. But he was not legally forbidden to do so. He was no longer tied to the estate belonging to his landlord. He was no longer a part of the human livestock which had come with the estate which the estate’s holder could dispose of as he pleased.

And yet there were *still* actual slaves in England. A few. Mostly in the form of little Negro page boys in gaudy livery, conspicuously positioned where their owners could parade them before their social or commercial rivals. They functioned as something between a luxury item and an exotic pet.

Or they were regular servants, by then typically of African



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descent, who had been acquired in the colonies by conventional purchase — because a servant had been needed at the time — and, being valued by their masters in human terms, had been brought back to England with them rather than resold. Their lot was much the same as that of other servants, except that they could not leave voluntarily and they received no regular wages, although they were usually able to earn money in the form of vails or through some particular craft, such as, for example, embroidery, or wood-carving or lace-making. And they were usually permitted to keep the income from it, too, or not, as their masters chose. Many of them saved up and purchased their own freedom with it.

And to abuse one's servants is something that a certain percentage of employers have managed to do in just about every society which has ever had servants. Which is to say, all of them. This does not eliminate the need for, or the respectability of domestic service.

Secure in the belief that the Elves could not readily oppose them, or betray them, quite a few their new Masters rapidly devolved into Tyrants. The new geasa did not really make it impossible for an Elf to work counter to their wizarding Masters' interests, but few Elves were prepared to contemplate the consequences of being discovered doing so and of being presented with clothing — which they would now *have* to accept. And, although oppressed, or at the very least, exploited, the majority of Elves were not treated so badly as to become desperate.



But a certain percentage were, and continue to be. Of the four

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Elves that we have met by name in canon, one has worked quite actively, and successfully, to oppose his Masters' goals, ultimately betraying his Master's activities to his enemies, and another has actually managed to betray a hated Master to his death.

Which, in itself is a clear indication that the system really needs to be changed. It is just too ripe for abuse. Miss Granger, however wrong-headed she may be in her methods of trying to go about it, is correct enough about it needing to be done. The problem is that neither the wizards nor the Elves are likely to see it that way. (Perhaps the potential danger of Elves like Dobby, and Kreachur, should be more widely publicized.)

An older, and more sophisticated Miss Granger might one day get more effective results out of proposing to Nationalize Elf Service.

Under such a system Elves would be classified outright as Ministry dependents, a valuable national resource, and assigned by a Ministry Department, or sponsored agency, either on an ongoing basis, as were their original assignments to wizarding families; or for a specific contracted term, according to temporary need. But their underlying "bond" would be held by the Ministry of Magic itself. The overseeing Ministry Department would monitor their treatment and summarily remove them from worksites where such a valuable Ministry resource is being abused. Even enslaved to the government — even so corrupt a government as the wizarding world has — might well be a better situation, and one in which abuses are easier to note and remedy, than the one some of them in private service were in at the end of the series.

And the Ministry might be very thankful to have this additional source of revenue opened to them. The fact that so many



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Elves, at Hogwarts and St Mungo's, are already essentially under Ministry jurisdiction (and probably are among the best treated in the wizarding world) would no doubt ease this transition.

And if a sufficiently enlightened government were ever to be established it would be much easier to transition the Elves from a position as Ministry dependents into the ranks of an independent and paid workforce. After all, to eventually "Privatize" the Elves' service would be hardly more radical than Nationalizing them in the first place. Their labor would already be understood to be "paid for" in the form of their contract with the Ministry. Privatization would simply cut out the middleman. It might take any number of generations under Nationalized service for them to begin to see it that way, but such a day would have a great deal higher chance of dawning eventually than it does now.

Elves, with their traditional insistence that things in "their" houses be done in the "proper manner" are highly resistant to change. But at that, they have shown themselves to be far more flexible than Giants. Their long, symbiotic relationship with humans is no doubt responsible for this.

Where forcing the Giants to live together in close proximity is gradually destroying them, the Hogwarts Elves have, with no appearance of effort, adapted from their historic pattern of living in single, nuclear family groups attached to individual human households, to living together in a large, "tribal" collective, in service to an institution. A collective which functions efficiently in a cooperative manner. From their historic origins of ruling their Muggle families, they have adapted to being ruled by their wizarding masters. It is not beyond the reach of



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possibility that they may one day adapt to functioning as individuals who rule themselves.

But it is not likely to take place in our lifetimes.



That House Elves in the wizarding world today are the descendants of freed Elves who agreed to be re-bound to wizards would go some way towards explaining why House Elves dress themselves in a manner that can be read as identifying themselves as if they literally constituted a part of the "fabric" of their Houses, and desperately cling to the "identity" of household "fixtures" as if their lives literally depended upon it. It is quite possible that to their way of reasoning, they do. Clearly the dispossessed Elf, Winky is behaving as though she is convinced that her duty is now to die, having lost her "place" in the world, although she lacks the courage to actually do the deed cleanly, and is engaged in drinking herself to death.

But, somehow, I doubt that it is all that simple.

Which suggests that we are still just not quite "getting it."

The sticking point is that with our background in a world in which there are no sentient Beings other than humans, we cannot get beyond "reading" the term "slavery" as *racial* slavery, that still being the form most familiar to the understanding of the English-speaking world.

But the House Elves are not a *race*. They are a *species*. "Enslaving" them is nearer to (and probably far less brutal than) the domestication of horses. And the fact that the Elves can understand and communicate (after a fashion) in a human language does not mean that House Elves necessarily share human





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instincts, that they recognize or respond to human symbolism or that they will adopt human imperatives any more than will house cats. And to merely lecture either species on the subject will probably have about the same effect as lecturing cats.

It is an intractable problem, and one which Miss Granger, at least, has not yet fathomed.

They are \*another species\*. By all observations, they are an extremely territorial species. In fact, there is every indication that they are an extremely possessive species. And one that determinedly resists change.

The Elves are also not the wizards' *personal* property, in the manner that human slaves belong to their masters. There is absolutely no indication in canon that a House Elf can actually be sold, or there would hardly be a Ministry office dedicated to their relocation. Nor, have we any canon confirmation that an individual Elf can even be legally "transferred" to another Master while the original Master lives. Elves can only be set free. The fact that Elves may form personal attachments to certain humans in their households is confusing the issue. Rather, the Elves belong to the *property* to which they have been deeded, and are effectively held in trust. They are a part of the *estate*. The Elf is part of the House.

The wizards only have the power to order them, as they have the power to order any other part of the estate. In the wizards' perception, this means that the Elves are their slaves and that their family "owns" the Elves.

But what of the Elves' perceptions? Dobby stated that he was bound to serve one house and one family forever. He also stated that an Elf must be set free in order to leave his family.



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This really does not sound significantly different from the traditional relationship of a House Elf to his former, long-lost Muggle property. It is just that the balance of power has shifted.

The injustice is that there are wizards who gratuitously abuse their Elves, simply because they can, not that the Elves have bound themselves to a property. The Elves *insist* upon being bound to a property. Anything else seems unnatural for Elves. And Elves resist change. Strenuously.

Traditionally, to the Elf, the property was *his*. *His* estate. *His* house. *His* family.

I think, perhaps, that to an Elf, they all still are.

In the olden days, they were *all* his, and he *ruled* them.

Nowadays, the ruling of them has been taken out of his hands, and there is an additional layer of administration set above him. But they are all still *his*. And he *will* hold them — regardless of the conditions under which he finds himself. This place is *his* place.

*His kingdom.*

Which may indeed be the crux of the matter.

Elves did not ever group together in villages. They did not build cities. They did not form governments.

They scattered themselves across the landscape, each Elf and his mate and their children claiming their own small piece of territory to hold and to tend in perpetuity, for as long as their line should continue. And within that territory, they were the *rulers*. Their children lived under their rule until they either were of an age to leave to establish their *own* little kingdom or until they themselves were old and turned the rule of the land over to their heir.





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And now, the humans who they once ruled, have banished them from their first lands, and these other humans have insisted that if they are to be permitted to tend these new lands, they must agree to let the humans rule *them*.

And these new lands are *good* lands, so they have agreed. Regardless of whether the humans are good humans.

The House Elves motivation is not simple servility. It is certainly not masochism. It is not even, precisely, Stockholm Syndrome. It begins to look to me as though what actually motivates House Elves is something that, in humans, would be most akin to a bizarrely twisted form of *Patriotism*.

Wizards may be spoken of as their Masters, but in practice, the wizards are their *governments*.

So, how does an overtly *political* reading stack up against the behavior of the more prominent Elves to whom we have been introduced in this series?

Dobby, who found his native “government” intolerably oppressive, was determined to go over the wall, even if he was shot for it. He engaged in a year-long campaign of subversion to engineer an opportunity in which he could make his escape with the assistance of an outside agency, and he deliberately betrayed his “government’s” secrets to that agency in the process. (A closer examination of Dobby’s “freedom fighting” campaign may be found in the companion piece, ‘The Year of the Basilisk’.)

Kreacher, who was also born under an authoritarian regime (but apparently not an excessively oppressive one. We have no reason to suppose that the way Sirius treated Kreacher was the way the rest of the Blacks treated their Elf, and Kreacher sincerely mourns all of them), and he remained a staunch patriot

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to that “ancient regime,” later engaging in an underground resistance against an enemy army of occupation, ultimately bringing about the death of the “traitor” who had facilitated the enemies’ invasion. And then he discovers that he is still trapped behind enemy lines and was even deported to an external holding point, under the eyes of guards, away from even his native “country.”

Winky, deported for failing to prevent a crime committed by somebody else will mourn the “old country,” which is gone forever, to the end of her days.

Poor little Hokey would have devotedly served her Mistress until the end of her life had she not been subjected to deliberate sabotage, and thrown to the wolves.

And the Hogwarts Elves, secure in their position of fair treatment and good government can imagine no better fate, and are determined to do nothing that will rock their comfortable boat.

And Miss Granger, although she has not yet realized it, is attempting to reinvent the wheel and found Amnesty International.



What Miss Granger does not yet understand is that the Elves, quite understandably, do not wish to be delivered from *all* “governments”; a few of them need to be protected from *bad* governments. And Dobby is not perceived by his fellows as a “free Elf,” he is literally “a man without a country,” and I am no longer convinced that Dobby even was actually free. He may in fact have lived and died a runaway slave. And he is regarded with disapproval and a certain degree of suspicion on the part of his peers because of it.

For that matter, if there is a cultural perception that an Elf



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*must* be bound to some place in order to survive, it might not be too much to suspect that Dobby's all but euphoric manner stems primarily from the conviction that he is cheating Death (he certainly has cheated Lucius Malfoy). And, being a "man without a country" — who *likes* it that way — may very well have put him at risk of attack, among his fellows in the Hogwarts kitchens. For if the above is at all close to being an accurate reading, his continued, unpunished, existence outside the bounds of all "decency" flies in the face of everything that Elfin wisdom, tradition and cultural experience dictates, and almost certainly will eventually be construed by the others as constituting a Very Bad Example and a threat to The Way Things Are, and The Way That They Must Be. He has determinedly cast himself into the role of the "Other." Or worse, the role of that which is "against nature."

And the odds are that an Elf's insistence upon retaining citizenship in his own "country" will remain an active issue with anyone who ever has to deal with them. An issue which has to do with the nature of House Elves themselves, regardless of their position within the wizarding world. Whether now or at any time in the future.

What is needed is for the Elves to learn to grasp the fact that they might reasonably ask to be given the power to *choose* their own countries. Or to initiate the breaking of an existing binding so that they may go out and find a place in which to form a more congenial one. The inalienable right to the pursuit of happiness does not automatically translate into mere remuneration in the currency of the day.

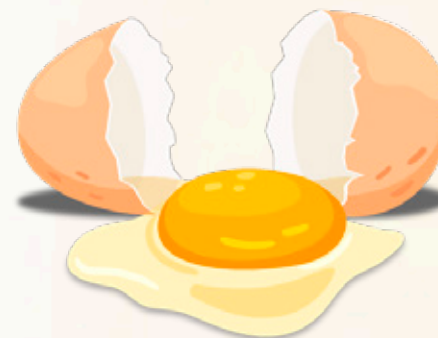
The House Elves will inevitably continue to bind themselves

## Problematic Servants

to their places, for, to House Elves, this binding is not slavery. It is the reason for their existence; to hold and to tend their "blessed country." It is the geas, intended to prevent them from opposing their wizarding Masters, or from betraying their Masters' secrets, and which prevents them from being able to resist whatever treatment to which their "rulers" choose to subject them which constitutes their slavery. Without that geas, they could fight back. For they certainly are capable of fighting and, historically, as we have been shown, have definitely got the inclination. If you give them sufficient reason to do so.

And from where I'm standing, that geas which constitutes the House Elves' "enslavement" is nothing less than a magically binding equivalent of the same bloody "loyalty oath" which keeps regularly recurring in the rhetoric of the politics of paranoia.

By which the Wizarding World is ruled.





## Concerning Parseltongue

In the previous build of the Red Hen Publications website I had appended the material related to Parseltongue to the character study of Salazar Slytherin. That iteration of the site used dropdown menus for navigation, and in an attempt to make the dropdowns short enough not to fall off the bottom of the screen a number of essays ended up being combined.

With the current build, and a change in navigation system, I decided that it was more appropriate to return this essay to its original sub-collection. Both the essay related to Slytherin, and the original Parseltongue essay were a part of the original 2003 essay collection. There have, of course been updates and edits to both over the ensuing 20 years.



**P**arseltongue; most probably derived either from “parcel” a verb; to divide and distribute, or, “parse” to analyze structure by examination of the \*parts\* of the whole, as in “parsing” a sentence; in either case an oblique reference to the fact that snakes have divided tongues, is identified as the language specific to serpents. At this point it is unknown whether other creatures with divided tongues also use this language. Such a possibility is not ever actually suggested in canon, however popular it might be with fanfic writers.

Wizards who have the gift of being able to communicate with snakes are commonly referred to as Parselmouths. This particular talent, even among wizards, is described as being exceedingly rare.

It is not, however, so rare as not to be widely known and

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recognized by wizards worldwide. Indeed, it is recognized as one of the very earliest of all wizarding abilities to have been identified. Parseltongue has a long and chequered history. In fact, a prehistory.

The association of Parseltongue, or rather, of Parselmouths with Dark magic is an unfortunate side effect of the gift's extreme rarity. The talent itself was first recognized in prehistoric times, and the Parselmouth's rapport with a creature which was both so potentially dangerous and so heavily laden with symbolic significance as the serpent soon became was a major contributing factor to the establishment of wizards as the shamans and priests of their tribes.

Prehistoric magic, as has already been stated elsewhere, was, by necessity, Dark magic, and many of the spells and procedures developed by early Parselmouths which made use of this rare ability have not ever been remade to operate through the indirect channeling methods of modern domestic magic. The gift is so rare that there have been few wizards who were equipped to undertake such a project, and those few who have the necessary ability, have clearly seen no practical purpose to be gained in doing so.

Which is perfectly reasonable, since, as far as the gift itself goes; although the exercise of this gift is technically classified as Dark magic, the classification, in this case, is misleading. For, while there is no currently known method of being able to communicate with snakes through any sort of indirect channeling of magical energies, the actual amount of magical energy which is channeled in this process is too low to be harmful to even the youngest or most low-powered wizard or witch who has the gift.



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I was inordinately pleased when Rowling had Professor Dumbledore confirm my suspicion, that the gift itself is not evil. That particular contention of my own, stated in the spring of 2003, is one of the oldest in the collection, even if it is not an issue of particularly large significance. Parseltongue seems to have functioned as primarily a useful means by which Harry has been able to acquire information which is not accessible to others. In CoS and later in DHs his ability to speak it enabled him to perform a function that at that point no one else would have been qualified to.

And, no, I flatly do not believe that Ron Weasley, five months after the fact, with no training, would have been able to imitate the sounds well enough to have done the same. Particularly given that at no point in canon had it ever established that Ron had a gift for mimicry. That was shoddy plotting and shoddy writing, and I reject it.

What I think he and Hermione probably *ought* to have done is to have pinched the school Pensieve from the Headmaster's office, taken it down to Myrtle's loo (or hell, summoned it once they got there), extracted the memory of Harry speaking it — either from the Forest of Dean with the Locket, or back in CoS right there in Myrtle's loo — and replayed it publicly the way Albus had replayed Trelawney giving the Prophecy, and let the memory of *Harry* open the passage. Harry has told them about that Pensieve. Hermione has probably read about how to operate one (and has the books there in her bag). Ron would certainly have earned due credit for *remembering* it from having been there when it happened. That's much more the sort of intuitive leap that Ron is capable of.



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And they'd need to do it again when they had to open the inner Chamber, unless the door had been standing open since CoS.

At this point it is unclear whether Parseltongue might even turn out to be one of those uncommon magical traits, such as the true seer's gift of "sight" which may even occasionally manifest in individuals whose psychic abilities are so low as to classify them as Squibs, unable to channel enough magical energy to register at birth as being wizards at all. In any event, no wizard or witch has ever been documented as coming to any degree of psychic harm merely through conversing with snakes.

Nor that the snakes are likely to have much of interest to say for themselves in any case



To normal human ears, Parseltongue, when expressed by a human wizard, is a hissing and spitting without drawing breath. When expressed by a snake, however, it seems to produce no sound at all. At most it might sound like a simple hissing of air. Snakes, like most reptiles, hiss, because snakes, like all other land animals and amphibians, breathe. Snakes do not, however, produce vocalized sounds, because they do not possess vocal cords, or, indeed any sort of vocal apparatus. (They also do not possess ears, or hearing centers in their tiny pea brains, and consequently are fundamentally deaf, but let that pass.)

Nor, for that matter, do snakes possess eyelids. In Harry's exchange with the boa constrictor in the zoo, however, Harry understood the snake to have both heard him, and spoken to him, and, in addition, *winked* at him. Under the circumstances, it seems reasonable to assume that both the voice and the wink were some





## Concerning Parseltongue

form of psychic projection, which Harry was able to receive, interpret and to respond to in kind, while the exchange remained either inaudible — or unintelligible, and invisible to onlookers.

Consequently, we must conclude that snakes themselves are inherently psychically active on some limited “frequency” that a few rare wizards are able to access. Rather like some creatures, such as owls, being able to “see” into the infra-red range of the light spectrum. One might postulate that this frequency might be positioned at one end or the other of the magical “scale.” However, given that both of the wizards who have demonstrated this ability in canon resonated best to phoenix feather wands which seem calibrated to transmit magical frequencies at greater force, rather than within a specific range. (That is, if the wand type of the wizard is even relevant to the issue. It may not be.) For that matter, we do not know the wand types favored by the members of the Gaunt family, or indeed by Salazar Slytherin, who are the only other Parselmouths on record, in Britain, although we know that there have been others with this particular gift elsewhere.



The passage of Newt Scamander’s ‘FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM’ describing the African Runespoor states that the information regarding this rare, three-headed snake was made available to wizarding researchers by Parselmouths, who could understand the dialogue between the Runespoor’s three heads. That there were multiple Parselmouths available to make such observations of these creatures leads me to postulate that Parselmouths, while rare,

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may nevertheless sometimes occur spontaneously — chiefly in those parts of the world that are particularly rich both in number and variety of serpents. Or that the wizards of these regions are more likely to carry whatever trait produces it

Northwestern Europe and the British Isles are not one of these regions. To be sure, there are snakes found native to Europe as far north as the arctic circle. But the climate of most of Europe is not particularly hospitable to serpents and comparatively few varieties are to be found there when compared to warmer areas such as Africa, Southern Asia, the Middle East, the Americas and Australia. I would hazard a guess that no Parselmouth has ever occurred spontaneously in Northwestern Europe, or in any of the other more temperate climactic zones of the globe.

However, Parseltongue, like most other magical traits, can be inherited by any of the descendants of the wizards who have manifested this gift, once it is has occurred in their particular bloodlines. And in fact it has been shown to have “bred true” among the Gaunts, to the point that they were able to use it among themselves in their home. This was no doubt assisted by their unsavory, and unwise, practice of intermarrying mostly among their own cousins. It should also be pointed out that the descendants of any such gifted bloodline can certainly migrate to anywhere else in the world, far from the geographic area where the gift first spontaneously occurred. Carrying their potential for passing on this gift to their descendants with them.

It seems probable, then, that Parseltongue was introduced to Great Britain by way of either Salazar Slytherin himself, or through one of his ancestors, possibly by way of the Phoeni-



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cian traders who had dealings with the tin mines in the west. Although, given that he himself is credited as having hailed from the fens, if this is the case, there would have been some migration among his forebearers since that early date. Given the rarity of this gift, in Europe, it is probable that all known British Parselmouths would be able to trace their descent to the same originating bloodline (which, if all such matters are parallel within the Potterverse to our own world, would include one rather well-known Irish Saint). Which might explain some of the confusion and disquiet of the onlookers when the gift was publicly manifested by Harry Potter, who has no known connection — so far as we know — to the Slytherin bloodline. There may be a few other such known Parselmouth bloodlines on the Continent, but we have not as yet been informed of this.



The former Tom Riddle's sweeping statement that he and Harry Potter may have been the only Parselmouths to have ever attended Hogwarts since Slytherin, on the other hand, is not necessarily true. Tom Riddle frequently makes false exaggerated statements in order to impress whoever he is speaking to. (Mm. Who does that remind us of? Er, no, *not* Albus. Albus already knows he's impressive. *His* lies are typically for the purpose of *concealing* things.)

Difficult as it is to imagine either Merope or Morfin Gaunt ever having attended Hogwarts, the fact that the Ministry of Magic did permit them both to bear wands suggests otherwise. Indeed, Riddle's statement was probably prompted by his actually having met Morfin Gaunt. I might have also concluded that



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that man had no schooling whatsoever.

However, regardless of Riddle's impressions of his uncle Morfin, the Gaunts are certainly listed in the books of wizarding families (i.e., genealogies) kept as references at Hogwarts, for that is where Riddle has to have found the information he used to trace his maternal grandfather. And, being listed, they were certainly sent Hogwarts letters when their names showed up on the enrollment list. We already also know that there is a fund which covers the requirements of students in financial need. Tom's disdain of his mother's family in itself is not convincing evidence to establish that they did not attend Hogwarts.



Such reference books on wizarding families are probably kept for the use of the Deputy Head to determine which projected students are likely to be Muggle-born and will need their Hogwarts letters delivered by hand. As well as for the use of those members of pureblood families who are determined to retain their pureblood distinction, thereby tracing the bloodlines of prospective marriage partners with whom they might form an attachment while at school in order to avoid too close a relationship.

A further relevant issue to the question of the Gaunts is the issue of what constitutes a "qualified" wizard. In the modern day, only such qualified wizards are legally permitted to own and use wands. Underage wizards are permitted wands only with the tacit understanding that they will use them only for training purposes, under supervision, in a controlled environment, until they attain their majority and have been properly qualified, presumably by some objective standard other than





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having your name listed in 'NATURE'S NOBILITY'. Clearly such "qualifications" must be rather low.

We've already been told that when Hagrid was expelled from Hogwarts, his wand was snapped. Over 50 years later he has still never been given the go-ahead to replace the broken wand and live openly as a wizard. Evidently by the late 20th century, one must both be of age *and* be "qualified" in order to live openly as a wizard. It seems likely that we have already been given as much information on the subject as Rowling is ever likely to give us. But the indications to this point are that one "qualifies" as a witch or wizard by receiving passing marks on some minimum number of the OWLs, and attaining your seventeenth birthday. This supposition may be off-base, but we have only what Rowling has given us to date in canon to reason from. We do not know the minimum number of OWLs necessary to qualify a wizard as a wizard. But the fact that the Weasley twins each received 3 OWLs suggests that they may have put in only enough effort to comply with the bare minimum to scrape a qualification each. Given that their own father is a Ministry lifer, they would probably know how little they could get away with.

A failure to pass a given OWL typically disqualifies you from further study in that subject, apparently, unless a remedial class is available, which for some subjects it is. But there may be students who do so poorly that they simply do not return after their 5th year. The indications are that Stan Shunpike is one such example. Still, there has been no verification that lackluster educational success disqualifies you from retaining your wand. And the likelihood of a student failing *all* of his subjects is rather distant, even when one considers the Gaunts.

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The first scene that we witnessed regarding the House of Gaunt, took place in the summer of 1925, when Bob Ogden was responding to a complaint by the DMLE of an attack made by a wizard on a Muggle.

That Morfin Gaunt was in possession of a wand when he was arrested, and that his wand was returned to him after his release from Azkaban three years later, is a strong indication that he "qualified" as a wizard. That Merope was left in possession of her wand when the DMLE took away her father and brother strongly suggests that she was understood to be "qualified" as a witch.

Either that or there was a store of legacy wands secreted somewhere in the Gaunt house. Or that the Ministry of Magic was less troubled by the possibility of unqualified purebloods of ancient lineage than that of unqualified Muggleborns.

The Gaunts did not *have* to have attended Hogwarts, of course. Durmstrang may have been more to the family's taste. Particularly if my suspicions as to the fate of Salazar Slytherin are wrong, and he merely stomped off to the other end of Europe to found Durmstrang Academy, according to his own principles, and run it as he pleased.

However, Salazar was already old when he left Hogwarts, and his own children were probably already grown, and they may not have shared their father's resentment of the place, nor did they all choose to leave Britain with him. Durmstrang is not in England and I tend to doubt that it is a non-fee paying institution, such as Hogwarts. The Gaunts had long ago beggared themselves through bad choices and I very much doubt that



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Marvolo Gaunt could afford to send his children to Durmstrang.

And, for all that there might be a family recollection of contempt for the school which Slytherin left, 1000 years is a long time. The family had worked its way through several changes of name and fortune and Salazar Slytherin was still honored as a founder of the place, which would be at least some advantage. You get the feeling that Marvolo Gaunt was the sort of man to take any advantage that he could. The probability was that he and his children may indeed have attended Hogwarts.

And Tom Riddle found record of the existence of a “Marvolo Gaunt” at Hogwarts, and enough information to be able to trace his address years later, after all.



But, as regards the business of Parseltongue: by HBP I was beginning to wonder more and more whether Albus was a Parselmouth himself. It would resolve a few minor questions, such as how could Albus know what was being said between Tom and Morfin in that recovered memory. Or among the Gaunts in the Ogden memory, too. Because both of those conversations were conducted in Parseltongue. Of course, Albus turning out to be a Parselmouth himself would up-end my contention that all known British Parselmouths have been connected to the Slytherin bloodline, but I'd have been happy to trade that for some rationality concerning the elements that are actually seen to be in play in the series.

Still, Albus would hardly be telling us that Tom was the last descendant of Salazar Slytherin if he and Aberforth are connected to that bloodline themselves. Even if both of them are

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childless and over 100. But being able to understand the language when it is spoken by a human Parselmouth (even if not when it is expressed by a snake) could be something else altogether. For one thing a human Parselmouth's rendition of Parseltongue is at least *audible*, whereas a snake's is not. Ergo: It's a *language*. It can't be significantly harder to understand than Merrow. And we know that Albus understood that, for we saw him conversing with the chieftaness of the mer-people in GoF.

Plus, of course, if you can *hear* it, a charm may be able to translate it. Dumbledore would have certainly felt he had good and sufficient reason to have devised a charm to be able to understand what was being said in the Ogden memory — which had been in his possession for a long time.

And the Albus Dumbledore that we finally ended up with at the end of the series would certainly have been twisty enough to have made a point of calling Harry's attention to the fact that Harry could understand the conversations, *without* adding that he could understand them too — without ever explaining how.

Because there really was no point in his having played those records for Harry unless he already knew what was in them. Or not unless he wanted Harry to translate them for him. But he never asked Harry to do *that*.



It is also possible that Dumbledore, knowing that young Riddle had claimed to be a Parselmouth, in the summer of 1938, went specifically looking for someone who might have had some recollection of the Gaunts. And it is hard to believe that he would have known of the Gaunts at all if none of them had



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ever shown up at Hogwarts. If Albus is correct about Merope's age in 1925 she would have finished not too much more than a decade before he was confronted by that disturbing child in the orphanage, and if Morin had stayed on for the NEWTS he might have been there as recently, too.

There must at least have been some association to provide grounds for Albus's leap to Bob Ogden and his dealings with the Gaunts. Even though I now contend that the connection was made after 1945 and from a different direction, the fact that Tiberius Ogden, school examiner and former member of the Wizengamot, is an associate and admirer of Dumbledore's, raises the possibility that Dumbledore had already been told the anecdote of Bob's face-off with a family of Parselmouths, not impossibly around the time that it happened, and later had merely contacted him to get a copy of the memory.

Dumbledore's statement in passing that Merope was 18 years of age in the scene in which we witnessed the last day she ever saw her father or brother suggests that he might even remember her from a school context. But it may only mean that he looked up her school records and birth date as noted by the Hogwarts quill afterward, while he was tracing the background of Tom Riddle.

And, if this is so, unless she had continued no further with her schooling than sitting her OWLs, it is possible that she had only just that summer completed her stay at Hogwarts. Indeed, her determination to entrap Tom Riddle may have been due to her no longer having the prospect of Hogwarts to escape to at the end of the summer. It isn't just fatherless boys who may have considered the castle their only true home. I'm sure that motherless daughters have also found it a welcome refuge.



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Of course, her time at Hogwarts is likely not to have been all that much of an escape. Morfin seems close enough in age to have been able to keep an eye (one at a time, of course) on his sister for most of the time she was there, and to chase off anyone who might try to befriend her. By the time he finished school, her position in whatever had been the established pecking order was too set in stone to change. And if Morfin continued into NEWT studies (difficult to believe, but not absolutely impossible, his magic seems strong enough at any rate) while Merope was kept home after sitting the OWLs, then their time as school may have entirely coincided. Dumbledore's little witticism that perhaps Marvolo had simply never learned to feed himself I think can be safely placed in the same category as his stated uncertainty as to whether his own brother knows how to read.

Riddle's inflated statement is, perfectly in keeping with both his determination to regard himself as *special*, and his apparently standard practice of attempting to immediately establish some sense of faux "connection" between himself and whatever person he is attempting to influence. But the statement itself is almost certainly false.



So. Did Albus understand the Parseltongue through Legilimency, or through some terribly sophisticated translation charm, or did he actually understand what was being said? From his comments to Harry he seems to have been perfectly conversant with what was being said. (Which raises the question of whether he also was hearing the Basilisk in the pipes back in CoS.)

And were the memories that we were played the *original*





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copies, or were there other, edited copies, with translations, which Albus had attempted to use in order to present his case against Tom Riddle to the Wizengamot, and from which he had been dissuaded due to the probability that the Wizengamot would not have accepted it as admissible evidence?

At one point, acto Rowling, a human wizard who is not a Parselmouth may, with difficulty and some training, be able to understand the language when it is expressed by another wizard, even if he cannot understand it, or may not even be aware of it when it is expressed by a snake. Rowling confirmed in at least one early interview that Albus Dumbledore was, indeed, able to understand Parseltongue. But then she also had Ron Weasley able to imitate it well enough to get a door to open. So I am not sure how willing I am to believe her — for I certainly didn't believe *that*. And given that she later contradicted herself by claiming she didn't think it was a language that one *could* learn, I guess anyone's own interpretation of the data is optional.

Yet despite the later flip-flop claiming that Parseltongue wasn't a language that humans *could* learn, she did *not*, however, claim that it was a language that magic would be unable to *translate* — once it was expressed audibly, that is. Otherwise Albus's campaign to secure Morfin Gaunt's release from Azkaban is completely impossible and unworkable, since, due to memory tampering, Morfin was unable to tell Albus what had actually taken place. He had no conscious recollection of having ever met his nephew, until Albus interviewed him, and uncovered it. And the memory as we saw it was conducted entirely in Parseltongue.

Ergo: there must be *some* way in which wizards are able to access it — at least when spoken by a Parselmouth (not by

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a snake). Otherwise far too many of Albus's statements and claims simply fall apart as untenable. It is not impossible that there is some variant of translation spell which can decipher the human meaning of the speech when it is spoken by a human being, with a human brain. Given that the whole issue of Parseltongue appears to be a form of psychic projection this ought to fall within the parameters of what is magically possible.

One could also use such a spell at leisure to decipher the speech as recorded in a Pensieve memory.



But I'm prepared to discard the theory that all British Parselmouths descend from old Sal at need. I suppose the gift could crop up in other bloodlines as well. Or the connection may be there but no one has ever managed to trace it. I never really got all that much of an impression that Albus was an "aristocratic" pureblood — although he did have the requisite self-confidence for it — or even that he was necessarily a pureblood at all, although that whopping string of primary and secondary names suggested as much. The old English form of his family name suggests that the family may be very old indeed. But it doesn't necessarily have to be a wizarding family.



None of this answers the question of where Albus might have learned the language, according to Rowling's original statement, however. Which is probably why she changed her story. It is an outside possibility that his own time at Hogwarts may have overlapped that of Marvolo Gaunt, or that of Marvo-



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lo's late wife, who was probably a cousin, and probably also a Parselmouth. Harry's estimation of Marvolo being "elderly" in 1925, may not have been altogether accurate. He was wrinkled, but his hair had not yet gone grey. Now that Rowling has repositioned Albus Dumbledore's birth year to 1881, Marvolo could have been not more than 50 when we met him and still been at school when Albus arrived around 1892 or '93. But this is likely to be an inquiry which will lead nowhere.

However, if Dumbledore understood, or was able to translate the conversation in Bob Ogden's memory, I had originally wondered why he would have gone to speak with Morfin in Azkaban at all. I'd first assumed that it was to get a translation from the Parseltongue for the Ogden memory. But if he could already follow that family quarrel, was he simply following every available lead on the ring? That's certainly what I have come around to believing now.

And did he \*find\* the memories in the order he showed them to Harry? Or did the uncovered memory from Morfin send him to Bob Ogden, whose report had led to Morfin's earlier arrest?

And more to the point, how could he mount that campaign to secure Morfin's release from Azkaban — as he claims he did — without producing the recovered memory as evidence, and providing some form of translation? I think there *must* be a charm which will allow a non-Parselmouthed wizard or witch to understand Parseltongue without needing to study the language. Unfortunately, I haven't a lot of confidence that these are details that Rowling ever intends to fill us in on.

It was Albus Dumbledore's stated contention in CoS that Harry Potter is only able to manifest this gift due to his proximity to the

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destruction of Voldemort's original body when the curse that the Dark Lord had thrown at Harry rebounded. That, in short, Harry received this gift, and possibly others, by what was effectively a magical "transfusion." I rather think the process was rather more far-reaching than that, although Albus, no doubt considered this an acceptable simplification to be given to a 12-year-old.

And, for that matter, Harry's command of this gift does seem to be imperfect. Although he can hear the language whenever it is spoken, he is only able to express Parseltongue when he has managed to convince himself that he is speaking to an actual snake. It is clearly implied that this is not normally the case among Parselmouths who have had this talent from birth, given that the Gaunts seem to be in the habit of even speaking in Parseltongue among themselves. We have also been shown that Voldemort is able to express Parseltongue for the purpose of calling his snake companion to him when the snake herself is not physically present. He also probably was speaking Parseltongue to open the passage through Slytherin's statue in order to call the Basilisk. For that matter the Diary Revenant may have slipped into speaking Parseltongue to Harry for their entire conversation. Harry is often not altogether able to determine whether the language he hears is Parseltongue or English. Having come by it late and artificially, it is also uncertain whether Harry will retain it (he didn't, *actio* Rowling) or to pass it on to his own descendants (unlikely), should he survive to have any.

It has also not yet been determined whether the ability to access the psychic frequency needed to receive and express Parselmouth can be induced by less drastic means than by a former or current case of possession. But Ms Rowling has already stated in the joint



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interview of July 2005, that Ginny Weasley did not retain this ability once she was freed from possession by the Diary Revenant. So, once again, Harry Potter's case seems to be unique.



With the adjusted time lines that we got in DHs and afterwards, Albus himself might be younger than Marvolo Gaunt. If Merope was indeed 18 when we first met her, and that was the summer of '25, as it seems to be from other pieces of timeline that we are left to deal with, then she would have been born in '07. Morfin didn't seem much older. That might put Marvolo's possible birth year as late as the 1880s or thereabouts. Which would put him into the same general age bracket as the Dumbledore siblings. The most recent information on Rowling's first official site, posted in 2007 claimed that Albus was born in 1881. Marvelo could have been born just about any time before that just as easily, however.

But one now does have to ask oneself, if Albus's translation of the Parseltongue conversations — and there was clearly a translation available, for he certainly appears to understand what was in them — was not due to a spell, then just who taught Albus to understand Parseltongue? Having Albus Dumbledore land at Hogwarts around the same time as Marvolo Gaunt could help to draw a line between those two points.

Something that might further draw such a line: Marvolo was also very quick to spout about his connection to the *Peverills*. We know that Albus was already fascinated by the legend of the Hallows before he finished school, and he was particularly fascinated by the tale of the Resurrection Stone. Not that Mar-

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volo seems to have had any idea that the real thing was sitting right there in his father's seal ring, or that Marvolo necessarily had possession of the ring when he was Hogwarts age (Marvolo's own father probably was still alive then). But the sigil carved in that stone was known to have been the mark of that group of loons who had been questing after the Hallows for centuries, and I certainly wouldn't have put it past young Albus to have asked questions about it if he ever saw it.

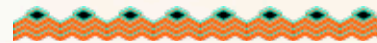
It might also make it a little easier to explain how he knew *exactly* where to go to find the damned Ring when he decided that it was time to take it out of action.

But the sort of jokey dismissive statements that Albus directs at Marvolo Gaunt echo those which he earlier turned upon his own brother Aberforth. And you do have to admit that the level of squalor of the Gaunt hovel is more closely mirrored in canon by that of the Hog's Head than just about anywhere else. Nor does someone who gets his name in the papers for casting inappropriate charms on goats sound like he has a lot of common sense (no apparent taste for grandeur there, at least). Chatting to snakes and luring them close enough to catch and torture them isn't particularly socially "appropriate" behavior either.

So. Did Albus manage to get that Azkaban interview with Morfin on the grounds of being "family"? Or perhaps by claiming to be an old family friend on the basis of having been at school with Morfin's father?

Admittedly, by this time, I think a different angle of approach is a good deal more likely.

But, like I say, I don't know just what to make of any of it.





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In common with most of the pieces in this particular subgroup, this is an exploration of probabilities regarding wizarding social attitudes as they stand in the late 20th century.

I don't count on having necessarily got it right. But I was at least basing it on something other than the belief that modern wizards are exactly like modern Muggles, only with magic.



Something that falls through the cracks due to Ms. Rowling's determination to present her wizarding society's mind-set as if its population is constant, its society static, and that at all times all people have thought exactly as they do today, is the question of what wizards might reasonably believe is the appropriate treatment of children. Quite without regard to the obvious fact that if we take Rowling's statements as to the population of wizarding Britain as a base point (which we simply can't) it looks very much as if children must make up a very different percentage of the overall population of the wizarding world than they do in the mundane world among us Muggles.

And if we had tried to believe her earliest statements regarding wizards, their potential ages, and their population numbers, the imbalance would have been even worse. After all, if one was to assume (on Rowling's assertion) that people characteristically lived to be 130–180 years old, you would expect there to be a lot more geezers than goslings.

After all, you only get 17 years to be considered a kid. You can be considered old anywhere from twice to four or five times that long. And if everyone born the same year you are



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does the same, hey, do the math.

Rowling, however, notoriously does not do math.

Well, by the time Rowling sat down to write DHs, she also seems to have quite thoroughly gone off the idea of wizards routinely having vastly longer lifespans than Muggles. She had already set it up that *some* wizards live longer than most Muggles, however. So she couldn't write the possibility entirely out of the story. But she scaled it back considerably. Children under the age of 17 aren't *quite* as small a segment of the population as it first appeared that they must be. Although there is still probably a lower percentage of the total population under the age of 17 among wizards than there is among Muggles. And their position within society still may not quite be the same in both.



Among fanon authors, who, for the most part are more likely than not to be young themselves, their young characters are often empowered to an implausible degree. In fanon, even the most ordinary wizarding youngsters typically have established careers, have married and begun families before leaving their teens and are honored and respected authorities in their fields and leaders of their communities by the age of about 25. Rowling's post-DHs interview statements appear to encourage this reading. At least as it regards Harry, Ginny, Hermione and Ron. Although she changed her mind about Ron within the week.

I think it is reasonable to view this interpretation of matters as being in at least some degree an effect of wish-fulfillment. Canon, at least up through HBP does not altogether support it.

To be sure, once a young wizard has proved his qualifications





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with a passing score on his Ordinary Wizarding Level examinations, he is probably permitted to take a place among the gainfully employed in wizarding society, even though he is still technically subject to the reasonable restrictions of underage sorcery until his 17th birthday, which typically will take place within the following year. It easy to speculate that until attendance became compulsory for all minors in DHs, there was a small subset of the students of Hogwarts who did not return to the School after sitting the OWL exams at the end of their fifth year. Rowling never either openly confirmed nor denied whether this is in fact the case, but if Stan Shunpike was indeed only 21 at the time of his arrest in 1996, the evidence suggests that he was not at Hogwarts after sitting the OWLs.

These early school-leavers (if they do indeed exist; I would not be astonished if Ms Rowling simply chose not to mention the possibility out of concern for giving the appearance of approving of early school-leaving for anyone other than her protagonists) would be the equivalent of those working class children who stay in school only for so long as it is required of them, and thereafter forego further education in favor of finding a paying job which will take them as they are, without demanding further qualifications. Within the wizarding world, such jobs are probably fairly widely available. Wizarding children from the artisan class, whose families run wizarding businesses and/or are engaged in wizarding crafts are probably often among this number, since the sooner such a child's hands are set to the family pump, the better for everyone in the family. And whatever specialized training the family business may require will be more productively learned at home, on the job, than

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in theory at Hogwarts. It is not unreasonable to suppose that some highly specialized craftspeople (such as the Ollivanders) may actively encourage their children to take their place in the business at an earlier age than that of "Ministry brats" or other children who have chosen to aspire to professions whose entry may require a respectable showing in the NEWTs.

Another group of these early leavers may be currently employed in what is, these days, referred to as the "service industry." Some such possible example of early school-leavers of this second sort that we have met in the series so far are Madame Rosemerta, and Tom of the Leaky Cauldron, Florian Fortesque and the aforementioned Stan and Ernie of the Knight Bus.

Such early school-leavers would, indeed still be legally subject to the reasonable restrictions of magic as practiced by underage wizards, but inside the wizarding world those restrictions effectively only apply to such matters as being still too young to get an Apparition license, to be unable to use magic outside of the secluded wizarding world, and within it possibly only to be able to do so under proper adult supervision, such as that of a parent or an employer. It is highly improbable that "reasonable" restrictions would bar a young wizard from performing any legitimate function in the course of gainful employment or the training for such inside the wizarding world under his employers eye, any more than they do for a young wizard performing legitimate classwork in a wizarding Academy. Although formal registration and a special "work permit" may be required. Indeed, given that I am pretty sure that the idea of a young wizard being educated at home rather than in one of the recognized schools may well be fanon, or interview info, and never actually mentioned in the



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course of the books at all, the whole matter may be conducted sub-rosa and not officially acknowledged.

The belated introduction (in DHs) into the narrative of the “trace” on underage magic flatly contradicts an earlier statement by Dumbledore regarding the matter, unless we conclude that either Dumbledore was deliberately fudging the truth for no obviously purposeful reason, or that the trace is only applied to young wizards living in Muggle households, and is imposed as an early warning system for when the Accidental Magic Reversal squad or the Obliviators need to be dispatched to the young wizard’s vicinity. In short, that as Dumbledore explained it in HBP, the restriction, *as enforced*, is effectively only the restriction of underaged *Muggle-born* magic.

It is easy to theorize that the Ministry would be happy to collect fees to supervise the scheduling of NEWTs undertaken after independent studies by witches and wizards who are already of age and out of school. Hogwarts only offers training in specific disciplines, and I am certain that not all of the possible ones are available there. We have been told by J.K. Rowling that there are no wizarding universities. But I suspect that it is not impossible to undertake further training than what is offered at Hogwarts, quite apart from the sort of specialized training programs sponsored by St Mungo’s and the DMLE.

These postulations remain only theories, however. Nothing of them is ever openly spoken of in canon.



But, despite the fact that Rowling has told us that a young wizard is regarded as an adult upon his attaining his 17th birth-

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day, in all probability, the typical place of such a young adult within wizarding society is that he is marginalized and largely ignored. There are some notable exceptions, of course. In particular, there are certain to be a few exceptionally talented youngsters who may find themselves on some variety of fast-track for early advancement.

Our best illustration of this particular process in action is in the rather singular case of Percy Weasley, achiever of the coveted 12 OWLs and former Head Boy of Hogwarts, who seems to have stepped out of school directly into an entry-level “Junior Administrative Assistant” position within the Ministry of Magic. Our vantage point on Percy’s experience may be misleading, however. Not only was Percy already the son of a well-known and well-liked current Ministry employee — which, without making even the slightest accusation of nepotism, can only have worked in his favor — but his position as Head Boy, and his test scores on the NEWTs exams the previous summer had probably been high enough to draw the attention of whatever Ministry headhunters set about to “cherry-pick” the top performing students of each given year. Percy is also widely-known to have *wanted* a Ministry career.

Percy’s next promotion, about 5 months later, to personal assistant to his Department’s Head, however, should be regarded as a false message on the way such matters are normally handled. That situation was not normal in the least. Percy is a young man very sure of his own excellence, and it is clear that, secure in the honesty of his own intentions, he did not question that he had earned that promotion. But, to the reader, particularly to the reader who has finished the book



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and is now looking back and counting the clues, it is clear that Percy's promotion was deliberately engineered and given to him by no less than Voldemort and Wormtail, themselves.

For them, Percy Weasley was a gift from the gods. Upon discovering Percy; young, keen, and above all, inexperienced, already in place in Crouch's Department, Imperius-controlled Barty Crouch Sr. could simply be instructed to name Percy as his personal assistant, after showing him a visible degree of favor; and then take "medical leave," sending all further instructions by owl, at a much earlier date than they would have otherwise been able to remove him from public view. If nothing else, Wormtail knew exactly how any such instructions should be worded in order to best allay suspicion. Percy clearly never knew what hit him.

From what we can determine in canon, Percy also clearly did not know that his former pet rat, Scabbers, was an Animagus and a spy, and was now an active supporter of Lord Voldemort. Ron knew this. But we get no indication that Percy had ever been told about it. At best, Percy was only aware of the brouhaha between Ron and Hermione when it was believed that Scabbers had been killed by Crookshanks. His reappearance (and immediate disappearance), months later, was never widely advertised. From Molly's reaction upon being confronted with Sirius Black in the Hospital Wing at the end of GoF (a full year later) it is obvious that Ron had not shared *any* of the information learned at the conclusion of PoA with anyone in his family. And, following the twins' lead in such things — as he nearly always does — Ron would certainly not have shared the information with Percy. (Who, at that point in the series, would



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have passed such knowledge on to their parents.) It is improbable, however, that even *had* Percy learned of this information it would have caused him to be more inclined to question the provenance of his superior's alleged instructions. Percy, who seems to be singularly lacking in paranoia, was not expecting to have to spot attempted subversion or a covert attack.

Percy's later acceptance of a post on the Minister for Magic's own staff is a slightly different proposition, but again, the advancement was unlikely to be typical. To take advantage of this offer he was forced to openly oppose and indeed to make a complete break from his own family. Percy has been much criticized by the younger fans for this decision. I am inclined to cut the boy some slack, however. And, indeed, it is made clear to the reader that breaking contact with his family has not deprived Percy of any great source of emotional support. His family, as a whole, has never really been shown to give him any appreciable degree of such support. Which speaks far more unfavorably of Percy's family, than it does of Percy himself.

We do not have the full information concerning what was behind that particular offer for promotion, either. If Minister Fudge really only offered the position in hopes of keeping an eye on a family suspected of supporting Albus Dumbledore, as Arthur contended, he certainly did not get one. Yet Percy was still on Fudge's staff at the end of the year, and the following month he was still employed within the office of the Minister for Magic by Fudge's successor. Evidently he *had* earned his place, in the eyes of his employers. And had done it without spying either on his family, or upon Harry Potter.

Percy may be a humorless, highly self-important young man,





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but he is very competent, and clearly managed to make himself much too useful to the people in charge to be summarily dismissed.

He was even retained by the puppet Ministry under Pius Thickenesse. And eventually validated himself by ultimately and publicly deciding that retaining his position in the Ministry was not worth supporting what the Ministry had become.



As to the more typical wizarding view of the appropriate treatment and status of children, however:

Among Muggles, and within the dynamics of the cyclic history which drives Muggle society, children under the age of 20 comprise approximately a quarter of the total population. This percentage varies to some degree when one examines the actual population numbers at 10 or 20 year intervals. The number of children born during a "Fourth Turning" is almost always relatively small, due to the crisis mode mindset that characterizes a Fourth Turning, and discourages the establishment of large families. By contrast, the birth numbers of the "First Turning" of the new cycle which follows it, are invariably very high, since the temper of a First Turning is that the crisis has been resolved, peace and plenty either already abound or are soon to be attained, and those somewhat older parents who deferred the starting of families during the crisis are now free, and encouraged, to do so — in addition to the young adults who have only just attained a proper age to be considering this step, and who are given no reason to defer this particular pleasure.

The temper of the times as reflected by the mind-set of these two very different eras also widely differs where it comes to

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what is considered the appropriate treatment of children. Society's expectations of the "typical" child's normal behavior are just as widely diverse.

During a Fourth Turning, children are a heavy responsibility, hence the reluctance to produce very many of them. Children are therefore to be protected (even overly protected) at all costs, kept under firm control and removed as completely as possible from the dangerous and important world-in-crisis of the adults. Children, in return, are expected to be rarely seen and even more rarely heard. They are to be docile, diligent, and well-behaved, and to keep out of the way.

The children of a First Turning, which follows the Fourth, are the embodied celebration of the successfully resolved crisis. Large families, even very large families are regarded as normal and desirable. Children are expected to be rambunctious and exuberant. They are given far more freedom than their immediate predecessors and are widely indulged by society. First Turnings are frequently defined as being "child-centered."

The two eras also vary where teenagers are concerned. In a child-centered First Turning, where children already have greater freedoms and are generally indulged, teenagers are also indulgently, and with some amusement, regarded as "almost adults" and allowed a great deal of social prominence and general public attention. In a crisis-centered Fourth Turning, under most circumstances teens are regarded as "older children" and expected to follow the rules set by their elders and to remain safely in the background.

There is an additional factor operating in mundane society which also needs to be considered. Modern post-Rousseau



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(sp?) Western Civ. has also enshrined the “state” of childhood by lumbering it with all sorts of symbolism related to nature and innocence and a great deal of other mumbo-jumbo. This is very much in contrast to the older, traditional viewpoint that childhood is a training period which should be gotten through as quickly as possible, or, conversely, that the little sinners should be whipped (literally) into shape as quickly and harshly as necessary, to save their souls before they can be led, or lead others, astray. (These definitions are both vastly over-simplified — Hagrid would be proud of me.)

The Seclusion of wizarding society predates the writings of Rousseau by a generous margin. What is more: wizarding children probably don’t constitute anything like a full quarter of their society’s population. If Rowling’s original claim of longer lifespans for wizards is at all to be given any credence, this cannot help but bear a considerable weight upon the degree to which modern wizarding society will have focused its collective attention upon its young.



In the first place, let’s look at the potential market demographics:

Even with the projected wizarding lifespan scaled back more closely to something like what we have actually seen in canon, given a relatively stable birthrate, a physical developmental period not noticeably longer than that of their Muggle counterparts and a projected lifespan of up to 110–120 years, the under-18 set might represent as little as a projected 15% or so of the total population.

Given that the primary concern of wizarding culture (the business of being a wizard, as it were) is to further the develop-

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ment of its own particular specialty, which is to say, magic, and to continue to conceal its presence from the mundane world, it does not have the spare resources of mundane society to throw at what must be considered a comparatively brief “larval” state affecting a minority segment of its members. Consequently, apart from seeing that the barest critical needs pertaining to this state are met, the society as a whole turns its attention to other areas where such attention is deemed to matter more.

For that matter it is never made clear that even seeing that those barest critical needs pertaining to this state are met. The Ministry of Magic takes no responsibility for wizarding children’s early education even as it appears to strongly discourage the enrollment of wizarding children in Muggle primary schools. (If the wizarding population is so cowed that they won’t even reveal their magical status to Muggles when they intend to marry one, they will hardly risk blowing the whole issue open by sending their children to be educated alongside of those of their Muggles neighbors. Rowling has confirmed this last assertion.) Clearly we are to understand that any witch or wizard who chooses to produce a child does so entirely upon his or her own responsibility, complete with multiple restrictions regarding their oversight of that child and without any support from the Ministry for the welfare or education of that child — until he reaches an age to be trained magically. Then, and *only* then, does the Ministry step forward and remove the child from his parents’ care to train him as a wizard. To me, there appears to be something fundamentally wrong with this picture.

Indeed, what we have seen of wizarding culture, in which virtually every child between the ages of 11 and 17 is routinely



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secluded in a boarding school for 10 months of the year, and that children between the ages of 0 to 10 are either educated at home at their parents discretion, or are Muggle-borns enrolled in Muggle primary schools, it would seem evident that wizarding society as a whole takes *no* notice of and makes almost *no* provision for children until they are of an age to be trained as wizards.

Given the lack of anything like a wizarding orphanage — even in the wake of a supposed war which saw the end of any number of wizarding families — it would appear that the Ministry of Magic cannot even be bothered to oversee the physical safety and maintenance of its youngest future constituents.

In fact, it would not be much of a stretch to conclude that, apart from those few businesses which derive revenue from marketing products that are attractive to children, wizards upon the whole seem to want as little to do with children as possible. Children are probably regarded as an unattractive, but necessary, nuisance. And a walking security risk. One which should be kept as avoidable by the rest of the wizarding world's "real" population as possible. This seems to be reflected in the generally small size of wizarding families. If Muggle society made as few provisions for the young as the wizarding government apparently does, either their family sizes or their general standard of living would be much lower than they are.

Given the slightly longer wizarding lifespan, the lack of clear demarcation between the internal "stages" of a wizard's adult life, and, perhaps, most important of all, the fact that these life stages are each of somewhat irregular duration, wizarding society may not be subject to the sort of pressures that create cyclic history at all, and should not be assumed to replicate it in this, or

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any other regard. Indeed, such shifts in Muggle social dynamics may utterly mystify wizards.

However, with DHs it has finally been more or less openly admitted that the "Seclusion" of most of wizarding society is a sham. Other than that minority of wizards who are able to live in Hogsmeade itself or within such secluded districts as Diagon Alley, most of the wizarding population lives among Muggles in the vicinity of a half-dozen or so traditional semi-wizarding villages. There is no way to completely avoid being swept up into the dynamics of cyclical history under such conditions.

Wizarding society however, almost certainly does not go through the periodic cycles of child-centeredness which can be noted in mundane society. Young wizards are taught the academic basics and given a moral grounding entirely at their parents' discretion until they reach an age that their magic is trainable, whereupon the Ministry finally takes an interest in them, and they are effectively removed from their parents, and herded into a secure facility where this critical matter is overseen by experts. Their progress is monitored by a Ministry Department, with a view toward cherry picking the top performers into key, entry-level Ministry positions. The Ministries of Magic being one of the key industries of the wizarding world, its largest single employers, and, being the ones that oversee and administer the training facilities, have first choice of the newly qualified.

Wizarding children of the ages of 10 and under are kept in semi-isolation by their parents, to avoid any such fallout as would be likely to occur from too close interactions with Muggles, and apart from what appear to be fairly rare cases, see few children other than those of their own families. Or their family's friends.



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Wizarding children also are not usually exposed to the mundane world around them by means of being bombarded all day by television (or its advertising), and most of them probably would not be able to recognize the on switch of a computer. They probably would be familiar with radio by means of the wizarding wireless. We have heard no indication that the Wizarding Wireless includes any sort of childrens' programing, however.



And at the age of 17 they are legally defined as adults.

The only significant "officially" perceived difference between the fresh Hogwarts graduate and a more seasoned wizard is the graduate's lack of practical experience, which will matter in some fields considerably more than in others. But in practice, few allowances will be made for youth itself.

For that matter, it is entirely possible that even the somewhat more mature wizards and witches of the most typical child-bearing and child-rearing ages are also regarded somewhat dismissively by the persons in the greatest positions of power, due to the fact that such are assumed to be preoccupied with the temporary distractions attendant upon producing and raising young, rather than being free to pursue the serious business of furthering the goals of wizardkind. If children themselves comprise no more than roughly 15% of the population, the parents of minor children will not represent all that significantly larger a percentage of the population, either. Young children (which even in the wizarding world are usually not "only" children) and their parents together, probably comprise not much more than a third of the total population.



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And if young children and their parents together represent so small a percentage of the total wizarding population. This is not likely to be the dominant, policy-making percentage of it, is it? Certainly not, considering how very little policy in the ww concerns itself with children.

We have been shown virtually nothing of any of this in canon because, up to now, we have been limited to the PoV of an adolescent boy who is locked up in the kiddie-bin for ten months of the year and exiled to Muggle hell for the rest of it. And the only wizarding family he has had any real contact with is, even by most wizarding standards, a raging pack of eccentrics. Nor, I think, does Rowling ever intend to show us any of this, for she has stated repeatedly that when she has finished with Harry Potter's school years, she intends to work on other projects.

Our ability to discern a plausible reading of a viable wizarding society from canon is not made any easier by Rowling's determination to co-opt all secondary characters into providing comic relief. This technique appears to be applied more crudely the older a given supernumerary character is.

Besides, I'm not convinced that Rowling even grasps the implications of any her statements on the subject, herself. I think that she regarded the key point of whole matter, the allegedly longer lifespans of wizards, as mere set-dressing.

And if she does grasp it — and by this time she may — she still doesn't intend to go into it, because it would interrupt the pace of the story.

But, it is still true.

If wizards have potentially longer lifespans than Muggles, then, rather than four basic generations; juveniles, young





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adults, the middle-aged and the elderly, there ought to be at least five; juvenile, young adult, middle aged, elderly and, say, “venerable.” Albus Dumbledore, at the age of 116 was a *venerable* wizard. In a real society such as Rowling postulates, there would be that additional generation represented in it. And that generation would be an \*active\* contributing generation, not consigned to sit by the fire and do little because of feebleness or other infirmities. They would be the elders still setting policy.

Or the basic four generations acknowledged would all be of different duration.

As things stand, Rowling seems unwilling to even depict the possibility of a adolescent child’s still possessing living grandparents. Only Neville Longbottom appears to admit to having one.

My reading of the situation is that in traditional wizarding thought, there would be no sentimental value placed upon the “state” of childhood whatsoever. And that children, however necessary, are not regarded as “special.”



Children are certainly necessary, even essential to wizarding society’s survival, yet they are probably regarded by those who do not have to deal directly with them, as a nuisance. But from a wizarding point of view, the “state” of childhood itself is brief enough that one does not make a big Muggleish parade of it. The lifespans of wizards are presumed to be such (even if those alleged extended lifespans generally fail to materialize) that in the eye of those who are actually “in charge” of any sort of social policy, well before these particular children are of an age to replace “us” they will have melded seamlessly into the

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much larger total adult wizarding population. In fact, they will probably be grandparents themselves by that time. The anticipated length of a wizard’s life is such that childhood is probably viewed as a very temporary condition, to be got through as simply as possible before embarking on one’s “real” life, and it is a stage certainly not meriting the sort of commerce-driven special attention as is the case in mundane culture.

Furthermore; a wizarding child’s magic usually does not reach a level that it may be reliably trained until he is within hailing distance of puberty. And by this time we all have a pretty clear idea of how much indulgence the wizarding world as a whole bears for the magically incapable. With this in mind, what normal wizard is likely to go misty-eyed and nostalgic over a period of his life during which he was unable to reliably perform magic?

In fact, that alleged, greatly-made-much-of extended lifespan of wizards appears not only to be rather less than the fans have attempted to make it out to be, but to clearly be a benefit only enjoyed by adult wizards. And remarkably few of them, at that. For there is no indication whatsoever in canon that the juvenile period of a pureblood wizard is any longer than that of a Muggle-born wizard — whose juvenile period does not notably differ from that of typical young Muggles.

And if, as I have suggested, the longer lifespan of wizards is based upon some physical benefit granted to the wizard by the active channeling of magical energies which helps to preserve his physical health and well-being, (and consequently, cannot be deployed effectively by the very young) and, as an outside possibility, any medi-magical treatments or lifestyle practices are aimed at lengthening the period during which a wizard is



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able-bodied and mentally and magically acute in order to preserve the greatest number of fully-functional members of society at all times, with a view to staving off yet another Goblin uprising; then, the end result of these benefits is that wizards — who may live longer — do not remain young longer, but, as with the improvement in the general health and increase of life expectancy among Muggles over the course of the 20th century, they remain functional, but OLD. Longer. The wizarding world, in short, ought to be “a country of old men” (and post-menopausal women).



Which is the *last* thing that Rowling seems willing to show us. But then Rowling admits that she is a coward.

In a society in which close to half of its members are either past, or within hailing distance of their 60th birthday (and in which it can be quite comfortably assumed that close to half of a witch's life is still patiently waiting for her to get around to it after she finishes with the purely temporary demands of child-bearing and child rearing) the Western, and Muggle-centric, value which we place upon the energies and vitality of youth, might be very far from the case.

Indeed, it becomes very easy to postulate a culture which operates rather on the principles of what, in my own childhood, were presented as the values of a sort of “storybook” version of ancient China, which was conventionally portrayed as having an exaggerated public veneration for age and tradition, and in which the old were regarded as a fount of wisdom and nearly always deferred to on the grounds of their opinions being more



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valuable merely through their having lived longer. Meanwhile the world wags on with business as usual, and children are expected to pull their own weight as far as they are able, and to stay out from underfoot.

And, as I state above, in a society of people who live extended lives, what children there are, are rather thoroughly outnumbered. It is Neville Longbottom, not the Weasleys, whose home life should probably be regarded as the more typical of young wizards. What is more, the state of childhood itself is probably discounted and devalued, being judged to represent very little of an individual life's total worth. After all, young children cannot reliably perform magic.

Meanwhile, legislation is imposed upon the freedom of children's actions in order both to control the amount of risk to which they are exposed and, perhaps more importantly, the degree of risk for the discovery of magic by Muggles which a child's inexperience and possible heedlessness may produce. Hogwarts may be by no means as secure a facility as Azkaban, but it's not that much more open. It is yet another isolated, fortified location in which young are to be kept secure, out of the firing lines and restrained from participation in the daily functioning of society. We got a taste of this enforced noncombatant status over the course of OotP, and very frustrating we, and Harry, found it.



For this reason I have never placed a lot of credence upon the fanfics that postulate the casual induction of schoolboys into the ranks of the Death Eaters. That such children might be encour-





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aged to gather whatever information is circulating through the halls of Hogwarts and passing it on to their parents, yes, of course. Any advantage is worth using. To approach any like-minded schoolmates as future recruits, certainly. But to permit them to take full participation in Voldemort's vision before they have even left school, or learned to Apparate? Ridiculous.

And post-DHs I still consider it ridiculous.

Not to mention that laying your personal Mark on children still living in dormitories would be a totally reckless and witless policy. (Tom was raised in an *orphanage*, for heaven's sake! He lived through seven years in a Hogwarts dormitory. He *knows* how little privacy one has living in an institution.) No. Just — *no*. Not even in Slytherin House. It should be noted that while he may in HBP have made an exception to this rule in Draco Malfoy's case, this was a single exception, made for a specific purpose. IF such an exception was even actually made. Which is far from certain.

And the whole story of Regulus Black, as told by Kreacher is completely bonkers. Not least in his contention that Reggie joined up at the age of 16. But that is a subject for another essay, on another day, in another sub-collection, under another heading.

To be sure, Lord Voldemort may not dismiss children as readily from his considerations as the generality of wizarding society does. If it existed in the Potterverse, he would certainly be able to remember the existence of the Hitler Youth. (As well as the standard rhetoric of the 3rd Reich which he knowingly incorporates into his addresses to the DEs. He has their number and will lead them on with exactly what they want to hear.) But while adolescents and post-adolescents may make the most

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dedicated foot-soldiers, he can afford the additional 2-4 years for the current crop to be out of school and away from official scrutiny before admitting them into the fold.

Besides, they aren't a lot of practical use until they can Apparate, and they can't do that without reprisals until they are 17. They aren't even taught the skill until they are 16.

Which, prior to the release of HBP, seemed to raise the possibility that there might be yet another kind of selection process going on within the DE families.

At that point, back when Lord Voldemort's followers were assumed to be far more numerous than they in fact are, I thought that it could well have been that Lord Voldemort did not really WANT whole families bearing the Dark Mark. The head of the clan or his heir, yes. But if one of them gets captured, they all come under suspicion, and there may well be a Ministry demand for a rolling up of sleeves. If the whole family is marked, that's the end of it. Who is left to carry on and give him access to their resources?

I proposed that it could well be that he encouraged the families of his supporters to make a decision among themselves (subject to his own approval) as to just who is going to be their primary representative within his inner circle, while the rest are positioned to knowingly and willingly carry out his orders at one remove, with nothing to identify them as his. Then, if the family's representative is caught, the whole family can then simulate horror and revulsion and do a convincing job of wailing about how they had been used with a strong likelihood of being able to carry it off. And, one assumes, after the dust settles, another representative is selected and takes the first's place in the circle.



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Well, it might certainly have worked. Even if Rowling didn't happen to think of it.



The situation in DHs — while totally implausible — certainly supports the contention that Tom must have had more than just marked DEs and imperiused puppets at his beck and call.

And while it now appears that I was considerably off-target, I still may not be completely wrong. Very much in the way that there was a very real cut-off point where no one finishing Hogwarts after a given date could have ever been a “real” Death Eater, it now appears that no one finishing their Hogwarts years before a given date is a likely candidate, either. In the manner of “young turks” everywhere, I seriously doubt that Tom Riddle and his merry pranksters gave squat about enlisting the active participation of their parents’ generation, or indeed much of anyone older and with more authority in the wizarding world than themselves. Or at least not through any means apart from coercion, either emotional or magical. It might be significant that the only former DE we’ve seen who appears to be significantly older than his 70s is Igor Karkaroff, who is a foreigner. And he may actually be within the standard DE age bracket and simply went white-haired young.

But the first defeat of Lord Voldemort was a helpful interruption. By the time he was defeated at Godric’s Hollow, not all of his followers were still whole-hearted in their personal loyalties, regardless of their support for his assumed agenda. The 2nd generation DEs had not gone to school with Tom Riddle, and while Lord Voldemort expounded on the issues in exactly the

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manner they had been brought up to revere, in most cases he did not ever expend the effort necessary to charm them all into the sort of highly personal attachment that had roped in their fathers. He saved that sort of treatment for the new recruits which didn’t have a hereditary connection to his organization, or outsiders who could be particularly useful for whatever reason, such as Barty Crouch Jr and, possibly, Severus Snape.

And, of course Bellatrix, whose devotion was probably an unasked-for gift. And one which he does not really show that he particularly valued over the course of DHs.

But Lord Voldemort’s sudden disappearance and 13 years reprieve from both his expectations and his demands were quite enough to give some of his followers second thoughts. For the first time in their lives they were free, and self-determining. And I think that quite a few of them found that they preferred it that way. Particularly those who had signed up in hopes of *political* power, which had never materialized, mainly because Voldemort had no intention of actually overthrowing the government. He just wanted to keep it afraid of him.

I think that had the raid on the DoM not ended in a shambles, and Lucius Malfoy had managed to retain some scrap of his Master’s favor, if Lucius had had anything to say in the matter, there would have been no actual Dark Mark in Draco’s future. Or, at least not until there was a new Malfoy grandchild slumbering innocently in his or her cradle. I cannot really see Lucius Malfoy regarding the possible extinction of the Malfoy name and honors as an acceptable price to pay for putting Lord Voldemort into power. Nor do I get the general impression that the Malfoys invariably marry and start spawning immediately



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upon finishing Hogwarts. Lucius would certainly not have pushed for Draco's early marriage.



To some extent, however, in trying to extrapolate the general stance of the wizarding world toward its young, one must also make *some* allowances for contamination from mundane culture. And probably ever more so as the 20th century progressed and the mundane entertainment industries became more prominent and more accessible to wizards.

Which would be readily noted as the number of wizarding families living in proximity to Muggle districts and the number of Muggle-born wizards participating in wizarding culture steadily increased. Once wizards' families get very heavily into the forms of mundane entertainment they can't help but absorb a lot of mundane values.

Even though I do still tend to doubt that most wizarding families maintain televisions. But that may be a misperception. You will notice that while there are rather a lot of rip-offs of Muggle tech circa about WWII era, there seems to be nothing much more recent than that. Despite the growing influx of Muggle-borns who are familiar with later tech. Possibly wizards are simply adopting the Muggle tech directly these days, and not attempting to make a living from converting or simulating a form of it which is suitable for sale to wizards.

But, still, I do believe that general attitudes and policy in the wizarding world is typically not just set by the adults, but by the *older* adults at that. And the older wizards in the wizarding world today did not grow up in a society where there was such

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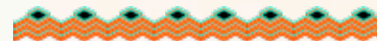
a high level of Muggle influence. In the wizarding world, as anywhere else, all things being equal, adults with a greater level of experience will find it easier to gather a following than adults without it. And, obviously, once a group has become entrenched, it will not readily risk its power balance by admitting outsiders into its gestalt.

Consequently, the group currently in control will age steadily until another group manages to displace them. And from what we saw of the Wizengamot, the group now in power probably is of an age range of 60-120, and most of those, as purebloods, did not grow up amid the mundane entertainment media.

Under this reading, if anything, Cornelius Fudge, who was only a Junior Minister some 15 years ago, comes across as surprisingly young for his position. And Lucius Malfoy as being very young indeed to have been able to wield so much influence over the past few years. To the point that until the publication of HBP, I seriously wondered what had happened to Lucius's father. And to his grandfather.

Of course, at the end of DHs, with the whole of British wizarding society in a shambles from top to bottom, they are going to have to start rebuilding it somewhere. Unfortunately, if the bloody epilogue is to be taken seriously, it is clear that at most, they did nothing more than to recreate what they had when Harry first stepped into the Leaky Cauldron in the summer of 1991.

Which given *any* close examination, was nowhere remotely in the vicinity of being "well"





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### Historical Note:

\*A necessary digression regarding Elfrida Clagg: on her original official website, Ms Rowling seems to have amused herself a great deal by arbitrarily messing with our heads. She made a practice of issuing contradictory statements which flip-flopped her position on various issues, contradicted statements made in interviews and even contradicted information as it has been presented in the books. Madam Clagg became the subject of one of these contradictions.

In the book, 'FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM' Madam Clagg was clearly stated as being the successor of a 14th century Head of the Wizards' Council. In the book 'QUIDDITCH THROUGH THE AGES' Madam Clagg was again mentioned and was stated as having declared the Golden Snidgett a protected species during her term as Head of the Wizards' Council a hundred years after a certain Madam Rabnott's run in with Minister Bragg in 1269. So, she is clearly presented as a figure of the 14th century.

On the official website for the month of June 2005 Elfrida Clagg is stated as "Wizard of the Month" as having lived from 1612-1687. That is the 17th century. Not the 14th. And yet, it was made clear by the context of the bio that this was supposedly the *same* Elfrida Clagg.

By this time one strongly suspected that Rowling was doing this kind of thing deliberately, just to wind her readers up. It was working.

Now, we do not know for certain whether the dates that showed up on the site were the dates actually specified by Ms Rowling. It is possible that this information was filled in by some

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3rd party at Lightmaker, the company which maintained the site. But, assuming that both entries refer to the same Elfreda Clagg — which seems undeniable — from where I am standing, two published books trump one website, and the information as stated on the website is simply wrong.

Plus, while we still have the books, we no longer still have access to that website.

In fact; let me clarify my position on this matter overall: So far as I am concerned; with very rare exceptions, anything in the books supersedes just about anything on any site, which supersedes anything said in an interview. Unless a statement is clearly identified as being a \*correction\* of something in the books, or a later printing of the books has been updated in accordance with the later statement. As far as this collection goes, in +90% of the time, what is written in the book is taken as the accurate version.

And the movies don't even count.



**H**aving lived among Muggles for most of human history there is no way in which wizards could have altogether escaped picking up at least some traces of the dismissive attitudes toward women which have been prevalent in mundane society throughout that time.

However, much in the way that a person of good will, raised within an atmosphere that fosters prejudice might typically make individual exceptions for every (insert racial, ethnic, or social group here) that he has ever actually met, without ever examining the underlying shakiness of his avowed beliefs, most



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wizards seem to have always readily acknowledged within their own society that witches are persons of power. And, indeed, even before Seclusion was established, witches held positions on the Wizards' Council and took active participation in the governance of wizarding society.

The earliest such recorded case at our disposal being that of Elfrida Clagg a 14th-century\* Chief of the Wizards' Council (precursor to the Ministry of Magic), who was effectively the Minister for Magic. Indeed, once the current Ministry of Magic was formed in the 18th century, one of the earliest official MfMs was also a witch.



However, it should be noted that, as cited, no more than a hundred years before Elfrida Clagg declared the Golden Snitch a protected species, in 1269 a certain Madam Modesty Rabnott had penned in a private letter that a certain 13th century Chief of the Wizard's Council, one Barberus Bragge's, behavior would have lost her vote if she'd had one. I suggest that this statement probably has less to do with female enfranchisement in wizarding politics than with whatever the specific form of general representation within the wizarding government may be.

We have been given no reason to suppose that a body as venerable as the Wizengamot is a representational democracy. I very much doubt that the members of the Wizengamot are selected by general election, and indeed, given the thinness of the dispersion of the wizarding population, among other considerations — not excluding the readiness of magical tampering with the results — it would be extremely difficult to administer



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any sort of a general election without interference.

But the indications to date are that whatever the form of representation in the wizarding government of Great Britain and Ireland today may be, witches are not banned from any level of participation in it merely upon the grounds of being female. *Social* participation, on the other hand, may be another pair of sleeves. Yet even in that context, in OotP, which gave us our best glimpse of wizarding society and government in general, we saw a broad degree of participation at all levels by witches. This was not contradicted by the presentation in DHs, although the wizarding government as represented in DHs clearly had a different axe to grind.

Nevertheless, the most widespread fanon reasoning appears to be that since the wizarding world gives every appearance of being “old-fashioned,” it's perceived technological backwardness is mirrored by a social backwardness to match.

In the face of everything that has been both stated and implied in canon this conclusion comes across as both probably wrong and flat-out weird. Particularly given the obvious effort which Ms Rowling put into OotP in attempting to show us a largely “gender-blind” society. (Of course, having done so, she immediately lapsed back into portraying females as being chiefly irrelevant. But that's clearly Rowling's own problem.)

I don't know where people come by these ideas. Unless it is either an indication of the deeply ingrained misogynistic streak which still underpins all Western Civ, or it is merely an all too handy straw man deployed in fanfics to provide instant “dramatic tension.” (And is no more plausible than the one about Snape having been outed as a spy in the “where your loyalties





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lie” confrontation all the way back in PS/SS.)

It was disappointing in the extreme to discover that Ms Rowling herself had evidently chosen to undercut all of her own hard work in OotP when it came time to write HBP, in which every female character seemed determined to behave like some level of crude “female” stereotype. And this impression was further supported by the events of DHs wherein, unless you are Hermione Granger, all females are either irrelevant or incompetent. (Apart, I suppose, from Luna Lovegood, who has always been identified as being female chiefly by default.)

In the case of the adolescent characters this can readily be forgiven, since adolescence is a stage of development wherein acting out the stereotypes is often the whole point. But the practice was extended well beyond just the adolescent characters.

In particular it was irritating to see Nymphadora Tonks, a character in whom a number of readers had taken an interest, and for whom they had some hopes, reduced, first to a weepy Cho Chang double, and then rapidly dwindle into a mere “girl-friend,” baby-maker, and redshirt. If this was indeed the full extent of the author’s intentions concerning Ms Tonks, I agree that we have some reason to feel annoyed.

For one thing, if that was all that was ever intended, there is no reason to have made such a point of her being a Metamorphmagus. Or, indeed to introduce her, or her “super-special” Mary-Sueish ability into the series at all. I am still inclined to think that Tonks’ Metamorphmagus status reads as an indication of a possible dropped potential thread of story which got crowded out of the book in which it was introduced due to the sheer volume of material that seemed to generate during that

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year’s adventure (and which shows some promise of being much more interesting than some of what we were actually given).

And well downstream of the closing of canon, the fact that rather a lot of fans had adopted Tonks as their very own gender-fluid poster child, tends to render the author’s own stance on gender politics as especially problematic.



What seems by far most likely to me is that witches, who had acted with considerable autonomy among their own society even before the establishment of Seclusion, became fully emancipated in not just *de facto* practice but also by wizarding statute very soon after the first time someone in the “secluded” world tried to invoke a Muggle statute or custom to thwart one.

For that matter, until the digital age started removing even Muggle technology from the strictly physical realm, even the assumed technological backwardness of the ww is almost completely illusionary. The wizarding world clearly operates on an alternate form of technology. Magical technology. Which perception is further hampered by the wizarding world’s obvious unfamiliarity of *how* Muggle technology works and what principles drive it. But then, wizards would hardly perceive a widespread need for filthy, smelly, environmentally nasty machines when every wizard has full access to a clean, renewable energy source which is inborn and can be replenished with a nice dinner and a good night’s sleep. (If it walks like a duck, and swims like a duck, it may still prove to be a goose. Or even a swan.)

Witches clearly hold jobs and professional positions outside the home today. But, since the setting of the Harry Potter



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series to the end of book 6 has basically been that of a collection of school stories, Ms. Rowling was forced to wait until the fifth book in the series to show us any sort of wider overview of wizarding society as a whole, and the extent of the female presence within it. However, I believe that the fact that we spent the first four books seeing few adult witches at all, and fewer of those outside of traditional feminine roles had less to do with the way that the wizarding world is set up than the fact that our viewpoint character is an adolescent boy.

The barbaric and dismissive regard toward women and girls which we have heard various of the Weasley brothers express is a separate issue, and one that I am more inclined to chalk down to the sort of passive-aggressive resentment against all things female which is not infrequently observed in men who have been raised by domineering mothers. It is not evident that their views are representative of the wizarding world as a whole. In fact, until the release of HBP, apart from the younger Weasleys we had seen remarkably little of that sort of thing anywhere else in the series. Unfortunately, the younger Weasleys tended to hog the spotlight, making it difficult to see anything else.

With the release of HBP we now see that the same dismissive attitude towards females was clearly shared by Marvolo and Morfin Gaunt, back in 1925, and, to a degree, also by the young Tom Riddle, whose orphanage appears to have been largely staffed by women. In Riddle's case we can perhaps overlook this viewpoint since it is clear he had no more favorable opinion of males. He simply found them more directly useful. In the case of the Gaunts, the attitude was undoubtedly amplified by the fact that the only female to whom they had access to had so readily allowed herself

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to be bullied. Not that she had any other real recourse, other than to run away. Which is what she ultimately did. The very minute that she could be sure that they wouldn't come after her.



Molly Weasley's narrow-minded attitudes regarding the permissible behavior of other females is a somewhat different issue. For one thing, I don't get much of an impression that would lead me to assume that Molly particularly *likes* other women very much. Although she clearly prefers some to others.

But Molly's intolerance toward other women's perceived actions is an attitude which is unfortunately familiar to most women who have ever attempted to step outside of the prescribed boundaries set for them by less open-minded keepers of the "norm." It is particularly common in cases where a dynamic woman, such as Molly Weasley, has made the choice to spend her own youth and energy counting (and wiping) noses and attempting to ride herd on a horde of little barbarians intent upon getting into as much dangerous mischief as possible. At the end of the day, such a woman's accomplishments may in fact be extraordinary, but these accomplishments are rarely acknowledged as being her own. The general temptation of such women to indulge in a sort of generalized resentment toward anyone who has managed to opt out of the contract is easy enough to recognize on that account alone.

And far too often whatever resentments or regrets such women harbor tend to be directed specifically towards other women who have *not* chosen to make the same sacrifices "for the common good."



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However, some of the ramifications attendant upon Rowling's statements regarding the lifespans of magicals and the population of the wizarding world — if these statements can be accepted at all — strongly suggests that Molly Weasley's somewhat narrow attitudes regarding female conduct not only may be pervasive throughout wizarding society, but that they may be so for very good reason, even if not for quite the *same* reasons that generally underlie such attitudes in Muggles.



We have been given no information which would lead one to believe that witches *per se* are barred from any level or area of either the public or private workings of the wizarding world. Since the publication of *Order of the Phoenix*, we have indeed seen witches employed in nearly all fields within the Ministry of Magic, and have been informed that both the former Head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement and a recent Minister for Magic were, in fact, witches. Witches appear to be fully enfranchised members of their society.

We have not, however, actually *met* any witch between the ages of, say, 20 and around 40, out in the public arena, with the exception of Fleur Delacour, Nymphadora Tonks, and the girls who work for the Wheezes. Our acquaintance to this point seems to be limited to witches who are still in school, and those who are over the age of around 40.

I suspect that the continuing pressures upon the wizarding world to maintain and, if possible, to increase their population numbers has fostered a tendency toward encouraging the likelihood that a certain degree of social pressure should be applied

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toward urging young witches to find partners and to raise families. And not to waste an inordinate amount of time about getting onto the job, either.

For this reason, I also tend to suspect that the attitude of wizarding society toward witches who have chosen to raise a child out of wedlock must be at least as tolerant as that of modern mundane society. And, as in the question of a witch's place outside the home, it probably became so a good deal earlier.

I am also inclined to think that this tolerance is probably considerably strained, or completely absent in any case where a witch seems to expect to raise such a child with the aid of public assistance, assuming the availability of such. (There is no evidence to suggest that the wizarding world has adopted the concept of the dole.) But in the case of a witch who is self-supporting, or who has a family which will support her, to raise a child without a husband is, in most cases, probably to some extent a non-issue.

For that matter, we also have no canon evidence to establish that wizarding marriages are any more permanent, upon the whole, than Muggle marriages, although we have not yet seen any examples of divorced parents among Harry's classmates. We have, after all, become familiar with the family situations of only a tiny sampling of Harry's classmates. And a high percentage of those selected few are being raised by a widowed parent, by relatives other than their own parents, or outside the wizarding world altogether.

Where illegitimacy in the wizarding world may *not* be a non-issue is when it comes to tracing bloodlines. It has already been made quite clear that there is a significant minority



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of wizarding society to whom bloodlines are of the utmost importance. I suspect that the attitude among this segment of wizarding society towards the acknowledgment of having borne or fathered an illegitimate child may be the sort of thing which must be decided upon a case-by-case basis. In some cases, particularly outside those factions which are excessively concerned with their bloodlines, the child is acknowledged without fuss, the lack of a marriage having been by mutual agreement. In other cases, within such sectors of society, the existence of such a child may be highly embarrassing, if not actively dangerous to either the child or its parents and the information is suppressed. Such unacknowledged children would probably not be regarded as marriageable within that sector of society. But only within that sector, and outside of that sector, the exact components of their bloodlines may not matter.

An additional factor in this particular issue which has to be considered, and which has at least some impact upon the permanence of marriages of wizards or witches is that by HBP, 6 books through the series out of 7, we had never, which is to say *never*, i.e., *not once* been told of any marriage between a Muggle and a wizard or witch, in which the Muggle partner was known to have been informed prior to the ceremony that their intended spouse was magical. Of the four such marriages of which we have been told either in canon or on the original official website, only one of these marriages was still known to be intact and still functioning by the time a child reached an age to attend Hogwarts. In two, one partner had already abandoned the marriage prior to his partner's, or his own death. In the last case, The marriage was still in effect at the time of the



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child of that marriage's starting at Hogwarts, but we were not clearly told the final outcome. Although we have no reason to believe that the marriage was dissolved, we have also no reason to believe it to have been anything but resentful and unhappy.

The simplest conclusion to be drawn from this information is that witches or wizards who get involved in relationships with Muggles do not tell their partner out of fear of going counter to Ministry directives. And the Ministry is short-sighted enough not to regard this issue as a problem. Leading one to suspect that most of the "halfbloods" of the present day must be technical halfbloods, rather than literal ones. Or, in other words, the children of Muggle-born wizards, such as Harry Potter, rather than children of actual Muggles.



What none of the considerations above examine, however is the question of whether witches of prime childbearing age, or those who are of an age to reasonably be expected to still be in the process of raising young children might possibly be regarded according to different standards, either legally or socially, than witches who are beyond the age of such considerations. For one thing, even if a witch may reasonably expect to enjoy the sort of extended lifespan that is demonstrated by Griselda Marchbanks, I seriously doubt that she will still be fertile *long* before she approaches her first century mark.

For that matter, with Rowling's statement in the joint interview of 2005, soon after the release of HBP that the British wizarding world consists of all of about 3,000 people with a Hogwarts enrollment of 600, throws us into a *complete* quandary.





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If the enrollment is as high as 600, then the average annual intake would be about 85. If the average number of annual births is 85, then to stabilize at a total population of 3,000, the life expectancy would be about the age of 35. This is absurd. Of the two numbers, given what we have been shown, rather than told, it is likely that the Hogwarts enrollment is just under 300 with an annual intake of some 40 students. And even this is on the high side, for in order to maintain a total population of 3,000 on the strength of 40 births a year would only extrapolate a projected lifespan of about 75.

And Rowling appears to have a real problem about depicting wizards who manage to make it past the age of 90, although by the end of canon she was getting better about that. At least two the "Wizard of the Month" postings in 2007 were for wizards who reached the ages of 111 and 114 respectively.

Obviously such lifespans as Professor Marchbanks's, or Bathilda Bagshott's, are vanishingly rare. Most witches and wizards may have a reasonable shot of living to the age of 90-120 perhaps, although Rowling fails to supply the numbers which would support that claim, but fewer than half of them probably manage to hit their century mark.

Given the rarity of witches and wizards worldwide, it is possible that some attempt to extend the years of a witch's fertility has been made, and it is not unreasonable to suppose that some success in these attempts may have been noted. But this is far from a done-deal. A modern witch's reproductive years probably reflect that of a modern Muggle's. Modern Muggle women leave their fertile years at varying ages, but the average is around the age of 48.



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As may be supposed, even in the absence of specific medical causes this may vary as much as a decade in either direction, although a variation of some five years is more typical. It has also been noted that a woman's actual fertility levels may begin to decline well before any noticeable physical changes related to perimenopause have occurred.

I have postulated elsewhere, that the active channeling of magic probably grants a physical benefit to the witch or wizard who does so. That by a sort of symbiosis, the channeling of magical energies serves to preserve a higher level of general health and physical well-being in magicals, quite possibly on a cellular level. It is not unreasonable to assume that once the safer methods of channeling magical energies, such as those practiced in conventional "modern wizardry," became widely adopted wizards and witches became more willing to initiate such channeling to a degree that their lifespans began to reflect these benefits.

I have further postulated that by the time wizarding Seclusion was formally established the average wizarding lifespan was already 30%-60% longer than that of the average Muggle; somewhere in the neighborhood of 90-110 years.

Quite a few years back, I originally also postulated that over the course of the 300+ years of Seclusion medi-magical processes (mostly related to the treatment of magical ailments) have been developed and widely adopted that have further increased the overall projected healthy lifespan of an average individual, up to a potential increase of an additional 30%-60% over that of a wizard's natural lifespan. This does not appear to be the case. A projected lifespan of, say, 90-120 years appears to be about the typical limit, with, as noted, a very few exceptions.





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But the somewhat longer extrapolated wizarding lifespan does not extend an individual's period of their most vigorous physical youth. It is far more likely that any advantage accrued by the active channeling of magic by the methods used in "modern wizardry," is to retard the speed of one's "decline." Consequently, the period so extended is the one generally referred to as one's "prime" (the period from about 35-55 in Muggles) and that of one's elder years, with the greatest advantage being most noticeable in the first half of traditional "old age" (approximately 55-70).

In wizards, while both of these stages may, un-enhanced by further measures, echo those of the comparatively rare Muggles who reach their century mark, any additional enhancements to wizarding lifespans are such that the period of "vigorous old age" is extended to match in duration that of one's "prime." And in rare cases both stages may be of longer duration than that of typical Muggles, even long-lived ones. Unfortunately, while the "prime" of a representative human being may extend from about the age of 35-55, a woman's most fertile period generally does not.

With this in mind, it is reasonable to suppose that at the most, the fertile period of a witch's life is more likely to reflect that of an individual with an overall natural lifespan of some 90-120 years rather than that of the rare witch whose lifespan of up to 150+ years is largely due to chance.



A textbook "average" modern Muggle woman whose fertile years span from the ages of 13 to 48, has, these days, a projected natural lifespan of just about 80 years. During 35 of those

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years, or 45% of that projected lifespan, she can be assumed to be capable of bearing a child. Applying the same formula to the lifecycle of a witch with a projected natural lifespan of 100 years, 45% of that lifespan amounts to 45 years.

And I am no longer convinced that a typical witch's fertile period is any longer than a Muggle's. It now seems rather unlikely. But given the possibility that the channeling of magic may begin slowing the aging process once the subject reaches physical maturity, we will leave the possibility in our considerations, which are all fairly hypothetical anyway.

Since there appears to be no indication that witches reach puberty either earlier or significantly later than Muggle females, this would only project a witch's average fertile years into her late 50s. Later than that of a typical Muggle woman, certainly. But not to such a sweeping degree when compared to a projected healthy, able-bodied lifespan of 90-120 years.

And, socially there seems to be in canon virtually no indication that witches characteristically defer childbearing to a visibly later age than Muggles. It has been implied that such examples may exist in interviews granted by Rowling, but these implications were summarily contradicted by the only kinda/sorta documentary evidence that Rowling has given us — some months after the interview was made, I feel a need to point that out.

Plus, the documentary evidence she gave us does not hold up to closer examination.

To wit: extremely elderly primagravidas are allegedly not unknown in the wizarding world, but at this point we do not actually know of any.

In canon, Sirius Black was born around 1959-60, and was 36



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years of age at the time of his death. Still a reasonably young man. His brother, allegedly murdered in 1980 (As stated in OotP, not on the Black family tapestry sketch) at the age of 17, would have been three years younger. And yet the portrait of their mother, deceased some 10 years prior to Sirius's death, is that of an *old* witch. If she had been in her middle-late 50s when her sons were born, that would certainly explain it.

But it does *not* explain it. According to the information on the Black family tapestry sketch—which is the only source we have concerning Walburga Black's birth and death dates—she would have barely reached the age of 60 at the time of her death. She had been 35 at the time her elder son was born.

Dorea Potter (*née* Black) who we have been assuming was James Potter's mother—who Rowling stated as having been very old, even by wizarding standards at the time of her son's birth—turns out to have been all of 40. If she and her husband Charlus Potter of the tapestry sketch are indeed supposed to represent the parents of James Potter. This might very well have been unusual as a primagravida in 1960, but the 1950s and early '60s was an era which was hospitable toward early marriages and large family sizes. It would not have been an unusually late age merely to be *having* a baby. The mothers of a great many youngest children of a large family must have been about that. At least among Muggles.

We have also noticed upon two occasions that wizards appear to go grey very suddenly. Igor Karkaroff and Albus Dumbledore each went from being, respectively, black and auburn-haired to completely silver-haired over an interval of roughly 10 years. Rowling also informed us in an interview not only that James Potter's parents were very old even by wizarding standards at

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his birth, but that their deaths were due to natural causes (magical illness specifically) by the time their son reached the age of 17. Once again, if the Potters on the Black family tapestry sketch are supposed to represent James Potter's parents, we have no dates to suggest his father's age, but Dorea, his mother turns out to have died at the not particularly ripe old age of 57.

This would at first glance appear to contradict the statement of Sirius Black when he tells us in GoF that he had already moved out into his own flat at the age of 17, presumably before the elder Potter's deaths, yet was still welcome to drop by for Sunday dinner. But this apparent contradiction can be fudged around. Either he (rather fecklessly) spent his legacy from Uncle Alphard moving briefly into his own flat during the summer before his 7th year at Hogwarts, or the elder Potters did not survive James's school leaving and Sirius's moving out for more than a handful of months, not surviving until the end of the same year. Either is technically possible, but it really isn't giving everyone enough time to get into place for the events which we have been told took place in canon.

However, this is a digression; all things being equal, wizarding society probably prefers that a witch bear and raise her children while she is still reasonably young.

And get it over with.

So she can get on with her *real* life.



Because, it is clear that even without the extended lifespans we were originally assuming for modern witches, half of a witch's projected lifespan is still waiting for her to get around to



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it after she is typically of an age no longer expected to be either bearing or raising children.

And, given a population whose numbers are always on the brink of being inadequate to maintain either its position of dominance over the other magical races, or to be able to continue to provide the high standard of living and public services to which its members have clearly become accustomed, without an active contribution from every possible individual, it is unlikely that women would be considered exempt from any level of participation in the workforce merely because they are women.

Which opens the possibility that a number of matters which we take for granted as Muggles may be handled very differently in the wizarding world.

In the first place. If one is being encouraged to marry and produce young at an early age, when one can project a future of 50–80 years after those young are grown and independent, it is certainly possible that marriage and divorce may be a rather casual affair. In some AU variants of the Potterverse marriages may be (by informal mutual agreement) contracted for a specific term of years, which may be extended or not as the participants decide. This is unlikely to be the case inside Rowling's version. But at the very least, and quite possibly in canon, it would suggest that a procedure for dissolving a marriage by mutual agreement would be widely available and that to do so, under most circumstances, once the family was grown would meet with little social disapproval.

After all, the sort of soul-bound inescapable unions so beloved of fanon, are strictly the invention of fanon.

It also opens the likelihood that a witch, who may still

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have most of her life ahead of her once her children are out of Hogwarts, will not, as a Muggle woman might, settle down in anticipation of being a professional grandmother for the remainder of it, and do nothing further in wider society. It is a good deal more likely that once her children have left home, she will engage in some form of either research, paid work, resume professional training in some field, or take up some form of public or private service. (Molly Weasley might well be counting the days until Ginny is out of school and married off to the suitor of her choice.) the late Madame Amelia Bones might be a good example of this sort of choice, although the suggestion in canon is that she may have remained unmarried.

A possible even better example may be Madam Marchbanks who is still *working* at the age of what is probably at least 125–130.

Given that much of our own “mundane” interpretation of how a society “works” in this regard is solidly based upon those bars to advancement which Muggle women have traditionally met in their professional lives, and which are understood to be grounded in a pervading belief that women “ought” not to be working professionally when there are (hypothetical) children to be raised; in a culture in which at least half of the population consists of aging men and women over childbearing age such blatantly Muggle-centric considerations are almost certain to have been reevaluated a good while ago, found wanting, and some alternate solutions devised.

Or at least this would be the case in a society in which the population is generally rational. Which we get no indication that Rowling's is. Rather the opposite, in fact.

And *particularly* in a society in which the population num-



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bers are so dangerously low that it is reasonably guaranteed that some form of active contribution to society as a whole is likely to be required of everyone.

By that criterion, having successfully raised a child 20 years ago will not entitle you to a free ticket for the next 50.

Most fans give little consideration to the fact that, despite the rhetoric used in the Ministry's smear campaign against Albus Dumbledore's sanity, in the wizarding world, any tendency toward "ageism" is far more likely to run counter to the way it does for Muggles. The fans may be excused, for it appears that Rowling has given little consideration to this matter, too. But in any functioning society such social factors would certainly be expected to have a far-reaching effect.

Another possibility that also seems very likely is that rather than applying for specialized training, or immediately contracting an Apprenticeship upon leaving Hogwarts, it may be just as customary for a witch to do so, or to engage in some form of independent "Masters" course of study after having first taken some 10–20 years time out in order to marry and raise her family. In fact, considering that virtually all wizarding children are away from home for 10 months of the year once they pass the age of 10, an average witch's time-out period may be a good deal shorter than that.

And most young (wizarding raised) witches are unquestionably aware that to raise this anticipated family is not only expected of them, but that for this endeavor they will have no shortage of willing potential partners to choose from



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Think about it.

Within wizarding society, witches of childbearing age are somewhat rare creatures. Extrapolating a general projected lifespan of 100 years across a total population of 3,000, and assuming the roughly same average of 35 fertile years as with Muggles, there would probably be no more than 450 between the ages of 18 and 48 in all of Great Britain and Ireland. (You don't *really* expect me to include those between the ages of 13 and 17 in that total do you?) Compared to some 680 wizards between the ages of 18 and 70. And another 450 wizards between the ages of 71 and 100.

Witches of childbearing age make up a comparatively small percentage of the total population, and are probably regarded as an extremely valuable resource. (Perhaps Arthur and Molly *were* trying for a girl for all those years! I would not be at all surprised to learn that there is a wizarding saying on the order of; "A wizard with five daughters has no shortage of friends.") I believe that it is probably a very safe bet that the status of witches in the wizarding world is probably a good deal higher than one might be led to assume it is if they spend all their time listening to the Weasley twins. And most young witches know it.

The perennial shortage of available young human witches also may go a long way towards explaining the tendency of some wizards to contract cross-species marriages. As well as the continuing, although officially unencouraged, practice of intermarrying with Muggles.

And, for that matter, it could also go a long way toward explaining even the endless Brown-Patil grooming and display rituals. Those young women are not enacting futile wish-fulfillment





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fantasies. They are tending to business in a manner that Harry, and even the ever-so-clever Miss Granger have not yet grasped.

Which is also a good tip-off as to the general socioeconomic level (or socioeconomic aspirations) of the Browns and the Patils. For the point where all assumptions about womens' proper place crash head-on with the realities of the wizarding world is exactly where the "women's place is in the home" assumptions of certain kinds of Muggles crash head-on with *their* reality. Which is right at the point that you leave the comforts of the upper and middle classes.

Among witches from, or who marry into, families of the artisan class, or those who run a business in the "service industry," there is no taking of 10 or 15 or 20 years off for anything. If a witch manages a few months time out with each child's birth she is doing very well. But the overriding social pressure for the wizarding world's culture is still that a young witch's *first* career should rightly be one as the mother of younger wizards and witches.

For, after all, who else is there in the wizarding world who can do it?



Still, mundane pre-Seclusion attitudes toward women are difficult to completely eradicate, and current mundane attitudes toward women and the value of housework are impossible to keep out, so long as a quarter of the population is being Muggle-raised, and over half of the population has retained or reestablished at least some contact with the mundane world.

And, even among the pureblooded, the attitudes openly expressed by the three youngest Weasley boys, all of whom

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were schooled at home and secluded from Muggle influences as thoroughly as their mother could control are indistinguishable from those of any three mundane "macho dudes" of their age group. It is not difficult to postulate that for all their rarity and value as "resources" young witches are not necessarily highly respected as *individuals*.

After their period of childbearing and child raising is accomplished, however, there appears to be no particular indication that a witch is any less highly regarded than a wizard. And this respect does appear to be accorded to her on an individual basis.

It does at least seem to be probable that any pressure brought to bear upon young witches to marry and reproduce is social rather than legal. Witches, even young ones, are, after all, persons of power in their own right.

Among magicals as much as among Muggles, during even the most retrograde of social eras, it stands to reason that there will be some individuals who continue to resist such pressures for reasons of their own. Some witches simply do not *want* a partner and children at all; no, not upon *any* consideration, thank you. Some may want a *particular* partner who is not on offer, and will accept no other. Or, on a more personal basis, they will not accept the ones who *DO* offer. Or they may be prevented from taking a partner through some consideration imposed by their families' situation or demands.

In fact, among the most narrow-mindedly pureblood-obsessed factions this last probably accounts for a number of unmarried siblings such as those shown on the Black family tapestry sketch. If your family's standards are such that there are only a couple of dozen people within your age range that the



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family would even consider remotely “eligible” and you can’t stand any of them, many would prefer to remain unwed than to marry to please themselves and be summarily ejected from the family. If nothing else, such practices ensure that these short-sighted factions will eventually dwindle to the point of being irrelevant within the society as a whole.



Nor are the professional functions that even young witches perform in the wizarding world necessarily only those of traditional feminine roles, although the majority of them undoubtedly are. We may assume, for example that the athletes who perform at the professional or National level are all reasonably young, and two of those “superb” Chasers on the Irish team can be identified (by a careful reading of pronouns) as witches. The Chudly Canons also include female players in their lineup. The Hollyhead Harpies is an all-female team.

It is not certain whether the world of professional sport is a year-round occupation in the wizarding world. And when one considers the scope of medi-magical technology, it is apparent that the considerations of mere physical injury in a given field might not be considered so great a deterrent to a witch as it is for Muggle women. Both Nymphadora Tonks and Alice Longbottom are/were trained and active Aurors. Evidently not all witches may chose to actually take time out from a career to raise an “only” child, but, raising a child, they usually manage to do. It is likely that had the Lestranges not come calling, Neville would not have *been* an only child. Without Voldemort Harry probably wouldn’t have been one either.



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One example of a comparatively young witch who seems to prefer to keep herself active in the public arena is Rita Skeeter. To be sure, even if someone is inclined to suspect that anyone who actually believes the claim of her quick-quotes quill — that she was 43 years of age in the year of GoF — might be interested in a certain Gothic revival bridge in Manhattan, I do tend to doubt that Rita has yet reached her 50th birthday. It is also possible, in Rita’s case, that if she did marry soon after finishing school, she might have already seen a child or two through Hogwarts and have embarked upon her “real” career by the time we met her. Indeed, journalism is a career that can be readily engaged in by a witch with school-aged children. If Arthur and Molly had stopped after producing and raising their first two sons Molly might be out in the public arena by now as well.

An even clearer example of an unpartnered witch is that of the unfortunate Bertha Jorkins, who, if her school days overlapped with those of the Marauders can have scarcely reached the age of 40, and yet had evidently worked for the Ministry of Magic for at least the past decade and apparently lived alone with no one but her co-workers to have missed her.

Nevertheless; I suspect that Bertha was very much in the minority. I also have a strong suspicion that the young Bertha Jorkins may have originally been one of those witches who was determined to attract a specific partner and would accept no other. In her case, I also suspect that her cap may well have been set at her widowed boss, Barty Crouch Sr. Whether she had ever been given sound reason to think that this particular goal was within her reach is a question that must forever remain unanswered.





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It is also not unlikely that among pureblood families with young daughters (and perhaps among even very wealthy and well-established technical halfbloods with good connections) it might actually still be the custom to partake in something very much like the traditional "London Season" wherein the debutantes of good family are presented to the most elite segments of Society with an eye to their contracting eligible marriages, assuming that they have not already formed an appropriate attachment at Hogwarts. Even formally arranged marriages among this sector may not be unknown, although they are probably not typical. Given the care that must be taken to preserve one's pureblood distinction, in this day and age, this is not beyond the range of possibility.

Indeed, the care necessary to both retain one's pureblood distinction and the necessity of avoiding too close a relationship between marriage partners probably does explain the rather high number of unmarried members of the Black family as shown upon the Black family tapestry sketch over the past 150 years. Such considerations may also explain the lack of any 2nd marriages depicted anywhere on that document.

It certainly explains every one of the Black females who have been blasted off of it. Every one of these disowned daughters married outside either the political or the pureblooded parameters considered acceptable by their family.

It does strongly suggest, however, that the very rarity of young unmarried witches throughout wizarding society assures that any young witch who chooses to marry would have to be either very particular, or very unprepossessing indeed not to be able to find a willing partner.



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Since the release of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, there has been a great deal of debate throughout the online fandom concerning the apparent lack of any truly convincing moral center or appropriate moral compass depicted and demonstrated over the course of the series and its characters.

This piece is not related to that.

Although I certainly agree that there is ample justification and material for such a debate, this essay, since it was originally uploaded in 2003, has never really been concerned with issues of morality. It has always been strictly focused upon matters of religion as depicted (or at least suggested) over the course of the series. It still is.

And as not only the Christians, but indeed the devout of any other creed, will remind you; *morality is not religion*.



Over the years, quite a few fanon writers have postulated that within the wizarding world, many if not most wizards have retained various pagan belief systems which predated Christianity and have continued to practice them to this day.

I'm sorry, but, no. We have been given no reason to believe that paganism holds any place in Ms. Rowling's vision of the Potterverse. And we have even less reason to think so after DHs.

Not that this limits any fanfic author from including it in their own AU. But this article is old enough to have been written back when the fandom was more interested in unraveling the probable intentions of JK Rowling, and analyzing what she had given us to reason from.

For that matter, the fact that religion remained strictly, and





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consistently, unmentionable within the parameters of the story, suggests far more strongly to me that Ms Rowling considers the subject of religion to be outside the realm of satire, or the sort of criticism to which she has subjected nearly all other social constructions (government, education, the press, etc.) over the course of the series, than otherwise.

Which is not to say that I necessarily insist that there are no modern wizards currently practicing various interpretations of pagan religions within the ww. But I certainly question the assumption that these religions had been retained throughout the course of European history. Looking at the general indicators in canon, any such pagan, or rather, neo-pagan, wizards and witches are far more likely than not to be Muggle-born.

The period during which wizards served the whole of the human community as shamans and priests was a long and honorable one, and one not likely to have completely fallen out of cultural memory, even yet. Given that a small sub-class of wizards enjoyed a far higher rate of literacy from much earlier times than the generality among Muggles, it is just barely possible that there might even be some ancient texts on various forms of pre-Christian worship in the collections of various extremely old wizarding families, or such semi-public archives as the library at Hogwarts, or some as yet unidentified Ministry research center. Considering that such practices seem to have survived in Britain up through the periods of the Celts and the Picts, the chances of there being some surviving form of written record, even if only in ogham, are not completely nil. If the national folklore attributed to the Celts and Picts can be considered a reliable source, there was a much higher than



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typical incidence of wizards among these peoples than those of the islands' later rulers, and the Celtic cultures were remarkably magic-tolerant until a very late date compared to that of continental Europe.

However, given the fact that wizards and Muggles were all part of one society, a more reasonable view to take is that although the indigenous priestly wizards resisted the pressures of Christianity for as long as they could, ultimately their followers capitulated to the demands of their conquerors and the efforts of the missionaries.

For that matter, the ranks of those missionaries were not altogether without wizards of their own. The fact that one of the House ghosts of Hogwarts is, himself, a Friar should be evidence enough of that. There is many a "miracle" recorded concerning the period that oversaw the establishment of Christianity as the predominant religion of Europe. And most of these miracles are compatible with the abilities of wizards.

A further clue once *appeared* to have been provided by Rowling herself in an interview shortly before the release of *Order of the Phoenix*, in which she stated that Voldemort had taken over an earlier organization from which he created his Death Eaters.

The name of that earlier pureblood isolationist (or supremacist) group, she told us, had been the Knights of Walpurgis. Although we never got any indication in canon that this statement was ever anything other than a "cool idea" that was never developed further, there is no avoiding the fact that Walburga is a recognized Christian *saint*. Had the wizarding world remained pagan, these gentlemen would have no doubt have styled themselves the Lords of Beltane, or some such variant.





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For anyone that missed this particular shout-out, the presence of wizarding graves in the Godric's Hollow churchyard complete with biblical inscriptions in DHs ought to stand as a salutary wake-up call as to Ms Rowling's take upon the likely religious practices, if any, of the average wizard in Great Britain.

It also became clear, post-HBP that if Voldemort ever took over any such organization as the alleged Knights of Walpurgis he did it by suborning the children of the members to his own cause. He got the organization as a value-added extra. Taking that kind of organization over wasn't ever really one of his goals.



The ancient nature religions of Europe, in general were deeply concerned with the turnings of the Astronomical year, and counted their holy days by the solstices and equinoxes. Between these four points of the year were the cross-quarters divisions, falling at the midpoints between solstice and equinox, and from which various of the aboriginal people counted the change of the seasons. These cross-quarter divisions are highly significant to the neo-pagan calendars of today.

During the period that Christianity was first making head-way across Europe the church was quick to co-opt these significant festivals, overlaying them with various saint's days and incorporating them into their own rites. The four cross-quarters festivals of Samhain, Imbolc, Beltane, and Lughnasad were recast as the Christian masses of All Hallows, Candlemas, Walpurgis, and Lammas. The most widely known of these is, of course, the overlay of All Hallows Eve upon the pagan festival of Samhain, which had marked the Celtic New Year.



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Almost as widely known, however was the overlay of the Feast of Walpurgis upon the ancient festival of Beltane. That one of the most rabidly pureblooded factions of the wizarding world's secret society allegedly chose to style itself as the Knights of Walpurgis, rather than the Lords of Beltane is a strong indication of just how thoroughly the original pagan religions had been obliterated in both the wizarding and the mundane communities.

Besides. Each and every one of those pagan religions were ALL predominantly *Muggle* religions. Nearly all of their worshipers were Muggles. And not every tribe's priest was a wizard, however many wizards may have been priests. (Or even priest-kings in the most ancient times.)

I suspect that, if anything, any modern paganism, like robes, is something that has been adopted — if/where it has been adopted — during the period after the Seclusion of wizards from mundane society had been formally imposed.

In which case we are not speaking of true paganism, *per se*, but various attempts at neo-paganism, most of which incorporate the precautions used in domesticated magic, aka: wizardry, and which had been absent from the original practices of the source religion. Very much like practicing pagans among Muggles today, who have adapted or omitted those practices which are in violation of modern secular law.

I have no idea what percentage of wizards may have actually adopted neo-pagan religions, or what percentage might continue to practice such religions today. I suspect, however that it was vanishingly small, and probably remains so.

I also strongly suspect that by the time that wizarding Seclusion was adopted, the real flash point was the issue of Catholic vs. Protestant.





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It is certainly not impossible that an undetermined minority of today's wizards are in fact neo-pagans. Although I very strongly doubt it. But the majority, given their long history of co-religion with their mundane neighbors are most likely to be either standard social Christians or woolly agnostics, much as are the majority of their Muggle counterparts. And any neopagan wizards would be well aware that they are a minority.

However; that is an observation which applies primarily to *modern* wizards. Wizarding history, like Muggle history, is bound to have a few odd pockets. And the British Isles have had a long history of waves of successive religions of which Christianity is only one. And it took some time before Christianity became the major one left standing.

There are persistent rumors that the death in a "hunting accident" on the day after Lammas in the year 1100 of King William II (William Rufus) was in fact due to his having gotten involved in a god-king cult. That William's relations with the established Church of the day were... *uneasy*, to say the least, suggests that this may be no more than a vile insinuation after the fact, but it cannot be ignored.

This rumored example of active paganism, or, possibly even at that date, neo-paganism, dated a scant century or so after the estimated date of the founding of Hogwarts draws our attention to the curious omission — regarding Hogwarts Castle — of any mention whatsoever of a Chapel. A Muggle fortification of the 10th century would almost certainly have included *something* of the sort. Yet at no point in the series has Harry



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either stumbled across one, or even a mention of one either in the Castle itself, or in the neighboring village of Hogsmeade. Nor is attendance at any form of religious services required of the Hogwarts student body.

Those who have adopted the reading of (neo)paganism among wizards make the not altogether unreasonable suggestion that there might yet be a circle of standing stones on the grounds, or a grove within the boundaries of the Forbidden Forest.

A reality check of course suggests that up to the release of DHs, JK Rowling — despite building her tale upon the foundation of what is obviously at least a titularly Christian society — had deliberately excised any overt mention of *any* specific religion, Christianity or otherwise, as well as any form of more blatant religious trappings from her storyline. (This much she has confirmed in her interviews, if we can believe interviews. I think in this case we probably can.) In this she is probably more to be thanked than censured. The author is known to identify herself as a Christian, her story appears to laud the so-called "christian" virtues, she is certainly to be permitted to decline the invitation to debate points of theology in the course of her story.

Assuming that she *had* actually declined this invitation, that is. This was not absolutely certain until the story arc had been completed. The title of the impending book: Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, suggested that Rowling may have finally decided to break her pattern. But we could certainly continue to hope, and the indications are that we did not do so altogether in vain. Even the somewhat hopelessly woo-woo and confusing gibberish of the celestial King's Cross chapter of the final book, and its aftermath, managed to narrowly avoid any





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points of organized theology.

The century and a half preceding the formal establishment of wizarding Seclusion, however, was not an era which would have contributed to the merely “social” observance of any religion. The religious manias and widespread intolerance for any trace of the supernatural which pervaded as a *leit motif* throughout the 16th and 17th centuries across all Europe was such as to give a great deal of plausibility to the suggestion of that hypothetical neo-pagan revival upon the establishment of Seclusion, for it had certainly been Christianity at its very worst which was on display throughout this period, and the excesses of which that had basically driven the wizarding population into headlong flight.

It should be noted, however, that being a wizard does not render one immune to religious devotion, or even fanaticism. When wizards retreated into Seclusion they took any number of religiously-based social issues with them.

And as usual, by the “wizarding world”, I am speaking primarily about the *British* wizarding world.



For one thing; as I stated above; the whole Catholic vs. Protestant issue would have certainly accompanied them. And it may still contribute a part of the underpinnings of the friction between some of the factions active in wizarding society today.

That the growing intolerance for wizardry and the supernatural were predominantly offshoots of the Protestant Reformation suggests that there is a far higher than average likelihood that any European wizarding family which retreated from mun-

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dane society in the early portion of this transitional period was almost certain to be at least publicly avowed as Roman Catholic. By the end of this period, however, when Seclusion was finally demanded of *all* magicals, those who were ultimately forced into Seclusion were likely to have been those who had already re-aligned themselves to Anglican, Lutheran or Calvinist congregations.

Muggle-born witches and wizards who have been recruited into the wizarding world over the past three centuries in Great Britain will have further raised the representation of both C of E and various smaller, non-conformist Protestant sects within the wizarding population, as well as the establishment or continuance of a presence of other world religions such as Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism and the like. None of which made up a significant portion of the wizarding population of Great Britain at the end of the 17th century.

But there is a strong probability that, even in modern day, anything up to half or more of the most staunchly pure-blood-centric wizarding population may still identify itself as adhering to some variant of Catholicism. And the more firm such a family's identification with the wizarding isolationist faction the higher this likelihood. This issue may well bear some relevance to the determined and growing resistance of this sector of the population to the Ministry's aggressive recruitment of (mostly Anglican) Muggle-borns.

By this time, of course, it would hardly be remarkable to discover that, within the wizarding world, even in the observance of some of this world's most dominant organized religions there has been a considerable amount of theological drift from what



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would be recognized as the standard observance of those religions by Muggles today. Or at least it would if the separation of the wizarding and Muggle worlds were anything like as complete as Rowling tried to imply over the first half of the series. But the probability is that this simply is not so.

When the wizarding world of Europe went into Seclusion, of course, it stands to reason that at least a few of their number might have been priests of both Catholic and Anglican ordination as well as Protestant ministers, Jewish rabbis, and the various clergy of Islam, or any other established religion which had been adopted by the time of the Seclusion's commencement, assuming that wizarding Seclusion was indeed established in Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, which is not by any means confirmed, given that those societies were not fully subjected to the pressures of a Protestant Reformation.

Had the separation been complete, these spiritual leaders would now have been largely cut off from their traditional centralized authority, forced into isolation with a "flock" of which every member was capable of producing miracles at will. Had this been the case, some degree of modification in the observance of those religions must have taken place in order to accommodate the somewhat specialized needs of these particular congregations. We have been given no indication of this having been the case. And I, for one, do not at all blame Ms Rowling for choosing not to go there. I am, if anything, grateful for her restraint.

Indeed, this much-touted "separation" between the wizarding and Muggle worlds appears to be gradually boiling down to the fact that wizards were simply no longer permitted to live openly as wizards — which is not at all the same thing.

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Indeed, with the release of DHs we now have been informed that a sizable percentage of the wizarding population merely clustered in the vicinity of a half-dozen semi-wizarding villages and, so far as religion goes, carried on as before.

(Rendering their incorrigible cluelessness regarding Muggles and Muggle culture as both totally implausible, and ridiculous.)



Unfortunately, it is also likely that for as much of the wizarding population to have survived long enough to have been able to escape into whatever degree of separation had been established by the date of the formal imposition of wizarding Seclusion, required that a great many very unpleasant and unsavory shifts and subterfuges had to have been deployed by wizards during the 16th and 17th centuries.

Many of these shifts were not at all admirable. One of the least palatable is the conclusion to which I am forced that some number of wizards must have actively infiltrated the ranks of the so-called witchfinders. In this guise they would have used every influence, both natural and magical, to divert suspicion from actual magical folk, at need re-directing it to those scapegoats they determined to be the least productive, most easily dispensed with, and most undefended members of mundane society. Most typically these were older Muggle women, living alone. It is also possible that the value which is almost certainly placed upon women within the wizarding world today may have been yet another of the developments which had taken place in reaction to what was going on in Muggle society, subsequent to the establishment of wizarding Seclusion. (Rowling seriously



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undercut this possibility in HBP and afterwards, although she had been at some pains to establish it prior to that, in Order of the Phoenix.)

It is also probable that these witchfinders actively sought out the chance to perform the slightly more excusable service of “exorcising” House Elves, thus “freeing” them to take refuge within the wizarding world that was in the process of forming and for them to be reassigned to wizarding properties. At the time these wizards could hardly have supposed that they were worsening the Elves’ lot in the long run.

It is also not at all difficult to believe that some of these “witchfinders” may have taken the opportunity to have abused their position by using their authority to pursue personal agendas against other wizards and their families. Some long-standing wizarding family feuds may very well date from acts which were undertaken during this deplorable era.



## Regarding the Potterverse Part I

# O! The Times are Out of Joint!

This is an attempt to construct a timeline backstory for the Wizarding World up to the opening of the series of Harry Potter. Which, in effect, boils down to events of the British Wizarding World over the course of the lifetime of Albus Dumbledore.





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Okay, tighten your seatbelts, get something to drink while you read it, this one is LONG.

It's got a lot of ground to cover, after all.

Unlike most of the collection, this *particular* sub-collection on the Red Hen Publications website tends to get a fair degree of revision whenever some alternate interpretation of the text available reveals itself to me. And that still tends to happen every couple of years or so. Consequently it gets a few shifts and changes.

If you haven't checked the website out recently, there may have been some since the last time you did so.



**M**y master timeline required a fairly major revision back in 2007 in view of Rowling's endorsement of the 1960 birth date for the Marauder cohort in DHs. In one fell swoop she disallowed nearly every date of the version of this piece which had been derived from the Black family tapestry sketch. As well as my own earlier calculations which took into account that a 1960 birth year scarcely gave the principle characters time to get into place before Tom Riddle came a-calling. I had, in response, calculated the Marauders' birth year as 1959.

Welcome to the "adventure" of trying to sort out a workable and mostly consistent timeline of the events we have been given to understand have taken place pertaining to the story of Harry Potter and the Dark Lord. And, yeah, I'm afraid that "mostly consistent" is as good as it's likely to get.

Attempting to work from the Black Family Tapestry Sketch is now revealed to be a peril that lurks for the unwary. For,

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although it seems that we can probably take all of the relationships depicted on that sketch as read, the dates on that document flatly do not work. Not with statements made by characters in the books, nor pointed out by the limited 3rd-person narrator related to actions or events which are inside the story. The tapestry sketch, not truly being a part of the story (even though it does make a cameo appearance in it), does not trump the information in the books. The information in the books trumps it.

It trumps it even more when one reflects that information on the sketch that was released in February of 2006 is not even the same information as I am told now exists on Pottermore. After demonstrating that she could not stick to the same story for two days running about what her main characters were doing between the "final battle" and the epilogue, I am completely done with listening to Rowling.

I have also incorporated some more recent tweaking regarding some of the Weasley family's birth years in accordance with the calculations used in the essay entitled 'The Weasley Calendar', which was also done to bring the probabilities closer to what has actually been mentioned in passing inside the books. Information which was once available on the (no longer online version of) Rowling's official website does not trump information in the books either. Nor, for that matter does information on Pottermore. Not if it contradicts the information inside the published version of the books.

The books, after all, came first. And they are going to be around *much* longer than Pottermore.

Finally, neither do Rowling's statements in interviews trump what is in the books. And should not be expected to. In an



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interview Ms Rowling is speaking off the top of her head without access to any of her references. And given that she has in the past claimed not to even reread her own work, often it comes across as though she is making things up on the fly to amuse the questioner and the audience. There is no reason to insist that the official canon — which are, after all, published documents — is going to reflect that kind of behavior. Particularly since there is just as much of a chance as not that she will contradict any such statement made in any interview as soon as someone asks her another question later. Or even the same question on a different day. She's done that.

None of my tweaking here is authorized, either, you understand. But the end result matches up *somewhat* better with what we have been told in the text of the actual books. The extrapolations of any and all possible causes and motivations are, of course, completely speculative.

The point of the exercise is to attempt to construct a reasonably consistent timeline that can be adapted for other purposes. And anyone is welcome to do so.



So.

Forget the date of the International Act of Wizarding Seculsion. Forget the estimated date of the founding of Hogwarts. Forget the estimated date that the Hogwarts Quill went into commission.

In THIS essay, we are only concerned with the events which are more-or-less directly connected to the backstory of the seven-part adventure of Harry Potter and the Dark Lord.



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Which is to say, the very late 19th and most of the 20th century. Or, by extension, the lifespan of Albus Dumbledore. And by further extension, the lifespan of Tom Marvolo Riddle. Which is quite enough to be going on with.

Until February of 2006 we still had only two “solid” dates from which we attempted to calculate *any* of the Potterverse's events of the 20th century. The first was the information on Albus Dumbledore's chocolate frog card, which states that Albus Dumbledore defeated the Dark wizard Grindelwald in 1945. And that doesn't really get us very much forwarder, since it now seems apparent that Grindelwald hadn't really got squat to do with Voldemort or Harry Potter. Or at least not directly, even if his story did reflect (rather poorly) upon Albus Dumbledore. Actually, upon closer examination that statement turns out to be slightly inaccurate. There *is* a probable connection. But even so it remains firmly in the background.

Our second date was given us by Nearly Headless Nick, who states in CoS that he was executed in 1492, and that he would shortly be celebrating the 500th anniversary of his death. I suspect the date actually *meant* there was 1592, which would have both matched up with his statement of the year before — that it had been \*400\* years since he had tasted food — as well as his mode of dress which includes a ruff, but we need not explore this glitch further, we can pretend it is a typo that the editors missed, and at any rate, it has nothing directly to do with the events of the 20th century, either.

All other statements within canon up to February 2006, then, were based upon “relative” rather than “absolute” dates. Which is to say that the dates were relative to the date of Sir





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Nick's execution, which served as our base point. And for the purposes of calculation we were counting from 1492, even though that date was politely agreed to be a misprint.

Our default starting point dictated that if Nearly Headless Nick was executed in 1492, and that event took place 500 years earlier, then the date at which his statement is being made is 1992. No problem with that so far.

This statement was made shortly before Halloween of Harry Potter's 2nd year at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Since we know that Harry had started at Hogwarts at the age of 11 almost exactly one year earlier, we readily determined that if the statement was made in 1992, soon after Harry has just turned 12, then Harry was born in 1980.

Or was he?

Yes, in fact, apparently he was. Or at any rate, it appeared to be safe to continue to believe so. This information was later mostly confirmed in October 2007 when Harry Potter became featured as the Wizard of the Month on Rowling's official site. Off-canon, admittedly, but no reason to assume it was incorrect.

As of February 2006, we thought we had been given a bit of a break. JK Rowling was asked by a charitable group known as Book Aid if she would donate a page of her own work for auction as a fund-raiser.

She donated a sketch covering the last 6 generations of the Black Family's genealogical Tapestry.

With dates.



Admittedly there were enough howlingly obvious bugs and

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glitches attendant upon these dates to make it difficult to know which ones were actually safe to use to reason from, even then. But I will not examine that particular issue here. A much fuller exploration and attempt at retrofitting that tapestry can be found in the essay regarding 'The Noble House of Black'.

Since the release of DHs, however, it has become obvious that the dates on this piece of paper are all but completely unworkable.

Which certainly isn't to say that we had not put a great deal of effort into *trying* to work with them by that time.

Even at the outset, the information on the tapestry sketch raised almost as many issues as it settled. Among the issues which seemed to have been settled by it was the confirmation of all our calculations of the year of Harry Potter's birth. He is known to have been born in the same year as Draco Malfoy. Draco Malfoy's birth year is clearly stated as being 1980. Nothing either in the books nor on the website has ever really called this date into question.

Of course, from the very beginning, the soundness of calculating from the original 1492 date was immediately contradicted by any attempt to cross-check related data against any Real World calendar as to the timing of events actually mentioned *in the story*. And if this date was adjusted to comply with the actual timing of some of these Real World events, the 1945 Grindelwald date was rendered even more irrelevant than it appeared to be already.

For example; that 1980 birth date for Harry Potter was immediately called into question by even the most cursory look at any Real World calendar.



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The action of Chapter one of PS/SS opens with Vernon Dursley setting off to work on a “dull, grey Tuesday morning” which all subsequent statements imply to have been November first, 1981, some 15 months after Harry’s birth.

Except that if you look at any calendar for 1981, you will see that the first of November is quite clearly a Sunday; a day upon which Vernon and Petunia might be heading off to church, but on which Vernon would certainly not be heading off to the office.

Unless the day the story opens is not the 1st of November, but the 3rd and baby Harry was not merely off the map for the “missing” 24 hour period generally assumed, but had been kept under wraps for a period of some three days. Otherwise it is not possible for the narration we are given to be applied to the Real World year of 1981.

And even this re-evaluation would not explain the radio announcer’s mysterious admonition that Bonfire night is “not until next week, folks,” unless the broadcast was actually taking place late in October rather than the 1st of November, which makes no sense whatsoever. That would not add up even if the 1st of November *had* been on a Tuesday.

In order to find a First of November that *does* take place on a Tuesday, you have to step forward to 1983. Which would shift Harry’s birth date to July 31, 1982. Which does not comply with having the 500th anniversary of Nearly Headless Nick’s death (in 1492) take place in Harry’s 2nd year, since in that case Harry’s 2nd year would have been the academic year of 1994-95.

So. Would correcting the date of Nick’s execution to 1494 resolve the problem?

Well, it would certainly resolve *that* problem. But does it

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solve all of them? In a word, no. Since much of the point of the timeline for CoS hinges upon the fact that the Riddle Diary was dated *exactly* 50 years before the year that Harry came briefly into possession of it, and that the original year of the Basilisk was Tom Riddle’s *5th* year, this no longer matches, and all becomes more than slightly inconvenient.

For that matter, the year earlier, as mentioned above Nick had been sighing that he had not tasted real food for nearly 400 years, not 500. That would move his execution to 1592, which would at least fit the description of his costume, and raises no other conflicts, but it will not move November 1, 1981 to a Tuesday, regardless. Even though it does make our confidence in using that 1492 date just a little bit shaky.



So what about any of the other events in the series that ought to be verifiable by a good look at an almanac?

In PoA Buckbeak’s execution is set for June 6, at sundown. It is a major plot point that there was a full moon that night.

That turned out to be an eventful evening. We not only overheard what we assumed to be Buckbeak’s execution (it wasn’t), Scabbers, who had been missing, presumed dead, for months unexpectedly re-emerged, we witnessed the showdown in the Shrieking Shack, learned the truth about just who really betrayed Harry Potter’s parents to Voldemort, got through a large-scale Dementor attack, and watched Harry and Hermione’s daring trip back through time to rescue Buckbeak and Sirius Black.

One of the side events of that action-packed evening was Professor Lupin’s having gotten caught out in the light of the



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full moon without having taken his wolfbane potion.

This climax of PoA took place June 6, 1994, according the 1492-1980 birth date-based calculations. Was there a full moon on June 6 in 1994? Well, as anyone who has been hanging around the fandom since the book came out in 1999 could tell you, no. There was not. The “Moon in June” wasn’t until the 23rd that year.

So, would resetting the wayback machine to 1996 and moving Harry’s birthdate to 1982 fix this? No. The full moon in June was on the 1st in ’96. Closer, certainly, but still nearly a week off.

Searching through that almanac, the first year we find where the full moon in June took place on the 6th is the year 2001. I don’t think so. Harry Potter was not born in 1987 whatever you may try to say. Digging back further we finally find a June 6 full moon in... 1982.

Well, that’s mildly interesting. Was 1982 the master calendar used for all dates, every year, throughout the entire series perhaps?

Well, it’s possible, certainly. But not a done-deal. Although it is interesting to note that both year 3’s first Hogsmeade weekend, which included Halloween itself, and year 5’s second Hogsmeade weekend which included Valentine’s day *did* land on weekends in ’82, but both landed on Sunday rather than Saturday. I suspect that there are additional such inconsistencies throughout the entire series. And I can guarantee that they are not all going to be resolved by a single global adjustment to Sir Nick’s presumed 1492 death date.

So, it is obvious that we are all on “Rowling time,” which conforms to no known rational calendar. Ms Rowling never made any attempt to put the Potterverse’s days of the week or phases

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of the moon into proper synchronization with those of our world. It is useless to attempt to adjust the timelines to allow for this. The tale takes place in Storybook Land. In Storybook Land, all times are one. Literally.

Ergo; we shall, provisionally, just have to assume that the weeks, months and years in the Potterverse are all the same lengths as ours, and continue to nod politely at the dates Rowling has given us, as she has given them to us. Ms Rowling has warned us that she is not at her best at maths, so anything to do with numbers tends to come unstuck at a touch. (One of the people in the Café Dangereux forums where I used to hang out commented that JK Rowling’s use of numbers is “impressionistic” rather than realistic. This is a very kind way of describing it.)

And, like I say, we were finally given confirmation of one point at least. Draco Malfoy, who shows up on the Black family tapestry, through his mother, is listed as having been born in 1980. And Harry Potter who is Wizard of the Month in October 2007 was as well. So we were right about that at least. We need no longer fret about Harry’s birth year.

Assuming that we ever had been inclined to.



Which perhaps is just as well. I will admit that I was rather fond of my calculations as they stood and was just as glad to be able to go on playing with some of them for a bit longer. Even if I did end up having to do a major retrofit in the wake of DHs.

The Black family tapestry did temporarily force at least a few adjustments onto my calculations, however. I really did *try* to make those dates work — until they turned out to be con-



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tradicted by information in just about every single book from GoF on. Finally in the wake of the closure of official canon, I decided that it was enough of a trial to attempt to bring the actual *published* statements into some form of compliance, and that life was too short to try to incorporate a page of gratuitous nonsense as well. Such as, for example:

In GoF, Sirius Black tells us very clearly that Severus Snape hung out with, among others, “the Lestranges, a married couple now in Azkaban” when he was a boy at Hogwarts. In OotP we learned that these particular Lestranges were Rodolphus Lestrange and the former Bellatrix Black, Sirius’s own first cousin.

At that point in the series we were still inclined to take Sirius Black at his word. This was probably a mistake, but it is still difficult to believe that he would have felt he had anything to gain by deliberately lying about it.

With the release of the Black family tapestry sketch, we learned that Bellatrix Black was born in 1951.

Er... huh?

The only way that Severus Snape could be at school at the same time as a Bellatrix Black who was born in 1951 would be if she was born after September 1, and he was born no later than 1958. Not even the 1959 that I had been endorsing ever since I started posting my interpretations of the timeline on the web. And certainly not the HP Lexicon’s 1960, which I had never agreed with anyway.

1958. Nothing. Else. Works.

And at that she’d be a 7th year when he went up as an ickle Firstie.

That much *about* worked.

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So for a year and a half, the dates throughout the collection were therefore updated to reflect this new interpretation.

Well. Oops.

With the release of Deathly Hallows it seems that I adjusted at the wrong end of the equation. Now that the 1960 birth date is official for the Marauder cohort *in the books*, the adjustment needs to be made to the Black family tapestry sketch instead. Even if the whole exercise is simply because Rowling cannot count (the woman had already demonstrated in canon that she literally cannot count to four) and wrote down the wrong dates.

Possibly in both places.



Ever since I put the first iteration of this essay collection together I have been scattering bits and pieces of extrapolated timeline backstory theory throughout the whole of it and by now it would be a real chore for anyone to try to go through and sort it all out. But I am going to make an effort to collect it all into one place.

In this essay, right here.

Therefore; I am undoubtedly going to end up summarizing and repeating the various calculations pertaining to the backstory here, along with my sources and the lines of reasoning I have used, just in case anyone has any interest in comparing my theories regarding the master backstory timelines alongside those of more widely-known sites such as the Harry Potter Lexicon. (Which I gather has been moved.)

And there is a fairly high chance that *this* essay might reflect a later interpretation which is not mentioned in one or more of



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my other essays. If you catch one of those lapses you can tell me and I'll correct the mismatch. THIS one is the definitive timeline essay.

I will not necessarily be extending this essay's chronology into the body of the series as we have it in the books. Whatever might have been going on during any period that Harry was an active participant might be better discussed in an essay related to analyzing whichever particular adventure one is trying to concentrate on. Consequently, this chronology only goes as far as the day that Harry was escorted by Hagrid to Diagon Alley the first time.

The sources I have used are, in order of preference; statements actually made in the books; statements made later by JKR in interviews, or on her original website, the Black family tapestry sketch; or extrapolations from what may be suggested by the above in the absence of hard data. There are also a couple of points made in the background by the overlay of some dates of events in the Real World, although there is considerable risk in using those, since the Potterverse is manifestly not the Real World.

There are, in addition, any number of extrapolated possibilities worked up from points that turned up in discussions or correspondence with other fans. There is no obligation to accept any of these, but they do fit nicely into some of the remaining gaps.

At least one of those is a sizable gap, and I made a determined effort to fill it completely.

You will also notice that I do not mention the films at any point in any of this. That omission is *quite* deliberate. I do not accept the films as canon At All. Films are effectively authorized fanfic.

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First out, and off the radar; we need to make a side note that in the first four books, we get a couple of references which imply that there was evidently a very dangerous, unidentified Dark wizard active at some point in the later half of the 19th century. It was mentioned in passing on more than one occasion that Lord Voldemort is "the most dangerous Dark wizard in a hundred years." Or words very much to that effect. In short; the wizarding world, in Rowling's original iteration, has been in something like this situation before. Possibly more than once, and most recently about a century ago. It survived that crisis, but it probably hadn't quite believed that it was going to at the time.

By HBP Rowling seems to have completely abandoned this line of backstory. People in the course of the story are now all hyperbolically declaiming that Lord Voldemort is the ultimate in *eeeeevil*. And is the most dangerous Dark wizard Of All Time. Neither of which statements seems even remotely plausible.

I also find such hyperbola in bad taste. But I am not the one writing the story.

Although I do have to concede that this rather tacky device does conveniently bypass the consideration that, consequently, unless the career of the last major Dark wizard took place on the continent and was upstaged by mundane events inside or outside of Great Britain, the whole thing managed to completely escape the attention of British Muggles. For they continue to show no indication of having ever heard of it.

In DHs, we are given to understand that this last factor appears to have been instrumental in the lack of mention ever



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given to Gellert Grindelwald, whose activities at the other end of Europe seem to have bypassed even the average wizard-in-the-street of Great Britain without much attention, or concern, until nearly the mid-20th century.

However, clearly not all Dark wizards are equal. In HBP even Albus Dumbledore appears to have scaled up his opinion of the danger represented by Tom Riddle to the point of suggesting that he is possibly the most dangerous Dark wizard “of all time”, at least when speaking of Riddle to Harry.

Unfortunately, given the revelations regarding Albus’s character over the course of DHs we cannot overlook the possibility that these statements were intended as sheer flattery, with the intent to influence Harry’s decisions, and appeal to his self-absorption. Although it would certainly be nicer if we could overlook that possibility.

And we *can* probably agree that no earlier Dark Lord candidate has ever presented quite such a sticky issue as the problem posed by those multiple Horcruxes.

But in any event; regarding the chronology of the wizarding world over the course of, say, Albus Dumbledore’s lifespan, now that we have the official Dumbledore backstory *and* the official Riddle backstory, in some detail, we find that it is necessary (and that we are finally able) to take few back-steps, and do some infill and retrofitting.



With a few recently interjected additions. As of the end of 2019 my attention was drawn, by a correspondent (yes, I am still in correspondence with people in HP fandom some 20 years

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later), to the problem of the paired “vanishing cabinets” which figured fairly prominently over the course of both OotP and HBP.

We had first encountered those cabinets all the way back in CoS. By Harry’s day, one of those cabinets stood in the showroom of Borgin & Burke’s curio shop in Knockturn Alley, London. The other was on display in a public area of Hogwarts. The Hogwarts cabinet was later smashed by Peeves during that same academic year and although physically repaired, its charmwork remained faulty.

We have absolutely no information about when the Hogwarts cabinet was brought into the castle, other than that it was almost certainly originally the personal property of a former member of the Hogwarts staff. One whose family, if any, has evidently never chosen to demand it back.

At the other end of this particular equation, we also have no information to establish when the London cabinet was added to the showroom of B&B, or under what circumstances. Either B&B were unaware that they were holding one of a set of paired cabinets, or they have been unsuccessful in gaining possession of the cabinet at Hogwarts.

The physical description of the cabinets; that they were specifically *lacquer* cabinets, was not a lot of help in determining their age, either. That description of the cabinets lines up nicely with the style of chinoiserie which has been intermittently popular since the eighteenth century. We have no way of determining just when those cabinets reached B&B and Hogwarts.

For over a dozen years, I had been proposing that those paired cabinets had originally constituted Headmaster Black’s emergency route home to #12 Grimmauld Place. His daughter



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Belvina was recorded on the Black Family Tapestry sketch as having married a Herbert Burke, which appeared to provide a simple line to draw between two points.

Since the tapestry sketch shows Belvina as having been alive until 1962 — which would have been nearly the time of Riddle's return from Albania, I had dismissed the London cabinet from any considerations regarding Tom Riddle's having encountered it during his period of employment in the shop a decade or so earlier.

This dismissal might have been premature. The Hogwarts cabinet could have been there since Albus's days as a student. The London cabinet could have been at B&B's since before Tom Riddle was born.

So, with that interjection noted, lets see what we can make of a timeline:



**1881:** Birth of Albus Wulfric Percival Brian Dumbledore, eldest child of Percival and Kendra Dumbledore of Mould-on-the-Wold. This date was confirmed when Albus was featured as Wizard of the Month for September, 2007. This came as a general surprise, since Rowling had stated more than once in earlier interviews that he lived to the age of about 150. Evidently she'd had second thoughts by the time she sat down to write DHs, for the 1881 birth date is supported by the text of that book, at least, even if not any of the earlier ones. Nor, it must be admitted is such a date contraindicated in any of the earlier ones.

**1883, Autumn:** Birth of Aberforth Dumbledore. This date is an approximation, but it follows Rowling's default positioning of the births of children within a family as roughly two years apart.

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That Aberforth was three years behind Albus at Hogwarts, however, suggests that his birthdate is after September 1.

**1885:** Birth of Ariana Dumbledore. The family portrait noted in DHs was probably made within the year.

**1891, approximate:** Attack upon Ariana Dumbledore, aged 6, by three Muggle neighbor boys. Percival Dumbledore sentenced to Azkaban for attacking said Muggles. Kendra Dumbledore moves the family to Godric's Hollow.

**1892:** Albus Dumbledore begins Hogwarts.

**1895:** Aberforth Dumbledore begins Hogwarts.

**1899, Spring:** Gellert Grindelwald, age 16, is expelled from Durmstrang and packed off to his great-aunt in Britain.

**1899, June:** Death of Kendra Dumbledore, soon after her elder son sits his NEWTs. Albus and Elphias Doge appear to have departed from Hogwarts before the leaving feast in order to start on their traditional "Grand Tour." Upon notification of his mother's death, Albus returns from London immediately, canceling his trip to arrange the funeral and care for his 14-year-old sister. Albus soon encounters Gellert Grindelwald who is living with his great-aunt Bathilda Bagshott. In Britain, Gellert seems to have had little difficulty acquiring a new wand if his own was snapped in a formal expulsion as would have been done at Hogwarts. It is assumed that he had already passed the equivalent of his OWLs, and may have intended to sit his NEWTs in Britain. By the time Aberforth returns from school Albus and Gellert are fast friends. The two spend most of the summer building castles in the air about questing after the Deathly Hallows, and how the world should be ruled once they aquire them. They ill-advisably start making plans about



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how to put these dreams into practice.

**1899, August:** an attack by Gellert upon Aberforth (who was protesting their plan to take their sister abroad) escalates into a magical brawl involving Gellert, Aberforth and Albus, in the course of which Ariana Dumbledore is inadvertently killed. Gellert Grindelwald flees back to the Continent. Aberforth holds his brother responsible, assaults him at the funeral and breaks his nose. Aberforth presumably returns to Hogwarts to study for and sit his OWLs. Possibly, he merely wanted out of his brother's house. It is unknown whether he continued his schooling beyond that point, but it appears that Aberforth does not return to Godric's Hollow afterwards. The brothers remain estranged for some years.



Albus's subsequent actions are unclear, although the impression given is that he was engaged in research, engaged in a partnership with Nicholas Flamel, and maintained a wide correspondence with many of the ww's eminent figures before returning to Hogwarts as a teacher. In the original projections based upon Rowling's statement that Albus was around 150 years old at the end of GoF there was ample time for this. With the DHs retrofit which sees him at 116 years of age at the time of his death in 1997, there simply isn't. There is a brief period between about 1899, and at the latest 1935 in which *some* of this might have been accomplished, but for the most part, these broad associations end up needing to be scaled back to correspondence only.

Acto Rowling acto various interviews, at some point in his life he learned to understand both Merrow and Parseltongue.



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Merrow he could have learned from the lake dwellers at Hogwarts over his period as an instructor there. It is unclear who taught him to understand Parseltongue. Later Rowling stated that she didn't think that Parseltongue could be learned, but, really, the official Riddle backstory makes no sense at all unless Albus could understand it, and she had previously claimed that he could. Presumably Parseltongue when spoken by a human is intelligible through a translation spell, rather than needing to be formally learned.



**1900–1910:** At some point during this period Gellert Grindelwald steals the Elder Wand from the wandmaker Gregorovitch. Since in all references to this event Gellert's youth is repeatedly called to our attention, my guess would be that the theft had probably taken place by 1905, when Gellert would have been about 22.

**1907:** Probable birth year of Merope Gaunt. Dumbledore's states in passing that she was 18 years of age at the time the scene took place which we were enabled to witness via the memory contributed by the late Bob Ogden, a former employee of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement (and presumably kin to Tibereus Ogden, a long-time supporter of Dumbledore's, who, along with Griselda Marchbanks resigned from the Wizengamot in protest over Dumbledore's removal from that body in mid-1995).



Difficult as it is to imagine either Merope or her brother Morfin at Hogwarts, unless such things were managed very differently at the early part of the 20th century, it seems equally





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unlikely that they would be recognized as a qualified witch and wizard, and permitted the possession of wands without having at least managed to scrape some sort of passing score on the OWLs. So it is likely that despite Tom Riddle's statement to the contrary, they did indeed attend Hogwarts. At least through their 5th years.

For that matter; that Dumbledore is able to state Merope's age so confidently confirms either that the Gaunts are in all likelihood British-born and were recorded by the Hogwarts Quill on the enrollment list, which he could have looked up before showing the memory to Harry. Or he personally remembered their attendance at the school. At any rate, Albus had at some point taken care to research the family before his presentation of the Ogden memory to Harry. It is my belief that he had found it necessary to do some research regarding the Gaunt family back in 1945.

If Merope sat the NEWTs, she would have finished school at the beginning of the same summer in which we witnessed the arrest of her father and brother. Merope's Hogwarts years — assuming she sat the NEWTs — would have probably been 1918-1925. If she left after only sitting the OWLs those dates would be modified to 1918-1923. With the DHs adjustment to Albus's personal timeline, he might not yet have been employed as an instructor at Hogwarts during the period that either of the Gaunt siblings were in attendance.

Morfin appears to have been the elder of the two Gaunt children, although it is not known by how much. Nor whether this is even, in fact, the case. We assume this to be the case chiefly because he appears to have been given a sentence for assaulting

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a Ministry employee (and a Muggle) which would suggest that he was tried as an adult rather than a minor.



**1914, (extrapolated):** *if we can assume that the Potterverse followed Real World trends (which is highly unlikely, but we'll go through the motions as if we believed it) growing unrest in Europe, cumulating in a political assassination in Sarajevo escalates into a Muggle war. This also marks a possible start of Gellert Grindelwald's rise to power in Eastern Europe. Much of his activity over the next several years were undoubtedly masked under cover of the Muggle war. Later the influenza pandemic, assuming that the Potterverse had one, followed by a bust-boom-bust economy affecting much of the western world, and the social unrest attendant upon the economic situation over much of Europe may have also concealed his growing influence. Assuming continuing parallels to Real World events, Fascist regimes popping up like mushrooms all over Europe, and the Spanish Civil War may have further distracted attention during this period from the consolidation of his gains.*

He is not likely to have given up on his ambition of collecting all three of the Deathly Hallows, however. Indeed, the fact that he has managed to take possession of one of them has probably only made him the more determined to find them all. But his current activities preclude his taking any further action on the matter himself. He has set some trusted agents to attempting to trace and acquire the relics under his direction. None of the artifacts he acquires, if any, are genuine. In the course of these investigations, one of his agents does manage to make note of a



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Marvolo Gaunt regarding his family's heirloom ring. The agent does not credit Gaunt with enough understanding of the matter to believe the ring he holds is genuine and does not persist in his efforts to acquire it.

**1925: Summer;** Bob Ogden visits the Gaunt household in the course of an investigation concerning the hexing of a Muggle by Morfin Gaunt. An altercation ensues which results in the arrests of both Marvolo and Morfin Gaunt.

**1925: Late Summer/Autumn;** in the absence of her father and brother, Merope Gaunt screws up her courage to put herself in the way of Tom Riddle, a Muggle with whom she is infatuated.

Albus claims that at some point during this period she managed to trick him into drinking a love potion. It should be noted that Albus was not there, and had no real knowledge of Riddle's motivations in the matter, nor of whatever methods Merope may have used to capture Tom Riddle's attention. The love potion scenario is Albus's own unsupported addition to the narrative.

It should also be noted that Albus has clearly, and not without some justification, already made up his mind that *nothing* good could ever be associated with Tom Marvolo Riddle, and this opinion colors his interpretation of the actions of everyone concerned.

Tom and Merope make a run-away match of it and remove to London. Given that Merope was under the age of 21 and did not have her family's permission or approval of the marriage, the legality of the marriage could be uncertain. But, if Tom was indeed under any form of magical influence he would probably have married her.

**1926: Late Winter:** Marvolo Gaunt is released from Azkaban. He returns to Little Hangleton to find his daughter gone and the

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house abandoned.

**1926: Spring — April-June:** Muggle Tom Riddle returns to Little Hangleton claiming that he had been "hoodwinked" by Merope Gaunt.

**1926: December:** Merope Riddle, heavily pregnant, is seen in Knockturn Alley. She sells Slytherin's Locket to Caractacus Burke of Borgin & Burke's. He takes advantage of her ignorance of the locket's probable value.

**December 31, 1926:** birth of Tom Marvolo Riddle in a London orphanage. Death of Merope Riddle. Age about 19.

It should probably be noted that it would have been extremely easy for Merope to ask anyone in Diagon or Knockturn Alleys about using the Floo to St Mungo's hospital when the time came to bear her child. That she instead chose to bear that child in a Muggle venue strongly suggests that she had probably been actively avoiding any wizarding enclaves since leaving Little Hangleton. And she may have only made her way to B&B when she realized that she might be able to get a better price for the locket from people who would recognize its history. It is entirely possible that she absolutely did not wish to *ever* be forced to return to Little Hangleton, and that she did not want any child of hers to fall into the hands of her father or brother. Perhaps even more particularly if that child should turn out to be a girl.

**Summer, 1928:** Morfin Gaunt released from Azkaban. His father is dead and his sister vanished. He returns to Little Hangleton and lives as a recluse. Age somewhere between about 20–23.

**Summer, 1938 (or perhaps the summer of 1937):** on the annual outing to the seaside with his orphanage, young Tom Riddle terrorizes two of his fellow orphans in a sea cave.



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**Summer, 1938:** Professor Dumbledore visits the orphanage with Riddle's Hogwarts letter. Tom accepts the letter, Albus's warning, and some amount of wizarding currency from the Governor's fund for destitute students, and enters Diagon Alley, unsupervised.

**September, 1938:** Tom Riddle arrives at Hogwarts. He is Sorted into Slytherin. Horace Slughorn is Head of House. In common with most young Slytherin students, he learns of the legend of Slytherin's Chamber of Secrets.

**Undetermined date, but prior to the academic year of 1942–'43:** Albus Dumbledore makes a fierce and determined effort to see the Hogwarts Library purged of any material pertaining to Horcruxes. It is not at all unlikely that Horcruxes were not the only unsavory practice included in this purge. But concealing the existence and creation of Horcruxes was definitely a part of this campaign.

It is unknown both precisely when this campaign actually took place, or exactly what incident might have inspired Dumbledore to initiate it. But the fact that he had recently delivered a Hogwarts letter to a child who had boasted of what appeared to be a probable skill in \*possession\*, *might* not impossibly have prompted him to make an attempt to limit possible related damage.

**Undetermined date 1938–1941:** Tom Riddle, in his search for the Chamber of Secrets discovers the Room of Requirement in its guise as the Room of Hidden Things. He keeps this information to himself.

**Summer 1941, extrapolation:** At this point we remind ourselves of the fact that traditionally, orphanages only undertook the care of children until they reached an age to be legally able to

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work for a living. At 14, Tom is eligible to take a job in domestic service, and one has been arranged for him. Upon his refusal to accept it, the orphanage takes the opportunity to be rid of him.

With a collection of various magical artifacts that he has lifted from the Room of Hidden Things, Tom approaches Caractacus Burke of Borgin & Burke to sell the items for funds to attempt to support himself, and asks for a summer job. Burke, feeling he has the upper hand, offers an apprenticeship, in which Tom will be bound to Burke's service for a term of seven years (or, mainly, summers), and in return, Burke will train him in dealing with cursed artifacts. Tom, having few other immediate options, and seeing at least some advantages to himself in the arrangement, accepts the offer. (Note: further extrapolation of this theory can be found in the essay; 'Minding the Gap', which can be found in the collection of Missed Opportunities.)

**Extrapolation, 1940–1942 approximate:** death of the father of a young Gryffindor student by the name of Rubeus Hagrid, leaving the child effectively orphaned. Due to the boy's obvious Giant heritage he cannot readily be sent to a Muggle orphanage, and there are no wizarding relatives willing to take him. Arrangements are made for him in Hogsmeade. Albus Dumbledore may have a prominent voice in the arrangements.

**September, 1938–June, 1942:** Tom Riddle searches for information regarding the wizarding side of his family. After abandoning a fruitless effort to trace the Riddles (possibly on the advice of Burke), he finally discovers a reference to a Marvolo Gaunt, and determines the family's whereabouts. Over this period he also continues to search for the entrance to the Chamber of Secrets — as has probably every third child ever



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Sorted into Slytherin for centuries.

**July or August, 1942:** Tom (age 15) makes a brief appearance in Little Hangleton. Encounters Morfin Gaunt, learns of his parents' history. Learns of his descent from the line of Hogwarts Founder, Salazar Slytherin, and the existence, and disappearance, of Slytherin's locket, which was last known to have been in his mother's possession. He does not, however, learn of his descent from the line of the Peverills, for Morfin did not raise the subject. Tom stuns Gaunt, steals his wand and crosses the valley to the Riddle House, where he murders the Riddle family. He then returns to the Gaunt cottage, where he returns Morfin's wand, steals the Peverill ring, and modifies Morfin Gaunt's memory by overlaying it with a copy of his own memory of committing the murders. Somehow he manages all this without setting off the trace on underage sorcerers.

(I personally contend that Burke may have had Tom's Trace deactivated by the Ministry in order to facilitate Tom's use of magic in the course of his duties in the shop — Burke had some excellent family connections, after all.)

In any event, at some point prior to his appearance in Little Hangleton, Tom appears to have become familiar with the operation of a Pensieve, and I doubt it was under the tutelage of Headmaster Dippet. His arrival at the Gaunt house was late enough in the evening to have taken place after the shop's closing time.

**Some days later:** Aurors arrest Morfin Gaunt who confesses to the murders and is sentenced to life in Azkaban.

After learning from Morfin Gaunt of his own descent from Salazar Slytherin (in the summer of 1942) Tom seems to have

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redoubled his efforts to find Salazar's Chamber of Secrets, ultimately with success. There is no evidence to suggest that he was aware of either his descent from the Founder (or that his father was actually a Muggle) prior to speaking with Morfin Gaunt.

It was also over the course of the school year after his visit to Little Hangleton that Tom mastered the spellwork necessary to build the functions of a Pensieve into at least one (possibly more than one) Muggle paper diary. Into which he recorded the events of that year, as they took place.

Ergo: well before becoming a Horcrux, the Riddle diary was already a heavily charmed artifact.



The first solid piece of (relative) information we were given to calculate from concerns the Riddle diary. Harry Potter did not come into possession of the Riddle diary until January of 1993. And the whole fact that the date on the diary's cover is exactly 50 years earlier, is presented to the reader as a Major Clue in the course of the novel. Ergo: the date on the diary was 1943. The academic year of 1992-93 is Harry's 2nd year; the academic year of 1942-43 was Tom Riddle's 5th year.

It needs to be stated, and stated repeatedly, that Tom Riddle was raised outside of the wizarding world. He would have been plagued with at least a few paranormal incidents attributable to accidental magic during his childhood and he, consequently, grew up knowing that he was somehow "special." But until the age of 11 he did not know that he was a wizard, and he did not know either that magic was real, that what he was doing was magic, or that there was a hidden world of wizards.



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Consequently, the fact that he was accomplished in the Dark Arts by the time he sat his OWLs originally suggested to me that at some point he had been tutored in those Arts. I had also postulated that a ready opportunity for this to have taken place, outside of Hogwarts itself, was offered to us by the events of the Muggle's equivalent of the Real World's World War II.

In our own world, the dates of the wartime evacuation of children from large urban areas such as London and Liverpool into the countryside during the Muggle war — if the dates of a war in the Potterverse were indeed those of the corresponding war in the Real World — would have taken place in two major phases. The first of these, soon after the war was declared, was in September in 1939, at the beginning of Tom Riddle's 2nd year at Hogwarts. The second evacuation effort began with the start of the German bombing of London in December of 1940 at the end of the Autumn term of his 3rd year. These events would have made it easy for him to have been tutored away from Hogwarts by Dark wizards who had chosen to "groom" him for a purpose, possibly in recognition of his Slytherin ancestry.

But, no. In the Potterverse, apparently children were never evacuated from wartime London, for Dumbledore assures us that Riddle returned to his (London) orphanage during summers throughout the war years. Or at least so he was believed to have done by Albus Dumbledore — who claims to read Muggle newspapers, and would at least have been aware of a widespread evacuation of children from urban centers, such as London. For that matter, neither did anyone know of Riddle's Slytherin ancestry. Not even Riddle himself until the summer before his 5th year.

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Apparently, there were also no wartime paper shortages in the Potterverse, and Tom was able to purchase (or shoplift) a Muggle diary for the calendar year 1943 before boarding the Hogwarts Express in 1942.

He may have also belatedly acquired one for 1942 as well. Or he may have simply modified the dates of whatever diary he had acquired. Which would hardly be the only modification he made to that book.

In retrospect, given some of his later known actions, it seems apparent that his on-the-fly memory modification of Morfin Gaunt had given him ideas.

The diary(s) were taken to school the following year to serve as the basis of a *project*.



As to the continuing question of a Muggle war: we do know from the opening chapter of GoF that the Muggle world of the Potterverse, like that of our own, went through at least one war in the middle of the 20th century. Frank Bryce had returned from it with a stiff leg, a disinclination for loud noises, or for company, by the summer of 1942, when he witnessed a young Tom on the Riddle property the night of the murders. We do not know for a certain that the Muggle England of the Potterverse was involved in this war, let alone that the Muggle England of the Potterverse went through two major wars in the 20th century. We have generally assumed so; but we may be wrong.

After DHs, I had come to the conclusion that we probably *were* wrong. There is nothing in the text of the entire series which supports the assumption that there was ever a second



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world war in the Muggle Potterverse. That there was a first one is more or less established, for there is a Muggle war memorial in Godric's Hollow. (Unless this monument commemorates the Napoleonic wars, or a foreign war, such as the Boer war, which is far ffrom impossible.) But a good deal about the behavior and attitudes of the characters that we *do* see appear to contradict that there was ever a second one. Somehow, the Muggles of the Potterverse seem to have managed to avoid it. And we are directly told that Grindelwald never brought *his* war to Britain.

For one thing, even in the rather pastoral opening of GoF there is no impression that there was a war actually *in progress* at the time. Which there would certainly have been the case in the Real World™ in 1942. Or in 1943. Even Frank Bryce, who is stated to have come back from a war seems to have been back for some time.

For another thing, if there had been a Third Reich complete with a widely reported agenda to “purify” their society by exterminating entire “inferior races”, wouldn't people *remember* it? Even wizards might have managed to remember *that*. Or at least wizards who retained at least some awareness of the Muggle world (i.e., At least half of the wizarding population, possibly more like three-quarters) would remember it. Let's face it, people do not immediately lose all recollection of major wars which their nation is agreed to have won! There are people in Britain who are still boasting about the Falklands. If there had been some Muggle on the continent bombing London in 1939—'45, (which even for wizards must have constituted a considerable inconvenience), and spouting bilge about racial purity, then when “Lord Voldemort” *née* Tom Riddle surfaced

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a mere 20 years or so later, with a pack of terrorist hooligans all spouting a version of *the same kind of bilge*, someone should have been able to slap a label on them immediately, and point out that they were copying a pack of Muggles who were losers. Not wibble about like this was some brand new thing under the sun that they had no idea what to do over.

Plus, as I've mentioned elsewhere, major world wars are *not* brought to an end by one-on-one duels between a couple of wizards — which Muggles do not *believe* in.

Nor do whole continents spend five years clamoring for a high school teacher of the only school in the only country which has been left out of the loop of this “war” to come and solve their Dark Lord problem for them.

Ergo: I now am convinced that the world was clamoring for Albus to come and make things right because Gellert's rise had already come unstuck on him, and it was only Gellert himself who still needed to be dealt with, and that somehow Gellert had managed to let everyone know that he would only surrender to Albus Dumbledore.

And I DO think that it was Gellert who stipulated that he would *only* surrender to Albus Dumbledore. And then went on a rampage to raise the stakes until Albus broke down and felt he had to comply.

Why?

Well, now that we know about the Elder wand, we might be able to make a few guesses.

For one thing, Gellert probably didn't like the idea of that wand being ignominiously snapped by anyone else who might apprehend him. (Although if that really was the Elder wand —



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which certainly seems to be the case — it isn't likely that there are very many who could have taken him down, unless he was taken completely unaware or attacked by a group.)

I also think that he had very strong suspicion that Albus would take him into custody without killing him. By that time, being locked up safely in his own prison probably looked like his best option.



Sidebar: Known events of the Academic year 1942-1943/  
Tom Riddle's 5th year.

**September, 1942:** Tom Riddle is appointed as a Prefect.

At some point in the year Tom Riddle, who has at least already come across the term, asks Horace Slughorn to explain Horcruxes. It is not absolutely clear in canon whether this conversation took place during this year or the following one. It could have been either. I, for one, do not believe any of Harry's pronouncements on the subject. Harry makes a piss-poor exposition machine. And unless Harry's memory is even worse than we have been led to expect, in DHs he was lying about what he saw in Slughorn's memory. Back in HBP Sluggy was very clear on the matter that the subject of Horcruxes had already been *banned*, and that Tom would not find *anything* further related to them in the Hogwarts Library. But we are not likely to get any additional outside information on that issue.

At this point we do not know how much Riddle already knew or had already guessed regarding Horcruxes when he raised the question to Slughorn. The impression which he gave Slughorn is that he had run across the term in a book, (possibly the same

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reference Hermione later encountered) and having been unable to find any further information, decided to ask a teacher.

This impression could be entirely false, but it is difficult to account for anything else.

Slughorn by that time already knew that there was no detailed information regarding Horcruxes left in the Hogwarts library, nor of the spell which will create one (a detail which Harry seems to have forgotten). The subject was already banned, and steps had no doubt been taken to excise all such information from areas accessible to the students. Slughorn made this very clear.

Slughorn was certainly not lying, but he may have been somewhat mistaken. He failed to take into account the fact that the banned books may have been removed from the library, but they had not been removed from the castle. The banned information had merely been made inaccessible to most of the castle's residents.

Hermione Granger makes the argument that Albus had removed the books from the library and stored them in his own quarters. Chiefly because she had removed them from the Headmaster's study. However, Albus was not yet Headmaster when Riddle raised the question of the subject to Slughorn, so either Albus had removed them from the library and kept them, on his own authority, or, more probably, they had been removed from the library at his behest and stored where Headmaster Dippet had directed them to be stored.

I suspect that poor Sluggy inadvertently told Riddle *exactly* where to go to find the information he sought, assuming that Tom had not *already* found it in the Room of Require-



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ment. Slughorn, in his agitation, let slip the news that Albus Dumbledore was particularly fierce on the subject and had seen that it was banned from the school. Well, we know where banned books end up at Hogwarts, don't we? They are removed into storage in the Room of Hidden Things. When Harry finally got into that Room, late in his own 6th year, he saw thousands of books stored there. *Stolen* books, books which had been graffitied, and *banned* books.

Just how much would you care to bet that Tom Riddle wasn't already fully aware of the Room of Hidden Things by his 5th year? He'd been all over the school looking for the entrance of the Chamber of Secrets ever since he had first heard of it. Nor had he ever had any compunction about the use of Legilimency to pry out other people's Secrets. Indeed, we got ample *confirmation* in DHs that Tom was indeed fully aware of the Room of Hidden Things, even though he does seem to have been fool enough to think that a room obviously packed to the rafters with the detritus of teachers and students of over 1000 years was known only to himself.

Contrary to Tom's belief, I think that Albus was by no means too law-abiding to have discovered that Room. Even if it had never taken the opportunity to have manifested itself as the Room of Beautiful Chamber Pots until Harry's 4th year. Upon his becoming Headmaster Albus would have immediately recovered those Dark Arts books related to Horcruxes and tucked them safely away in the Headmaster's study.

When Tom showed up in his "melting wax" iteration very soon afterwards, Albus may have even have engaged in some reflections on the subject of missing horses and barn doors.



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The only thing that we know about it for certain is that the Riddle Diary was definitely a Horcrux by the time it was found in Ginny Weasley's cauldron after a shopping trip to Diagon Alley, and that the memories of the Diary Revenant had been put there when Riddle was 16.

We do not know, however, when the diary was actually made into a Horcrux. That may have happened years later.

Yes, I know that *Rowling* claims that Tom used Myrtle's death to create it. In common with much of Rowling's interview information, this comment came off the top of her head and does not really hold up to what has been said regarding the back history of the subject in the course of the series. It doesn't even comply with what she had already shown us related to the Diary in the book in which it featured.

Slughorn's rather incoherent explanation of Horcruxes strongly suggests that the Horcrux needs to be created at the same time that the murder that it is created from takes place, but this timing has no relationship to the age or character of the artifact used to store the resulting soul fragment. Nor that the artifact used cannot already be magical in its own right. Indeed, with the exceptions of Harry and Nagini, all of the artifacts that Tom created his Horcruxes from already were magical in their own right (as in fact, so was Harry if you want to be accurate). The ripping of the soul and the removal of the fragment to its external housing really does not appear to be two widely separate actions. I now concede that both actions must be performed as a *process*. And Rowling, having finished with the series, is unlikely to backtrack in order to clarify. My own reading is that "the spell" that Slughorn speaks of almost certainly





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enables both functions. And I am also as convinced as I ever have been that the traditional spell to create a Horcrux is not Avada Kedavra. Nor is it unblockable. There is also reason to suspect that a wizard of some of Tom's more *\*unusual\** abilities, may not *need* a specific spell to create a Horcrux. He clearly finds it *inordinately* easy to project, or to shed bits of his soul.

From what Rowling has told us inside canon, it would appear to be faulty reasoning to assume that one may create a Horcrux from a soul fragment which has been torn loose in the course of a murder committed at some time in the past. Committing *any* variety of murder may damage your soul, but it does not necessarily tear pieces *off*. And so long as the fragments remain together inside the body the breach may eventually heal, (if one feels sufficient remorse for the act) since the soul is *\*supposed\** to remain intact.

Even while damaged, it will still continue to function more-or-less normally, and there will be no apparent effect upon the murderer's physical appearance. Lord Voldemort created seven Horcruxes and looks barely humanoid. Peter Pettigrew murdered a dozen Muggles in one stroke, and while he is certainly no beauty he does not in any manner resemble a mask-faced, red-eyed, cadaverous monster.

Apart from the death of Moaning Myrtle, which from the internal evidence in canon had to have taken place some time before the Diary Horcrux was created<sup>\*\*</sup>, we have been told of no other suspicious death or disappearance during the period between December 31, 1942 and December 30, 1943 — the year that Riddle was 16 — which Riddle might have used as the source needed to create a Horcrux. If one cannot select and

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use a specific previously-committed murder to create a Horcrux, then either *whoever* died to create the Diary did so off of everyone's radar, or the Diary Horcrux was created later and the Diary Revenant only replicated the 16-year-old Riddle because it is the 16-year-old Riddle's *memories* which were accessible to give it form.

*\*\*Unless* Riddle was able to continue to enter additional diary records after the diary was already the Diary — which I frankly think is unlikely. Once the book had a soul, I don't think it was readily editable, not even by its creator — in which case it had to have been made a Horcrux at some point *after* the events of Tom's 5th year. Because every single scene related to the matter that Tom played back in Harry's view took place *after* Myrtle was dead.

And, while we are at it, Moaning Myrtle was presumably killed by the *Basilisk*, not by Tom Riddle. From her own account, she looked it in the eyes, and died of it. I do not know how causing a person to be killed by a monster whose nature is to kill other creatures by looking at them rips your soul, even if you were the one to have summoned the monster.

Unless, of course, Tom had actually *possessed* her and *forced* her to look at the Basilisk. Which, for the record, I now believe is *exactly* what happened. She was clearly not killed by a *spell*, and Dumbledore somewhat mystifyingly does not appear to count Myrtle among Riddle's victims.

But that still does not mean that whatever Horcrux was created by Myrtle's murder was the Diary. Even if Tom had the diary in his pocket, he was *wearing* the Peverill ring at that stage of his career, and the ring would have been much more accessi-



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ble in which to trap any soul fragment produced by that murder.

It is also pretty widely believed (although this is probably more fanon than canon) that an artifact to be made into a Horcrux, needs to be given some form of advance preparation for the purpose. In the period leading up to Myrtle's death, the only artifact in Riddle's possession which he is likely to have considered of a suitable provenance for such a purpose was the Peverill ring. He is not likely to have considered a paper Muggle diary as a suitable repository for his soul. Memories, yes, what else is a diary *for*. But hardly his *soul*. Besides, he wasn't yet *finished* with the diary.

Conversely, Dumbledore is definitely wrong when he claims that UglyBaby!Mort used Nagini to kill Frank Bryce. And we all know it. Harry witnessed Bryce's death by courtesy of the connection between his mind and Voldemort's. Even weakened as he was, Voldemort still managed to kill Bryce with an AK. The snake did nothing but to report that Frank Bryce was listening at the door, watch it happen, and quite possibly, devour the body.

Even Rowling eventually realized that particular statement was a blunder and has since claimed that Nagini was made into a Horcrux by the murder of Bertha Jorkins. Which at least makes some degree of sense in the timeline, even if it isn't actually published canon, and assures us that the Snake was already under Tom's full control before it reached Britain. Even though we are thereby forced to accept that UglyBaby!Mort was capable of dividing his soul and creating yet another Horcrux when he hadn't even managed to recover a functioning human body yet.

Also that he managed to do it in Pettigrew's company without Pettigrew figuring out what was going on.

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But there is no point in sidetracking ourselves by digging into the issue of the Horcruxes at this point. There is a whole set of Horcrux essays which examines the issue in exhaustive detail. We really don't need to do it here.



**Returning to our timeline:** at some point, presumably late in the academic year of 1942-'43, Tom Riddle finally discovered the entrance to Salazar Slytherin's Chamber of Secrets.

The Chamber was opened. The Basilisk was released. There were attacks on students, most were petrified, and later revived, one student (Myrtle) was killed.

Her death took place quite late in the year. The Headmaster was about to send the students home some 2-3 weeks before the end of term in response. (Note: if the testing procedure was as it was shown to be at the end of OotP, the standard exams for that year would not have been given yet. The NEWTs and OWLs would probably have been underway but not yet complete.)

Rubeus Hagrid, a 3rd-year student was discovered to have been trying to raise an acromantula inside the castle, and was expelled. There were no further attacks. The problem was deemed solved. The attention of Albus Dumbledore, if he had not been doing so before, may have been more closely directed at Riddle (who had ratted out Hagrid to his own advantage) after this point. In response, Tom Riddle closed the Chamber of Secrets and did not reopen it during his remaining time as a Hogwarts student.

From statements related to this information we can calculate that:



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Rubeus Hagrid, whose birthday is December 6, acto JKR's website, would have been born in 1928. He started Hogwarts in the Autumn term of 1940 and lost his father at some point during 1941 at the age of 12 or 13. I originally thought that this might possibly due to the Muggle war. The Germans bombed more than just London. But since I no longer believe that there was a Muggle war going on in Britain in 1941 in the Potterverse, this no longer plays. Someone — until this point it has generally been presumed to have been Albus Dumbledore — took responsibility for the orphan who had no surviving human relatives. It is uncertain whether this is in fact the case. The Board of Governors or even the Wizengamot may have ended up getting involved. It is even possible that the school itself took responsibility for the boy.

The wizarding world is small enough for sponsorship by non-relatives to probably be standard procedure in such cases. Certainly in the case of a child such as Hagrid who could not readily be palmed off onto the Muggle authorities. Nor could he be left to wander about at liberty, unsupervised.

In an interview made shortly after the release of *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* JKR informed us (in response to a reader's question) that as of the end of Harry Potter's 4th year at Hogwarts, Severus Snape was 35 or 36 years old. She then went on to volunteer the information that Albus Dumbledore was 150 (which she has since reconsidered), and that Minerva McGonagall was "a sprightly 70" (which as of late 2011 I gather she has also reconsidered).

Given that, acto JKR's original website we were told that Minerva McGonagall's birthday is October 3, If we provisionally

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assume that she was born in 1925 (I completely dismiss the bilge that Rowling chooses to post on Pottermore, particularly when it contradicts statements she made during the course of the series and from which we were expected to reason from for most of the previous decade) she would have started Hogwarts in the Autumn term of 1937 and finished with the class of 1944. She would have been in her 6th year and completely out of the loop when the Chamber was first opened and Hagrid expelled. She would also be expected to have remembered the uproar of the events of that period, if she had still been at Hogwarts at the time.

However, her extreme confusion during CoS regarding Salazar's Chamber suggests that the age of "70" stated in the interview must have been "impressionistic", for Minerva gave us *no* indication that she had ever lived through events of that sort at the school once already. It is for this reason that I am inclined to place Minerva's birth date no later than 1923, making her Hogwarts years the period from 1935 to 1942, finishing the year before young Riddle discovered the entry to the Chamber.

For the record, and as a piece of Real World background information; The year 1920, like the year 1946, was, in the Real World™ the first full year after a major war was concluded (and, in the case of 1920, the first year in the aftermath of a deadly pandemic as well). Both circumstances had much the same effect upon the Muggle birthrate. In fact, in England the year with the highest number of recorded births in the entire 20th century was 1920. With a recorded 1,126,800 births in that year alone.

We have no certainty as to whether the Potterverse had two major World Wars in its 20th century, let alone a flu pandemic. We originally assumed that the events of the Potterverse have



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paralleled those of ours, but we cannot be certain of that from what we were ever told in canon. However, until we have been given actual information which makes it clear, I will continue to try to reason as if Muggle history has proceeded in the Potterverse more or less as it has in the Real World up to at least the 1930s. In the Potterverse of the books there appears to have been no 2nd World War that included Britain. The worldwide Great Depression of the earlier 1930s may have lasted longer however.

If the proportion of magical births to Muggle births which appears to be the case from the calculations in other essays in this collection applies, the above 1,126,800 recorded births would have included about 13-14 Muggle-born magical children, Close to twice as many as the usual number prior to that year, of 7 or 8. Compared to the usual 10 or so purebloods in a given year. I don't know how long it took for this sudden boom in the Muggle-born birthrate to taper off.

These children would have started arriving at Hogwarts in a wave beginning with the Academic year of 1931-32. It may have taken a little time for the information to have spread to the older generations whose own children were already out of Hogwarts that Muggle-born students at Hogwarts were now easily outnumbering purebloods, but the information would have gotten there eventually. In any event, mutterings about this "inundation of mudbloods" would soon have taken an upsurge in the households with pureblood isolationist, or budding supremacist sympathies, which would have quickly been being parroted in the Slytherin — and other — dormitories.



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The fact that the Riddle Diary was dated exactly 50 years before the year that Harry got his hands on it is a Major Clue to the solution of the CoS "mystery" and, consequently, this is a relevant piece of information which does not admit to alternate interpretations.

However;

1. The events leading to Hagrid's expulsion did not take place until after June 13, of the year that was the date printed on the diary's cover. The threatened closure of the school amounted to little more than sending the students home about 2-3 weeks early
2. According to the Diary Revenant's own testimony, *it* was not embedded into the Diary until after the Chamber had been closed again, at the end of Riddle's 5th year. So if the Revenant's account can be trusted, we conclude that the Diary Horcrux was created no earlier than between the middle of June and the end of December.

I no longer think that we can trust the Diary revenant's account, however.

Who are you going to believe? Tom Riddle or Albus Dumbledore?

Eh, forget I asked. It's not that much of a choice, is it?

Still, Dumbledore may have habitually shaved the truth according to his audience, but what purpose would he have had to claim to Harry that he knows of no murder committed by Riddle between the Riddle massacre in the summer of 1942 and the murder of Hepzibah Smith at least five years later, if that was not the case?

Albus knows when Myrtle died.



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He knows (now) that Riddle created the diary *as a diary* when he was 16. Harry is the one who told him that.

We do not necessarily know when he created the Diary as a *Horcrux*.

But we may be able to make a guess.

Not for some decades afterwards, *I* would guess.

And would the Diary Revenant even have been fully aware of just exactly when it actually came into conscious and independent existence separate from the age of the memories to which it had access, i.e., those of the 16-year-old Riddle?

The following extrapolations regarding the Diary and its creation step off the path which accepts all of Rowling's information, from either the series, the website, or interviews, impartially. Although the contradictions between the sources are not always major ones, there are nevertheless multiple contradictions. I have chosen to overlook interview information in favor of what holds together most closely to the information which can be found within the text of the books.

Harry's second Hogwarts year may have begun in 1992, but it ended in 1993. The date printed on the diary's cover, from the internal evidence of the story was, therefore, 1943.

If the diary was acquired in London, and acquired specifically for the purpose of embedding the secret of Salazar's lost chamber into it (we were shown no traces of its having been used for anything else), then it would appear to have been acquired after Riddle's fifth year was completed.

This reading does not quite hold together, however. The Diary Revenant was able to take Harry directly to the account of specific *events* within the story regarding the aftermath of

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the first time the Chamber was opened. *Very* specific events, indeed specific as to the very *day*. Now, Riddle may have a good memory, certainly. He may have also later drafted the account of the events of that year according to approximate dates, setting them down in the various pages of the book for later retrieval. But if we are supposed to believe that the events assigned to June 13, actually *happened* on June 13 — and I really think we *are*, then we are being invited to believe that he must have recorded them into the book, effectively as they happened.

And then hid them.

Assuming that he even needed to. If that diary was an experimental version of a Pensieve, the memories may have been entered directly as memories. There may have never been any visible *\*writing\** involved.

Indeed, the information which was conveyed to Harry was conveyed primarily as images, and sound. Not as any form of *text*. The Diary only wrote back when it was attempting to communicate with a potential target.

And none of that happened by accident. Nor could Tom readily have anticipated the events that were going to end up being recorded in that diary *before* they happened. I think he was already recording his day-to-day activities during his 5th year before he discovered the entrance to the Chamber (He very deliberately did not let Harry get a look at *that* page). Plus, when you factor in his modification of Morfin Gaunt's memory just the previous summer, it is not at all difficult to deduce that Tom may have started that year intending to conduct an experiment in creating a form portable memory storage.

Riddle could not very well have gone off to Hogwarts the



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previous September with the *intention* of putting himself into a book, confidently expecting that this was the year that he was going to strike gold and uncover the entrance to the Chamber of Secrets. He may believe in prophecies, but he isn't a seer. He had not at that point yet found the entrance to the Chamber, let alone subdued the monster that was waiting there. But when it happened, it enhanced the value of that particular diary immeasurably.

Rather like actually having your camera with you, and loaded, when chance puts you in the way of a once-in-a-lifetime shot.

I also suspect that the diary originally contained all of his research and theories about the creation of Horcruxes, and his extrapolations about whether it was possible for someone of his own talents to do so *\*without\** using the traditional spell.

And I think that Albus was right when he tells us that by the time he made it into a Horcrux, he was able to treat that one so casually, because he knew he already had others.

Ergo; The Diary was not Tom's first Horcrux.

It was his 5th.

And I don't think it was a part of his originally planned set at all.



Once we had been given the official Riddle backstory over the course of HBP, many of my earliest interpretations were demonstrated to be faulty.

First; apparently in the Potterverse, children in London were *not* evacuated into the country during a war. Second; that rather than being overseen and more-or-less confined to the orphanage property during the summer, Tom had been accustomed to wan-



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dering about at liberty throughout London by the time he was 10, completely unsupervised. Third; that as we had all vaguely suspected, the "reasonable restrictions" on underage sorcery is in fact, only a reasonable restriction on underage Muggle-born sorcery. That, in fact, once inside a wizarding household or district there is *no* reliable way to trace underage sorcery. This restriction is conducted entirely upon an "honor system" administered, or not, by the children's families. And, fourth: that by the time he was awarded his Prefects' badge, Tom Riddle was already a murderer three times over.

My original scenario, one in which I *had* taken into account the logistics of wartime paper shortages and the widespread evacuation of children to the countryside during that particular war; was that the diary was sent to Riddle as a Christmas gift by someone still in London. Most likely, by one of the institution's staff. Orphanages in the 1940s did recognize that Christmas is a holiday in which gifts are given to children. Even if those gifts tended to be drearily practical, or otherwise not particularly exciting. A diary would be very well in keeping with the caliber of gift that an orphanage child might expect to receive at Christmas. And Riddle was still, officially, an orphanage child. This scenario is no longer required. Rowling had not taken into her account *any* of these matters.

But we still do not know just where Tom learned how to *create* a Horcrux.

The Room of Hidden Things is still our hottest possibility. As is a private library of a schoolmate.

But if the Diary was *not* the first of the collection, we are off the hook for a whole slew of timing issues that creating a Hor-





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crux while he was still in school entails. Such considerations do not necessarily apply to the Ring.

Moreover, we have the intractable issue to have to sort out that all of the memories shown to Harry by the Diary Revenant were events that took place *after* the death of Myrtle — which Rowling tried to claim is the point that the Diary became a Horcrux.

Think about that for a second. We are being expected to believe that Tom, who later discovered that once he had turned the Ring into a Horcrux he found he could no longer continue to wear it, had allegedly already turned the Diary into a Horcrux — and yet had still been able to continue entering data into it? For weeks afterward?

Because there is no way that the Diary Revenant would have had access to the events that took place after Myrtle's death unless someone had entered them into that book. And, as I just pointed out, everything that he showed Harry, took place after Myrtle's death.

Not to mention the Diary Revenant's own admission that *it* was not embedded into the diary until some time after the Chamber had been *closed*. Which certainly took place after Myrtle's death *and* Hagrid's expulsion.

Now, even setting aside how badly handled the whole issue of the Locket behaving like the One Ring all through the endless camping trip was, did you ever get any kind of feeling that; in addition to trying to take over anyone in contact with it, it was actually aware of where they were and what they were doing? That it was *learning* anything about their situation? Yeah, sure, it could access their fears and taunt them with them, but it sure didn't know enough of their circumstances to, say, lead them into a trap.

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I don't think that Tom would have been able to *keep* entering memories into that Diary any more than he could have borne to continue wearing the Ring (and I've had some ideas regarding that ring since I last revised this article as well) once he'd turned it into a Horcrux, either.

And the next time we caught up to that Diary after we *know* that it had become a Horcrux, was when he handed it off to Lucius Malfoy shortly before his first defeat. So all we can say about it for sure is that it was a Horcrux by 1981.

Nevertheless, if the sort of "elegantly wasted" appearance Tom was displaying at the time of his visit to Madam Smith is supposed to be a visual clue that he had already created one, then even though Albus tells us that he does not *know* of another murder committed by Riddle during that period, he has to have guessed that there was one. And we can be pretty sure that by that time he had created the Ring.

We have good reason to believe that Tom was largely out from under adult surveillance (or at least *Muggle* adult surveillance) during summer breaks. We already have his boast, made at the age of 11 that he was in the habit of wandering about London on his own, and after that point he certainly knew how to get into Diagon Alley.

By the time he was out of school, he was also clearly fully aware of the resources available in Knockturn Alley, and it is all too likely that Riddle had already discovered that there is no way of reliably tracing underage magic inside a wizarding district long before he was out of school.

Indeed, even in the absence of the formal/informal apprenticeship/contract that I postulate, he may have been in the habit of earning his pocket money for the year by working at Borgin & Burkes,



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or some other Diagon, or Knockturn Alley shop during the summer.

And who knows what information he might have discovered there?



**1945, May:** In our own world this marked the official end of the Muggle war in Europe. This date may be completely irrelevant to the Potterverse.

**1945, June:** Tom Riddle sits the NEWTs and leaves Hogwarts by the end of the month. Harry Potter attempts to convince us that he immediately departs for Albania in search of the Ravenclaw diadem.

I tend to doubt that. I think he had the last of his contracted time to serve with B&B. Also, after his visit to his uncle Morfin Gaunt, I think he started searching the shop records in hopes of finding any information on the Slytherin Locket — which he had not known existed before that point. He found those records, too. And the name of the collector who had purchased it. He may even have already met the lady, but possibly not. Perhaps not for a couple more years. But, collectors always come back, eventually. And he was waiting for her when she did.

**1945, either spring or summer break:** Albus Dumbledore defeats the Dark wizard Grindelwald. Grindelwald is consigned to Nuremgard, the prison he had caused to be built for his enemies.

At this point it is unknown how determined a fight Gellert put up against his former friend Albus Dumbledore. I think that Grindelwald was fully aware that Albus would be very reluctant to actually kill him. I would hazard that it is at least arguable that Gellert might have been equally reluctant to kill Albus.



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A genuinely desperate man might have done so anyway. Particularly one who was holding the Elder Wand. Whether he was “truly” its master or not.

Consequently it is definitely arguable that Gellert Grindelwald may have already discovered that his reach had exceeded his grasp, and that his regime had already come unstuck. He appears not to have had a team of supporters behind him that he trusted, and, indeed, if a one-on-one duel with Albus Dumbledore was able to bring his whole house of cards down in one decisive confrontation, he may well have already come to realize that to be locked up in his own prison was the best of his available options.

But in any case, regardless of whether he was ever properly the “Master” of it or not, he is confident in being able to safely turn the Elder wand over to Albus. And was just possibly relieved to be shut of it.

I contend that he also turned over all of the notes pertaining to his search for the other two Hallows.



Albus’s chocolate frog card provides at least a capsule review of the signal accomplishments of Albus Dumbledore.

That the card identifies Dumbledore as the current Headmaster of Hogwarts suggests that unless chocolate frog cards only came on the market sometime about 1960, either the defeat of Grindelwald was not an achievement of such an order as would have justified commissioning a card for him on its own merit, or the card would have been issued back in ’45 with no mention of his being Headmaster. Dumbledore was not appointed to the





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office of Headmaster until at least the something like the winter of 1956–'57, and possibly not until a few years later.

To examine this last statement; we need to make another side trip, and jump forward to OotP, directing our attention to the period that Professor Umbridge was making a nuisance of herself in other instructors' classrooms during the Autumn term. She showed up in no fewer than four of Harry's classes during this period, over the course of September–December 1995. In the course of most of these "interviews" (the exception being Hagrid's) she routinely asked the class's instructor the length of time they had been teaching at the school. The answers were;

Snape = "14 years."

Trelawney = "Nearly 16 years."

McGonagall = "39 years this December."

From which we can accurately calculate the date at which Minerva McGonagall joined the faculty as Transfigurations mistress. Which, counting back from the point the statement was made in the Autumn term of 1995, places her starting date as January 1957. Which implies that something took place during the Autumn term of 1956 to require that Hogwarts fill a suddenly vacant position for a Transfigurations instructor.

Since we know that in 1943 the Transfiguration instructor of Hogwarts had been Albus Dumbledore and the Headmaster of the School the elderly Professor Dippet, we are invited to assume that this event was the death or retirement of Professor Dippet.

Post-HBP, it is now strongly suggested that we had unavoidably overlooked a detail which was not available to us prior to the release of HBP. One which is tucked into the official Riddle

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backstory. With this minor detail in mind, there is now no absolute certainty that Minerva's addition to the Hogwarts staff corresponded with Albus's elevation to Headmaster. Although this still probably represents the earliest likely date for his appointment as such.

However, given the sheer range of Albus Dumbledore's offices and achievements, we probably need to make an examination of the whole collection in order to try to determine which came in which order.

From the letterhead of Harry's Hogwarts letter, we know that by 1991 Albus Dumbledore was not merely the Headmaster of Hogwarts School, but also the Chief Warlock of the Wizengamot and the Supreme Mugwump of the International Confederacy of Wizards.

We have no information regarding the order in which these three offices were acquired. It seems mildly improbable, however, that a common schoolmaster would also be Supreme Mugwump or Chief Warlock. It seems somewhat more likely that the office of Headmaster of Hogwarts School came first.

Still, given Albus's long reputation, it is just barely possible that he had been serving as Chief Warlock even while still an active teacher. He almost certainly had his own seat on the Wizengamot when he was still blamelessly teaching at Hogwarts and (possibly) serving as Deputy Head. Because we are told outright that he had already been offered, and had refused, the post of Minister for Magic three times by the time by the time he finally became Headmaster. It is unlikely that the post of Minister would have been offered if he were not already a member in good standing of the Wizengamot.



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There appears to be no set term of office for Minister for Magic, but several questions in the final round of the WOMBAT test on Rowling's first official website suggested a typical term of approximately 10 years. By 1938, had he chosen, he might have been serving as Minister for Magic rather than hand-delivering Hogwarts letters to orphans.

It may have taken at least a few years on the Wizengamot for Dumbledore to have gained enough support to be elected Chief Warlock of that body, although if Griselda Marchbanks was already a member of that body, which seems likely, she would have certainly nominated him for the position. Griselda was extremely impressed by Albus from the time she first met him when he was a schoolboy sitting his NEWTs back in 1899.

However, we also do not know — and probably never will know — exactly when Dumbledore began teaching. He could have been a personage of considerable political importance before he ever started. And it appears, post-DHs that due to his habit of initiating correspondence with notable figures, his name probably was already fairly widely known in powerful circles by the time he sat those NEWTs.

Which, perhaps we ought to remind ourselves, was *before* his life turned upside-down over the course of the summer after sitting those NEWTs. The young Albus Dumbledore who formed those associations had no reluctance about grasping at power. Nor, once he came to the conclusion that power was something that he needed to avoid, did he withdraw from those associations. Neither, it would appear, did he ever feel that he was unqualified to offer his associates, and the world at large, his advice.

Even before DHs was released, the fact that he had already

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been offered the post of Minister for Magic three times before he was appointed Headmaster, suggested that, among the ruling elders of British wizardry, Dumbledore's reputation went back much farther than the date at which he defeated what at that point was appearing to be one very obscure Dark wizard. His associations with Flamel, Marchbanks, Bagshott, and other notable personages seemed a much more likely direction for investigation if one was searching for reasons why people kept repeatedly offering him a high political post that he manifestly did not want.

The fact that there is no mention whatsoever on that card regarding any presumed activities on the part of Albus Dumbledore during VoldWar I would suggest that Albus Dumbledore's specific activities, if any, during VoldWar I have remained generally unknown to the broader wizarding public (or that, post-DHs, his determined reluctance to take responsibility for the welfare of others dictated that he probably engaged in very few of such, until the point that he titularly founded the Order of the Phoenix) and that his reputation is based upon his multiple positions as Headmaster of Hogwarts, Chief Warlock of the Wizengamot and Supreme Mugwump of the International Confederation of Wizards over that crucial period and since.

In any case, those people who "wanted him to be Minister for Magic" as recently as 1990 presumably were almost certainly his fellow members of the Wizengamot, a body of some 50 witches and wizards, who appoint or elect the Minister among themselves. (Note: that the Minister for Magic is an appointed office was finally confirmed in April 2006 with the posting of Grogam Stump as Wizard of the Month on Rowling's official site. Mr Stump was a popular MfM "appointed in 1811!")



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The most widely known event of the year 1945 in canon, at this point is:

Albus Dumbledore defeats the Dark wizard Grindelwald.

We don't know when during the year this took place. But until the release of DHs we could assume that the fact that in our world the war was over in Europe by the time the school year ended would appear to suggest that Grindelwald's defeat was not concurrent with the end of any Muggle war, if there even was one. We could also speculate that it must have taken place in the vicinity of Hogwarts, since Albus had a day job and wasn't off on the continent chasing Dark wizards.

Now that we cannot establish that the Potterverse even *had* a Muggle war in the 1940s, this reasoning falls apart. With the release of DHs we are once again stuck having to account for the fact that Albus had to go abroad in order to defeat Grindelwald. Which limits us to one or another term break.

Until the publication of *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* we knew of no obviously significant date directly related to the adventure of Harry Potter and the Dark Lord between 1945 and the then presumed return to Britain of Tom Riddle in 1970 (based upon Dumbledore's statement in November '81 that the wizarding world had had little to celebrate for the past 11 years). Since the release of HBP, however, we have a number of other possible stopping points, and the 1970 date has been rendered bogus.



So, taking the events of HBP (of which we had no indication

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before that book was released) into consideration, one possibility, to recap:

**1945:** Long time DADA Professor Galatia Merrythought announces her retirement. It's possible that the ongoing Grindelwald situation may have been instrumental in this decision. But not altogether certain. After all, some fifty years teaching might well be accounted to be a sufficient career for anyone.

Upon sitting his NEWTs, Tom Riddle applies for the post of Defense Against the Dark Arts Instructor. Upon the advice of Albus Dumbledore, Headmaster Dippet kindly refused this request, telling Tom that 18 is too young to be a teacher, and recommends that he return and re-apply in a few more years, when he has had more experience. Riddle is next known to be employed at Borgin & Burke as a Sales Assistant. In retrospect, even if he was not obligated as a contracted apprentice, he was almost certainly there in hopes of tracing what had become of Slytherin's locket which until shortly before his own birth had still been being worn by his mother. He suspected, and rightly so, that eventually the collector who purchased the locket would return.

On the strength of his fresh defeat of Grindelwald (probably during Easter break, or just possibly early in the summer break), Albus cuts any threat of Riddle's future appointment as DADA instructor off at the pass by taking over the DADA post himself and a new Transfigurations instructor is hired.

Canonical proof? None, but it lines up with subsequent events which we know to have taken place in regards to the Hogwarts staffing issues in canon.





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At the date of the interview with Madam Smith, Riddle's physical appearance was such as to suggest that he had already created at least the first of his seven Horcruxes. We do not know *for certain* whether the faintly decadent "pale and interesting" appearance he presented at that time was definitely indicative of his having created a Horcrux, but we have been offered no alternative interpretation. It is strongly, and crudely, implied that this is the underlying cause of all of his subsequent changes in appearance.

It would appear, from one of Ms Rowling's interview statements, and upon the basis of Harry's unsupported assumptions in DHs that Tom had, by the time of his return created three of them. To wit, the Ring, the Diary, and the Diadem, which Harry is convinced that he went and retrieved from Albania as soon as he finished Hogwarts. I find this supposition difficult to credit, given the gross deterioration in his physical appearance by the next time we saw him which we are to understand was the result of creating only two more of them (the Cup and the Locket).

I really do think that Harry is being a fool, and that Ms Rowling was talking off the top of her head, without reference to any of her notes, or application of common sense, about a subject which she had not ever considered in any depth, having already relegated it to background set-dressing. I mean, it's quite obvious from everything she has ever had to say on the subject that she doesn't actually *care* about anything to do with the Horcruxes.

I am more inclined to believe that by the date of his chat with Madam Smith Riddle had created only the Ring. By that point, he would have been in the process of drafting out his next sequence of plans. I think that before leaving for Albania

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he hid the Ring in the ruin of the Gaunt hovel, possibly as a trap for his uncle Morfin (of which more later). In all likelihood, he also may have stashed it there as a safeguard against embarking upon his impending travels to a dangerous part of Eastern Europe to hunt for the Ravenclaw diadem.

But I am currently convinced that, Harry's convictions notwithstanding, Tom had delayed that journey until Hepzibah Smith, who he *had* indeed discovered in the shop's records to be the purchaser of Slytherin's locket, revisited B&B (i.e., collectors always return). His intention was to have a shot at charming her into giving him a chance to verify that she did indeed still have the locket in her possession, rather than, say, depositing it in her Gringotts vault where no one else could get access to it.

The murder of Madam Smith (whose death, I agree was probably the base for creating the Cup Horcrux) prompted an abrupt change in plans, causing him to withdraw from Britain before managing to establish himself at Hogwarts where the Sword associated with Gryffindor was probably known to occasionally manifest at times when there was a threat to the school.

It is uncertain whether his deployment of the Basilisk at the end of his own 5th year had been a gambit intended to goad the Sword into manifesting itself even then. It is not established whether Tom had already managed to discover that the Sword was understood to appear under such conditions as an ongoing threat to the school. But it is far from impossible.

Any such earlier manifestations were probably documented, or at least a matter of school legend, much as Salazar's monster was, and it is possible that such had indeed been his intentions. By that point in time, he had already spoken with his



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uncle and discovered his own descent from Slytherin, and had also possibly found record of the sale of the Slytherin locket in the records of the shop. It is likely that he had already cozened the secret of what had happened to the missing diadem out of the ghost of Helena Ravenclaw (as well as the Bloody Baron's part in it all). It is not altogether impossible that he may have reasoned that by deploying Salazar's monster, he might force a manifestation of Godric's sword.

In another universe, Tom Riddle might well have made a very good historian.



When this essay collection first went online I contended that it was not the death of young Myrtle and Hagrid's expulsion which put Dumbledore onto Riddle's trail but the murder of the Riddle family and Tom Riddle's subsequent disappearance.

It is now abundantly clear that this belief is also incorrect. At that point it was widely assumed that the Riddles were murdered after Tom had already finished Hogwarts in 1945. I also did not know, (nor did anybody apart from Rowling) that Tom's mother had a father and brother who outlived her, and that her brother was all-too-available to take the blame for the Riddle murders.

And, yet, for far too long a time, I had still been convinced that I had been right in essence, because it had been a death and Riddle's subsequent disappearance which had finally prompted Albus Dumbledore to attempt to belatedly trace Riddle's backtrail, and that after examining Hokey's memory of Riddle's last known meeting with her mistress, two days before that lady's death, he had made a point of speaking with Carac-



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tacus Burke regarding the provenance of that locket, and eventually his inquiries also led him to Bob Ogden, which seems to have prompted him to request an interview with Morfin Gaunt before Gaunt's death in Azkaban.

Well. I no longer believe any of *that* chain of events, either.

I had been so determinedly rejecting DHs and everything to do with it that I totally overlooked the only bit of that stupid and overwrought business of the Albus/Gellert backstory which actually connects to the central issue of the problem of the threat constituted by Tom Riddle. So let us all step back a number of years, and reevaluate what we think we know:



**1945 (Yes, again): Albus Dumbledore defeats Gellert Grindelwald, taking him into custody.**

A domino got knocked over — right on top of me — during a correspondence with my fellow-traveler, Swythyv. One which prompted a number of fundamental shifts in assumption regarding certain bits of that backstory. Not that any of it particularly matters, and none of it is actually provable, but it is gratifying to discover that there are still potential insights to be gained regarding the Harry Potter saga.

I'd been assuming for years that Albus turned up most of the Riddle backstory in the course of investigating Hepzibah Smith's death and the disappearance of two of her treasures.

Well, that much is still *possible*, but that no longer reads as the most *likely* scenario.

After all, at the time that Madam Smith was murdered, Albus Dumbledore had a day job and was off in Scotland still





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actively teaching most days of the week.

*Albus* wasn't likely to be investigating anything related to Madam Hepzibah Smith.

So who was? The woman was clearly found to have been murdered. *And* robbed. There would certainly have been an investigation of *that*. That's the DMLE's job. And the DMLE was *doing* it.

It's beginning to look as though by the time Hepzibah Smith was murdered for her treasures, the ongoing duel between Tom Riddle and Albus Dumbledore was already well engaged. As I say, I'd been so determinedly rejecting DHs and everything in it that I had completely overlooked one particular which in retrospect now appears obvious.

Albus did not trip over Morfin Gaunt and his suppressed memories during an investigation of Tom Riddle's activities.

It was Morfin Gaunt's faulty memories that set him onto Tom Riddle's trail.

Yes, the very same Tom Riddle that Albus had thought that he was finally well rid of, as of June of 1945.

Consider: Albus took Gellert into custody in 1945. Probably during the spring or summer break, since he was still actively engaged in the classroom, teaching, with a class schedule to follow at the time. Indeed, one of the students in his NEWT class was probably young Tom Riddle.

Ergo: whether I am correct in my speculation that Gellert's rise had already failed some years (5?) earlier, and that it was simply that no one had been able to catch him and get him off the streets which required Albus's intervention (possibly on Gellert's own insistence) or not, it stands to reason that Albus

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had some degree of involvement with closing down whatever was left of Gellert's operation.

And Gellert effectively purchased his life and safety from Albus by making him an offer he knew Albus was not likely to refuse.



Stepping back another 46 years, both Albus D and Gellert G had gone completely nuts over the idea of recovering and reuniting the Deathly Hallows. Gellert was particularly fascinated by the unbeatable Wand, Albus was fixated on the Resurrection Stone, but they were both absolutely gaga about going off on a treasure hunt and finding the damned things..

Neither one of them ever really got over that shared obsession, either. In fact, Gellert in particular, went right on to *do* it. Albus, badly burned, shied off from the whole issue, until he confronted Gellert again 46 years later.

After which point he seems to have suffered a fairly major relapse.

Now, pause and think: is Gellert, a dedicated — and partially successful — Hallows quester really likely to have stopped at just the Wand?

I don't think so! Indeed, the very fact that he *did* find the Wand is more likely to have made him all the more determined to find the other two items as well. After all, the legend had by that time grown up which claimed that only the master of *all three* of the Hallows would be the Master of Death.

And by, say, 1915 or 1920, he had resources available to put toward finding them.



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Grindelwald was still very young when he acquired the Elder Wand, however. And the young tend to be impatient. Where Albus might possibly have done nothing but to continue his research until he had at least discovered one more of the Hallows, when the circumstances presented a not-to-be-refused opportunity, Gellert made his grab for world dominance on the strength of holding only the Wand. After that point his campaign for World Dominance™ will have kept him fully occupied.

However, he is highly unlikely to have ever forgotten that he intended to make himself the Master of Death itself, and for that he needed both the Stone and the Cloak as well. If Grindelwald did NOT have a handful of very talented scholars on his payroll engaged in attempting to track the other two items I would be very much surprised.

I still think that it is most likely that his empire had come unstuck by about 1940, and that it was only the fact that he was still running about loose and unpredictable that had most of the European ww so on edge that they were begging Albus Dumbledore to come and take care of the situation. But what is clear is that Albus *did* finally do so. And, once Gellert was taken into custody, which was almost certainly arranged and administered by Albus Dumbledore, *personally*, it was Albus who closed down what was left of Gellert's operations.

Well, okay. As a result, at some point in the middle of 1945 we have Albus returned to Britain, in possession of the Elder Wand, possibly (acto Swythyv) a clutch of tamed Thestrals, and all 40+ years of Gellert's notes regarding the search for the other two Deathly Hallows.

The next portion of my speculations is a bit less clearly sup-

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ported by elements openly stated in canon, but there is at least *one* such statement.

Part II of this particular theory stems from a comment made by Marvolo Gaunt during his confrontation with Bob Ogden.

Evidently *someone* had attempted to buy the Peverill ring from Marvolo. Had offered him a handsome sum for it as well. We do not know precisely *when*, but Ogden's visit to the Gaunts took place in the summer of 1925.

Where was Gellert Grindelwald in 1925?

By 1925, or even 1920, I should think that it would be unlikely that Gellert Grindelwald would be in Britain attempting to purchase an alleged Peverill artifact himself. He had other fish to fry. But he would certainly have sent an agent to do it for him. And the fact that the artifact was only a *possible* lead, might explain the lack of followup. There are unquestionably as many purported "Peverill artifacts" strewn across wizarding Europe as there were fragments of the "true cross" in its Muggle counterpart. The agent had followed the lead of an old wizarding family's ownership of what they claimed to be a Peverill ring, but there was nothing about Marvolo or his household to instill any confidence in those claims. And we already know from our first sight of Xeno Lovegood at the Weasley wedding that there is no shortage of artifacts bearing the sigil of the Hallows questers. At least a few of these artifacts are bound to be legitimately historic in themselves.

So, like I say, in 1945 we have Albus returned to Britain with (a clutch of Thestrals?) the Elder Wand, an Order of Merlin, and some 40 years of Gellert's records concerning his search for the Stone and the Cloak.



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Most of the leads in these records had already been investigated and found to be bogus. But there were probably a few unexamined or abandoned trails. Over the following 2–3 years Albus's term breaks are taken up with attempting to pick up these leads where Gellert's agents had left them. Since he is still actively engaged in the classroom, his time for such pursuits is limited to the 3 weeks of Christmas break, the 2 weeks of Easter break and the long holiday of two months in the summer. In addition to any Assistant Headmaster duties which may fall under his responsibility. Or not, as the case may be. We have no direct canon claim that Albus was ever Deputy Headmaster, although it would not be unexpected.

At some point after the commencing of the school term of... we'll say 1947, but we don't have to insist on it, he finally works his way down the list to a report of a ring bearing the sigil of the Hallows which in the middle 1920s was in the possession of a family named Gaunt who refused to sell their heirloom. Given that there was nothing to distinguish the ring in question from any other artifact of the sort that would have been adopted by a family of traditional Hallows questers, the lead had been abandoned.

Well, Albus knows enough of pureblood wizarding society to know that 'Gaunt' is a legitimately *old* wizarding name, although the family appears to have died out. The lead may well go nowhere, but it is certainly worth following.

A grateful Ministry would hardly have refused to assist Albus Dumbledore in an attempt to trace a wizard who might have a connection to whatever it was that Gellert Grindelwald had been up to over in Europe, some years back.

It would soon have transpired that Marvolo Gaunt had died

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back around 1926 or '27. But a look at the Ministry's file would have turned up his arrest record. Which would have led Albus directly to Bob Ogden, and the information that Marvolo's son Morfin was currently serving a life sentence in Azkaban for the murder of three Muggles.

His interview with Bob Ogden, which entails a Pensieved memory, forewarns him that he's going to need a translation charm to understand Parseltongue. I almost wonder whether Morfin was *compos mentos* enough by the time Albus got to him to even still speak and understand English.

So we now finally have a handle on why Albus was permitted that interview with Morfin Gaunt in which he uncovered the buried memory of Tom Riddle's visit to his uncle back in the summer of '42.

Morfin Gaunt, by then is very close to his end. He has been in the hands of the Dementors since that summer of 1942, something like 5 years, on top of his earlier 3-year sentence back in the mid-'20s. It is possible that the deterioration of his condition is part of the reason why over the course of the interview the suppressed memory was finally accessible.

The memory has provided Albus with no more information concerning the provenance of the family's ring, although he now remembers having seen Tom Riddle wearing what was *probably* that ring at Hogwarts. But there is a clear indication that a miscarriage of justice has taken place, and if he can get Morfin out of the Dementor's custody and into St Mungo's there might be a better chance of questioning him further. He starts a campaign to secure Gaunt's release.

He is also now determined upon building a case against Tom



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Marvolo Riddle and presenting it to the Wizengamot. There is no statute of limitation on the crime of murder. Albus now sees the possibility of packing Tom Riddle away to Azkaban where he will be in no position to be a further danger to anyone.

If he had been quicker off the mark and managed to do it *then*, he might have pulled it off. After all, at that point, for all of his former popularity among a group of fairly high-ranking schoolboys, Tom Riddle wasn't anyone with influence to bring to bear in opposition to Albus Dumbledore.

And then Albus has to return to his teaching duties. In the interim between this point and the summer break, the information that Albus Dumbledore is agitating for a retrial for Morfin Gaunt, of all people, is printed in the Prophet, although probably on a back page. It is more of a curiosity than a bit of relevant news.



To Tom Riddle, however, any article that mentions Morfin Gaunt serves as a strong suggestion that he needs to get out of Dodge. He turned 21 at the end of 1947, and his contract, if any, with Burke will be up in June. Upon the whole, he's found the association profitable in terms of information, training, and contacts, but he never did intend to spend his whole life as a shopkeeper. And he already knows who last had Slytherin's locket. Now is a good time to get it back.

He starts cultivating Hepzibah Smith. When we saw him pay her a visit in Hokey's memory, he claimed to have come with a negotiation from B&B to purchase back one of her previous acquisitions, at this point there is no way of telling whether this was actually prompted by Burke, or was his own idea, but it

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made a good enough pretext to get into the lady's house, and the connection is going to serve his own purposes rather than Burke's.

He probably also starts making comments to Burke about maybe taking a traditional Grand Tour when his contract runs out. Is there anywhere or anything on the Continent that Burke thinks might be particularly worth investigating or keeping an eye out for?

In the meantime, there is the question of the Ring. By this time Tom is bound to have heard about those loons who call themselves the Hallows Questers, but at least they are an exclusively wizarding nut cult so he has no regrets as to having formerly displayed the connection. But it may turn out to be inconvenient, now, after the fact.

He has no idea that \*Albus\* wants that ring. But if Albus is campaigning for Morfin's release, then the likelihood is that the memory charm on Morfin has failed, and the ring ties him to the Riddle murders (he probably thanks Merlin that the device on it doesn't connect him to any specific *family*).

I think Tom decided that it might be wise to shed it. He was also planning to soon be traveling into dangerous places, so, one evening, or on his day off, he slipped off the radar, cursed it heavily, and dumped it where he'd found it.

I think that he quite deliberately took it back and left it in the Gaunt ruin. And it was quite deliberately cursed to kill whoever picked it up. That was an intentional trap. He no doubt expected that the most likely person to find it would be uncle Morfin. And if Morfin wants his ring back, much joy may he have of it. Once Morfin was dead, there would be no way to conclusively prove Tom had ever been anywhere near the place.



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So, right about the time his contract with Burke was due to expire, Tom Riddle, in his capacity as a shop assistant employed at Borgin & Burke has an interview (not his first) with Madam Hepzibah Smith, a wealthy collector of magical artifacts, in which he verifies that, yes, it is Madam Smith who has current possession the locket of Salazar Slytherin, which had originally been the property of his mother's family. She also reveals that she possesses a cup which she claims is a relic of Helga Hufflepuff, of whom Madam Smith claims to be a descendant. These temptations prove far too great to resist. Madam Smith survives her last known interview with Riddle by only two days.

He almost certainly made another visit on the actual evening of her death, during which he possesses Madam Smith, forces her to drink poison, waits until she dies and creates the Cup Horcrux from her murder. He also probably stuns her House Elf, and modifies the Elf's memory, takes the Locket and the Cup (and probably whatever cash he found in her house), makes his good-byes to Burke, and slips off the board by the time the Hogwarts term breaks up for the summer.



An alternate possibility, suggested by a correspondent, is that Tom may have been being kept abreast of developments inside the Ministry by a former classmate. It stands to reason that someone else either in his own year, or anything up to 2–3 years ahead of him might be working in the Ministry by then. Possibly more than one, considering how well-connected many of Tom's former classmates were. In either event, Albus Dumbledore's sudden interest in getting Morfin Gaunt's conviction



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overturned would have given Tom an unequivocal heads-up.

Indeed, I suspect that Tom was probably the one who took the initiative by contacting Hepzibah (whose name had probably shown up any number of times in the shop's records) about selling that goblin armor back to B&B. And he may have done so without his employers' knowledge. It would not have taken long to charm her into showing him whether she still had the locket, and had it in her own possession, rather than having stowed it in a Gringotts vault.

And, I'm also certain that the news of Albus's interest in Morfin is what prompted him to lay a curse on the Ring which would cause it to kill anyone either who tried to remove it from its hiding place, or attempted to put it on. (I am still rather fond of my theory that he developed this curse by clandestinely messing with the silver and opal necklace at B&B, which was already *known* to be cursed, but nothing actually depends on *that*.)

On Burke's end, he had no idea that Tom had any interest in that locket or any connection with the ragged, homely young witch he'd bought it from. Tom was careful to never tell him anything of that. Tom's investigations of the shop's records were probably passed off as becoming better aware of the shop's stock.



Morfin Gaunt didn't live to walk into the trap that Tom had set for him, but it caught Albus Dumbledore neatly enough, even though it had to wait to do so for something like 39 years. Almost to the day. We're never going to get any kind of confirmation on any of this but I put the murder of Hepzibah Smith as taking place in early June 1948. That's certainly within the parameters





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that we already knew.

Albus would have immediately recognized Tom when he showed up in Morfin's memory. But I'm not sure that he hadn't been expecting that. A lot depends upon just how widespread the name "Marvolo" is among wizards. And Albus had been taking a covert interest in a student named Tom Marvolo Riddle for some years now. In fact, he had finally believed himself to be rid of the troublesome boy. He probably also remembered that the child had once claimed to be a Parselmouth, and may well have recalled the ring that Tom had been wearing at some point in his last three years at school. Albus most likely had never taken a close look at it, but, even if it was crude and ugly, it was not something that one would expect to find in the possession of a penniless orphan. Albus already knew that the boy was a thief, as well as the kind of bully who liked to take trophies. Morfin's rambling over having "lost" his father's ring would have made that connection inescapable.

By that time, Tom was of age, either as a wizard or a Muggle, out of school, and no longer under any authority of Albus Dumbledore's.

Since he had also almost certainly already turned the ring into a Horcrux, and since Rowling now has all Horcruxes acting like Tolkien's One Ring, he would have had reason to find the ring's attempts to influence him irritating, and would have stopped wearing it.



Although considering what that ring already inherently was there is a rather more amusing possibility for someone to make something of. If they choose.

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You do not activate the Resurrection Stone by *wearing* the ring. You have to take it off and turn it around in your palm three times.

Well what else would you expect someone to do who is gloating over creating his very first Horcrux?

And probably thinking of all his "perfect" murders.

We've already seen that Tom doesn't *\*like\** to be visited by the dead. We know he got used to talking to the ghosts at Hogwarts, but these shades aren't *\*ghosts\**.

He pulled up the *Riddles* — even though they were *Muggles* — and he also got *Myrtle*. And Myrtle immediately set up her usual howl about how Olive Hornsby was *mean* to her and now she's *dead* and it was *unfair*, and Tom probably said something like; "Then go haunt Olive Hornsby and leave me alone!" And Myrtle was off like a shot, since he'd just given her permission to do *exactly* what she wanted to do.

Various people have pointed out that Myrtle is curiously *substantial* for a ghost. How many other ghosts have we met who were able to displace water?

Tom managed to banish the Riddles. They were all Muggles, and wouldn't have been able to manifest at all without the help of the Stone. But shedding the Ring a few years later may probably have suddenly looked like a rather good idea.

He may have even thought that what it did had something to do with his having turned it into a Horcrux. It would have been years before he had a chance to learn differently. Assuming he ever did. He may not.



Having gone over the reports both of Morfin and his father's



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earlier arrest, as well as the report of Morfin's murder conviction, it is difficult to believe that the name of the primary victim in both attacks did not register with Albus, who would certainly have associated it with the troublemaker who he suspected to have been behind any number of the nasty incidents at Hogwarts over the past few years. And who he had finally thought he was through with having to deal with.

Through the use of Legilimency Dumbledore followed his hunch, and was able to retrieve the buried memory of Morfin's only meeting with his nephew. Which if we had a more pro-active Albus, he would possibly have been *looking* for. Albus's discovery of Gaunt's almost certain innocence of the murders of the Riddle family was enough to try to get him out. Morfin Gaunt's death took place before his release from Azkaban could be accomplished. Morfin's death therefore I now place in the spring or early summer of 1948, although we cannot be certain. Assuming Morfin and his sister Merope had been near to the same age, Morfin would have been somewhere in his 40s at the time of his death.

That Albus Dumbledore was campaigning for Morfin Gaunt's release suggests that the information discovered in the recovered memory would have been submitted to some Ministry committee as evidence. We do not know for certain who might have been a part of this committee. But there is some circumstantial evidence to suggest that Arcturus Black, then Head of the Black family *may* have been a member of this body.

Bob Ogden, however, had been working with Dumbledore since this business first turned up, and was aware of Albus's attempt to build a case against the man he believed had been

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the true murderer of the Riddle family. He probably assigned an Auror to investigate further. Ogden probably also no doubt pointed out that Albus's case, as it currently stood, was far from watertight. The death of Morfin Gaunt before he could be questioned further put a considerable spoke in their wheel.

However, at about this point in time, the DMLE suddenly finds itself investigating the robbery and murder of one Madam Hepzibah Smith, a wealthy collector of magical artifacts. The whole business is confusing and inconclusive. There is undoubtedly a good deal of discussion regarding the case around the Department.

The name of one of Madam Smith's last visitors a couple of days before she was found dead turns out to be the name of the same fellow that Albus is convinced probably murdered that family of Muggles back in the summer of 1942.

Someone speaks with the Auror who is in charge of the Smith investigation. While the murder of the Riddles might just conceivably be classified as a domestic. The murder of Madam Smith appears to be a straightforward murder for gain. Ogden doesn't see a pattern emerging, but they just might have a serial killer on their hands.

At which point I tend to think we may have discovered where that long-standing association/friendship between Albus Dumbledore and Alastor Moody may have started.

Moody is known to have been an Auror with a long career. It isn't beyond belief for that career to have started by some point in the 1940s. Possibly even earlier. In any case, Ogden may well have suggested that the two of them pool resources and see if they could advance their investigations and get this Tom Riddle off the streets.



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Unfortunately, Riddle was out of the country before a viable legal case against him could be raised.



Nothing much is known to have taken place related to the face-off between Tom Riddle and Albus Dumbledore over the following decade. Which is approximately the point at which Tom Riddle returned to Britain, wearing a new face, and, soon afterwards, adopted a new name.

**January 1957:** Minerva McGonagall is hired as the new Transfiguration instructor at Hogwarts.

**Winter, year unknown (1957–1963 approximate):** Albus Dumbledore is formally appointed Headmaster of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. If we are to take Albus at his word that Tom Riddle was absent from Britain for a period of ten years, this would place his appointment in the winter of 1958–'59.

Soon afterwards Albus Dumbledore receives a visit from the former Tom Riddle, now openly calling himself Lord Voldemort. During this meeting Riddle once again requests the post of Defense Against the Dark Arts instructor — which he knows is now *vacant*. This request is refused.

In retaliation, Riddle allegedly jinxes the post, ensuring that no other instructor will manage to finish out a year in the position. We do not know whether the jinx was to continue in perpetuity, or only throughout Dumbledore's tenure as Headmaster (Rowling has since stated that it lasted until Riddle's unequivocal death). In the course of this discussion, it is also heavily implied that Aberforth Dumbledore was already in place as the barman of the Hog's Head Tavern in Hogsmeade



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by the date of the interview between Albus and Tom Riddle. Indeed, it is entirely possible that Aberforth has been in place in some capacity at the Hog's Head since he sat his OWLs in 1900.



Another thing which we do not know is how long Riddle had been in Britain at the time he contacted Albus for that job interview.

The probability is that he had not been back for long. Riddle is unknown to have had a fixed address during the period after he finished Hogwarts, before he departed Britain, presumably in search of the lost diadem of Rowena Ravenclaw. During the period that he was employed at B&B he is assumed to have had rooms somewhere in the general Diagon/Knockturn Alley area, if he was not actually being housed by Burke on the premises.

At this point, he had certainly not yet acquired the Riddle House, and the Gaunt hovel was probably close to uninhabitable. Consequently, we might fairly safely conclude that he was staying with one or other of his former classmates. Wizards do appear to recognize the laws of hospitality, and many of the more prominent families have properties which would make such hospitality easy to extend.

This seems also to be this point at which "Lord Voldemort" first began to make a public appearance. Which upon consideration probably ought to strike us as distinctly peculiar — particularly given later developments. Still, perhaps we need to remember that what things become, is not always what they originally were. Or what they were *presented* as being.

The Diary Revenant informed us that "Lord Voldemort" had been an invention of Tom Riddle's schooldays. Already known to





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his close associates by the time he was in his 5th year.

Whatever the grand title of Lord Voldemort might have represented to Tom Riddle at that point. I rather suspect that it was presented to his compatriots in the manner of a joke.

Before his resurrection in the summer of 1995, Tom Riddle had been presented to the reader as an individual who would have always appeared to have a goal. I agree that once he was actually “on stage” his depiction in canon would call this belief into considerable question, for a more passive villain would be difficult to find.

Not to mention the fact that the official Riddle backstory, as presented by Albus Dumbledore depicts him as a public enemy from the get-go. An outlaw whose “message” could never have enjoyed *any* degree of public acceptance, let alone support.

Post-DHs we know that Albus was capable of lying like a rug, but this is still a contradiction that needs some form of resolution.

One of these things, is simply *not* like the others.

However, perhaps we need to keep in mind that the Tom Riddle who returned to Britain after a decade’s absence had not yet been diminished by a dozen years of semi-existence as a disembodied spirit, being eaten away at by the sort of chaotic entities which feed upon magic as it emerges into the world.

The Tom Riddle who returned to Britain roughly around 1958–1963 had just completed a mission which I believe had taken him *far* longer than he had ever thought was even *possible*.

I tend to think he was ready for a break.



The next item on his primary agenda was going to be tricky



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to get set up. He needs to establish a place for himself at Hogwarts and engineer a situation which will cause Gryffindor’s sword to manifest.

Not a problem — if Dippet had still been in charge, but Hogwarts is currently lacking an active Headmaster, and it looks like the job is probably going to fall to Dumbledore. That’s going to make things difficult. He has *never* had a good relationship with Albus Dumbledore.

In the meantime, he is staying with one of his friends, catching up with others, and finding out what has been going on over the past decade that wasn’t mentioned in the international news.

I rather think he was starved for company, too. After all, hunting for the lost diadem was probably not really a mission that he felt he could *share*.

Oh, sure, he had been used to working alone back in his orphanage. And he’s at his most dangerously innovative when he is working solo. But his years at Hogwarts had given him a taste for having a following.

I suspect that his host, or someone in his host’s family might have been a member of the Knights of Walpurgis.

Remember them? Rowling pulled their name out of her hat and tossed it into an interview, possibly the joint interview of 2005, and tried to claim that they were an organization that Riddle had taken over in order to create the Death Eaters.

They never turned up anywhere in canon.

But I don’t doubt that they, or something very much like them *does* indeed exist in the Potterverse.

As I’ve said elsewhere, I think that they are the model that Horace’s Slug Club is based on.





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And I no longer think that it had *any* resemblance to the Death Eaters. Or certainly not at its inception. It's far more likely to be along the lines of the Glorious Order of the Moose. Or perhaps the Shriners.

It was (and probably still is) a *service* organization. I suspect that it was formed around the time that wizarding seclusion was being established, and was created to assist families, or individuals, to hide themselves. Or to help them re-train for some craft or profession which would benefit themselves *and* their new world a bit less conspicuously than just trying to support themselves farming. A "hidden" wizarding world simply isn't *big* enough to hide a lot of farms.

No. Leave the farming to the Muggles. They're good enough at it to manage without magical help.

But, like I say, things do not always remain what they begin as.

By the mid-20th century the Knights were very much the Slug Club. Only older.

Riddle's contemporaries probably regarded them as a lot of stuffy old farts who thought far too well of themselves.



Which, at very long last, finally offers at least a *possibility* of how "Lord Voldemort" might have briefly — *very* briefly — enjoyed some public notice.

It was a *\*prank\**

There Tom was, staying over with one of his ex-schoolmates, and a couple of the other old boys joined in, hanging out, most of them being bored scions with nothing of any significance to do with themselves. Riddle probably privately considered them



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all a bunch of useless twits who wouldn't have recognized a good day's work if it bit them on the arse. By this time they were probably around 30, and had established themselves as well as they were ever going to establish themselves until someone in one of the older generations died and left room for them to get a bit closer to the top of the family "business".

With not a trace of anything that could be regarded as a "purpose" among them.

In short, they were all dangerously at loose ends.

They'd been reminiscing about some of the rigs they ran back at Hogwarts, and someone probably brought up Lord Voldemort. Who had been very much an in-joke among them.

Somebody else probably brought up the Knights of Walpurgis, and it all expanded into a glorious plot to bring "Lord Voldemort" (from abroad) to a meeting as a guest.

Tom may have even given a fine speech (complete with a foreign accent) at the meeting. One which would have *\*sounded\** like *exactly* what they all stood for —

— And which upon further examination would have devolved into a complete mockery.

They may have kept Lord Voldemort around for a few more meetings, and maybe a couple of articles in the Prophet.

They probably didn't perpetrate the original hoax any longer than it was still fun, but it may have taken a while to wind down.

Being publicly made an object of ridicule for having bought the package might have had something to do with most people's reluctance to speak of the episode later.

But that certainly wouldn't explain the *type* of reluctance which we see in canon.





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I could just *about* see the whole “Lord Voldemort” thing starting off as a joke which got completely out of hand.

But the violence later attributed to the Death Eaters that started causing concerns in the DMLE by roughly the mid-1960s was something else entirely.

That doesn’t really seem to be connected at all. That has *nothing* to do with somebody prancing about masquerading as a bogus Lord Voldemort.

Something, somewhere else gave Tom and his cronies a reason to renege on any kind of social contract and start raising hell for the fun of it. And whatever that reason might have been, it has to have been something more than just “because they’re evil.”

I’ve swung around to the view that the whole Death Eaters business originally started as a group effort. It might not even have been Tom who prompted the first move.

And, it does seem to have taken at least a bit of time before Tom had established himself as their unequivocal leader.

Yes, they’d been in the habit of following his lead from their schooldays. But he hadn’t *owned* them. By the time they had adopted the Dark mark and started signing their work, he did.

That had to have taken time to establish.

Indeed, I suspect that the reason it took so long before the DMLE woke up and realized they had a bunch of terrorists on their hands, was because for the first several years, terrorizing the wizarding public wasn’t actually Tom’s primary objective. No, at this point the primary objective was Tom’s gradual establishment of total dominance, and indeed *\*ownership\** of



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their whole group, and all its works. Terrorizing the public was a tool, not a goal. At least in the beginning.

It would, after all, take a while to convince people who are accustomed to regarding themselves as the ruling elite to essentially sell themselves into slavery to you, personally.

It would have been easy enough for him to foment dissatisfaction with things as they are — even if most of that crowd was already in the position of being at the very apex of society.

Only of course you’re not, since your daddy and your granddaddy, and hell, even your great-granddaddy are still probably hanging around, refusing to let go of the reins.

He could enable blowing off some steam — if you point them at a safe target, of course.

A handful of Tom’s old school friends would have drifted into place without a great deal of resistance. Not all of them, however. The ones who hadn’t a taste for that kind of mayhem, were simply not invited to take part.

And were probably “encouraged” not to speak of anything they might have engaged in before they realized the direction things were taking.

And once a few such engagements have been successfully accomplished, *nobody* would be in a position to go blowing the whistle on anyone else.

Real recruitment didn’t get started until there was a philosophical message and something that would pass as a “cause”. But the formative period was now.

And Tom seems to have wanted to establish a tight, indeed, a *complete* hold on the followers that he already had before he made *any* push to recruit others.





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I'm inclined to think that the whole first phase of Tom's first rise, the period before the DMLE started looking for a pattern in the kind of disturbing episodes that were taking place, may have been accomplished with no more than a handful of participants.



Riddle's physical condition at this date, after his 10-year absence makes it evident that he has already been noticeably Changed by his involvement in some dangerously degenerative magical processes. His appearance is not yet so far removed from that of general humanity as it would be by the time of his 2nd return to the ww in 1995, but he is sufficiently changed to strongly foreshadow it. We assume that he had rendered the ring, the cup, the locket, and the diadem all into Horcruxes by this point, but that he had certainly not yet created his 6th Horcrux. It is now uncertain as to whether he had already rendered the diary into a Horcrux, either. Or whether he only did that shortly before intending to deploy it when he gave it to Lucius Malfoy in preparation for an intended plot that never materialized due to his defeat at Godric's Hollow.

Riddle would, at the point of his return to Britain (depending on which year the interview actually took place), have been 30–36 years of age. If it did indeed take place in the winter of '58–'59 he would be just short of his 32nd birthday.



At this point one might well raise the question of why Albus even agreed to that interview. He clearly had no intention of granting any request that Tom Riddle might make. Why even

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permit him onto the grounds? Did he think it would be impolite to refuse him a hearing?

Did he want to take the opportunity to make Tom aware that he would be paying great attention to his future behavior? Is that what that reference to "rumors have made their way to Hogwarts. I would be sorry to believe half of them to be true." business was about?

Was that an elliptical hint that he was well aware of Tom's former activities concerning the Riddles and Madam Smith?

What *else* could it be? Tom was presumably only recently returned to Britain. He wasn't known to have yet done anything unlawful since his return that Albus could have held against him.

Or was Albus simply chiding Tom about the "Lord Voldemort" hoax that he and his friends were running to make a mockery of their elders? Albus is likely to have heard at least something about that.

And then Albus goes on to out Aberforth as a source of his own information in the course of it. WTF?

The whole meeting appears in retrospect to have been a piece of foolishness on Albus's part.

Of course, here outside the fourth wall, it's all just a case of Rowling moving furniture. Her apparent purpose was pass some information to the reader about Aberforth's identity, in case they'd missed the interview and website information which confirmed it, and to have Tom strut around and show off his ruined looks. But it clanks. Loudly.





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At this point, once again, I'd like to direct our attention to some of the possibilities introduced by those 2019 reconsiderations regarding that set of paired vanishing cabinets.

We have no information regarding when those cabinets were first introduced to the two locations where we originally encountered them. They are described as being \*lacquer\* cabinets, but this is not much help. Such a style, treatment, or material is often associated with chinoiserie, and other "exotic" decorative elements, and such styles have been going in and out of fashion for at least the last three centuries. Conversely, the term can merely indicate a particular variety of glossy shellac.

As to Borgin & Burke's shop, we are told that the business was founded by Caractacus Burke, and that either the present shop, or an earlier one also run by Burke, was in business at least as early as 1926, when Merope sold Burke the Slytherin locket. By the time Burke was interviewed, probably by Alastor Moody, regarding that locket in the course of his investigation of the robbery and murder of Madam Hepzibah Smith, Burke was described by Harry Potter as "a little old man."

Moody's interview with Burke is most likely to have taken place in the mid-20th century. The shop might by that time have been in business for several decades.

The question of how long Burke might have had possession of the London cabinet could boil down to whether or not he was aware that the cabinet was one of a paired set. If so, he might have been reluctant to sell it without attempting to acquire the second cabinet, in order to sell them as a set, which would be a great deal more valuable.

But in any case, the fact that the London cabinet was still

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in the shop in 1996 in no way disqualifies it from having been in the shop in 1938. Or for it to have been acquired at any time during the period that Tom was either employed there full time, or working there during his summers. And I am fairly certain that if it was acquired during that period, it would have been known to be a "vanishing" transfer cabinet from the get-go. B&B isn't just a second-hand furniture shop, after all. All of their stock is known to be magical in either function or origin.

Burke is likely to have had at least *some* form of provenance for that cabinet, and such information would have been in the shop records. Such information might very well have included the fact that it was one of a *pair* of transfer cabinets, and could well have included the activation phrase, or spell.

Another thing we don't know is whether Burke was aware of the location of the second cabinet. It seems quite likely that through some oversight, he was not, or he would have made a more determined attempt to acquire the one still at Hogwarts.

Tom, however, is very likely to have come across the Hogwarts cabinet at some point while poking and prying into every nook and cranny looking for an entrance to the Chamber of Secrets, and might have recognized that it matched the one at Burke's. Particularly if, as I have postulated, he spent his summers as Burke's shop boy, being trained in how to deal with a wide variety of enchanted, or cursed artifacts.

And if so, then Tom Riddle may well have had access to that cabinet during at least some of his student years at Hogwarts. Even more to the point, he would have had access to it in roughly 1948, before he left Britain and headed off to Albania.

I'm not at all sure that Tom would have passed this infor-



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mation on to Burke. I would be quite unsurprised to learn that Tom found having his own secret passage into Hogwarts during the summer to be very useful. Particularly given that he was well aware of how to get into the Room of Hidden Things.

It does occur to me to wonder how much of Burke's new stock during the period that Tom was a student had been lifted from among the unclaimed and abandoned property in that Room. Tom Riddle was a thief long before he became a murderer.

And if, as I now suspect, Tom was covertly slipping in and out of Hogwarts under Headmaster Dippet's unsuspecting nose at his own convenience, then I think the rarely asked question of; "Where did Tom store his Horcruxes before he gave them to followers to guard?" has a fairly obvious answer.

Tom, after all, is not known to have had a residence of his own during the years he was working at B&B. He probably had a rented room somewhere, or even was living in a room attached to the shop. This is not the best sort of place to hide valuables. Particularly dangerous valuables. Particularly not dangerously *illegal* valuables.

I rather think that once he had stopped wearing it, he had stowed the Ring in the Room of Hidden Things until he decided to deploy it as a Morfin trap.

And once he acquired them, he was hardly going to risk the Cup and the Locket on his projected jaunt across Europe, either. They would be *much* safer stored in the Room.

Insofar as the Cup and Locket went, there was also the added bonus of the fact that if by some unlucky chance they had been discovered there, They would probably have simply been put on display in the trophy room rather than removed from the castle.



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Consequently; Tom's job interview may have been primarily a pretext for getting into the castle to discover where the transfer cabinet was currently located. A simple "point me" would have told him that.

Checking whether the Cup and Locket were still *in situ*, adding the Diadem to the collection, and jinxing the DADA post (or the classroom), or Confunding the Hat, could all be better accomplished on a later visit, at some time when there would be no reason to believe that he had been anywhere near the place, and could work undisturbed. He had come to Hogsmeade with witnesses who could attest that he had met with Dumbledore, returned to the Hogs Head and departed in their company. As for getting back via the cabinet; he was fully conversant with the security at Burke's. Getting access to the London cabinet was hardly beyond his capabilities.

For that matter; young Tom may or may not have lived on the premises during the years that he (arguably) spent his summers as Burke's unofficial (or official) apprentice, but that doesn't mean that Burke would have continued to house and feed him once he was out of school and had officially joined the workforce. And he certainly wouldn't have been rooming at Burke's once he returned from his 10-year exile.

But he probably did have a room somewhere in the area. For that matter, once he returned from his first exile, he may have maintained a small *pied-a-terre* somewhere in the neighborhood o Knockturn Alley for those periods between his visits to the homes of his former schoolmates.

He might very well have purchased the London cabinet from Burke and had complete access to it — and by extension, the Castle.





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After his defeat at Godric's Hollow, Burke may have recovered the cabinet, purchasing it from a landlord who liquidated Tom's abandoned assets in lieu of any owed rent.



After this point we lose track of any of Tom Riddle's known activities. It is a bit much to suppose that having been denied his chance to settle into Hogwarts castle and attempt to create a situation which would enable him to get access to Godric's sword, he simply went off and threw a tantrum for the next 20 years.

And about the only thing I can come up with at this point to explain that would be some kind of a psychotic break.

If the soul is the seat of the personality, it's not like Tom Riddle's personality was not already deeply compromised. We have been given every reason to believe that by the time he showed up in Albus's office, he already had four Horcruxes to his (dis)credit.

But, if that was the cause, it wasn't a break that was immediately obvious to his croneys.

On the other hand, the Diary Revenant did tell us that it had *always* been his intention to make his name feared. It is not impossible that once the joke of being Lord Voldemort wore thin, and Albus blocked his attempt to establish himself in the castle, he decided to table the goal of adding Godric's sword to his collection, and concentrate on that instead.

It certainly wouldn't have happened overnight. Indeed, it took several years to gather momentum.

And if Cornelius Fudge is to be believed, the DMLE didn't start connecting the dots and looking for villains until the mid-1960s.

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We have been given at least some indication of the activities which were later attributed to the Death Eaters over that period. Although nothing of what we are given to understand went on is described in any kind of detail. It is all blocked in with the broadest of brushes, leaving the reader to make assumptions and leap to conclusions. Which can end up in a quagmire.

We were told that there were unexplained disappearances. It has not been indicated whether these were wizards or Muggles. But it must be admitted that most wizards would have remained unaware of the disappearance of Muggles.

We do not know whether these disappearances were persons of any specific blood status, or political stance either. Nor whether they were persons who had any known unfriendly dealings with either Tom Riddle or his associates.

For that matter, we do not know whether the people who were assumed to have disappeared might not simply have been people who would not have been quickly missed.

By the mid-1960s, however, the DMLE was taking notice and becoming concerned.

The general uneasiness over the situation that such attention might have provoked would, either sooner or later, have led someone in a position to be tracking such occurrences to conclude that, rather than an unknown individual dark wizard or two, they had a suspected group of terrorists at work.

Quite possibly without any clear indication of what these terrorists actually *wanted*.

The turning point of the whole first "war" appears to have been the point at which these suspected terrorists started signing their work with a skull-and-snake sigil which became



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known as the Dark mark.

That is the point at which there was first acknowledged to even *be* a war.

We do not know just when the term: “Death Eaters” was first applied to these particular terrorists, either. Nor where the term originally came from.

Nor do we know whether at any point in their gradual rise, these “Death Eaters” appeared to have been undertaking any of their violent activities for the purpose of any sort of material gain. But I suspect they were apparently *not* simply assumed by the DMLE to be a band of brigands attempting to distribute the wizarding world’s wealth into their own hands by any means that seemed effective.

The question of; “What do they *want*? What are they *after*?” would have become nerve-wracking as their activities spread. Because I don’t think there was initially any clear indication.

At some point, a philosophical component related to blood status and pureblood superiority was publicly added to the mix, but the people being targeted for the group’s attentions were of so broad a variety and applicable to *any* of such classifications as to make it difficult to reconcile this detail as being anything like a coherent message.

Once someone coined the term “blood traitor,” however, it gradually became clear that the target was anyone who caught their attention, or who attempted to speak out against them.

A major element related to the first rise of the Death Eaters that we do *not* know is just precisely when Tom devised the Dark mark and convinced his followers to adopt it. Or how long it was between their use of it as a signal that they deployed to

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take credit for their work became a Mark that they allowed their Leader to brand them with. Or what his argument for having them adopt such a brand was. Clearly there is a form of communication built into it which it conveys upon its wearers — which was undoubtedly useful. But the apparent pain of its activation might have made it a hard sell. Tom, however, is known to have been persuasive.

And, of course, once they accepted his mark, they were *his*. Without recourse.

It was the adoption of the Dark mark which finally solidified Tom Riddle and his associates’ activities into a “cause.”

Not that he, or they, actually *had* one. Apart from demonstrating that they could do anything they wanted, to anyone they wanted, and the Powers That Be were powerless to stop them. Indeed, that much has always been his *only* “cause.”

Admittedly, they couldn’t do it openly, but running around in masks had a thrill of its own.

But they needed to have at least something that would *pass* as a message, or a “mission statement,” as it were, so they recycled any conglomeration of the old Pureblood manifesto that they’d all grown up with, on whatever occasion that some pronouncement appeared to be necessary. It didn’t particularly need to be consistent. After all, the audience would fill in the blanks.

At some point the “Lord Voldemort” persona — which a number of the credulous still believed in — was drawn into association with the Death Eaters. Probably as a mouthpiece.

And, we are led to believe, around 1970 something was done which rendered “Lord Voldemort” unmentionable by most of respectable wizarding society.



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None of which has ever been specified in detail, either in canon or otherwise.

And, no don't talk to me about the taboo. The taboo was only adopted once Tom had the full resources of the Ministry at his disposal in order to apply it. If the taboo had ever been in effect over the course of Vold War I, Sirius Black would have told us *all* about it in his rant about "how things were in the war" in OotP when he was preaching to Harry about how awful the first war had been. Rowling only invented that stupid taboo at the last minute in the last book, in order to enable Harry to capture himself.

What seems a good deal more plausible would have been the likelihood that Tom and his followers, inadvertantly or not, did something that made it clear to all observers that he didn't give *squat* about the Statute of Wizarding Secrecy.

You know. That piece of legislation that convinced them all that they were *\*safe\**



To leap directly from this point to our next fairly solid date of 1980 would be to overlook the entire Marauders' era, in which there is considerable reader interest across the fandom, and who unquestionably have contributed significantly to the story in the overall scheme of things.

Until recently, our only real handles on the Marauder era had come from interview and website information, which was awkward to work with since it tended to be mushily inexact, and because Ms Rowling has a distressing tendency to later reverse herself in subsequent statements. Both of these appar-

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ent handles also depended upon highly "relative" dates.

The first of these is the post-GoF interview statement, quoted above, that Severus Snape (a year-mate of Remus Lupin and the rest of the Marauders) was "35 or 36" years old in the summer of 1995. The second; in a website response, in reply to the question as to whether or not she liked Sirius Black, Ms Rowling made the statement that he was only "around" 22 when he was sent to Azkaban.

However, with the release of the Black family tapestry sketch in February 2006, we suddenly had to juggle the information that Bellatrix Black was allegedly born in 1951.

And yet, acto Sirius Black, Bellatrix was still at school when Severus Snape (and he himself) got there.

Since we know that Sirius Black was sent to Azkaban a day or so after Voldemort was defeated (i.e., November, 1981), if he was 22 years old at that point, he would have been born in 1959. He would not have been at Hogwarts while his cousin Bellatrix was still there. Not if she was born in 1951. Not even if she was born in the autumn of '51.

And she isn't quite stupid enough for it to be plausible that she had to repeat a year. Although it is possible that she may have missed a year due to some other, possibly medical, problem. I think it might be unwise to depend upon that possibility, however.

The HP Lexicon originally reasoned from the "35 or 36" interview information that Snape and the Marauders were all born in 1960. I never agreed with that reading. I thought the probability was that the Lexicon's calculations were off by a year. For their cohort all to have been born in 1960 did not plausibly give everyone enough time to finish school and get into position for



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the events which we know to have taken place in 1980-'81. But we did not yet have the website information regarding Black when the Lexicon did their original calculations and for several years they seem to have had something invested in an attempt to represent all characters as being as young as possible.

It now seems likely that Rowling either later cribbed her dates from the Lexicon (which she had cited on her original website) or she pulled them out of her hat, but for good or ill, we now have James and Lily Potters' birth dates set in 1960.

Carved in stone, in fact.

Ergo: one needs to redraft, or completely dismiss, the dates on the tapestry sketch. And we need to redraft *all* of the dates for that generation in order to make them line up to what has been said about these people in canon. Because all of the dates that are visible in that sketch are just plain wrong.

And, after all, dates are what a timeline is all about.

I suppose it would also make sense here to raise the question of the ages of a few other people who are just a bit older than the Marauders as well. Comparatively few of these can be set with any accuracy, since of all the persons we have met, only two of them have ever had ages assigned to them at any specific time in canon.

If we can believe her quick-quotes quill; in order to have been 43 in the Autumn term of Harry Potter's 4th year, Rita Skeeter would have to have been born in 1951, or quite late in 1950. She would most probably have started at Hogwarts in the Autumn term of 1962 and finished with the class of 1969. This might well put her into the same year as Molly Weasley. This is not an absolute conclusion, however. The elder Weasleys may have finished school some time earlier than this, and simply not have

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started their family until 1971.

However, Rita's long practice of sniping very specifically at the Weasleys, does at least suggest that there may be a history of friction between Rita and the elder Weasleys.

Arthur Weasley's February 6 birthday, and Molly's October 30 one would imply that if they are close to the same age, which has also been strongly suggested in canon, Molly would have been a year behind Arthur at school. Or, Molly could easily be the elder of the two, by a mere 3 months or so, which would put them both into the same year.

We have no confirmation of that, however. And while their elopement suggests that they married quite young, it does not necessarily follow that they started their family immediately. And all that we have in canon to set the date any closer than that is the information that the Whomping Willow (planted in the summer of 1971) was not at Hogwarts in Molly's day.

Note: all projective birthdates regarding ages of the oldest three Weasley children were thrown into a cocked hat, and then shaken hard, by contradictory information posted on JKR's website, over the course of 2004, forcing us to dismiss at least one of her cumulative statements on the subject as simply wrong. And all of these statements still add up to a total which does not support statements made by the Weasley children themselves as to what was going on when, in their childhood.

More recent discussion on a listgroup far, far away, has suggested an alternate interpretation which reconciles most of the confusion, but depends upon another as yet unconfirmed factor. The matter is gone into in the companion essay 'The Weasley Calendar' over in the collection of character studies. I will not



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repeat the calculations here, but the information following is in accordance with those modified calculations. They may yet be further disrupted by future statements made by Rowling, but I suspect by this time Rowling has other fish to fry.

And I'm no longer inclined to listen to Rowling anyway.

The Longbottoms also would appear to fit into this gap between Rita and the Marauders, but we do not have any information to place their birth dates at all. As both were qualified Aurors by 1981 they were at least a year or two older than the Marauders.

With Lucius Malfoy, however, we have another minor problem. In order to have been 41 in September of Harry Potter's 5th year, Lucius Malfoy would have to have been born in 1954 or very late in 1953. In this case, he would have probably started Hogwarts in 1965 and finished with the class of 1972. Lucius, unlike the elder Weasleys, *would* remember the planting of the Whomping Willow. But with these dates his time at Hogwarts overlaps that of Snape and the Marauders by only one year. Considering the suggested long association between Lucius Malfoy and Severus Snape, it would seem a longer period of early association would have been the case. The article which stated Lucius's age as 41 ran in September of 1995. So unless Lucius, like Miss Granger has a mid-September birthday, we have insufficient wriggle room in which to deal with the issue.

If, however Lucius Malfoy *can* be assumed to have a September (or later) birthday, then he would have had to wait an extra year to begin Hogwarts which would give he and Severus an overlap of two years. Malfoy's adjusted Hogwarts years would have been 1966–1973.



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As to the rest of the relevant characters for whom a date can at least be estimated:

**1953, Autumn:** Bellatrix Black born. Once again we are extrapolating children in a family spaced 2 years apart in accordance with what appears to be Rowling's default assignments.

Due to the necessity of fitting Nymphadora Tonks's birth into the timeline before the end of August of 1973, in order for her to have commenced Auror training with the last group accepted into the program in 1991, and to yet keep Bellatrix in school at least long enough for a one year overlap with the Marauder cohort, an autumn birthday to delay Bellatrix's start at Hogwarts seems the least awkward adjustment. Her Hogwarts years would have been 1965–1972.

**1955, January-August:** Andromeda Black born. Andromeda, on the other hand needs to have been born early enough in the year to have been of age and able to bail out of school in order to marry Ted Tonks as soon as she turned 17, making it possible for her daughter to have been born by the end of August of 1973. She might have been in the same academic year as Malfoy, but left before her 7th year.

**1957:** Narcissa Black born.

We have no indication of the birth dates of Frank and Alice Longbottom. But the fact that they had completed their three years of Auror training and were established as active Aurors in the field at the time of Lord Voldemort's first defeat would put them at least a couple of years older than the Marauder cohort, who, even if they immediately started Auror training





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upon completing Hogwarts would not have had full qualifications as Aurors by the time Harry Potter was born.

**Sept 2 1959–Sept 1 1960:** Marauder cohort born. Those dates known to us are:

**September 2 — December 31, 1959:** Sirius Black born. We can't estimate any closer than that, and even that information is off-canon.

**January 9, 1960:** Severus Snape born.

**January 30, 1960:** Lily Evans born.

**March 10, 1960:** Remus John Lupin born.

**March 27, 1960:** James Potter born. So much for Sirius Black's statement that James had been "only 15" at the time of the Pensieve junket. James would have turned 16 some 3 months earlier.

We have no "official" birth dates for Sirius Black or Peter Pettigrew. Rowling's statement that Sirius was "about 22" when imprisoned in Azkaban on November 1, 1981 suggests an autumn 1959 birthday. No information whatsoever is available concerning Peter Pettigrew.

**January–August, 1963:** Regulus Black born. The death date on the tapestry as reported in OotP would have been 1980. Not 1979 as recorded on the Tapestry sketch. From the statement made by Kreachur in DHs he was 17 at the time of his death. I have adjusted both his birth and his death dates to match with the textual evidence in canon.

**1966 (approximate):** According to Cornelius Fudge in July of 1996, the Ministry of Magic finally becomes officially aware of a group of terrorists calling themselves the Death Eaters, under the leadership of a wizard calling himself "Lord Voldemort" (it

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should be noted that Lord Voldemort's name may have only been attached to this group, as their learder, retroactively, once he had rendered himself unmentionable, around 1970). His capture and arrest are being actively sought from this point.



Another thing we do not know is whether Albus Dumbledore took any action related to this newly apparent threat against the British wizarding world at this time. Given his reluctance to take action at any point that it might have made a difference in canon, I am inclined to believe not. I am also still inclined to believe that from what we observed, Albus Dumbledore would have been unlikely to do anything whatsoever before a situation arose (i.e., the Trelawney Prophecy) which he knew that the Ministry would do absolutely nothing to address — because to do nothing about Prophecies is established Ministry policy, for good and sufficient reason.

I also do not know whether Rowling has since posted any information on Pottermore, or any other website regarding the date at which Dumbledore formed his Order of the Phoenix. It was clear, however in the immediate DHs post-release flurry of interviews that she intended us all to believe that the Marauders were able to go directly from Hogwarts into the Order, "full time."

Of course this was also during the period that she could not stick to the same story of what her own trio was doing with itself between the Battle of Hogwarts and the Epilogue for two days running.

Frankly, I am inclined to regard this impression very much in the same light as the statement made in the combined interview



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of 2005 that she “feels” that the Potterverse events parallel those of the Real World — and then when she actually settled down to tuck this statement into her backstory, she went out of her way to demonstrate that the history of the Potterverse, as she states it, would make any such a parallel impossible. At which point one must conclude that Rowling “sucks at summaries.”

Still, assuming that the Order existed before the Prophecy got turned loose, we are left needing to address what conceivable use Albus Dumbledore would have decided that he had for a private group of vigilantes unaffiliated with the Ministry — particularly a group which included Ministry employees. Even more particularly a group that was supposedly under his direction while he was away at Hogwarts, with a day job of his own. A day job that, in addition to a seat on the Wizengamot, the position as Chief Warlock of the Wizengamot — which was *already* overseeing Ministry policy related to this war, and the office of Supreme Mugwump of the International Council of Wizards apparently didn’t keep him sufficiently *busy*.

To be perfectly honest, this whole scenario appears to be no more than a labored attempt to depict a tableau of two titularly secluded “leaders” of two symmetrically opposing groups, each with a team of minions, striking attitudes and snarling at each other across a great divide, posing in perfect balance.

However, the problem with tableaux is that they are all inherently a completely artificial representation of whatever their apparent subject is. Any hint of movement at all and the illusion is spoilt.



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Much as the way in which Rowling has refused to ever give us any workable definition of these “Dark Arts” that are supposedly such a point of debate among wizards, she has also failed to provide us with any convincing reason for why Albus would have felt a need to try to put together a team to oppose a Dark wizard when the Ministry was already doing so.

Did he hope that if he could be seen to be opposing Tom that if someone brought Tom down he might be able to take possession of that ring?

Indeed, he was dividing the Ministry’s efforts and siphoning off some of what we are given to understand were some of their best operatives. And they agreed to it! There was nothing secret about the Order of the Phoenix in the first Voldemort war. Indeed, acto Sirius Black, and Remus Lupin, during Vold-War I the Order and the Ministry fought side by side.

So, why the Order at all? What was the point? Why did the Ministry let the Headmaster — off in Scotland — meddle with their job of catching Dark wizards?

Or, maybe it’s finally time for us to wonder; did they *ask* him to?

After all, somebody (probably the ICW) had certainly asked him to deal with their Grindelwald problem.

This was something that came up in a discussion at some point in, I think, 2011. Why would the Ministry have wanted Albus Dumbledore to found an Order of youngsters and misfits to oppose Lord Voldemort? And permit at least three of their own Aurors to donate their time to shepherd it. Probably on their own time, I doubt that Moody and the Longbottoms were being paid a bonus to do it.

Well, it also occurs to me to wonder exactly how this Order





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functioned. It sounds like they did a certain amount of training, maybe some research, and more-or-less waited on the Ministry to give them something to do, or give them a heads-up for when the Ministry needed some additional bodies.

Without pay, of course.

And also — and this might be the sticking point — without requiring any specific NEWTs. You need quite a collection of those to qualify for Auror training, after all.

Plus, apart from Moody and the Longbottoms, and *possibly* a few others — who we know were employed by the Ministry — it doesn't sound like many of the rest of the group were Ministry employees at all. Some, like Hagrid and Minerva, had day jobs elsewhere. Some, like Mundungus Fletcher (and Remus Lupin), were probably unemployable.

And some, like the Potters and their friends, were a pack of young hotheads without jobs to keep them busy and out of mischief.

And the more I think of it, the more likely it sounds as if the Ministry might have wanted such a group of well-connected post-adolescents kept track of.

After all, it stands to reason that not all of the young rowdies in the ww at that period were prime DE material. And they may not have all had to work for a living, either.

The ones who did need to work probably had enough on their plate already, but kids with money (and “good families”) and too much time on their hands... Oh, yeah, I could see someone, somewhere in the Ministry, coming up with an idea to harness that energy to some purpose. And Albus was in an excellent position to have some idea of who were the most likely candidates. And also to be best qualified to give them

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some flannel-mouthed pep talk that would direct them somewhere where they might be out of the Ministry's way and of some conceivable use.

And if a few of them did manage to be taken on for Auror training, or settle into entry-level Ministry jobs, no harm, no foul.

Not that I *necessarily* think that the whole “Order of the Phoenix” was nothing more than another name for; Albus Dumbledore's Babysitting Service for “Special Snowflakes,” but it makes at least as much sense as what Rowling has managed to provide with her oh-so-vaunted “feelings.” In fact, maybe a bit more.

But, really, the more Rowling has to say on the subject, the less reason I can see for the Order to even exist.

Until, that is, the Prophecy demons tossed an actual one into Albus Dumbledore's lap. Just to see what he made of it.

Given the way the physics of the Potterverse seems to warp themselves around Harry Potter, maybe that's why they did it.

Prenatally, even.

I mean, the more we ever learned about James Potter and Sirius Black, the less likely it sounded that they would even *want* to sign on for three more years of advanced training in order to become Aurors and make a career of hunting Dark wizards. After all, they wanted to fight Dark wizards *right now*, not three years from now. And they were confident that they already knew as much as they would ever need in order to do *that*.

It could certainly explain Lucius Malfoy's dismissal of them as “meddlers.”

Like I say, I still don't see any convincing reason for why Albus would have founded an Order — apart from authorial fiat — until that Prophecy got turned loose. But at least this is a possibility.



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Another possibility, and one that recently surfaced (not until the year 2020!), is even more theoretical.

This one came up over the course of an email correspondence regarding the Hallows.

Yes, *those* Hallows.

Albus and Gellert went collectively Hallows-mad some time around 1899, and neither one of them ever really got over it. And, although I rather think that the continuing search for the Stone and the Cloak were still definitely on his agenda, I suspect that by the time the Marauder cohort started at Hogwarts, Albus had thoroughly checked out all of the leads that Gellert had turned over to him in 1945, as far as he possibly could, and had come to a standstill.

Well, yes, he still wanted to get a better look at that ring that young Riddle had been wearing. But that wasn't getting him any forwarder.

We were given no hint of what age James was when he first brought the Cloak to school with him. I tend to doubt that his father handed it over to him in first year. But if Sirius Black is to be believed (which is always risky), James Potter's invisibility cloak was a factor for more than one of their Hogwarts years.

The Marauders were hardly the most *responsible* of teenagers, were they? One cannot suppose they were any more so as preteens, either.

So, let's just suppose that at some point they were larking about with it and got caught. An invisibility cloak in the hands of a student is not something that belongs in a school. Any



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responsible instructor would have no doubt confiscated it.

And turned it over to the Headmaster, to see that it was returned to the student's family.

Invisibility cloaks do exist in the Potterverse. They may not be common, but Albus is not unaware of them. They are used by the DMLE and at least one of Albus's associates in the DMLE is known to have one.

But I would rather expect that if the Potters' heirloom cloak was turned over to him by a concerned member of the staff, he would have very quickly recognized that this was not a "typical" invisibility cloak.

He would, indeed have returned it to James's father. Albus isn't a thief, after all. And when James brought it back to Hogwarts a year or so later, he and his friends were a lot more careful, and were never caught with it by the staff again. But Albus now had another "project" underway, and the first order of business was to see what he could discover about the Potter family's lineage. I rather think that, name change notwithstanding, it was not difficult to confirm his suspicion that these were indeed Peverill descendants.

Which means that Albus had just been handed what to him would have looked like a very good reason to "cultivate" James Potter.

And to want to continue to have a good reason to keep track of Mr Potter once he had finished school.



Now, I am quite sure that you will find no direct support for this particular reading in canon, but Rowling's canon is only loosely sketched in. I am just as sure that you will find nothing





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that would absolutely disallow it, either.

But, once this particular possibility is actually on the table, quite a few matters which continue to mystify readers suddenly line up in a row like obedient little ducklings.

For one thing; if the Cloak had been confiscated and returned to James's father before the Marauders' 5th year, we have a secondary reason for Albus to have gone easy on the Marauders over the werewolf caper.

We definitely have a reason for Albus to support the proposal for James Potter to be Head Boy.

We also suddenly have a viable reason for just why Albus might have arbitrarily decided to form an Order of independent "freedom fighters" under his personal oversight, right around the time the Marauder cohort finished school.

And, with this in mind, I rather doubt that it was only Lord Voldemort who leapt to the conclusion that, once there was a "Child of Prophecy" in the equation, that the child so referred to would be the son of James Potter.

I certainly don't *insist* upon this reading, but it does open up a number of possibilities...



On the other hand, as of 2021 yet *another* possible option opened up.

This one is much less dramatic, but far more to scale.

It's certainly got *my* vote.

I think it is perfectly believable to assume that Albus at some point in the mid-1970s might have had to listen to Alastor Moody grouching about obstructiveness in the DMLE once too often, and



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challenged Moody to put his money where his mouth was.

He offered to sponsor a volunteer resistance group and put Moody in charge of running it, and give him somebody else to bark at. Albus was the titular head, and might call a meeting when he came across something that he thought needed to be shared. He'd also recruit a few people that he thought might be useful, and encourage the people who constituted his own information network to pass things on to Moody when they came across something. As for day-to-day operations, Moody could direct and coordinate it to suit himself.

After all, the Order *did* appear to survive Albus's death. But after Moody was killed, it seems to have broken up and gone dormant. Although certain people associated with it later went on to develop Potterwatch.

And, of course, once it actually *existed*, Albus would have been perfectly capable of inviting the Marauders to join up, for whatever reasons of his own, and, given that the Order had no specific NEWT requirements, and wasn't demanding three years of advanced training before qualifications, I'd say that James and Sirius at least, would have found that option *much* more attractive than working for the Ministry.



**1970 (approximate):** Lord Voldemort does something which renders himself personally unmentionable by the greater wizarding public.

**Summer, 1971:** The Whomping Willow is planted. The tunnel to the Shrieking Shack, intended for the use of Remus Lupin is prepared at the same time.





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**September 1, 1971:** The Marauder's cohort arrives at Hogwarts for the autumn term.

**November 28, 1971:** Bill Weasley born. Note: Molly and Arthur Weasley were out of Hogwarts and had eloped before the summer of 1971, when the Willow was planted. It is *\*not\** established in canon that they eloped during the summer of 1971. They may have done so at any date earlier. Their birth years and attendance years at Hogwarts are not established in canon.

**June, 1972:** Bellatrix Black finishes Hogwarts.

**June, 1972:** Andromeda Black finishes her 6th year at Hogwarts. Marries Ted Tonks, presumably in an elopement. There were said to be a lot of those at the time. She never goes home again. Her aunt Walburga burns her name off the family tapestry.

**June 1973:** Lucius Malfoy finishes Hogwarts.

**1973:** Nymphadora Tonks born. From her August, 1995 statement that she had just qualified as an Auror the year earlier, we can conclude that she began her training in the summer or Autumn of 1991. (The last year that any candidates were accepted into the Auror training program, as of Harry Potter's 5th year at Hogwarts.)

Ergo; if she commenced her Auror training directly out of Hogwarts, she would have finished Hogwarts the summer of the year that Harry started, and her mother, Madam Andromeda Tonks (*née* Black) is unlikely to have been at Hogwarts after June of 1972. That Bellatrix Lestrange *née* Black is established as the eldest of the three Black sisters reveals that Sirius Black's blanket statement in GoF of her being a part of the same group that Severus Snape frequented while at Hogwarts must be

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somewhat exaggerated. She can have been no younger than a 7th year in the academic year of '71-'72, which was Snape and the Marauders' first year at Hogwarts.

This, of course, assumes that Sirius Black had not simply conflated an assumed familiarity of Snape's with the Lestranges *\*after\** having finished Hogwarts with a hypothetical, and non-existent, association with them *\*during\** the time he was in attendance at Hogwarts. Possibly prompted by Sirius's awareness of Snape's long association with Malfoy. But I will continue to try to reason as if such an association at Hogwarts actually did exist. However briefly.

**December 12, 1973:** Charlie Weasley born.

**June, 1975:** Narcissia Black finishes Hogwarts. It is uncertain exactly when she married Lucius Malfoy, but their son was born in June 1980.

**1972-1976:** At some point during the Marauders' years at Hogwarts, presumably between their 3rd and 7th years when they would have had limited access to the village of Hogsmead, Mundungus Fletcher got himself permanently ejected from the Hog's Head pub by the barman Aberforth Dumbledore. Indicating that by this point the Headmaster's brother was *definitely* stationed in the village in a position to be keeping an eye and an ear on the doings of the Hog's Head's rather unsavory clientele. It is possible that he and his brother were both engaged in gathering information which was passed on to the Ministry in matters concerning the Death Eaters and/or other persons engaged in criminal activities. The Hog's Head was probably a suspected Death Eater dive by this time. Although only the lowest ranks may have ever actually patronized it.



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**1975:** young Quirrell starts at Hogwarts. It was Quirrell, after all, who first volunteered the information that James Potter and Severus Snape were at Hogwarts together and had loathed one another. Consequently, he must have seen at least something of the hostilities, and may have witnessed the Snape's Worst Memory attack as a First year. This information would have come from Quirrell himself, Voldemort wasn't anywhere near Hogwarts at that time and wouldn't have cared anyway.

**1975–76:** The “werewolf caper” in which Severus Snape allegedly might have been killed by Remus Lupin but for James Potter's intervention took place at some point during this academic year. The hazing episode that we witnessed in the Pensieve took place at the end of the year in June. If the werewolf caper took place early enough in the year, and was hushed up without dire consequences, that might have given the Marauders the confidence, and sense of invincibility which prompted them to make such a very public attack upon Snape at the end of the year..

Based upon information in HBP, it is likely that at some point in their 5th year (1975–1976) a spell which had much the same effect as Levicorpus, managed to escape into the school. Post-DHs we appear to be expected to simply assume that Snape taught it to Mulciber or Avery and it spread from there, but this is never actually sated. In any case, whatever the source, the spell rampaged through the school like a bad case of the flu. Severus Snape either developed it, or managed to reverse-engineer it, and to devise a counterspell, as was recorded in his marginalia.

**July, 1976, (probably):** After a final confrontation with his

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family, Sirius Black leaves home. Moves in with the Potters.

**August 22, 1976:** Percy Ignatius Weasley born.

**1977, Winter or Spring:** Death of Sirius's uncle Alphard, leaving him a sufficient legacy to get his own flat during the summer. Alphard is blasted off the family tapestry posthumously for this demonstration of disrespect to his sister and her husband, the boy's parents.

**1977, late Summer or Autumn:** Dorea Potter dies of natural causes, either soon preceded or followed by her husband Charlus Potter. If these are supposed to be James Potter's parents, he would have been in his 7th year at the time. (Source: Black family tapestry sketch, circa 2006, so we cannot depend on the date, the relationship of these Potters to James, or the relevance of the information.)

**April 1, 1978:** Fred and George Weasley born.

**June, 1978:** Snape and the Marauders finish Hogwarts.

**1979, exact date unknown:** Death of Orion Black.

**1979:** Regulus Black, age 16, joins Death Eaters. Probably during the summer or Christmas break, exact date uncertain.

**September 19, 1979:** Hermione Jean Granger born.



**Halloween, 1979–January 1980:** Sybill Trelawney makes a Prophecy in the presence of Albus Dumbledore. Setting the stage for the next phase of the conflict between Lord Voldemort and the rest of the wizarding world. My own inclination is to accept the earlier end of this possible range of time.

Which entails another side trip on the subject of “defiance”: We have been given no reason in canon to believe that any of



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the allegedly requisite three instances of the “defiance” of Lord Voldemort on the part of James Potter which are specified in the Trelawney Prophecy took place during his school days (I am inclined to dismiss the “prequel” which Rowling produced for yet another charity auction after the release of DHs. Very little of it actually fits into what we have been told in canon). If this is the case, any such incidents must have taken place between July 1, 1978, the point at which we can be sure that James had completed his schooling, and July 31, 1980, the date of the birth of his son.

We also have no information regarding the form that this alleged defiance is supposed to have taken. Dumbledore attempts to claim that to have escaped his attentions or those of his followers would have been interpreted as “defiance.” But we have, to date, no information as to why they would have been attacked by Voldemort, or his agents, in the first place. The Trelawney Prophecy was not yet a factor at this point in time.

Defiance, however, comes in more than one flavor and three separate escapes from Death Eaters may not be absolutely required.

We were given some hints (admittedly, only in interviews) by Rowling during the early years of the series that what the Potters did for a living was “important,” but there was never any follow-up of these statements in the text. This appears to be an intention that Rowling did not ever manage to fit into the story, and it is not likely to be a profitable avenue for exploration now. From everything she has told us lately, both James and Lily were unemployed, and living on James’s inheritance. Not my definition of “important,” but your mileage may vary.

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We also know from Sirius Black that when James Potter started his final year at school his parents were both still alive; yet by the time of James Potter’s death on October 31, 1981 his son’s only surviving relatives were Lily Potter’s sister Petunia, and her family. We already can see that this statement could be inaccurate, since if Doria Black and Charlus Potter were supposed to be Harry’s grandparents, there is no shortage of family connections through the Black family which can be proved to be cousins of Harry Potter, however distant. But Petunia and her family were certainly Harry’s *closest* relatives.

Rowling stated in her joint interview of July, 2005 that both of the elder Potters were quite old, even by wizarding standards, at the time of their deaths (a statement which is not supported in the least by the dates on the tapestry sketch, leading many fans to question whether these are supposed to represent James’s parents at all). And that they died of natural causes; some unidentified magical illness.

I have been given to understand that on Pottermore Rowling has indicated that Dorea and Charlus Potter were not James’s parents. I would not know about Pottermore, and prefer to dismiss it from consideration, given that Pottermore is not remotely canonical even if Rowling did have something to do with it.



Well, we still have any number of possibilities. Admittedly none of those can be regarded as canonical, either.

One possibility is that the defiance preceded, and indeed may have provoked the attacks.



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That Lily Potter was allegedly offered a legitimate choice of saving herself (when? Certainly not in our hearing. Not at any point in that DHs flashback) suggests that it was only *James* Potter who was the primary object of any previous attacks. Given that the DEs by this point included a generous number of James's Hogwarts rivals, the first attack(s) could have been quite personally motivated. Lucius Malfoy's statement in CoS that Harry's parents were "meddlesome fools, too," otoh, suggests that James, and probably Sirius Black, may have managed to unwittingly stumble into the middle of some DE plot and mess with it, motivated primarily by Sirius's continuing adversarial attitude toward his family. This might have constituted a first act of defiance. With the first direct attack upon James Potter (and probably Sirius as well) a piece of retaliation. Their escape constituting a 2nd "defiance."

After the attack, I suggest that James not only did not back down, but began to publicly speak out against them, supported by the prominently pureblooded Black family's rather notorious black sheep, and James's own Muggle-born girlfriend/fiancée/eventual wife. Which would have constituted his 3rd act of defiance.

Or at least that was an early possible interpretation.



However, by this time, I think it simplifies matters considerably to assume the pronouncement to refer to *\*collective\** defiance. i.e., membership in any *\*group\** known to have opposed Voldemort's activities at least upon three occasions. Which of course, the Order was. As was, indeed, the Ministry.

And that, in fact, membership in the Order, or employment

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by the Ministry automatically would qualify *\*anybody\** as being of those who have "thrice defied" the Dark Lord for the purposes of the Prophecy and its related bafflegab.

Remus Lupin, a registered werewolf, would have made sure to keep himself well in the background during this period, since his involvement in the matter would have done nothing for James's public image. And, in another part of that background, I believe that pressure was now steadily being brought to bear on Peter Pettigrew, who was known to be connected to Potter's circle, and, by extension, the Order. My own suspicion is that this pressure involved both the "carrot" and the "stick" and was applied by an expert. Pettigrew, unwilling to look the situation in its face, started spinning daydreams to himself and trying to have things both ways. See the essay entitled 'Abandoning Ship' for more detailed speculation.

An interview comment by Rowling in October of 2007 attempts to reconcile this by claiming that the Potters and Sirius Black had joined the Order of the Phoenix directly out of school. Unfortunately the logistics of this statement are not fully supported by what we have been shown in canon. Consequently, although I will leave the statement here, I am less than enthusiastic about adopting it for my own speculations. Post-DHs I have become progressively less and less inclined to accept any interview claims as being even remotely canon. They are suggestions only, imho.

And, bringing us back to the starting point; I propose that at some point around Halloween, 1979 Albus Dumbledore conducted a job interview for a vacant Divination instructor's position and became the impromptu recipient of the Trelawney



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Prophecy. Further speculation on matters related to the Prophecy can be found in the essay entitled 'The Child Foretold'.

My reasoning for the most likely placement of the Prophecy around Halloween is discussed in detail in the aforesaid essay. In any event this reasoning is readily supported by Trelawney's statement that in September of 1995 she has been an instructor at Hogwarts for "nearly 16 years". Indicating that she, like Minerva came on Staff after the school year had formally commenced. We know from Albus Dumbledore that he did not take her onto the staff of Hogwarts until after she had made the Prophecy. Her date of hiring would therefore be sometime between the middle of the Autumn term, 1979, and January, 1980. (The Umbridge interview took place before the end of September, 1995, so we can be certain only that Trelawney did not start teaching at the beginning of the Autumn term of '79.)

We were told in OotP that during this incident an eavesdropper was detected, and ejected from the building, presumably by the barman Aberforth Dumbledore, before this individual got a chance to overhear the Prophecy in its entirety.



Which entails a side trip to examine the "grand contradiction". In HBP we discovered that Trelawney's version of this event is very different from Dumbledore's. According to Trelawney the eavesdropper was still outside the door when she had finished giving the Prophecy, and was dragged *into the room* by the barman after it was complete. From this point we are forced to pick and chose which version we are going to believe.

Since there is no way that Trelawney would have been able to

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identify the eavesdropper if Dumbledore's version is the accurate one — there having been no opportunity for her to have got a glimpse of him — I am forced to conclude that Dumbledore was fudging the truth for reasons of his own. We have yet to hear either Severus Snape or Aberforth Dumbledore's version of the proceedings.

In any case, it is clear that only the first part of the Prophecy was actually *reported* to Lord Voldemort. Consequently, I say that this was certainly with Albus Dumbledore's knowledge, possibly with his approval, and not impossibly on his orders. Even if not according to Rowling.

What is more, despite the fact that the Ministry's policy is to *suppress* Prophecies, Albus appears to have hedged his bets, in case that unprepossessing youngster at the door was *not* one of Tom's, and waltzed into the Ministry himself to present them with a Prophecy record — probably already labeled something provocative like "Concerning The Dark Lord's Downfall." Albus was taking no chances that the fact of the *existence* of that Prophecy would not get out.

For the sake of my own interpretations, it is easier for me to believe that Albus *sent* Snape to report the first half of the Prophecy, and then possibly formed his Order to attempt damage control. But I won't insist on it.

But what I DO now suspect is that Albus's insistence in HBP that Prophecies are what you make of them was offered very much in the spirit of "the man who learned better." I tend to think that at the time it occurred, he was every bit as deluded by that Prophecy as Tom was.

At the very least, Albus realized that he had been caught nap-



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ping and that at least part of the Prophecy was potentially in circulation. There was every chance that Tom would eventually learn of it.



At which point it is now necessary to extrapolate Tom Riddle making another surreptitious foray to make use of the vanishing cabinets. Up to this date, I contend that the Cup, the Locket and the Diadem had remained safely tucked away in the Room of Hidden Things, and Tom had felt confident in his belief that even if by some unforeseen circumstance they managed to be found, they would not have been removed from the building.

I also doubt that he had as yet created any additional Horcruxes. He very likely still wanted to use Gryffindor's sword and Dumbledore's death for one of them, and had still not managed to figure out a way to accomplish it. Given the visible physical results of his previous stint of Horcrux-making, which was making it somewhat difficult to go about openly without attracting unwanted attention, he had held back, keeping another spot open, in case of future developments.

I am also inclined to doubt that he credited Albus Dumbledore with being able to recognize an actual Horcrux, regardless of how "fierce" he might have been some decades earlier about suppressing any information about them. Albus had certainly constituted no more than a moderate nuisance to Riddle's activities so far.

If, as I contend, the Prophecy was made at some point around Halloween, 1979, then Tom might have taken a few days or weeks to draft out some altered plans in reaction to it. He still

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had a Ministry to destabilize, and any number of other ducks to herd into a row. But he does appear to have come to the decision that leaving three of his Horcruxes all in the same place might probably not be as clever an idea as he had originally believed.

And, what is more, with a "Child of Prophecy" in the equation, he was no longer obligated to devise a way of managing to possess, and then assassinate Dumbledore for his *piece de resistance*. He could now simply contract *that* death out, without needing to create a Horcrux from it.

I rather expect that he waited until the winter break when there would be fewer people in the castle. If there was some Ministry function or Wizengamot session which would get Dumbledore out of the castle as well, all the better.

He left the Diadem in place. It was sufficiently damaged that it would not enhance his status, even if someone did recognize what it was. And he decided to hide the Locket himself. But, at some point, late in '79 or early in '80, he gave the Cup to Bellatrix for safekeeping.

He had already experienced the "grabby" behavior of his own Horcruxes back when he had created the Ring. But from that experience he had only concluded that *he* could not comfortably handle them, and may have concluded that the soul fragment was attempting to recombine with the rest of his soul. I also rather think that since 1943, he may have largely forgotten about that particular detail.

I currently hypothesize that Bellatrix rapidly gave him ample reason to remember that little problem. Hermione tried to tell us that Horcruxes are only dangerous if you become "attached" to them. (And she was manifestly wrong about that if Rowling



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is to be believed. But attachment undoubtedly makes it worse.) Can you draw me any scenario in which Tom could hand Bella a Founder's artifact, asking her to keep it safe for him, and she wouldn't *immediately* become "attached?"

It had probably completely taken her over before a month was out. And the behavior of the possessing fragment (the 21-year-old Riddle from the memory of the visit with Madam Hepzibah Smith) would have made the situation of what was going on *obvious*. The difficulty would have been in getting it to turn her loose. And she probably wouldn't have *wanted* it to! Tom probably had to *order* her to put it in her Gringotts vault where she couldn't keep being overtaken by it.

All of which I rather think gave Tom ideas.

He had stopped at four, holding two in reserve, One would be filled by the murder of the foretold child, once he had determined who that was. But he still had an extra slot available. One where it might now be possible to devise a weapon which might facilitate the long-delayed project of eliminating Dumbledore, and the method that he eventually devised would result in that fifth Horcrux being left in a place where not only would no one ever find it, but it would have a Basilisk to guard it, in addition. Indeed, with a Basilisk terrorizing the castle, the school might well be closed, and he could finally have taken the castle as his own personal stronghold.

It might have taken him a while to hit on the idea of using his old diary as a user interface, and some time more to draft out how it would need to *work*. We do have Albus's statement that the Diary was not given to Lucius Malfoy until some time in 1981, possibly rather late in the summer.

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So, altogether, it may have been something more, and something other than just determining the proper interpretation of; "the seventh month" that kept him occupied for two years after he learned about the Prophecy before he appears to have done anything about it.



The October 2007 appearance in which Rowling made the comment above about the Potters joining the Order right out of school also produced a statement claiming that the Potters had gone into hiding soon after Lily discovered herself to be pregnant. From this statement it would appear that we are being invited to understand that the meeting between Snape and Albus Dumbledore on the windy hilltop was the point at which Albus convinced the Potters to go into hiding. I think this might be an invitation that it would be unwise for us to accept.

In the first place, although Christmas break 1979–1980 would certainly conform to both the season in which the meeting was seen to have taken place and the time at which the Potters are now stated to have gone into hiding (which contradicts information which had been sitting on Rowling's original website since about 2004), from what we witnessed, it is very difficult to accept that the discussion between Snape and Albus is referring to a child who is not *already* born.

It is also difficult to accept that Tom Riddle would have announced to Snape that he was intending to murder the Potters the moment he learned that the Potters were expecting a child. The child after all, might not have shown up until August, or might have been a girl. Tom Riddle would have probably dis-



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missed a girl as being any threat to him.

For that matter there is the question of how Tom Riddle would have known that the Potters even were expecting a child at so early a date. For it is unlikely that they made a general public announcement so early in the proceedings.

To be sure, if Tom *had* been informed of the matter so early, it would certainly explain how Albus knew that there was a spy in his Order and that the spy was connected to the Potters. But, the fact is that Voldemort did not reveal that there was a child of Prophecy in the equation to his followers in general. That he spoke of the matter to Snape, is only due to the fact that it was Snape, alone, among his followers who even knew that the Prophecy referred to a child. Or appeared to do so.

I also seriously doubt that Albus revealed the news of a Prophecy to the Order either, and without that information, there is no reason for why Peter should have reported a pregnancy among the Order members to the DEs. For that matter, I'm not convinced that Peter actually got off the fence and formally joined Lord Voldemort until the night he inadvertently led the Dark Lord to his destruction. Although he had certainly been passing information before that night. Possibly under pressure, initially.

It is also hard to believe that Peter could have been spying in the Order for 22 months without Albus having figured out that it was him. If Albus gave a damn, that is. The Order wasn't all that large. Even downstream of DHs, it is hard to believe Albus *hadn't* figured it out.

So, upon the whole I think I will decline that particular invitation. On the other hand, if Voldemort was aware that Lily Evans

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(the current Lily Potter) and Severus Snape had been friends when they first came up to Hogwarts, and continued to be such for years afterward, regardless of whatever Snape might think of James Potter, then I can well imagine that he *might* have chosen to claim — to Snape — that he had decided to kill the Potters as soon as he understood that the Potters were expecting a child (or had produced a child) around the time that the foretold child of Prophecy was due.

Consider; Tom Riddle had nowhere nearly as solid a grip on Severus Snape as he had upon his more typical followers. Snape did not fit his followers' usual demographic at all. And most of his younger followers were well aware of it. Bellatrix in particular, who had Tom's ear, would certainly have remembered the grubby, common, little working-class tyke, from a northern Muggle mill town who had shown up in her 7th year, and she would have been quick to make certain that Tom knew all about it.

This might not have had quite the effect that Bella intended. As an orphanage child, Tom himself had come from a social stratum that was if anything, somewhat lower than Snape's. Snape's efforts to make himself "presentable" would have been regarded as being to his credit. But it would have suggested that Snape not only knew what Muggles were like from experience, rather than biased and ignorant report, but that he also probably had few obvious collateral ties inside the wizarding world through which he could be readily manipulated.

If nothing else, a threat to Lily Potter and her family might serve as a useful test.

Snape's plea for Lily's life spoke well of his capacity for loyalty. It also suggested that if Tom could manage to spare the



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little bint, her life could be held hostage against Snape's good behavior forever afterwards. But it did indicate that whatever his *capacity* for loyalty, that loyalty was subject to being *divided*. I tend to doubt that was a test Snape passed with his usual level of excellence.

It's far from a certainty, but it seems in keeping with what we've come to expect of the mental processes of Tom Riddle.



**January, 1980–December, 31, 1980:** at some point during this period, Regulus Black disappears and his death is recorded on the family tapestry in the parlor. His Voldemort scrapbooks, discovered in his bedroom after his death suggested to his family that he had become involved with the DEs, leading to his death. Arcturus Black reinstates Sirius as his heir, there being no other male Black still living other than his cousin Pollux whose line has dwindled to nothing but granddaughters.

The Black family tapestry sketch absolutely contradicts information given us in the course of the series, for it claims that Regulus Black did not die in 1980, as was stated outright in OotP, but in 1979. It also claims that Regulus was born in 1961, which, if the information given us by Kreachur in the course of DHs is to be believed would place his death in 1978. Consequently the sketch contradicts both OotP and DHs on anything related to Regulus Black, while the books do not actually contradict each other. His father, Orion Black is also shown on the (corrected) sketch as having died at some point during 1979. We do not know if his death and that of Regulus are supposed to have been connected. But it does not seem likely.



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A further wrinkle has been introduced by the tapestry dates for Cygnus Black, which were originally stated as being 1938–1992. There were considerable problems with these dates. Not the least of which being the fact that Sirius Black had apparently inherited the house, despite having been disowned and burnt off the tapestry back in 1976. The Lexicon later changed Cygnus's dates to 1929–1979 matching those of his cousin Orion. This information was allegedly taken from the prop tapestry created for the film. It is unknown where the film designers got these numbers..



**December 1979–February 1980:** I still think it would make a great deal of sense to read it that in an attempt to reduce the potential collateral damage from the Prophecy, Dumbledore either founded the Order of the Phoenix, or started directing persons at risk toward it, as well as whatever friends and family members were willing to get involved. It is possible that the Potters came in through their association with Remus Lupin, who may have already been monitoring the movements of Fenrir Greyback's band of werewolves on Albus's behalf.

Among this collection of people were a handful of families, including, as it turned out, not one, but at least two couples who were anticipating the birth of a child around the end of July, leading Dumbledore to conclude that the "7th month" referred to in the Prophecy was, in fact, July, rather than September, the month whose name translates *literally* as "7th month," or the 7th month following the giving of the Prophecy which, if the Prophecy was given around Halloween, would





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have been the end of May. He also knew that Tom had none of these assurances.

If it was *not* intended as a holding pattern for young rowdies of good family, the primary purpose of the Order appears to have been mutual support and protection. For there is certainly no other function that it served which was not already being covered by the Ministry.

Even if Albus never openly admitted to the existence of a Prophecy or expressed this to be any part of the organization's purpose, the Order's duties would have been particularly directed to the protection of the anticipated Child of Prophecy and his family, along with any other candidate for this position and his family.

The Order's *stated* purpose is more likely to have been intelligence gathering and interpretation. The members can hardly have been unaware that pretty much anything else they might be engaged in would be duplicating effort already being handled by the Ministry. Intelligence processing was as well, but the Ministry was likely to have always been glad of more help, and the Order would have had slightly different sources of such information. The Ministry would probably have also welcomed the Order as a trusted source for few extra volunteers for a raid or other operation.

Dumbledore's duties to the school, to say nothing of the Wizengamot and the International Confederacy of Wizards precluded his taking more than an advisory role in this matter. The active members did the body of the work, mostly on their own initiative under Alastor Moody's overview, with occasional input, advice, and direction from Dumbledore. The vin-



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tage photograph of the "original" Order unearthed by Moody at the opening of OotP is assumed to have been taken not long after the Order's founding, possibly as early as 1978, or by the beginning of 1980. Both Lily Potter and Alice Longbottom and their husbands were already a part of the organization. Neither pregnancy had yet reached the point of "showing," and no live infants are in view.

The Ministry and the Hogwarts staff were aware of the Order's existence, its stated purpose of opposing Voldemort, and were willing to work with it. But at this point it seems unlikely that it was aware of the Order's connection to a Prophecy. Or even in the case of most of the Ministry, of the fact that there ever had *been* a Prophecy — let alone that a part of that prophecy had managed to escape. We have no further information on this issue.

At this point, the Ministry was itself under the strain of close to 20 years' worth of slow, insidious undermining of public confidence in its ability to protect its constituency, and at most it was only aware that a Prophecy related to the Dark Lord had been recorded and archived in the Department of Mysteries. Had it known anything further it might be grateful for someone else, particularly someone of Dumbledore's stature to be willing to take on the additional burden of overseeing anything as dicey as the events foretold in a maybe-Prophecy. But more likely, they would have firmly advised Albus to stay out of it and not meddle.

It is also entirely within established policy that the Ministry would have flatly refused to take any action with regards to matters referred to in a Prophecy, even one that *had* escaped. From the measures taken by the Ministry to limit access to even





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the records of Prophecies, it is clear that the MoM's official policy on Prophecies is to actively suppress them. It would be against all precedent for the Ministry to have taken extreme measures, or indeed *any* measures to prepare for one. Which sets a precedent from the beginning that the Order exists to do that which Dumbledore judges needs to be done, and which the Ministry will not or can not do.

Voldemort, on his end, would have seen to it that none of his followers had any knowledge regarding a Prophecy concerning his downfall, either. This is information which he only shared after his return, once retrieving the record of the Prophecy became his highest priority. The most that could have been known by anyone within the DEs prior to his first defeat is that there was a record of a Prophecy related to the Dark Lord having been made, but prior to Tom's first defeat in 1981 Harry Potter's name had not been on that record.

On the other end of the equation, if Albus Dumbledore shared any information with the members of the Order of the Phoenix (and he claimed to Harry that he did not) it would have been only that portion of the Prophecy which Voldemort was known to be aware of; that the one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord would be born to those who had thrice defied him, born as the 7th month died. No one other than Snape and the Dumbledore brothers knew anything of what had actually been said on that night.



**1979 (Approximate):** there is a shift in the progress of the war. The Ministry institutes its shoot-to-kill policy. Possibly in

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response to recent unspecified advantages gained by the DEs.



One possibility concerning that unspecified advantage Lord Voldemort and the DEs may have gained concerns Barty Crouch Jr.

Young Crouch, upon what indications we have in canon can have finished Hogwarts no later than with the class of 1981, making him one of the last bonafide groups of Death Eaters to have been inducted into the organization before the defeat of the Dark Lord in October of that year.

If this is the case, he would have started Hogwarts in the Autumn term of 1974, the year before our Pensieve junket took place, and would have been born between September 2, 1962 and September 1, 1963. This supports Sirius Black's statement that Crouch looked no older than 19 when he was first imprisoned, possibly before the end of 1981. He would have been either 19 or barely turned 20 at that point. He would also have been in the same year as Regulus Black. Who died before finishing Hogwarts.

However, given that almost no information handed to us by Sirius Black in that particular conversation has failed to be thrown into dispute elsewhere inside of canon, I am no longer convinced that this statement is safe enough to simply be accepted without question. Particularly a statement that pertains to something as indeterminate as the apparent age of a youngster of around 20. How readily would most people be able to tell an 18-year-old from a 20-year-old after all? Young Barty may have been baby-faced, and anything up to a couple of years older than Sirius guessed him to be. And if that were





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the case, he may have been a new hire at the Ministry and passing information on his father's activities to Voldemort since the summer of, say, 1979.

Now I admit that this possibility is not *openly* suggested anywhere in canon. But the fact that it takes so little effort to admit such a possibility into the equation; indeed, one need only to dismiss one statement from among a clutch of statements nearly *all* of which have since proven to be dubious, it seems unsafe to refuse to consider it. And the fact that Sirius seems not to remember anything *about* young Crouch, despite the fact that their time at Hogwarts in either case must have overlapped, suggests to me that 12 years in the custody of Dementors had resulted in a degree of memory loss which was not confined only to specifically happy memories. That indeed, any memory which was not actively miserable may have been misplaced, and that many basically neutral memories might not have ever resurfaced without some degree of therapy, which Sirius never got.



Over the course of the first four books, and even to some degree in the fifth, we were given the strong impression that throughout the first portion of Lord Voldemort's "first rise" he had enjoyed some degree, perhaps a very large degree, of popular support.

But then, we also believed, based upon Dumbledore's comment that "We've had precious little to celebrate for 11 years," made in the first chapter of PS/SS, that Lord Voldemort had only begun his rise around 1970.

Post-HBP, it is now clear that this was no such thing. We

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have been shown the official backstory of Tom Riddle at most of what are represented to be its significant points, and there was no point in that arc at which he was ever anything other than the leader of a dangerous gang of thugs, a gang that the greater part of the wizarding public abhorred, and, moreover, one with no more than a few dozen voluntary followers even at the height of his influence.

And yet we still get statements like Lupin's claim that the Order was outnumbered 20 to one by Voldemort's DEs. Clearly, Lord Voldemort was a Master of smoke and mirrors.

It seems likely that the discovery that a Prophecy had been made related to his downfall shocked and frightened him. And, rather than ignoring it, which would have been the wisest course, he panicked and escalated his campaign of steadily increasing violence before the Ministry had succumbed to either his cumulative overt or covert campaigns against it (assuming he actually had any. After the fact it seems easier to believe that he was merely stringing his followers along with an illusion that he had).

This turned out to be a significant blunder. One should never do anything based on a Prophecy.

The final phase in his first rise appears to have been based upon extravagant levels of open violence. In the face of an already collapsed and dysfunctional Ministry he might soon have been able to wrest command away from the Wizengamot and establish a state of open anarchy. But the Ministry was still holding together, even if in a weakened position. And it was still able to mount a functioning, if not necessarily effective, opposition. We were given to believe that Voldemort's current activities, once his return was open knowledge, took up, as closely as



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possible, from where he left off nearly 15 years earlier.

It is also unlikely that there were ever more than 5 or 6 dozen actual Death Eaters, most of them the members of 2–4 dozen or so families; descendants of the people with whom Tom had attended school, plus a few key recruits who may have been slightly older than himself, or, later on, younger recruits from families of a similar background. And later yet, his original followers' descendants.

If his followers current activities reflect those of the 1970s, it now appears that they were far more likely to depend upon sabotage achieved by lavish use of the Imperius Curse, which served to conceal their true numbers. We have already been told that in the first war most of the Death Eaters did not know more than a few of their fellows' identities (Imperio'ed puppets certainly would not). And, from Karkaroff's testimony, it appears that they operated in sub-groups probably under "cell leaders" at Voldemort's direction.

Different groups probably had different responsibilities, and it was probably only a few of these subgroups who had typically been engaged in arranging open attacks, suspicious deaths (or, even better, *unsuspicious* deaths) and disappearances.

But enormous damage to public perception was being done.

As in his second rise, much rhetoric was expended spurring the Ministry to unwise responses to the growing threat, and these responses, although they produced little in the way of actual protection, did much to increase the level of public anxiety, and even to force a significant minority of the public into a position of opposing the Ministry's policies and actions who otherwise would not have done so. Not to mention prompting a complete disregard of due process of law and the arrest

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and summary imprisonment of the innocent, without benefit of trial. Voldemort had effectively remade the Ministry, and Barty Crouch Sr in particular, over into his own image.

Furthermore, if any prominent, highly vocal critic of the WW's government had ever been revealed (or could be made to appear to be revealed) as an undercover DE terrorist willing to overthrow that government by violent means, however vigorously a deceived former supporter of this critic might recant his earlier position, there was always considerable doubt that his statements could be trusted, since he was known to have formerly been quite open in his support of the "monster's" goals. Neighbor could no longer trust neighbor, and even one's own family members were nervously brought under general suspicion.

I suspect that until the final, most violent stage of his rise, Muggle-baiting and Muggle killings had probably never been an official part of the agenda, apart from serving as another source of a gibe at the Ministry for failing to stop it. Attacks upon Muggles were simply a perk in which Voldemort had always allowed his followers to indulge unchecked, so long as they could manage to not get themselves caught, and did not let it interfere in what orders he *did* give them. He certainly had no objection to it and may have occasionally taken part. But he has demonstrated enough of a pattern of allowing other people to take the real risks, even for his own activities that I suspect whipping his followers up with rhetoric and turning them loose to indulge themselves was more in his style.

I also suspect that not all of his followers may have indulged in this behavior. (Although many, particularly a certain segment of the younger ones, did, with considerable relish.)



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Now, suddenly, they were all — young and old — expected to hold themselves in readiness to be sent on violent missions in which they were expected to kill, destroy, and terrorize their fellow wizards! *Any* of them. At any *time*. Regardless.

And without regard to the protection of wizarding Seclusion, either.

Not all of Voldemort's inner circle had intentionally signed up for this. Certainly not to take the risk of completely blowing the discovery of the existence of wizards among them wide open to the countless multitudes of Muggles out there. Nor to be expected to take the risk of openly attacking other wizards who could curse them back!

Plus; some of the younger ones had evidently expected this "new Dark Order" to be simply handed to them once the Ministry collapsed. Without any kind of compromise of their own moral values — such as those were. After all, they were the *elect*.

The reactions to their Leader's sudden escalation of the agenda were somewhat varied: the first, and most widespread, and of course, the only one really acceptable, ranged anywhere from; "Okay. You're the boss." to "YES!!!!!"

The second; a far less common reaction was to offer some protest; It was at this point that Voldemort took the gloves off and demonstrated that he was not their *Leader*, he was their *Master*. Unforgivable curses, and some judicious thinning of the flock were his immediate response to any form of protest. In fact, I suspect that ordering some of those who were teetering on the fence to do the actual culling was an economical way of sorting out who was worth being retained.

Young Regulus Black was originally assumed to have been a casualty of this particular phase in the proceedings. But it is

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now clear that there was a good deal more than this to his particular story, and our initial perception (as was that of his own brother) was very, very wrong.

The third reaction among the troops was undoubtedly; "Oooohh, shit!" accompanied by a determination to keep one's head down, follow orders, and just hope that it would all be over soon. Ludo Bagman's behavior in canon makes it likely that if he was indeed a Death Eater, this was his response.

And one or two of them may have considered approaching the Ministry to cut a deal.



**1980, exact date unknown:** Millicent Bagnole becomes Minister for Magic

**1980, March 1:** Ronald Billius Weasley Born. Middle name commemorating Bilius Weasley, one of Arthur's uncles; the one who is said to have seen the Grim and died of it.

**1980, June 5:** Draco Malfoy born.

**1980, July 30:** Neville Longbottom born.

**1980, July 31:** Harry James Potter born.

**1980, late:** Igor Karkaroff captured and sentenced to Azkaban.



For some as yet undetermined reason of his own (although I have speculated on what sort of project may have been keeping him busy, above), Voldemort did not attack the families of either of the two children who were born at the time supposedly foretold by the Prophecy immediately after the children's births. Although Harry's christening was allegedly "a hurried and secret



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affair” with his parents ready to bolt into hiding at any moment, the expected attack did not come until more than a year later.

It is possible that Voldemort, who is perfectly capable of drawing a line between two points, and being perfectly well aware that the month name “September” translates literally into “7th month” had concluded that the child foretold in the Prophecy was to be born toward the end of September. And when no such child appeared, he was forced to backtrack. Having learned of the Prophecy soon after the end of October, he may have next estimated seven months from the time of the Prophecy, which would have been the end of May. That investigation may have proven to be similarly fruitless.

It is also possible that the families of any wizarding child born during the month of September 1980 had already been attacked and murdered, and he had concluded the matter settled. Temporarily. We do not know of any event that might have caused him to reconsider the matter, or when. But the fact that no Horcrux was created from any of these hypothetical murders suggests that there were in fact, no such hypothetical murders of infants taking place connected to these particular dates.

But whatever the cause might have been, the prospect of needing to survey 20+ years of his activities in order to determine who might be the specific “defiant ones” to whom the Prophecy referred, and to attempt to discover whether any children of such people were known to have been born at any other time that the Prophecy might have been referring to would have been daunting. He was also hampered in this search by the fact that he had shared none of his scanty information regarding the Prophecy with any of his followers. Not

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even the most zealous.

By the beginning of October 1980 (or thereabouts) the only follower he had who knew anything about the contents of the Prophecy was Severus Snape, who had reported it. I originally thought that this might have had some bearing upon why Snape was ordered into Hogwarts the following year. That, in fact, one of the first assignments that he gave Snape, once he had established himself at Hogwarts, might very well have been to get a look at the enrollment list and copy down the names of all children whose births were listed on it in the year following the date the Prophecy had been given. If this had been the case, it would have been very clear why events came so quickly to a head in October of 1981.

Although still possible, this seems not to be the case, however. At this point it also becomes necessary — with some reluctance — to take the revelations of ‘The Prince’s Tale’ into account. Regardless of the fact that in most cases, to summarily dismiss any information that was lobbed at us over the course of DHs will usually make getting a handle of what was going on a lot more convincing.

Nevertheless, from the state of the leafless trees on that windy hilltop, it is unlikely that the meeting at which Snape told Dumbledore that Riddle had chosen to target the Potters took place as early in the year as Halloween, or any time before it. Trees usually still have their leaves at Halloween, that is the height of “fall color.” Consequently, the meeting must have taken place either the previous year, in either very late autumn, winter (although not once snow was on the ground) or very early spring, before the trees had set out buds. Indeed, if the



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region where the meeting took place was in an area which gets little snow (as is the case with much of Great Britain), it could have taken place at any time over the previous winter.

It is not likely to have taken place the week or so before the Potters went into hiding, as was implied in the eavesdropping scene in the 3 Broomsticks in PoA. I think that Ms Rowling must have suffered a change of mind between 1999 and 2007 regarding this matter. In any case, the meeting appears to have taken place well before Severus Snape was taken onto the staff at Hogwarts school, or the meeting would hardly have been taking place out on a hilltop, instead of in Albus's office.



**Winter of 1980/1981, early:** Severus Snape turns himself in to Albus Dumbledore and agrees to become a spy in return for protection for Lily Potter (and her family). If it was a mild winter, it is possible that this meeting occurs during Christmas break. He would be just turning 21.

**1981, late spring or summer:** Severus Snape, who since reporting the partial Trelawney Prophecy to Lord Voldemort, has risen into a position of at least some favor on the strength of it is ordered to take a position in Dumbledore's school. Ostensibly to spy on Dumbledore.

It is still strongly suggested in canon that Voldemort intended for Snape to be drafted to the ever-rotating DADA instructor's position, and Snape did indeed first apply for that position.

Which, given that Voldemort knows perfectly well that the position is cursed, suggests that he; A. considered Snape expendable, and/or; B. he only intended for Snape to be posted



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inside the school for a year.

Consequently we might suspect that there was in fact another covert mission behind this assignment. One that could be accomplished within a year. I contend that the most likely such covert assignment would have been the assassination of Albus Dumbledore. But; only after Voldemort had already settled the threat posed by the foretold child of the Trelawney Prophecy. At this point I do not think that Snape was informed of this.

Snape, who had already been working with/for Dumbledore for at least some months, informed Dumbledore of this development, and Albus chose to modify the plan by hiring Snape to replace Horace Slughorn as Potions master and Head of Slytherin House instead. It is at this point unknown whether Albus encouraged Slughorn to consider retirement at this time, or if he inquires regarding what had caused his favoritism for Tom Riddle to cool so rapidly back around the time that something was attacking and petrifying students had already prompted Slughorn to consider retirement.



Herein some further speculation concerning Snape's position within the DE hierarchy:

Snape was certainly accepted into the inner circle of "marked" DEs at some point, but I contend that until he reported the partial Trelawney Prophecy to his Master he was never a prominent or particularly important figure among them. He was just too young. He is almost certain to have been brought into the organization under Malfoy's sponsorship and would have functioned as a subordinate member of Malfoy's "cell"





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Snape, to that point, had probably never worked directly for Voldemort; his orders would have always come through Malfoy. (One seriously wondered how having his patron, Malfoy, taken off the game board at the end of OotP was going to affect Snape's position in the circle. Evidently he immediately appeared to have risen to take Malfoy's "favored" place.)

And Snape's orders were dependent upon whatever area in which Voldemort had chosen to deploy Malfoy's cell. Snape probably was Malfoy's own pet Potions swot. Voldemort may have had one or two other, older and more experienced (although possibly not so gifted) Potions specialists already available; Malfoy very likely did not, or none as conveniently to hand as Snape.

But I believe that Snape's primary function for the DEs was not necessarily Potions brewing, or even R&D of hexes with which the Ministry Aurors would be unfamiliar, but rather the gathering and verification of information. His marked affinity for this sort of work had been apparent even before he finished school, and it is just as likely to have proved essential to Malfoy prior to Snape's alleged change of allegiance as it became to Dumbledore afterwards. In short: he has always been engaged in espionage at some level.

Given Rita Skeeter's fairly obvious Malfoy connections, it seems likely that Malfoy and his cell may have been quite heavily engaged in information gathering, with blackmail and extortion as a sideline. Pettigrew's DE contact, however, is almost certainly to have been someone not connected to Malfoy. Otherwise Snape might have figured out the identity of the Order's spy and passed word to Albus.

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It should also be noted that at the time he contacted Dumbledore, there was probably no *provable* crime for which Snape could have personally been charged. Such crimes may have existed, but it is almost certain that his involvement in any such was nothing that could have been proved. Disagreeing with Ministry policy, even publicly, is not a crime. The study of the Dark Arts in itself is not illegal.

Snape may not have been the only DE to have considered turning his coat, either. But he may have been the only one with the chutzpah to have signed on as a Ministry mole using Dumbledore as an intermediary. And even he would not have done so had he not been desperate. At this point Dumbledore also kept Snape's activities completely separate from those of his Order. Snape had no interaction with the Order during VoldWar I. Nor did the Order know about Snape's position as a spy. They only knew that Albus had spies.



Being welcomed into the Order of the Phoenix as a benefit of his long-standing friendship with Black & Potter may have been a cause of great relief for Peter Pettigrew who had been finding it progressively more difficult to pass information to the Voldemort supporter who had been plying him with veiled threats and even vaguer promises, without giving away something which might actually get James (who he still regarded as his friend, even if only for "old time's sake") killed.

Although Pettigrew's leaks were probably not the only reason, a not insignificant percentage of the Order's appalling casualty rate over the 20-24 months or so of its known opera-



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tion probably was due to information that Peter had provided, almost from the date of the Order's foundation.

It appears to have been some months before it was suspected that the organization had a traitor in its midst. It was several more months before Albus narrowed it down that the traitor was one of the Potters' associates (rather than, say, an associate of the Longbottoms, or someone from the Ministry). And this suspicion may have been assisted by information provided by Snape, although it is not dependent upon that. We certainly were given no such indication over the course of 'The Prince's Tale'.

In this iteration, the Order's membership was also almost entirely made up of people that Voldemort and his followers already wanted dead. This offered Peter a far wider range of potential subjects to inform on than just James Potter's immediate circle.

What is more, while Peter informed his contact of the Order's existence. I seriously doubt that he volunteered anything related to the Order's actual purpose — assuming that he knew anything of it, apart from its identity as a trusted group of intelligence gatherers. I doubt very much that anyone among the DEs other than Voldemort, Snape, and possibly Rookwood, was aware of the existence of a Prophecy related to Dark Lord, and even Rookwood would not have known for certain what the Prophecy related to. Consequently, Pettigrew's "handler" did not know the right questions to ask. And, as we've always seen for ourselves, Peter never just up and volunteers information.

In a matter of only a few months after the Prophecy was made, however, Voldemort's 20+ years of steadily tightening of the screws of anxiety and dread had erupted into a campaign of wanton violence and terrorism which raged unabated for

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nearly two years. The demoralization of the wizarding public was all but complete after a year of this. The Ministry seemed powerless to prevent it. To the typical wizard on the street it appeared that Voldemort was certainly winning.

At some point in this development, Pettigrew finally woke up and realized how deeply he had been drawn in to this situation unaware, But his primary shock is more likely to have been over his own blindness rather than from the reflection that the information he was passing was responsible for so much of the violence around him. Peter Pettigrew has always had a marked taste for violent mayhem, and once he managed to wrap his mind around the truth, if anything he is likely to have felt rather excited, and, well, *important*.



**Taking place over the course of 1981: Capture and sentencing to Azkaban of Doholov, Travers and Mulciber, and the deaths of Rosier and Wilkes while resisting arrest.**

It has been pointed out that if Moody's statement that it took 5 DEs to take down the Prewett brothers, and that the Order could say for certain that there were five of them, might suggest that the Prewetts had managed to call for help. The help arrived too late for the Prewetts, but was able to take custody of their attackers:

i.e., Doholov+Mulciber+Travers+Rosier+Wilkes = five Death Eaters.

Unproven, but suggestive.

**1981, August 11: Ginevra Molly Weasley born.**

**1981, September 1: On Voldemort's orders, Severus Snape**



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joins the staff of Hogwarts as Potions master and Head of Slytherin House for the academic year 1981-82, his instructions to take the DADA instructor's position having been balked by Dumbledore. Young Quirrell is at this point a seventh year student (probably a Ravenclaw).

At this point it is necessary to reconsider the matter of the Diary. Albus tells us that Lord Voldemort only passed the Diary to Lucius Malfoy shortly before his defeat. We have no real evidence in canon to suggest that it was a Horcrux before that point.

Albus also states that the Diary was a particularly disturbing example of a Horcrux because it was clearly designed to be used as a weapon rather than exclusively as an anchor of its creator's life to the material "plane." (This statement has since been rather badly undercut by the behavior of the Locket, and what we have since been informed to be the general behavior of \*all\* Horcruxes in DHs. What was that one supposed to be if not a weapon? It certainly behaved exactly the same as the Diary, just stupider). From the information at our disposal, it sounds very much as though Lucius was entrusted with the Diary in 1981 and told to wait for his Master's signal to send it into the school.

Which means that Tom pretty clearly intended that the Chamber of Secrets be opened at some point during the academic year of 1981-'82. And probably that Albus be murdered under cover of the attendant uproar. At that point Lucius Malfoy's quickest route by which to send an artifact into the school would have been through Snape.

I think that we may have finally uncovered what the full scope of Snape's one-year posting as DADA instructor was sup-

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posed to accomplish. He was either to have passed the Riddle Diary into the hands of a child at the school, or he was to open communications with it himself. If the first, the choice of child would have possibly been left up to him.

However, we cannot be altogether certain of that reading, no matter how reasonable it may sound, for we have been given every indication to understand that the creation of an additional 5th Horcrux would have left a visible change to Riddle's appearance in its wake, and we have heard of no point toward the very end of VoldWar I at which Lord Voldemort's physical appearance took a sudden turn for the worse.

Unless such changes take extended time to establish themselves, and the required time was simply not sufficient by the end of October.

But then, even if so, how could we be sure of that? Who would have reported such a thing to Harry, who is our only real window on this world? By that point of VWI Voldemort himself was in deep seclusion, no one but his most favored Followers — or his personally selected victims — appear to have ever seen him. And none of them were talking about his physical appearance.



**1981, Late September/October:** Acto Cornelius Fudge, additional information indicating that Voldemort has decided to attack and murder the Potter child reaches Dumbledore.

Or at any rate, so we were given to understand in PoA. Rowling probably hasn't reread her notes related to that one recently. I don't know how she thinks that information fits with what she chose to show us in 'The Prince's Tale'.



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For that matter, the letter which Harry found in Sirius's room at #12 speaks of Harry's birthday tea as a recent event, placing the letter as being from perhaps, mid-August. (Q: who, precisely is supposed to have taken the photo showing Lily laughing, Harry on a toy broom, and James' legs in the background? Bagshott? Pettigrew?) And while the Potters are clearly not yet under Fidelius, and are modestly interacting with various of the other wizarding neighbors in Godric's Hollow, such as Bathilda Bagshott, they appear to be keeping their heads down and living at least somewhat in seclusion. James is at any rate fretting over the loss of his cloak, and the necessity of sticking close to home because of it.

In any event, Albus proposes the use of the Fidelius Charm to protect the family, and offers to serve as Secret Keeper. James Potter possibly smarting over the withholding of his cloak (spoken of as having already been loaned to Albus in Lily's mid-August letter) or possibly alarmed by Bathilda's tales of Albus and young Gellert Grindelwald, declines the offer.

After investigating the Fidelius charm himself, he decides to employ it after all. Tells Dumbledore that Sirius Black will be their Secret Keeper.

**1981, October 23-26 approximate:** The Potters go into hiding at Godric's Hollow under the protection of the Fidelius Charm. At the last minute Peter Pettigrew substitutes as Secret Keeper instead of Sirius Black. Pettigrew and Black also go into hiding, individually.

**1981, October 31:** Voldemort receives information from Pettigrew on the Potters' location. By some as yet unexplained (and probably unexplainable) process, the Fidelius Charm is

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broken, rather than simply "shared" with the wrong party.

Voldemort descends on Godric's Hollow. We are given to understand that he kills James and Lily Potter; whatever curse intended to kill Harry Potter (and create his final Horcrux?) rebounds, and destroys his own body. Damage is made to the house either by Pettigrew who has followed him, possibly unbeknownst — or as a part of an agreed upon plan intending to eliminate Sirius Black — or as a consequence of an improperly grounded curse. All of the ramifications of this are explored in more detail in the essay; 'C.S.I.: Godric's Hollow'.

Pettigrew confiscates Voldemort's wand and escapes. Note: now that we know that the house is still standing it is possible that Pettigrew retrieved the wand at some later time, but it seems unlikely that it would not have been confiscated by Ministry investigators had it still been present after the explosion. We do know that the site was investigated by the Magical Catastrophes Department.

We do *not* know whether Peter may have hedged his bets with a Patronus message to the Headmaster claiming that Black had betrayed them all.

Dumbledore is informed of the defeat of the Dark Lord (probably by Snape when his Dark mark suddenly all but disappears), is abruptly aware that the Fidelius has been broken rather than merely shared. Sends Hagrid to Godric's Hollow via portkey to investigate. Sirius Black arrives at Godric's Hollow soon afterwards. Events of the "missing" 24 Hours ensue.



Speaking of which; a recent email conversation with a Brit-



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ish HP fan brought up the observation that in Book 1, Chapter 1, Vernon Dursley seems to notice an inordinate number of odd-balls in cloaks out in the streets on the day before his wife found a baby in a basket on their doorstep.

Which, in a roundabout manner, finally offers a possible explanation for why although Harry Potter had lived in hiding among Muggles for a decade, everyone in the wizarding world still knew what he looked like, right down to his distinctive scar.

I think those wizards that Vernon noticed on that November day were Order members. I think that Albus had alerted the Order to keep watch on the Dursleys to determine whether anyone else from the ww was aware of them and their location. Arabella Figg would not yet have been posted in the house on Magnolia Crescent to keep watch full time. Albus undoubtedly had other commitments the day after Voldemort's defeat, and knew that he wasn't going to be able to get there until that evening at the earliest. So he wanted them kept track of, just in case.

Which would also account for Minerva's overhearing the gossip of Tom's defeat and the Potters' deaths while she was sitting on the Dursleys wall in her Animagus form all day.

And, since the wards that Albus set on the Dursley residence was *not* Fidelius, this means that any of the Order members who had taken part in watching the property that day knew *exactly* where Harry Potter had been placed. And some of them probably dropped by periodically to try for a Potter sighting.

Harry did recognize at least one of those Order members when Hagrid took him to Diagon Alley.

They were probably reasonably good at keeping the location secret, but they would have gossiped about having seen the boy.

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And described him.



**November 17, 1981:** Peter Pettigrew confronts Sirius Black in a Muggle district, presumably in London; he is assumed to have been killed, along with a dozen Muggles. Sirius Black is arrested and consigned to Azkaban without trial. Harry Potter is left on Dursley's doorstep sometime after dark. The timing of this sequence famously does not add up. Speculation regarding the "missing" 24 hours may be found in the essay so entitled.

It should be noted that once he had taken up his position at Hogwarts, Snape was probably not summoned to any Death Eater meetings during term time in order to not raise any suspicions of his continuing allegiance to the Dark Lord on Dumbledore's part.

If, as I still suspect, Pettigrew only made his decision to take the Dark Mark on the evening of the Potter's deaths, Snape would not have been present when "Wormtail" appeared and led Voldemort into a trap. It is possible that, isolated at Hogwarts, he never was told that the betrayer of their leader was someone who was referred to by the name of Wormtail. Otherwise it is just possible that the name might have rung a bell. Or, conversely; he knew that it referred to *one* of the Marauders, but not knowing the context, assumed it referred to Black, since everyone was convinced that Black was the traitor.

Rowling has also assured us that Snape was not loitering around Godric's Hollow under James's cloak at the time. I quite agree. He would have been in plain sight at Hogwarts, at the Halloween Feast that evening until curfew. As would Albus.



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**1981, probably a few days later in November:** Igor Karkaroff attempts a plea bargain in return for his release from Azkaban. Deal accepted by Barty Crouch Sr. (Note: Snape had already been cleared of any culpable association with the DEs by Albus by this time.)

**November 1981–early 1982:** Frank and Alice Longbottom are tortured into insanity by Death Eaters. They are nonetheless able to identify their attackers. The Lestranges and Barty Crouch Jr are quickly arrested, tried, and sentenced to life in Azkaban.

**1981–1982:** Death Eater trials, including the arrest and sentencing of Augustus Rookwood, followed by Ludovic Bagman's arrest, trial, and acquittal. Barty Crouch Sr accepts DE Lucius Malfoy and DE Avery's Imperius defense.

**1982 exact date uncertain:** Madam Crouch takes her son's place in Azkaban under Polyjuice. She is assisted in this substitution by her husband. Dies in custody soon afterward, still under Polyjuice

Barty Crouch Sr imprisons his son in his home under the double constraints of the Imperius Curse and an invisibility cloak. Madam Crouch's death and funeral are reported in the Daily Prophet. Crouch leaves his son during the day under guard by the family's House Elf, Winky. The reported death of his son in Azkaban either after or some time before the reported death of Madam Crouch begins the sway of public opinion against Barty Sr. At some point afterwards, possibly as late as 1990 with the appointment of Cornelius Fudge as Minister for Magic, he is shifted to the Department of International Magical Cooperation. It is at this time unknown whether there was any active "whispering campaign" to this end, but he is no longer



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being considered as Minster Bagnole's successor as Minister..

**1983:** Bill Weasley begins his first year at Hogwarts.

**1984:** Nymphadora Tonks begins Hogwarts.

**1985:** Charlie Weasley begins Hogwarts.

**1987:** Percy Weasley begins Hogwarts.

**1989:** Fred and George Weasley begin Hogwarts.

**Academic year 1989–90:** Unconfirmed extrapolation, at the end of the academic year, the DADA instructor, Professor Quirrell, who was apparently hired on the basis of a sound theoretical study of his subject of some years standing, announces his intention to take a sabbatical year to gain practical experience in the field. It is unknown whether any specific incident in the classroom over the course of the year was the cause of this decision. It should be noted that this interpretation ignores Rowling's claim that Quirrell had originally been the Muggle Studies teacher before his sabbatical year. That claim was made in an interview, and we already know about how much faith to put into anything that comes out of those. It should also be noted that the academic year of 1989–90 was Fred and George Weasley's first year at Hogwarts.

Bill Weasley finishes Hogwarts with the class of 1990. The same year, Charlie sits the OWLs, and with glowing references from Professor Kettleburn of Care of Magical Creatures and his Head of House, Professor McGonagall, takes an opening at the Dragon Reserve in Romania rather than continuing NEWT-level studies at Hogwarts.

**1990:** Millicent Bagnole, Minister for Magic, retires and is succeeded by Cornelius Fudge, Head of the Department of Magical Catastrophes. It is reasonable to speculate that there was





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a general rotation of Department Heads at this time; and that Crouch's transfer to the Department of Magical Cooperation was a part of this rotation, with Amelia Bones replacing him as Head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement. Ms Bones, having no knowledge of any unofficial non-interference pacts between Crouch and, say, Abraxus Malfoy, initiates a series of raids on suspected Dark wizards' homes over the next two years. Arthur Weasley, now Head of the Misuse of Muggle Artifacts Department, a sub-bureau within the DMLE, is peripherally involved in these. It is possible that Arthur was promoted to the Head of the MMA division at this time, amidst the rest of the personnel rotations. He soon is completely enamored of Muggle technology, with which he is still largely unfamiliar.

Regarding Crouch's transfer to the Department of Magical Cooperation: we know only that Crouch had already been transferred by the time his subordinate Bertha Jorkins — who may well have decided to set her cap at her widowed (new?) boss — showed up at his home one day with a message; expecting to find him and discovered the family skeleton, instead. His excessive modification of Jorkins's memory, and her subsequent Transfer to the Department of Magical Games and Sports took place at some point before 1994 when Percy Weasley joined Crouch's staff.

**1991, spring, late:** young Quirrell goes into a reputedly haunted forest in Albania and comes out twitching. This is reported to Albus Dumbledore either by an observer stationed onsite, or by one of the instruments in his office. He concludes that he is going to be forced to create some sort of diversion to distract Lord Voldemort from contacting his followers and attempting to reform his empire — or from attacking Harry

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Potter who will be arriving at the school with the incoming class at the Autumn term.

Knowing the full content of the Prophecy, Dumbledore is convinced that there is probably no hope of destroying Voldemort at this time. He discusses the problem regarding his knowledge that he has a compromised DADA instructor with his old friend and former partner, Nicholas Flamel. It is at this point unknown whether he also discussed the matter with the new Minister of Magic, Cornelius Fudge. This last seems unlikely. Fudge would have been too insecure in his post and too much of a yet unknown quantity.

Nymphadora Tonks finishes Hogwarts with the class of 1991. Commences Auror training.

**1991, summer, early:** Harry Potter releases a large snake from its enclosure in the zoo. Quirrell returns to England psychically haunted, but not yet physically possessed by Lord Voldemort.. (No, I have no idea how this was accomplished, either. And Rowling is No Help.)

**1991, summer:** The Dursleys are subjected to a plague of owls. Vernon takes evasive action. Arabella Figg reports this development to Dumbledore.

**1991, July, probably the 30th:** Dumbledore calls an emergency meeting at Hogwarts wherein he announces that he is having Flamel's Philosopher's Stone brought to Hogwarts for safekeeping and requests the assistance of the Groundskeeper, the four Heads of House and the DADA instructor to help him set up security measures to protect it before the students return. In Quirrell's hearing he instructs Hagrid to fetch the Stone from a specific (numbered) Gringotts vault the next day. Voldemort takes the bait



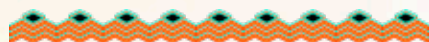
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and directs Quirrell to break into the specified vault and remove the Stone before Hagrid can retrieve it.

**1991, July 31, 12:00:01 am:** Hagrid appears at the Hut on the Rock (this is assumed to be via either portkey or Thestral. Given that Buckbeak had no apparent difficulty carrying two healthy teenagers and a tall, full-grown, even if half-starved adult to the top of a tower, one might also cast a vote for hippogriff) with a copy of Harry Potter's Hogwarts letter, a birthday cake, and the story of his parents' murder.

Later that day Quirrell botches the timing on the attempted break-in of the Gringotts vault. Quite possibly on purpose, in what turns out to have been a last act of defiance. He only made his attempt on the Stone after he had already encountered Harry and Hagrid at the Leaky Cauldron. This attempt at evading orders dooms him. Voldemort takes full physical possession of him at this point.

From this point all events proceed as defined (or suggested) in canon.



## Colophon

The layout and formatting of this document was done in Adobe InDesign, utilizing commercial clip art from Getty Images/Dynamic Graphics, and the incomprable Marwan Aridi, modified in Adobe Photoshop. Cover was created in Adobe Photoshop,

Fonts used in this publication: for body text, the MT Cantoria family, by Monotype, modified in Fontographer. Page Numbers, Titles and Drop Caps are set in ITC's Motter Corpus 300. Fontcraft's Dresser Rules is used for spacers.

Special mention should also be extended to Jack Davis and Linea Dayton for their efforts in producing The Photoshop 7 One-Click WOW Book. More than a decade later, their layer styles still constitute one of my first go-tos.

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