

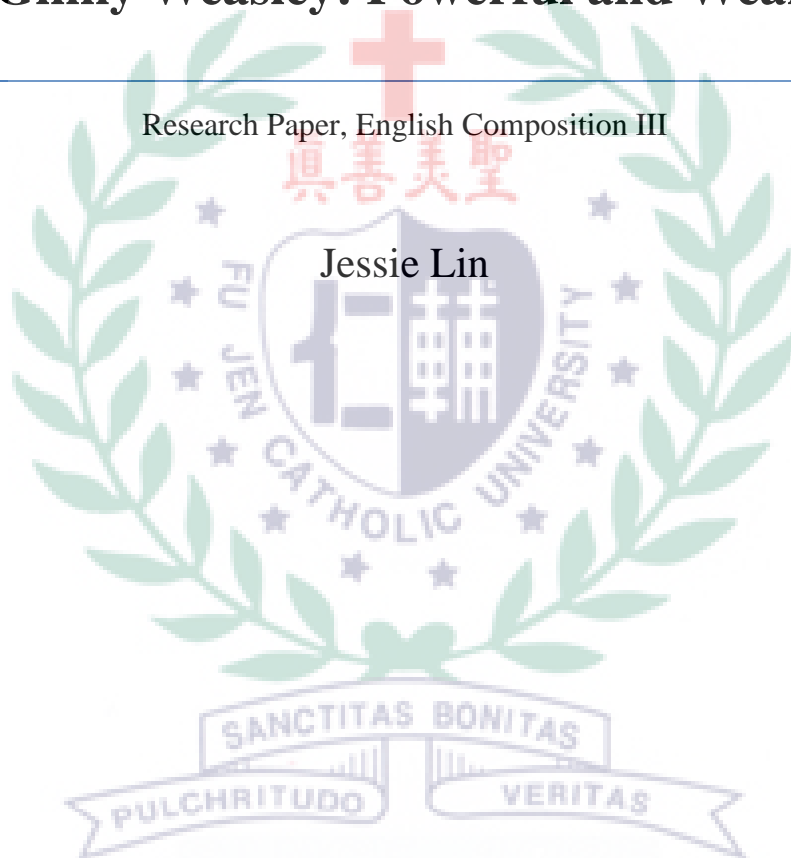
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Ginny Weasley: Powerful and Weak

Research Paper, English Composition III

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- 1) Major errors: title, ellipses –3 periods, space before and after (. . .).
- 2) Some transition and quotation problems.
- 3) [Thesis Statement] should appear in your introd.
- 4) 9 ★

Outline

I. Introduction

A. Background information

B. Scholars' views on gender stereotypes in *Harry Potter* series.

- i. some female characters, like Ginny Weasley, are depicted as traditional wives, which are “objects,” not “subjects.” (Limbach 173).
- ii. the series contains gender stereotypes; however, J.K. Rowling challenges standard constructions of gender roles. (Smith 191).

C. Methodology: reasons I choose these two volumes to analyze

- i. *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* is the first volume that Ginny Weasley appears as a major role.
- ii. Ginny Weasley in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* is apparently a more passive role. Also, whether Ginny in *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* is more active is rather controversial.

D. Thesis statement: As a supportive role, Ginny Weasley has become a grown-up, who is stronger, more self-assured and more independent in her judgment. I categorize the changes Ginny makes into four parts, from external to internal. First, she has become stronger as a witch. Second, she gradually has her own good judgment, with which she uses to help others. Thirdly, she transforms from an innocent girl who needs being taught to a big girl who is able to suggest others. Last, she is braver to speak her own ideas.

II. Body

A. Feminine principles: Is Harry Potter feminized?

- i. *Harry Potter* as a “girl tale” (Smith 191).
- ii. Sexed symbols, feminine spaces, and gender choices (Smith 196-99).
- iii. The answer to the question “Is Harry Potter feminized?”
 - a. Harry’s mastery in negotiating gender roles (Smith 199).
 - b. J.K. Rowling focuses on men; yet, with a closer look, she in fact blends gender features.

B. Analysis of Ginny Weasley

- i. weak vs. powerful
- ii. lack vs. has her own good judgment

iii. being taught vs. teaches others

iv. dare not vs. dare to express herself

III. Conclusion



Ginny Weasley: Powerful and Weak

Harry Potter series have caused a sensation among teenagers and adults since they were first published in 1999. However, despite the popularity of this young wizard's story, some scholars hold that *Harry Potter* in fact is composed of many gender stereotypes. According to Gwendolyn Limbach's "*Ginny Weasley: Girl Next Doormat?*", female characters, such as Ginny Weasley, are depicted as traditional wives, which are "objects," not "subjects." (Limbach 173:200). Similar to Limbach, in the article "*Cinderella: J.K. Rowling's Wily Web of Gender*," C. Jason Smith also considers *Harry Potter* as a story with gender stereotypes. Yet, Smith believes J.K. Rowling does challenge the standard constructions of gender or gender roles (Smith 191). This paper, however, argues that *Harry Potter* can be read from various feminist perspectives. There are not only feminine principles but powerful female protagonist.

As a supportive role, Ginny Weasley has become a grown-up, who is stronger, more self-assured and more independent in her judgment. I categorize the changes Ginny makes into four parts, from external to internal. First, she has become stronger as a witch. Second, she gradually has her own good judgment, with which she uses to help others. Thirdly, she transforms from an innocent girl who needs being taught to a big girl who is able to suggest others. Last, she is braver to speak her own ideas.

J.K. Rowling, indeed, focuses on male characters, and especially Harry Potter,

in his namesake series; yet, with a closer look, she in fact blends gender features to allow both male and female readers to identify with the protagonist, Harry Potter. The three main reasons that some scholars consider Harry feminized are first, *Harry Potter* is a girl's tale (Smith 191). Second, that there are abundant feminized symbols in the series, through which we can see that Rowling has a preference for the feminine, and third, the idea of "otherness" (Smith 181).

First of all, both Smith and Gallardo consider Harry Potter feminized because *Harry Potter* is a girl's tale. According to Smith, *Harry Potter* is a twisted version of Cinderella's tale. Both Harry and Cinderella have a dead mother, and their mothers' love is presented as a magic. In *Harry Potter*, it is even his mother's love that protects Harry from being killed. Also, both Harry and Cinderella escape from slavery to the liberty. Harry leaves his aunt's house, in where he serves as a servant, when he is eleven. While Cinderella escapes from her evil step-mother with the help from the prince.

Secondly, some scholars consider *Harry Potter* as a girl's tale, which refers to a story which female readers can relate to. In *Harry Potter* series, feminine spaces play a role. For instance, Harry needs to explore those feminine spaces, such as secret paths and the maze, to discover the truth and to fight for justice (Smith 198). Another role that feminine spaces serve is the place for Harry to recover from damages caused

by males. In addition to feminine spaces, Ron and Hermione are also sexed symbols. Ron Weasley refers to the “masculine principle”; while Hermione Granger refers to the feminine one (Smith 199). For Ron often leads Harry to the incorrect direction; in contrast, Hermione offers Harry suggestions which result in his growth and triumph. From that fact that it is a female which leads Harry to the victory we can realize that Rowling expresses her preference for the feminine. Thirdly, some scholars see Harry Potter series as a girl’s tale because of the idea—“otherness.” Like the princess in the girl’s tales, Harry was considered as the other due to his magical power. Because of his connection to the magical world, he is left out by the non-magical community and is regarded as “a feminized other” (Smith 191). In addition to his magical power, his orphan position worsens his status and results in “otherness.”

However, there are still scholars in favor of the fact that *Harry Potter* is a boy’s tale. Mikulan sees Harry Potter as a classic boy’s tale in which girls are allowed to find their ideals. Hermione Granger, Professor McGonagall, and even Ginny Weasley can be the icons for females. Since the protagonist is Harry Potter, those female characters naturally become supportive roles. Yet, these female characters can still be powerful and independent in their roles. Take Hermione Granger for example, she is a powerful witch although she serves as the supportive role. Additionally, though being a female, she is a solution-provider in the triadic group. Moreover, she

still proves that she has progressed and her power works differently from Harry's (Sammons 5). Harry represents the brave hero; while Hermione symbolizes the wise character. Hence, it is undeniable that Hermione plays a major role in helping Harry on his path to victory. To express the preference to feminism, Rowling also arranges feminine features in some characters. Ginny Weasley's "changes" from weak to powerful can be considered one.

Speaking of whether this female protagonist is a powerful character, Ginny's case is worthier discussing comparing to Hermione Granger. This is as well the reason I chose to analyze the character. Is she a weak character without good judgment? Ginny in *Harry and the Chamber of Secrets* (hereafter cited as *Chamber of Secrets*) is indeed a weaker teenager girl and a shy admirer of Harry. As a student of magic, she is the one who is easily influenced by others. Also, she is so shy that she does not dare to express herself. Ginny cannot speak to Harry naturally. Whenever Harry is present, she is quiet and shy, Ron finds very "weird" since "she never shuts up normally" (*Chamber of Secrets* 34).

For instance, the first view Harry and we readers have of her is when she arrives with Mrs. Weasley; and clings to her mother's hand timidly (*Chamber of Secrets* 46). Later in the novel, she is one to be rescued, as she is enchanted by Lord Voldemort, "standing with her head against Mrs. Weasley's shoulder, and tears ... still

coursing silently down her cheeks” (*the Chamber of Secrets* 242). After being saved by Harry, Ginny could do nothing but “drew a great, shuddering gasp,” with, again, “tears ... pouring down her face” (*the Chamber of Secrets* 236). Through those tears Ginny’s weakness can be seen. Also, it is her weakness that leads herself to the danger. That is the reason Lord Voldemort chooses Ginny as the “puppet” to carry out his evil plan, instead of other female characters. “So Ginny poured her soul to me, and her soul happened to be exactly what I wanted. I grew stronger and stronger on a diet of her deepest fears, her deepest secrets.” said Lord Voldemort (*the Chamber of Secrets* 229).

Apart from being a “dependor” who relies on others, Ginny lacks her own judgment, which another reason Lord Voldemort determines to make her accomplish his plan. Ginny is too innocent in *the Chamber of Secrets* and is not able to detect hidden dangers on her own:- “.....she didn’t know what she was doing at first.....It took a very long time for stupid little Ginny to stop trusting her diary” (*Chamber of Secrets* 229). Ginny’s lacking judgment can also be found when she simply takes the book without ensuring the origin of it; while it should be the common sense. “I d-didn’t know. I found it inside one of the books Mum got me. I th-thought someone had just left it in there and forgotten about it.” (*Chamber of Secrets* 242).

Apart from being weak and lacking good judgment, in the second volume,

Ginny is the one who is taught and easily affected by others. Not only her decisions but her emotions seem to be easily influenced by others. She is not able to adjust herself to the negative emotions, but relies on others to do the job. “Ginny Weasley, who sat next to Colin Creevey in Charms, was distraught, but Harry felt that Fred and George were going the wrong way about cheering her up” (the Chamber of Secrets 138). Among all the exterior factors, Harry plays a major role affecting Ginny’s emotions. Her mood seems to be influenced by who she likes, so she talks “all about Harry” in the diary (*Chamber of Secrets* 229). What’s more, she cares about what others’ opinions towards herself. After being saved, the first thing that comes up in Ginny’s mind is nothing but her parents’ possible reactions. “I’ve looked forward to coming to Hogwarts ever since B-Bill came and n-now I’ll have to leave and – w-what’ll Mum and Dad say?” (*Chamber of Secrets* 238). Moreover, she relies on others to teach her due to her lack of judgment, which can also be found when she cannot bear the reminder from her father in mind. “Haven’t I taught you anything? What have I always told you? Never trust anything that can think for itself if you can’t see where it keeps its brain” says Mr. Weasley (*Chamber of Secrets* 242).

Ginny dares not to speak a single word in front of Harry, and she often acts bashfully in front of him. For instance, from the crack of a door, “Harry just caught sight of a pair of bright brown eyes staring at him before the door closed with a snap”

(*Chamber of Secrets* 34). When Harry is asking her a question, she “blush[es] to the roots of her flaming hair, and put her elbow in the butter dish” (*Chamber of Secrets* 38). When Harry is present, Ginny says nothing and achieves nothing, not to mention conveying her own feelings or emotions.

Being submissive and shy, Ginny cannot speak up when she sees something wrong. When Fred and George are playing some jokes on Harry’s being the murderer, Ginny finds it not interesting but just “wailed every time” instead of pointing it out directly (*Chamber of Secrets* 157). Even when Ginny wants to tell Harry all about the truth of the real murderer, she is not brave enough to do it. Hence, she tells nothing but just “glanced up and down the Gryffindor table with a scared look on her face” or “was rocking backwards and forwards slightly in her chair” (*the Chamber of Secrets* 158). For she cannot express herself in front of others, she can just give herself to the evil diary left by Lord Voldemort. She writes down something like “No one understood me, ... I’m so glad I’ve got this diary to confide in...It’s like having a friend I can carry round in my pocket...” (*Chamber of Secrets* 229).

In contrast, in *the Order of the Phoenix*, Ginny becomes more powerful in terms of both her magical powers and personalities. She is no longer the timid girl who needs others rescue, her power is strong enough to be praised by a male character, who states that power is not necessary related to size: “Look at Ginny. You’ve never

been on the receiving end of one her Bat-Bogey Hexes, have you?” (*Order of the Phoenix* 101). Moreover, when it comes to the real fights, Ginny is also powerful. When trying to leave Hogwarts to come to Sirius Black’s rescue, Harry and his partners, Ginny included, have a fight with students from Slytherin. Ginny proves that she is powerful and receives another compliment from a male, Neville Longbottom: “But Ginny was the best, she got Malfoy—Bat Bogey Hex—it was superb, his whole face was covered in the great flapping things” (*Order of the Phoenix* 670). In addition to performing spells, Ginny is also good at playing Quidditch, a kind of sport that dominated by male players. After Harry is banned from participating in any Quidditch games, the team leader finds another seeker, that is Ginny, to replace Harry. What’s more, Ginny’s talent as a seeker is approved by her elder brothers, Fred, George and Ron (*Order of the Phoenix* 506, 621).

Unlike the Ginny in the second volume, Ginny in *the Order of the Phoenix* does develop her own judgment, with which she uses to succor. When they are cleaning the ancient house of Black, there is an evil musical box, which could have harmed or even killed them. It is Ginny that “had the sense to slam the lid shut” (*Order of the Phoenix* 109). Also, she offers good suggestions which approved by both males and females, such as the title of the underground student association “Dumbledore’s Army,” which causes “a good deal of appreciative murmuring and

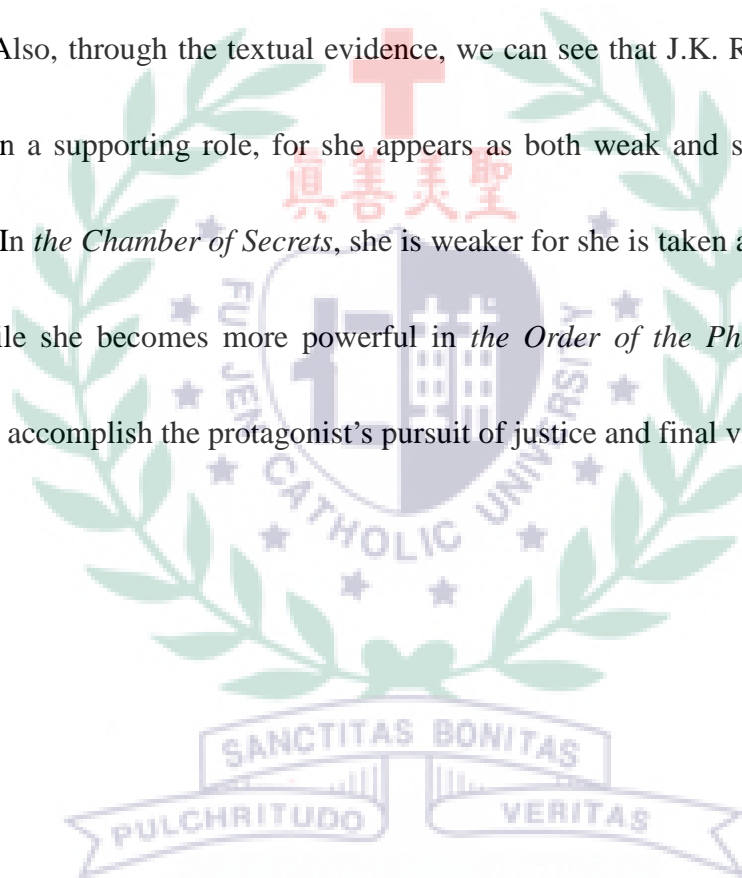
laughter” (*Order of the Phoenix* 347). When everyone is trying to come up with a good solution, Ginny is capable of using her own judgment to help Harry and others actively. When planning to leave Hogwarts to save Sirius Black, Ginny offers workable suggestions: “Luna and I can stand at either end of the corridor, and warn people not to go down there because someone’s let off a Garrotting Gas” (*Order of the Phoenix* 649). Also, when being in a real battle, Ginny’s judgment not only allows her fellow partners to avoid danger, but shows them some good solutions. For example, Ginny can maintain clear-minded and keep calm in crisis. In the Department of Mysteries, Ron asks a question about a strange door with fear; while Ginny is the one who answers her elder brother with calm, “I think it was to stop us knowing which door we came in through” (*Order of the Phoenix* 680).

Apart from becoming more powerful and having her judgment, Ginny is able to influence or to teach others, Harry included, in the fifth volume. It is Ginny that teaches the Weasley twins, who master being mischief, how to tell if Extendable Ears will work or not in the house of Black (*Order of the Phoenix* 68). When Harry feels confused and anxious about whether he is possessed by Lord Voldemort, Ginny rescues him from being haunted by the thought. She actively offers a suggestion in a strong tone, which we cannot see in *Chamber of Secrets*. “Well, that was a bit stupid of you, seeing as you don’t know anyone but me who’s been possessed by

You-Know-Who, and I can tell you how it feels” (*Order of the Phoenix* 441). Also, she becomes braver. She is even capable of giving good suggestions and encouraging Harry to be courageous; while boldness is exactly what she lacks in the second volume. “.....if you really want to talk to Sirius, I expect we could think of a way to do it” and “the thing about growing up with Fred and George is that you sort of start thinking anything’s possible if you’ve got enough nerve” (*Order of the Phoenix* 577).

Ginny in *Order of the Phoenix* appears to be braver to express her own thoughts to Harry and to others. She dares to talk naturally and “brightly” to Harry (*Order of the Phoenix* 68). Additionally, her becoming more courageous is seen from the white lies that do not appear from her mouth in the second volume. When Mrs. Weasley is asking who threw Dungbombs onto the door, Ginny answered “unblushingly” with a lie (*Order of the Phoenix* 73). She expresses her emotions more often no matter she is angry or joyful. She does “a kind of war dance” with her brothers after learning that Harry is free from charged (*Order of the Phoenix* 142). Also, when Hermione is insulted by the house-elf, Ginny shows her anger and defends her friend by saying “Don’t call her a Mudblood” (*Order of the Phoenix* 101). She is braver so she sometimes even talks to Harry in a cool tone if she does not feel good. Ginny “raised her eyebrows”, saying “There’s no need to take that tone with me” (*Order of the Phoenix* 648).

From the textual evidence mentioned above, it is clear that though being a supportive role, Ginny Weasley still improves in terms of power, judgment, ability of guiding other and courage. Moreover, she indeed helps Harry and her partners to some degrees; therefore, we can say that her support of Harry Potter indicates that she is a grown-up, who is stronger, more self-assured and more independent in her judgment. Also, through the textual evidence, we can see that J.K. Rowling does not fix Ginny in a supporting role, for she appears as both weak and strong role at the same time. In *the Chamber of Secrets*, she is weaker for she is taken and needs others' rescue; while she becomes more powerful in *the Order of the Phoenix*. Ginny no doubt helps accomplish the protagonist's pursuit of justice and final victory.



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