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## Representations of Gender and Agency in the *Harry Potter* Series

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### Introduction

Gender is an all-pervasive and extremely influential construct in the lives of individuals (Taylor, 2003). In children's literature, we find a reflection of the attitudes towards gender prevalent in a given society at a particular time (Peterson and Lach, 1990). Therefore the study of how gender is represented in children's literature can make a useful contribution to our understanding of how choices in language use support particular discourses, 'broad constitutive systems of meaning' (Sunderland, 2004: 6) or 'ways of seeing the world' (op cit: 28). These representations in turn perpetuate prevailing gendered power relations in that society, as research into children's literature has shown (Thompson and Sealey, 2007). Corpus Linguistics offers a degree of objectivity and efficiency not possible in manual ideological analysis, as well as a set of tools particularly useful for the lexical analysis of considerable quantities of text. In this chapter, I report on my analysis of gendered discourses in the *Harry Potter* series by J. K. Rowling, focussing on patterns around grammatical agency in the books.

Books written for children are just one of several sources of cultural and ideological information 'about socially sanctioned relationship patterns and about social constructs' for children (Wharton, 2005: 239) but their importance is evident in the interest that they arouse in educators, parents and researchers. There is a plethora of research into the multiple effects of children's books on their young readers, much of it concluding that 'children's literature can positively influence gender attitudes' (Trepanier-Street and Romatowski, 1999: 158). To investigate the contemporary representation of gender in children's literature written in English, the *Harry Potter* series is a good candidate, with record sales and massive popularity amongst both child and adult readers. Unlike previous studies into gender representation in children's fiction, which tend to focus on plot or on easily quantifiable aspects like the numbers of female and male characters and their occupations, this study addresses more subtle aspects of the text and the discourses

supported by it, in this case body parts and the uses their female and male owners put them to, via the integration of corpus linguistics into a critical discourse analysis. This methodological combination opens up the possibility of analysing much larger quantities of data than the analyst is able to address in traditional Critical Discourse Analysis and provides statistical support for interpretations, without sacrificing social sensitivity and the micro-level nuances of discourse analysis. This chapter continues with an outline of the theoretical context of this study, pointing to previous research in the area, after which I describe the practical aspects of the methodology employed. My emphasis is on the analysis afforded by the synergistic research method and the implications of my findings for our understanding of the representation of gender in children's fiction.

## Context

The role of language in reflecting cultural norms is well established, and children's literature is no exception. Indeed, Thompson and Sealey (2007: 3), in reviewing research into fiction for children conducted over the past two decades, comment that 'these texts are inevitably suffused with ideology'. Thus what children's books say about social constructs, including gender, is of concern because they are instrumental in constructing reality for the children who read them (Wharton, 2005). Fantasy, for example, provides readers with 'texts of meanings' of femininity and heterosexuality that they may draw on to understand and interpret their place in the social world' (Jackson, 2001: 306). These ideologically charged texts make reading 'a particularly influential activity in terms of children's learning of societal expectations' (Wharton, 2005: 239). The iteration and reiteration of particular ideologies regarding gender in a popular series like *Harry Potter* could have a significant impact on the kinds of masculinity and femininity that child readers have to choose from in constructing their own identities, hence my interest in revealing just what options are offered by the representations of various characters in the books.

Research into the representation of the body demonstrates the salience of gender in the representation of physical identity as well as the tendency for female and male bodies to be associated with different uses and to be evaluated in terms of different criteria (c.f. Hammers, 2005; Gill and Herdieckerhoff, 2006; Jeffries, 2007). Although the fact that literature reflects society suggests the need for action to correct the representation of women as second class citizens, it is the role of literature in perpetuating ideological constructs that is of most concern. The prior existence of dominant ideologies around gender strengthens the efficacy of those discourses expressed in books for children (Wharton, 2005) and the reiteration of particular representations allows the continued influence of existing ideologies, which explains the importance of this research.

Research into children's literature in English over several decades indicates the nature of the ideological material present in these texts: the bulk of it rendering female characters virtually invisible or trivialised in terms of their occupations, roles and traits. This work has tended to focus on aspects such as the balance between female characters and male characters – in titles, pictures and the stories themselves – and has reported some gains for female characters in these aspects over time, which is generally interpreted as a response to pressure from publishers and society at large for more egalitarian representation (c.f. Taylor, 2003; Diekman and Murnen, 2004). I have chosen instead to look at something which I believe is less amenable to superficial adjustment, and which is probably more likely to be unconscious to even the author herself: the description of and especially the uses of body parts in the story line (Hunt, 2011).

Jeffries' study of women's magazines (2007) shows how useful an investigation of body parts can be to the analysis of gender representation, although due to the increased emphasis on sexuality in reading matter for adults, she found quite different patterns to those in my data. However, she confirms the importance of reiteration, arguing that the constant repetition of the same ideas about women's bodies may influence women readers into accepting these emphases and value judgements.

Body parts were also the focus of a comparative study of advertisements in *Cosmo* and *Men's Health* magazines (Motschenbacher, 2009). For women, there was a focus on body parts that appear on the outside of the body and have aesthetic value (for example, hair and skin), while for men, the focus was on male body parts that are typically inside the body and have some sort of practical value (for example, muscles and parts of the legs and feet), such as being used for sport or for physical training. In my data (Hunt, 2011) there is a similar polarisation in that body parts semantically or conventionally associated with one gender are almost always portrayed as belonging to individuals of the same sex. Exceptions, such as Aunt Marge's *beard*, are negatively valued and are used to imbue the character with a negative evaluation in general. In advertisements, women are objectified by the representations, and their bodies are also often seen as problematic, and in need of solutions, such as viewing cellulite as a problem requiring intervention (Motschenbacher, 2009). Similarly, although female body parts are used for physical purposes in *Harry Potter*, as I will explore below, they are not used as effectively as the male equivalents, and they are often represented as unreliable.

## Combining corpus linguistics and critical discourse analysis

Agency, and how it is constructed along gender lines, is my focus in this chapter, and to explore this I examine the body parts of male and female characters in three of the *Harry Potter* series of children's books (hereafter HP).

This is part of a larger study which also included three of the *Chronicles of Narnia* books by C. S. Lewis, as well as other uses of the characters' body parts (Hunt, 2011). My aim here is to show how female and male characters in HP are represented as acting on the world in different ways, especially in dangerous contexts. Here, as in the larger study, I make use of the combination of corpus linguistics and critical discourse analysis, which enables the analysis of large quantities of data, as several studies, including Baker et al.'s (2008) work on the media representation of refugees, have shown. The strength of the synergistic combination of corpus linguistics and CDA lies in its capacity to show up broad, objectively observable trends, to lend statistical validity to relationships of collocation, and to point to tendencies in the textual construction of reality which may then be analysed ideologically.

In terms of canonical CDA as described by Fairclough (2001), vocabulary, grammar and textual structures are all interrogated. My emphasis here is on the first of these, vocabulary, as this relates most strongly to the experiential and expressive values encoded within texts, which in turn reveal the authors' views of the world most clearly, and also their beliefs regarding the elements of the world that they mention and their evaluations thereof. Thus these values and the ways in which they are encoded in the lexis of the data provide the strongest evidence for the gendered discourses encoded in the texts. In particular, my focus on the physicality of the human characters as expressed in their body parts means that nouns are of special interest to me. The patterns formed by the characters' ways of using their bodies are most salient for my analysis, especially the patterns of agency and passivity revealed in the way these body parts are represented in the prosodic patterns and syntactic structures employed.

The experiential value of a word has to do with the version of the world that it represents to the reader, or as Fairclough puts it (2001: 94): 'how ideological differences between texts in their representations of the world are coded in their vocabulary'. An analysis of the experiential values encoded in this way thus includes facets such as overwording, collocations, classification schemes and ideologically significant meaning relations (Fairclough, 2001). Corpus processes are of particular help in addressing these aspects. Overwording, the tendency for a writer to repeat those words of central relevance to the topic of the text, is a prime example. The list of body part frequencies in Table 1.2 demonstrates the salience of that body part to the world created in the books, while the columns for females and males give a good indication of how each group is characterised physically.

Focussing on the related concepts of collocation and discourse prosody, I show how males and females in the stories behave differently with regard to how their bodies are used to act on the world, in other words in terms of their agency. The notion of collocation, the regular, meaningful co-occurrence of words, is useful because of the need to go beyond single words in the search for meaning: '[i]ndividual words can never be more than a starting

point, since it is often collocations which create connotations' (Stubbs, 2003: 13). Connotations range on a cline from barely evaluative to strongly expressive. If a given word has several collocations all with similar expressive value, this contributes to its meaning in context. Expressive connotations, or the evaluative meanings associated with a word, far from being peripheral, are as central to meaning as denotation (Partington, 2004). Sinclair (2000), calling this semantic prosody, sees it as one of two 'obligatory component[s] of a lexical item'. Corpus linguistic methods enable one to identify regular patterns of meaning in the data which, through their combined prosodies, construct particular realities.

The key to the value of collocations in the critical analysis of representation is their tendency to be below the level of consciousness. Not only can they reveal semantic components of words, but they are also capable of conveying meaning implicitly (Baker et al., 2008: 278), often via the evaluative component of semantic prosody. These messages, if repeated often enough, are 'more likely to become fixed in the minds of speakers and therefore, more difficult to challenge' (Stubbs, 1996: 195). An example of this is the work by Mautner (2009) on the representation of unemployment in the media. She found that the word *unemployed*, followed by *and* and an adjective collocated with words like *desperate*, *disadvantaged*, *divorced* and *homeless*, all carrying a 'negative semantic load' (2009: 127). This shows quite clearly the ways in which collocation, particularly regular relationships of collocation with the same terms across many texts, can contribute to the creation of clusters of meaning which coalesce into discourses and habitual ways of thinking and writing about areas of life. Patterns of repeated collocation involving the body parts of males or females, like those identified by Motschenbacher (2009), reveal established coalescences of social meaning about gender and what is 'appropriate' behaviour according to dominant constructions of gender.

Research into meaning relations set up through various permutations of collocation has resulted in a taxonomy of related concepts (see Stubbs, 2007). While semantic preference refers to the simple frequent co-occurrence of words like 'glass of' and terms for liquids (Baker, 2006), semantic prosody is defined as a more evaluative concept: a mechanism through which the writer can send meanings of assessment and preference, expressive value, classification schemes and so on. In this study it is evident in patterns found in the use of body parts, such as the tendency for certain body parts to be associated with a particular gender and to be explicitly marked as such. Morley and Partington (2009) link the paradigmatic choice evident in semantic prosody to what it tells us about the views of the speaker or writer of the text, which demonstrates the potential value of this concept in ideological analysis.

However, semantic prosody relates only to individual word choice, rather than meanings built up through larger units. For this meaning, the term discourse prosody is used (Stubbs, 2001; Baker, 2006; Jaworska and

Krishnamurthy, 2012), which signifies a more abstract and more social level of collocation, concerned with the critical analysis of language in its social context. Discourse prosody refers to meanings on the level of discourse which are built up in the text, such as the groupings of uses of body parts that the data themselves suggested in the initial study (Hunt, 2011). There is no intrinsic meaning in the lexical items *leg* or *arm*, for example, that says they must be used with reference to males or females, although there are social expectations with some body parts (c.f. Motschenbacher, 2009), and yet readers are primed (Hoey, 2005) to associate certain uses of particular body parts with females or males, which is of ideological significance.

Analysis in terms of discourse prosody involves the categorisation of the data into trends or patterns, mostly of meaning but sometimes also of structure, grouping them together 'according to the purposes that they serve in contributing to particular discourses' (Baker, 2004: 352). Thus, the tokens for each body part were reviewed in their linguistic context, analysed for trends in meaning and grouped accordingly. Because this kind of meaning is generated over longer stretches of text and is not necessarily located in individual words, it is crucial that the researcher does not rely too heavily on frequency or collocation calculations alone but supports them with data from the concordance lines. These trends in discourse prosody can then be used in the critical analysis process to identify the gender discourses constructed within the texts.

In practical terms, to analyse the most numerous body part, male eyes, in terms of discourse prosody, meant that 526 concordance lines were coded and sorted, and the most common 'meanings' or uses identified, such as the use of the *eyes* to see, the use of the *eyes* to show emotion, *eyes* as a site of injury and so on. As a result of the choice of this method, only those meanings involving the use of one or more body parts are reflected in the data set, while those phrased in other ways (for example, purely verbal constructions) are not. Thus 'he got up' is not included in the data analysed but 'he got to his feet' is. The omission of these instances was considered a worthwhile sacrifice for the efficiency and objectivity in data mining made available by using the software to search for body parts and their discourse prosodies.

Baker (2004: 353) justifies the arguably subjective nature of this process of grouping, saying '[c]arrying out concordance-based analyses of individual keywords should ensure that the researcher first has an understanding of what such words are used to achieve in a text, before erroneously combining words that may appear similar at face value', adding that 'researchers are required to develop skills of interpretation, which suggests that corpus-based research is not a merely quantitative form of analysis'. This inductive method involves 'keeping "an open mind" [while looking] carefully at concordance and word frequency data to attempt to find hidden ideologies' (Goatly, 2004: 142) and 'important categories of ontological and ideological representation which might escape an ordinary reading of the book' (op cit. 117). These two

Table 13.1 The composition of the *Harry Potter* corpus

Text	Words	% of corpus
<i>Philosopher's Stone</i> (PS) (1997)	65,208	20
<i>Prisoner of Azkaban</i> (PA) (1999)	90,337	28
<i>Deathly Hallows</i> (DH) (2007)	168,742	52
Total	324,287	

perspectives underline the blending of the qualitative and the quantitative approaches in corpus methods.

The ease with which Corpus Linguistics allows one to mine the experiential representations of body parts is a great advantage, facilitating in my case the intentional focus on particular lemmas. The discorsal meanings of particular types are then also easily identified and grouped thematically in their linguistic contexts, through the use of the KWIC sort, ensuring that the pragmatically generated meanings are not neglected. In order to explore the construction of gendered discourses in HP, I used three of the seven books, resulting in a corpus of over 320,000 words, detailed in Table 13.1.

The books selected were the first, the last, and one from the middle of the series, in order to cover the introduction of the characters, their eventual characterisation in the final book, and the full complement of three child characters in PA. Due to the length of the final book in the series, it comprises over half of the corpus, which proved particularly useful for my study due to its especially physical descriptions of the Battle of Hogwarts.

Each body part noun was manually tagged according to whether it belonged to a human female or a human male, so that independent lists of collocates could be calculated for each member of the pair and gendered patterns in the concordance lines made apparent. Body parts belonging to mixed groups of people or non-human referents were excluded by not being tagged. A word processor's find-and-replace function made this arduous process somewhat more efficient. The cleaned and tagged data were then analysed using AntConc 3.2.1 (Anthony, 2007) (Table 13.2).

Table 13.2 shows the 10 most frequent body part types, including both singular and plural forms, normalised to tokens per 100,000 words, compared to normalised frequencies in the British National Corpus (BNC), a 100 million-word general reference corpus comprised of a range of genres. It is clear that the children's literature corpus shows much higher frequencies for all the body parts than the more general one, which may be taken to be a feature of fiction generally. However, a comparison of the HP corpus of the *Chronicles of Narnia* reveals that the frequencies found in HP are also much higher than those in Narnia, although the ranking of the various body parts is quite

*Table 13.2* Top 10 body parts: normalised to tokens per 100,000 words, as compared to the BNC.

Rank	Body part	Female frequency	Male frequency	Total	BNC/100,000
1	eye	46	162	208	36
2	hand	32	138	170	51
3	face	30	133	163	37
4	hair	22	50	71	14
5	arm	17	53	71	19
6	head	16	95	111	44
7	feet	10	39	49	13
8	mouth	8	27	35	9
9	shoulder	8	30	38	8
10	finger	8	33	41	9

similar (Hunt, 2011). This indicates that the relatively high frequency of body parts may simply be a feature of HP as a series, rather than (children's) fiction in general, which makes it a particularly good choice for this research.

Another striking feature of the frequency table for HP is how much more common male body parts are than female, but this is not surprising, given the centrality of the male character Harry to the story. However, returning to the Narnia books, in which the central characters are evenly balanced between male and female, references to male body parts again predominate. Taken as an instance of overwording, this suggests that male bodies may be regarded as more salient than female's in some children's fiction, which supports the research discussed above which claims a masculine bias in terms of characters and focus, although a broader data base would help to establish this more conclusively. It also suggests that the children's literature surveyed here echoes the emphasis in the representation of males on physicality in other genres (Hunt, 2011), rather than the emotional qualities often ascribed to females.

In the discussion which follows, I will be focussing on the ways in which the characters' bodies are shown to be acting on the world, or in response to the world, in other words, in terms of agency. I should point out that the analysis for the larger project also revealed gendered trends in other respects: appearance and the display of emotion, for example. As Table 13.2 suggests, there are many more tokens referring to body parts than those reported on here, but I have limited this discussion to those which illustrate the gendered nature of agency, namely fingers, hands, arms, shoulders, feet, heads and faces, all of which feature in the top 10 body parts tabulated above.



## Interaction with the world

As embodied beings, everything we do and every effect we accomplish is mediated through our bodies. Agency, then, is of necessity a bodily thing and examining the representation of the use of the body is a study of messages about agency: both the kinds of agency that a body is capable of and the degrees of agency available to that body. That the use of the body to act on the world is strongly gendered in the HP series is therefore significant in terms of what it suggests about the gendered nature of agency. In this analysis I investigate the ways in which characters act on the world using their bodies, and also the ways in which their bodies respond in situations of danger. The characters use their bodies to act on the world, both animate and inanimate, in three main ways. Firstly, characters change the position of their bodies relative to the context in a variety of ways: standing up, running, jumping and so on. Secondly, body parts are used communicatively, both submissively, in order to make requests of some kind, and from a position of power, to direct the behaviour of others. The final category is the use of the body to carry things: especially the use of arms and hands, to accomplish the characters' goals in the plot. This last group is particularly indicative of agency.

### Altering the position of the body

While there are many ways in which the movement of the body may be encoded, such as the use of verbs of motion, those involving specific body parts typically focus on the lower limbs and feet. Of particular interest is how frequently that movement is represented as being difficult in HP. There is a continuum in the representations in terms of ease of movement, and that is frequently gendered, as the following discussion will show. Moreover, difficulty in movement implies a problem with agency.

With both male and female characters the construction *X got / struggled / was helped to his / her feet* is very frequent, reflecting a preoccupation with the transition to a position which allows greater movement. The males display this use in just under half of the instances of *feet* (63<sup>1</sup>), while the females use it even more, proportionally, with nearly 55 per cent (17). However, female characters are four times more likely to require assistance in standing up than male characters, with only 6.4 per cent (4) of the male examples as opposed to 23.5 per cent (4) of the female instances encoding this meaning. The helper, for both sexes, is always male.

'That ... that was...' Hermione whimpered, as Ron helped her to her feet.

Harry dragged her to her feet and they raced along the corridor, trailing the Invisibility Cloak behind them,

Hermione put her hands on Buckbeak's back and Harry gave her a leg up. Then he placed his foot on one of the lower branches of the bush and climbed up in front of her.

In the third extract above, both Harry and Hermione are still physically children, and of roughly the same stature, but in this and similar examples, Hermione needs help from one or more of the boys, while they are able to climb by themselves. So even when female body parts are being used for a physical task, they are often incapable of accomplishing it, and need male assistance.

The more physical nature of the males, generally, is reflected in the collocations for females' and males' *feet*, with many more high scoring verbs of movement evident for the male characters in Table 13.3.

In addition to not appearing amongst the high MI scores for female *feet*, *scramble*, *clamber* and *stagger* were not predicated of the girls and women at all, even though they are all fairly frequent amongst the males. The first two of these three suggest particularly physical, climbing movements, which makes it all the more interesting that they are not attributed to female characters. Only *staggered* and *struggled* reflect any difficulty in movement, while the rest of the collocates are vigorous in nature. Similarly, while female *legs* show no collocating verbs of motion at all, male *legs* collocate most strongly with *sprang* (MI 10.28, rank 1).

In terms of moving the body, male characters are able to move vigorously and with agility, while the females are not very mobile in comparison, especially in terms of the limited range of movement types and the fact that they need assistance much more often than males.

Table 13.3 Collocations with female feet and male feet: verbs of motion<sup>a</sup>

Female feet			Male feet		
Rank	Word	MI <sup>b</sup>	Rank	Word	MI
1	sprang	10.2	1	scrambling	10.8
2	leapt	9.6	2	leaping	9.4
3	flying	8.6	3	staggered	8.9
4	bellatrix	8.0	4	scrambled	8.9
5	her	8.0	5	sprang	8.8
6	getting	7.9	6	clambered	8.8
7	books	7.8	7	jumped	8.8
8	mcgonagall	6.5	8	ladder	8.7
9	moment	6.3	9	dangling	8.7
10	looking	6.1	10	lifted	8.2
11	too	5.8	11	struggled	8.1
12	hermione	5.6	12	leapt	8.0

Note: <sup>a</sup>Collocates unrelated to movement are included in Table 13.3, but are listed in grey.

<sup>b</sup>The MI score measures the strength of the association between the search term and its collocate. A score over 3 is deemed to be statistically significant (Hunston (2002)). A span of 5 words on either side was used.

### Communication using the body

Humans interacting with each other are of course common in real life, and also in children's fiction where it is a useful plot device. So it is not surprising that in the HP corpus one of the most common uses of the body to act on the world is to communicate, and this communication typically involves the hands. Two particularly striking uses of the hands reflect not only power differences, but strong gender differences too. Putting one's hand up as a bid to answer a question in class is a frequent female use of *hand*. Most of these involve Hermione, and help to establish her as clever and well-informed. However this is sometimes portrayed as a negative trait, especially in the first book, despite her knowledge being essential to the success of the children's missions in most cases. Her humiliation and disappointment, often at the hands of Professor Snape, is evident when she puts her hand down again:

know-it-all.' Hermione went very red, put down her **hand**, and stared at the floor with her eyes full of tears

said Professor Lupin, and Hermione put her **hand** down, looking a little disappointed. 'It's always

The only male character to raise his hand to speak is Neville and it seems to be part of his characterisation as an unusually 'unmasculine' male. Not surprisingly, there are no examples of Neville requesting permission to speak like this in the final book, which includes in the plot his transformation into a heroic figure. The fact that this submissive action is strongly associated with females, and otherwise disempowered characters, shows that the state of being female in the HP world is also one that lacks power.

Quite a similar action, although with a vastly different meaning, is the exclusively male behaviour of raising one or both hands for silence or attention. Typically powerful characters do this most, like Dumbledore and Voldemort, but both Harry and Ron do it too. None of the female characters raise their hands in this way. The evident contrast in terms of speech act between these two strongly gendered uses of hands is particularly significant. While female hands are raised to request in a turn-taking bid, the action of a subordinate in the interaction, the male hands are those of a person with power, and the gesture constitutes, instead, an order. The female bid may be refused at the discretion of a more powerful person, and frequently is in Hermione's case, but the male signal for silence is never ignored or disobeyed.

Amongst females, fingers are used to request silence, rather than whole hands as seen with male characters above: Hermione places her finger on her lips in times of danger, and Narcissa Malfoy secretly squeezes her husband's wrist when she fears he may endanger them by speaking. Both these are small, private movements, as opposed to the larger, more public gestures of the males.

In similar vein, attracting the attention of others is also gendered. Male characters clap their hands to get the attention of other people while females click or snap their fingers:

‘Well!’ said Lupin, **clapping** his hands together and looking around

‘Right then, Neville,’ said Stan, **clapping** his hands, where abouts enjoying herself hugely, **snapped** her fingers for more champagne. drained her goblet and **clicked** her bony fingers at a passing waiter the locket! Come on,’ she said impatiently, **clicking** her fingers at

Once again, the agentive gestures belong to the males: clapping is both louder and more expansive than the clicking of fingers, suggesting a smaller, less confident impact on the world for the female characters.

Clicking for attention and similar examples represent roughly a third of the uses that the female *finger* is put to: directing another character (8). What is significant in terms of the differences between male and female characters is that nearly all of these female uses (88 per cent: 7) are symbolic – the fingers themselves do not steer the behaviour of others, but perform gestures which do. For male characters, however, the use of fingers to direct represents just under 4 per cent of uses (4), and only half of these are symbolic uses, both of which involve simple pointing, accompanying speech. So while the fingers of both genders direct other characters, for female characters this is a major function which is mostly symbolic, while male fingers are more practical, with nearly half being used to accomplish physical acts (50). Although about a quarter of female fingers also accomplish things (6), these are often either again communicative in nature, such as Death Eaters pressing their tattoo-like marks to summon Voldemort (12 per cent: 3), or ineffectual in terms of plot, like Luna closing the dead house-elf’s eyes. The communicative dimensions evident in all of the directive examples discussed above, and in the Death Eater ones just mentioned, combine to form a strong tendency for the female fingers to be involved in accomplishing communicative goals (54 per cent: 13).

Communication is common for both females and males in HP, but certain hand gestures are strongly gendered, with the masculine form having considerably more power than the feminine. In addition, the less powerful gestures using the fingers are much more strongly associated with female characters, who show a far stronger tendency than males to use symbolic movements, rather than agentive ones.

### **Acting on objects in the world**

As male fingers are much more likely to be used to accomplish things than are female fingers (46 per cent versus 24 per cent), and in a much less communicative way, it is illuminating to explore what it is they are doing. Mostly,

male characters in HP use their fingers to do magic, a major form of agency in the context of the 'wizarding world', and turn objects over in the fingers so as to examine them, both things female characters never do. Female characters do perform magic in the series, but it is not encoded in this physical, agentive fashion. Male fingers are also used to open boxes and envelopes, to hold paper and remove clothing, to operate a motorbike, strangle another character and staunch the flow of blood from a fatal wound. Tokens representing nearly 5 per cent of male fingers reflect Harry handling the dangerous Horcruxes (5), which is represented as both foolhardy and brave.

Holding or carrying things is also a common use of hands and arms, and this agentive behaviour once again reveals gendered trends. Females hold a wide range of articles in their hands: two instances of drinking glasses, a letter and a broomstick, books, a wand, a milk jug, the back of Harry's robes (so as not to fall), Quidditch teams (figuratively), a sponge, two cups of tea (while trembling), another cup of tea, a sword, a flower, a bulldog, a suitcase, a book bag and a cat. Female characters also hold their hands out to take a piece of paper and a locket. Books are the most popular items in female arms, usually carried (and dropped) by Hermione, followed by a cat, two babies (separately) (female *arm* collocates with *baby* with an MI of 10.48, rank 2), a tray of tea, a laundry basket and some basilisk fangs. Apart from the books, which emphasise Hermione's role as the most academically oriented of the three friends, and the fangs, the items held by female characters' arms could hardly be more domestically oriented. And apart from the locket and the letter, none of these is central to the plot. None is particularly large or heavy either, except for the suitcase carried by the overbearing Aunt Marge, who is clearly represented as not conforming to dominant norms of femininity:

her moustache was not as bushy as his. In one hand she held an enormous suitcase

Male characters hold markedly different things to their female counterparts. While a female hand is mentioned as holding a wand only 2 per cent of the time (2), over 9 per cent of the male hands are holding wands (41). Similarly, male hands frequently hold items central to the plots of the books, such as Horcruxes and Hallows, while female hands seldom get entrusted with such objects, apart from the locket mentioned above. Possibly because of Harry's skill as a Quidditch player, brooms and other game paraphernalia are mentioned as being in male hands over six times as frequently as for female hands, despite the fact that there are several female players in the team and the Quidditch coach is female. Male arms are used to carry items ranging from books to the Invisibility Cloak, a lamp, various magical items and even other human bodies.

Shoulders are also used to carry things: Hermione occasionally carries a book bag on her shoulder, but males carry a greater number and variety of things on theirs: mostly living things, but also inanimate objects. A goblin, a

giant snake and a human disguised as a rat, as well as another boy, appear on male shoulders, while the inanimate objects include a rucksack, a broomstick, a quiver of arrows and the Invisibility Cloak, not to mention figurative burdens like *the hopes of the Wizarding World* and *responsibility*! Again, these items are weightier, both physically and in terms of plot, than Hermione's book bag.

In general, objects which are important in the story line are held and carried by males. In contrast, female characters hold onto peripheral things, items which are incidental to the plot, like milk jugs and a flower, whereas male characters really do carry the plot forward. In addition, the things more commonly associated with males tend to not only be more important, but also more dangerous, such as the Horcruxes, swords and handfuls of fire.

If it had been only Harry, the hero of the series, who was depicted as carrying important objects in the stories, it would be easier to understand the strong polarisation in terms of things carried in the hands, arms and on the shoulders of the characters in HP: peripheral, often domestic, items for the females and dangerous, heavy and important things by the males. However, Harry is not the only male character to carry the more significant objects and so we must look further than his status as the central character for the explanation. Clearly this is a strongly gendered aspect of the use of body parts in the series, and one which is unlikely to have been consciously written in to the books but nonetheless primes young readers to expect and live out these roles in their lives.

### Responding to the world: battles and other danger

One of the most extreme ways in which the characters interact with the world physically is in the context of warfare and danger. This is an opportunity for bodies to behave as agents which act on the people and objects around them in a particularly practical way, and to be revealed as vulnerable flesh and blood. This is also a theme which is especially gendered.

Male *heads* are involved in injury, both potential and actual, more than any other body part and more than any other meaning, with 12 per cent of tokens (37; male *head*: *smacked* MI 10.44, rank 1). Male characters have spells, curses and physical objects narrowly miss their heads, or often actually connect with their heads, and their heads are objects which others attack. In the course of their injuries, male characters lose copious amounts of blood, George Weasley loses an ear, and several males are hit on the head with a variety of objects including some clothing, a saucepan, a giant stone chess piece, a club, a cat, some vegetables and three Quidditch Bludgers, which are rather like iron hockey balls. They also hit their own heads against walls, ceilings and doorframes, and the disliked Professor Snape is magically transported unconscious without much attention being paid to the fact that his head hits the ceiling repeatedly in transit. However, girls' heads are never mentioned as being in danger in this way. Despite their being involved in the same battles and in the same dangerous places as the boys and men

who are vulnerable to such injuries, there is not a single bump, scrape or narrowly missed spell mentioned with regard to female heads.

Physical contact with male faces is also relatively common (15 per cent of the 63 male *face* tokens) involving various surfaces, substances and objects, and much of this contact is unpleasant and causes pain (male *face*: *bruised* MI 10, rank 3; male *face*: *pained* MI 9.4, rank 5). There are numerous instances of the face being in contact with the earth or a floor, when the character finds himself face-down on a surface. Others involve a wand being pointed aggressively in the face of the character, while yet more are spells. Male faces encounter a Quaffle, a large hard ball used in Quidditch, and a sword. Of all the tokens for contact with the male face, less than 1 per cent of male *face* tokens (4) refer to a soft or gentle touch, of which the following is the most extreme example, with Hermione taking care of Harry:

There were purple shadows under her brown eyes and he noticed a small sponge in her hand: She had been wiping his face.

The female *face* is also involved in physical contact, but only half as often as male faces, with the hardest item being a door, shut in the person's face, presumably not actually making contact with the face itself. The other forceful contact is in a torture scenario, where *a slimy scabbed hand grasped her chin and forced her face back*. The remainder of the items range from an innocuous napkin, patted on the face by its owner, to an instance where a bad character spits in a good female character's face. There are also two instances of hair being in a female character's face. Probably the most negative thing ever to approach a female's face is goat dung. There is clearly a sharp contrast between the kinds of things that make contact with female faces and those that touch the males'.

References to injured arms are dominated by the boy Malfoy, who plays up a small injury for all it is worth, and Ron, who suffers a fairly severe injury to his arm when travelling by magic. Other male characters experience injuries to their arms as well, but no females do.

Male fingers are also slightly more likely to be injured or to be vulnerable to injury than are female fingers. Nearly 20 per cent of male fingers are hurt in some way (20), and only 16 per cent of female digits (4). Moreover, all the female tokens refer to two injuries: Luna's gnome bite and Hermione's blisters. Male fingers, however, suffer bites or attempted bites by various livestock including rats, an owl and a dragon, cuts from a mirror and a cup, burning, freezing, the loss of two fingernails, attempts to break the fingers and amputation. Thus although the quantitative difference is not particularly significant, the nature of the injuries is markedly more serious for males.

Injuries to male fingers, hands and arms are often found in the context of battle and, together with the neck, head and face, are related to danger in general. As such they are particularly vulnerable to dangerous contact, being linked, in some cases, to death. While females do experience some physical damage, their less frequent injuries are trivial in comparison with

the males'. Occasionally they are protected in that they are confined to a less dangerous context, but even when they are involved in the fighting, females do not experience much injury.

Relating injury to agency is the characters' responses to danger: whether they attempt to protect themselves and their bodies and, if so, how. Both male and female characters cover their heads with their arms. For males, this results in a strong collocation between the two terms (male *head*: male *arms* MI 7.16), and is in most cases defensive.

bellowed, and he flung his **arms** over his head, hardly knowing whether  
He had sunk to his knees, his head in his **arms**. He was shaking  
unable to see as debris rained upon him, his **arms** over his head. He

The only female to do this shows a much more extreme reaction to the situation than the other two (male) characters involved:

the figure exploded in a great cloud of dust: Coughing, his eyes watering, Harry looked around to see Hermione crouched on the floor by the door with her **arms** over her head, and Ron, who was shaking from head to foot, patting her clumsily on the shoulder and saying, 'It's all r-right ... It's g-gone ...'

While all the characters were affected by the situation, Hermione's response is to try to avoid perceiving it, which literally immobilises her and renders her incapable of responding to it in any useful way. In another example, Hermione is unable to move or to contribute to their rescue, again because of her emotional response to danger:

'Come on, run, run!' Harry yelled at Hermione, trying to pull her toward the door, but she couldn't move, she was still flat against the wall, her mouth open with terror.

Another frequent female response to situations of anger, fear or uncertainty involves Hermione or Lily wrapping their arms around themselves.

'A gang of what?' asked Harry, as Hermione threw herself down into a chair with her **arms** and legs crossed so tightly it seemed unlikely that she would unravel them for several years.

As the extract above emphasises, this posture renders the females' arms unavailable for other uses. Female characters also use their arms to shield others from danger. In contrast to these generally passive or defensive responses to danger, male responses are often quite active, involving an individual leaping to his feet, for instance, in fact moving so as to confront the danger directly.



In terms of facing danger, males regularly lose their footing by, for example, being blasted off their feet, thrown off their feet, lifted off their feet (due to an explosion) or knocked clean off their feet. This only happens to female feet twice and is represented as being due to their innate frailty, especially in the context of overwhelming emotion, rather than the actions of a hostile other:

Hermione was wrapped in a borrowed dressing gown, pale and unsteady on her **feet**; Ron put an arm around her when she reached him.

Here girls' bodies are revealed as being less exposed to physical danger than boys', but also more vulnerable in their inability to serve their owners.

## Conclusion

The representation of agency is very clearly gendered in HP, as the data show. Movement in these books is particularly connected to the legs and feet, and males are presented as showing a much greater ability to be active physically than females. Female characters are generally presented as physically deficient in comparison with males and their inability to cope with physical situations is seen as a liability in terms of plot. Communicative gestures involving the hands show a contrast between powerful and powerless characters, which correlate with gender to a large degree. Male characters hold or carry much more dangerous and important things (in terms of the plot) while the objects in females' arms and hands are generally from the domestic sphere. Males suffer far more numerous, and far more serious, injuries, emphasising their physical identity, despite characters of both sexes being involved in the often dangerous quests and battles. In addition, females are often incapacitated by their fear or other emotions, rendering their bodies useless as tools of agency. Females, as embodied entities in the world of HP, are systematically excluded from acting on the world in powerful or meaningful ways and the message is clear: agency is not for girls.

Taken together, these patterns of representation are not innocuous features of a popular series, but do important, and I would say, problematic, ideological work in texts for a group of readers who are arguably more receptive than most to priming, due to their youth. The crucial point for the consumers of children's fiction is that these iterations and reiterations of ideas about gender are typically below the level of consciousness, and therefore more difficult to resist, but contribute nonetheless to the gradual accumulation of a set of norms, beliefs about how to be a girl, or how to be a boy, made all the stronger through their normative relationship to existing traditional views on gender.

Conventional literary analysis, content analysis and even critical discourse analysis are used to analyse a variety of texts in terms of their representation of gender and other social constructs. But all these approaches pose various risks which corpus linguistics can guard against: for instance, analysts may miss features in the language use or fail to recognise instances in the text for a

variety of reasons. They may find only features which support their assumptions going in, or they may (unconsciously) choose texts to analyse which validate their argument. In any event, there is always a trade off between the quantity of data and the level of detail in the analysis. Corpus methods can offer both, due to the ability to search large amounts of data reliably, and more objectively, and with statistical evidence for patterns, as well as the facility to drill down at interesting points and analyse the text at micro-level, thus avoiding sacrificing depth in analysis. Corpus processes tend to show up and focus on differences (Baker, 2004) but also have a great capacity for allowing the researcher to find patterns of similarity (Taylor, 2013), and the value of this is evident in the collocations and groupings of meanings in the discourse prosodies in the HP data. There is also, in corpus linguistics, an emphasis on the lexical which suits research into gender representation perfectly with its focus on the experiential values encoded into the text. As this research has shown, there is much to be gained for the critical analysis of gender representation by including corpus methods in the analysts' toolset.

## Note

1. A number in brackets after a percentage indicates the raw frequency of the particular usage being discussed.

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