

THE IMPACT OF MOTHER-SON RELATIONSHIPS ON THE ABANDONED BOY
IN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

By

JULIE ATKINSON

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Holly Blackford

And approved by

Dr. Holly Blackford

Dr. Carol Singley

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THESIS ABSTRACT

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By JULIE ATKINSON

Thesis Director:

Dr. Holly Blackford

Historically, children's literature featuring abandoned boys focuses on separation from the maternal and the development of aggressive masculinity, seen as necessary for sociocultural acceptance and advancement. Using a feminist perspective, this thesis examines several transatlantic novels and argues that the boy protagonists actually exhibit maternal traits, in contrast to aggressive masculinity. As a result, these novels display a necessary female temperance over masculinity, which brings about success to the male orphan. In this way, mothers circumvent their socially prescribed secondary status to bring their true influence into the world. However, the sacrifice of mothers highlights both the problem of female sacrifice for male children and a cultural tempering of aggressive masculinity.

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1. Introduction

Childhood—a temporary state—becomes an emblem for our anxieties about the passing of time, the destruction of historical formations, or conversely, a vehicle for our hopes for the future. The innocent child is caught somewhere over the rainbow—between nostalgia and utopian optimism, between the past and the future. (Jenkins 5)

In literature and discourse, the child is a loaded figure, one which both frightens and excites us. To paraphrase Henry Jenkins, as the living embodiment of the adult struggle of grappling with the past while simultaneously moving forward the child presents a figure ripe for literary exploration by authors and readers alike. Novels with child protagonists can be viewed as distinctly not about the child but rather about a confrontation between individual emotion and communal norms. As Henry Jenkins posits in the introduction to *The Children's Culture Reader*, children are “subject to the same historical shifts and institutional factors that shape all human experience” (4). Thus, children's stories are heavily influenced by sociocultural expectations and norms, the aim of which seeks the creation of behaviors which fulfill “the current social, political, economic, and environmental orders as they should be” (Mickenberg and Nel 1). While Julia Mickenberg and Philip Nel affirm most children's works “uphold the status quo,” there are also examples of “radical” works which advance alternative ideologies (1).

As products influenced by these social values, children's stories historically have reproduced traditional gender roles. While other scholars, including Judy Simon, have discussed how some protagonists “actively transgress the roles assigned to them,” she still agrees on the incongruous representation between boy and girl characters (1). This paper will focus solely on boy protagonists in several transatlantic novels. While some scholars, including Judy Simon, discuss boys who transgress these traditional roles as “sissies,” I believe there is further research to be done in this area (24).

Typically, boys' development follows a pattern of maternal separation, which is preparation for the aggressive masculinity deemed necessary in the nineteenth century for male development. Boys who uphold the pattern are rewarded with rising success, both individually and communally. I will then narrow my focus to the abandoned boy, the orphan. Orphan boys, biological or figurative, represent a prime territory for the inculcation of social values, for they perfectly exemplify how "the loss of home and family" becomes a "gateway to full engagement with life" (Nelson, "The Orphan" 79). For the orphan boy in literature, maternal separation seems guaranteed; thus, boy orphans who desire advancement should more readily conform to the social prescription of masculinity. A common and often cited example celebrating the reward for male conformity exists in Horatio Alger's *Ragged Dick* (1867). A rags-to-riches tale, orphaned Dick transitions to Richard Hunter, Esq., only after he submits to the prescription of masculinity espoused at the time.

Despite this tradition, a closer evaluation of boy orphan narratives demonstrates that these boys absorb a feminine temperance of public values through a discourse of womanhood and motherhood. Specifically, I argue this temperance occurs through the boys' adoption of their lost mothers' self-sacrificing, maternal traits. The interplay between self-sacrificing mother and boy orphan blends male and female elements and produces the unique narrative of cultivating motherhood inside the developing male. Only once this cultivation is complete does the boy orphan achieve social success; furthermore, through the son, the mother herself circumvents and overcomes the (patriarchal) oppression which so often plagues her.

My study will focus on this gender-blending in several novels, ranging in publication from the late nineteenth century to works published more recently. These novels include *The Water-Babies* (1863), *Little Lord Fauntleroy* (1886), *Ender's Game* (1985), the *Harry Potter* series (1997-2007), and *The Graveyard Book* (2008). All works incorporate the following elements: (1) a boy keeps a significant relationship to a lost mother figure; (2) he overcomes significant odds to achieve individual and social success; and (3) he succeeds via the acceptance of female traits as superior over male traits. The female traits of motherhood vary within the tales. In *Fauntleroy*, the boy lord is a physical and emotional comforter, as well as a moral compass for his grandfather. In *Water-Babies*, Tom must inculcate the motherly gentleness through the removal of his “prickles” (Kingsley location 1458). Ender must learn the acceptance only a mother can give in *Ender's Game*, and Harry in *Harry Potter* must become as selfless as his sacrificial mother. Finally, Bod in Gaiman's *The Graveyard Book* transitions into a strong protector. Comforting, tender, accepting, selfless, and protecting—these make a mother. These traits temper the masculinity instilled in the boys and allow them to overcome traditional male traits valued in a capitalist culture.

In these narratives, the patriarchal power structures seek to acculturate the boys into the male-female binary consistent with traditional historical rhetoric. Through a feminist analysis, I suggest the boy orphans expose the problem of cultures which relegate mothers to self-sacrifice for the good of nation. These mothers, seemingly deprived of their power, allow their progeny to circumvent and overcome patriarchal indoctrination.

I would be remiss if I did not provide a note on the range in publication date, genre, and country of publication, as examining works spanning two countries and 145 years may seem a precarious choice. Yet, the breadth of my study indicates its value by demonstrating a truth about the longevity of the ideas discussed herein; it is the “continued circulation of old conceptions and the emotional tug of previous practices” that portray a “history of the ideology of childhood” which is “most convincing” (Jenkins 22). The confrontation between individual and community extends beyond the boundaries of time and location. Mired into a transnational subconscious are common anxieties about the past, present, and future for individual and nation.

This study is bound by the inherent racial privilege of the protagonists. All are white males; their ability to transcend social boundaries via a connection to maternal values may very strongly be interconnected with race: “Mothers of black sons ... must negotiate between the need to keep their sons physically safe while simultaneously promoting their psychological maturation” (O’Reilly 113). African Americans and minorities face a myriad of complex forces which bring about different demands for parenting. The stakes involved with identity creation, particularly regarding gender, necessitate future research, which is not addressed herein.

This paper will be divided into three parts. In the first section, I will discuss the history of orphans and their special connection to national identity. While Jenkins astutely observes children to be “powerful institutions that ascribe meanings onto their minds and bodies in order to maintain social control,” orphans particularly require ascribed meaning due to their primary loss and the continued threat of worthlessness (26). In the second section, I will provide the history of maternal separation, followed by a

discussion of valued aggressive masculinity. Finally, in the third section, I will discuss the novels and how the boys inculcate maternal values to rise to success.

2. Orphans as Signifier of Threat

An orphan, by definition, is a child marked by an experience of loss and emptiness. In the aforementioned novels, these “empty” children are depicted as innocent and thus in stronger need of guidance; society as a result feels a greater responsibility to “fill” the children with the correct sociocultural ideals and norms to produce their definition of a successful citizen adult. There is a wealth of scholarship on the orphan figure, including by scholars such as Claudia Nelson, Melanie Kimball, Laura Peters, Diane Pazicky, and others. Much of the scholarship focuses on biological orphans, children bereft of one or both parents. However, research on orphans also demonstrates another type, the social orphan. Social orphans may have living parents but nonetheless experience some familial abandonment or sense of loss, which characterizes them similarly to biological orphans. Together, both types of orphans are concurrently representational of past loss and future hope.

Although the orphan remains a prominent character in both modern literature and popular media culture, Melanie Kimball traces its history back to the earliest folktales. Kimball conceptualizes orphans as universally symbolic of “our isolation from one another and from society ... [they] are a tangible reflection of the fear and abandonment that all humans experience” (559). All adults will experience loss; however, loss during the childhood years, especially of a parent, presents itself as an especially painful tragedy. Claudia Nelson, in *Drying the Orphan’s Tear*, discusses the increasing sentimentalization of orphans as a result of “new approaches toward children as a group, especially the redefining of the child’s value as emotional rather than practical” (55). An orphan bridges

the gap between emotions toward children and the practicality of sustaining the future generation.

Emma Wilson brings ideas of threats against children to her study on contemporary cinema, writing that resulting actions begin to include:

questions about the protection and innocence of childhood, about parenthood and the family, about the past (as childhood is constructed in retrospect of nostalgic space of safety) and about the future (for fears for children reflect anxiety about the inheritance left to future generations). (2)

Children, as representative of a dual legacy of both past and future, become worth safeguarding. Henry Jenkins, in his discussion on the myth of childhood innocence, describes evidence of such safeguarding rhetoric present in various media across the spectrum. Jenkins writes, “What unites the haves and the have-nots ... is that all of us care about our children” (12). This feeling of caring towards abandoned children becomes complicated when united with feelings on national identity and the social status quo. The abandoned child, as most vulnerable, then requires social intervention to idealize a future. It comes as no surprise in many orphan narratives there is a concomitant narrative of adoption. Carol Singley aptly concludes, “[i]f orphans symbolize unchecked liberty and the threat of social disorder, then well-placed adopted children illustrate the positive effects of freedom suitably restrained” (84).

This connection to national identity is present as well in Laura Peters’ *Orphan Texts: Victorian Orphans, Culture and Empire*. Peters argues, beginning in the late 1830s in Britain, orphans were “a scapegoat—a promise and a threat, a poison and a cure” to handling the connected issues of the unstable Victorian family and empire (2). As she discusses in her introduction, the orphan is threateningly “outside the dominant narrative of domesticity.” Literature depicted these outsiders as “the foreigner . . . that

comes to disturb the structure of home, identity, nation and discourse” (Peters 19). Despite the danger the orphan figure presented to the Victorian family, both literary and political forces establish the hope for an orphan’s return to legitimacy. By tempering the orphan’s foreign, threatening nature with national ideology, often through workhouse labor, the orphan reaffirms the value of both the British Victorian family and the Empire itself.

Diana Pazicky’s scholarship establishes a similar conclusion for American literature beginning as early as the 1600s. In her examination of the marginalized groups in America, Pazicky determines ways in which abandoned children are categorically representative of a national, cultural identity formation. In the nineteenth century, the creation of orphanages were not only meant to be “inculcating values that would enable orphans to survive and become self-supporting members of society,” but also additionally functioning to turn poison into cure, to borrow Peters’ metaphor, by becoming “an element of social control intended to protect the republic” through the rehabilitation of the foreign orphan with national ideology (141). Though literature demonstrates how society employs a variety of institutions—workhouses, orphanages, adoption—to cope with the problem of the orphan and the ideas orphans represent, they still are all methods to inculcate the orphan with the necessary norms to cultivate proper citizens and thus guarantee a stable national future.

Using a feminist perspective allows the dismantling of these social interventions which ultimately seek to “preserve cultural hierarchies” (Jenkins 14). Boy orphans especially function as figures of a subliminal institutional mandate: downtrodden, at-risk children can rise to social stability only through embracing dominant sociocultural

values. These risen children are often depicted as heroic figures, a shining symbol of a functioning system.

Though these further implications of heroism are not the focus of Kimball's article, she hints at this idea remarking, "When orphans succeed against all odds, their success ultimately *becomes ours*." (559, emphasis added). Orphans have an exceptionally unique ability to represent success, both individual and communal. Henry Jenkins, in *The Children's Culture Reader*, channels the ideas of Mary Lynn Stevens Heiniger, to discuss the myth of childhood innocence and its usefulness in exhibiting the predicaments of modernity: "It is precisely because the young are untainted that the nation can willingly vest in them its best hopes" (9). Orphans go beyond simply being "the young"—they are primed for national symbolism which enable the inculcation of dominant ideologies and create an insurance policy for the future.

3. Masculinity vs. the Maternal

Gender norms provide the boy child with the initial step towards celebrated social success and integration into the dominant social order. Prior scholarship delineates a specific discourse for boys: one centered in maternal separation, followed by individuality, aggressive masculinity, economic advancement, and nation building. The primary requirement of maternal separation is meant to reinforce dominant patriarchal values and provide the necessary stepping stone in the movement towards masculinity.

As Andrea O'Reilly discusses in terms of ancient Greek mythology and modern literature, male power traditionally stems from the "patrilineal line" and requires a mother-son separation to provide the foundation for manhood (92). O'Reilly predicates much of her study on this belief, that "in Western culture, we see mother-son separation as both inevitable and desirable" (14). In fact, according to Silverstein and Rashbaum:

[Our culture believes] that a male child must be removed from his mother's influence in order to escape the contamination of a close relationship with her. The love of a mother—both the son's for her, and hers for him—is believed to feminize the boy, to make him soft, weak, dependent, homebound ... only through renunciation of the loving mother, and identification with the aggressor father does the boy ... become a man. (qtd in O'Reilly 14)

The severance of the mother-son relationship moves the boy from the domestic, feminine sphere to the social, masculine sphere.

The patriarchy reinforces feminine separation by impressing on boys the need for masculinity as a requirement for success. While boys spend their childhood in the supposedly influential maternal sphere, Judith Arcana concludes "mothers are making scant headway against traditional male socialization. The primary reason for this is that basic sex-role conditioning is not in the mother's hands, but in the hands of the men

who've made this culture" (120). Male values are strongly reinforced in the social sphere, especially in written media, as prior scholarship demonstrates.

Peter Hugill critiques the juvenile imperial romance genre for boys, which tied manliness to imperialistic success. Though he states "[a] plucky lad could always 'rise' through hard work and devotion to the imperial cause," his article demonstrates the additional necessary quality of manliness (Hugill 320). By comparing both Edwardian-era British and American male-oriented juveniles, Hugill details how American juveniles adapted as the era progressed to meet the needs of a burgeoning new country. "Early in the second decade of this century American authors began to depict the British as less manly and thus less suited to world power," he writes (334). "Manliness" is explicitly linked to advancement, by design both individual and national.

Similarly, Alison Reynolds connects the written accounts from the surviving boys of the Titanic with the interlocked themes of manliness and nationalism. Though she notes that "it is unlikely that every boy on the Titanic read [magazines promoting these values]," the ideas were so pervasive in the cultural schema that through their "adherence to manly, adult-like roles," the "boys managed to act as symbols of the power of the younger generation" (Reynolds 49). The boys' bravery and heroism in the face of tragedy results in national acclaim—a reward for their obedience to cultural norms.

Reynolds and Hugill both focus on boys' stories; however, they only briefly touch on the connections among boy orphans, manliness, success, and national ideology. Reynolds notes only one account of a boy's father definitively perishing aboard the Titanic; however, given the "women and children first" rescue procedure, it is not a stretch to assume many of the surviving children lost at least one parent. Hugill's

reference is stronger as he comments, “[m]ost boys were depicted in juveniles as orphans, or with weak parent figures,” thus making “[t]he romance of individual advancement . . . muted by communal responsibilities . . . centered on the empire itself” (336). However, other scholars note the ways male orphans are inculcated with teachings to develop “traits that resonate with nationalist myths of individualism and self-creation” (Troy 14). Troy, Kella, and Wahlström discuss American novels featuring male orphan icons of aggressive masculinity, including:

Natty Bumppo, Ishmael, and Huck Finn . . . [who] follow strictly gendered trajectories, which lead them from restriction to freedom, in the process reinforcing a masculine ideal typical of settler cultures, marked by self-reliance, strength, and industry. (16)

The aforementioned *Ragged Dick* novel illustrates a tale of masculine self-reliance, strength, and industry. Dick’s economic savviness and industrial fortitude are not the only keys to his success; his new suit of clothes presents a persona of male economic strength which others cannot ignore. The lesson is clear: success, particularly socioeconomic, comes for males only through maternal separation and the embracing of masculine values.

4. Boys and their Mothers

While history provides a plethora of boy narratives predicated on this female separation and aggressive masculinity, a feminist lens reveals narratives about boy orphans which inculcate and exalt the maternal over the paternal. I would argue, that given this use of maternal values, the boys are able to transcend their socially-prescribed gender roles and become “mothers” through their work. Andrea Doucet, in combination with Sara Ruddick, examines the definition of “maternal work,” including “preservation, growth, and social acceptability” (167). In engaging with this philosophy, I will contend that the boy orphans in my study meet all these characteristics.

The first characteristic, “preservation,” is defined by “protective care,” and “the ability to recognize where care is needed and the actual physical work of caring” (Doucet 167). As demonstrated in Burnett’s *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, nursing and physical care becomes paramount to establishing a trustworthy and mutually beneficial relationship. The second characteristic, “growth,” involves the world beyond the physical—the “emotional and intellectual” (Doucet 168). Both Kingsley’s *The Water-Babies* and Card’s *Ender’s Game* demonstrate the fostering of morality and relationship-building, which become vital to advancement. And finally, the third characteristic, “social acceptability,” is the most important (and hardest to attain). It includes the acceptance of the child, but vitally and additionally requires the acceptance of the mother herself—for her acceptability is predicated upon “the group values that a mother has internalised as well as the values of group members whom she feels she must please” (qtd. in Doucet 171). Each boy—Fauntleroy, Tom, Ender, Harry, and Bod—gains social acceptance as

members of the society, but as mothers as well. They are all esteemed for their maternal values, which become critical to their success.

4.1 *Little Lord Fauntleroy* and *The Water-Babies*

Frances Hodgson Burnett's *Little Lord Fauntleroy* presents the tale of a beloved boy child whisked abroad to grow into his patrilineal legacy after family tragedy. Notably, Cedric Errol is only a half-orphan through the death of his father, not his mother. However, patriarchal forces in the novel seek to separate mother and son immediately upon arrival in England. Thematically, the novel contends the separation to be due to the Earl's dissatisfaction with his own son's marriage to an American woman; however, it exposes the idea that maternal separation is required for male succession, and even more so when firmly entrenched in patriarchal legacy. Despite these efforts towards patriarchal rehabilitation, Fauntleroy charms his irascible grandfather and changes his paternal home into a dwelling characterized by maternal sensitivity. Fauntleroy, playing the role of the comforter, strongly draws on characteristics from the prevailing notions of Cult of True Womanhood, defining true women as caring and obedient spirits, to succeed.

Despite his removal from his mother's care, Fauntleroy mirrors his mother through his presentation of her maternal values. As Anna Wilson indicates:

Gentle, beautiful, unassuming, poor, and of humble birth, Dearest's influence over Fauntleroy and, by story's end, his grandfather is absolute. Her perfection of self-sacrifice both stands as a model for her son and enables his seamless progress into earlhood. By acquiescing to the old Earl's demands that she should live apart from Fauntleroy and by refusing monetary support, Dearest inscribes herself as pure moral influence within the Earl's castle even as she is barred from entering it. Dearest has

made Fauntleroy what he is; to a quite surprising extent, Fauntleroy is his mother's creation.” (240)

Wilson, in arguing Fauntleroy as a mini-Dearest, relates the qualities which enable him to succeed. She presents as an ideal woman, displaying the “four cardinal virtues—piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity” (Welter 152).

Fauntleroy, like Dearest, is sacrificial. He thinks first of others and their needs before his own, even when it would seem his physical prowess becomes strained beyond its limits. As a self-proclaimed “nurse,” he demonstrates a key maternal value. As the Cult of True Womanhood proposes, “[o]ne of the most important functions of woman as comforter was her role as nurse” (Welter 163). Fauntleroy begins to inhabit the role of comforter/nurse at an early age, shortly after the death of his father. As his mother declines in mourning over the death of her husband (Fauntleroy’s father), Fauntleroy gives her both physical and emotional care, thereby meeting Ruddick’s demands of preservation and growth. As he faces his mother the first time after his father’s departing, “his loving little heart told him that he’d better put both his arms around her neck . . . ” He knows what is beneficial as well as detrimental for his mother, as “he found out, too, that it was better to not let her sit still and look into the fire or out of the window without moving or talking” (Burnett 1). As he dutifully watches over his mother to ensure her emotional stability, his transition from calling her “Mother” to his father’s old endearment, “Dearest,” can be more closely read as a nurse figure imparting loving care than just a simple transition into the abandoned paternal role.

Similarly, Fauntleroy’s nursing skills extend to his grandfather, the Earl. When the Earl and Fauntleroy move to share their first meal, Fauntleroy himself offers to assist his gouty grandfather in walking to the table; “Just lean on me . . . I’ll walk very

slowly,” he implores. Though the burden of his grandfather’s hulking figure is great, Fauntleroy persists. The narrator reveals the Earl to heavily lean upon Fauntleroy as part of an “experiment.” The reasoning for the experiment is unclear—Fauntleroy matter-of-factly states he has a “good deal of muscle for a boy that’s only seven”—so the Earl may be testing his grandson’s physical prowess (46). Or, the Earl may be testing a fortitude of spirit, as Fauntleroy is able to successfully nurse his grandfather through an ailment (and attitude) the Earl’s own footmen fear. As they move towards the table, Fauntleroy clearly struggles physically, given the depiction of his increasingly reddening face and shortness of breath; he even seems to rely on “stiffen[ing] his childish muscles.” Yet, he persists and manages to “[encourage] the Earl as he limped along” and additionally offers homeopathic remedies (47). His abilities are not limited to physical strength but are accompanied by his encouraging and thoughtful nature. He is truly a caregiver and nurse—with a level of caring that exceeds beyond what is typified by the Earl’s own footman.

The symbolism of this moment cannot be overstated. As noted, not only does the Earl wish to test Fauntleroy’s physical abilities, but also the true “burden” of the Earl is far greater than his gouty foot (47). The Earl’s heaviest burden is emotional: his hard-heartedness, his anger, and even his regret. Fauntleroy proves to the Earl in this moment to have the fortitude to shoulder these burdens, to begin the work of spiritual reformation, which mirrors the mission of the Cult of True Womanhood (Welter 163). Burnett ends the novel with a reflection on the changing older man: “he had begun to love something, and he had several times found a sort of pleasure in doing the kind things which the innocent, kind little heart of a child had suggested, —and that was a beginning” (121).

Fauntleroy's employment of female virtues ignite change in both the past and present; he not only brings a new legacy but begins to reinvent the old.

Additionally, like Dearest, Fauntleroy accepts his social station. Impending earldom excites Fauntleroy not for the status or social recognition it will bring; rather, Fauntleroy finds joy in the ways he can assist others with his financial stability. Monetary wealth holds little attraction for the unselfish, giving child. Fauntleroy demonstrates his exemplary character when his newfound wealth and status is threatened. As an imposter appears to claim the title of Lord Fauntleroy and its subsequent monetary gains, Fauntleroy is unperturbed by the loss of fortune and earldom; monetary gain is only a means to an end (of helping others), not himself. Fauntleroy's primary concern is the community of family he's built with the Earl—the establishment of himself as the “Earl's boy.” When the Earl assures him a place always exists for him as a member of the family, he exclaims with relief, “Well, then, I don't care about the earl part at all. I don't care whether I'm an earl or not. I thought—you see, I thought the one that was going to be the Earl would have to be your boy, too, and—and I couldn't be. That was what made me feel so queer” (106). This line of thinking directly correlates with the Cult of True Womanhood. Welter writes of women's ideology on marriage as one for affection, not materialism: “She should choose only the high road of true love and not truckle to the values of a materialistic society” (171). With Fauntleroy's profession of relief at his preserved status as “the Earl's boy,” he embraces the ideals which define a “true woman.”

Finally, Fauntleroy exemplifies the necessary piety and moral aptitude which befit true women. Though the Earl is not a religious man, he brings Fauntleroy to church. In

the church, as Fauntleroy joins the congregation in hymns, he is characterized as nothing short of a little angel: “Cedric stood with the big psalter open in his hands, singing with all his childish might, his face a little uplifted, happily; and as he sang, a long ray of sunshine crept in and, slanting through a golden pane of a stained-glass window, brightened the falling hair about his young head” (71). As the novel continues, Fauntleroy continues to do what a good Christian might—seek to serve the poor, remain humble in all circumstances, and demonstrate love and acceptance to all.

Fauntleroy functions in a manner analogous to a mother and still receives full accolades as the male heir. This novel realizes the ways the Cult disempowers women. Cult writings state that “true women” would, by following Cult virtues, have an “almost magic power, which, in her proper sphere, she now wields over the destinies of the world” (qtd. in Welter 173). If a woman could truly have a “magic power” over men, Dearest herself should have had greater influence over the Earl. Despite a change of heart late in the novel, the Earl still views Dearest as closer to a pet: one he is “pleased with” and enjoys only superficially as he “likes ... to hear her sweet voice and to see her sweet face.” Unheeded are her words and thoughts towards the outside society; she is relegated to an object—a mother—whose only purpose is to give “loving, gentle words” to her son. It is still the male Fauntleroy who prompts action, and the narrator notes the Earl “had several times found a pleasure in doing the kind things which the innocent, kind little heart of a child had suggested” (121). By having a male fulfill Cult values and effectually prompt action, when the woman herself cannot, we see that Cult values lack the “magic power” they should have. These Cult values were truly created to keep women from entering the male sphere. In specific regards to piety, it becomes desirable for women

because it roots them within the home; it is “a kind of tranquilizer for the many undefined longings...about which it was better to pray than to think” (Welter 153). Women perhaps may long for pursuits outside the home, yet they should pray them away, so that they do not become like men who “rarely have time” for religion. Welter insightfully addresses the ironies of belief in woman’s power yet the lack of actualization: “For if woman was so very little less than the angels, she should surely take a more active part in running the world, especially since men were making such a hash of things” (174). *Fauntleroy* demonstrates these ironies: only this male orphan can choose his identity, and when his identity includes the virtues of a “true woman”—he is celebrated and empowered.

Charles Kingsley’s *The Water-Babies* continues the utilization of male orphans requiring maternal virtues for advancement. In *The Water-Babies*, orphaned chimney-sweep Tom tags along with his master, Mr. Grimes to clean the chimneys of a wealthy home. After accidentally entering the room of his wealthy patron’s daughter, Ellie, he flees and eventually drowns in the river. From there, he is transformed into a “water-baby.” A series of lessons and adventures in morality culminate in his rebirth to a human “great man” (Kingsley location 2197).

Critics agree Kingsley’s work struggles with the boundaries between the characterization of both genders. Both Claudia Nelson and Laura Fasick agree Kingsley’s work is conflicted over whether the it is male or female virtues which are revered as rewarding. Nelson comments, “Much as *The Water-Babies* wants to unite masculine energy with feminine unselfishness ... Kingsley consistently undercuts the idea” (Nelson, *Boys* 153). She reconciles Kingsley’s shortcomings with the shortcomings in his own religious philosophies: “Perennially seeking ... ‘manful Christianity’ ... Kingsley may

never have developed a consistent creed.” Unable to reconcile female sacrifice with “manful Christianity,” Kingsley’s protagonist “has a difficult task” of reconciling the two gendered ideals (*Boys* 155). Fasick concurs Kingsley exhibits “problems conceptualizing manhood” (106). Ultimately, she views *The Water-Babies* as failing to exhibit moral change in Tom, and his rise comes from “derring do” and “rugged male strength,” not for lack of the efforts of female intervention (Fasick 108).

Kingsley’s difficulty in maintaining his own coherent set of religious doctrines, as Nelson asserts, is most certainly the reason scholars (and readers) have difficulty making sense of *The Water-Babies*. *Fauntleroy* is written by a female author; Burnett may have a stronger inclination towards elevating women’s ideals than male author Kingsley. His protagonist’s meetings with female mother figures do seem to influence and impact Tom in ways in which male figures haven’t. However, Kingsley, in his own personal search for an effective religious doctrine of grounded in masculinity, cannot ultimately allow women to have the final impact.

The impact of female figures to orphan Tom begins with a “poor Irishwoman” they meet along the road (location 110). After walking along with Tom and conversing with him, he “thought he had never met such a pleasant-spoken woman” (location 116). It is after conversing with the Irishwoman, and hearing about her home by the sea and how “the children [would] bathe and play in it ... Tom longed to go and see the sea and bathe in it likewise” (location 121). His desire for bathing immediately is enacted in the following moment, when his master begins washing in the spring. Tom’s surprise at his master’s bathing and the master’s claim he did it only for “coolness” implies Tom’s lack of cleanliness (location 134). Tom’s lack of cleanliness is confirmed when he later

enters Ellie's angelic white room and "for the first time in his life, found out that he was dirty" (location 215). The Irishwoman's final parting words, "Those that wish to be clean, clean they will be; and those that wish to be foul, foul they will be" become a mantra in Tom's mind which lead him to drowning in the river in his efforts to clean himself (location 149).

The Irishwoman is revealed to be the Queen among water-fairies, and her return to the stream Tom has just entered reveals her as beholden to the attributes of womanhood:

I have been smoothing sick folks' pillows, and whispering sweet dreams into their ears; opening cottage casements, to let out the stifling air; coaxing little children away from gutters, and foul pools where fever breeds; turning women from the gin-shop door, and staying men's hands as they were going to strike their wives; doing all I can to help those who will not help themselves: and little enough that is, and weary work for me. But I have brought you a new little brother, and watched him safe all the way here. (location 431)

She nurses, guides, and wearies herself in toiling for others. Her home near the sea is not forgotten by Tom, despite becoming a water-baby. When he meets an otter and hears tales of the sea, he "longed to go ... [he] could not tell why" (location 784). After a long journey and several mishaps, Tom eventually meets Mrs. Doasyouwouldbedoneby. Her description leaves no doubt as to her motherhood. Her arms laden with babies, "when the children saw her, they naturally all caught hold of her ... clung round her neck" (location 1343). After she announces she will become Tom's mother and embraces him, Tom "fell fast asleep from pure love" (location 1356). This love, which Tom and the other children undoubtedly feel, make it necessary to connect to the motherly Mrs.

Doasyouwouldbedoneby. Tom would do anything to receive her embrace and thereby establish a firm mother-son connection. Like the other children, he longs to connect with

her at any cost; he even agrees to her behavioral demands and successfully “tormented no sea-based after that as long as he lived” (location 1376).

Tom’s need for connection to a mother figure continues when he reintroduced to the increasingly angelically described, Ellie. Her angelic qualities become more pronounced as she, not Tom, is able to go “home on Sundays To a very beautiful place” (location 1469). When Tom desires to join her he is told only “dear, sweet, loving, wise, good, self-sacrificing people” go there (location 1475). Tom’s fairy protectors indicate further that to go to that beautiful home, he must “go first where they do not like, and do what they do not like, and help somebody they do not like” (location 1481). Fasick argues Tom remains selfish and never learns the necessary self-sacrificial spirit because he “forgets even his demure sweetheart, Ellie” as soon as he leaves for his journey (108). However, the text indicates that though he did forget her, it was only in his “head” and “his heart did not” (location 1623). This juxtaposition between head and heart alludes to the start of Tom’s transition from the male knowledge-as-power ideal to the female powerful internal spirit.

While Tom does in fact, complete his task of helping his old master, Grimes—the someone he doesn’t like—and attains a lifetime with Ellie, the narrator explicitly states Ellie and Tom do not marry, though the narrator’s reasoning is that “no one ever marries in a fairy tale, under the rank of a prince or princess” (location 2201). Ellie is not Tom’s “sweetheart,” but rather, is his unwilling schoolmistress (and, as I read, a mother figure like the fairies who begin to guide his moral education) who aids him in the removal of his “prickles” (location 1458). His subsequent desires to “hug and kiss her” hint not at a love between sweethearts, but at the love between a mother and a son (location 1458).

Tom wishes for the embraces of Ellie in the same way he would seek the embraces of the tender Mrs. Doasyouwouldbedoneby. In fact, mothers in *The Water-Babies* are characterized, as Ellie is, as “white lad[ies]” (location 214). Mrs.

Doasyouwouldbedoneby is not explicitly written as white, but the frontispiece in the 1863 edition by Sir. R. Noel Paton renders her as a white angelic being, complete with halo and finger raised to the heavens (Appendix A). Likewise, Mother Carey is a “white marble lady,” consistently reminding the reader that Ellie’s whiteness aligns her as a mother, despite her young age (location 1845).

Tom, by becoming metaphorically clean and white like the angelic Ellie and the other mothers, finally becomes worthy of Ellie’s “home.” Tom does this exactly through the inculcation of motherhood’s values—self-sacrifice and a taught morality. Only the values of the mother can allow reformation, and though both the characters of Fauntleroy in *Little Lord Fauntleroy* and Tom in *The Water-Babies* are repeatedly characterized as strong males, the mother’s link is key to triumph. Fauntleroy, readers are assured, will become the best Earl Dorincourt has ever had, and Tom, a new man, will doubtless change the world in a similar way.

4.2 *Harry Potter*, *Ender’s Game*, and *The Graveyard Book*

The complexity of the lost mother anchoring the orphaned boy hardly ends in the nineteenth century. In J.K. Rowling’s celebrated *Harry Potter* series, which spans thousands of pages through seven books (which were subsequently adapted into eight blockbuster films), orphan Harry Potter is introduced to his identity as a wizard. He

learns of his parents' murder by the evil Lord Voldemort; and his own avoidance of the same fate.

As Harry journeys through his school years, he battles Voldemort in various incarnations, climaxing in an epic duel wherein Harry realizes he must die to bring an end to evil, and readily chooses death. Of course, as a beloved sacrificial hero, Potter also experiences a resurrection and happy ending.

Throughout the series, Harry Potter and Lord Voldemort have an increasingly intimate connection. The scar upon Harry's forehead marks the spot wherein Voldemort's killing curse proved ineffective. As a result, Harry is able, as we learn in *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, to connect with Voldemort's mind and both see through his eyes and hear his musings. It is through this connection and the introduction of Voldemort's past as the orphan Tom Riddle that readers can see how easily it would have been for Harry to be Lord Voldemort. Their circumstances are eerily alike: they are both outcast orphans, band together "a group of dedicated friends," appear physically similar,—“tall, pale, dark-haired”—and even share similar feelings on Hogwarts. As Harry uncomfortably notes, both he and Voldemort feel “Hogwarts was where he had been happiest; the first and only place he had felt at home” (*Half-Blood Prince* 361, 363, 431). Harry is also descended from famous Slytherins, like Voldemort, and though Harry is chosen to enter the Gryffindor House, the Sorting Hat believes he would do very well in the Slytherin House.

Throughout the *Half-Blood Prince*, Professor Dumbledore tries to impart in Harry a sense of what makes him special in being the “Chosen One” to deliver the wizarding world from Lord Voldemort:

“Yes, you have,” said Dumbledore firmly. “You have a power that Voldemort has never had. You can—” “I know!” said Harry impatiently. “I can love!” It was only with difficulty that he stopped himself adding, “Big deal!” “Yes, Harry, you can love,” said Dumbledore, who looked as though he knew perfectly well what Harry had just refrained from saying. “Which, given everything that has happened to you, is a great and remarkable thing. You are still too young to understand how unusual you are, Harry.” (509)

Harry, says Dumbledore, has the power to love. It seems trite, but, as Harry and his readership are constantly reminded, his life is only a result of his mother’s sacrificial love. This reminder sets the stage for Harry’s own sacrifice. Notably, Dumbledore hints at “everything that has happened” to Harry. His entry to his beloved school has been fraught with problems; from possessed professors, giant deadly snakes, evil diaries, and the return of Lord Voldemort during the Tri-Wizard tournament, which resulted with the death of Harry’s classmate before his very eyes. Given all these calamities, Harry has surprisingly not yet succumbed to darkness. Voldemort, in contrast, suffered little comparatively, yet remains the greatest evil threat; someone who can never understand love or feel it. Can this difference only be accounted for by the sacrificial love from a mother whom Harry cannot remember? I argue yes, based on a compelling contrast between the respective mothers of Harry and Voldemort and the change produced in Harry’s character.

Readers of the series and viewers of the movies are frequently presented with Harry’s loving mother. What type of mother could ever measure up to one which would willingly die to protect her son? Certainly, it would not be Lord Voldemort’s mother. Unlike Harry, conceived of a couple mutually in love, Lord Voldemort is the product of a love potion. His mother, Merope, a witch, fell in love with a Muggle (non-wizard). She, in order to secure marriage either enchanted him or fed him a love potion, per

Dumbledore's educated guesses. After a year, Merope is pregnant, but the love remains one-sided. She allows Tom Riddle Sr. to leave and he ““never troubled to discover what became of his son”” (*Half-Blood Prince* 214). In an exchange between Dumbledore and Harry, Dumbledore reveals mother Merope's desperation, which she does little to remedy:

“But she could do magic!” said Harry impatiently. “She could have got food and everything for herself by magic, couldn't she?” “Ah,” said Dumbledore, “perhaps she could. But it is my belief—I am guessing again, but I am sure I am right—that when her husband abandoned her, Merope stopped using magic. I do not think that she wanted to be a witch any longer. Of course, it is also possible that her unrequited love and the attendant despair sapped her of her powers; that can happen. In any case, as you are about to see, Merope refused to raise her wand even to save her own life.” (*Half-Blood Prince* 262)

Thus, mother Merope dies an hour after her son is born. Harry, carrying a torch for his beloved mother, is aghast. ““She wouldn't even stay alive for her son?”” he asks Dumbledore. Dumbledore remonstrates Harry slightly, reminding Harry that Merope suffered greatly and “never had [Harry's] mother's courage” (*Half-Blood Prince* 262). Despite Dumbledore's reluctance to clearly depict Merope as a monstrous mother, it becomes cemented in both Tom and Harry's minds that she deserves blame. When Lord Voldemort realizes his mother in her grief versus mothering, he blames her for being weak. The difference in a mother's spirit is directly attributed to the resulting child: a weak mother produces a villain; a strong mother produces a hero.

Voldemort, prior to learning the truth, believes his mother most certainly would have raised him if she had the choice. “My mother can't have been magic, or she wouldn't have died,” said boy Voldemort, more to himself than Dumbledore. (*Half-Blood Prince* 275). Yet, she does die, and when he learns his father abandoned her, he finds and kills him. In the final novel of the series, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*,

Voldemort's rise to social power is linked with the killing of mudbloods, those who are not descended purely from wizards. Notably, Voldemort himself is a mudblood, born of a witch mother and muggle father. As he discusses his plans for insuring the purity of the wizarding race, he speaks of eliminating the "disease" parts of family trees which threatens the health (purity) of the tree. His words are meant towards another family, but it echoes the thoughts on his own diseased family tree when he asserts, "'And in your family, so in the world . . . we shall cut away the canker that infects us until only those of the true blood remain'" (*Deathly Hallows* 5). Voldemort's quest to preserve the purity of the wizard race demonstrates his inability to cope with his mother's failure to love him, his mother's failure to be the self-sacrificing mother every child so desperately wants.

Similarly, Harry faults Voldemort's mother and locates true power in the strength of a mother's love. His consistent stance is that a child should have their parents, not truly making allowances for the overpowering grief and suffering which plagued Merope. He doesn't account her for individual personhood, but rather only considers her status as mother. Similarly, when Harry is confronted with friend Remus Lupin's decision to abandon his pregnant wife to save his potentially werewolf-stricken child, Harry resentfully reprimands him and accuses him of cowardly behavior. To his aghast friends, Harry justifies his hurtful words—"Parents," said Harry, "shouldn't leave their kids unless—unless they've got to'" (*Deathly Hallows* 88). Though Harry suffers greatly from his mother's death, Harry is soothed by the fact his mother only left *because she had to*; a self-sacrificial mother to the end, completely unlike Merope. One may argue that in this aspect, Harry begins to marginalize parents, and especially mothers. However, his views on his mother as a person evolve the more he learns about her and accepts her as an

individual in her own right. As he knows and understands his mother better, he transforms more closely into her mirror image.

Without the sacrificial love of Lily Potter, Harry, I argue, would be Voldemort. Without the love imbued by his mother, he would easily be able to succumb to the resentment, fear, revenge, and need for power which drive Voldemort. Though Harry is lauded as having instincts which are “always good and right” and “pure of heart” (*Deathly Hallows* 182, *Half-Blood Prince* 182), he also has instincts not unlike Voldemort’s of “cruelty, secrecy, and domination” (*Half-Blood Prince* 276). In cruelty, Harry’s argument with Lupin can be viewed as unnecessarily cruel; his friends certainly believe so. In other instances, Harry’s instincts prove less than “good and right:” when he finds Mundungus selling the deceased Sirius Black’s possessions, “he pinned Mundungus against the wall of the pub by the throat,” holding him to near suffocation (*Half Blood Prince* 245, 297). When another team is about to best Harry’s in a Quidditch match, Harry, though he “did not know what made him say it,” shouts an insult causing the opposition to stumble (333). He is “determined to hate Snape,” “angrily” wants to “find McLaggen and kill him” after an accident, hexes an annoying poltergeist, curses Malfoy, and finally, “wanted to rage and storm at Dumbledore” when Dumbledore continues to trust Snape (*Half-Blood Prince* 416, 548). In *Half-Blood Prince*, Harry spends a lot of time responding angrily and hurting people—with both words and actions. He is even aware of his internal struggle for admits “he was terrified that Dumbledore would not take him along unless he mastered his anger” (548). After Snape kills Dumbledore, Harry not only is “feverishly collecting more reasons to hate him, to swear vengeance,” but without hesitation attempts to use dark magic, the Cruciatius Curse, to torture Snape

(617). Harry is not as pure-hearted and instinctively good as everyone would believe. He struggles with an internal self, one he doesn't always understand, and one which is increasingly more like Voldemort.

Luckily for this orphan, his mother was the good and worthy self-sacrificial mother. Her selfless love becomes a part of Harry, and he overcomes his darker self. As the final novel progresses, Harry becomes increasingly selfless, thinking not of his own pain and suffering but that of his friends. He feels “terror” when his friends, disguised with his form, place their lives in danger to help him escape. (*Deathly Hallows* 22). Rather than being the cause of Stan Shunpike's certain death, he “behaved a little too kindly” to him in battle, which allowed for him to be identified as the authentic Harry Potter amid a group of imitations (*Deathly Hallows* 29). In battle with the soul-sucking Dementors, Harry continues onward while “he forced himself to think of Hermione and Ron, who needed him” (*Deathly Hallows* 106). He tries to encourage Ron, the deserter, that Dumbledore “‘must've known [he'd] always want to come back” (*Deathly Hallows* 161). Harry searches for what must certainly make him like his beloved mother. He finds an old handwritten letter and is warmed when he realizes they write in a similar fashion. And of course, the way in which Harry most inculcates his mother is his willingness to die for his friends, just as his mother willingly died for him. In the final battle against Lord Voldemort, Harry knows what he must do—“His job was to walk calmly into Death's welcoming arms” (*Deathly Hallows* 285). Through the Resurrection Stone he is able to summon the ghosts of those he loved—most especially, his mother—and implores her, who is “part of [him],” to “‘stay close”” (*Deathly Hallows* 289). When The Boy Who

Lived goes to become The Boy Who Died, he thinks of his girlfriend, Ginny. He died to save them, shouting so at Voldemort, depicting himself as his mother's double:

“I was ready to die to stop you from hurting these people—” “But you did not!” “—I meant to, and that's what did it. *I've done what my mother did.* They're protected from you. Haven't you noticed how none of the spells you put on them are binding? You can't torture them. You can't touch them.” (*Deathly Hallows* 305, emphasis added)

He repeats his mother's actions; he sacrifices himself. He saves them all and triumphs over death itself, something his mother could not do. Interestingly, Harry's thoughts in his final moments of his mother are defined both narratively and metaphorically; narratively though Harry's actual recollection, and metaphorically though the setting imagery: a beautiful red color, like the hair of Harry's mother, is recalled in the final battle when the “red-gold glow” that illuminates the sky as Voldemort is defeated.

Overall, Harry Potter *is* Lily Potter. Nonetheless, he is male and receives the resurrection of the privilege, able to experience the life Lily was denied.

One aspect which truly unites the orphans Fauntleroy, Tom, and Harry is their need for a connection to their mother. According to O'Reilly, the traditional rejection from a mother results in a broken man, one who:

decisively breaks from his mother and forges an identity separate from her modeled upon the masculine values of self-sufficiency and autonomy, particularly as they pertain to emotional identity ... the son ... experiences a deep and inexplicable loss that profoundly scars the boy and causes him to grow into a psychologically wounded man. (109)

Significantly, the disconnect between a mother and a son leads the son towards patriarchal power. Lord Voldemort in *Harry Potter*, completely broken by his deceased mother, is resultingly compellingly powerful (and evil). Additionally, Grimes in *Water-Babies* faces his difficulties, and undoubtedly became an abusive unscrupulous man, because of his disconnection with his mother. While the orphans discussed herein are

defined by their disconnection (via death and predetermined removal), they reconcile their losses in a way other boys cannot. They find connections—which become inoculations—that resist the ideological tide of dominance. These boys’ actions present quite the contrast to the prescription of aggressive masculinity; by channeling their separated mothers, they do not become a masculine vehicle of “self-sufficiency and autonomy,” which focuses on male power. Rather, their gender-blended identities create them as prime models of future change.

The choice for modern male motherhood doesn’t end with Harry Potter. In Orson Scott Card’s science fiction novel, *Ender’s Game*, another male child inculcates the values of his mother to transcend into a maternal hero. Notably, Ender Wiggin is not a biological orphan; his parents are alive and well through the novel’s entirety. Rather, he is abandoned by his parents when he is accepted to Battle School, leaving behind his parents, as well as his brother, Peter, and sister, Valentine. Ender never belonged to his parents, being only conceived by permission of the International Fleet in their hopes of finding the perfect commander to lead Earth against an invasion from an alien species, the Buggers. Through carefully crafted simulations and war “games,” Ender proves to be the perfect commander and saves Earth from invasion; in the process, he unknowingly murders almost an entire species. However, he rejects this identity and instead remakes himself into a female persona, a “Queen Bugger,” one rife with the loving influence that comes from motherhood.

As with Potter, Ender finds meaning in his mother’s loving influence. Though she agrees to conceive knowing the child may never be hers, she never allows her love for Ender to stop. Ender’s first friend at school, Alai, reminds Ender of his fact when he

covertly kisses Ender's cheek and offers a "private and powerful" religious benediction—"Salaam." Due to religious suppression, this moment reminds Ender of his mother's secret expression of *her* love. Ender remembers "when he was very young ... she had put her hands on his head when she thought he was asleep, and prayed over him. Ender ... had kept it as a memory of holiness, of how his mother loved him when she thought that no one, not even he, could see or hear" (Card 69-70). Ender's mother expresses love in the face of oppression: a knowing, worthy sacrifice.

Like Harry, Ender struggles with his identity. The International Fleet, by allowing his birth, hopes he would be "half Peter and half Valentine" (Card 24). His brother Peter is an adept tactician, albeit with a strong vicious streak. Valentine is Peter's equal in skill and intelligence but viewed as too tempered by feminine gentility. Ender's greatest fear and struggle is echoed page after page: "I am Peter. I'm just like him. And Ender hated himself ... I am not a killer ... I am not Peter" (Card 33). Additionally, like Harry, the leaders believe Ender is not like Peter; he is per Colonel Graff, "'clean. Right to the heart, he's good'" (Card 36). Though they cling to this hope in their child prodigy, Ender time and time again commits violent, atrocious acts. He digs out the giant's eyes, drowns children-wolves, and kills snakes. He murders through physical force not one, but two, other children. He's angry, solitary, and often feels oppressed. Like Harry, Ender does not succumb to darkness. He finds his true identity. I argue that he is actually a Bugger, which is in essentiality a mother. Through game play, he finally works out his warring feelings and creates his own identity.

Through the games, Ender comes to terms with his inclinations towards violence and his gentler, maternal sensibilities. After acts of violence, even simply computer-

generated acts, Ender feels remorse. He “hadn’t meant to kill the Giant . . .,” it wasn’t supposed to be “a choice between his own grisly death and an even worse murder” (65). For the wolf-children, after they disappear from the game, it “made him a little sad” (117). He feels remorse at his killings; a stark contrast from Peter, who kills squirrels for pleasure. He argues with himself, “This game tells filthy lies. I am not Peter. I don’t have murder in my heart” (118). To prove he doesn’t have murder in his heart and that he ultimately is not Peter, Ender meets the snake one final time. Rather than resorting to violence, Ender kisses the snake. It transforms into his sister and they exit the “End of the World” and find peace and celebration. Ender realizes he is misunderstood; the schoolmasters put him through circumstances which seem to necessitate violence; however, violence is not Ender’s desire. Ender wants peace, acceptance, and love—his true essence of self, found through his games (Ruddick’s demand of growth).

Despite the many instances when Ender despairs that he’s nothing more than a replica of his brother, he begins to discover an identity which is not just the great military tactician society demands. Ender will in turn shift his tactical battle skills from the male realm to the female; not only through the continued close relationship with his sister, but also through the adoption of a female “queen” persona, even when it compares to the Queen Bugger, Earth’s greatest enemy. As he continues his training, he realizes he can learn better tactics from the bugger army than Earth’s. When the school administrators ask Ender about his unparalleled success in leading his army in mock battles in the battle-room, he positions himself as a bugger queen, guiding the movements of his forces: ““You gave me an army that does *whatever I can think* for it to do”” (190, emphasis added). Ender need only think, and his army will respond, just as the brain does for the

body; just as the queen does for her bugger hive. Additionally, immediately prior to Ender's final real-life battle, his commanders note his skill: "[You] look like a bugger fleet" (275).

Ender's identity as a bugger is cemented in the aftermath of the Third Invasion. When his reunited sister offers transport to the bugger homeworld during the attempt to colonize the abandoned planet, he accepts based on his unique connection to them. He rationalizes to Valentine, "I'm going because I know the buggers better than any other living soul, and maybe if I go there I can understand them better. I stole their future from them; I can only begin to repay by seeing what I can learn from their past" (314). After many years on the planet, he comes to find a replica of a space he explored in his virtual reality game, the End of the World. Behind a mirror, he finds a cocoon of a bugger queen, ready to birth the new bugger race. As Ender and the queen communicate, she tells him he and the buggers are the same: "*We are like you*; the thought pressed into his mind. We did not mean to murder, and when we understood, we never came again" (Card 321, emphasis added). She says they are like him; however, the greater implication in their selection of Ender as their speaker is that *he is like them*. As they used the ansible to access his mind (through the virtual reality game), they saw his fears at becoming a murderer; how he never meant to commit such atrocities; how he had love and peace ultimately in his heart. He was always a bugger; he just never knew it until he found the queen's cocoon. From this moment on, Ender feels more at peace than he ever has, and he writes the tale of the buggers and searches for a planet for them to be reborn. He becomes a pseudo-queen mother figure for the alien race; he fulfills his identity as bugger

and mother, and successfully overcomes the institution which sought to define him only as a war machine.

The self-sacrificial spirit of his own mother and the Bugger Queen resonate within Ender as he grows into adulthood. As he travels the galaxy searching for a new home for the Bugger species, he pens the history of the Bugger species, which culminates in the most important tale of all:

the tale of the great mother, the queen of all, who first learned to keep and teach the new queen instead of killing her or driving her away, then he lingered, telling how many times she had finally to destroy the child of her body, the new self that was not herself, until she bore one who understood her quest for harmony. (322)

The Bugger queen would kill her own children for peace. Ender understands her pain, her passion for harmony, and the sacrifice it brings. Ender chooses to become a mother, a privilege he has as a male. He is never depicted as monstrous for his acts; rather, he is lauded for both saving the human world, and further lauded when he becomes a speaker for the dead and spreads the messages of peace throughout the galaxy.

Finally, I wish to examine Neil Gaiman's gothic fantasy novel, *The Graveyard Book*. In this award-winning novel, Nobody "Bod" Owens is saved from certain death as a toddler through his escape to a graveyard by his house after the rest of his family is murdered in their sleep. In the graveyard, he is adopted by the presiding ghosts of the graveyard, as well as the resident vampire, Silas. Bod grows up in the safety of the graveyard, being told he cannot leave for fear his family's murderer, Jack, will always be searching for him. Eventually, Jack does locate Bod and after a scuffle in the graveyard, Bod emerges victorious and leaves the graveyard.

Bod lives interstitially, in the world of the dead and the world of the living; thus, he struggles more than the typical protagonist in the creation of his own identity. Tsung

Chi Chang writes “Bod’s search for identity is associated with the fantastic elements” and it is through his interactions with both worlds he can create his own self (9). His name, “Nobody” is given to him by his adoptive mother, the ghost Mrs. Owens, and his undead guardian, Silas. “‘He looks like nobody but himself,’ said Mrs. Owens, firmly. ‘He looks like nobody.’ ‘Then Nobody it is,’ said Silas. ‘Nobody Owens’” (Gaiman 25). Chang writes of the name “Nobody” as being unable to define Bod because “names are just names” and as neither the reader, nor Bod, is ever privy to his birth name, names are not the locus of identity and “in other words, whatever your name is, you are always who you are” (15). Bod’s name also metaphorically characterizes him as that empty, innocent child. He is the blank slate; he can be anything he wants to be.

However, much like both Harry Potter and Ender Wiggin, Nobody Owens cannot be “always who [he is]” without the influence and guidance of his parents. Additionally, like Harry Potter, Bod is born and named as important via a prophecy. The “Jacks of All Trades,” an ancient organization which the narrator hints keep the hegemonic order, seek to kill Bod because an ancient prophecy identified a child whom would bring forth “the end of [their] order and all [they] stand for” (Gaiman 271). It is essentially a repetition of Harry and Voldemort’s prophecy, “*Neither can live while the other survives*” (*Half-Blood Prince* 75). Both Harry and Bod are born unto their mothers as prophesied instruments of destruction. Furthermore, it is their mothers’ protection which confirms their identity as overcomers. While Lily Potter knowingly dies to save her son, and thus marks him with her love, Bod’s mother is murdered in her sleep, not knowing her son will be killed. Even so, Gaiman’s utilization of the gothic allows the ghost of Mrs. Dorian to enter the graveyard wherein her son resides to plead for protection for Bod: “*My baby! He is trying*

to harm my baby! ... Protect my son!” (Gaiman 15). Mrs. Owens, his ghostly surrogate mother, while sympathetic to the now-orphaned toddler, attempts to reason to Mrs. Dorian why this otherworldly adoption would not work. Yet, in words that can only be heard between two mothers, Mrs. Owens resolves to protect the child (16). Bod’s mother’s protective actions enable him to become the child who would “walk the borderland between the living and the dead” and permanently end the Jacks of All Trades (271).

Beyond his biological mother’s protection, Bod is also guided by the dead and undead in the graveyard that functions as his surrogate foster family. He learns about life, death, and everything in between from them. They protect him always, and he seeks in return to do the same for them. When the Jacks have rediscovered Bod and pursue him and his living female friend Scarlett to the graveyard, Bod secures Scarlett in a tomb and goes to battle the Jacks. Scarlett asks his intentions and Bod replies: ““This is my home ... I’m going to protect it”” (264). It isn’t apparent to Bod that his home doesn’t *need* protection; ghosts cannot be hurt by the living Jacks, only Bod and Scarlett face true physical danger. But Bod’s inherited maternal instincts cannot allow him to do anything else. His home is his domestic sphere; his job to remain and protect signifies him as female. As he tells the mythical Sleer before he knowingly heads straight into the metaphorical lion’s den, ““I’m not frightened of dying ... It’s just, so many people I care for have spent so much time keeping me safe, teaching me, protecting me ... I have to do this on my own”” (250). In return for their efforts in mothering him, Bod knows he must mother and protect them, thus he forges ahead and successfully eliminates the danger the Jacks pose.

Chang quotes Wayne Yuen in saying it is “Bod’s virtues, such as bravery, temperance, charity, truthfulness, friendliness, and authenticity, [which] help create his moral and virtuous life despite the terrible tragedy that befell his family” (9). These virtues are all he learned from his deceased mothers, both biological and adopted. Just as Harry Potter and Ender Wiggin learn and inculcate their mother’s virtues, so does Nobody Owens. This inculcation sets him apart, enables him to become a hero, and allows him to create his own identity successfully in the living world.

4. Conclusion

Ruddick's final demand on motherhood is based on social acceptability. Through their actions, the boys find social acceptance. Fauntleroy is beloved by all; Tom joins Ellie in her special home and finally the wider world; Ender Wiggin is offered prominent political and military status (though he rejects it); and Bod rejoins the world of the living with ease. Harry Potter, especially, faces communal acceptance by his peers. In a critical moment when Voldemort offers what seems to be an irresistible reward for turning him over, at least one student wishes to condemn him. However, Harry's sacrificial spirit has inspired his class fellows to do the same:

Before Harry could speak, there was a massive movement. The Gryffindors in front of him had risen and stood facing, not Harry, but the Slytherins. Then the Hufflepuffs stood, and almost at the same moment, the Ravenclaws, all of them with their backs to Harry, all of them looking toward Pansy instead, and Harry, awestruck and overwhelmed, saw wands emerging everywhere, pulled from beneath cloaks and from under sleeves. (*Deathly Hallows* 251)

This moment is laden with emotion; Harry is fully accepted into the school community and is fundamentally uniting a citizenry that prides itself on house divisions. Thus, the boys are accepted, and in the best case, begin to inspire change themselves.

In hegemonic narratives in children's literature, the boy child's removal from the mother is presented as a necessary reinforcement of the status quo. Patriarchal narratives seek to subvert the power and authority of mother; traditional paradigms surrounding mother-son relationships require a separation which "becomes naturalized as the real and normal," while any sort of intimacy becomes "pathologized as aberrant" (O'Reilly 108). For a son, hegemonic narratives position the mother as commodity, a servant to both men and children. The power for male children, traditional narratives argue, exists in their

possession of mothers and ability to discard her when the coming-of-age story begins. As Andrea O'Reilly discusses in her study, *Mothers and Sons*, "in Anglo-American culture, mothers are assigned responsibility but given no power—and accorded no status—for the maternal work they do" (101). In this way, female submission is continually reinforced.

However, a mother's influence cannot be so easily dismissed. Fautleroy, Tom, Harry, Ender, and Bod instill their mothers' best traits to forge new, and decidedly more female, identities. Furthermore, boy orphans who exhibit values and virtues of their mothers are able to transcend their status as orphans. They are not limited to remaining outsiders or others, rather becoming celebrated heroes and paragons of morality. While some may argue the boys are acting in accordance with prescribed gender norms by using maternal traits to gain authority they would ultimately still inherit because of their inherent maleness, I disagree. The difference lies in the continuation and celebration of the maternal over the aggressively masculine. The boy child transcends into an agent of change—an amelioration to a broken society.

If, as Arcana argues, "a mother's relationship with her son [is positioned as] pivotal to the changes we seek both for our sons and for the larger patriarchal society," the contradictions inherent within the ideology of motherhood must be exposed and thereby re-evaluated (qtd. in O'Reilly 11). These novels do expose the contradictions, and even allow "feminized" boys to enter society without stigma. They've successfully forged their own identities; but the future remains undetermined. Harry Potter, we are given in Rowling's epilogue to the final novel, marries Ginny and becomes a parent himself. Does he raise his son differently than a traditional father, one who, if society had its say, would have successfully separated from his mother and become manly like this

father? We are not given these answers for him; nor do we know what happens to Lord Fauntleroy, Tom, Ender, or Nobody Owens. One inherent problem with the children's literature genre is protagonists do not usually grow beyond adolescence. They are bound within their genre, and readers are left to wrestle with the ideological implications alone. Perhaps readers are the "children" of these maternal male figures, and they must subsequently become figuratively orphaned by the finality of the text, now inoculated themselves to transcend above tradition.

Appendix A: *The Water-Babies* Frontispiece

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