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### **Quarrelling with Scaly Beasts and Excitable Goddess: Navigating Expectations of Desire**

This paper aims to examine the use of the “inner voice” as a means by which the complex relationship between social expectation and internalized desire may be examined. This “inner voice,” while revealing some form of inner conflict or trait, is its own active force within the narrative. It is at odds with its attached character, and reveals to the reader private information. These revelatory moments tell something useful about the character – for our purposes, desire – that cannot be shared openly. In J. K. Rowling’s wildly popular series, *Harry Potter*, the protagonist Harry Potter’s “chest beast” is his desire for his best friend’s sister Ginny, but it is also at odds with a sense of duty he feels for his best friend, Ron. The struggle surrounding these desires never gets shared precisely because Harry fears he will upset Ron. The “Goddess” of E. L. James’s series, *50 Shades*, is a complex image of female sexual empowerment that berates Anastasia, the protagonist, who struggles in her new relationship. While some of her concerns are shared with her boyfriend, Christian Grey, much of the conversation surrounding unclear lines of privacy and sexual autonomy are pushed aside.

As the secondary voices come into conflict with the protagonist, they begin to adopt an aspect of moral judgment. *Harry Potter* addresses, though certainly does not focus on, questions of loyalty and duty in a friendship, while *50 Shades* grapples with a complex idea of female sexual empowerment. In both cases, the “inner voice” is at odds with the characters. In this dilemma, the “inner voice” provides the reader with a private space to examine internalized struggles of desire that the characters deem are too transgressive to discuss openly.

### ***Harry Potter* and *50 Shades*: Two Controversial Texts**

J.K Rowling's *Harry Potter* series follows the life of the orphan Harry Potter, who learns about his wizarding heritage at age 11. The books follow him through his boarding school days in London's fantasy institution, Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, where he and his friends, Ron Weasley and Hermione Granger, continuously thwart attempts by the villain Voldemort to return to power. Harry's eventually develops a romantic interest with Ron's younger sister, Ginny Weasley. By book six, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, several characters have been killed off and Voldemort has returned. *Half-Blood Prince* sets up the end of the series, and Harry's life has become complicated by his personal tragedies and the burden he feels to somehow stop Voldemort.

E. L. James's *50 Shades* series follows the life of Anastasia Steele, a young college graduate with an English degree who finds herself in an uncomfortable relationship with business tycoon Christian Grey. We will look at the first volume of the series, *50 Shades of Grey*. The book opens with Anastasia driving to an interview in place of her friend and roommate, the journalist Kate, who has fallen sick. The interview is an exclusive look into the life of Christian Grey, and after a fumbled series of questions Anastasia finds herself taken by him. Shortly after, James introduces us to Christian's secret BDSM practices, which originate from his childhood sexual experiences. The rest of the book follows Anastasia's discomfort in her relationship with Christian.

It is not without some humor that we can look at two dramatically different texts like *Harry Potter* and *50 Shades* and wonder, keeping the intended audience and subject matter at the forefront of our minds, why we might compare these two. It is not that these two books are in conversation nor do they address questions of desire in a similar fashion. Indeed, Rowling

doesn't intend to sweep the child-to-teenage audience off its feet into a leather bedroom and James has no intention of putting the young adult reader through magical boarding school. Both of these writers, however, have received a substantial body of criticism for the potential dangers of their writing.

J.K Rowling has generated a fair bit of conversation surrounding her books in both literary and academic circles. These conversations range from critiques of Rowling's failure to produce a proper fantasy text<sup>1</sup> to a paranoid concern that the series undermines religious morality.<sup>2</sup> In all cases, the extreme popularity and pervasiveness (and I mean this neutrally) of the series sparks a concern as to its impact on moral and intellectual wellbeing of its child readers.

It is clear that a discussion about *50 Shades of Grey* brings into discussion the massive, ongoing debate on where the book stands as some form of representative for female sexual liberation and BDSM culture.<sup>3</sup> These are hotly, contested debates; they are characteristically defined by a serious conversation on the feminist standing of the book, concerns about the representation and pursuit of wealth<sup>4</sup>, and debates surrounding the idea of women as sexual beings. All of these conversations and many more add a level of complexity that will touched upon as needed although not necessarily made a focus of this paper.

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<sup>1</sup> See John Pennington's article, "From Elfland to Hogwarts, or the Aesthetic Trouble with Harry Potter."

<sup>2</sup> Many parents and educators expressed a fear of children being lead down the road of black magic. See Lee Grant's and Roger Shawley's article, "End of Magical Journey Begins: Fans Flock to Stores to Snag Final Book of Harry Potter Saga," for a quick understanding of *Harry Potter's* popularity that keeps bookstores open on the Sabbath.

<sup>3</sup> BDSM is a type of consensual, sexual practice that often involves a type of sexualized, power dynamics. Because of the wide range of practices and interpretation, BDSM cannot be fully contextualized within this paper.

<sup>4</sup> Heather Havrilesky in her work, "Fifty Shades of Late Capitalism," read a subversive obsessions with money that underlies the sexual desire of the "Goddess" throughout the first volume of the series.

What these two works do share is a public concern for the moral education of the reader. It often splits down the middle between a religious concern surrounding Rowling's work, and a sexual concern surrounding James's work, although these concerns are not exclusive to one writer. Both writers, however, are attacked on moral grounds for potentially corrupting the masses because of their popularity. This concern for the reader, which attempts to dictate a morally appropriate conversation, links the two series.

### **Disagreeing Deep Down Inside – What is the Inner Voice?**

We need to define “the inner voice.” This paper is concerned, to at least some extent, with a psychological reading of the characters<sup>5</sup>. Both Harry Potter and Anastasia Steele have an “inner voice,” manifested through Harry Potter's “chest beast” and Anastasia Steele's “inner Goddess.” We may come to a closer understanding of the “inner voice” by addressing the literary technique of psychomachia<sup>6</sup> and Freud's ideas surrounding the ego.

The characters do struggle with moral – more specifically, sexual – questions throughout the text, as psychomachia does. The back-and forth that Harry and Anastasia go through echo the moral conflicts of psychomachia, but are further complicated by a lack of clear positions to adopt. The “inner voice,” a representation for a type of sexual attitude, will have a position that is at odds, but not binary to, the concerns of the character. This lack of binary choice – a good place decision vs a bad decision – distinguishes the “inner voice” from this literary technique, but keeps in mind the central moral dilemma.

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<sup>5</sup> For a brief discussion of how the work of psychology can influence literary criticism, look at Michael Payne's short work, “Do Psychologists and Critics Speak the Same Language?”

<sup>6</sup> Otherwise known as a “soul-struggle,” the most popular use of the technique is in Latin poet Prudentius's poem, “The Psychomachia.” It describes a conflict between two opposing forces, often good and evil, within the soul of an individual. More contemporary uses of this technique will have a small angel and devil stand on either shoulder of the character with the moral conflict.

Freud's work on the symbolic representations of the mind – id, ego, and super-ego – further help define the “inner voice,” and his concerns surrounding sexual desire are welcome. More specifically, the work he has produced regarding the super-ego resonates with the concerns of my paper. Freud introduces the super-ego in conversation with the Oedipus complex, and describes it forming as a result of suppressing sexual desires.<sup>7</sup> This paper is not concerned with the Oedipus complex. The idea of “inner self” that is based in the repressions of sexual desire, however, is the crux of the psychology of my critique.

The literary phenomena of the “inner self,” one that is distinct from our speaker, essentially functions as a second character; one that has no physical impact on the world of the text, that wields little to no actual autonomy, but reveals to us the deepest, darkest conflicts of a character or narrator.

That we get a character's deepest secrets isn't particularly problematic; that is the goal of storytelling devices. This disconnect between character and the inner voice reveals a discomfort that receives a range of responses and solutions. The characters go back and forth between accepting what they feel, and rejecting – even fighting – a desire that has been identified within a representation of themselves that they cannot control. This conflict, never directly addressed by the authors, does not come from just a discomfort with a foreign idea of desire, but an intersection of a host of external, social norms and judgments.

### **Harry Potter and the Scaly Beast that is Probably from Down Below**

Rowling takes a lot of care to have Harry grow up alongside his readers. By the time we reach the *Half-Blood Prince*, Harry has come face to face with death, killed savage animals,

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<sup>7</sup> Freud discusses these concepts in his paper, “The Ego and Id.” Specifically, the section titled “The Ego and Super-Ego” is where he first brings up this concept.

participated in anti-slavery movements to liberate house elves, supported Hermione with her (admittedly light) struggle against racism, seen his godfather die, learned of Voldemort's patricide, and watched a demonic-looking baby be cooked into an adult man using a severed hand as an ingredient. By the time we reach *Half-Blood Prince*, the world of Hogwarts has stopped being a safe world of magic where bad guys do some bad things but nothing too close to home. No, things have become quite dark in the wizarding world.

However desire does have a role in Harry's life, and Rowling links a need for romance in young Harry's life with Ginny Weasley, Ron's sister. It's a budding romance, and largely ignored until

Harry pushed open the tapestry to take their usual shortcut up to Gryffindor Tower, however they found themselves looking at Dean and Ginny, who were locked in a close embrace and kissing fiercely as though glued together. [ . . . ] It was as though something large and scaly erupted into life in Harry's stomach, clawing at his insides: Hot blood seemed to flood his brain, so that all thought was extinguished, replaced by a savage urge to jinx Dean into a jelly. (Rowling 286)

Harry's "chest beast" is a monstrous figure, eventually located somewhere between his chest and stomach. Rowling is blatantly personifying a powerful jealousy that overrides Harry's sense of self. He's not actually doing anything to Dean, but Rowling has fully developed a savage image of desire. It is one that lends itself to violence and territorial tendencies. It is an aggressive image of young, male desire.

Ginny should feel left out of the conversation in this moment. She is someone to be desired, someone who stirs up intense feelings, but she doesn't particularly do anything. In a

wonderful article by Elizabeth E. Heilman and Trevor Donaldson, “From Sexist to (sort of) Feminist: Representations of Gender in the Harry Potter Series,” Ginny’s role within the series – as well as that of many other female characters – gets deconstructed. Most relevant to this paper is their observations surrounding who determines when relationships happen or cease to be.<sup>8</sup> As these two note, throughout the series instances of desire are negotiated and determined by men without much conversation, if any, from the women.<sup>9</sup> Harry’s “chest beast” can then be read as embodying this masculine control, even as Harry remains unsure of his feelings in the first place.

### **50 Shades of "Oh My"**

Anastasia fits the profile for the romance heroine. Her looks, while beautiful, are fairly simple with a clean face, simple brown hair, and a wardrobe that anyone could acquire without breaking the bank. It is a passive image, marked by a lack of outstanding or outlandish behavior, and accompanied by a love of reading that a reader of the book may share. James does not twist the romance genre by writing Anastasia and her struggles with an incredibly handsome and fairly rich man with a lot of time and frequent flier miles on his hands. Her romantic struggle remains fairly unremarkable for the first seven chapters of the book, until we finally get a direct introduction to *50 Shades* and its many whips, ropes, and spreader bars.

It is not until after Anastasia’s first sexual experience that James decides to celebrate, or perhaps complicate, Anastasia’s new life as an experienced woman by introducing, somewhat out of nowhere, the “Goddess” of the text. As Anastasia begins her second sexual experience in

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<sup>8</sup> The short answer: “Men determine whether relationships are on or off. Ron decides when to romance Hermione, Lupin decides when to marry Tonks, and Harry decides when to romance or break up with Ginny.” (153)

<sup>9</sup> At no point does this paper argue that Ginny is, in any way, a passive/submissive character. Rowling wonderfully includes several scenes throughout the series when Ginny asserts her autonomy against her brother Ron’s misogynistic comments. Ginny’s does voice an opinion two pages later exactly on Ron’s approving nod, and chastises him for his hypocrisy in dealing with his own relationship. (536) However, these wonderful moments do not erase her silence in Harry’s “victorious” kiss.

the bath with Christian, she contemplates “moving down, I push him into my mouth. He groans again. *Ha!* My inner “Goddess” is thrilled. I can do this. I can fuck *him*” (James 136). This is the first time we get to meet the inner “Goddess,” and it is an introduction that is characterized by Anastasia’s new sexual experience. The “inner Goddess,” in this introduction, is acknowledged as a being of sexual liberation. More specifically, James is imagining liberation that locates Anastasia within a space of sexual dominance. Not only is the “inner Goddess” a manifestation of an accepted desire, but also one in which imagines a space of shared, sexual autonomy – if only for the moment.

To break away from empowerment for a moment, this scene is still a lesson. Anastasia is learning the different ways in which two people go about giving each other pleasure. That this sex is meant to teach and instruct Anastasia is just as important as this moment being Anastasia’s first time (technically second). James writes this moment of sexual exploration as a joy, where Anastasia “had no idea giving pleasure could be such a turn-on, watching him writhe subtly with carnal longing. [Her] inner “Goddess” is doing the merengue with some salsa moves” (137). The image of a divine woman mixing two different styles of dance while enjoying her first time is meant to be taken with a bit of humor. It is a feminist image of female sexual liberation, one that encourages a joyful exploration into the world of desire as Anastasia slowly prepares to practice something she has only just learned about. Whether we ultimately agree to accept the “Goddess” as she grows and changes is up in the air, but James does make the effort to embody this form of empowerment. The “inner Goddess” is her own person, distinct from Anastasia and her subconscious.

Before leaving the “Goddess” as a perfect figure for sexual empowerment, we look towards Alex Dymock’s work, “Flogging Sexual Transgression: Interrogating the Cost of the



‘Fifty Shades Effect.’” Yes, the “Goddess” is meant to be empowering. However, she still exists with a sexual hierarchy that allows James a space to continue writing about Anastasia’s immanent BDSM experiences.<sup>10</sup> It is a freedom that still conforms to a laundry list of romantic conventions, even as it seeks to break them. Despite the challenges that Dymock provides to a purely feminist reading of *50 Shades*, we will continue, but with Dymock’s observations as a caution.<sup>11</sup>

### **Judgments**

Both Harry and Anastasia are unable to parse through the world of desire that initiates the development of a mature, sexual being as an internal voice. In experiencing the desire for another person, both become aware of the judgment of the world around them. It’s not that Harry just sits around until the time is right to pursue Ginny (he’s running from death half of the time), and it is not at all the case that Anastasia gets to mull over the complex, messy contract of sexual behavior in the privacy of her own room (Christian certainly has no qualms about breaking and entering).

### **Harry and the Duty to a Friend – Understanding Codes of Brotherhood**

*Half-Blood Prince* explores the growing isolation that Harry feels. Rowling’s work on heightening the tension in the plot – Voldemort posing as a looming threat, always immanent, always keeping Harry awake at night in fear – keeps Harry occupied, and he finds little opportunity or permission to discuss his secret plans and training with his close friends. As a

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<sup>10</sup> Dymock notes that “it is the ‘inner experience’ of sexual freedom that the *Fifty Shades* phenomena appeals to, and which permits its reading as a work of transgressive literature.” She quote Downing who claims that “what the *Fifty Shades* novels promise is something relatively taboo (BDSM practices and power exchange) concealed within a conservative form – the popular romance novel.” (881)

<sup>11</sup> Like Havrilesky, Dymock unpacks the social and economic consequences of the *50 Shades* phenomena. These concerns aren’t particularly germane to the concerns of this paper, but should be acknowledged as a concern for the purely feminist reading we have given thus far.

result, Rowling spends little time with his romantic troubles. These troubles interrupt the narrative as they interrupt Harry's thoughts. She writes:

But unbidden into his mind came an image of that same deserted corridor with himself kissing Ginny instead . . . The monster in his chest purred . . . but then he saw Ron ripping open the tapestry curtain and drawing his wand on Harry, shouting things like "betrayal of trust" . . . "supposed to be my friend." (Rowling 289)

This image of boyhood friendship is the core difficulty Harry has. The "chest beast" is taken with the idea of pursuing Ginny. Yet in somehow realizing this pursuit, Harry imagines the romance as a betrayal of some unspoken trust. Harry's monster, however, is pure desire at this point. In establishing this internal figure, Rowling is putting desire against a code of masculine friendship. It's not just problematic that Harry likes another girl, but that the "chest beast" makes it astoundingly more difficult for Harry to be comfortable around his best friend. The monster becomes a powerful force of anxiety and personal discomfort as it functions within Harry as a catalyst for some kind of maturation.

Solidarity of brotherhood only makes up half of Harry's concerns. He clearly cannot speak with Ron about this situation for fears of transgressing against their friendship. However, this is further complicated by Harry's pre-existing notion of his relationship with Ginny. He wonders about his mixed emotions:

Harry lay awake, looking up at the canopy of his four-poster and trying to convince himself that his feelings for Ginny were entirely elder-brotherly. They had lived, had they not, like brother and sister all summer, playing Quidditch, teasing Ron, and having a laugh about Bill and Phlegm? He had known Ginny for years now . . . It was natural that

he should feel protective . . . natural that he should want to look out or her . . . want to rip Dean limb from limb for kissing her . . . No . . . he would have to control that particular brotherly feeling (287-288).

He thinks of Ginny as family. Here we see an almost incestuous transgression. His summer memories take on a childhood nostalgia as she describes the innocent game and tricks he has enjoyed with Ginny. Harry feels so much guilt that he attempts to logically reduce his intense feelings, noting that it was “natural that he should feel protective.” But a back-and-forth ensues yet again, and Harry unintentionally slips in his desire to “rip Dean limb from limb.” These emotions are immediately rejected, with Harry noting that he has to “control that particularly brotherly feeling.” However, his feeling still remain “brotherly” and Harry is trapped in a pseudo-incestuous drama; partly because of his history with Ginny, and partly because he feels a similar familial connection with Ron. Any potential for maturation gets rejected because it is figured as transgressive on multiple levels.

### **Anastasia and Questions of Sexual Discretion – Understanding Levels of Privacy**

By the very nature of the genre, particularly one that deals with extremely sensitive and private sex practices, James has to acknowledge the question of privacy (but consent not so much). Anastasia has typical concerns when talking about sex. When talking with her roommate, Kate, she goes, “I can’t help but smile at Kate’s concern and her burning curiosity, but suddenly I feel shy. I blush. It was very private” (James 158). It’s odd that the “inner Goddess” fails to empower Anastasia in this regard, but this conflict is otherwise mundane – at no point is either privacy or disclosure indicated as the “right” decision. Yet when Christian lends his opinion, the issue of privacy carries a different tone.

On her way back home from her first weekend with Christian, Anastasia says, “I need to talk to Kate. I’ve so many questions about sex, and you’re too involved” to which Christian responds “Talk to her if you must . . . Make sure she doesn’t mention anything to Elliot.” Anastasia “bristle[s] at his insinuation. Kate isn’t like that” (150). Of course, the prospect of one’s private sex life, particularly as it deals with less than publicly approved sex practices, elicits from Christian a stern response. It would otherwise be read as a scene where James wants us to see insecurity and misplaced shame, except our heroine is responding to something different. It’s not that sex is difficult to talk about, it’s not just that Christian wants his privacy. Anastasia wants the freedom to parse over her experiences not just on her own but with someone she can confide in. This level of exploration, of confiding experience and knowledge, is being misunderstood by Christian as a violation which hasn’t even happened yet. More significantly, he insinuates a distrust of women, focused on Kate, one that fears an inevitable exposure; as if both women are unable to understand discretion. Individuals not involved in the sex act, outsiders, are not appropriate to converse with. Anyone one beyond the relationship is one person too many. We see here, powerfully, a silencing of experience, and James’s “Goddess” is silent.<sup>12</sup>

### **Resolution or Not At All**

These dramas of desire we have discussed so far complicate the lives of Harry and Anastasia to different degrees. As we have seen, these complication stem from their obligations:

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<sup>12</sup> Anastasia resolves, beyond this point, to speak with Christian almost exclusively about her sex question. These exchanges, often done through email, litter the book, and notable only happen when Anastasia is a significant distance away from Christian. These conversations add depth to the level of discomfort she feels, but the cyclical nature of them – Anastasia’s “I’m uncomfortable” to Christian’s “Please don’t be” – distracts us from the “inner voice.”

either to a sense of brotherhood or to privacy. Both Rowling and James do arrive to a resolution and end the conflicts, for better or worse, between their characters and the “inner voices.”

### **Harry and the Story of a Conquest**

In part because Rowling isn't particularly concerned with a childhood exploration of love, Harry's struggles do come to an end. Reaching the end of *Half-Blood Prince*, Harry has been struggling with the private lessons that Dumbledore, the headmaster of Hogwarts, has instructed him to undergo with the antagonistic Professor Snape. He no longer participates on the school Quidditch team, a type of fantasy soccer on broomsticks with baseball bats and loose interpretation of the term “foul play,” and has been trying to convince Ron that, as goalkeeper and captain, he has the ability to win the championship. Upon returning back to his dormitory from a rough day with Snape, he is met is a roar of victory; his team won the game.

In the midst of the celebration, “Harry looked around; there was Ginny running towards him; she had a hard, blazing look in her face as she threw her arms around him. And without thinking, without planning it, Harry kissed her” (Rowling 533). This moment amidst a surge of celebration is characterized by the sport that everyone is celebrating. Ginny, not necessarily sexualized but not without passion, is “blazing” as she approaches Harry. Caught in the joy he feels with the rest of his classmates, he then proceeds to overcome his own internal struggles, having clearly helped Ron overcome his own insecurities. He goes in for the kiss.

But it is not just a charged kiss in a moment of silent-but-shared emotion that characterizes this scene. This is happening in a room full of people. Immediately after the kiss, Rowling writes:

The room had gone very quiet. Then several people wolf-whistled and there was an outbreak of nervous giggling. Harry looked over the top of Ginny's head to see Dean Thomas holding a shattered glass in his hand, and Romilda Vane looking as though she might throw up. At last he found him, still clutching the Cup and wear an expression of appropriate to having been clubbed over the head. For a fraction of a second they looked at each other, then Ron gave a tiny jerk of the head that Harry understood to mean, *Well – if you must.* (533-534)

It is another victory, this time a private one for Harry. The celebration that is shared by the rest of the students amounts to “wolf-whistles” which echoes his original monstrous desire and furthers a masculine praise for Harry's actions. Yet we also see “nervous giggling,” a nod to a level of discomfort that a display of affection still brings. These are accompanied by Dean's “shattered glass” and Romilda's sick face. It is not all acceptance, but those who are shocked by the display are not judging Harry. They are jealous of him. In a subtle way, these expressions of jealousy only further the characterized victory of the moment. When Harry finally finds Ron in the crowd, he originally sees the same look of shock. Yet Ron approves, and gives Harry the “tiny jerk of the head” as the ultimate approval. The jerk of the head does two things in this moment: it approves, and it reimagines Harry's desires as something that he must act upon. Harry's understanding of “if you must,” absolves him of his brotherhood duties, and reprioritizes his masculine desires.

Immediately after this shift in priorities, the “chest beast” makes one final appearance in the *Harry Potter* series. Rowling writes that:

The creature in his chest roared in triumph, he grinned down at Ginny and gestured wordlessly out of the portrait hole. A long walk in the grounds seemed indicated, during which – if they had time – they might discuss the match. (534)

His “chest beast” takes part in the Quidditch victory, and Harry adopts a confident, dominant persona. His wordless gesture capitalizes on the victory and he gets to take his affections farther, in the open air of the grounds without any shame. This scene is the acceptance of desire, and the championing of the masculine initiative. Questions about brotherly duty and pseudo-familial connections are pushed aside thanks to Ron’s prior nod, and Ginny’s unvoiced consent leaves this as the final instance of the “chest beast.”

Heilman and Donaldson return us back to the questions of consent.<sup>13</sup> The dominating masculine sentiment that washes over this victory scene sets up a series of gendered expectations for the romance. Harry, in becoming one with his “chest beast,” has to dominate the romantic exchange, and Ginny literally follows his lead. Harry final maturation marks his entry into a hegemonic, romantic context, the ultimate conclusion of his acceptance of the “chest beast.”

### **Anastasia and Her Continued Grapple with Being Loved**

The back-and-forth Anastasia has gone through in discussing her concern with Christian eventually comes to an end as she eventually becomes unable to accept his secrecies regarding his sexual-emotional history. After a final experience with the punishment aspect of BDSM,

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<sup>13</sup> They note generally, by quoting Gramsci, that “the form of masculinity that is culturally dominant in a given setting is called hegemonic masculinity. Hegemonic cultural practices are those in which most people give “spontaneous consent” to the “general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group.” (155).

Anastasia break up with Christian, and runs away from him. Distraught at having insulted him, she struggles to clarify her own feelings around their relationship. She frantically thinks:

Oh, his distraught look as I left. I was so cruel, shocked by the savagery . . . will he forgive me . . . will I forgive him? My thoughts are all haywire and jumbled, echoing and bouncing off the inside of my skull. My subconscious is shaking her head sadly, and my inner goddess is nowhere to be seen. Oh, this is a dark morning of the soul for me. (James 507)

In the critical moment where Anastasia needs access to her “Goddess” as a means of empowering her sexual wants as they align with her emotional needs, she finds no assistance. The absence of the “Goddess” marks an absence of sexual control. Anastasia has already decided that any relationship that ignores her emotional needs cannot be accepted, and she therefore has lost her empowering “inner voice.” It is a traumatic moment, where Anastasia reduces Christian’s habits and preferences to a “savagery” where she is unsure of whether she can “forgive him.” In the perhaps the most intriguing twist of the book, James has outlined dark consequences for the absence of empowerment; namely, the possible shaming of other sexual practices. Levels of consent add to the confusion Anastasia is feeling, but none of it gets to be spoken because she cannot come from an empowered space to do so.

The loss of Christian sends Anastasia into a depression. Alone at home, she falls to the floor and laments her decisions. James removes us from Anastasia’s judgments, and returns us back to consequences of the break-up. She writes:

Grief. This is grief – and I’ve brought it on myself. Deep down, a nasty unbidden thought comes from my inner goddess, her lips contorted in a snarl . . . the physical pain from the



bite of a belt is nothing, nothing compared to this devastation. I curl up, desperately clutching the flat foil balloon and Taylor's handkerchief, and surrender myself to grief.

(514)

The final paragraph detailing her sadness at the break-up also includes the final instance of the "inner Goddess." Anastasia has been willing to accept discretion when discussing her sexual affairs, but Christian's inability to share with her emotionally is the breaking point. However, the "inner Goddess" aggressively opposes Anastasia's decision. She is silently chastised for her behavior, and is left alone with her thoughts. This harsh judgment by the "inner Goddess" shames her for choosing her own autonomy and pushing for an emotional exchange in response trying out Christian's sex practices. The "Goddess" subverts the original, empowering power dynamic that she so embodied in her first introduction. James provides no comforting resolution to Anastasia's struggles.

### **Conclusion**

Rowling doesn't particularly intend for her male readers to lead her female readers down a victorious, romantic fantasy. Nor does James intend for her female reader to look towards her male readers for a consent-ish relationship as standard for all their romantic and sexual wants. Intense, internal struggles aside, both authors use these "inner voices" playfully, and dabble to varying degrees with discussing or form of social taboo regarding sexuality. The concern this paper has cited with the moral weight of such writing has hopefully added to the ways in which we understand the discourses surrounding desire – intentional or otherwise – within these books.

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