



The crucifixion of consumerism and power and the resurrection of a community glimpsed through Meylahn's wounded Christ in conversation with Rowling's Christ discourse in the *Harry Potter* series

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Note:

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Like some fantasies (including *Lord of the rings* and the *Chronicles of Narnia*), the *Harry Potter* series by J.K. Rowling makes a social comment on a particular dominant discourse within a particular sociocultural context. One of Rowling's social comments is the dehumanising and fragmenting effect of the power and consumerist discourse in Western society – where great value is placed on what a person owns. An example of this theme in the series is the characters of the Dursleys, as prime examples of 'Muggles'. Although it is not power that Muggles seek, but rather to fit in by having what the Jones' have, which fits in well with the capitalist discourse as developed by Lacan – as discussed by Meylahn. Rowling juxtaposes this discourse with the alternative sacred story of the Christ discourse (community and fellowship are more important than material possessions), that she has subtly woven into her narrative. This alternative discourse challenges adolescents' identity and spirituality by offering the Christ discourse as an alternative discourse to the dominant discourse of consumerism and power they live in. In his article, 'Holistic redemptive pastoral ministry in the fragmented transit hall of existence', Meylahn (2010) speaks of a 'wounded Christ' healing a 'wounded community' and this ties in well with the Christ discourse presented by Rowling. Meylahn gives us a useful hermeneutical tool to interpret the actions of some of Rowling's characters. Hence, Meylahn's 'wounded Christ', will be brought into conversation with the actions of some of Rowling's characters. By bringing Rowling into conversation with Meylahn, pastors and youth workers are presented with an ideal tool to help guide adolescents towards a more spiritual life that is not bound to the dehumanising discourse of consumerism and power.

Introduction

This article argues that by juxtaposing the Western dominant consumerist and power discourse with the Christ discourse, adolescents may be exposed to a discourse that crucifies consumerism and power and resurrects a Christ-like community within the alternative wizarding world. Then, by bringing Rowling into conversation with Meylahn, the article proposes to present pastors and youth workers with an ideal tool to help guide adolescents towards a more spiritual life that is not bound to the dehumanising discourse of consumerism and power.

It needs to be noted that in my reading of the series, power, which is one of Rowling's sub-themes (love and death being the two main themes), seems to be closely bound to consumerism. In the series, misuse of power and attaining material things seem to be important in conforming to one's dominant social discourse, with the Dursleys as the prime example of Muggles who spend most of the series wanting only to be perceived as 'normal'. This may help situate adolescents in a position to question the dominant discourse of consumerism and power that they dwell in on a daily basis, and the values that they live by. Rumscheidt (1998:36) explains how the 'global economy' has no respect for the collective, the loving and caring for neighbours or the weak: 'In the present social context, "winners" in the "global economy" voluntarily accommodate social attitudes and behaviour to whatever maintains a competitive advantage over others' (Rumscheidt 1998:37). This consumerist existence not only affects ambition and the need to be a 'winner' as opposed to a loser, but also creates selfish individuals who ask, "How am I doing?", as opposed to, "How are we doing?" (Gerkin 1997:232).

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Added to this, comments Mercer, adolescents are conditioned by consumerism to believe that if they possess all the 'new things' on the market (DVDs, toys, games etc.), they will never be bored, which 'has become the most dreaded human condition' (Mercer 2005:91–92). This results in adolescents being continuously dissatisfied with whatever new things they receive, easily becoming uninterested in them, and therefore putting pressure on their parents for the next novel item. Thus, 'childhood itself comes to be seen as a time defined by constant access to whatever is amusing, fun, and exciting' (Mercer 2005:92). This creates a totally unrealistic, dehumanised and fragmented existence for adolescents, who as a result carry this behaviour into adulthood.

People are dehumanised, and regarded by the market as either a customer or a product (Rumscheidt 1998:5). By reading narratives, such as the *Harry Potter* series, adolescents are given the opportunity not only to be exposed to the degenerative effect of consumerism and power, but also to the selfless alternative stories of Harry, Dumbledore, et cetera, who through their stories reveal something of the Christ discourse. Rowling gives her characters the choice of living the kind of life that offers them honest friendships, fellowships and the importance of living in community, rather than enhancing their popularity. In essence, Rowling pits selfishness against selflessness. She places emphasis on the family, not necessarily the conventional one but the families we create through living a life in community with our fellow neighbours.

Harry Potter as a Christian novel

There are those who do not see any religion in the *Harry Potter* series (Fenske 2006:349), whilst others, (Granger 2008; Griesinger 2002; Le Blanc 2002), consider the series not only to be Christian, but also to uphold and reintroduce Christian morals and values to children and adolescents. It is important to note what Rowling says on the religious aspect of her series. In 2007, after the last book of the series was published, Rowling did an interview in which she stated that the books were based on Christ's story (Gibbs 2007). In the same interview Rowling explained how she spent her childhood 'seeking' faith and attended church regularly, although no one else in her family was a 'believer' (Gibbs 2007). In another interview, Rowling (Ray 2010) admitted that Christianity had been a major inspiration for the *Harry Potter* books:

'To me, the religious parallels have always been obvious,' Rowling said, 'But, I never wanted to talk too openly about it because I thought it might show people just where the story was going'. (Ray 2010)

Rowling explores Christ-like actions with some of her characters and how in their wounded vulnerable states these characters are redeemed and transformed.

Meylahn's discourse of Christ

In his mentioned article Meylahn (2010) explains that in a multidimensional socio-political cultural environment,

people have become fragmented 'selves'. These fragmented selves are because of the disappearance of the 'grand narratives of modernity'. Now, there are multiple narratives and people participating in many of them (Meylahn 2010:1). This means that people exist in 'transit halls', forever taking on different characters, depending on which narrative sphere they have chosen to enter or exit. Meylahn (2010:1) uses Lacan's theory of the four discourses (the master, the university, the hysteric and the analyst) and the basic communication model (four positions: agents, other, truth, product) that Lacan created to discuss these discourses, to 'unpack' the 'phenomenon of the fragmented self'. Lacan based this model on the assumption that communication is always a failure, and that is the reason why we keep talking. We keep talking because we keep searching for the 'truth'. Meylahn (2010:2) explains that Lacan understood truth as 'the half spoken "truth", because "truth" can never completely be put into words; there is always a certain lack or absence between "truth" and the signifier communicating that "truth"'. If people were capable of complete truth, people would have already said everything that could have been said. 'Thus every discourse is open-ended and, because of this structural lack, it continues to turn and repeat itself' (Meylahn 2010:2). Meylahn then goes on to apply the above discourses to current social phenomena that cause the fragmented self.

For the purpose of this article the most relevant discourse that Meylahn uses is that of the hysteric. The discourse of the hysteric is placed in the context of the discourse of the capitalist to examine the 'truth of who the "real me"' is. Lacan's basic communication model is applied to the discourse of the capitalist by placing the 'market as master signifier' in place of the truth, as the market has become 'the global truth' (Meylahn 2010:3). The agent of the truth is 'science and technology', as it is the latter that produces the goods that the market tells us to consume. From the above, Meylahn (2010:3), deduces that 'the market produces its own self-sustaining truth'. Hence the market feeds its own version of the truth to the consumer. This (i.e. my identity is who the market tells me to be, and I cannot be identified without what the market is selling to me) then is the dominant discourse (i.e. the grand narrative and sacred narrative) that controls the social discourse of the self. Therefore, the truth and the product are the same in this discourse.

However, this grand and sacred narrative would fail if people felt they were being controlled. This is how the grand and sacred narrative has convinced the individual that she or he is a free agent with a freedom of choice, as opposed to being a 'slave or victim to the market' (Meylahn 2010:3). Although the individual is free to choose, she or he is actually only free to choose what the market has to offer. So the market, to compensate for its limitation of freedom 'floods the market with objects of desire so that the subject can choose and find its individuality therein' (Meylahn 2010:3). However, these objects of desire have a short lifespan as they are quickly replaced by the next 'must have, can't do without' thing, leaving the individual in a crisis. The individual is either

left behind, as she or he cannot afford to keep up with the latest 'object of desire', or now everyone has the desired object and therefore no longer desires it as it impinges on individuality. Hence, the individual is never truly 'one' with the desired object.

The individual makes her or his truth the object of desire. By doing this the individual attaches her or himself to the object, instead of other individuals, resulting in her or him being lonely, disconnected and fragmented. The desired object is supposed to counter the loneliness:

[H]owever it remains an empty promise, preventing the subject from interpreting itself as a victim of failed promises, which is its own fault resulting from wrong choice of object and it continues to hope the next choice will be more successful. (Meylahn 2010:4)

The lonely, fragmented individual hopes that what she or he possesses is enough to be desired by the master signifier. The master signifier Meylahn (2010:4) are the Jones's whom the individual continuously strives to please and mimic. Rowling's version of individuals who strive to please the Jones's are the Dursleys, who spend much time worrying what the neighbours will think. The Dursleys' house and garden look exactly like all the others up and down Privet Drive and they are sure to keep up with what is going on in their neighbourhood and who has what.

The individual seems to want to be told what to be, so that they can be desired by the Jones's. Therefore, the Dursleys keep a close eye on their neighbours so as to have everything their neighbours have, to be desirable and respected by the neighbourhood and be part of and an accepted part of their community. Harry could cause the Dursleys (if his abnormality, being a wizard, was discovered) to become undesirable and they, therefore, do whatever it takes to keep Harry out of sight, or cause Harry to be the undesirable one. In this set-up the hysteric takes the role of the agent, as the hysteric wants the other (Jones's) to answer the question, 'Who am I?'. The other (Jones's) answers the question by telling the individual what object is most desired right now, by showing off their latest acquisitions. This says to the individual: 'You are the object' and this is your identity (Meylahn 2010:4). Hence the individual becomes who the object tells her or him to be:

The question, 'Who am I?' receives an answer, calls a subject into being as 'what you are' and thus objectifies the subject. The division of subject and object is an irrevocable effect of language and provides the foundation for continuous speaking. (Meylahn 2010:4-5)

The discourse of the hysteric, argues Meylahn (2010:6), 'fits our civilization today'. The individual takes on the identity of the hysteric, who is forever asking the other who to be now, so she or he can be accepted and desired by the other. Although never quite satisfied by the latest desired object, she or he also never gives up on the quest. The hysteric represents who the 'real me' is, a 'debarred, fragmented self' and, as such, an unavoidable fact of the structure of language (Meylahn 2010:5). This fragmented self had in the past been hidden from us through the religious discourse, but now,

as this discourse has started falling away and we stand in the 'transit hall of experience' of various narratives, being introduced to many roles, we are revealed to our real selves. But the individual is frightened of the real me, so they look to things like Facebook, (Meylahn 2010:2-3) as it allows them to have complete control and/or hide the real me, not only from the other, but also from themselves. Also, Facebook is something that the other tells the individual to desire.

Meylahn (2010:9) concludes by proposing an alternative discourse – not a discourse that must be interpreted as a new master signifier – but rather a discourse that talks of 'naked selves' who are accountable for one another. This is a discourse of Christ that embraces the real:

This discourse of Christ is pastoral, as it takes the real desires seriously, without the protection of the phallic signifiers. It is also redemptive, in that it heals the self from its fragmented symptom by helping it to embrace and become the symptom as well as messianic, in that it longs for a community of naked selves who no longer elude themselves. (Meylahn 2010:9)

This community that Meylahn proposes can only be created through love and grace which can deconstruct the need to please and fulfil the others' desires. This will then generate space for the 'real which is still to come'. Therefore, Meylahn's discourse of a wounded, fragmented and naked community looks to a wounded and naked Christ for love and grace to rebuild itself. The desire then becomes a desire for a spiritual way of living, choosing quality of life over a life based only on material possessions. This perfectly echoes Rowling's message in the series and can be used as a tool to interpret the series through the fragmented self, specifically if one focuses on her theme of the Muggles as exemplified by the Dursleys.

Meylahn brought into conversation with Rowling

Meylahn's wounded Christ and Rowling's alternative sacred story display some similarities. However, Meylahn's wounded Christ derives from a pastoral ministering aspect, whilst Rowling's describes a personal spiritual journey. Meylahn, therefore, gives us a useful hermeneutical tool to interpret the actions of some of Rowling's characters.

Meylahn's wounded Christ will be brought into conversation with the actions of the main protagonists, Harry, Dumbledore and Snape, although there are also other characters that show Christ-like actions in the series. When these three characters are at their very weakest they are full of grace, closely resembling the wounded Christ. Through these characters' actions the reader is exposed to and may experience a 'lived religion' of true fellowship that may leak into their 'primary world' (the reader's reality). The reader witnesses these characters' state of weakness and vulnerability, and how their actions crucify the dominant discourse, deconstructing consumerism and power and resurrecting a community that places its values in the Christ discourse. Rowling constantly challenges her protagonists with the choice of Christ versus Caesar. Caesar here represents the 'big other', and Rowling

goes back to the original discourse of Christ, the wounded, undesirable Christ, whom many loathed for questioning their laws. This Christ shares a connection with Harry who is often undesirable to those whom do not like to have the big other challenged, such as for example the Dursleys, the Ministry of Magic and Voldemort's supporters. In fact, in the last book, *Harry Potter and the deathly hallows*, Harry is referred to as undesirable number one (Rowling 2007:208) by the Ministry of Magic.

The discourse of consumerism and power, fragments and dictates to people, whilst the discourse of Christ seeks to liberate people from discourses that try to control people. By symbolically crucifying the dominant discourse of the consumerist West, Rowling allows for a re-birth – a resurrection – of a free world that is no longer bound to things, but acts out of love for its neighbours. Harry and the 'good' wizards (those who oppose Voldemort) represent what Meylahn (2010:9) refers to as naked selves, who want to be accountable for, and to one another.

Harry the fragmented 'seeker'

Although Harry is not represented as a Christ figure, Rowling often gives us glimpses of the Gospel and of Christ's love, death and resurrection through Harry's story:

Harry is not a fictional messiah or a Jesus-double as much as he is an Everyman figure ... He struggles, but by force of the example of people (and one house-elf) who believe and those who do not, he chooses the right path of obedience, love, and sacrifice. (Granger 2008:233–241)

For humanity to be reinstated to God, Christ had to be crucified and thus sacrificed in order for the restoration to take place. Christ's death revealed to humankind his love for them; as was Christ's weakness an act of love. This sacrificial act on Christ's part is a very powerful expression of love towards humanity.

It is because of the actions of Dumbledore and Snape that Harry understands the depth of these men's integrity, helping him to completely accept who they were, and the pivotal role they had in who he has become: this also allows Harry the courage to accept who he is, to truly know himself and his self-worth. All these aspects of the other characters narratives (including the sacrifices of Dobby and Lily), have been woven into Harry's personal narrative, becoming a part of his identity and thus his spirituality. These aspects of narrative have served to keep Harry humble, as he now knows that great men are not born, but struggle to wisdom. Dumbledore was devastated by guilt, but once he has confessed to Harry at King's Cross he is free of that guilt. Ironically this burden that each is carrying also makes them the exceptional people they are. In other words, suffering and overcoming that suffering may lead to Christ-like actions. The humility gained by Harry shows the reader that by accepting others as they are and by them accepting you as you are, the opportunity presents itself instantaneously to truly know Christ through another person without being

eluded by material gain. These characters' actions of sacrifice strongly echo Christ's sacrifice of freeing humanity from their sinful existence. The Christ event, as Meylahn (2012:43) points out, 'in weakness and vulnerability ... deconstructs the dominant laws that hold people captive, through both the incarnation and solidarity with the marginalized as well as through the crucifixion'.

We see a glimpse of Christ's sacrifice, when Harry allows himself to be killed by Voldemort so that the wizarding world, as well as the Muggle world can be restored to a world without Voldemort, his lust for power and murder of Muggles (whom Voldemort wants to rid the world of). When Harry 'dies', he meets Dumbledore at King's Cross. In *Harry Potter and the deathly hallows*, Dumbledore tells Harry that he is the true master of death, because the true master does not seek to run away from death. He accepts he must die, and understands that 'there are far, far worse things in the living world than dying' (Rowling 2007:577). Therefore, rather than watch his friends die, Harry chooses to stop it by allowing himself to be killed by Voldemort. But Harry's death actually results in the evil piece of soul (Voldemort's soul) dying, allowing Harry to be 'resurrected' – a new man without evil attached to him, free of the burden he has been carrying around since he was a year old.

Harry is wounded and fragmented through all that he has endured in both the Muggle world, through Dursleys abusive way towards him, and the wizarding world, from Voldemort and his supporters. These wounds help a fragmented Harry to act with love and grace when he returns from King's Cross to do away with Voldemort and restore order to the fragmented wizarding community – a community that he loves and who love him in return. The wounded, fragmented and naked community, with Harry, will now embrace the real through love and grace, deconstructing the threat that Voldemort (big other) had over them, to rebuild itself. Harry co-authors his story with the help and love of others and does not undertake this journey on his own. Harry co-authors his story in a community. The community where Harry encounters fellowship, love and acceptance for the first time in his life (the Weasley's and the other undesirables) is where the reader encounters a powerful glimpse of a Christ-like community, free of the pretentious discourse of those who try to keep up with the consumerist discourse.

In this way, Rowling awakens the readers from the spell of consumerism and power and reminds them that love for others and the love of others for them, is far more precious than to buy things that may impress others into loving them. Therefore, like the desire in Meylahn's discourse of Christ, the desire of the wizarding community is for fellowship and all it takes to look after that fellowship. Rowling, as Tolkien (2008:64) says, has not tried to delude the reader, but has created something pure, showing how greed cannot lead to love, grace or the healing of the fragmented self. With the *Harry Potter* series, Rowling opens a space for an alternative construction of identity and spirituality for adolescents to use.



Blake (2002:71–72) points out that Harry, regardless of being ‘wizard cloaked and wand in hand’, is like any other contemporary kid, as he desires ‘the pleasure of retail’, like wanting the latest broomstick. Harry’s desire for the latest broomstick makes him human, and adolescents can easily identify with Harry wanting something. However, he never puts material wants over any friendship and would rather have friendship than money. Harry always shares his money and material things with his friends. On his first train ride to Hogwarts, he is thrilled to have someone, Ron, to share the food that he buys from the trolley: ‘It was a nice feeling, sitting there with Ron, eating their way through all Harry’s pasties and cakes’ (Rowling 1997:76). Harry is happy for the companionship shown to him by Ron. Although Harry has been deprived of both money and friends, he instinctively knows where to place value. Harry also chooses to be friends with Ron, rather than Draco, whom Harry immediately recognises as a bully who likes people with influence, having had lots of experience with his cousin Dudley (Rowling 1997:81). Now, Harry has true companionship through Ron, something that cannot be bought. Adolescents experience Harry’s delight at finding money and friends. They also experience the importance of the ‘joy’ of having friends over having money and desirable objects. Through expressing joy in their stories, writers, Tolkien (2008:246) tells us, allow the reader to experience ‘source-reality’ (Christ). Therefore, through the joy of Harry finding companionship, the reader also glimpses Christ and the friendship and companionship that comes from knowing Christ: through a friendship a person can experience the joy of Christ.

Dumbledore the fragmented ‘wise man’

On encountering Dumbledore for the first time in the first book, the reader is mesmerised by a powerful, mysterious and wise wizard. However, by the last book the reader is shown a man who made many mistakes as a young adolescent and then spent the rest of his life regretting that he could not change. Dumbledore is also a fragmented character: to the wizarding community, for most of his career, Dumbledore is viewed as an all-powerful wizard, a role he maintains in school, and the Ministry of Magic; yet, he is also mortified and wounded by his past actions that resulted in the death of his sister and estrangement with his brother.

To Harry, Dumbledore is the wise grandfather and father figure he never had. Towards the end of the first book, Dumbledore creates a space for Harry to re-imagine his parents’ sacrifice for him. From then onwards, Harry knows that he was loved. Love becomes the ‘space-opener’ that Harry needs to move forward and re-imagine a life filled with love when his parents were alive. When Dumbledore is killed by Snape, Harry is crushed: not only has he lost another parent figure (having lost Sirius first), Hogwarts will also never be the same again for him and many of the other students. In other words, Harry feels as though he has lost not only a father, but the only true home he has ever

had. Harry trusts and respects Dumbledore and, although towards the end he has some doubts and is even disappointed in Dumbledore, he remains loyal to Dumbledore to the very end. Harry is ‘Dumbledore’s man through and through’ (Rowling 2005:326).

Dumbledore dies in *Harry Potter and the half-blood prince*, and the reader finds out in *Harry Potter and the deathly hallows* – through Snape’s memory – that he had asked Snape to kill him for three reasons: so that Snape remains Voldemort’s faithful servant to keep Harry alive; so that he can die quickly and with dignity; and to keep Draco from committing murder and ripping his soul apart. Therefore, Dumbledore sacrifices himself for Snape, Harry and Draco, rather than cling to life as long as possible. For him, his responsibilities towards Harry, Snape and Draco are far more important than a few more days of life. Dumbledore is a man of integrity, honouring his responsibilities and symbolises to the reader what it actually means to live a life of integrity without fail. Although Dumbledore made a huge mistake as a young man, once he decided to turn his life around, he re-storied his life to live according to different values to his life’s end. To troubled adolescents Dumbledore can become a symbol of how your life can be completely turned around if you choose to do so, and shows that even great people make bad choices.

When Harry meets Dumbledore at King’s Cross, in the last book, Dumbledore stands before Harry, wounded and naked, no longer fragmented playing more than one role, namely the role of the great wizard, and the role of a man living with regrets. At King’s Cross, through sharing his remorse with a wounded and naked Harry, Dumbledore is restored to the great wizard that Harry loves and respects, more so for being honest, wounded and naked. Harry honours Dumbledore a few years later by calling his youngest son Albus. Through Dumbledore’s wounded and naked state, the reader experiences how confession to another can allow you to re-story your life and allow you to become whole, free of delusions and fragmentation. Meylahn (2012:66) calls Dumbledore’s confession and act of selflessness, ‘transformational’, a ‘re-birth’, a death of the ‘old-self’:

This openness to God’s involvement in the community (Christ event) brings about radical transformation in the sense of re-birth, dying to the old self (under the dominant myth) and being born as a new creation, liberated by the power of the cross. (Meylahn 2012:66)

Dumbledore crucifies his youthful lust for power, and was reborn free of the dominant discourses need for status and power – a liberated man seeing only the downfall of the dominant discourse. From then on he continuously tries to awake others in his community to the downfall of power and status, seeking to protect those not only in his community who are undesirable, but also the Muggle world. The final time the reader encounters Dumbledore is at King’s Cross, a powerful symbol of his liberation and transformation through the cross. Transformation and liberation are presented by Rowling as actions that can only be achieved by choosing to do so, not through some magical incantation



or expensive object. By focusing on confession to another, Rowling gives the reader a look into the intimate side of fellowship. Confessing to another, something that a person deems to be embarrassing or hurtful, takes courage, trust and sometimes even a leap of faith; it requires that you stand naked before another. Therefore, to Rowling friendship and fellowship are essential parts of being human. Through these fellowships and friendships a person is given the integrity to be liberated from something that may be binding them to fear, embarrassment and so on. Even Dudley, through thanking Harry in the last book for saving him from the Dementors, is liberated from being a Dursley (Rowling 2007:39). By shaking Harry's hand and by being concerned for Harry where his parents only show concern for themselves, Dudley is redeemed to Harry and to the reader.

Snapé the fragmented 'protector'

Snapé has an ambiguous nature, and the reader is never truly sure of how good or evil he is, until the last book. Snapé always appears to be the villain: from the first book, Harry knows that 'Snapé didn't dislike Harry – he *hated* him' (Rowling 1997:101). The truth is he never does really like Harry, whom he often refers to as 'Potter's son'. In conversation with Dumbledore, Snapé says Harry is 'mediocre, arrogant as his father, a determined rule-breaker, delighted to find himself famous, attention seeking and impertinent' (Rowling 2007:545).

Snapé is the character the reader loves to hate, and he is also the character that surprises and touches the reader through his choices and actions in the end. The reader discovers that it is love that has motivated Snapé to sacrifice himself by playing the double agent on Dumbledore's orders, to take care of Harry for Lily to the very end. The turning point for Snapé to play a double agent and turn against Voldemort is caused by Voldemort killing Lily, although Snapé had asked Voldemort to spare Lily's life. Snapé is beside himself with grief and remorse, promising Dumbledore to help him protect Harry for his beloved Lily. Through Snapé's love for Lily, Harry was protected by the man whom he never trusted and often hated. Love has had a powerful impact on Harry's safety through his mother. When Dumbledore questions Snapé's love for Lily after all these years since her death, Snapé's reply is that he has always loved Lily (Rowling 2007:552). Snapé proves this to Dumbledore by showing him his Patronus, which is exactly that of Lily's, a silver doe (Rowling 2007:551).

By loving Lily, Snapé's actions are good and noble, instead of being that of a death eater and a faithful servant to Voldemort. Snapé is redeemed to Harry and the reader for his choice to keep on loving Lily although she never returns his love, nor does Snapé stop loving Lily after she dies. The character of Snapé, say Deavel and Deavel, shows that love is a choice, and not just an emotion, as Snapé continuously chooses to do good for the sake of others 'despite his emotional indifference to or even dislike of these individuals, testifies to the strength of his love for Lily' (Deavel & Deavel 2010:55). Snapé for most of the series is a fragmented self: he dislikes

Harry yet protects him for his beloved Lily; and plays a dual role, that of a death eater and also a member of the Order of the Phoenix. Snapé never wants anyone to perceive him as weak or kind.

When Harry enters Snapé's memory through the pensieve, in *Harry Potter and the deathly hallows*, Harry sees Snapé having a conversation with Dumbledore about Lily. Lily is dead and Dumbledore asks a remorseful Snapé to help him protect Harry. Snapé agrees, but makes Dumbledore give his word never to tell anyone. Dumbledore answers as follows: 'My word, Severus, that I shall never reveal the best of you?' (Rowling 2007:545). Snapé's best is his weakness, his love for Lily, which Snapé perceives as a terrible flaw on his part, and yet it is his saving grace to Harry and to the reader. In the pensieve both Harry and the reader encounter a wounded and naked Snapé, no longer eluded by Voldemort's power, after Lily's death. We see how Snapé's relationship with Dumbledore is reborn in grace. Also, through Snapé's choice to protect Harry, sacrificing himself to do so, Snapé achieves what Millbank (2005:5) calls 'innocence', as he has defended Harry's innocence: Snapé, having defended Harry, develops his spirituality in an 'unsullied manner'.

Snapé stays faithful to Dumbledore and the memory of Lily to the end. Harry and the reader also see Snapé with reborn eyes, forgiving him for his pride. Both Snapé and Harry are liberated through Snapé's confession. Harry let go of all the hatred and anger he has felt for Snapé since he was 11 years old; he also understands how true love cannot allow any more harm to come to those whom he loves. This liberates Harry to move on and do what he needs to do. Snapé's confession, through giving his memory to Harry, allows him to die a whole person – free from fragmentation. Snapé dies only as the man who loved Lily. Again, confession to another helps not only the character, but also the reader to understand that by putting a problem in context you may be liberated, as Snapé was, from the role of traitor to the role of saviour. Rowling continuously emphasises people's ability to transform if they choose to do so, and Snapé becomes the ultimate symbol of transformation.

Whilst Harry and Dumbledore have some firm friends and supporters who rally around them and their cause – to get rid of Voldemort – Snapé has no one. No one likes or trusts him, not even the members of the Order of the Phoenix. Snapé is undesirable to most of the other characters. People, like Professor McGonagall (who is a member of the Order of the Phoenix and a school teacher at Hogwarts), only tolerates Snapé because Dumbledore says that he has reason to believe Snapé's loyalty (Rowling 2005:574). Yet, it is Snapé who makes the biggest sacrifice, for the boy he never liked, and the woman who never returned his love. Snapé shows Christ-like sacrificial love, more than even Harry and Dumbledore, who sacrifice themselves for their loved ones. Snapé's sacrifice touches Harry and the reader the most, as Snapé chooses to die to protect Harry, regardless of his dislike for him. His sacrifice does not gain him any glory or material gain. Snapé's sacrifice, like that of Christ's, is one of choice. The reader here gleams the joy of love (Christ's love): something pure without intention or gain.

Conclusion

Meylahn's description of the fragmented and wounded individual is perfectly echoed in Rowling's three main characters. These characters allow the adolescent reader to gleam the joy of love (Christ's love), something pure without intention or gain. This alternative discourse is in opposition to the materialistic world of power and consumption that adolescents exist in. Harry, Dumbledore and Snape start off in the series as fragmented and wounded people. This state leaves these characters vulnerable to liberate and transform not only themselves into whole people again, but also the wizarding community. With these characters Rowling renders material things irrelevant and trivial to loved ones, crucifying consumerism and power, thereby resurrecting a community and fellowship. The healing of a wounded community looks to a wounded Christ for love and grace within fellowship and a community to rebuild itself, and is embraced by the wizarding community after the death of Voldemort.

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Authors' contributions

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