Harry Potter and the Specular Selves: the Life and After-life of the Image

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Statement of Originality

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Abstract

This thesis examines the “specular selves” of J.K. Rowling’s Harry Potter sequence. The specular self is a term I employ to describe a form of the double that is, thanks to the magical technology of the sequence, able to exist independently of the original subject in visual or specular form. Throughout this thesis, I demonstrate that this form of the visual not only saturates each novel but is, in fact, central to the overall sequence.

In investigating Rowling’s diverse depictions of the specular I employ an ekphrastic analysis that reveals significant variations in the evolving representation and function of the specular selves. From enchanted portraits to magical incarnations, a various range of specular entities influences the narrative progression, character development, and ideological worldview of the series in fascinating and often unexpected ways. I argue that Rowling’s narrative is dependent upon these specular entities from the very first novel, and I examine their ongoing evolution, growing significance, and increasing complexity as the sequence unfolds. In Chapter One I focus on the enchanted portraits and moving pictures of the wizarding world, revealing the importance of the specular to Rowling’s sequence and its centrality to narrative progression. In Chapter Two, I examine how specular technology in the form of magical mirrors provides an extra level of depth to the idea of the specular while working as crucial instruments of character revelation. Chapter Three considers Horcruxes as a form of specularity unique to the Harry Potter sequence. These specular selves bestow immortality on their creator, and, because they threaten to breach the boundaries between specular and corporeal, they are the most malignant and parasitic forms of specularity depicted in the sequence. Linking narrative progression with character revelation, Rowling’s Horcruxes provide vital
insights into the nature of life, death and the after-life, and in doing so work to establish
the moral and ideological world view of the novels. Finally, in Chapter Four I examine
the magical incarnations and mechanisms that invert variations of the specular self
explored in the first three chapters. These incarnations continuously transgress the
boundaries I explore in my first three chapters between the specular and corporeal, life
and death. The visual entities examined in this chapter paradoxically challenge and
reinforce the binary logic of the sequence’s moral worldview, while subverting narrative
expectations and providing startling character reversals as the sequence reaches its
conclusion.
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Introduction

This thesis examines J.K. Rowling’s depiction of the “specular self”, a term I employ to refer to a specific form of visual image which is central to Rowling’s Harry Potter sequence. I argue that Rowling’s varied portrayal of specular selves plays a vital but previously under-acknowledged role throughout the sequence. The specular self as I define it is a form of the double that, thanks to the magical technology of the sequence, is able to exist independently of the original subject in specular form. Put simply, the specular self is a literary depiction of a visual image that participates in the phenomena known as the “spectacle” because it relates to vision and – as the sequence unfolds – is increasingly connected with material manifestation. I demonstrate throughout this thesis that varieties of this form of specularity effectively saturate each novel. The predominance of the specular self within the world of Rowling’s sequence establishes it as a part of the spectacle of the magical world that the protagonist of the sequence, Harry Potter, enters in the first novel. As the sequence progresses, Rowling’s specular selves begin to function, in their more complex forms of Horcruxes and magical incarnations, as varieties of the “spectral”. The varied forms, properties, and behaviours of the specular selves that I explore in the chapters that follow ultimately provide a platform for meta-commentary on the very nature of the “speculative” in Rowling’s work.

The specular selves, as visual representations, are varied in my thesis: that is, I start in Chapter One with the magical variation of portraits and photographs – traditionally “still” images – which is where my ekphrastic analysis begins. Ekphrasis, W.J.T.
Mitchell explains, is the “verbal representation of visual representation” (696). In this sense, the entire thesis is an exercise in ekphrastic analysis and it is appropriate because, as Bartsch and Elsner argue, it offers “countless opportunities for the discovery of meaning” (i). When I employ ekphrastic analysis most explicitly again, in Chapter Four, we shall see that Rowling’s visual portrayal of spectral entities is almost three-dimensional, and it is the manner in which Rowling portrays them that permits an ekphrasitic understanding of their narrative functions. Chapter Two discusses the specular self as a fragmented mirror image that is vital to revealing crucial facets of self-hood, and, as reflection, this brand of specular self attains an added layer of depth via the looking glass. The most unique brand of specularity that Rowling incorporates throughout the sequence is a malignant variety termed “Horcruxes”: as discussed in Chapter Three, the visual entity in this instance resides within a physical object, therefore enabling this type of specular self to manifest itself within the corporeal world.

I argue that Rowling’s narrative is dependent upon specular selves from the very first novel, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*, and I examine their ongoing evolution, growing significance, and increasing complexity as the sequence unfolds. The Harry Potter sequence eschews modern technology, and this is partially due to the setting of the novels: Harry Potter’s parents died in 1981, we learn in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (364), so the first novel is likely set during 1991-92, pre-dating the digital world as we are currently familiar with it. This marked absence of contemporary digital technology informs Alison Lurie’s suggestion that one manner in which the novels are enjoyed is “as the celebration of the preindustrial world: Hogwarts Castle is lit by torches and heated by fires, and mail is carried by owls of different sizes” (118). Rather than portraying modern forms of communication, Rowling instead constructs
elaborate magical mechanisms that function as alternative technologies. These, in turn, afford a speculative investigation of the human condition as the primary characters of the sequence reach maturity.

As a visual mechanism possessing the power of movement and influence, earlier instances of what I am calling the specular self have appeared in popular Victorian works, such *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) and *Dracula* (1897). I interrogate where appropriate the intertextual resonances that inform Rowling’s particular depiction of specular selves, exploring how these visual entities represent an evolution of the double as it has previously appeared in supernatural or Gothic fiction. In the Harry Potter novels, the specular self – as it first appears – can be initially be viewed as simply contributing to the charm and magical atmosphere of the wizarding world, but it becomes further complicated as the sequence unfolds. From enchanted portraits to magical incarnations, a conspicuous and diverse range of specular entities guide the narrative progression, character development, and the ideological worldview of the series.

Although Harry Potter scholars have not yet discussed either the prominence of the specular in the sequence or its significance, some critics have commented on narrative and thematic elements relevant to my analysis. For example, Mary Pharr raises the question of doubling when she examines the similarities between the title character of the sequence and the sixteen-year-old “memory” of Tom Riddle (an earlier version of Lord Voldemort, the primary antagonist of the sequence) that Harry Potter encounters in

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1 See also: Théophile Gautier’s short story “The Coffee Pot” (1831).
Pharr comments that despite their similarities, “no matter how often Harry escapes his seeming doppelgänger, Voldemort will likely never acknowledge their primary difference: the strength Harry receives from his conscious decision not to become another Heir of Slytherin” (64). I take this line of investigation further by demonstrating how Rowling constructs their bond not only with the lightning-shaped scar that marks Harry’s forehead, but with various forms of specular selves that are depicted throughout the sequence. For example, Harry’s encounter with the specular remnant of Voldemort’s sixteen-year-old past self not only establishes that Voldemort has created a specular double of himself, it also implies that Harry may share a more complicated connection with the Dark Lord. Pharr considers this proposition before suggesting that the personal choices Harry and Voldemort make actually negate their seeming doppelgänger connection. I argue instead that Harry is revealed to be a double of Voldemort because they are physically linked by the specular device known as the Horcrux. The visual depiction of their appearance, as well as their connection via the Horcrux, demonstrates a deeper mirroring between the two characters than the superficial similarities observed in the first two books.

The characters of Harry Potter and Lord Voldemort are, in many ways, twisted reflections of each other, as their specular connection reveals. Karl Miller, writing on the double in literary history, links the “double” and the “orphan”, arguing that to bring them together is “to unite submission and aggression, freedom and impediment. Theirs is a proximity which is sometimes an identity, and it depicts the place of the individual in one or more of the environments that befall him” (39). Miller also refers to Freud, who
thought that the primordial double may have been the immortal soul, and that, having given promise of eternal life, the double later became deathly. Orphan, double and flight have certainly been expressions, in modern times, of an interest in avoiding and mitigating the fact of physical death: as the only complete escape from common life, death has been desired, disliked and equivocated. (48)

Miller’s writings here apply to both Harry Potter and Lord Voldemort, because both characters are “orphans” and, at times, function as doubles of each other. If the primordial double was the immortal soul that offered eternal life, then Voldemort’s decision to mutilate his inner self and create doubles of himself does become deadly. The fact that Harry Potter contains a double of Voldemort within him – a Horcrux – complicates their status as doubles even further.

Pharr suggests that what ultimately separates Harry and Voldemort as doubles is choice; more specifically, it is the different ways they choose to approach (to accept or reject) death that makes them truly distinct. In her examination of the Harry Potter sequence M. Katherine Grimes explains how “death, the obverse of birth, is even more of a mystery. We have both a fear of death and an obsession with it, partly because no one can really explain it” (120). It is death that influences Harry’s true desire – to be reunited with his deceased loved ones, whom he encounters in specular form throughout the sequence; likewise, it is Voldemort’s fear of death that drives his actions and choices. Dumbledore advises Harry to live in the “real world” after a specular encounter sees him begin to obsess over his deceased parents, but the dead – via the image –
continue to stay with Harry throughout the sequence, appearing dramatically in specular form when he most needs them.

Her complex treatment of specularity, with emphasis on the visual and multiple manifestations, enables Rowling to explore the human condition by investigating familiar concepts such as love and death. The specular selves of the sequence reflect not only how Rowling refreshes the trope of the double, but also other familiar and traditional literary devices that are embedded within the Harry Potter novels which no doubt contribute to their popularity. In identifying what is behind the popularity and endurance of these themes, I refer to J.R.R. Tolkien who, in “On Fairy Stories”, suggests that when pursuing the “origin of stories (however qualified),” one needs “to ask what is the origin of language and of the mind” (6). Tolkien then identifies the familiar elements of fairy stories, such as: “…detachable heart, or swan-robins, magic rings, wicked stepmothers, and even fairies themselves…” (6), many of which are recognisable in one form or another throughout Rowling’s sequence. I refer again to Grimes, who argues that “Mythology is our earliest form of literature. Fairy tales are probably our second. More realistic narratives came much later, just as more representational painting followed long after the symbolic paintings found in caves,” (121) and so, it can be argued, “that fairy tales grew from mythology and that more realistic literature grew from these tales” (121-22). The novels that make up the Harry Potter sequence combine the elements Grimes writes of (literature informed by mythology and fairy tale), and this contributes to their enduring popularity. Despite the worldwide fame of the novels due to the effectiveness of this strategy, I suggest that the prominence of the visual and the specular has been overlooked when analysing the Harry Potter sequence. By investigating the differing yet vital functions of Rowling’s
specular selves, and highlighting their initially hidden significance, I aim to demonstrate the neglected yet integral role that the specular plays throughout the Harry Potter sequence.

In the world of Harry Potter criticism, which in itself is vast and varied, several scholars have dealt with aspects of the visual: at times my topic touches on those that have already been investigated, but we ultimately take different roads. For example, Judith P. Robertson discusses Rowling’s use of abject imagery in depicting aspects of the magical world, but her investigation does not extend to the Horcruxes that Lord Voldemort creates, as mine does in Chapter Three of this thesis. Noel Chevalier analyses the relationship between magic, technology and fragmentation of the body in the Harry Potter sequence; however, Chevalier does not perceive visual aspect as being vital to character revelation, as I show that it is when I examine the fragmented self of the magical mirror (in Chapter Two). Likewise, the examination by Pharr and others of doubles in the sequence has not focused on their specifically visual operation, and has been treated in isolation from other forms of the specular as I examine it here. Peter Ciaccio, for example, has discussed spectral variants of the specular selves, such as Horcruxes, and considered how moral lessons derived from Rowling’s use of this device may be aligned with Christian mythology. Again, however, these studies neglect the specifically visual operation of important literary devices in the sequence. Suman Gupta, in Re-Reading Harry Potter (2009), argues that “the two key devices which bring about the resolution of the Harry Potter series in the final books – Horcruxes and the power of love – deepen the concept of innateness around which the earlier books
had already been structured” (173). I agree with Gupta’s statement; however, I take the concept further by arguing that the “devices” that result in the sequence’s narrative and emotional resolution depend upon Rowling’s idiosyncratic evocation of specular selves.

I indicate above that the specular self is a mechanism that includes some familiar concepts, such as the double, but it is the specular self’s less considered visual component that locates it as participating in the phenomena known as “the spectacle”. The spectacle, Guy Debord explains, “… is not a collection of images;” rather, “it is a social relation between people that is mediated by images” (7). The spectacle represents a dominant model of life for Muggle (non-magical) readers and informs the narrative of the Harry Potter sequence in what are initially subtle ways. I demonstrate, however, that the spectacle in the form of specular selves, while maintaining social relations within the magical world, is ultimately also embedded within the narrative structure:

The spectacle, like modern society itself, is at once united and divided. The unity of each is based on violent divisions. But when this contradiction emerges in the spectacle, it is itself contradicted by a reversal of its meaning: the division it presents is unitary, while the unity it presents is divided. (Debord 16)

Such divisions are literalised in Rowling’s sequence, where the visual takes on a “life” of its own, dividing (or replicating) itself from an original subject. Chapter Three demonstrates the evolution of the visual in the sequence: here, a specular fragment is able to be divided from the original self in the form of a Horcrux. As I show throughout this thesis, such separation becomes more violent as the specular grows paradoxically

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2 Colin Manlove, in The Order of Harry Potter, addresses the cohesion of Rowling’s sequence.
further united with and divided from the corporeal world of the primary characters. In a sense, a cloning of the self occurs, and this is often accompanied by a violent division (or death). Jean Baudrillard, in investigating cloning, argues that the “subject is also gone” because “identical duplication puts an end to division,” (97) but in Rowling’s treatment of doubles, division does remain and the subject becomes splintered. The Horcruxes that I examine are in fact not “clones” as Baudrillard defines the term. Instead, they are copies of a subject captured at a moment in time: the subject continues to move forward in time while the visualised self remains preserved, existing outside of time, visible in reality and able to interact with it, but never truly a part of it. How the divisions and replications occur is the result of the specular technology that Rowling constructs throughout the sequence. The various forms they take each have their own significance and consequence; as doubles, the specular selves have a destabilising effect on character and narrative.

Harry Potter frequently encounters his double in specular form, and this helps produce the complex relationship that Rowling establishes between the image and death from the first novel. Dimitris Vardoulakis defines the doppelgänger as a “divided subject,” explaining how it is the “relationality [of the doppelgänger] that establishes the subject’s identity and difference” (37). The doppelgänger is ultimately “shown to be implicated in the structure of writing,” (Vardoulakis 131), and, as I shall demonstrate, throughout the Harry Potter sequence, the doppelgänger – or double – is not only evoked by Rowling, but is created through the act of writing within the narrative itself. This occurs most noticeably when a visual fragment of Voldemort, Tom Riddle’s diary, begins to corrupt the narrative of the second novel, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of*
It is during this novel that Hermione Granger encounters a specular mirror of her own in the form of Moaning Myrtle, the resident ghost of one of the many bathrooms to feature throughout the Harry Potter sequence. June Cummins argues that Myrtle, as a ghost, “always hovers between life and death, between having a physical body and not being visible” (188), and because she is a ghost, Myrtle is “*stuck* in a permanent Gothic mode” (190). Hermione briefly sought solace in the bathroom during *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*, briefly becoming the “damsel in distress” when confronted by a troll (Cummins 184; *Philosopher’s Stone* 176), but she is able to quickly progress from this moment whereas Myrtle remains trapped as the weeping teenage girl forever in the bathroom. Hermione, then, is briefly a copy of Myrtle but as Cummins argues, “Hermione can exit the Gothic mode,” while “Myrtle is sacrificed to the Gothic plot” and, consequently, “stays in the toilet forever” (190). As a specular entity, Myrtle is fixed while Hermione, a corporeal entity, is able to move forward: as a result, she finds herself confronted by what was once a reflection of her own insecurity during encounters with Moaning Myrtle, but these instances ultimately lack the malice and terror that the doubles of Voldemort evoke.

While the German word “doppelgänger” is perhaps the most well-known term for the concept of the double in literary analysis, similar concepts exist in other cultures. Of particular interest to my final chapter is the Norwegian equivalent: “vardøgr.” While much has been written on “the doppelgänger,” the vardøgr remains a lesser-known relative of the double. I identify the “Patronus Charm”, which appears in the sequence from the third novel, as a form of vardøgr. Leiter identifies the vardøgr as “a specific variation of the doppelgänger phenomenon” and argues that both “terms can be
subsumed under the general heading ‘apparitions of the living’” (622). What Leiter terms the “so-called crisis apparition” occurs when “the image and/or the voice of a family member or loved one” is sensed by someone during “a moment of life-threatening crisis” (622). This description applies to Rowling’s depiction of the specular dead, as I demonstrate in Chapter Four. Instances of the “crisis apparition” occur throughout Rowling’s sequence, with one example occurring during a wand duel between Harry and Voldemort in *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*. In this encounter, spectral forms of the Dark Lord’s most recent victims appear during the wand phenomenon known as “Priori Incantatem” to support and guide Harry to safety while simultaneously haunting Voldemort. This incident reinforces Harry’s dependence upon the specular – his desire to recall the dead – which Rowling has established since the first novel, while underscoring Voldemort’s fear of death. This fear is what has lead Voldemort to split and double his very essence in the form of Horcruxes.

Robert Rogers writes that while the double is “sporadic rather than omnipresent in literature, the incidence is great enough to make it impossible for anyone to mention all occurrences of it” (viii). Likewise, in this introduction and the thesis that follows I am unable to mention every appearance of the double in the Harry Potter sequence, in which Rowling’s use of the concept is wide-ranging, varied, and prominent. Because specular selves heavily populate the sequence, so too do the variations of the double that Rowling employs at different stages during the narrative. Rogers acknowledges how “casual familiarity with the double in literature has bred a strange mixture of contempt and awe, contempt for what seems like a facile device of melodrama and awe at the uncanny feelings which exposure to doubles can evoke” (2). The prevalence of the
double, particularly in specular form, throughout the Harry Potter sequence demonstrates both its resilience and ongoing attraction.

I consider the enchanted portraits and moving photographs depicted in the Harry Potter sequence to be visual doubles in that they are not only a copy but a separate extension of a person capable of living on in a world only glimpsed through a frame. A.S. Byatt argues that a “painted portrait is an artist’s record, construction, of a physical presence” that “exists outside time and records the time of its making” (1). In the Harry Potter sequence, enchanted portraits are initially seen as part of the charming and magical world of Hogwarts School, but, as with other variants of the specular, their depiction grows more complex in later novels. For example, it is revealed that the portraits of former Headmasters and Headmistresses that reside within Hogwarts School appear at the moment of the subject’s death. Upon their appearance, the specular copy of the deceased exists outside of time and records the time of its making by marking the death of the specular self depicted on its canvas. A similar process of specular death takes place in Roald Dahl’s The Witches (1983), when an evil witch traps a young girl, Solveg, in the family painting. Nobody ever witnesses Solveg moving in the picture: however, she appears in a multitude of different places, seeming to grow older until, after fifty-four years, she disappears from the picture altogether (Dahl 12-3). In the case of The Witches, there is no after-life in the canvas: instead, the portrait is used as a means of allowing a family to watch their daughter live out her life alone and finally vanish.
Clearly, Rowling is not the first author to employ portraits as a narrative device; referring to the character of Milly Theale from Henry James’s *The Wings of the Dove* (1902) for instance, Byatt describes how novelists “have played in different ways with characters who use portraits from other times and places as temporary mirrors to see themselves with difference” (5). Byatt comments on “the paradoxical timelessness and deadness of portraits”, and argues that the portrait is a paradox “representing both life, death, and life-in-death, a kind of false eternity” (5-6). While it is never made clear that all of the portraits featured throughout the Harry Potter sequence are those of the dead, they do suggest a paradoxical representation of life, death, life-in-death, and a false eternity, all of which I examine in my first chapter. By examining the pseudo-world that is glimpsed through such portraits, I trace the initial encounters the primary characters have with these specular selves before focusing on the aspects that truly define the inhabitants of the portraits as existing in a life-after-death.

In investigating Rowling’s diverse depictions of the specular in Chapter One, “Pictures Behaving Badly,” I employ an ekphrastic analysis that reveals significant variations in the representation, function and consequence of the enchanted portraits and moving photographs that feature prominently throughout the sequence. As I demonstrate, Rowling’s visual entities earn the title of specular “self” because of how they are portrayed to the reader: Rowling depicts them as characters in their own right. I begin by examining the protagonist’s initial exposure to enchanted portraits in the magical world. Laura M. Sager Eidt classifies material into four categories as a means of “comparing and distinguishing different types of ekphrasis” (44). Eidt explains:
My system comprises four categories that are ample enough to be applicable to poetry, novel, drama, and film, yet different enough to minimize overlaps, although I am aware that overlaps cannot always be avoided. (44)

Eidt’s four categories are attributive ekphrasis, depictive ekphrasis, interpretive ekphrasis and dramatic ekphrasis. Dramatic ekphrasis is, Eidt argues, “the most visual of all four,” (56) and this category emerges as particularly relevant when I examine the key specular character of Phineas Nigellus Black (a former Headmaster introduced in the fifth Harry Potter novel), who is represented very powerfully in visual and dramatic terms. I consider how the portraits exhibit both a sense of self-preservation and an ability to provide surveillance by looking back at the world, just as the world looks at them, before investigating the type of immortality that these portraits offer in the specular after-life.

Finally, in this chapter I highlight the distinction between the two realms of the specular and the corporeal: one portrait in particular hints at the boundary between these realms being challenged, but it is never truly breached. The initial appearance of the specular, in the form of enchanted portraits and moving photographs, sees Rowling establish visual foundations in atmospheric ways, but I go on to demonstrate how the specular selves contribute to narrative and character, particularly in later novels, and ultimately reveal how vital elements of the overall sequence, primarily plot, characterisation, and overarching themes concerning the notion of human nature, are dependent upon her representation of the visual.
The second half of Chapter One focuses on how Rowling employs magical photographs as infinite echoes that provide emotional links with an emotional past. Mary Price explains how the “essential difference” between painting and photography is not merely physical. Instead, “the photograph has the causal connection with the world of objects that allows it to hold in fixed form the piece of the world a photographer chooses and also restricts him to such a piece of the world” (6). As a narrative device, photographs are utilised by Rowling as a means of introducing the past to the present and, at times, providing the reader (via the protagonist) with a first impression of a character. In concluding Chapter One, I examine how in the magical world – as in the world of the reader – images can be used in the service of propaganda as a means of shaping and corrupting stories in order to suit those in power. Throughout this chapter, my examination of the evolving function of enchanted portraits and moving pictures in the wizarding world reveals how, behind apparently conventional literary tropes, the specular in this form is embedded within the sequence and therefore concurrent with narrative flow.

As I demonstrate in Chapter Two, the mirrors of the Harry Potter sequence continue the theme of visual doubling, and these specular selves ultimately reflect a truth of selfhood. In *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*, Grimes observes that Harry, “like such fairy tale characters as Lewis Carroll’s Alice and Snow White’s wicked stepmother, looks into a mirror, the Mirror of Erised, and sees his greatest desire: his parents and other ancestors” (Grimes 100). The reflection is based on the desire and memory of the person gazing into the glass, which reflects how imagination influences what we see being reflected back to us when we look into a mirror. Andrew Benjamin,
in his book *Art, Mimesis and the Avant-Garde: Aspects of a Philosophy of Difference* (1991), argues that the mirror

reflects more than that which is reflected in it. It takes what is outside and in providing the surface and frame can hold and thus re-present it inside. Reflection and representation are not reducible to each other. None the less the mirror enacts that temporal simultaneity and exactness of production – of re-production – such that it functions as almost the ideal type of representation. The mirror mirrors the perfection underpinning the ontological aspirations of representation. It constructs the perfect homological relation between inside and outside. What appears within the frame is the “same” as that which is outside it. And yet one is a reflection of the other. (14)

The mirror is a reflection of the subject inside of a frame, but the surprising feature of mirrors in the Harry Potter sequence is that a connection is required in order to project the representation – and these may not be simple reflections of what is “outside.” In Chapter Two, “Revealing Reflections,” I examine how specular technology in the form of magical mirrors imparts an extra level of depth to the notion of the specular.

The mirrors in the Harry Potter sequence work as crucial instruments of character revelation and as a means of solving mysteries – both narrative and character-driven. Examining the roles the (magical) mirror has previously played in fiction, I discuss how Rowling depicts this type of specularity as an enchantment, a sentient reflection, a doorway, a method of unravelling a mystery and, most importantly, a manner of revealing the truth of character. I employ Sabine Melchior-Bonnet’s theories regarding
the mirror to analyse the role of desire and fantasy in Rowling’s depiction of the Mirror of Erised and the implications this magical mirror has for Harry’s character both in the first novel and in later moments in the sequence. I then examine “Mirrors of Consequence,” as I term them. These mirroring objects provide reflections and projections that, in revealing aspects of selfhood related to fear and foes, often prove to be the difference between life and death for Harry.

The device known as the Pensieve is the most complex of the magical mirrors depicted throughout the sequence because it allows for the subject’s complete immersion within its surface. What it reflects, however, is a projection of a character’s memory, and this device allows Rowling to shift from a linear method of narrative in order to reveal critical backstory and hidden aspects of character. From the fifth book onwards, the Pensieve is a crucial device in the sequence, as are the specular selves encountered when Rowling deploys it. The Pensieve enables Rowling to reveal backstory concerning Lord Voldemort, whose character remains unseen and incomplete for the majority of the sequence, and in its final appearance it results in a complete reversal of preconception regarding one of the most divisive characters of the sequence, Severus Snape. I demonstrate throughout this chapter that these magical mirrors are, essentially, projecting emotions, and thus revealing submerged aspects of character that, at the conclusion of the sequence, enable each novel to reveal a hidden aspect, via reflection, of another.

Chapter Three, “Deciphering the Riddle of Lord Voldemort via Enchanted Objects,” examines Horcruxes as a form of specularity unique to the Harry Potter sequence. These
specular selves are designed to bestow immortality on their creator, and, because they threaten to violently breach the boundaries between specular and corporeal, they are the most malignant and parasitic forms of specularity depicted in the sequence. Horcruxes are not introduced explicitly until the sixth novel, *Harry Potter and the Half Blood Prince*, but because of the specular beings that inhabit them (they are fragments of Voldemort’s soul) and the violence that surrounds their introduction and discovery, they are immediately cast as evil. Horcruxes, as a distinctly negative form of the specular, act as a source of information in that they ultimately reveal a full picture of the antagonist of the series.

This chapter begins by analysing the function of the specular Tom Riddle that inhabits a diary and by identifying the intertextual resonances that this and other Horcruxes share with those found in Victorian novels, such as the title characters of Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) and Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897). Writing on *Dracula*, Ronald R. Thomas considers the manipulative abilities of the title character, in particular his ability to influence via writing. The Tom Riddle of the diary exhibits similar behaviour, which I examine in Chapter Three. In *Dracula*, when Jonathan offers the book to Mina, he is exposing her to “Dracula’s invasive influence as well,” and, Thomas argues, “Dracula seems to similarly take up occupancy in Dr. Seward's diary, the newspaper accounts of his activities, the ship’s log recounting his journey, and the telegraph messages of Van Helsing” (294). As the primary characters of the Harry Potter sequence spend more time exposed to the specular fragments of Voldemort that reside within his Horcruxes, so too are they slowly corrupted by the Dark Lord’s “invasive influence.”
I next examine Voldemort’s other Horcruxes, malignant forms of specularity lurking within various enchanted objects that he has selected because they reflect an aspect of his greatness. These Horcruxes recall the haunting nature of elements of the Gothic and exhibit behaviour associated with that of the vampire in literature. Shira Wolosky describes Voldemort as

a vampire of souls, feeding on the souls of others, which is to say, on their inner life and deep secrets – and on their trust, which he betrays. This is the essence of possession, the only relationship he can imagine having to others, as the books go on to explore. (80)

Horcruxes, which feed on the souls and inner lives of those that come into contact, strengthen this notion of vampire-like behaviour that Voldemort and his fragments exhibit. I identify their resonances with other objects common in myth as well as fantasy fiction (such as soul jars) and examine how Rowling has extended this notion.

In the last section of Chapter Three I examine what the revelation that Harry Potter is in fact a Horcrux suggests for understanding his character and that of Lord Voldemort. The discovery that they are linked not only by prophecy but by a physical and specular bond has implications for the entire sequence because it challenges the notion of the hero and implies that this malicious type of specular self has been strengthening its existence – and Voldemort’s – since the first novel. Linking narrative progression with character revelation, Rowling’s Horcruxes ultimately provide vital insights into the nature of life, death and the after-life in the Harry Potter world and in doing so work to establish
Voldemort and his specular fragments as being in complete opposition to what it means to be human.

In Chapter Four, “Inverting the Specular Selves,” I examine the magical incarnations and spectral projections that invert variations of the specular self as I have explored them in the first three chapters. I begin with the ghosts who inhabit Hogwarts, whose visual appearances represent the moment of their death, and employ an ekphrastic analysis once again because, as Bartsch and Elsner argue in “Eight Ways of Looking at Ekphrasis,” this type of analysis seems to present countless opportunities for the discovery of meaning: it has been variously treated as a mirror of the text, a mirror in the text, a mode of specular inversion, a further voice that disrupts or extends the message of the narrative, a prefiguration for that narrative (whether false or true) in its suggestions. (i)

Applying an ekphrastic analysis to the specular within Rowling’s sequence presents countless opportunities for uncovering hidden meaning via transformation – particularly in Chapter Four, where a specular inversion occurs as magical incarnations and mechanisms challenge and reverse preconceived notions surrounding the specular as I have previously examined them. This in turn sees the visual offer a mirror of text, meaning, and character by reflecting and questioning the elements of the human condition as Rowling has been investigating it. For example, the ghosts of the sequence represent an inversion of what a human being in the Harry Potter world is – but not in the same way that a Horcrux does. Instead, these entities are the result of a conscious choice that both challenges and reinforces the sequence’s worldview of human
existence. In Chapter Four, I demonstrate how Rowling blends the specular with the spectral; what is initially introduced as an atmospheric and amusing type of visual trope is transformed into a meta-narrative commentary on life and death.

I next discuss the magical incarnations that reveal aspects of selfhood in a manner that inverts that demonstrated by the magical mirrors. Rather than revealing emotion via desire, these incarnations unveil submerged facets of character through fear. I conclude by analysing the magical mechanisms that enable the specular dead to be recalled into the world of the corporeal living, cementing the relationship that Rowling has constructed between the specular and death from the first novel. The visual entities examined in this chapter, then, act paradoxically in that they challenge and at the same time reinforce the binary logic of the sequence’s moral worldview regarding love, identity, mortality and death. As with other types of the specular that I examine, these examples disrupt narrative expectations and reinforce how the specular is productive of character revelations and reversals until the very end of the sequence.

Ultimately, this thesis demonstrates how, from the enchanted portraits of Chapter One to the tragic spectres of Chapter Four, Rowling’s sequence is dependent upon specular selves because they enable a form of transformation of the familiar. Kate Behr writes that Rowling works the magic of sustaining the sequence from book one to book seven “through transformation – a significant element in the narrative structure across the novel series and a repeated theme at the heart of the story” (257). The specular enables this form of transformation and revisitation of familiar themes. Indeed, the specular itself is reworked from *Philosopher’s Stone* to *Deathly Hallows*, transformed from
comical and enchanting, to providing a deeper commentary on the nature of life, death, love and loss. Just as Harry and his companions undergo great changes and challenges over the sequence, so too does the specular transform and – at the same time – enable the “transformation” and “recapitulation” of the themes of the first volume (Behr 268) that ultimately bring the story full circle. The specular selves – as spectacle, doubles, speculative and spectral variations – inhabit each novel, and their functions grow increasingly complex as the sequence develops, to the point that every facet of the narrative is revealed as ultimately dependent upon the visual. From character development and revelation, to the construction of the magical world itself (past and present), and the binaries of good and evil, life and death, the specular self as visual image is crucial to understanding not only the beginning, middle and end of the Harry Potter sequence, but the concept of humanity itself as Rowling depicts it.
Chapter One

Pictures Behaving Badly:

Portraits and Photographs in the Harry Potter sequence

Portraits and photographs function as specular selves throughout the Harry Potter sequence and, as forms of both spectacle and the visual double they are my starting point for demonstrating the important role that specularity plays across the entire narrative. The portraits and photographs that adorn the Harry Potter world defy expectations about the permanency of death because the specular beings inhabiting these frames never age; they remain a fixture of the corporeal world indefinitely. As Muggles from the non-magical world, readers of the novels are most familiar with portraits and photographs in their traditional static forms, but this familiarity is immediately challenged by the way that Rowling depicts such images within the world of the sequence: the subjects of Rowling’s portraits and mirrors are capable of movement, emotion, memory, and even action. In defying and challenging readerly expectations concerning the conventional behaviour of portraits and photographs, Rowling forces us to sharpen our own focus, to read very carefully the images she presents us with. Effectively, she propels the reader into a state of ekphrastic awareness, because her literary depictions of images carry hidden messages, which in turn reveal submerged stories as the sequence unfolds.

“Ode on a Grecian Urn” (1820), the poem written by John Keats, is a particularly canonical example of ekphrasis within literature. “Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of
thought/As doth eternity”, writes Keats, and these lines capture the relationship the reader forms with specular selves throughout the Harry Potter sequence. Images, traditionally silent, evoke emotion within the viewer or – in these cases – the reader, as the author imbues the specular with certain characteristics. Keats’ poem presents the reader with a narrator addressing an imagined urn that, via its description, becomes established as a “real” urn in the eye (or mind) of the reader. This is, in the simplest of senses, what Rowling’s treatment of images – the specular, as I define it – throughout the Harry Potter sequence achieves as they become “real” within their respective texts. Grant F. Scott, in his analysis of Keats’ ode, argues:

> If “Ode on a Grecian Urn” portrays the confrontation between Keats and the urn, and by implication the age-old agon of word and image, it also reveals the tension between the two competing strains of ekphrastic description: the yearning for movement, for animation, and the equally strong desire for graphic stasis.” (164)

Throughout the Harry Potter sequence, the tension between the competing desires for movement and stillness is continually challenged because of the device known as “magic” within the world of Rowling’s novels and it is ekphrasis that enables the specular selves of the Harry Potter sequence to come to life. W. J. T. Mitchell, whose seminal collection *What Do Pictures Want?* informs the methodology of this chapter, defines ekphrasis as a “verbal representation of visual representation” (1992: 696). In undertaking an ekphrastic analysis of Rowling’s depiction of portraits and photographs, I also employ Laura M. Sager Eidt’s four categories of ekphrasis in literature and film, as they are detailed in *Writing and Filming the Painting*. While moving pictures make up part of the literal background of Rowling’s sequence, bringing them to the fore alerts
us to a parallel world of subtlety and subtext that is surprisingly central to the narrative as a whole.

Eidt outlines a system for understanding ekphrasis that comprises four categories “that are ample enough to be applicable to poetry, novel, drama, and film, yet different enough to minimize overlaps,” although she acknowledges that overlaps “cannot always be avoided” (44). The first category Eidt identifies is “attributive ekphrasis,” defined as including the “verbal allusion to pictures in a description or dialog of a text or film, that is, scenes in which artworks are shown (as actual pictures or tableaux) or mentioned, but not extensively discussed or described” (46). One such example of this occurs in the first instalment of Rowling’s sequence, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*, when Harry spends his first night at Hogwarts Castle of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Tired and overwhelmed after the House sorting ceremony and welcoming feast, Harry heads to his dormitory and encounters a series of enchanted portraits that decorate the walls of the castle: [Harry] “was too sleepy to even be surprised that the people in the portraits along the corridors whispered and pointed as they passed…” (*Philosopher’s Stone* 141). These portraits are described in enough detail that the reader is aware that they are capable of movement, but at this point in the narrative they remain a part of the background, adding merely to the magical charm of Hogwarts. Despite his sleepiness during this encounter, the fact that moving portraits are featured so early in Harry’s journey into the world of magic offers a proleptic glimpse of their increasing significance as the sequence unfolds.
As Harry pays more attention to specular images in the wizarding world, Rowling invites the reader to participate in the activity Eidt calls “depictive ekphrasis;” like Harry, the reader is enjoined to pay closer attention to how such images function. In contrast to attributive ekphrasis, depictive ekphrasis is where “images are discussed, described, or reflected on more extensively in the text or scene, and several details or aspects of images are named” (47). Eidt suggests that this type of ekphrasis “comes closest to the widespread definition of ekphrasis (noted above) as ‘verbal representation of visual representation’” (48). During Harry’s further encounters with the moving portraits of Hogwarts and continued exposure to magical photographs we see more extensive depiction afforded to the visual. Eidt argues that when the narrator of a novel reconstructs images “through extended description with many details, a depictive ekphrasis [is] often followed by the novel’s characters’ interpretive reflections on the paintings”, and this leads to a third category, which Eidt calls “interpretive ekphrasis” (50). Eidt suggests that interpretive ekphrasis sees a “verbal reflection on the image” (50) take on further nuances that allows “the image [to] function as [a] springboard for reflections that go beyond its depicted theme” (51). As Rowling’s specular beings continue to evolve throughout the Harry Potter sequence and become characters in their own right, we can see how the interpretive method of ekphrasis follows naturally from the depictive mode. For example, figures in portraits can move from one frame to another for the simple act of visitation or for other purposes such as surveillance. The character of Phineas Nigellus Black, who is arguably the most fleshed-out portrait that Rowling creates, and the behaviour of the Fat Lady portrait provide a focus for my examination of interpretive ekphrasis since several sections of the narrative are dedicated not only to their characters but to how their respective pictures function.
Rowling’s preoccupation with the visual throughout the Harry Potter sequence takes on a more prominent role with each instalment in the series. While the earliest descriptions of portraits and photographs utilize attributive ekphrasis, subsequent encounters with these images imbue them with elements of depictive and interpretive ekphrasis as the narrative evolves. As the examples discussed below will demonstrate, however, the most prominent literary technique Rowling employs in her depiction of portraits and photographs is “dramatic ekphrasis:” throughout the sequence, these images have the ability to evoke and animate – both within the narrative and in the mind of the reader. Eidt describes dramatic ekphrasis as occurring when:

images are dramatized and theatricalized to the extent that they take on a life of their own. Thus, this category is the most visual of all four, and has a high degree of enargeia. In other words, texts and films have the ability to evoke or produce the actual visual images alluded to in the minds of the readers or viewers while at the same time animating and changing them, thereby producing further, perhaps contrasting images. (Eidt 56)

The ability of Rowling’s images to behave as they do relies on the use of rhetorical enargeia, defined by Murray Krieger as “the capacity of words to describe with a vividness that, in effect, reproduces an object before our very eyes (i.e. before the eyes of the mind) (68). Enargeia, then, provides a level of visual specificity that enables the specular to mimic realism, thus contributing to the sense of character afforded the specular beings inhabiting the pictures of the wizarding world by providing animated dramatization to what ought to be a static image. Throughout the series Rowling employs a variety of what I identify as “visual technologies of the specular” in order to
create portraits and photographs that are effectively dramatized to the extent that they have a life of their own.

The analysis of visual imagery in literature has long been influenced by the work of W.J.T. Mitchell, whose work resonates with Rowling’s extended narrative because it enables us to ask what it is the specular beings in Rowling’s sequence may want for themselves – if, indeed, they want anything at all. In the first half of this chapter I explore how the trope of the enchanted portrait evolves throughout the sequence and emerges as a method of spanning the worlds of the living and dead, the boundary of which is clearly established early on in the sequence. Indeed, Shira Wolosky, in her detailed analysis of the Harry Potter sequence (The Secret Riddles of Harry Potter), describes Rowling’s portraits as acting “as windows between the worlds of death and life”, and opens the possibility “of magic suddenly appearing in the ordinary world, which seems open, at any moment, to enchantment” (21). My argument takes this notion of the portrait as the window between worlds further, examining how – as forms of specularity – the inhabitants of these enchanted pictures defy and rework the traditions of time, space and death by their presence in the world of the sequence. I then analyse how Rowling utilises photographic images to project not only a detached copy of a person (and, in some cases, a moment), but also a double-life that remains separate from the original subject. Finally, I consider the role of the frame – via the application of Jacques Derrida’s theories of the parergon – and examine how it functions as both a window to the other world of the image and a distinct boundary to what is, essentially, a pseudo-world.
The prominence of the specular and spectacle throughout each instalment of the Harry Potter sequence reflects the daily saturation that we, as twenty-first century Muggle readers, are confronted with on a daily basis. This thesis argues that the worldview of the Harry Potter sequence upholds a similar obsession with various forms of the spectacle in its society. Guy Debord explains how “the spectacle appears simultaneously as society itself, as a part of society, and as a means of unification” between the two (7). Throughout the Harry Potter sequence specularity is vital because it informs the narrative and is, from the opening novel, entrenched throughout the magical world. By adopting an ekphrastic analysis of Rowling’s depiction of the image we can see how the spectacle, as Debord conceives it, often occurs without our even noticing – in part, because Harry notices the magical world’s specular selves but grants them little attention, at least initially. In its totality, Debord argues, “the spectacle is both the result and the goal of the dominant mode of production,” “not a mere decoration added to the real world” but in fact the very “heart of this real society’s unreality.” In all of its particular manifestations – news, propaganda, advertising, entertainment – the “spectacle represents the dominant model of life” (Debord 7). The spectacle as we are exposed to it on a daily basis is our society and, by being a part of our society, functions as a manner of connectivity. As I demonstrate in this chapter, the spectacle depicted throughout the world of the Harry Potter sequence, particularly as manifested in portraits and photographs, performs the same unifying function throughout Rowling’s narrative and is vital to its society.

Somewhat surprisingly, given their contemporary setting in the mid-1990s, Rowling’s novels do not depict modern technologies that are capable of the mass production of
images and copies. Instead, throughout the sequence, various manifestations of the spectacle that Debord mentions, and their potential implications, are depicted and explored via magical means. This gradually emerges as the norm: as Harry and the reader become further immersed within the magical world, the Muggle technology we are familiar with is cast as inferior. For example, Rowling eschews depicting modern methods of replication, such as mobile telephones, digital cameras, or the Internet. The only reference to what we would consider familiar and modern technologies are to televisions (which are mentioned briefly in relation to Dudley Dursley’s favourite program or Harry’s desire to follow the Muggle news bulletins), and to telephones (the latter of which the inhabitants of the wizarding world struggle to understand how to operate). The two exceptions are the newspaper and radio, neither of which could be considered “modern” in the eyes of the readers of the Harry Potter novels, and these respective forms of media exist within the wizarding world. The prominence of moving photographs immediately establishes the magical newspaper as different from those that exist in the Muggle world. To those from the wizarding world, such Muggle technology is utterly unfamiliar – even comical – when contrasted with what they consider normal methods of communication and interaction, such as the owl post. Rowling utilises and reimagines visual tropes from the Gothic genre to provide alternative modes of communication and technology – most importantly for my discussion here the living portrait – that meet the requirements of those in the wizarding world, allowing alternative media to function, information to be sent and received, and specular images to be shared and replicated.
Ron Weasley, Harry Potter’s best friend, displays obvious confusion when he discovers that the specular beings captured in Muggle photographs (or posters) are incapable of movement: at one point, Harry catches Ron prodding a classmate’s poster of the West Ham football team in an effort to make the players move *(Philosopher’s Stone* 158). This incident establishes moving images as the norm in contrast to what Harry and the reader expect. Fixed images, such as portraits and photographs, which constitute real-life manifestation of the spectacle in Debord’s view, become fluid in Rowling’s sequence. That their subjects are able to move within their frames is only the most obvious difference from the behaviour we expect of traditional images, and subsequent encounters foreground the increasing autonomy of specular beings throughout the sequence. The enchanted images that Rowling introduces in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* are a part of the “spectacle,” as Debord defines it, because while the images are physically “detached from every aspect of life” in that they are permanently separated from our world by a frame, they then “merge into a common stream” (7) of the world because the spectacle is entrenched within society. It is the ability of the inhabitants of these portraits to interact and observe from within their frame – in many cases after death – that enables what Debord describes as fragmented “views of reality [that] regroup themselves into a new unity as a separate pseudo-world that can only be looked at” (Debord 7). This pseudo-world is glimpsed throughout the sequence through various portrait or photograph frames, demonstrating how these specular copies – or images – of the real become fragmented from the physical world of the viewer, resulting in a permanent detachment from the original subject.
The specular selves that inhabit portraits and photographs in the Harry Potter sequence commune with the living from a separate pseudo-world, inviting exploration beyond the frame of analysis applied to the portraits of our world because the canvases Rowling creates challenge the traditional definition of a portrait. Analysing the traditional functions of the visual in literature, I intend to demonstrate how – from early on in the sequence – Rowling surrounds the living characters with specular doubles of not only themselves, but also of the deceased. In choosing to relegate this phenomenon to the background of the overall plot, as a consequence of the normality of magic in this world, Rowling creates new functions for the Gothic trope of the enchanted image.

The enchanted images that are encountered throughout the Harry Potter sequence provide disjointed views for both the specular inhabitants of the portraits and the characters of the corporeal world: while the specular beings that exist in Rowling’s wizarding world are capable of interacting with the physical or real world, they can never actually step out of their frames into the physical world they observe. With one significant exception, the frames act merely as doorways or windows: doorways for these specular beings to come and go in their pseudo-world, and windows for the characters to view and communicate with them. While moving and enchanted portraits have featured in other examples of popular literature and film, Rowling utilises their functions in a dramatically fluid style that continues to evolve throughout the Harry Potter sequence as a means of merging the past with the future and linking specularity with the boundary between life and death. Mitchell argues that the literary treatment of pictures is “quite unabashed in its celebration of their uncanny personhood and vitality,” suggesting that one reason for this is because the “literary image does not have to be
faced directly” and is instead “distanced by the secondary mediation of language” (31). Upon first reading of Rowling’s sequence we are not necessarily disturbed by the uncanny aspects of the framed yet moving image because of the distance of language: we are not actually being confronted by the haunted specular image, but by the trope from which such pictures evolve. Rowling’s use of enchanted portraits, along with their increasing influence as the narrative of the sequence unfolds, means that that the “uncanny personhood” and “vitality” of the specular invites us to breach the distance of language and look into the pseudo-world of the frame.

Rowling is not alone in literature as an author using portraits that move, but the manner in which the specular selves of the portraits within the Harry Potter sequence function is clearly different from other examples because they exist in a framed separateness from ongoing life. A prominent eighteenth-century example of the moving painting and the “uncanny personhood” Mitchell describes can be found in Horace Walpole’s The Castle of Otranto (1764), a gothic novel featuring a portrait of the protagonist Manfred’s grandfather. The portrait turns out to be a specular copy of its original that is capable of quitting its panel. In describing this emergence, Walpole writes:

The spectre marched sedately, but dejected, to the end of the gallery, and turned into a chamber on the right hand. Manfred accompanied him at a little distance, full of anxiety and horror, but resolved.

(Horace Walpole, The Castle of Otranto, 1764)

The spectre of Manfred’s grandfather Ricardo is able to step from his frame and move about the physical world. This is considerably different behaviour from that demonstrated by the portraits depicted throughout the Harry Potter sequence. The
specular being here, while unsettling in its behaviour, does not inhabit a pseudo-world because Walpole’s Ricardo is, simply, a ghost. The similarity between Walpole and Rowling’s literary depictions of enchanted images is that while their specular beings may be able to defy their frames in the traditional sense, they can never truly recreate themselves as physical beings because this would be a true transgression between the boundary separating life and death. As I will explore in my third chapter, Lord Voldemort, via his creation of Horcruxes, succeeds in recreating or rebirthing himself into a physical body after being rendered little more than a specular entity at the beginning of the sequence, but at a terrible and permanent cost. The specular selves that exist within the portraits of the Harry Potter sequence enjoy a seemingly immortal existence, but one that is defined by the separateness of the framed pseudo-world.

The reader learns in the first novel that the subjects of Rowling’s enchanted portraits can disappear from their home canvas, visit other portraits, or flee from the gaze of an undesired audience, but they can never truly duplicate themselves physically in the “real” world. However, the specular beings in the Hogwarts portraits always remain linked with the living and physical world that watches them because of their connection with the original subject of which they are a copy – even when that subject has died a physical death. Mitchell argues that no “modern, rational, secular person thinks that pictures are to be treated like persons,” but believes that we “always seem to be willing to make exceptions for special cases” (31). The Harry Potter sequence insists that we make an exception from the first moment we, via Harry, are exposed to a picture in the wizarding world, because these images are “special cases” in that they are capable of behaving in the first place – very badly, at times.
This is because these specular selves are depicted as characters capable of interaction and influence, despite existing in a specular realm and this is best demonstrated by the manner in which Rowling constructs images. That is, the differences between how photographs and portraits function and their significance to Harry and the reader clearly demonstrate how specularity can influence the physical world in varying ways.

Rowling’s novels feature moving or living images, specular representations of a subject that reflect the nature of the original self and are capable of movement within a frame long after the true self has died. Indeed, there is a sense of death about the image throughout the Harry Potter sequence in that several images that are interacted with or looked upon contain a specular double of a subject that is deceased. These specular reflections offer a form of immortality that is supported by A.S. Byatt’s arguments concerning portraits in fiction: Byatt claims that the portrait is a “paradox” in that it represents “both life, death, and life-in-death, a kind of false eternity” (6). This holds true for the portraits that we see throughout the Harry Potter sequence that appear after the death of a character, such as those which appear in the office of the headmaster in Hogwarts Castle. But Rowling’s portraits also offer a life after death, where a person is able to remain a part of the world as a specular being and gain a second – possibly permanent – existence after their physical death.

A living image is not a living organism because, as Mitchell explains, such a creature has “two logical opposites or contraries: the dead object, which was once alive, and the inanimate object,” which was never alive (54). We can consider the portrait or specular representation as the “living image” because of the ability of those depicted in
Rowling’s sequence to behave, demonstrate self-awareness and self-preservation. Because the living or corporeal characters only view these specular subjects by looking into their frame, it suggests that they are living in their own pseudo-world. Now, if the original subject that served as the basis for the portrait is viewed as a living organism, Mitchell’s explanation offers a manner of distinguishing between the real and the portrait (or photo) copy. Mitchell suggests that a “third opposition is, then, the negation of the negation, the return (or arrival) of life in the nonliving, substance” (55). This applies to the enchanted portraits of the wizarding world: their paradoxical and uncanny nature is evident in their return as “life” within a nonliving substance – that of a canvas. Because the inhabitants of these images have a life, or rather, an after-life or existence within the world of frame, the question of what these specular selves may want becomes pertinent. Mitchell argues that “most pictures want something” and suggests we “consider the average portrait, standing in a portrait gallery with hundreds of others, waiting for someone to pay attention to it” (73). In this chapter, however, I demonstrate that Rowling negotiates the very concept of pictures wanting something, in the ability of her portraits to exhibit good and bad behaviour regardless of their audience.

**Seeking the Specular Self: “He’ll be back…”**

*Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* introduces Harry – and through him the reader – to an alternative world of magic which includes the specular selves that inhabit portraits and photographs. By the time Harry encounters his first enchanted image, he has already discovered that he is a wizard, successfully navigated an invisible barrier in order to board the train that takes him to his new school, and made the unusual purchases required for his first classes, including a cauldron, quills, ink, robes, a wand,
and an owl. Having introduced the reader to the reality of the world of magic, Rowling turns her attention to enchanted images as the Hogwarts Express heads for its destination. The first encounter Harry has with enchanted images is during this first trip to Hogwarts when he and his new friend Ron Weasley are looking at the collectable cards that come with Chocolate Frog sweets. Ron explains how people build their own collection of the “Famous Witches and Wizards” by collecting those who appear on different cards, telling Harry that he has “about five hundred” cards (Philosopher’s Stone 113). Harry’s first card contains a picture of Albus Dumbledore and, after reading about the current Headmaster of Hogwarts:

Harry turned the card back over and saw, to his astonishment, that

Dumbledore’s face had disappeared.

“He’s gone!”

“Well, you can’t expect him to hang around all day,” said Ron.

“He’ll be back…” (Philosopher’s Stone 114).

Harry stares in amazement as Dumbledore slides back into the picture on his card and gives him “a small smile” (114), but no explanation is given for where the specular Dumbledore has been. The role of looking and its importance when engaging with pictures is first highlighted here through Harry’s interaction with the Dumbledore card and Ron’s simple explanation for the picture’s behaviour. We can only speculate where Dumbledore goes when he vanishes from the picture (there is always the likelihood that he has appeared on another card elsewhere), but when Harry turns the card back and sees the empty frame, the specular Dumbledore slides back – late, as it were – for his viewing. Recalling Mitchell’s theories concerning portraits, what the Dumbledore in the card wants, though, remains unknown: to be seen, surely, for he reappears when Harry
notices that he has disappeared. What is established at this point is that the images in Rowling’s sequence behave very differently from the traditional examples of the specular that the reader is familiar with: for Muggles, the images in a picture do not simply vanish out of a frame when people stop looking at them and they do not move (smile, slide back into view) at random.

This moment in the sequence invites consideration of what Mitchell terms “the scopic drive,” because, according to Mitchell, “no discussion of what pictures want can get very far without engaging the question of desire and aggression in the visual field” (72). Mitchell argues that “if pictures teach us how to desire, they also teach us how to see – what to look for, how to arrange and make sense of what we see” (72). Rowling’s sequence, beginning with Harry’s encounter with the Chocolate Frog cards, challenges how the scopic drive applies to traditional images because the specular beings within the frames of this alternative world behave of their own accord regardless of what we or Harry are seeing or desiring to see.

Ron is disappointed to have received another card featuring the witch Morgana, for he already has six of her (114), and this raises the question of how many copies of these famous witches and wizards, alive or deceased, might be interacting with collectors all over the world. It is never explained to the reader whether or not the specular beings glimpsed within the Chocolate Frog cards can be viewed simultaneously by other card holders, nor do we learn if their disappearances see them enter into the pseudo-world that other portrait subjects in the sequence appear to inhabit when they momentarily vanish from their frames. When Harry explains how in the Muggle world, people just
“stay put in photos”, Ron is amazed and believes that to be “weird” (*Philosopher’s Stone* 114). The still image, or rather, the fixed or normal image, gradually becomes the oddity throughout the sequence as Harry becomes further immersed in the magical world. How we traditionally look and make sense of what we are seeing when confronted with an image is challenged by the Chocolate Frog card featuring Dumbledore because this specular version of the Hogwarts Headmaster is able to come and go from the frame of the card as he pleases. Because the specular figure is not fixed within its frame, our ability to make sense of what we see, to arrange and desire, is therefore altered. Harry’s astonishment at and subsequent understanding of the behaviour of magical images, or rather the fact that images *are capable of* behaviour in this world, results in the reader’s expectation of pictures from this moment on being both foregrounded and challenged.

**The Portraits of Hogwarts Castle: Dramatic Ekphrasis of the Specular Selves**

The portraits featured throughout the Harry Potter sequence behave differently to real world portraits because, as we have seen, they are *capable of behaving*. These specular characters are depicted as existing within a pseudo-world that we are only able to glimpse through a frame and they exhibit no dependence upon being noticed by an audience, nor do they make (in general) any demands to be admired or acknowledged in order to sustain their existence. Although some of the specular beings that we are introduced to as the sequence progresses – such as Sir Cadogan, a portrait of a knight who often challenges students to duels – appear to thrive on attention from the living, their ongoing specular existence is not dependent on having a rapt audience. The first prominent example of their existence being essentially detached from the viewer occurs
in *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* when Harry enters the office of Dumbledore and notices that “the walls were covered with portraits of old headmasters and headmistresses, all of whom were snoozing gently in their frames” (223). The scopic drive in this instance reveals only that these former headmasters and headmistresses, like other portraits in the magical world, behave as they wish – in this case, by sleeping – and do not perform, as it were, for an audience. A magical portrait is still a portrait even if it is not seen, but from a Muggle perspective a portrait requires engagement with a viewer in order to perform its intended function: to be looked at. However, magic ensures that ordinary objects defy this tradition throughout the sequence. Harry discovers on his first day of classes at Hogwarts that the people in the school’s portraits are capable of visiting one another (*Philosopher’s Stone* 145), and while we might consider this to be both wondrous and unsettling, those from the wizarding world think nothing strange of such behaviour.

In Harry’s first encounter with a moving image – his introduction to the Chocolate Frog cards – the reader discovers that a specular being in the magic world can act as a double of a living individual, and this establishes how these copies are able to exist independently of the original subject. During his first night at Hogwarts, Harry discovers how the people in the portraits along the corridors of Hogwarts Castle whisper and point as the students pass on their way to Gryffindor Tower; further, in order to enter the tower, a student must give the portrait of the Fat Lady, who acts as the guardian to the tower, the correct password (*Philosopher’s Stone* 141-42). However, in addition to her allotted role as guardian, the Fat Lady is an autonomous being and on various occasions throughout the sequence acts of her own accord. This autonomous
behaviour can lead to students being stranded outside their dormitory; for example, Hermione Granger finds the painting of the Fat Lady empty when she tries to return to Gryffindor Tower on one occasion because the “Fat Lady had gone on a night-time visit” (*Philosopher’s Stone* 170). This is only the first example of the Fat Lady behaving of her own accord and inconveniencing the students of the corporeal world.

Throughout the sequence, Rowling depicts portraits that at times prefer not to be seen or addressed at all by those inhabiting the real or physical world, and these specular beings make their resentment abundantly clear to the characters who have disturbed them. For example, the Fat Lady, unhappy at having been disturbed twice in a short space of time in *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, calls grumpily after Harry: “What was the point of waking me up?” (166). Moreover, the Fat Lady’s personality is given further substance after the Yule Ball concludes in *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, when Harry has to yell “Fairy lights!” to wake up the Fat Lady and her friend Violet, who – after battling through many liqueurs – are snoozing upon his return and are very irritated at being woken up (472). The Fat Lady also overindulges at Christmas in *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, abruptly changing the password to “Abstinence” afterwards without informing the students of Gryffindor Tower, leaving Hermione to explain the portrait’s less-than-merry mood: “She and her friend Violet drank their way through all the wine in that picture of drunk monks down by the Charms corridor” (416). These examples of autonomous behaviour support the notion that their pseudo-world is real to the inhabitants of the portraits, because the Fat Lady is clearly able to be affected by the objects depicted in that world (wine, liqueurs) as one would be in the physical world. Not only are these portraits capable of interaction with the living, but
they are able to leave their canvases, supply or deny information or access to a person, and visit other pictures.

Rowling’s characterisation of these portraits is often more life-like than those of other background characters that are encountered throughout the sequence, and this dramatic ekphrasis, where images are brought to life and given the status of characters, becomes more prominent as the sequence progresses. Rowling’s increasingly detailed depiction of the behaviour of the Hogwarts portraits corresponds with Eidt’s definition of dramatic ekphrasis:

> Literary texts can bring characters from one or more images to life and make them characters in the story or drama that speak and act for themselves, thus reflecting on and interpreting the image they come from in the light of their new quotation context. (Eidt 57)

Throughout Rowling’s sequence, the characters in the portraits become more fleshed out and certainly demonstrate that they are capable of speaking and acting for themselves. At times, this is much to the frustration of those around them (specular or corporeal), and the very fact that they exist independently of viewers establishes them as characters in their own right.

In certain cases, these portraits can themselves mirror the behaviour and personality of the original subject, which occurs when the portraits of Gilderoy Lockhart – the Defence Against the Dark Arts professor during Harry’s second year – flee out of view because they are not looking their best, providing an apt reflection on the vanity of the
subject of whom they are copies. During *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, Harry and a group of teachers unexpectedly enter Gilderoy Lockhart’s darkened office, when: “there was a flurry of movement across the walls; Harry saw several of the Lockharts in the pictures dodging out of sight, their hair in rollers. The real Lockhart lit the candles on his desk and stood back” (155). After the real Lockhart loses his memory at the end of *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (thanks to a backfiring Memory Charm), it appears that the many pictures of Lockhart – that he continues to surround himself with – retain the personality traits of the original subject. Indeed, Rowling addresses the link between specular and living (though amnesiac) original subject when Harry and his friends encounter Lockhart at St Mungo’s Hospital for Magical Maladies and Injuries in *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*. They notice that the wall around Gilderoy’s headboard was “papered with pictures of himself, all beaming toothily and waving at the new arrivals” (563), suggesting that the specular copies of Gilderoy remain echoes of the original subject and are, therefore, undamaged. Lockhart, who has created a false persona by stealing the credit and obliterating the memories of other witches and wizards, now finds himself an empty shell surrounded by specular copies of his false self – the fabricated celebrity with no substance, a specular self in a portrait or photograph that echoes the falseness that he had so carefully constructed at the expense of others.

Understanding the relationship between the real and specular beings of Hogwarts involves further investigation into the essence of these enchanted portraits and a theoretical consideration of the traditional portraits from our own world. Mitchell has
asked provocative questions about pictures, addressing the needs, wants and desires that a normal portrait possesses, and inviting us to consider what we are looking at and how:

captured there on the canvas is the shadowy likeness of a once-living individual, one who probably regarded himself with considerable self-esteem, an attitude validated by his ability to command a portrait to be made. (73)

The framed specular beings of Rowling’s sequence are not bound by the traditional Muggle rules of the image; but it is nevertheless illuminating to apply Mitchell’s above argument to interactions in the Harry Potter sequence between those in the real and pseudo-worlds. The inhabitants of Hogwarts require the subjects of the portraits to notice and respond to their demands – to fulfil their role as Guardian, in the case of the Fat Lady – instead of the portraits desiring to be noticed.

All of the framed specular beings depicted in the sequence regard themselves with considerable self-esteem, as evidenced by the behaviour of Lockhart’s portraits and those that hang in the office of the Hogwarts Headmaster. Ultimately, though, these specular selves appear content to inhabit their own pseudo-world, only looking out at the living and physical world when it suits them, and requiring no validation of their importance on the part of the viewer. Despite their specular status, the inhabitants of the pseudo-world of the Hogwarts portraits often have just as much – if not more – substance as their corporeal counterparts in the wizarding world.

Self-preservation and surveillance in the “Pseudo-World” of the Frame
The first two instalments of the Harry Potter sequence introduce the portrait as what I term a “specular self” and demonstrate how the figures in these frames are capable of movement, emotion, and motivation, but it is not until the third and fourth instalments that we are provided with examples of a portrait subject’s actions of self-preservation and surveillance – the latter of which becomes crucial as the sequence reaches its climax. In the third novel, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, the portrait of the Fat Lady further defies our expectations of portraits when she demonstrates a sense of self-preservation. By fleeing from her portrait when it is slashed she proves that she is capable not only of visiting other canvases but even of existing independently of her framed portrait itself. This same instalment also introduces the portrait of Sir Cadogan, a knight who frequently brandishes his sword violently, as he challenges human viewers in the physical world to duels (*Prisoner of Azkaban* 110-11). Sir Cadogan is the most vivid example Rowling depicts of an attention-seeking specular self residing within the pseudo-world of the portraits. When Harry and his friends have lost their way while heading through the North Tower of Hogwarts towards their first Divination class, Sir Cadogan agrees to help them find their destination and can be seen running off, “clanking loudly, into the left-hand side of the frame and out of sight” (111). He is then spotted running through the pictures ahead of Harry and his companions, before appearing “in front of an alarmed group of women in crinolines, whose pictures hung on the wall of a narrow spiral staircase” (111-12). Sir Cadogan, like the Fat Lady when she flees her canvas in terror, defies the function of the frame as a defined border of the work.
In *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, the Fat Lady’s flight from her canvas after it is attacked by Sirius Black – the prisoner of the book’s title – implies that her existence is not dependent upon the survival even of the painted canvas itself. Instead, the canvas that stands at the entrance to Gryffindor Tower may be described as her “home” canvas, but the Fat Lady as specular being does not appear to be permanently linked to it and can exist in another canvas. Throughout the Harry Potter sequence, if the home canvas of a portrait is damaged, cleaned, or refurbished, this does not appear to permanently harm its occupants, although it does irritate them or, in the case of the Fat Lady, frighten them. When several “grimy portraits” are scrubbed in preparation for the arrival of students from two other international magical schools, Beauxbatons and Durmstrang, the subjects of these portraits huddle in their frames “muttering darkly and wincing” as they feel their “raw pink faces” (*Goblet of Fire* 260). Peeves the poltergeist shines light on the whereabouts of the Fat Lady when her canvas is discovered empty and violently slashed, explaining that he “saw her running through the landscape up on the fourth floor”, “dodging between the trees” (*Prisoner of Azkaban* 175). Just as the specular beings in the portraits of the wizarding world are able to visit other canvases, so too are they able to take refuge in the space of the pseudo-world that we can only view via the frame: the parergon that is both a part of the image and separate from it – our window into the pseudo-world.

In *The Truth in Painting*, Jacques Derrida describes how the parergon acts as the frame: the “parergon comes against, beside, and in addition to the ergon, the work done, the fact, the work, but it does not fall to one side, it touches and cooperates within the operation, from a certain outside. [It is neither] simply outside nor simply inside” (54).
The frames of portraits in the Harry Potter sequence work as the parergon does: they are a part of the visual image, in that they both contain and work with the specular space. The boundary or window between the pseudo and real worlds is also defined by the parergon – the frame – and the window of the frame works by allowing the two worlds to peer into and interact with one another.

This ability of the frame to behave as a window between realms recalls the portrait that features in C.S. Lewis’ *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* (1952), the third novel of *The Chronicles of Narnia* series (1950-1956). Early in this novel, Lucy and Edmund Pevensie, along with their cousin Eustace Scrubb, witness and then experience the magical behaviour of an enchanted painting. As the three are commenting on the painting of a ship and observing how the waves appear very much “as if they were going up and down,” Eustace begins to feel ill when recalling the time he was on a ship in the past. As the children continue to watch, the painting suddenly becomes a window and the world within its frame begins to influence that of the viewer:

> The things in the picture were moving. It didn't look at all like a cinema either; the colours were too real and clean and out-of-doors for that. Down went the prow of the ship into the wave and up went a great shock of spray. And then up went the wave behind her, and her stern and her deck became visible for the first time, and then disappeared as the next wave came to meet her and her bows went up again. (Lewis)

Lewis is clearly establishing the wonder that the reader, like the characters, is expected to experience at such a vision. Pictures are, after all, not expected to move or behave in such a manner. The presumed “glass” of the picture frame vanishes in this moment, as
the very environment of the painting begins to corrupt the room that the children are residing in.

…Lucy felt all her hair whipping round her face as it does on a windy day. And this was a windy day; but the wind was blowing out of the picture towards them…But it was the smell, the wild, briny smell, which really convinced Lucy that she was not dreaming. (Lewis)

The children are finally pulled into the world of the painting, via magic, but this is where the similarity between the magical frames and windows of the novels of Lewis and Rowling ends. The effect of Lewis’ painting here is to create a portal between two separate realms: that is, the world that houses the painting (the room) and the magical world of Narnia. This contrasts with how the portrait works as a “doorway” within Rowling’s sequence because the specular realm contained within the frame is never experienced by the corporeal characters. The closest exception to this rule occurs when Harry and his companions encounter the portrait of Ariana Dumbledore, which I examine in detail later in this chapter. This particular picture represents a doorway in that the spectral inhabitant appears to walk into the distance and reappear with another character, before the portrait swings open to reveal a tunnel hidden beneath the canvas that leads to Hogwarts (Deathly Hallows 625-26).

The portraits of the Harry Potter sequence, rather than enabling a portal into another world, instead offer interaction between the realms of the specular and corporeal and this interaction in turn facilitates the passing of information between the two worlds on either side of the portrait frame. In Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire, after Harry discovers that he has been named as the “fourth champion” to compete in the Tri-
Wizard Tournament by the Goblet, he departs the Great Hall of Hogwarts and finds himself in a small room. He quickly discovers that the bewilderment of his peers at his unlikely selection appears to be shared by the portraits:

The faces in the portraits turned to look at him as he entered. He saw a wizened witch flit out of the frame of her picture and into the one next to it, which contained a wizard with a walrus moustache. The wizened witch started whispering in his ear. (*Goblet of Fire* 300)

Not only are the autonomous figures in the portraits capable of leaving their frames and visiting other pictures, which by this fourth instalment has become commonplace, but they demonstrate an interest in the affairs going on at Hogwarts and are more than capable of instigating gossip. After learning that he will indeed be forced to compete, Harry finds his way back to Gryffindor Tower and is surprised to see that the Fat Lady is not alone in her frame:

The wizened witch who had flittered into her neighbour’s painting when he had joined the champions downstairs was now sitting smugly beside the Fat Lady. She must have dashed through every picture lining seven staircases to reach here before him. Both she and the Fat Lady were looking down at him with the keenest interest.

“Well, well, well,” said the Fat Lady, “Violet’s just told me everything. Who’s just been chosen as the school champion, then?” (*Goblet of Fire* 312)

While this type of surveillance is initially portrayed as a fairly harmless method of spreading gossip, it also demonstrates how quickly information can be transmitted...
throughout the wizarding world and establishes portraits as an as yet untapped mechanism for communication.

This exchange of information also indicates that these specular beings, as entities residing in the pseudo-world of the paintings, still possess a genuine interest in what is happening in the corporeal world that they look out at from their frames. For example, in *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, the Fat Lady is devastated when Harry confirms the rumours that she has heard concerning Dumbledore’s death are true (*Half-Blood Prince* 743), signifying her emotional investment in the school. Rowling depicts the frame in the world of the Harry Potter sequence as a window and a boundary between the corporeal world and the pseudo-world. As a boundary between the two realms, it cannot be used as a doorway to cross back and forth, but as a window it allows for the passage of information and interaction between the living and echoes of the living, with the result that the specular subjects of the portraits remain emotionally connected with the physical world through their respective canvases. Their depiction as fleshed-out characters as the sequence progresses sees them take on lives of their own, despite existing in a non-living form such as a canvas; yet, as a form of the spectacle that is immersed within society they are simultaneously a representation and a part of the world in which they exist. This is why they are such a vital component of the Harry Potter sequence.

**Twin Frames: Dual Windows**
Certain witches and wizards in the Harry Potter world are able to inhabit twin frames or dual portraits after their death, which allows them to move between their portraits that reside in different locations. Our first encounter with the concept of dual portraits occurs in *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* when Harry explains how he has witnessed a terrible attack on Arthur Weasley (his friend Ron’s father) through a dream, which results in Dumbledore instructing two of the portraits in the Headmaster’s office to raise the alarm and make sure that Ron’s father is found by the right people.

Dumbledore then relates, in the only explanation the reader is given of the subjects of twin portraits, that “Their renown is such that both have portraits hanging in other important wizarding locations” (*Order of the Phoenix* 516). Upon visiting Mr Weasley at St Mungo’s Hospital, Harry notices that the portrait of Dilys Derwent, former Hogwarts Headmistress, is watching the party as they arrive. When Harry catches her eye, she gives a tiny wink, walks sideways out of her portrait and vanishes (*Order of Phoenix* 534), presumably to inform Dumbledore of their location. Dilys’s dual portraits act as a method of surveillance here by monitoring the location of Harry and his companions and the events at St Mungo’s, and reporting back to Dumbledore what she is witnessing from her frame. By having portraits hanging in dual locations, such as the Hogwarts and St Mungo’s Hospital for Magical Maladies and Injuries, these specular beings are able to move between their own portraits and determine what is happening elsewhere. We know, from the gossiping capabilities of the Hogwarts portraits, that they are capable of spreading information almost instantly, but the concept of dual portraits adds further layers to this ability: space and distance.
The reader encounters the most important example of a portrait with dual frames during the same novel when Harry has joined the Order at the House of Black at Number Twelve, Grimmauld Place, the home of his godfather, Sirius. Harry glances around the “dank and dark” room and notes that a “blank stretch of canvas in an ornate picture frame was all that relieved the bareness of the peeling walls,” and as Harry passes, he hears someone, “who was lurking out of sight, snigger” (Order of Phoenix 77). Much later, when Harry is back at school, a crisis occurs during which Dumbledore requests that former Headmaster Phineas Nigellus Black, whose portrait hangs on his office wall, visit his “other portrait.” Only then does Harry realise that this is the person he has heard in the “apparently empty frame” at Number Twelve, Grimmauld Place (521). The dual portraits of Phineas provide Dumbledore with a manner of monitoring Harry and his companions while also providing an instant and secure method of communication – unlike owls, the traditional wizardly method, which can be intercepted – from one location to another.

While Everard, Dilys, and other portraits of former headmasters and headmistresses seem content in their role of service to the present Headmaster of Hogwarts, Phineas Black appears to regard the duty with apathy and distaste. He feigns sleep when Dumbledore and the other portraits seek his attention and appears motivated only when the portrait of a witch threatens him with a wand (520-21). Phineas is perhaps the most life-like portrait character that we encounter throughout the series, and the dramatic ekphrasis prompted by his twin portraits expands crucially in the final novels. Throughout Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix, we learn more about Phineas’s character as the narrative unfolds. We learn from Sirius that he was “the least popular
Headmaster Hogwarts ever had” (129) in life; now, as a portrait, he views his great-great grandson and last remaining descendant as “worthless” (902); despises the “self-pity” of students (904); shares the beliefs of his former school house (belief in blood purity and watching out for one’s own neck); and, unlike the other portraits in the Headmaster’s office, appears willing to question Dumbledore’s decisions and his faith in Harry Potter. For all of his complaining, however, Phineas respects Dumbledore. Phineas also appears genuinely shocked to learn of Sirius’s demise, refusing to believe Dumbledore’s confirmation when he asks if his “great-great-grandson – the last of the Blacks – is dead?” Instead, he brusquely responds by marching out of his portrait to visit his other painting at Grimmauld Place, where Harry imagines him walking, “perhaps, from portrait to portrait, calling for Sirius throughout the house …” (907). This response demonstrates how Phineas, for all his sarcastic and scathing observations, retains not only his personality in the portrait after-life, but also, despite having physically died many years before the start of the Harry Potter sequence, a familial and tangible connection with the living.

The investment that these specular beings maintain in the lives of the living keeps them connected not only to the corporeal world their portraits inhabit, but also to the narrative, and ensures that, despite being figures within an enchanted portrait, they remain fleshed out characters retaining the prejudices, affections and motivations they held when alive. That is, Rowling affords them as much description – at times, more so – as the living characters of the sequence and gives their roles such a level of prominence that their significance to the narrative is etched in the mind of the reader, even if Harry at times neglects to notice their importance. When Harry considers
running away from Grimmauld House after seeing Arthur Weasley being attacked in a
dream, it is Phineas who appears to speak with him. Having asked snidely if Harry is
running away, Phineas is described as having “an amused expression on his face”
(Order of the Phoenix 545). As Phineas goads Harry, passing on a message from
Dumbledore, his appearance and personality are afforded detailed description
throughout the passage: “I thought,” said Phineas Nigellus, stroking his pointed beard,
“that to belong in Gryffindor house you were supposed to be brave?” (545). This
observation is followed by Phineas calling Harry a “dolt” and “raising a thin black
eyebrow as though he found Harry impertinent” (545). When Harry, frustrated that
Dumbledore won’t speak to him directly, starts shouting at the portrait, Phineas shouts
back at Harry and speaks of his loathing of being a teacher because “young people are
infernally convinced that they are absolutely right about everything” (546). When Harry
interrupts Phineas, the response is not what he was expecting:

“Did I say that?” said Phineas Nigellus, idly examining his silk
gloves. “Now, if you will excuse me, I have better things to do than
listen to adolescent agonising…good-day to you.”

And he strolled to the edge of his frame and out of sight. (Order of
the Phoenix 546)

The complexity of description afforded Phineas as a specular portrait subject during this
exchange rivals that granted many corporeal characters throughout the sequence. His
attitude and personality give added substance to what we have already learnt about him
at this point from other characters and his behaviour in Dumbledore’s office. Even the
description of his physical appearance is rhetorically enargeic: the pointed black beard
and thin eyebrows, the silken gloves and his general body language (leaning against the
frame, watching Harry with amusement) allow the reader to visualise a fully bodied character from a moving image that is, essentially, a specular afterlife.

I have argued that portraits act as windows into a specular space, rather than doors, but there is one exception, and that is the portrait of Ariana Dumbledore, deceased sister to Professor Dumbledore. Ariana is encountered late in the final novel, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, and her portrait appears to represent a doorway for the living characters of the novel in that – like that of the Fat Lady – it guards a physical entrance: in this case a secret passage to Hogwarts castle. Although Ariana is not able to step into the real world, she can bring others to her location, with her portrait acting as a specular doorway. Apparently, whoever is using the doorway temporarily appears within her portrait. When Harry and his companions are seeking entrance to Hogwarts Castle in order to find and destroy one of Voldemort’s elusive Horcruxes, Aberforth Dumbledore, brother of Albus and barman of the Hog’s Head in the nearby village of Hogsmeade, explains to them that there is only one secret passageway left and tells the portrait of Ariana:

“"You know what to do."

She smiled, turned and walked away, not as people in portraits usually did, out of the sides of their frames, but along what seemed to be a long tunnel painted behind her. They watched her slight figure retreating until finally she was swallowed by the darkness. (*Deathly Hallows* 625)
The observation that Ariana’s portrait does not behave as portraits in Rowling’s sequence usually do establishes it as distinct from those I have examined here because it is the first and only portrait depicted as challenging the boundary between specular and corporeal. As the three companions discuss the state of Hogwarts, which has been infiltrated by Death Eaters and is now under the control of Snape as Headmaster, Hermione notices that the portrait has altered.

What follows is the first and only depiction of a living character, eventually revealed to be Neville Longbottom, being represented as apparently travelling through the pseudo-world of the enchanted portraits. However, this is never implied to be anything more than a visual trompe-l’oeil representation of a doorway with the picture acting as a window. Neither Neville nor any other characters who pass through the passage Ariana guards ever make note of moving between the realms of corporeal and specular.

A tiny white dot reappeared at the end of the painted tunnel, and now Ariana was walking back toward them, growing bigger and bigger as she came. But there was somebody else with her now, someone taller than she was, who was limping along, looking excited. His hair was longer than Harry had ever seen it: he appeared to have suffered several gashes to his face and his clothes were ripped and torn. Larger and larger the two figures grew, until only their heads and shoulders filled the portrait.

Then the whole thing swung forward on the wall like a little door, and the entrance to a real tunnel was revealed. (Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows 626)
Here, Rowling depicts Ariana as a blend of the Fat Lady’s role as guardian or gatekeeper and that of dual-portrait inhabitant Phineas Black in that she acts as a form of communication, surveillance and, as is demonstrated when she returns to her canvas, an escort through a secret tunnel depicted as a temporary blend of specular and the physical. The temporariness here suggests that the boundary between the two realms is usually kept stable, but in dire situations such as this – where the defeat of Voldemort hinges on Harry and his companions finding and destroying the final Horcruxes – the border can be transgressed. Harry and his companions watch as the canvas swings open and reveals the entrance to a real tunnel; the real Neville Longbottom, whose specular double had appeared to walk with Ariana, steps into the room to greet Harry and his friends (Deathly Hallows 626). This blurring of boundaries foreshadows Harry’s later passage through death, with the portraits that initially acted as windows between the worlds of the living and dead now able to function as a temporary portal between the two realms. Indeed, the guide during this walk is a specular copy of a deceased character, and it is later in the same novel, via another type of magical technology known as the Resurrection Stone, that the specular dead are recalled to escort Harry towards his own death. While the portraits have always suggested an afterlife within the pseudo-world of the canvas, Rowling’s breakdown of the boundary here – when Ariana Dumbledore appears to lead the living into the specular realm – foreshadows how the disintegration of the divide between specular and corporeal parallels Harry’s complex relationship with death throughout the entire sequence.

The Afterlife of a Portrait: the Immortal Specular Self
Despite her death at a young age, which occurred long before the Harry Potter sequence began, Ariana appears to have been granted a sense of immortality in portrait form as “the painting of the girl over the mantelpiece” (*Deathly Hallows* 618). This suggests that some portraits in the magical world offer a permanent after-life in the pseudo-world of the canvas and that in certain cases these specular selves remain invested in the corporeal world due to a connection to their living family. Throughout Rowling’s sequence, the majority of the portraits that are encountered contain the specular selves of persons who have long since departed from the world – physically, at least – and the occupant of the frame that interacts with the living is all that remains of the deceased.

While many portraits offer the odd sarcastic quip, it is not until Harry encounters the picture of Sirius Black’s mother in Grimmauld Place (in *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*) that Rowling presents us with a specular being whose sole purpose appears to be to haunt and torment the living beings that enter her former residence. In an effort not to disturb her, the current residents keep her frame (and window into the real world) covered and speak in whispers when in the portrait’s presence, but on occasion, she is made aware of their presence – such as when the doorbell rings (*Order of the Phoenix* 135), or when Nymphadora Tonks accidentally knocks over an umbrella, the crash of which results in a “horrible, ear-splitting, blood-curdling screech” (90), serving as our introduction to Mrs Black:

The moth-eaten velvet curtains Harry had passed earlier had flown apart, but there was no door behind them. For a split second, Harry thought he was looking through a window, a window behind which an old woman in a black cap was screaming and screaming as though
she were being tortured – then he realised it was simply a life-size portrait, but the most realistic, and the most unpleasant, he had ever seen in his life. (*Order of the Phoenix* 91)

The explicit reference to this portrait as a window endorses my argument that the frame acts as a viewing space into a pseudo-world. This particular portrait is described by Rowling as the “most realistic,” yet Harry regards it as the most unpleasant he has ever seen: if it is realistic and horrific, we can only assume this portrait is an accurate depiction of its original subject in its appearance and behaviour. Mrs Black’s portrait is described as “life-size,” so we accept that this is a physically accurate representation of how she was when alive.

It is at this moment in the sequence that Rowling makes it most clear that the specular selves that live on within portraits retain their appearance and personality after they have died in the corporeal world. As the old woman continues to scream, her yellowing skin stretched taut as she brandishes claws as though to tear at the faces of those trying to cover her frame, Harry observes that the curtains are refusing to close. This particular specular being is able to influence the physical frame that acts as the window to the pseudo-world of the specular, and as she screams abuse at those she can see, Rowling brings the trope of the haunted Gothic painting to “life.” It is only when Sirius roars at her to “shut up” that the curtain is able to be closed. He greets Harry grimly, “I see you’ve met my mother,” clearly establishing that the portrait and his deceased mother are one and the same, before explaining that the canvas remains stuck in place due to a Permanent Sticking Charm (*Order of the Phoenix* 91-3). Mrs Black is physically linked
to the Black residence, and her chosen role, it appears, is simply to torment the “blood traitors” that she believes are shaming her family home.

In *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, after having inherited the home from Sirius, Harry and his companions seek shelter at Grimmauld Place. Mrs Black offers them the same screams of welcome (“Mudbloods, filth, stains of dishonour, taint of shame on the house of my fathers”) but, as when Sirius was the home owner, she is silenced when Harry orders her to “Shut up!” (*Deathly Hallows* 193). This is reminiscent of the obedience shown by Kreacher the House-Elf – sworn to “the Noble House of Black” (*Order of the Phoenix* 125) and whose servitude to both Sirius and Harry could be kindly described as reluctant. It appears that the current owner of a canvas can claim a certain level of authority over the specular inhabitants of a designated physical space. The present Headmaster maintains a similar level of authority over the portraits of former Headmasters and Headmistresses of Hogwarts that reside at Hogwarts, and these specular selves are, it is revealed, obligated to provide further servitude to the school in their portrait afterlives. The portrait of Armando Dippet, Dumbledore’s predecessor, reminds Phineas that they are “honour-bound to give service to the present Headmaster of Hogwarts” when Phineas claims to be “too tired” to visit his other portrait at Dumbledore’s request (*Order of the Phoenix* 520). In order for the specular beings to look out of their frame (not have their window blocked, as it were) and interact with the world they have departed after death, they have – to an extent – to behave appropriately or be essentially cut off from the present, from information and the ability to maintain a corresponding existence with the real world. This demonstrates that, despite exhibiting bad behaviour at times, certain pictures still express a desire to remain informed of the
events happening in the corporeal world and this allows them to remain linked with the present – or the future that follows on from when they became a portrait. It is here, in the ability to close the portraits’ window into the physical realm, that the living characters are finally able to exhibit some power over them.

Intriguingly, the reader discovers late in the sequence that the specular subjects of portraits in the Headmaster’s office simply appear there after their physical death. These portraits are not after all painted, and it seems in this case that it is the moment of death that generates a specular copy. Following the death of Dumbledore, Harry enters his office and observes that

a new portrait had joined the ranks of the dead headmasters and headmistresses of Hogwarts…Dumbledore was slumbering in a golden frame over the desk, his half-moon spectacles perched upon his crooked nose, looking peaceful and untroubled. (*Half-Blood Prince* 737)

No direct explanation is provided for the appearance of the specular Dumbledore. Rather, the reader must infer that these portraits appear because the Headmasters and Headmistresses are honour-bound to continue service to Hogwarts even after death. The magical appearance of the specular Dumbledore in a frame so soon after his death suggests that the post of headmaster or headmistress is permanent – even after one has died.
The implication then is that the other portraits, such as that of Phineas Nigellus Black, also appeared in the office of the Headmaster at the time of their natural deaths. Phineas exists independently of a viewer, and at most times claims he would rather be undisturbed. He is an autonomous being – at times much to the frustration of his neighbouring portraits in the Headmaster’s office – and his twin frames enable him to conduct surveillance throughout the sequence. Self-preservation is a part of his personality, as evidenced by his outrage that Hermione dares to alter his appearance as a painting by magically adding a bandage over his eyes (*Deathly Hallows* 335). This demonstrates not only his self-importance but also his vanity. Phineas’s after-life as a specular self, then, is an immortal one and is governed by choice, desire, identity, and – despite his protests – the role of service to Hogwarts, which he ultimately fulfils. During *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, Phineas overhears Hermione, who neglected to consider that the frame acts as a method of audio as well as visual communication when she hid his second portrait in her handbag and blindfolded him, in conversation with Harry and, unaware that Phineas is listening in, she reveals their location. Phineas in turn reveals this to Snape, allowing the sword of Godric Gryffindor to be delivered to Harry and Ron, providing them with a means of destroying one of Voldemort’s Horcruxes (*Deathly Hallows* 755). Phineas, despite all of his snide remarks about ignorant students (Muggle-born or otherwise), “plays his part” (*Deathly Hallows* 819), decades after his physical death, in defeating the evil of Lord Voldemort because he chooses to fulfil his role of service to Hogwarts. As the subject of a dual frame portrait, he is able to inhabit two spaces in the pseudo-world, which enables him to gather information. For all of his spiteful commentary, and despite being a specular character, Phineas Nigellus plays a vital part in enabling Harry and his companions to defeat Lord Voldemort.
Phineas’s decision to fulfil his duty to Hogwarts demonstrates how, despite existing as a specular being, he can nevertheless intervene in the “real” world and frame the narrative in his own chosen way. His final intervention, in which he conveys news of Harry’s whereabouts to Snape so that Snape can leave the sword of Gryffindor for Harry, establishes that Phineas, as a character in his own right, is not only on the edge or frame of the story but immersed within it. Regardless of his apparent lack of enthusiasm and occasional bad behaviour, then, Phineas is the specular embodiment of a metafictional technique in the sense that – as an enchanted portrait – he is used as a literary device by Rowling to raise questions about fiction and reality. The established boundaries between the realms of specular and corporeal are ultimately challenged by the ways that specular entities, such as Phineas, are able to influence – if not take charge of – the narratives unfolding around them, long after they have died a physical death. It is noteworthy that these specular beings, physically deceased as they are, have long since accepted that which Lord Voldemort fears the most – the spectre of death – and they continue to exist in specular form via the wizarding technology of magic. As portraits, they are capable of interaction, influence and awareness – a more fulfilling after-life than awaits Lord Voldemort, who seeks to defy all aspects of time and nature in his attempts to defeat a permanent death.

Magical Photographs: Infinite Echoes

While the portraits depicted throughout the Harry Potter sequence offer a specular existence that provides the inhabitant of the frame with a potentially immortal after-life, the enchanted photographs that Rowling presents us with provide a different type of
specular double that instead functions as an emotional echo of a subject captured in a moment. As in our Muggle world, there is a difference between the two forms of the image: as Mary Price argues, although “the photographer’s vision may discern the same ‘reality’ as the painter’s, it is subject to such different restrictions of time and material that the quantitative differences make a qualitative difference” (7). In the Harry Potter sequence, the specular double contained within a photograph exists independently of the subject that was originally captured and, thanks to magic, is given the ability to move around and generate expression within the frame of the picture. However, there is no evidence that these photographic doubles are able to live a full life in a pseudo-world after their physical self has died, as those in portraits appear to do, because the doubles we see do not engage in any new behaviour with those that look at them. They do not talk to each other or to the viewer, and although they may step out of their own photograph they do not to visit other photographs in the way the inhabitants of the portraits do. Instead, the specular selves in the enchanted photographs of the sequence act as emotional echoes of the original subject, and their behaviour generally reflects the feelings of the person being photographed at the time.

Mary Price describes the act of photographing as “one way of arresting time in order to contemplate it” (177). Throughout the Harry Potter sequence, this is literalised in the apparently frozen emotional responses of the subjects of moving photographs. The enchanted photographs that Rowling depicts reflect aspects of their original subjects, yet they remain emotionally connected via magic years after the moment has been captured. For example, the specular copy of Percy Weasley is able to walk out of a family photograph long after it has been taken, in an echo of the living person’s
defiance in the present time. Roland Barthes argues that “what the photograph reproduces to infinity has occurred only once” (4). By assigning her photographs’ subjects movement through magic and defying their traditional behaviour, Rowling invites her readers to contemplate the peculiar functions of this type of specularity.

Towards the conclusion of the first novel, Rubeus Hagrid (the groundskeeper of Hogwarts who collects Harry from his Muggle aunt and uncle to escort him on his journey into the magical world at the beginning of the first novel) presents Harry with a “handsome, leather-covered book” that is full of magical photographs that he has put together after contacting old school friends of Harry’s parents (Philosopher’s Stone 326). And there, within the pages, “smiling and waving at him from every page were his mother and father” (Philosopher’s Stone 326). This album enables Harry, whose only vision of his parents until this point has been that which he sees in an enchanted mirror, to recognise his own heritage and gives him a permanent point of reference when constructing a visual memory of his parents. Barthes argues that a “specific photograph, in effect, is never distinguished from its referent (from what it represents), or at least it is not immediately or generally distinguished from its referent” (5). The magical and moving photographs Rowling depicts throughout the sequence become windows into a space that enables Harry a sense of false interaction with his specular parents: they wave to him, and he can wave or smile back. The terrible thing that exists within every photograph, what Barthes describes as “the return of the dead,” (9) is foregrounded dramatically in Rowling’s depiction of photographs because of their ability to move and to feel, mimicking a long departed liveliness.
Rowling highlights her characters’ emotional investment in this form of specularity when she depicts how a single photograph can hold multiple meanings for different people. This occurs during two encounters characters have with the same picture during *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*. First, Harry finds a part of a photograph of himself as a baby that has been torn in half. For Harry, this photograph is a glimpse into the childhood he never knew: “A black-haired baby was zooming in and out of the picture on a tiny broom, roaring with laughter, and a pair of legs that must have belonged to James were chasing after him” (*Deathly Hallows*, 205). Only near the end of *Deathly Hallows*, when Harry sees into the memories of Severus Snape, whom he has regarded as a villain in service to Voldemort until this stage, is it revealed that the Potions master was in fact always in love with Lily Potter and as a result, had sworn after her death to protect Harry from Voldemort. It is revealed that, prior to Harry discovering the torn photograph, Snape had ripped the picture in two and essentially removed the section containing Harry’s mother, and kept the half that containing the laughing image of Lily. This action demonstrates that damaging the physical photograph in the wizarding world does not harm the specular being captured within, but the act of tearing does, however, create a literal separation. That is, a second viewpoint of the same moment is enforced because Rowling presents us with a physical manifestation of the difference of interpretation through the torn photograph: for Snape, the photograph memorialises his desire for Lily, while for Harry it is a fragmented glimpse into a past he does not recall.

The infinite echoes that a magical photograph represents in constructing and representing identity are perhaps best captured in the many copies of himself that
surround Gilderoy Lockhart throughout *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*. Harry’s first sight of Lockhart is in a photograph featured on the cover of one of his many books, this one owned by Ron’s mother, Molly Weasley: “As always in the wizarding world, the photograph was moving; the wizard, who Harry supposed was Gilderoy Lockhart, kept winking cheekily up at them all. Mrs Weasley beamed down at him” (*Chamber of Secrets* 43). The initial encounter Harry and his companions have with the real Lockhart finds him seated at a table in a bookshop, “surrounded by large pictures of his own face, all winking and flashing dazzlingly white teeth at the crowd” (68). The numerous specular Lockharts that surround the physical Lockhart indicate the fabricated nature of his public identity and the shallowness of his celebrity status: as noted above, Harry discovers that Lockhart has used Memory Charms to wipe the memories of other wizards so that he can take credit for their work, which he then turns into the content of his many best-selling books (*Chamber of Secrets* 320-21). Lockhart is more than happy to be endlessly copied and even be surrounded by specular doppelgangers. As the truth of Lockhart’s devious nature is revealed and his Memory Charm backfires (326), obliterating his memory and constructed character, it seems fitting that the former Defence Against the Dark Arts teacher has only the endless echoes of the magical photographs of himself, which are essentially empty copies of a dead self, surrounding him when he tries unsuccessfully to reconstruct his identity.

In the end, Lockhart is simply an echo of his former self and his photographs have a stronger sense of identity than he does: he has become a specular shadow while the images of his former self present a more accurate depiction of the original subject. In *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* Harry encounters him in St Mungo’s
Hospital for Magical Maladies and Injuries, clumsily signing photographs of himself: “I am not forgotten, you know, no, I still receive a very great deal of fan mail … Gladys Gudgeon writes weekly … I just wish I knew why …” (*Order of the Phoenix* 563). As we have seen, Gilderoy Lockhart is reduced to a specular echo that smiles and waves from a picture. Lockhart has dedicated so much of his life to living up to his specular projection, by living as the smiling and all-conquering photograph that graces the covers of his many books and taking credit for the work of others, that neither he nor the reader has any real idea who he truly is or was.

Rowling leaves the reader with this image of the bewildered wizard surrounded by copies of his false self, suggesting that in some cases an individual can completely lose themselves in the specular. To lose one’s identity is to suffer a form of death: the specular images of the false Lockhart reflect a life that can never be recalled. Lockhart’s fate foreshadows the potential lure of other forms of specularity I will examine in subsequent chapters, where Rowling clearly intimates that investment in a specular copy of oneself is both dangerous and enthralling.

**Enthusiastic and Reluctant Subjects: Photographs as Emotional Link to the Past**

How and why the photographs in Rowling’s sequence are capable of movement is explained to the reader by Colin Creevey, a new student who as a Muggle-born wizard is eager to photograph everything in the wizarding world. As Creevey explains, “if I develop the film in the right potion, the pictures’ll move” (*Chamber of Secrets* 107). Colin later shows Harry a photograph that he had taken:
A moving, black and white Lockhart was tugging hard on an arm Harry recognised as his own. He was pleased to see that his photographic self was putting up a good fight and refusing to be dragged into view. As Harry watched, Lockhart gave up and slumped, panting, against the white edge of the picture. (Chamber of Secrets 117)

This example of depictive ekphrasis demonstrates that the photographic specular self is in some sense a separate entity to the original subject, which is why Harry was “pleased” to see his photographic copy behave in such a way, as he himself can no longer influence the captured moment. The specular Harry and Lockhart in the photograph accurately reflect their respective feelings about having Colin take the picture at the time:

Gilderoy Lockhart was striding towards them, his turquoise robes swirling behind him. “Who’s giving out signed photos?”

Harry started to speak but he was cut short as Lockhart flung an arm around his shoulders and thundered jovially, “Shouldn’t have asked! We meet again, Harry!”

Pinned to Lockhart’s side and burning with humiliation, Harry saw Malfoy slide smirking back into the crowd. (Chamber of Secrets 108-09)

The moment of the photograph’s capture and the feelings of the subjects at that time have been replicated perfectly, it seems. Most people have been in a similar situation to Harry, where they have been made to pose for an awkward photograph, but without magic or technology to create a moving photograph, those specular selves are unable to
put up a fight and simply have to grin (or grimace) through the moment. While comedic in its description, this particular photograph demonstrates how characters in the Harry Potter sequence are captured perfectly and permanently in photographic specular form, complete with the awkwardness and embarrassment associated with the moment the picture was taken. There is evidence, however, of a connection with the original subject remaining despite Harry or other photographed subjects being unable to truly alter their photographic selves after they have been captured and duplicated. The consequence of the subject having no control over the photograph is that this specular copy is essentially out in the world forever and can be possessed or employed by anybody else.

The subjects within these magical photographs do seem to possess varied senses of awareness about the person they are, essentially, an echo of, as Rowling demonstrates when depicting the behaviour of Percy Weasley’s photograph of his girlfriend, Penelope Clearwater. When the photograph is smirched as a result of a cup of tea being spilt, the image of Penelope hides itself under the frame because her nose is now blotchy (Prisoner of Azkaban 79). The old pictures in the family home of Sirius Black demonstrate that they are able to behave as well, protesting as they are thrown away: the “…occupants squealed shrilly as the glass covering them smashed” (Order of the Phoenix 134). Rowling briefly revisits these photographs when Harry and his companions discover that the house-elf Kreacher has managed to retrieve the discarded pictures despite Sirius attempting to dispose of them:

Their glass might be shattered, but still the little black-and-white people inside them peered up at him haughtily, including – he felt a little jolt in his stomach – the dark, heavy-lidded woman whose trial
he had witnessed in Dumbledore’s Pensieve: Bellatrix Lestrange. By the looks of it, hers was Kreacher’s favourite photograph; he had placed it to the fore of all the others and mended the glass clumsily with Spellotape. (Order of the Phoenix 555)

This moment demonstrates how the specular is often utilised by Rowling to introduce characters to the reader before they are encountered physically. Bellatrix Lestrange, who is arguably Lord Voldemort’s most dedicated follower, features prominently during the final three novels but is first introduced as a specular vision of a memory in the Pensieve – a specular technology I address in the following chapter – and here, in a photograph. The above passage, where Harry sees how Kreacher has saved and repaired the family photographs that Sirius disposed of, demonstrates how physical damage to a photograph does not actually harm the occupants (they mimic the expected behaviour), and this suggests that the picture itself is simply a window into a specular realm of echoes. Magical photographs then, in contrast to enchanted portraits, appear to provide a window into a void of duplication: a series of captured moments and copied subjects that are essentially paused in the instants that the magical film has captured.

The specular copies in photographs do possess a sense of awareness in that they behave for the viewer or looker as they would for a camera, but while they do not possess autonomy as the portraits do, they nevertheless remain connected to the original subject. For example, in Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix, when we learn that the specular Percy Weasley has stormed out of a family photograph taken in Egypt two years earlier, echoing the original subject’s fall-out with his family (151), there is no evidence to suggest that this specular copy of Percy appears elsewhere, nor does he
offer any new interaction with a viewer the way a portrait might. This suggests, then, that the photograph as the specular self is an emotional echo capable of reflecting the current mindset of the original subject, but not an extension capable of living on as a separate entity in, for example, the manner of an enchanted portrait.

Just as photographic specular copies are able to behave independently of their original subject while at the same time reacting to current events, as the defiant photographs of Harry and Percy do, so too can the original subject directly influence the specular copy via interaction. In *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, when Alastor Moody shows a photograph to Harry of the original Order of the Phoenix, he pokes at the picture and tells the inhabitants to “shift aside there”, or “budge along”, so that the “little people in the photograph jostled among themselves and those hidden right at the back appeared at the forefront of the picture” (*Order of the Phoenix* 195). What Rowling depicts here is a “return of the dead” (Barthes 9) that brings to life a captured moment of the past filled with deceased characters. In having Moody alter these specular copies by forcing them to change positions, Rowling grants the copies in the photograph a temporary liveliness as they respond to Moody, and the fact that many of the people in the picture, including Harry’s parents, are long dead creates an unsettling sensation expressed for the reader by Harry’s own dismay.

The differing emotions that a photograph can stir are highlighted by Rowling here, for while Moody presents this picture to Harry hoping he will find it of interest, Harry has a different reaction as he looks at the specular copies “waving happily out of the photograph forever more, not knowing that they were doomed…”; he muses that
“Moody might find that interesting … he, Harry, found it disturbing …” *(Order of the Phoenix* 196-97). Barthes’s argument regarding the dead returning in photography (9) and the different emotions this can trigger are relevant here: for Moody, this is a moment when his fellow Order of the Phoenix members are in their prime and are happy, a time he himself remembers with pleasure. The foreverness of their happy waving, however, unsettles Harry: these are not portraits that can be truly interacted with and therefore their subjects cannot be forewarned of the inevitable danger that has – for Harry and the reader – already occurred. Paradoxically, their liveliness in this moment emphasises the permanency of the boundary that exists between the specular dead and corporeal living, because while these echoes from the past can wave to the present – their future – the present viewers who choose to interact with the photograph cannot send themselves back into the time before the image and its echoes were captured.

What Rowling highlights here is the different emotional affects that such specular echoes are able to evoke in different viewers of a photograph. The fact that Moody can move the images from their original positions in the photograph establishes a sense of the supernatural, because it teases at a real interaction with these photographic copies of the deceased. The specular dead briefly appear to be living, but ultimately these photographs, containing copies and reflecting their emotions for all eternity, are only echoes. They appear to be aware that they are captured within a photograph and must behave for the viewer, yet their futures ended long ago.
Barthes suggests that as viewers, we “animate” photographs by looking at them and that they in turn animate the viewer: “the photograph itself is in no way animated (I do not believe in ‘lifelike’ photographs), but it animates me” (20). However, Rowling, by giving these specular echoes animated form, creates photographs that are truly like life. There is in fact no need to look at them in order to “animate” the specular subjects, as evidenced by the specular Percy walking out of the family photograph. At times, such as when Penelope Clearwater hides from view, the photographic subjects of the wizarding world demonstrate an awareness of being watched. Rowling’s manipulation of the functions of the traditional photograph results in specular copies condemned to re-enact past moments, all the while reflecting the emotional connection that was magically forged at the time the photograph was taken and teasing at the ability to give life to the dead. The specular selves of the photographs, then, are death both captured and reanimated. They are a transcription of a moment long past that has been captured and, as is the case for so many photographs that Harry beholds throughout the sequence, a specular copy replicating itself in life. In doing so, however, the subject of the magical photograph ultimately reaffirms the death of the original subject. The photograph then, as Rowling depicts it throughout the sequence, is a manner of linking the specular with death despite initially being presented (to Harry) as a gift.

A Picture Tells A Thousand Words: Moving Photographs as Narrative Device

In *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, Rowling employs photographs as a narrative device: they provide clues whereby the reader and the characters can unravel the mysteries surrounding the “Prisoner” of the book’s title. Early on this novel, Harry sees the Weasley family waving at him from a photograph as they stand in front of a
pyramid (15), and soon after sees the face of Sirius Black – his first look at the character and the escaped prisoner of the novel’s title – blinking slowly as he stares at Harry from the front page of the popular wizard newspaper, the *Daily Prophet* (45). These two pictures, which Rowling reveals to the reader and Harry early in the novel, help to inform our interpretation of events. But, as is ultimately revealed to us, it turns out that we have been misled, or rather, have looked at the images in the wrong way. When Sirius explains to Harry and his companions that Peter Pettigrew, presently disguised as a rat, framed him and is hiding in plain sight, he reveals how he discovered exactly which rat to look for and where to find it. Sirius shows Harry the photograph of Ron and his family on vacation in Egypt that had appeared in the *Daily Prophet*, the same one that Harry had looked at in the beginning of the book – and it clearly shows Scabbers, Ron’s pet rat, now re-identified as Peter Pettigrew (*Prisoner of Azkaban* 391). The corporeal Pettigrew, oblivious to his specular copy making the front page and being identified by Sirius, demonstrates no control over his photograph or, at least, no thought to vacating the photograph in order to remain disguised as Scabbers. In this instance, the photograph is used to solve a mystery and invert the preconceptions that have been built up around the supposed villain of this instalment.

The photograph is also utilised as a way of establishing emotional investment in characters and giving the past visualisation. Harry inspects the photo album that Hagrid gave him during his first year and considers a photograph taken on his parents’ wedding day. He sees Sirius Black, his parents’ best man and his godfather, and compares the two specular versions of Sirius he knows as he examines the photograph:
If he hadn’t known it was the same person, he would never have guessed it was Black in the old photograph. His face wasn’t sunken and waxy, but handsome, full of laughter. Had he already been working for Voldemort when this picture was taken? Was he already planning the deaths of the two people next to him? Did he realise he was facing twelve years in Azkaban, twelve years which would make him unrecognisable? (Prisoner of Azkaban 230)

At the conclusion of the third novel, after Harry has learned the truth about who betrayed his parents and discovered that Sirius is innocent, the photograph in the album of his parents with their best man takes on new meaning: it is no longer Sirius the betrayer, but once again Sirius the best friend of James Potter and godfather to Harry. As in real life, photographs are used in Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban to construct a history and a narrative: first, by allowing Sirius to solve the mystery of Pettigrew; second, by giving Harry two pictures of Sirius that allow him to reconstruct the character for the reader – because the history surrounding both Sirius and Pettigrew is revealed to be false. This particular instalment sees Rowling utilising photographs to advance the plot; further enforcing the sequence’s growing dependency upon the visual as the linear narrative grows further complicated.

In Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, a book written about Dumbledore by sensationalist journalist Rita Skeeter contains photographs that enable Harry and his companions to fill in the blanks concerning the riddle of the Deathly Hallows (three magical objects known as the Elder Wand, Resurrection Stone, and Invisibility Cloak) that would grant the holder of all three power over death. Harry sees a photograph of
“the young Dumbledore and his handsome companion [Gellert Grindelwald], roaring with laughter at some long forgotten joke” (391). The young, specular Dumbledore and Grindelwald, laughing at the forgotten joke, are part of a story that, between the lines of Rita Skeeter’s sensationalised version of events, ultimately allows Harry to unravel an important mystery. It is this photograph that, in providing further backstory for Dumbledore, acts as a narrative device from the past that propels the plot forward when it is combined with a vision Harry has of Voldemort torturing Grindelwald in the present, enables the mystery of the Deathly Hallows to be unraveled. Not only does this photograph initially taint the image of Dumbledore in the eyes of Harry and the reader, but it humanises both of these infamous yet old wizards and collapses time by giving a visual depiction of the period in the wizarding world before the Harry Potter sequence began.

**Images as Influence: Photographs in the Service of Propaganda**

Photographs often provide a first impression in real life. For example, photographs are a method of introduction, as Barthes explains in the following example: “this is my brother; this is me as a child” (5). Throughout the Harry Potter sequence, Rowling often uses photographs as a means of providing a first meeting with a character. In the case of Sirius Black, this introduction is deliberately misleading to the reader because of Harry’s initial interpretation of the image. In her descriptions of the *Daily Prophet’s* various campaigns that benefit those in power at the Ministry, Rowling highlights media influence, corruption, surveillance and manipulation in the novel’s setting, and photographs such as that of Sirius are major elements in this process. The agenda of the Ministry during certain novels (denying the return of Voldemort, insisting on the guilt
of Sirius Black and supporting those in government), which is informing the Daily Prophet, demonstrates how those with the power to circulate and promote photographs can attempt to use them as influence by creating a narrative to accompany them, as is the case with the many Daily Prophet stories that feature throughout the sequence.

Although Rita Skeeter’s fabricated newspaper stories create problems for Harry throughout Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire, by casting him as the celebrity or rebel entry into the Tri-Wizard Tournament and speculating on his relationship status, the sinister undertones of media representation are not fully revealed until the fifth novel, Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix. In this novel, Rowling describes at considerable length how the Daily Prophet discredits both Harry and Dumbledore, who maintain that Lord Voldemort has returned. As it emerges, this is a stratagem to ensure that Cornelius Fudge – the Minister of Magic – and his repellent ally Dolores Umbridge retain power. By portraying how the Daily Prophet frames the photographs that accompany its stories, Rowling demonstrates the ability of the media to construct a character as “good” or “evil.” As the narrative of Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix unfolds we see how the agenda of rival publications can then deconstruct and challenge this fabrication. Thus Harry provides an interview to the Daily Prophet’s rival publication, The Quibbler, in order to upset the stranglehold that the Daily Prophet, under the Ministry’s control, has on the flow of information. Painted as the “Boy who Lies” (as opposed to the “Boy Who Lived”) and an “attention seeker” by the Daily Prophet, Harry is portrayed in contrast by the Quibbler, who depict him as a heroic saviour. Not only does this interview introduce new information into the heavily regulated media, but Umbridge, in demanding the Quibbler be banned, ensures that her
censorship rule will guarantee extra readership. Suddenly, people who were beginning to doubt Harry and Dumbledore, such as fellow Gryffindor Seamus Finnegan, begin to realise that they have been duped by the Ministry and the largest media organisation in the wizarding world: they have allowed media distortions to use specular representations to reshape their world views. Rowling demonstrates that by framing the narrative of a photograph, a person or media organisation is able to alter public perception concerning the original subject. In the case of Cornelius Fudge and the Ministry of Magic, the reality they are desperately trying to ignore is the return of Lord Voldemort; once the ministry employees (Fudge and the Aurors) see him with their own eyes, there is no controlling that information and they are ultimately exposed.

As is often the case in the Harry Potter sequence, we find our first introduction to a character is via the specular, and in certain instances photographs as an extended double of the self do not lie in their representation. Following a mass breakout from Azkaban, the wizard prison, the Daily Prophet publishes photographs of the escapees. Harry notices one in particular, that of Bellatrix Lestrange:

Her face had leapt out at him the moment he had seen the page. She had long, dark hair that looked unkempt and straggly in the picture, though he had seen it sleek, thick and shining. She glared up at him through heavily lidded eyes, an arrogant, disdainful smile playing around her thin mouth. Like Sirius, she retained vestiges of great good looks, but something – perhaps Azkaban – had taken most of her beauty. (Order of the Phoenix 600)
Because the image of the prisoner was used in a different way in the case of Sirius Black, who is Bellatrix’s cousin, and we are at this stage already suspicious of what the *Daily Prophet* is reporting to us, the reader might be reluctant to trust the photographs being presented at this point. In this case, however, the framing of these pictures by the *Daily Prophet* turns out to be accurate: we, and Harry, recognise the names of these prisoners as those previously identified through Harry’s own experience to be Death Eaters, Dark Wizards loyal to Voldemort’s cause. Harry’s “reading” of the image here is likely to be an accurate reflection of the true subject, but the *Daily Prophet* attempts to undermine this by linking the innocent Sirius Black to the escape in its continual denial of Voldemort’s return.

The power of the media in the wizarding world that Rowling constructs is one of influence, just as it is in the Muggle world. This is demonstrated when Harry’s Uncle, Vernon Dursley, upon witnessing a news report about the escaped prisoner Sirius Black during *Prisoner of Azkaban*, offers his own non-wizarding opinion based mainly on image accompanying the story:

“No need to tell us he’s no good,” snorted Uncle Vernon, staring over the top of his newspaper at the prisoner. “Look at the state of him, the filthy layabout! Look at his hair!”

He shot a nasty look sideways at Harry, whose untidy hair had always been a great source of annoyance to Uncle Vernon. Compared to the man on the television, however, whose gaunt face was surrounded by a matted, elbow-length tangle, Harry felt very well groomed indeed. (*Prisoner of Azkaban* 24)
There is a sense of foreshadowing in Harry’s comparison to the image of the wanted Sirius because his own image is ultimately employed by the wizarding media in similar fashion. In Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, Dolores Umbridge, now heading the Muggle-born Registration Commission after Lord Voldemort has seized control of the Ministry, has files and posters containing information regarding Harry and his companions. Harry sees a poster of himself on the wall with the words “Undesirable Number One” emblazoned across his chest (281). This specular copy of Harry, like all photographs, is an echo of his true self, but it is forever separate and is now in the service of those who would see him destroyed. This proves how, despite the magic of the wizarding world, the characters still have no control over how their specular copies are used. As in our own world, not only can the media take a likeness and twist a narrative around it with merely a caption (hero, undesirable, criminal), but so can any person who views the photograph.

In her depiction of the varying uses of photographs Rowling thus comments on how a society surrounded by the spectacle, as described by Debord, results not only in a dependency upon the visual but enables characters to construct identity via recognition by looking at images of the past. This occurs repeatedly throughout the Harry Potter sequence. By granting her magical photographs a sense of animation and awareness that echoes the original subject, Rowling demonstrates that the photograph functions as an infinite echo of a single moment. A photograph in the Harry Potter sequence is essentially a captured specular copy that is doomed to repeat itself in a void; unlike the specular images created in portraits, it is unable to influence the world of the living or the ways it is used by those in power. Photographs and their inhabitants, with their life-
like qualities, ultimately reinforce the permanency and separation between the realms of the specular and the corporeal because they are a past moment captured. The fact that they move and wave only teases at true interaction, like that offered by the enchanted portraits, and so it is little wonder that Harry’s reaction to them shifts from one of initial fascination to that of quiet horror.

Throughout the Harry Potter sequence, the ekphrastic techniques Rowling employs when constructing the specular subjects of portraits and photographs establishes the specular selves as both spectacle and double. As characters, the enchanted portraits, whose roles grow more complex and prominent as the sequence continues, gain the ability to frame aspects of the narrative. By acting as visual representations of death and the after-life, they collapse the boundary of time and, at times, challenge the distinction between specular and corporeal. In the case of the portraits, which can be viewed as a window between the living and dead and therefore as an established boundary between two realms, we are presented with doubles of deceased characters who defy the traditional behaviours one expects of a painting in the Muggle world. These specular beings do not require an audience, although some enjoy attention, and Rowling describes them in such vivid detail as the sequence progresses that certain portrait subjects, such as Phineas Nigellus Black, become as life-like as any of the living characters. Indeed, the fact they are dead does not prevent the inhabitants of the portraits from influencing the narrative because they are, in their specular forms, sentient beings. Throughout the sequence the specular selves of the portraits act as a *parergon* (Derrida 54) in that they are “against, beside, and in addition” to the narrative: they are neither simply “outside nor simply inside” of the events of the sequence, but are vital to it.
Their frames act as windows into a pseudo-world that the living are, in the Harry Potter universe, unable to enter but that is vital to the continuing function of the world as Rowling has constructed it. It is only the portrait of Ariana Dumbledore, the last to be introduced sequentially, that offers a temporary blurring of this boundary when it acts as a doorway for Harry and his companions to enter. The behaviour of this particular portrait foregrounds the blurring of the definitive separateness of the realms of the living and dead throughout the sequence, particularly during encounters with other variations of the specular. The magical photographs, while offering no new interaction with their viewers, tease at a re-awakening of both the past and the deceased with their ability to move. These specular copies are on a loop, as if programmed to repeat the behaviour of the moment captured on magical film for all eternity. It is the emotional resonance that they stir in the viewer, amplified by their movement which in turn hints at life, that establishes them as an important from of specular throughout the sequence. In other cases of specularity, which I examine in the following chapters, extra dimension plays a crucial role as these non-corporeal forms – visual doubles – attempt to further negate the established boundaries of two worlds that are intended to remain connected – via the image – yet always separate.
Chapter Two

Revealing Reflections: The Looking Glass of Emotional Experience

Mirrors, possessed of the ability to replicate the real within their surface, help reveal the complex relationship between the corporeal and specular realms throughout the Harry Potter sequence. What the magical mirrors of the wizarding world actually reveal are hidden aspects of the self: that is, by acting as a form of specular technology, the mirror reflection reveals those elements of emotional selfhood that have previously been the most concealed. The magical element of these mirrors lies in their ability to access the minds and hearts of their viewers or owners. This, in turn, enables them to produce a specular reflection, usually based on desire or fear, resulting in the projection of an aspect of the hidden self. The revelation of the hidden self or selves provides Harry with knowledge to unravel truths regarding certain characters and, in most cases, this allows him to elude or read dangerous situations that might otherwise have had fatal consequences. Effectively, these projections become specular representations of character, and, when they are visible to others, work as sites of potential vulnerability.

Each encounter that Harry has with a specular reflection recalls the following biblical verse: “For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as I am known” (1 Corinthians 13:12 KJV). Chantel Lavoie applies this “glass darkly” verse to the Harry Potter sequence in her examination of the role of prophecy throughout the sequence, suggesting that the “veil between this life and another, this world and another, although opaque, is very thin in Rowling’s fiction” (48). The mirror, itself a looking glass that claims to reflect a truth, is perhaps
the most porous of veils between the realms of specular and corporeal throughout the sequence because it is ultimately powered here by magic. The reflection of a mirror provides an extra dimension – that of depth – which is missing from the portraits and photographs examined in my previous chapter. This dimension of depth endows this incarnation of the specular with an ability to produce a sense of authenticity. Within a traditional Muggle mirror is a virtual yet inaccessible space: a specular copy of a corporeal being looking into the glass and a projection of the moment of viewing. Mirror reflections as they appear throughout the Harry Potter sequence, however, are not always linked to the instant of viewing. Due to magical enchantments, these reflections are capable of looking into both the self and the past and this allows Rowling to construct a visual representation of aspects of characters and narrative that have, until being exposed to a mirror, remained concealed.

As a result of the magic of mirrors depicted throughout Rowling’s sequence, Harry, and through him the reader, is able to form more nuanced, mature, and generally more accurate character assessments. Rowling’s magical mirrors thus underscore the absolute importance – and associated difficulty – of reading character accurately. Indeed, as these mirrors reveal, the consequences resulting from misreading character are sometimes fatal. Throughout the series, Harry must learn to interpret, channel, and control the emotional insights these mirrors grant him. Mirror technology and its interpretative apparatus ultimately make the difference between life and death, with their revelations allowing Harry to determine truths regarding character and elude the hidden menaces of Voldemort during the climax of the novels in which they feature most prominently.
Literary awareness of the specular lure of mirror images is evident as early as the story of Narcissus, who fell in love with his own reflection in a pond (Ovid's *Metamorphoses*), and throughout the Harry Potter sequence we are presented with a variety of depictions of the ability of the specular form to enchant corporeal beings. The variations of the mirror that Harry encounters and that I examine in this chapter share similarities with those found in other fictional works, such as “Snow White,” which features a magic mirror that can never lie to those who ask it a question. The mirrors that Rowling depicts do not offer falsehoods, either because they ultimately provide Harry with self-knowledge or hidden knowledge regarding other characters that he has falsely judged. Thus the Mirror of Erised (“Mirror of Desire” in mirror writing), introduced in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*, reveals truths about the self by reflecting the innermost desires of those who gaze into its glass. Rowling’s Pensieve, a magical device in which a character is able to become immersed within a memory of the past, recalls both Lewis Carroll’s *Through the Looking Glass*, where Alice is able to enter a mirror and step into an alternative world, and the Mirror of Galadriel in *The Fellowship of the Ring*, the depiction of which initially seems to share similarities with the Pensieve. As these historic examples demonstrate, the mirror has been an established trope in different genres of literature: as an enchantment, a sentient reflection, a doorway, a method of unravelling a mystery and, most importantly, a manner of revealing the truth of character.

As my examination of portraits and photographs in the previous chapter demonstrates, the specular selves depicted throughout the Harry Potter sequence exhibit uncanny
behaviour in that they defy the norms that we, as Muggles, expect from traditionally inanimate objects. The specular selves reflected in the mirror objects that Harry encounters also exhibit unfamiliar behaviour. As we have seen, in the world that Rowling has established, the portrait is able to exist independently of subjects and viewers and the photograph provides an infinite echo of the original, but the mirror acts as a form of technology because it requires a connection with a corporeal being in order to work. By this, I suggest that it links with, or reads, the mind of the viewer looking into its frame in order to construct a reflection or maintain a projection, one that is generally a result of unconscious fear or desire. Sabine Melchior-Bonnet explains how with “the emergence of the mirror, a fantasy of fears and desires is born” (187), and argues that the “mirror mediates between the dream and the real,” offering “a virtual space for the encounter with the other—a fictive space in which an imaginary scenario is played out” (233). Rowling employs these functions of the mirror throughout the Harry Potter sequence as a means of revealing varying forms of selfhood, such as memory or desire, in specular form.

As I have already shown, Rowling foregrounds the importance of the specular in the first novel, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*, by introducing magical portraits and photographs that defy tradition. In the first appearance of the mirror, also in *Philosopher’s Stone*, Rowling deploys the specular as a method of constructing identity: this is depicted in such a way that it ensures that further encounters with magical mirrors will be invested with emotion and, as a result, the consequences of Harry’s understanding of reflections become integral to his evolving relationship with the realms of the corporeal and specular. As I shall demonstrate, the mirror evolves to
establish a further distinction between the realms of the specular and corporeal, and it also functions as a method of replicating the past via the projection of specular memory.

In each encounter, the mirror functions as a form of magical technology that reflects and simulates an aspect of the hidden self by displaying an image within a virtual space. By employing this particular type of specularity throughout the sequence, Rowling is able to literalise the concealed reflection as a revelation of character while illuminating hitherto hidden plot points. By representing in visual form the facets of selfhood that remain unseen until placed before a mirror, Rowling provides the reader with a deeper understanding of her characters. As hidden events and motivations are revealed in subsequent encounters with different variations on magical looking glasses, the stakes grow higher: with each novel, the sequence grows darker and so too do the encounters with mirrors. The innocence of Harry’s first encounter with a magical mirror, one shaped by desire and the unconscious wish of an orphaned child, is replaced by those variations linked with fear, shame, and a conscious yearning to evoke the deceased in specular form.

**A Specular Reflection of Desire: The Mirror of Erised**

The mirror is first utilised as a specular reflection of desire in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* when Harry encounters an enchanted mirror called “The Mirror of Erised”. It is described as “a magnificent mirror, as high as the ceiling, with an ornate gold frame, standing on two feet,” bearing a carved inscription around the top with reversed words: “Erised stra ehr uyt ube cafru oyt on wohsi” (“I show not your face
but your heart’s desire”) (224-25). When Harry looks into the mirror he sees his family for the first time in his life. Virginia Zimmerman suggests that “Harry takes comfort and strength from his biological connection to parents he does not remember, and this importance does not diminish as the books progress through his years at Hogwarts” (207). Indeed, the specular is used to emphasise this connection at almost every opportunity. The Mirror of Erised is the first and clearest occasion where the hidden past is visualised: Harry’s desire is shaped by his unconscious need for connection to a family he is unable to remember. This moment reveals the emotional investment that this particular mirror requires of each character and allows for Harry to begin to formulate his identity as a part of the Potter family.

As Harry and the reader discover, every individual who looks into the glass of the Mirror of Erised sees something unique, and what they behold cannot be seen by any other. The fact that Rowling depicts this mirror as a piece of technology capable of constructing an image from anyone’s deepest wishes, as Dumbledore explains, has several implications, one of which is that desire contributes towards the construction of fantasy. The fantasy, despite being created by the corporeal subject’s desire, visually exposes an aspect of selfhood because it is a projection of an innermost or even unconscious wish. As Harry begins to understand that the familiar people he sees reflected in the mirror are not physically in the room with him, Rowling shows him deducing their identity and thus his own, as he comprehends exactly who he is looking at in the Mirror of Erised:

He looked in the mirror again. A woman standing right behind his reflection was smiling at him and waving. He reached out a hand and
felt the air behind him. If she was really there, he’d touch her, their reflections were so close together, but he felt only air – she and the others existed only in the mirror.

She was a very pretty woman. She had dark red hair and her eyes – *her eyes are just like mine*, Harry thought, edging a little closer to the glass. Bright green – exactly the same shape, but then he noticed that she was crying; smiling, but crying at the same time. The tall, thin, black-haired man standing next to her put his arm around her. He wore glasses, and his hair was very untidy. It stuck up at the back, just as Harry’s did. (*Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* 225-26)

Harry identifies himself in the reflections of his parents, which becomes a recurring theme throughout the sequence: James and Lily Potter are dead, but Harry, in his subsequent encounters with their specular forms, recalls them as extensions of his identity and recognizes his own reflection in their visages. Rowling here provides Harry with a second “mirror stage” as he compares and relates his own appearance to that of his parents. Jacques Lacan argues that “we can understand the mirror stage as an identification, in the full sense that analysis gives to the term: namely, the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image” (2). As Harry identifies himself as a part of the Potter clan in the Mirror of Erised, he forms for himself a new identity, one distinct from “Just Harry,” the one he assumed when living with his Aunt Petunia’s family (the Dursleys) or “The Boy Who Lived,” which he discovers is his celebrity identity in the wizarding world after having apparently defeated Lord Voldemort as a baby.
In the reflection of this enchanted mirror, Harry’s specular self recalls what Lacan terms the “drama whose internal thrust is precipitated from insufficiency to anticipation - and which manufactures for the subject, caught up in the lure of spatial identification, the succession of phantasies that extends from a fragmented body-image” (4). The “drama” of this reflection sees Harry, via fragmented body-image, identifying physical traits that he shares with his family, and, as a result, he is able to construct a sense of identity within the projection of the specular Potter family being displayed in the Mirror of Erised. Taija Pippo suggests that “Harry’s underlying desire for parental love” could allow the Mirror of Erised to be termed “the Mirror of the Preconscious” because it “works similarly to the psychological occasion for the dream, giving unconscious wishes a possibility to come into sight of the consciousness” (Pippo 75). The Harry in the mirror entrances the corporeal subject because he has all that the living Harry desires: a family that establishes a sense of identity, something he has unconsciously longed for.

In contrast to a photograph or portrait, the mirror’s specular image cannot be captured or transferred, which is why Harry is unable to show his vision to anybody else, as he discovers when Ron sees not Harry’s but his own unique desire reflected in Mirror of Erised. The contrast between Harry’s vision in the mirror and that which Ron sees highlights this and foregrounds the different desires that will test their friendship in future books: Ron sees himself alone, celebrating being recognised as separate from the large Weasley clan, whereas Harry is depicted as surrounded by his parents and recognisable Potter relatives. However, while Ron finds the enchanted mirror to be
fascinating, he expresses concern as Harry becomes increasingly obsessed with his personal projection, sneaking away each night to gaze at its reflection for hours, gradually becoming lost in a fantasy that he can never enter into (*Philosopher’s Stone* 229-30). Harry’s growing obsession and Ron’s concern regarding the enchanted mirror are two ways in which Rowling introduces the particular allure of this form of specularity. Lavoie argues that:

> The seductive Mirror of Erised establishes the importance of glass and wanting to see through or past death. Into this magical object the eleven year-old boy gazes and gazes at his deceased parents, calling to mind 1 Corinthians 13: 9-10: For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face. (49)

While drawing on the connection with 1 Corinthians once more, Lavoie is suggesting that Harry evolves as he sees through the glass. I would argue that Harry’s encounter with the Mirror of Erised is what gives birth to his dependence upon the specular dead – the fantasy – and while this at times sustains him, it threatens – as the sequence progresses – to consume him; to draw him into darkness.

As Rowling’s representation of the specular moves beyond the flatness of the portrait or photograph, in both of which the represented images are effectively independent of the viewer, the boundary between corporeal and specular appears to blur. The reflection in
this case is not a separate entity, like the images depicted in portraits or captured in photographs, but a projection of a hitherto hidden aspect of the self.

By linking the Mirror of Erised with Lacan’s writings on the mirror and understanding what Harry sees in the mirror as a second mirror stage, we are able to identify the manner in which the specular possesses the ability to seduce in certain instances. Because of the magical elements employed by Rowling throughout the Harry Potter sequence, the boundary between the realms of the specular and corporeal becomes fluid as the specular selves become more prominent throughout the narrative, and in the case of the Mirror of Erised, this gives the fantasy of the specular further power over the viewer. Melchior-Bonnet provides an explanation of how Lacan’s mirror stage “develops the function of the I” (4) and this, in part, explains both Harry’s fascination and the mechanics of a traditional mirror. Melchior-Bonnet explains:

The child takes pleasure in the spectacle of himself and, at the same time he understands the difference between the image and its model; standing before the mirror he acquires a new capacity for mental projection. (4)

Harry’s enchantment with the reflection that the Mirror of Erised provides lies in his pleasure at the spectacle that he is projecting, despite his understanding that these images of his family are not real. The mirror’s ability to depict a false reality, combined with its magical enchantment of revealing one’s innermost desire, results in Harry becoming enthralled by the fantasy of family to the point of obsession: he can only think of his next opportunity of recreating it.
When Dumbledore explains to Harry and the reader how the Mirror of Erised functions, Rowling issues the first caution regarding the dangers that surround certain types of specular selves, particularly those born from or associated with the most desperate and hidden parts of our souls. Dumbledore warns:

“It shows us nothing more or less than the deepest, most desperate desire of our hearts. You, who have never known your family, see them standing around you. Ronald Weasley, who has always been overshadowed by his brothers, sees himself standing alone, the best of all of them. However, this mirror will give us neither knowledge or truth. Men have wasted away before it, entranced by what they have seen, or been driven mad, not knowing if what it shows is real or even possible.” (Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone 231)

Thus this particular reflection provides the ultimate illusion by fabricating a pseudo-world that, unlike those glimpsed in the background of the Hogwarts portraits, is shaped by the viewer’s deepest conscious or unconscious desires. This frame cannot be entered; it is merely a false window into a temporary fantasy world that is constructed for each individual who glances into the Mirror of Erised, vanishing the moment the connection between the viewer and the glass is severed.

An understanding of the function of the Mirror of Erised and an awareness of its ability to entrance becomes crucial to the climax of Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone because Dumbledore utilises the mirror to conceal the Philosopher’s Stone that is the
object of both Harry’s and the villain’s quest. The Philosopher’s Stone is a physical object taken into Dumbledore’s protection early in the narrative of the first novel, the power of which is that it enables one to brew an elixir that grants drinkers immortality. The primary antagonist of the sequence, Lord Voldemort, who at this point lacks a physical body of his own, seeks the stone in order to return to corporeal life. Professor Dumbledore, knowing this, hides the Philosopher’s Stone behind an array of barriers culminating in the Mirror of Erised. Professor Quirrell, Harry’s Defence Against the Dark Arts Instructor, whom Harry belatedly discovers has been working for and possessed by Lord Voldemort, is unable to comprehend how to solve the mystery of the mirror and its relationship to the Stone. Quirrell even considers breaking the glass in the hope of reaching his desire – to retrieve the Stone for Voldemort – before Voldemort orders him to use Harry to get the Stone. Quirrell orders Harry to stand before the Mirror of Erised and Harry immediately thinks that he must lie in order to foil Voldemort:

[Harry] saw his reflection, pale and scared-looking at first. But a moment later, the reflection smiled at him. It put its hand into its pocket and pulled out a blood-red stone. It winked and put the Stone back in its pocket – and as it did so, Harry felt something heavy drop into his real pocket. Somehow – incredibly – ‘he’d got the Stone!’

(Philosopher’s Stone 314)

The specular copy reflected in the Mirror of Erised only works when there is a connection to the mind of the viewer, but the enchantment here, which Dumbledore calls one of his “more brilliant ideas,” is that “only one who wanted to find the Stone – find it, but not use it – would be able to get it” (Philosopher’s Stone 333). Since Harry’s
desire when he looks into the Mirror of Erised is to find and protect the stone, he is able to solve the riddle that Dumbledore has created.

When Dumbledore employs the Mirror of Erised as a safeguard its ability to read characters and impart self-knowledge ensures it is an almost unsolvable riddle: Quirrell’s desire to procure the Philosopher’s Stone for Lord Voldemort reveals intentions that are immoral, but Harry’s innocence and desire for good ultimately allow him to unknowingly thwart Voldemort and Quirrell. This is the first instance, then, of a mirror enabling Harry to evade death because his ability – or his specular copy’s ability – to utilise specular technology prevents Voldemort from returning to power at this time. By harnessing the power of the Mirror of Erised to reveal desire, Dumbledore made it near impossible for others to retrieve the stone because the motivation to solve the puzzle of the mirror – to find the Philosopher’s Stone, but not to use it – would need to stem from what Dumbledore calls “purity of heart,” which both Quirrell and Voldemort lack in the former’s subservience – as opposed to service – and the latter’s desire for power and immortality. This moment in the sequence is significant in that it demonstrates and foregrounds how the power of mirrors in the wizarding world ultimately reflects the truths of selfhood.

As I have already remarked, the specular reflections that appear in mirrors throughout the sequence are not able to exist as independent entities after the link between the subject and the image is severed, as it is the connection between corporeal viewer and specular self that sustains the projection. As a result of this connection between projector and projection, the Mirror of Erised acts as form of temporary technology that
has the ability to enchant. This is because, as Melchior-Bonnet argues in relation to traditional mirrors, the mirror “mediates between the dream and the real” (233). The Mirror of Erised is able to project the ultimate dream, which is a fantasy based on desire, and this is the first instance of the enchanting power of the specular. Throughout the Harry Potter sequence, specularity becomes more alluring to the viewer as the traditional reflections associated with Muggle mirrors are challenged by the magical power of specular technology. By introducing a separate specular self in the form of reflection so early in the sequence, Rowling demonstrates how the specularity of the mirror is significant in further defining and understanding those who gaze into its frame. She achieves this simply by having the characters (Harry, Ron, Dumbledore or Quirrell) explain what they see and thus making clear to the reader that the mirror is not behaving as Muggle mirrors do. By looking into a Muggle mirror, we see ourselves framed and are able to look at a visually accurate – although reversed – reflection of ourselves; the reflection that the Mirror of Erised projects, however, is not an accurate copy of a subject but an idealised reflection manifested out of desire.

Moreover, by depicting Harry’s mirror-bound specular copy as acting independently of the corporeal Harry, Rowling establishes how the reflection is, to a degree, separate from the subject. Indeed, Harry’s specular self demonstrates that it is its own entity by winking when it recovers the Philosopher’s Stone. What this suggests is that Harry’s inner self or the double in the mirror understands the purpose of the Mirror of Erised, even if the corporeal Harry does not consciously comprehend the mystery at this stage. It also foreshadows the important role the specular will play throughout the sequence. In this case, provided the mirror retains a connection, the specular reflection can behave
independently – but in ways that are visible only to the eyes of the viewer – revealing an important clue that the viewer may have initially missed but that their inner self has registered. The fact that the Mirror of Erised projects reflections capable of behaviour not only establishes this particular mirror as a magical device, but it also sees Rowling creating another example of a specular self that is capable of behaving independently from its original subject. The specular power of the Mirror of Erised, then, is that it is able to project a double that has unconsciously paid attention, quietly recording events that the subject may not have considered important at the time.

**Mirrors of Consequence: Shards between Life and Death**

*The Foe-Glass: Revealing Enemies Reveals the Self*

The Mirror of Erised gives the impression of a mirror that, as a form of specular technology, is capable of looking at its viewer when it projects and reflects the innermost desires of those who look into its glass, but the mirror itself has no agency and is in effect merely a window that closes once the viewer is no longer watching. In the fourth novel, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, Rowling extends the idea of the mirror that looks back further in the Foe-Glass, a reflecting technology that functions as a warning to the owner but does not require a person to look into it in order to project images. Like the Mirror of Erised, the Foe-Glass forms a connection with the mind and acts as a piece of linked technology, in which the display in the reflection will differ for each owner. The reflections within the Foe-Glass, like those seen within the Mirror of Erised, cannot be altered or controlled due to the fact that the mind of the owner is unable to lie to this type of mirror. The distinction here is that while the Mirror of
Erised shows the desires of each viewer, the Foe-Glass reveals the fears of its owner. Moreover, while the projection in the Mirror of Erised is private, that seen in the Foe-Glass is visible to anyone present. The Foe-Glass is thus a form of mind-reading technology that is employed, in its first appearance, as a warning device meant to alert its owner to the approach of their enemies.

The Foe-Glass is described as “what appeared to be a mirror” hanging opposite Harry on the wall, “but it was not reflecting the room. Shadowy figures were moving around inside it, none of them clearly in focus” (Goblet of Fire 376). The shadowy nature of the inhabitants of the mirror bears similarities to aspects of the specular discussed in the previous chapter and those projected in the Mirror of Erised in that they are, by moving in a distinct realm, established as separate from the corporeal world. The Foe-Glass does not accurately reflect the room that it resides in, evidenced by the fact that these shadowy figures are able to move about independently. Alastor Moody, the current Professor of Defence Against the Dark Arts, explains to Harry what this type of mirror actually is: “Oh that’s my Foe-Glass. See them out there, skulking around? I’m not really in trouble until I see the whites of their eyes. That’s when I open my trunk” (Goblet of Fire 376-77). The unfocused, “shadowy” reflections in the Foe-Glass echo aspects of Moody’s character, such as his mysterious personality and secretive behaviour, which are ultimately revealed to be a part of Lord Voldemort’s plot to return to a physical body.

Throughout Goblet of Fire, Moody has seemingly been aiding Harry: Moody has provided advice to enable Harry to pass the tasks that comprise the Triwizard
tourney and, much to the amusement of Harry and his companions, has disciplined Draco Malfoy (Harry’s rival) by transfiguring him into a ferret. Despite being depicted as eccentric and paranoid, Alastor “Mad-eye” Moody appears to be Harry’s ally: he is a good friend of Dumbledore and responsible for arresting countless dark wizards during the last time Voldemort was in power (when he was an Auror working for the Ministry of Magic). His exposure as an enemy hinges on the fact that, unlike the Mirror of Erised, what is reflected in the Foe-Glass can be seen by others, and this feature ultimately reveals the shocking truth about Harry’s current Defence Against the Dark Arts instructor. While the Foe-Glass is able to function as a warning or enemy detector to its owner, it will at the same time project the owner’s fear and expose vulnerabilities. Melchior-Bonnet argues that

Man’s relationship with his reflection is conflicted. Forced to let his image enter the mirror, he is revealed – visible, naked, vulnerable, subject to the sight of himself as others see him. He has to control his face, adjust his behaviour, hide his secrets. (247)

The Foe-Glass allows the image of the owner’s enemies to enter the mirror, thereby revealing hidden aspects of their character, which for Moody exposes his treachery and renders him vulnerable to counter-attack. Finding himself cornered and threatened by someone who he believes to be a traitorous Moody, Harry notices that “the foggy shapes in the Foe-Glass” begin sharpening, becoming more “distinct,” until he is able to see “the outlines of three people over Moody’s shoulder, moving closer and closer” (Goblet of Fire 734). The Foe-Glass acts as a character revelation technique here as the shapes in the Foe-Glass sharpen, coming into focus as Moody explains how he has manipulated the mysterious events surrounding Harry – Harry’s selection and apparent
victory in the Tri-Wizard Tournament were all a part of a conspiracy to enable the return of Lord Voldemort. As Moody explains that his intention now is to deliver Harry to the Dark Lord, the Foe-Glass finally reveals all:

“Stupefy!” There was a blinding flash of red light, and with a great splintering and crashing, the door of Moody’s office was blasted apart –

Moody was thrown backward onto the office floor. Harry, still staring at the place where Moody’s face had been, saw Albus Dumbledore, Professor Snape, and Professor McGonagall looking back at him out of the Foe-Glass. He looked around and saw the three of them standing in the doorway, Dumbledore in front, his wand outstretched. (*Goblet of Fire* 735)

The faces that replace Moody’s are foes of the false Moody, not of the real Moody: a Death Eater has kidnapped the real Alastor Moody and posed as him throughout the novel. Rowling has provided subtle clues regarding Moody’s falsity throughout *Goblet of Fire*, but only during this moment – thanks to the Foe-Glass – do these images finally come into focus and establish background and motivations for these characters. As the magical photographs did for the fraud Gilderoy Lockhart, so the Foe-Glass belatedly reveals the true nature of the imposter posing as Professor Moody. In the case of both former Defence Against the Dark Arts instructors, it is only later that we realise that the specular has been suggesting we look beneath the surface at these characters, because by the time we understand what the Foe-Glass or Lockhart’s pictures are implying, both characters have triumphantly confessed their subterfuge (*Chamber of Secrets* 320; *Goblet of Fire* 732-735).
Another variation of the mirror, this time enabling connection and communication between two people, appears in the next novel in the sequence, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*: the Two-Way mirror, a device which allows two people to communicate while they are in different locations. A note from Harry’s godfather Sirius Black, who has given it to Harry, explains “This is a two-way mirror, I’ve got the other. If you need to speak to me, just say my name into it; you’ll appear in my mirror and I’ll be able to talk in yours. James and I used to use them when we were in separate detentions” (*Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* 942). The two sections of the Two-Way mirror act as a form of portable technology that allows two users to communicate over space and distance. Harry only discovers this object after Sirius has died, but upon reading the note from his godfather, his heart begins to race: “He remembered seeing his dead parents in the Mirror of Erised four years ago. He was going to be able to talk to Sirius again, right now, he knew it –” (*Order of the Phoenix* 943). Despite calling for Sirius, Harry finds only his own reflection staring back at him and, after convincing himself that Sirius must not have had his mirror on him when he died, Harry throws the Two-Way mirror into his trunk and inadvertently shatters it.

Here we see how Rowling links the specularity of the mirror with Harry’s desire to recall the dead, demonstrated by his initial recollection of the Mirror of Erised: he believes, at first, that this mirror can defy the boundary between the living and the dead but is ultimately disappointed. This emphasises the emotional impact the specular continues to have throughout the sequence and demonstrates the importance of Harry’s continuing desire to recall the dead in specular form.
In the sequence’s final novel, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, the Two-Way mirror, while acting as a form of communication technology, also develops the specular’s potential for surveillance. The section of mirror that Sirius had owned is discovered to be in the possession of Aberforth Dumbledore, brother of Albus, who has been using it to keep a watchful eye over Harry and his companions as they seek to hunt down Voldemort’s Horcruxes. When Harry glances into the remaining shard during *Deathly Hallows*, he occasionally sees a blue eye staring back at him, and his plea for help into the mirror when he and his companions are captured by Death Eaters is answered by the prompt appearance of a rescuer (Dobby the House-elf). Harry wonders if this eye is that of the deceased Albus Dumbledore, before he eventually encounters Dumbledore’s brother Aberforth and recognises him as the holder of the other half of the mirror. Harry’s assumption regarding the owner of the eye once again cements the link between specularity and desire: Harry often wishes that it was the deceased Dumbledore watching over him, and this harkens back to Harry’s desire to recall Sirius from beyond the grave when he first discovered the Two-Way mirror.

In contrast to the Mirror of Erised and the Foe-Glass, this form of mirror technology creates a divided reflection in that, due to its portability, it can project the specular copy of the subject over a potentially limitless distance. However, like the Mirror of Erised and the Foe-Glass, the Two-Way mirror requires a connection with the corporeal viewer in order to function. In this case, in order for the Two-Way mirror to work as intended, there needs to be a sender and receiver connected by looking into the mirror at the same time. This underscores the fact that the magic of the mirrors throughout Rowling’s sequence only functions when a link is created with the mind of whoever is looking into
the glass at that particular moment in time. Without two people engaged in act of viewing, the pieces of the Two-Way mirror are simply pieces of reflective glass. The Two-Way mirror acts as a form of technology by creating an open link of communication, but because the holder of one mirror cannot control who holds the other there is a potential risk of exposure. Despite this, the Two-Way mirror is depicted positively when it is used by Harry and other characters and it is the only form of specular technology that is used to allow two people – via reflection – to communicate over an indefinite amount of space and in present time. While the Mirror of Erised projects fantasy and the Foe-Glass danger, the Two-Way mirror is a form of immediate communication where one’s specular copy is beamed into the reflection at the receiver’s end. However, because this particular form of mirror is always presented to us from Harry’s point of view, it is always linked with his desire to break down the boundary between the realms of the living and the dead.

Immersed within Memory: Reflections of Hidden Character

The Pensieve, unlike the mirrors I have explored thus far, allows the corporeal self to become immersed in a specular memory. In the form of the Pensieve, the magical technology associated with mirrors enables a person’s memories to become projections. As forms of specularity, these memory projections are fragmented aspects of selfhood: each is a person’s past, able to seen or re-lived courtesy of the Pensieve. The Pensieve is not a mirror that shows a reflection. Instead, it enables the viewer to enter into a specular world that provides a mirror of the past: it is the specular replay of a person’s memory. In *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* and the following instalments in the
sequence, Rowling deploys specular memories in Pensieve form as a literary device to provide backstory for characters and to allow the reader to visualise events that have not been previously explained in earlier novels.\(^3\)

The Pensieve is first encountered during *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, when Harry discovers the object in Dumbledore’s office, and its description recalls that of the Mirror of Galadriel in *The Fellowship of the Ring*: the Pensieve is a “shallow stone basin” that has “odd carvings around the edge,” with “silvery light” within (*Goblet of Fire* 633). The Mirror of Galadriel is a similar variety of looking glass: “…upon a low pedestal carved like a branching tree, stood a basin of silver, wide and shallow, and beside it stood a silver ewer…” (*The Fellowship of the Ring* 352). Galadriel fills the basin to the brim, breathes upon the water and invites Frodo and Sam to look upon it, if they choose. The difference between the Pensieve and the Mirror of Galadriel is that Galadriel maintains some semblance of control over what it reveals to those that look into it, although the mirror can, Galadriel explains,

> “show things unbidden, and these are often stranger and more profitable things which we wish to behold. What you will see, if you leave the Mirror free to work, I cannot tell. For it shows things that were, and things that are, and things that yet may be.” (*The Fellowship of the Ring* 352)

In the case of the Mirror of Galadriel, the looking glass is initially aligned with visions of foresight and cannot be entered into: indeed, Galadriel twice warns Sam and Frodo

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3 The globes of prophecy encountered during Order of the Phoenix contain specular selves, but these function as static recordings and do not offer interaction or character revelation in that manner the Pensieve and other “magical” mirrors in the sequence do.
not to touch the water (352, 355). The visions within the mirror shift at random and ultimately fill both Sam and Frodo with doubt. When Sam, having seen their home of the Shire in danger, expresses a desire to return home, Galadriel warns of trusting in the visions. Having pointed out to Sam that he only wishes to return to the Shire after having looked in the mirror, she advises him to “remember that the Mirror shows many things, and not all have yet come to pass. Some never come to be, unless those that behold the visions turn aside from their path to prevent them. The Mirror is dangerous as a guide of deeds” (The Fellowship of the Ring 354). The influence of this conception of the mirror is evident in Rowling’s depiction of mirrors, particularly the Mirror of Erised and the Pensieve, for both of these possess an element of danger in their ability to provide an illusion that offers a false impression of the real, and, as a result, act as an unreliable guide or influence on future deeds.

The Pensieve is unable to reveal the future or things that may or may not come to pass, yet its ability to immerse both character and reader in a memory from another time and place demonstrates how Rowling takes a mirror such as Galadriel’s a step further: the Pensieve involves not only touching the water-like substance, but becoming submerged within the projection it contains. In the first depiction of the Pensieve in the sequence, Harry wonders if “the substance was liquid or gas. It was a bright, whitish silver, and it was moving ceaselessly; the surface of it became ruffled like water beneath wind, and then, like clouds, separated and swirled smoothly” (Goblet of Fire 633). Unlike previous varieties of the mirror with which Rowling has presented us, the Pensieve is fluid and allows immersion alongside specular representations of the past in the form of memories. The viewer is able to enter the substance and stand witness to memory;
however, unlike with the Mirror of Erised or the Foe-Glass, what is reflected is not linked to the person watching. The contents of the Pensieve consist of memories that have been stored, in this case by Dumbledore. Via its magic, a person looking in is able to enter into those living memories, as Harry discovers after prodding the contents of the basin with his wand:

The surface of the silvery stuff inside the basin began to swirl very fast. Harry bent closer, his head right inside the cabinet. The silvery substance had become transparent; it looked like glass. He looked down into it expecting to see the stone bottom of the basin – and saw instead an enormous room below the surface of the mysterious substance, a room into which he seemed to be looking through a circular window in the ceiling. (*Goblet of Fire* 634)

At this point, the liquid or gas substance, which “looked like glass,” has in fact become, like Carroll’s looking-glass, a window into a specular world but it does not function as a mirror. That is, it offers no accurate reflection of the room it resides within. When Harry makes a closer inspection of what he is seeing, the apparent glass that separates reality and the specular vanishes:

The tip of his nose touched the strange substance into which he was staring. Dumbledore’s office gave an almighty lurch – Harry was thrown forward and pitched headfirst into the substance inside the basin. (*Goblet of Fire* 635)

Harry finds himself seated in a room surrounded by at least two hundred wizards and witches, but nobody appears to notice him. Indeed, when he speaks to the specular Dumbledore seated beside him, there is no response. This form of mirror technology
differs from the ordinary kind and from the Mirror of Erised or the Foe-Glass because the viewer – in this case Harry – is fully immersed in the reflected and virtual space that has always previously been separated by a boundary; however, the simulacrum of memory in which Harry finds himself immersed is a replay, with which he is unable to interact.

Having encountered the Mirror of Erised, which offered a fantasy that was separate from the corporeal world and contained within the glass, we are now presented with a mirror that allows the viewer to step through the glass into the world of the specular. The point of this form of specularity, which operates like a recording, is to watch past events unfold and temporarily merge the past into the present from a narrative perspective. The Pensieve is essential to Rowling’s narrative because it means, as Ann Curthoys writes, that the “past is no longer chronicle but an essential aspect of the present” (13), allowing the merging of time and space throughout the sequence. Since the Pensieve offers a replay of the past, Harry does not belong in this specular space: he is immersed within a specular replay of the past that resembles a video playback. The Pensieve, as a form of specular technology, can bring hidden aspects of the self in the form of past memories into the present, but the present cannot be forced back into the past to alter the course of fixed events. The Pensieve, by making the past an “essential aspect” of the present narrative (as Curthoys argues), becomes vital to the sequence because it not only allows Rowling to explore latent aspects of characters at a late stage in the narrative, but also provides a greater emotional experience for Harry by playing on his yearnings for the past.
The fixed events that Harry witnesses during his first experience with the Pensieve in *Goblet of Fire* are those of a past wizard trial, and we soon learn that this is one of Dumbledore’s memories. The reader is thereby introduced to many Death Eaters (including Barty Crouch, Junior, later revealed to be masquerading as Professor Moody) who have more prominent roles later in the sequence; as a result, narrative clues are provided not only for this novel but for the sequence as a whole. The lack of control that Harry has over this form of specular projection is reinforced when he notices that “the dungeon was dissolving as though it was made of smoke; everything was fading, he could only see his own body, all else was swirling darkness” (642), and then the scene of the memory alters to play back a different trial, or rather, a different memory. It is finally Dumbledore’s intervention that pulls Harry out of the specular world of memories: “I think, Harry, it is time to return to my office,” said a quiet voice in Harry’s ear (647). Harry realises that the real Dumbledore is present when he sees the specular Dumbledore of the memory sitting silently to his right:

> Harry felt himself rising into the air; the dungeon dissolved around him; for a moment, all was blackness, and then he felt as though he had a slow-motion somersault, suddenly landing flat on his feet, in what seemed like the dazzling light of Dumbledore’s office. The stone basin was shimmering in the cabinet in front of him, and Albus Dumbledore was standing beside him. (*Goblet of Fire* 648)

This description of coming out of the looking glass of memory clearly demonstrates how this representation of specularity is distinct from previous incarnations. The Pensieve, unlike traditional mirrors, is depicted as a basin that also acts as a screen and allows the viewer to not only watch, but be physically pulled into the past that is being
projected. Despite their ability to enchant, the other types of mirror technology I have considered so far have not possessed the ability to create a physical sensation in those that look into their reflections; the Pensieve goes a step further by bringing people into and out of the projection. The contrast between the specular past and the corporeal present is again emphasised when Harry is caught and retrieved by Snape while immersed in a memory of the Potion master:

Harry felt himself rising into the air; the summer’s day evaporated around him; he was floating upwards through icy blackness, Snape’s hand still tight upon his upper arm. Then, with a swooping feeling as though he had turned head-over-heels in midair, his feet hit the stone floor of Snape’s dungeon and he was standing again beside the Pensieve on Snape’s desk in the shadowy, present-day Potion master’s study. (*Order of the Phoenix* 714-15)

In both cases of returning to the present and the initial immersion process, blackness is mentioned as a part of the method of submerging the self into the specular past of memory. Memories, like any moment of the past, have an aspect of death about them because they cannot be recreated – only revisited, not unlike the photographs I examined in the previous chapter. The Pensieve enables the specular to fabricate a false reality for the corporeal viewer because of the complete submersion into not only memory and perspective, but the very environment of the past and all its aspects, be that a summer’s day or a dungeon, and the return to reality – through icy blackness – only strengthens the fact that the projection one has been immersed in is a specular echo of a departed moment.
The purpose of reviewing these memories and the manner in which this particular type of mirror technology functions is, in line with Rowling’s preferred method of clarification of magical events and devices throughout the sequence, left to Dumbledore to explain:

“At these times,” said Dumbledore, indicating the stone basin, “I use the Pensieve. One simply siphons the excess thoughts from one’s mind, pours them into the basin, and examines them at one’s leisure. It becomes easier to spot patterns and links, you understand, when they are in this form.”

“You mean… that stuff’s your thoughts?” Harry said, staring at the swirling white substance in the basin.

“Certainly,” said Dumbledore. (Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire 649)

The Pensieve works as a method of storing and saving, but particularly sharing, memories indefinitely, because these memories do not expire when the person who supplied them dies. So long as a Pensieve is available, they can theoretically be viewed repeatedly. This can be compared with our real-world methods of attempting to capture moments to save or share with others at a later time, all the while imbuing them with personal experience and feelings that are recalled when we revisit them. Kate Behr explains how “Muggle memories are evanescent, transitory signifiers; wizard memories, the signified, can be physically captured and stored in a Pensieve for later sifting and retrieval” (261). Because memories in the wizarding world are able to be physically reviewed later in this type of mirror, Rowling is able to utilise the Pensieve throughout the sequence after its introduction in Goblet of Fire as a method of revealing the hidden
past of certain characters, such as Lord Voldemort. The Pensieve demonstrates how memory and the past are firmly entrenched in all of the forms of mirror specularity depicted throughout the Harry Potter sequence and, as a result, so is the emotional connection that is forged in the creation of an important memory. That Rowling ensures that the Pensieve plays such a vital role in the final half of the sequence suggests that we as readers should look to the past of the Harry Potter world in order to unravel various patterns and links occurring throughout the present time of the narrative.

One final distinction between the Pensieve and other types of magical mirror portrayed throughout the sequence is that it can be used not only through immersion but through projection, and this occurs twice. After returning from the memory discussed above to Dumbledore’s office, for instance, Harry watches as Dumbledore prods the contents of the Pensieve basin with his wand: “Instantly, a figure rose out of it, a plump, scowling girl of around sixteen, who began to revolve slowly, with her feet still in the basin” (Goblet of Fire 650). As is the case when the Pensieve allows a person to become immersed in a memory, the past projections demonstrate no awareness that they are being witnessed or replayed. When Dumbledore speaks to the projection (his memory of sixteen year old Bertha Jorkins from many years ago, who now is missing), the specular memory does not show any awareness of the headmaster or Harry. The second and final time that Rowling depicts this method of using the Pensieve is when the Prophecy surrounding Harry and Voldemort is finally revealed in full to the reader. Once again, vital information from the past is presented in specular form:

“To the one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord approaches...
born to those who have thrice defied him, born as the seventh month
The slowly revolving Professor Trelawney sank back into the silver mass below and vanished. (Order of the Phoenix 924)

This memory reveals the motivation behind Lord Voldemort’s attempt to kill Harry as a baby, and, more importantly, that their lives and deaths are bound together.

Significantly, in its delivery the specular form of Trelawney, like that of Bertha, is described as emerging from, but not leaving, the basin of the Pensieve. This suggests that although the boundary here can be stretched or bent to allow the present, corporeal user of the Pensieve to recall the past, the specular past cannot return to the realm of the viewer.

The fact that Rowling only employs this method of using the Pensieve twice suggests that in these instances the focus should instead be on the corporeal characters and that there is no need, at these points in the narrative, for a complete immersion in a time and space from a past memory. In the passage in which Dumbledore has the Pensieve replay Trelawney’s prophecy, a prophecy already established as vital to the sequence yet only now revealed in its entirety, the narrative’s attention remains on Harry’s reception both of the prophecy itself and of Dumbledore’s immediate explanation of it. Dumbledore explains how Voldemort has, by attempting to kill Harry as a child and marking him as equal, essentially set the prophecy into motion by choosing to act on it. Harry is then...
forced to comprehend the fact that his life and death are essentially linked to those of the Dark Lord. Immersing the reader in the past at such a point would result in the flow of the narrative being disrupted. By keeping the focus on the room where Harry and Dumbledore are talking together, rather than shifting us into the original space of Trelawney’s prophecy, Rowling is able to solidify the backstory of the sequence while retaining the focus on Harry’s reactions.

However, Rowling more usually prefers to immerse the corporeal characters of the present in the specular replays of the past. By representing present characters witnessing replays of the past unfolding in real time, Rowling is able to provide believable flashbacks to the past of the sequence that simultaneously inform Harry and the reader. Thus Severus Snape uses the Pensieve to hide his worst memory during Occlumency lessons with Harry (Occlumency is a type of spell casting where one wizard defends his or her mind against Legilimency, which is a mind-probing form of magic). When Harry looks into the Pensieve and finds himself immersed in Snape’s specular past, the mirrored memory alters what had – until this point in the narrative – been accepted by Harry and the reader: that James Potter was a good and heroic young man whom Harry was happy to emulate. What Harry sees in Snape’s memory alters Harry’s perception of his father and, in a reversal of the specular fantasy the Mirror of Erised once provided, splinters his identity as the proud son of that father (*Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, 715). Immersed within Snape’s memory of the conclusion of exams, Harry suddenly sees his fifteen year old father and – as he has previously done when confronted with the specular image of James Potter – he looks for himself:
Excitement exploded in the pit of his stomach: it was as though he was looking at himself but with deliberate mistakes. James’s eyes were hazel, his nose was slightly longer than Harry’s and there was no scar on his forehead, but they had the same thin face, same mouth, same eyebrows; James’s hair stuck up at the back exactly as Harry’s did, his hands could have been Harry’s and Harry could tell that, when James stood up, they would be within an inch of each other in height. (*Order of the Phoenix* 706)

After witnessing James and Sirius deal with their boredom by bullying Snape, however, Harry, who has experienced, resisted, and deplored the bullying of his cousin Dudley Dursley and classmate Draco Malfoy, is left to agonise over what he has seen. It is not only the behaviour of James in this memory that shakes Harry’s preconceptions regarding his father, but that of his mother, Lily Evans.

In the memory, Lily appears and demands that James leave Snape alone and Harry recognises her immediately: “She had thick, dark red hair that fell to her shoulders, and startlingly green almond-shaped eyes – Harry’s eyes” (712). After the bullying of Snape comes to a halt, with Snape calling Lily a “Mudblood” (a foul name for a witch or wizard born to non-magical parents), she gives James a piece of her mind and completely shatters any illusions Harry had created regarding his parents in their youth:

“Messing up your hair because you think it looks cool to look like you’ve just got off your broomstick, showing off with that stupid Snitch, walking down corridors and hexing anyone who annoys you just because you can – I’m surprised your broomstick can get off the
ground with that fat head on it. You make me SICK!” (Order of the Phoenix 714)

This encounter with the past challenges Harry’s moral understanding of his parents and, to a degree, Snape – although it is the forced reversal of his former reverence for his father and godfather that wounds him the most. Harry feels that “the memory of it was eating him from inside”; he had been “so sure his parents were wonderful people that he had never had the slightest difficulty in disbelieving the aspersions Snape cast on his father’s character” (718). The fact that Harry has always viewed Snape as both a villain and bully, from their very first encounter, makes the truth of this specular encounter even harder to accept. Harry even attempts to “make a case for Snape having deserved what he suffered at James’s hands” (718) before realising that there is none and having to confront the fact that James Potter was, in fact, an example of everything that has made Harry’s life miserable. In the words of Lily Evans, James was “an arrogant, bullying toerag” (712): the opposite of what Harry had always aspired to be and, perhaps most importantly, what he truly believed his father to be.

This moment ultimately demonstrates how viewing memories within the Pensieve can alter preconceptions, and foregrounds further instances where this type of mirror technology enables Rowling to elaborate on background and reveal hidden motivations long after having apparently established particular characters as good or evil. For Harry, who for nearly five years had found the thought of his father to be a source of comfort and inspiration, this type of mirror has dealt a terrible emotional blow: “Whenever someone had told [Harry] he was like James, he had glowed with pride inside. And now … now he felt and cold and miserable at the thought of him” (719). This moment, then,
essentially takes Harry back to the Mirror of Erised and inverts the experience. It is also an indication by Rowling that preconceptions concerning other established characters within the Harry Potter sequence are likely to be challenged or overturned.

The power of the Pensieve to alter preconceptions and reveal personal truths is most fully active in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*. Here the chapter titled “The Prince’s Tale” (722-56) finally reveals to Harry and the reader the truth behind Severus Snape’s motivations. This chapter is provided as a Pensieve memory in which Harry discovers the true motivations for this divisive and apparently loathsome character, who was the subject of much reader and scholarly debate as the sequence unfolded\(^4\). It is revealed that Snape has been acting on Dumbledore’s orders all along, motivated by his unrequited love for Harry’s mother Lily Potter. The importance of Rowling establishing Harry’s resemblance to his father, James, yet always mentioning that his eyes resemble those of his mother, Lily, is finally clear after Harry watches Snape’s memories in the Pensieve. As he discovers, it was Dumbledore’s remark that the infant Harry had “precisely” the same eyes as Lily that prompted Snape to remain Harry’s unknown protector, despite his strong physical resemblance to James Potter, whom Snape loathed (743). Indeed, Harry’s immersion in Snape’s memories after Snape has died transforms his perception of the Potions master he had previously hated. Harry, during his final confrontation with Lord Voldemort, explains how Snape was Dumbledore’s man and speaks of the power that the Dark Lord has never understood – that of love:

> “Snape’s Patronus was a doe,” said Harry, “the same as my mother’s, because he loved her for nearly all of his life, from the time when

they were children. You should have realised,” he said, as he saw Voldemort’s nostrils flare, “he asked you to spare her life, didn’t he?” *(Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* 811)

Harry has altered his view of Snape after having immersed himself in the mirror of memory, and even Snape’s worst memory, where Harry witnessed his father bullying Snape at school and his mother attempting to intervene, takes on further meaning. As he now learns, when Snape called Lily a Mudblood, she ended their friendship. Harry has already learned that it was Snape who, having overheard the prophecy when Trelawney spoke it to Dumbledore, reported it to Voldemort. This in turn led to Voldemort choosing Harry as his equal and killing his mother Lily; he now learns that since Lily was the woman that Snape had loved and whom he had begged Dumbledore to protect, he subsequently agreed to protect “Lily’s son,” despite his consistent identification of Harry as just like James (*Deathly Hallows* 749). The emotions of reflection – shame, desire, fear, regret – remove what has been at best the ambiguity of Snape’s character and see him reconstructed as a hero in Harry’s eyes. Indeed, as the conclusion of *Deathly Hallows*, set many years later, reveals, Harry has named his second son Albus Severus Potter after not only Albus Dumbledore but also Severus Snape, citing Snape as the “bravest man he ever knew” (830).

The memories of Snape in particular demonstrate how the specular in the form of the Pensieve forces the viewer to reconsider past events. By shifting the point of view of the narrative away from Harry’s perspective, Rowling grants past or deceased characters temporary influence over the narrative via specular technology. This not only allows for the inclusion of vital backstory and information, but it enables Rowling to provide an
alternative emotional investment for the reader and to provide fragments of revelation and backstory that construct a full picture of present events and characters. Throughout *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, stored and copied memories in the Pensieve function as pieces of a puzzle that need to be put together to construct a picture of Lord Voldemort, who was previously known as Tom Riddle. Dumbledore has obtained each of these Pensieve memories in an attempt to find clues to Riddle’s nature and so gain a full understanding of Lord Voldemort and how he may be conquered.

One particular memory sees Harry and Dumbledore immersed in a time where a young Tom Riddle, still attending Hogwarts School, encounters his mother’s brother, Morfin Gaunt (*Half-Blood Prince* 431-433). In this memory Riddle discovers that his father and namesake was a Muggle: this revelation provides Harry with an extra insight into Riddle that will ultimately allow Harry to comprehend how Riddle’s mind works and defeat him. Riddle, like Harry, is a half-blood wizard, despite representing the dark side of pure-blood mania. The prophecy could have referred either to Harry or to Neville Longbottom, a contemporary of Harry’s; however, after hearing the prophecy (relayed to him by Snape), rather than select Neville, a pure-blooded wizard, Voldemort selected Harry – the one most like him. Indeed, during *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, Ron marvels at Harry’s ability to really understand Voldemort (541) and when Harry encounters a specular fragment of Voldemort in his second year at Hogwarts, that incarnation of Tom Riddle (his sixteen year old self preserved in a diary) remarks on the similarities between the two wizards. By seeing Harry and Dumbledore immersed in these past memories, the reader is finally able to unravel the many mysteries surrounding Lord Voldemort, including his hidden past and motivations. Also, by
dedicating a substantial amount of narrative space to the young Voldemort – Tom Riddle – in this novel, Rowling is able to place further emphasis on the similarities between Harry and Voldemort that have only been hinted at in previous novels.

As Harry and Dumbledore delve further into Voldemort’s past, the pieces of the Dark Lord’s splintered self gradually come together and assist them to find a method of defeating him. For example, one memory reveals Voldemort’s connection to the Gaunt family and their historic bloodline, which ultimately leads to the discovery and destruction of one of his Horcruxes, the Peverel ring. Thus this version of specularity is not just able to reveal history and identity, but renders the subject of the memories vulnerable, as demonstrated by the efforts certain characters take to hide particular memories from others. This is evidenced by Harry’s discovery that a memory can be, as Dumbledore puts it, “tampered with” (Half-Blood Prince 440). In Rowling’s wizarding world, it appears that wizards are able deliberately to corrupt memories – their own or others’ – in order to conceal the truth. The first example of memory corruption occurs when the memory concerning Voldemort’s encounter with his uncle Morfin concludes in the Pensieve: “an unnatural darkness” falls, extinguishing Voldemort’s lamp and “Morfin’s candle, extinguishing everything …” (Half-Blood Prince 433). Dumbledore explains that the darkness was due to Morfin being unable to remember anything as a result of Voldemort hexing him and the experience enables Harry to identify the signs of memory tampering when viewing another recollection concerning Voldemort later in this novel. The difference this time is that it is the owner of the memory who has altered it because they have something to hide: once again, the mirror – in the form of the
Pensieve in this case – is able to reveal hidden truths and vulnerabilities about those who open themselves to it.

Professor Horace Slughorn, Harry’s sixth-year Potions teacher, is also guilty of tampering with a memory, and it is one that Dumbledore is most keen to see in its unedited form. Our initial encounter with Horace Slughorn, introduced in the sixth novel, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, sees him disguised as an “overstuffed armchair” in the ruin of a Muggle house, attempting to elude Death Eaters who may want to recruit or murder him. Slughorn admits to having “been on the move for a year” and never staying in one place more than a week (*Half-Blood Prince* 84). This establishes that he is afraid and has a good reason to be in hiding. It is soon apparent that Dumbledore is attempting to recruit Slughorn back to teach at Hogwarts and that Harry, regarded now by the magical world as the Chosen One as well as the Boy Who Lived, is essential to convincing the former head of Slytherin House to come back into the Hogwarts fold. Slughorn, we learn, likes comfort and “the company of the famous, the successful and the powerful. He enjoys the feeling that he influences these people” (93); it is revealed that Lily Evans was one of his favourite students (88) and that he prides himself on the success of former students (89-90). While at Hogwarts and after his return, Slughorn is the host of the Slug Club – a group of star pupils – and in the past, Tom Riddle was a member. Slughorn will, Dumbledore explains, want to “collect” Harry because of his fame (94).

During their investigation into Voldemort’s origins in *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, Dumbledore invites Harry to enter, through the Pensieve, an altered memory in
which Riddle is seen enquiring about hitherto unknown objects called “Horcruxes” (438-440). Throughout this memory, fog appears and through the mist, the voice of Horace Slughorn rings out unnaturally, although the specular forms in the Pensieve do not show any acknowledgement of the interruption. When the Riddle in this memory asks, “Sir, I wondered what you know about … about Horcruxes?” the dense fog reappears (439), followed by Slughorn’s booming voice: “I don’t know anything about Horcruxes and I wouldn’t tell you if I did! Now get out of here at once and don’t let me catch you mentioning them again!” (440). Harry, whom Slughorn wants to recruit for his Slug Club, is charged with obtaining the true memory, and Slughorn finally admits that it is terror and shame that motivated him to corrupt his shared memory. Slughorn admits, “I am ashamed of what – of what that memory shows … I think I may have done great damage that day …” (580). Slughorn has altered his own memory due to terror of not only Voldemort, but what the wizarding world would think of him for putting the young Riddle on the path to immortality, and shame for being, as a result of Voldemort being near unstoppable, partially accountable for countless deaths – including that of Lily. Slughorn finally grants Harry the memory because of his love for Lily, begging Harry not to think too badly of him. Slughorn’s need to surround himself with powerful people and desire to spread influence is what resulted in him providing Tom Riddle with the terrible knowledge about Horcruxes. The true memory reveals that Slughorn explained, to a degree, how Horcruxes work to Riddle, and this knowledge has enabled Voldemort to defeat a final death. The Pensieve is, like other forms of mirror technology in the sequence, a projector of truths regarding selfhood, and the unaltered memory that Slughorn has kept concealed reveals not only his reasons for remaining in hiding, as he was when first introduced, but his deepest fears.
Each variation of mirror technology as it functions throughout Rowling’s sequence involves a revelation of selfhood, often an aspect that had remained hidden either out of unconscious desire or out of deliberate action. In the case of the Mirror of Erised, the viewer sees the true desire of their heart – their preconscious desire – projected in the glass of the mirror. Harry’s first encounter with a magical mirror introduces the reader to a type of mind-reading technology. Whilst this is a private projection that is not able to be shared, it remains entrancing because the depth that a mirror offers suggests – falsely – that the fantasy is based on the real. Rowling’s depiction here, along with Dumbledore’s explanation of how the Mirror of Erised both functions and enchants, demonstrates how the mirror is able to corrupt and reveal identity. How the Mirror of Erised is utilised, finally, as a riddle to be solved, suggests that Dumbledore’s claim that the mirror offers neither knowledge nor wisdom is not entirely true. At the conclusion of *Philosopher’s Stone* Harry’s specular self – the reflection in the mirror – seems to have grasped the truth of the Mirror of Erised in order to solve the riddle that Dumbledore has set up.

The implication, then, is that this mirror does not simply project the desire of one’s heart, but it reads the unconscious desires – whether those are good or evil – and in doing so reflects the hidden self to the viewer. What is disconcerting is that those who look into the Mirror of Erised have no idea that their deepest and most preconscious or unconscious desires are being pulled out of their mind and they subsequently have no control over what is being displayed for them. No wonder then that, as Dumbledore warns Harry, men have wasted away or been driven mad staring at its reflection: it is a private fantasy screened just for the viewer, one they may not even realise that they
desired, and one that – because it cannot be shared or seen by anyone else – does not reveal any personal vulnerability to others. The fact that it reveals a hidden self to the one looking at their own reflection is obscured, however, by the element of the fantasy based on desire. In a sense, the mirror hides the unconscious self in an enchanting illusion that takes a certain level of understanding to comprehend. For Harry, it is Dumbledore’s explanation that enables him to shake off the enthralling power of the Mirror of Erised and see the truth in the reflection of fantasy, granting him a level of self-knowledge greater than that which Quirrell or Voldemort possesses.

The Foe-Glass, kept in the office of the imposter Alastor Moody, is our first encounter with a mirror capable of both protection and exposure. Shadowy figures appear in the reflective glass of this mirror, becoming more distinct as the owner’s enemies approach and finally sharpening into focus when they are near. Once again, Rowling depicts a type of technology in the Foe-Glass that extracts information from the mind, but by projecting it for everyone to see, this particular mirror acts in an even more invasive manner than the Mirror of Erised because it exposes vulnerability and fear in a public reflection. This type of mirror technology once again establishes a connection with the mind of its owner by projecting those they identify as enemies, but, unlike the Mirror of Erised, the reflection in the Foe-Glass is perceptible to anyone who is present. This results in a potential vulnerability being exposed because their foes, their feared enemies, are suddenly visible. In the case of the fake Moody, the enemies are revealed to be allies of Harry Potter, exposing the impersonator as a villain, and this happens at the climax of *Goblet of Fire*. This is the second instance where a mirror and its ability to reveal hidden aspects of selfhood act as the difference between life and death because of
the truth they reveal: Harry, seeing his professors materialising in the glass, knows that not only is help on the way but that his would-be murderer is oblivious to having been exposed. It is also the second time that the specular hints at the duplicitous nature of a Defence Against the Dark Arts professor, the first instance being the pictures of Gilderoy Lockhart accurately reflecting his false persona.

The Two-Way mirror has the potential to transform a method of secret communication into one of exposure because it is a form of specular technology that requires a link between two users and, as a result, this could lead to vulnerability because one user – the sender – does not necessarily know who the receiver is, as is demonstrated when Harry sees a blue eye watching him and can only speculate as to who it is. This particular mirror does not form a link with the mind of whoever looks into it, but instead invites an emotional investment. Harry wishes to summon Sirius before breaking it, and, during *Deathly Hallows*, he fancies that it is the blue eye of the deceased Albus Dumbledore looking over him. The Two-Way mirror, then, for Harry, represents his longing to recall the dead and this is, essentially, the basis of his desire when utilising mirror technology. When he looks into the Mirror of Erised, it is an attempt to recall the dead, but it is not until later instalments in the sequence that this becomes obvious, for the initial encounter Harry has with this enchanted object is depicted as one of childlike wonder and innocence.

The Pensieve, which allows a specular reflection of one’s memory to be viewed as an immersive form of projection where the viewer finds themselves pulled into the mirror, can be viewed by anybody, but it requires a memory to be tipped into the basin in order
to work. This version of the specular exposes vulnerability because not only are the memories often those which a character may desire to keep hidden, but, as is evidenced by the various memories that Dumbledore has collected pertaining to Lord Voldemort, any person willing to provide a memory can act (or has already acted) as an unwitting recorder of past events. This implies that, with coercion in the case of memories surrounding Lord Voldemort, any of the characters throughout Rowling’s established world could be or all of them are transcribing events of the lives around them with the potential for storage and sharing.

Importantly, these memories are viewable in the mirror of the Pensieve after their owner dies and do not expire after a certain time. The fact that any character is an unknowing recorder that can be encouraged either through charm or spells to give up a memory is a disconcerting notion. These particular reflections are permanent copies that require no live connection to the original subject – the only action needed to create them is the method of extraction, where a wand tip is pressed to one’s head and a silvery substance is removed, and so the memory is captured, duplicated, and stored indefinitely.

All of the mirrors that are employed by Rowling provide not only an extra level of depth to the specular that portraits and photographs possess, but they work as instruments of crucial character revelation. This in turn allows, upon completion of the sequence, for aspects of each novel to reflect and reveal one another. The chapter “The Prince’s Tale” (Deathly Hallows 722-56) sees earlier encounters with Snape – from his first meeting with Harry in Philosopher’s Stone to when he grants him the memory before his death in Deathly Hallows – take on an entirely different meaning when
invested with the reflection of previously concealed emotion. We have insight into Snape’s loathing of Harry, yet we know why he muttered the “counter-curse” when Harry’s broomstick was jinxed by Quirrell during his first Quidditch match and why Snape insisted on refereeing the following match (not after all to benefit his house, Slytherin, as Harry and his friends had suspected) (*Philosopher’s Stone* 311).

Not only do the mirrors provide the specular with a level of depth that suggests realism, but by projecting the emotional experience from a point of view other than Harry’s, these reflections allow for a depth of character to be constructed throughout the sequence, because, particularly in the case of the divided Voldemort, they enable an exploration of character via the visual. This in turn brings the hidden aspects of the past into the present narrative and enables Rowling to offer revelations concerning certain characters in the final stages of the sequence, when, as Voldemort threatens to defeat all that oppose him, the many reflections that have been depicted throughout the wizarding world enable Harry to make a remarkable flight from death in his final confrontation with the Dark Lord.

Essentially, what the mirrors of the Harry Potter sequence establish is that the past is dead: the ability of these types of specular technology to fabricate or recreate realities sees Rowling aligning the specular with the realm of the dead and grounding the corporeal characters in the world of the living. This is achieved by utilising technology and psychology to grant these enchanted mirrors a sense of believability in a narrative that is, fundamentally, populated with unreal and fantastic aspects (wizards and magical creatures). It is the ability of these mirrors to project emotions that highlight how the
Harry Potter sequence, at its core, is a narrative that is grounded by the deepest sense of inner character: desire, love, fear, and regret.
Chapter Three

Horcruxes:

Deciphering the Riddle of Lord Voldemort via Enchanted Objects

One of Rowling’s most distinctive contributions to speculative fiction is the device of the Horcrux – a particularly malignant mechanism of specularity that Lord Voldemort harnesses in his attempt to achieve immortality. As readers discover only in the sixth novel of the sequence, several decades prior to the present time of the series, Voldemort had set about dividing his soul in his attempt to evade death. Believing seven to be the most powerful magical number, he intentionally split his soul six times, hiding these soul fragments in objects that held great significance to him because they embodied his self-perceived greatness. A Horcrux is, put simply, “the word used for an object in which a person has concealed a part of their soul” (Half-Blood Prince 586). The Horcruxes that feature so prominently in the final two Harry Potter novels act as visual representations – specular forms – of Voldemort’s extreme acts of self-fragmentation, and of the overarching ambition that drives them. Because a deliberate act of murder is required to produce each splitting of Voldemort’s soul, each Horcrux is a powerfully and darkly enchanted object. Harry, and the reader, must strive to decipher the clues contained in Voldemort’s Horcruxes in order to piece together a more complete image of the series’ antagonist, who has remained invisible or fragmented for the majority of the sequence. Suman Gupta argues, in Re-Reading Harry Potter (2009), that there “are primarily two magical devices around which the resolution of the Harry Potter series is constructed: the dark magic of Horcruxes, and the power of love” (170). While I agree with this argument, I add that without the specular in all its forms – particularly the
malignant variety that are Horcruxes – this power behind this resolution would not be as
great. The physical absence of Voldemort has contributed to the terror of his character;
it has been established, from the first time he is depicted (as a parasitic form growing
out of the back of the skull of one of his servants), that he is an incomplete being.
Horcruxes, despite emphasising that he is a fragmented character, provide a visual
mechanism for deciphering the unseen elements of Voldemort that pervade the narrative
of the sequence. By establishing Voldemort as the antithesis of what it means to be
“human” within the world of the sequence, Rowling is able to further challenge and
question certain aspects of humanity.

Upon their introduction in the sixth novel, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*,
Horcruxes dramatically alter the reader’s understanding of the narrative thus far and
establish a new plot trajectory for the remainder of the sequence. As containers for a
type of specular self, Horcruxes are the result of an abuse of specular technology — one
that is presented as the antithesis of morality within the world of the sequence.

Hermione Granger, in providing a summary of what these dark objects are to Harry and
Ron during *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, explains that “a Horcrux is the
complete opposite of a human being” (120). Hermione distinguishes the difference
between what is natural and unnatural in regards to the human soul, reiterating the
moral attitude of the sequence and explaining how in the case of a normal or natural
death, “whatever happens to your body, your soul will survive, untouched” (120). In the
case of Voldemort, his soul has been torn into pieces that are stored in hidden enchanted
objects – Horcruxes – that are essentially dark riddles that Harry and his companions
need to track down and solve.
The attempt to decipher Voldemort’s Horcruxes provides insight into two foundational riddles posed from the opening of the sequence: the questions of how the infant Harry Potter survived the killing curse that Lord Voldemort struck him with and how, after the same curse backfired, Lord Voldemort remained bound to the world. The second turns out to be the most straightforward. As enchanted objects that contain specular fragments of Voldemort’s soul, his Horcruxes have enabled him to remain bound to the corporeal world after his apparent demise. The first fragment that Rowling introduces to the reader is that of the specular sixteen year old Tom Riddle residing within a Horcrux created out of a diary. The Riddle of the diary functions as the primary antagonist of the second novel, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, and this specular sliver of Voldemort’s soul is depicted as a character in his own right.

The final riddle to be solved in the series is that of the “unintentional Horcrux” or hidden fragment of Voldemort’s soul, which is revealed to the reader in the final stage of the last novel, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*. Here, Rowling reveals that Harry Potter has been sustaining the Dark Lord by functioning as a Horcrux since before the sequence began – and indeed it was Voldemort’s accidental transformation of him to a Horcrux that saved Harry’s life as a baby. At this stage, we are well informed of what Horcruxes are: how they behave, what they represent and how each one, essentially, is part of Voldemort. The final riddle, then, is buried within the protagonist of the sequence and has been since the opening pages of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*. As I shall show, by transforming the hero into a mechanism that has been sustaining the villain, and subsequently aligning him with the inhuman traits of
Voldemort, Rowling threatens to destabilise not only the character of Harry Potter, but the entire narrative structure of the sequence.

**The Murderous Memory of Tom Marvolo Riddle**

The Diary of Tom Marvolo Riddle, appearing in *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, is the first Horcrux the reader encounters as being a part of Lord Voldemort, and it functions as the first type of specular self in Rowling’s sequence that threatens truly to shatter the boundary between the realms of specular memory and corporeal present. The specular Riddle is a fragment of Voldemort’s soul capable of interacting with and feeding off the living, with the goal of this specular fragment being to become corporeal once more. This version of Riddle is dependent on the survival of the physical diary in which it has been placed, and, in order to interact with the world, requires a person to write in the diary’s pages so that he can achieve a connection with them. Tom Riddle ultimately reveals himself to be Lord Voldemort: as a Horcrux he is a specular incarnation of the youthful Dark Lord. The Riddle of the diary is Voldemort’s hidden past self, a fragment of soul that exists as a living memory that has been cast aside to help secure the original self’s immortality. Yet this fragment is depicted as an entity in its own right. The Riddle of the diary appears to exist in what Melchior-Bonnet, in her writings on the mirror, refers to as “the gap between man and his reflection” (255), a gap that allows Voldemort’s specular duplicate to exist and interact with the living indefinitely.
The diary features elements of the enchanting features of mirrors discussed in the previous chapter, where the reflection ultimately reveals an aspect of concealed selfhood. As a mirror device, the diary of Riddle provides the reader with the first piece of Lord Voldemort’s backstory: we learn of his half-wizard, half-Muggle parentage and his deceptive nature at a young age, and are presented with the contrast between his past and present appearance (Chamber of Secrets 330-37). When the diary is belatedly identified as a Horcrux later in the sequence, Dumbledore explains to Harry how it was “certain proof that Voldemort had split his soul” (Half-Blood Prince 590):

“what you described to me was a phenomenon I had never witnessed. A mere memory starting to act and think for itself? A mere memory, sapping the life out of a girl into whose hands it had fallen? No, something much more sinister had lived inside that book … a fragment of soul, I was almost sure of it. The diary had been a Horcrux.” (Half-Blood Prince 591)

The specular Riddle contained in this particular Horcrux is depicted as the most aware and life-like specular fragment of Voldemort’s soul that the reader encounters in the sequence. The Riddle of the diary, created fifty years prior to Harry’s encounter with him, has set about defying time and space by attempting to recreate himself in the present time of Chamber of Secrets in corporeal form. The specular Riddle thus demonstrates, after its reclassification as a Horcrux in Half-Blood Prince, how this type of specularity can serve not only as a deliberate act of self-division but, in this case, as an attempt at self-multiplication.
As an antagonist, Voldemort is never depicted or seen as a complete being with arguably one exception: when Dumbledore first meets the young Tom Riddle in the orphanage to extend an invitation to attend Hogwarts but even this depiction is achieved through specular means – a memory viewed through the Pensieve (*Half-Blood Prince* 310-26). Horcruxes, while concealing the Dark Lord, paradoxically provide the most visual depictions of his character. The specular Riddle of the Diary is depicted as a “tall, black-haired boy”, presumably appearing exactly as he had been fifty years prior when attending Hogwarts, “not a day older than sixteen” (330). It is only the fact that he is described as “strangely blurred around the edges” (330) that establishes him as a specular being when Harry encounters him in the fabled Chamber of Secrets during the climax of the second novel. Without interaction, the diary, like other types of specular technology in the sequence, would remain dormant, but, once a connection is formed, the specular Tom Riddle within has the ability to enchant those opening their mind and heart to him. Riddle intends to “leave [the diary’s] pages at last” (336) thanks to Ginny Weasley, Ron’s sister. Ginny, has been writing in the diary throughout the school year. As she confided her deepest secrets to the nice and understanding Tom inhabiting the enchanted pages of the diary, Riddle was able to infect her with a part of his essence and use her to do his bidding. Gradually, he has been draining her life with this parasitic behaviour.

Riddle’s nature is reflected in the mechanics of the Horcruxes, and the incompleteness of Voldemort as a character, particularly in the manner Rowling depicts him visually, suggests this type of specularity shares the ability to haunt and corrupt - elements familiar to Gothic literature. Out of all of the Horcruxes depicted throughout the Harry
Potter sequence, the Riddle of the diary has most in common with the behaviour of the title character of Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897). As Ronald R. Thomas argues, Dracula is able to “exude control through writing” (104), and we see the Riddle of the diary demonstrate this when writing back to both Ginny and Harry in attempts to manipulate them. Dracula inhabits the writings of Jonathan Harker, Thomas argues, and “gradually transforms his character, so that he will occupy and work through all of the elaborate array of written texts (and writers) that comprise the novel” (104). By committing a part of himself to these texts and their innocent readers, Dracula finds another, more permanent, way of living forever, just as Tom Riddle intended when his diary passed hands from one unsuspecting reader to the next. “This power is not just a function of the diary’s Dark magic,” argues Shira Wolosky, but it is also a reflection of “the general power of words to cast the past in the writer’s desired image, controlling how what has happened will be interpreted, understood, and acted on” (22). In a sense, by reading and re-reading not just the Harry Potter sequence but any novel, we grant the author the opportunity to transform our own character, to infect us, as it were. Our point of view is open to corruption and we should read warily. Rowling’s depiction of Riddle’s diary transforms the pairing of reader and writer into a literary image. Thus the Horcrux that is Riddle’s diary not only allows its author to find a form of immortality, but demonstrates the power of words and specularity within Rowling’s world to shape the character into the narrative the writer – in this case, Voldemort – so desires.

The contrast between the appearance of the specular Riddle of the diary and the physical appearance of Lord Voldemort recalls another obvious intertextual resonance informing Rowling’s depiction of Horcruxes: Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891).
In Wilde’s novel, Basil Hallward paints a full-length portrait of the beautiful youth Dorian Gray, who comes to believe that beauty and sensual fulfilment are the most important aspects of life. Dorian, beholding his specular double within the canvas for the first time, wishes that instead of himself aging, it would be the painting that would grow old, allowing him to remain youthful. As the protagonist declines morally yet remains eternally youthful, precisely as he appeared to be at the time of the portrait’s completion, the Dorian in the portrait begins to age and grow more sinister. While Dorian only divides himself once, Rowling extends this concept of self-division by depicting Voldemort as deliberately setting about splitting himself into several parts.

The Horcruxes depicted throughout the Harry Potter sequence act in a similar way to Dorian Gray’s portrait in that the terrible devastation caused to the soul as a result of deliberately dividing oneself through murder is always revealed, either in the behaviour of specular fragments or in Voldemort’s physical appearance\(^5\). Late in Wilde’s novel, when Basil beholds the “hideous face on the canvas grinning at him” (136), he finds that something “in its expression filled him with disgust and loathing” before realising that it is Dorian Gray’s own face that he is looking at:

> The horror, whatever it was, had not yet entirely spoiled that marvellous beauty. There was still some gold in the thinning hair and some scarlet on the sensual mouth. The sodden eyes had kept something of the loveliness of their blue … (Wilde 136).

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\(^5\) In Dorian Gray’s case, it is the portrait that ages and appears more grotesque with time until he stabs it while for Lord Voldemort, the remnant that is his physical body reflects the damage the creation of Horcruxes causes the human soul.
In *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, Harry witnesses a memory in the Pensieve where Voldemort’s appearance blends the features of the sixteen-year-old Tom Riddle of the diary and the Lord Voldemort he is familiar with. The features were

not as snakelike, the eyes were not yet scarlet, the face not yet masklike, and yet he was no longer handsome Tom Riddle. It was as though his features had been burned and blurred; they were waxy and oddly distorted, and the whites of the eyes now had a permanently bloody look. (*Half-Blood Prince* 523)

The physical transformations of Dorian’s canvas and Lord Voldemort over time ultimately reflect the malevolent nature of the original desires that motivated them to divide their souls. In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, the first reflection of the damage done to Dorian’s soul occurs after his cruelty to Sybil (his behaviour that leads to her suicide) when he notices a change in the canvas: “the face appeared to him to be a little changed. The expression looked different. One would have said that there was a touch of cruelty in the mouth. It was certainly very strange” (Wilde 80). His act of cruelty is now reflected in the specular Dorian on the canvas, while his physical appearance remains unchanged, concealing his spite. Lord Voldemort’s transformation, as he becomes more distinct from the boy who was Tom Riddle, resembles that of the Dorian Gray contained within Basil’s portrait, and is similarly caused by acts of cruelty to others that affect the self: the alteration of the two figures ultimately reveals the cost that comes with tearing one’s soul apart. *The Picture of Dorian Gray* treats the implied division of soul here as the unintentional benefit and curse of a Faustian wish: a proverbial deal with the devil. As a result of this wish being granted, the title character of Wilde’s work is able to divide himself and remain eternally youthful in physical form, while the canvas both
contains and reflects the debauchery and evil that corrupts his soul as time passes⁶. The appearances then – Dorian’s portrait and Voldemort’s visage – are the consequence of the hubris involved in blatantly defying the natural order of life and death.

Such splits or divisions, despite their murderous beginnings, paradoxically create the potential for immortality by providing the replicated or speculated selves with the chance to live outside the bounds of time and space, free from decay, mortality or vulnerability. Elizabeth Grosz explains that “…bodies are always understood within a spatial and temporal context, and space and time remain conceivable only insofar as [physical form] provides the basis for our perception and representation of them” (84). With the creation of a portrait and a diary – two objects that are representations of a fixed time – the specular versions of Dorian and Riddle are able to defy the spatial and temporal context that restricts the corporeal form of the traditional body. The diary of Tom Riddle and Voldemort’s subsequent Horcruxes, like the portrait depicted in The Picture of Dorian Gray, represent an attempt to control time, space and – to a degree – the body. Horcruxes are intended to act as a method of conquering mortality and defying the laws of nature; as a malignant mechanism of specularity, they deliberately contravene the natural order of life.

When Riddle first makes contact with Harry, writing back from the pages of the diary, he pulls him into the diary and controls Harry’s interpretation of the past in an attempt to gain his trust. This encounter begins with a square on the page in the diary

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⁶ See also Elana Gomel’s article, “Oscar Wilde, The Picture of Dorian Gray, and the (Un)Death of the Author” for discussion of how Dorian gives up a body and receives “the ready-made soul of art” that becomes his second self.
transforming into a “minuscule television screen” (*Chamber of Secrets* 262). Harry raised the book to press his eye against the little window and, “before he knew what was happening, he was tilting forwards; the window was widening, he felt his body leave his bed and he was pitched headfirst through the opening in the page, into a whirl of colour and shadow” (*Chamber of Secrets* 262). As she does when introducing the Pensieve, Rowling depicts Harry’s physical sensations as he crosses the divide between corporeal and specular realms, demonstrating that there is a distinct boundary separating the two spaces. When Harry walks through the memory Riddle chooses to project, he has no control or influence over the events unfolding and only sees and hears what Riddle wishes him to7. This foreshadows Harry’s experience in the morally neutral Pensieve; it here establishes how Voldemort – even as a specular fragment inhabiting a Horcrux – can actively manipulate specular technology to exude control and influence. Riddle’s goal in revealing the memory of his “capture” of Hagrid, who was blamed for opening the Chamber of Secrets fifty years ago, was to gain Harry’s trust (334), revealing early on in the sequence how Riddle’s persona functions on a subtle level: Riddle frequently fabricated trust in order to manipulate, deceive and murder, as Harry later learns that he did when obtaining the treasures that he transformed into Horcruxes.

During their confrontation in *Chamber of Secrets*, the Riddle of the diary tells Harry that “Voldemort is my past, present and future” (337). Indeed, the diary projects an aspect of Lord Voldemort in that it reveals his past (as Tom Riddle), present (as Harry’s

7 In C.S. Lewis’ *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, Lucy Pevensie encounters a specular copy of herself within the Magician’s Book. The specular copies of Lucy tempt her to use magic and she finds herself absorbed within the story, which plays on her desires and insecurities and allows her to spy on people. Riddle’s diary is a sentient object in that it houses a fragment of Voldemort’s soul: when Harry is pulled into its pages, he relives a memory that Riddle wants him to see.
enemy) and future (as Lord Voldemort). Riddle ponders how his future self could have been defeated by Harry Potter, for Ginny has written about Voldemort’s defeats at Harry’s hands in the diary and gained his interest: “Twice – in your past, in my future – we have met. And twice I failed to kill you. How did you survive?” (339). Riddle’s words here demonstrate how, as a specular fragment, he possesses not only awareness of his status after the creation of the diary and events that have occurred since, but also an investment in the future of the being from whom he was split off.

The introduction of Horcruxes in the sixth book of the series challenges the reader’s understanding of previous events in the sequence. As we realise that the diary is also a Horcrux and that this particular fragment of Lord Voldemort is not linked to Harry in any physical form, or by the prophecy that is revealed in the fifth novel (I discuss this in my analysis of the Pensieve in Chapter Two), we can understand why this murderous memory is the most deadly version of Voldemort that Harry has encountered in the sequence. Voldemort’s failed attempt to kill the infant Harry Potter inadvertently forged a connection with the boy that keeps both tethered to life. This specular fragment of Voldemort’s soul, created nearly forty years before his attack on the infant Harry, has no such bond to Harry. As a specular being, the Riddle inhabiting the diary is a sentient and interactive fragment, but, as the closest to replicating itself in corporeal form, actually comes closer to *successfully* killing Harry than the true Voldemort does elsewhere in the sequence. In this sense, the Horcruxes act as a speculative form of specular technology because they enable Rowling to demonstrate the power and potential of the image.
The Riddle of the diary is a specular memory that threatens to transcend time, re-create itself physically in the present and defy the traditional boundaries that separate the realms of specular and corporeal. However, despite this evident desire of the Horcrux-fragments to corrupt and possess the corporeal, Hermione tells Harry that each specular fragment “depends on its container, its enchanted body, for survival. It can’t exist without it” (*Deathly Hallows* 120). In *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, Harry stabs the diary of Tom Riddle with a Basilisk fang, the venom of which is fatal to a Horcrux, preventing transgression between the two realms, and when the diary is killed, the specular Riddle is destroyed: “Ink spurted out of the diary in torrents, streaming over Harry’s hands, flooding the floor. Riddle was writhing and twisting, screaming and flailing and then… He was gone” (*Chamber of Secrets* 346). The depiction of violence during the death of the specular Riddle – the bloody imagery, screams and sudden silence that follows his complete disappearance – founds an expectation about how future Horcruxes might behave in their moment of death. With their destruction, the specular essence bound to the object screams and fights, only to vanish as if it were never there – a haunting that has been exorcised.

What this demonstrates is how the narrative device of the Horcrux suggests that alternative narrative paths may have been taken without the reader’s awareness. Horcruxes are enchanted objects that represent the malevolent end of the spectrum of magic, but they are necessary for Rowling to establish a distinction in how specularity is depicted. That is, if they are the opposite of human and represent the attitude of evil within the sequence, then Harry, positioned as the titular hero, should consequently be contrasted against that. This becomes problematized, however, when Rowling unveils
the final riddle concerning Horcruxes in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*: Harry himself is revealed to be the unintentional Horcrux that Lord Voldemort accidentally created when the killing curse backfired prior to the opening events of the sequence.

**Malignant Mechanisms of Specularity: Fragmented Riddles**

In *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, Rowling reveals that each division of Voldemort’s soul and subsequent Horcrux was created by the act of murder. This bloody act of creation differentiates Horcruxes from other specular selves, such as those in photographs or portraits. Moreover, Horcruxes hold not simply a representation or copy of a person, but a specific fragment of the soul; as a consequence they keep their maker bound to the corporeal world in defiance of death. Voldemort’s creation of Horcruxes enables fragments of his soul to exist as specular entities bound to various objects. Shira Wolosky highlights how the very word “Horcrux” suggests a play “on crux, what is crucial, with ‘hor,’ from the French dehors (outside), perhaps suggesting being put outside the self” (49). When Lord Voldemort stores fragments of his soul in various receptacles scattered across the world, he literally casts parts of himself outside of the self and defies the rules of time and nature as he does so. Horcruxes, then, represent a complete antithesis of the natural order of life and death: they challenge what it is to be human within the world of the sequence.

Each encounter that a full or corporeal character has with a Horcrux recalls the function of the One Ring from J.R.R. Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings* (1954–1955), an object containing the evil Sauron’s power and the malice of his character that enables him to
defy death while gradually corrupting the soul of the wearer. With time, the ring bearer becomes a shell, consumed only the obsession with the ring (Smeagol/Gollum). Certain Horcruxes depicted throughout the sequence parallel the One Ring, the key difference being that these objects contain a fragment of Voldemort’s soul and appear to relish the corruption of those they encounter. The behaviour of these fragments of Riddle’s soul also recalls the type of vicious haunting encountered in the traditions of Gothic literature. The connection of Horcruxes to images as a manner of evading a true death again recalls the vampire, which Robert McCully argues “symbolizes the ever constant wish for life and renewal” while simultaneously being a symbol of “the hideously egocentric wish for survival that would destroy a living human being so as to maintain its own existence” (73). Horcruxes, by acting as physical receptacles that contain a specular copy of part of a person’s soul, offer a far more complex form of specularity than any I have examined thus far. Voldemort, like the traditional vampire figure, gradually destroys himself as a living human being in order to achieve a form of immortality while draining the lives of those around him.

Virginia Zimmerman argues that “Voldemort’s Horcruxes, inasmuch as they are like traces, follow the Derridean model; they reveal a violent disconnection from origins” (198). As Harry and Dumbledore investigate and theorise the creation of each Horcrux that Voldemort has created, the reader recognises that each separation has resulted in a permanent and violent disconnection of a vital part of the self. Thus Zimmerman perceives Horcruxes as “an abuse of time and of traces. Voldemort severs himself as completely as he can from his origins and makes traces, not of people from his past or simple memories, but of himself, dividing and diminishing his soul” (Zimmerman 199).
In severing vital facets of himself with each division of his soul, Voldemort – as the human being who had been Tom Riddle – becomes further concealed, yet each encounter the reader has with these complex mechanisms of specularity enables Rowling to provide a more detailed image of the Dark Lord.

While the variations of specularity that I have previously examined reflect a successful confrontation with a part of the self and inevitable death, resulting in an after-life in the form of the image within the narrative, Horcruxes represent not only an attempt to defy death but an inability to behold the self. This is because, from the moment it is fractured with the creation of a Horcrux, the self is incomplete. Each object selected to become a Horcrux, a container of a soul fragment, holds personal significance for Voldemort. The enchanted objects are chosen because they relate to his great wizarding ancestry in a particular way (such as his being a descendant of Salazar Slytherin) or because of their powerful magical history, yet their creation ensures that Voldemort will never be a whole being again. Having murderously cast off the essential facets of the self that Zimmerman argues “connect him to family and to the past” (220), Voldemort seeks to live forever, albeit in a divided form, with each specular fragment that inhabits a Horcrux containing a part of his splintered soul. While these Horcruxes represent what Voldemort deems to be the most important aspects of his greatness, at the same time they enable Rowling to construct a detailed character of the Dark Lord in the form of imagery – that is, via the specular.

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8 The Horcruxes that Voldemort intentionally creates are: Tom Riddle’s diary, Marvolo Gaunt’s ring, Rowena Ravenclaw’s diadem, Helga Hufflepuff’s cup, Salazar Slytherin’s locket, and the serpent, Nagini.
Suman Gupta, in his consideration of Horcruxes, highlights how “the idea of a process of externalising and splitting the soul has a considerable basis in folklore around the world” (171). Tolkien comments on this motif, in “On Fairy Stories,” when discussing how fairy stories provide several examples and modes for the “oldest and deepest desire, the Great Escape: the Escape from Death” (22). The Horcruxes that Lord Voldemort are an attempt at a “great escape” from death, but as Tolkien states: “Few lessons are taught more clearly…than the burden of that kind of immortality, or rather endless serial living, to which the ‘fugitive’ would fly” (22). Rowling, in portraying death as a natural part of life and with her references to Christian themes, such as the importance of an intact soul, paints Voldemort as the fugitive that refuses to learn the lesson Tolkien speaks of. A lesson that Rowling, speaking through Dumbledore, makes clear to the reader in each novel is: that death is not to be feared and to defile one’s soul is a terrible crime against the natural order.

I not only identify Rowling’s Horcruxes as a “great escape” for Lord Voldemort, but a version of soul jars, a trope common in folklore and fantasy fiction. For example, the Russian figure of Koschey the Deathless is, according to Anita Silvey, “an ancient, vengeful, villainous character who can only be killed if the hero finds his external soul, which is ingeniously hidden inside an egg” (4). While Koschey the Deathless resembles Lord Voldemort in seeking to elude death by keeping this vital part of himself hidden, the key phrase here is “external soul”. Koschev’s soul remains single, though displaced

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9 *The Young King Of Easaidh Ruadh*, a Scottish fairy tale; *What Came of Picking Flowers*, a Portuguese fairy tale; and the Norwegian fairy tale, *The Giant Who Had No Heart in His Body* all incorporate the notion of the soul jar where the soul is hidden in an egg, which in turn is hidden with or under another object. Destroying the egg results in the destruction of the soul. See also the anime *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, the role playing game *Dungeons and Dragons*, and the film *Dragonheart* for other variations of soul division/storage.
and concealed. Lord Voldemort, unlike most other legendary and literary users of soul jars, sets about dividing his soul seven times when he creates his Horcruxes. Horcruxes, then, allow Rowling to expand upon the notion of the soul jar as it functions in her brand of speculative fiction, but by associating this mechanism with Voldemort, she immediately associates this type of visual mechanism with evil. As a result, the creation of Horcruxes, like Voldemort himself, becomes clearly positioned as immoral and in conflict with the natural order of the world of the sequence.

With the creation of each Horcrux, Voldemort permanently removes a vital part of his humanity, a removal that is evident in his increasingly inhuman physical appearance. It is only after comparing the Voldemort of the present with his past incarnations – those reflected in the specular fragments housed within the Horcruxes – that the terrible damage to his soul becomes truly obvious. Tom Riddle, not long graduated from Hogwarts, charmed collector Hepzibah Smith during an encounter in her home. Following her death two days afterward, both he and her treasures (Salazar Slytherin’s Locket and Helga Hufflepuff’s Cup) had vanished (Half-Blood Prince 519-20) and her house-elf had confessed to her murder after being hexed by Riddle. This moment in Riddle’s life, on the cusp of creating his third and fourth Horcruxes, sees Rowling offer the chronologically first alteration of his handsome appearance, with the flash of “scarlet eyes” and “hollowed cheeks” (Half-Blood Prince 517-18) that we as readers have become familiar with as a part of Voldemort’s description (Philosopher’s Stone 315; Goblet of Fire 697; Order of the Phoenix 892-893). Before Voldemort recreates his physical body, Harry sees what remains of the Dark Lord’s form after surviving the rebounding killing curse that occurred prior to the opening events of the sequence. As
we later understand, Voldemort’s body acts as a true reflection of the damage that he has done to his soul, or rather, all that remains after he has mutilated it so:

The thing … had the shape of a crouched human child, except that Harry had never seen anything less like a child. It was hairless and scaly-looking, a dark, raw, reddish black. Its arms and legs were thin and feeble, and its face - no child alive ever had a face like that - flat and snakelike, with gleaming red eyes. (*Goblet of Fire* 693-94)

After his physical rebirth is complete, Voldemort, whose skin is “whiter than a skull, with wide, livid scarlet eyes and a nose that was flat as a snake’s with slits for nostrils” (697), is depicted as monstrous in appearance:

Voldemort looked away from Harry and began examining his own body. His hands were like large, pale spiders; his long white fingers caressed his own chest, his arms, his face; the red eyes, whose pupils were slits, like a cat’s, gleamed still more brightly through the darkness. (*Goblet of Fire* 698)

The creation of each Horcrux sees Voldemort casting aside an aspect of his past self, but by removing these parts of his essence into physical vessels he renders himself more inhuman in appearance, suggesting that the damage he has rendered to himself is both permanent and a reflection of the vital aspects of his humanity that he has cast aside.

Importantly, Voldemort demonstrates no awareness of the status of his Horcruxes and the soul fragments that they house. Indeed, he is unaware that Harry and his companions even know about them until informed that they have broken into Gringotts,
the wizard bank, and stolen a Horcrux (Helga Hufflepuff’s cup) from the vault of Bellatrix Lestrange. It is only after learning of this from an external source that Voldemort sets about investigating the location of his other Horcruxes, which he regards as “his treasures, his safeguards, his anchors to immortality” (*Deathly Hallows* 604). Dumbledore theorises in *Half-Blood Prince* that “Voldemort is now so immersed in evil and these crucial parts of himself have been detached for so long he does not feel as we do” (599). The fact that Dumbledore refers to these fragments as “crucial” strengthens the notion that Voldemort is discarding the necessary parts of his humanity. During *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, when Harry is exposed to Voldemort’s thoughts, the reader learns that indeed the Dark Lord does not feel when these specular fragments of his soul die, and is surprised that he has not felt the destruction of previous Horcruxes:

> But surely if the boy had destroyed any of his Horcruxes, he, Lord Voldemort, would have known, would have felt it? He, the greatest wizard of them all, the most powerful, he, the killer of Dumbledore and of how many other worthless, nameless men: how could Lord Voldemort not have known, if he, himself, most important and precious, had been attacked, mutilated? (*Deathly Hallows* 604)

Not only does this highlight the great self-importance Lord Voldemort places upon himself, it clearly demonstrates that he is permanently disconnected from the specular selves that reside within his Horcruxes. Thematically, Rowling is enforcing the notion of human versus inhuman; further, by temporarily switching to Voldemort’s point of view, we sense the anger and self-doubt radiating from the antagonist. This moment reveals that, despite the fact that the Horcruxes are self-contained and self-aware
entities, Voldemort still fails to recognise the significance of the loss of these parts of selfhood. Indeed, Voldemort never grasps the importance of what he has cast aside and it is the reader, via Harry, that identifies the significance of this self-destruction because of how Rowling depicts it – as a (negative) specular self.

Each Horcrux is not only a divided fragment of Voldemort’s soul, but also a reflection of his nature, as is evidenced by how each Horcrux is able to corrupt and even possess those who come into contact with them. Hermione explains how this corruption works to Harry and Ron in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*:

> “While the magical container is still intact, the bit of soul inside it can flit in and out of someone if they get too close to the object. I don’t mean holding it for too long…I mean close emotionally. Ginny poured her heart out into that diary, she made herself incredibly vulnerable. You’re in trouble if you get too fond of or dependent on the Horcrux.” (*Deathly Hallows* 120-21)

The malignant fragments of the soul within a Horcrux can think for themselves and have certain magical abilities, including the capacity to influence those in their vicinity. When Harry, Ron, and Hermione take turns carrying Salazar Slytherin’s locket around their necks (*Deathly Hallows*), they each become affected emotionally, especially Ron, demonstrating the danger of exposure to this type of specularity and the evil with which in this case it is aligned. The behaviour of this particular Horcrux, with which Harry and his friends have prolonged contact, parallels the ability of the One Ring of *The Lord of The Rings* to gradually influence and corrupt those who have extended contact with it (Isildur, Smeagol, Bilbo and Frodo Baggins).
The key difference is the behaviour of the Horcruxes, whose specular selves represent an abuse of specular technology by forging an unwanted connection and violating the minds of those they make contact with. Rowling makes clear that the specular inhabitants of the Horcruxes relish the malicious abilities they possess. The Riddle of the diary explains to Harry how, as Ginny poured her soul into the diary, he was able to pour a bit of his soul back into her: “her soul happened to be exactly what I wanted. I grew stronger and stronger on a diet of her deepest fears, her darkest secrets” (Chamber of Secrets 333). This establishes that the fragment of soul contained in the first Horcrux has wants: a need to cannibalise other souls in order to sustain its existence. These forms of specularity, then, while the most vicious, are also the most life-like because they literally are a cast-off part of a person. The Horcrux that was created out of Slytherin’s locket also demonstrates a desire to feed on the souls of the living and, aware that it is in danger when Harry opens it by speaking the snake language of Parseltongue, demonstrates self-awareness as the eyes of a specular Riddle look out of the locket:

…the golden doors of the locket swung wide open with a little click.

Behind both of the glass windows within blinked a living eye, dark and handsome as Tom Riddle’s eyes had been before he turned them scarlet and slit-pupiled. (Deathly Hallows 415)

Harry finds himself “already imagining blood pouring from the empty windows” (416) of the locket as Ron prepares to destroy the Horcrux, recalling the behaviour of the Diary of Tom Riddle when it was destroyed. The later destruction of the lost diadem of
Rowena Ravenclaw is also accompanied by the imagery of death and blood when, after that particular Horcrux has been destroyed by a fire curse,

A bloodlike substance, dark and tarry, seemed to be leaking from the diadem. Suddenly Harry felt the thing vibrate violently, then break apart in his hands, and as it did so, he thought he heard the faintest, most distant scream of pain, echoing not from the grounds or the castle, but from the thing that had just fragmented in his fingers. (*Deathly Hallows* 697)

By describing the destruction of these Horcruxes so vividly, Rowling grants these malevolent specular selves a physical link to the world that they haunt, and this in turn adds a sense of physicality to the damage Voldemort has caused to his soul. The fact that the substance emerging from the Horcruxes seems like blood, suggesting that parts of Voldemort are being killed, aptly highlights the fact that these dark magical objects are created out of an act of violence themselves. Just as Horcruxes are the opposite of a human being, so their creation is depicted as the ultimate negation of life itself. Rowling’s depiction of how these objects behave, then, establishes them clearly as mechanisms that visually represent the negation of life itself. While Horcruxes represent Voldemort’s fragmented self, they are the pieces of the puzzle that, when unravelled, are metaphorical representations of the humanity he has cast aside: the independence and physicality that Rowling grants them establishes them as the most vivid form of specularity in the sequence, but their growing malignancy as they enjoy greater proximity with corporeal beings sees the distinction between good and evil complicated and, finally, blurred during the final instalment of the sequence.
**Harry Potter and the Riddle of the Accidental Horcrux**

At the climax of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, Harry discovers that he himself is a Horcrux of Voldemort and, as a result, has been a host to one of the Dark Lord’s parasitic soul fragments for most of his young life. Prior to the events of the Harry Potter sequence, when the killing curse that Voldemort aimed at the infant Harry Potter backfired as a result of Lily Potter sacrificing herself to protect her son, it not only devastated the physical body of the Dark Lord but transferred a section of his unstable soul onto Harry. This is what resulted in Harry becoming the unintentional Horcrux.

Harry, like the other Horcruxes, ensured that the Dark Lord remained alive despite the killing curse having rebounded, resulting in Voldemort being “ripped from [his] body, [where he] was less than spirit, less than the meanest ghost … but still, [he] was alive” (*Goblet of Fire* 707-08). Dumbledore offers an explanation for what occurred the night the killing curse rebounded:

> “You were the seventh Horcrux, Harry, the Horcrux he never meant to make. He had rendered his soul so unstable that it broke apart when he committed those acts of unspeakable evil, the murder of your parents, the attempted killing of a child. But what escaped from that room was even less than he knew. He left more than his body behind. He left part of himself latched to you, the would-be victim who had survived.” (*Deathly Hallows* 777-78)

The only Horcruxes with which Voldemort seems to create temporary psychic connections are the final two that he created, those made out of living beings: his snake, Nagini, and the unintentional Horcrux, Harry Potter. Dumbledore explains to Harry that it is “inadvisable” to use animals as Horcruxes “because to confide a part of your soul to
something that can think and move for itself is obviously a very risky business” (*Half-Blood Prince* 598). This is why Harry, as a Horcrux, is a risk to Voldemort, and upon the revelation of this terrible link between the two, the connection between the protagonist and antagonist begins to make more sense.

Rowling has established that Harry and Voldemort are linked from the first novel, but when it is confirmed that a fragment of Voldemort’s soul resides within the protagonist of the sequence we are forced to reconsider everything Rowling has told us from the opening page. Harry’s concern is no longer an uneasy awareness that he shares similarities with Voldemort, as was the case in *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, and about which Dumbledore famously reassured him. Instead, a part of this malevolent antagonist has been concealing itself within the body of the hero from the moment that the reader was introduced to the infant Harry during the opening passage of *Philosopher’s Stone*. The Boy Who Lived and defeated the Dark Lord has been ensuring that Voldemort remains undefeated because he – Harry Potter – is alive and well when the sequence begins. Essentially, the two characters have – via their Horcrux link – acted as doubles for one another. Jean Baudrillard describes the double as:

> an imaginary figure, which, just like the soul, the shadow, the mirror image, haunts the subject like his other, which makes it so that the subject is simultaneously itself and never resembles itself again, which haunts the subject like a subtle and always averted death. (95)

From the very first novel, Harry and Voldemort have haunted one another and redefined the identity of each other’s character, essentially bleeding into one another. Harry, via specularity in the form of magical photographs and reflections, has been able to reforge
his own separate identity as “Harry Potter”; however, he is unable to truly escape being stalked by the essence of Voldemort that haunts him. After Rowling reveals that Harry is a Horcrux, because the double in this case is a part of the subject, the death for both protagonist and antagonist is always averted.

Before revealing to the reader that Harry is a Horcrux, Rowling has provided several narrative clues throughout the sequence that allude to the doubling and mirroring between the protagonist and antagonist that are essential for both characterisations to unfold. Linking Harry with the specular mechanism of a Horcrux offers further insight into the consequence of Voldemort’s actions when he returned to physical form and further strengthened the bond between the two of them. During the ritual to return to a body when Voldemort uses Harry’s blood as a part of his spell in the belief that it will make him stronger (*Goblet of Fire* 754), he unwittingly doubles the bond that he had created between himself and Harry by taking the sacrifice of Lily Potter into himself. This creates a “two-fold connection” between Harry and Voldemort and ensures that their destinies are wrapped together “more securely than ever two wizards were joined in history” (*Deathly Hallows* 779). Throughout *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, Voldemort becomes aware of the psychic connection between himself and Harry. At this stage, however, neither party is aware of Harry’s status as a Horcrux, nor does Voldemort appear to ever glean this piece of knowledge. Previously in the sequence, Harry’s scar had burned when he was in close proximity to Voldemort, but by the time of *Order of the Phoenix*, this has advanced to flashes of the Dark Lord’s emotions, such as elation or rage. The most unsettling and vivid connection occurs when Harry dreams that he is Voldemort’s snake, Nagini, and finds himself
experiencing what he believes to be the snake’s emotion and desire as it attacks Arthur Weasley, Ron’s father. Severus Snape, when preparing to instruct Harry in the art of Occlumency (a type of spell casting designed to keep the mind closed), clarifies how this connection works:

“The usual rules do not seem to apply with you, Potter. The curse that failed to kill you seems to have forged some kind of connection between you and the Dark Lord. The evidence suggests that at times, when your mind is most relaxed and vulnerable – when you are asleep, for instance – you are sharing the Dark Lord’s thoughts and emotions.” (Order of the Phoenix 585)

Snape further explains that it appears that Voldemort is now aware of their connection and is willing to exploit it; significantly, this is similar to the behaviour the Horcruxes exhibit when they look into the deepest desires of those closest to them and finally use these against them.

What is hinted at here and later confirmed is how Horcruxes made from living beings are able to communicate with one another: “You seem to have visited the snake’s mind because that was where the Dark Lord was at that particular moment,” snarled Snape. “He was possessing the snake at the time and so you dreamed you were inside it, too” (Order of the Phoenix 587). During Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, Nagini impersonates Bathilda Bagshot (an old neighbour of Dumbledore and his family) and waits for Harry to visit on Voldemort’s orders. When Harry and Hermione travel to Godric’s Hollow and encounter an elderly lady they believe to be Bathilda, Nagini is
able to communicate on a telepathic level with Voldemort, a message that Harry senses (as does the Horcrux he is wearing around his neck at the time):

Then [Bathilda] closed her eyes and several things happened at once:

Harry's scar prickled painfully; the Horcrux twitched so that the front of his sweater actually moved; the dark, fetid room dissolved momentarily. He felt a leap of joy and spoke in a high, cold voice: *hold him!* (Deathly Hallows 376)

The “dissolving” effect that Harry experiences here is akin to that depicted when, during his experiences with the Pensieve, he temporarily transgresses the boundaries between corporeal and specular. This establishes how the Horcruxes, as enchanted objects, act as a form of specular technology in their ability to temporarily pull corporeal forms out of the physical world. It also strengthens the notion of these objects being capable of haunting via the specular because of their ability to temporarily disrupt the corporeal reality – demonstrated by their ability to influence and corrupt the realm of the physical.

Bathilda, it turns out, has been dead a long time, and Voldemort has arranged for his snake to impersonate her by animating her corpse. Harry shares the psychic communication between Voldemort and the snake when Nagini lets the Dark Lord know she has captured Harry. This suggests that the connection between Horcruxes is strongest between the living beings housing parts of Voldemort’s soul – no matter how unwilling those entities may be. By contrast, Slytherin’s Locket, despite twitching in this instance and showing a sense of malice or self-preservation when in danger, never exhibits an ability or desire to contact Voldemort, nor did Riddle’s diary in Chamber of Secrets. This implies that while the specular fragments housed in inanimate objects
selected to be Horcruxes are permanently divided from the original, the living vessels acting as Horcruxes – while perhaps less stable than an inanimate object – are able to be possessed by a stronger mind, if only temporarily. The power of the Horcruxes, then, is they are specular parts of Voldemort granted physicality. Baudrillard argues that “the imaginary power and wealth of the double” is due to its “immateriality, on the fact that it is and remains a phantasm” (95): the Horcruxes allow the phantasms of Voldemort – rebirthed into a physical container via the act of death – a sense of materiality and this increases the power of the double. When that material is the physical body of Harry Potter, a battle for possession – a battle between the two doubles within – takes place as each individual grows in power.

The implication is that one physical form should only house one specular entity at a time. Double possession results in the parasitic form ultimately destroying the host. This is hinted at when Professor Quirrell is possessed by Lord Voldemort in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*: in this case Voldemort’s face appeared to burst from the back of Quirrell’s skull and this parasitic form of the Dark Lord was, until abandoning his servant, a constant companion and torment (315, 320). Harry himself begins to fear that Voldemort might erupt out of the back of his own head after realising that they share a psychic connection (*Order of the Phoenix* 543), allowing Rowling to transform an initially scary villain into a terrifying concept: an invasive parasite. In Quirrell’s case, the invasion into the body was that of a parasitic nature rather than specular possession. The depiction of Voldemort, even in this first encounter as a parasite, sees the reader introduced to the familiar “chalk white” terrible face, with “glaring red eyes and slits for nostrils, like a snake” (*Philosopher’s Stone* 315). It is immediately
established that Voldemort is inhuman and snake-like. Indeed, he is not even a complete being. The reader can only wonder why his face is so disturbing at this stage. In any case, Rowling clearly depicts the Dark Lord as a character aligned with malignancy and terror from the outset.

During *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, Voldemort attempts to destroy Harry by using him as a weapon with which to attack Dumbledore. Following his brief possession of Harry towards the novel’s conclusion, however, Voldemort ceases his attempts to control Harry or enter his mind, repulsed by having to experience the grief and emotion that Harry feels following the death of Sirius Black. Once informed about the mechanics of Horcruxes, the reader comes to understand the repulsion Voldemort felt: what Harry was experiencing was raw emotion, a vital part of what it means to be human. The creation of Horcruxes requires the casting aside of essential facets of what it means to be a human being, the aspects of which Rowling has distinguished as crucial to defeating evil since *Philosopher’s Stone*. Dumbledore, ever wary of the growing connection between Harry and Voldemort, explains to the protagonist why he had been avoiding him during Harry’s fifth year at Hogwarts:

“On those rare occasions when we had close contact, I thought I saw a shadow of him stir behind your eyes…”

Harry remembered the feeling that a dormant snake had risen in him, ready to strike, in those moments when he and Dumbledore had made eye-contact.
“Voldemort’s aim in possessing you, as he demonstrated tonight, would not have been my destruction. It would have been yours.” (Order of the Phoenix 909)

Dumbledore explains his fear that Voldemort would force his way into Harry’s mind, where he could manipulate and misdirect, or even take possession (909). If Voldemort were to completely possess Harry and render him merely an empty vessel that would be the total destruction of the Boy Who Lived. As a result, the entire sequence, which focuses on the journey of Harry Potter, would be in jeopardy because the “hero” of the sequence would now be devoid of his own character.

Ultimately, Voldemort chooses to exploit Harry’s thoughts and emotions, and projects specular visions into Harry’s mind in an attempt to manipulate him. This behaviour is later repeated by the Horcrux created out of Slytherin’s locket, when it creates a specular projection based on the emotional fears of the person it deems the most vulnerable to this type of attack. That person is Ron Weasley, Harry’s best friend. While it is not explicitly stated that Harry is a Horcrux until late in the final novel, there are disconcerting implications for the entire sequence when the malignant traits of specularity that have been associated with Horcruxes are applied to the protagonist of the sequence. If the malignant specularity of one of Voldemort’s Horcruxes resides within Harry, then it might seem that all of his relationships and magical abilities can be reviewed as ambivalent. He has always attracted interest from both good and dark witches and wizards, as did Voldemort in his youth: this revelation invites the question of how much of Harry’s charisma is his own and how much is residual from the Horcrux within. The jealousy that Ron exhibits at times during their friendship, while
based in his own insecurities, could arguably have been fed by the Horcrux within Harry: the addition of Slytherin’s locket only brought his fears to life in a specular fantasy. The implications then are that Harry functions as the agent of Ron’s difficulties, for these become more pronounced as the sequence – and his exposure to Harry – continues. Indeed, the entire Weasley family\textsuperscript{10} experience significant traumas as their association with Harry grows, and if this fact is causally linked to Harry being a Horcrux then the distinctions that Rowling has so clearly established between good and evil since \textit{Philosopher’s Stone} become further complicated. For example, each novel sees Ron’s life becoming further in peril: from the magical chess game that saw him lose consciousness in \textit{Philosopher’s Stone} (305), to his life literally being on the line in subsequent novels as his exposure to Harry grows. Like the first exposure to the portraits, the close encounters with death that Harry’s companions have are initially portrayed as the side effects of the young and lucky evading a bad situation: however, as the sequence unfolds, a quirky encounter with a troll that sees Harry and Ron rescue Hermione (\textit{Philosopher’s Stone} 190-93) gradually evolves into a terrible torture scene. In this instance, the two boys can only listen to Hermione’s screams as Bellatrix Lestrange “questions” their friend with an Unforgivable Curse (\textit{Deathly Hallows} 510-15).

No wonder, then, that the specular Riddle of the locket, having likely gained further insight into Ron’s mind from Harry when it was his turn to wear the Horcrux, is able to

\textsuperscript{10} This includes: Ginny Weasley’s possession by Tom Riddle’s diary and near death (\textit{Chamber of Secrets}), Arthur Weasley’s attack by Nagini (who was possessed by Lord Voldemort at the time) during \textit{Order of the Phoenix}, the attack of Bill Weasley by were-wolf Fenrir Greyback (\textit{Half-Blood Prince}), and the murder of Fred Weasley during the Battle of Hogwarts (\textit{Deathly Hallows}).
so accurately glean Ron’s insecurities and construct a twisted specular fantasy, all the while holding Ron enchanted as it feeds off his fear:

Out of the locket’s two windows, out of the eyes, there bloomed like two grotesque bubbles, the heads of Harry and Hermione, weirdly distorted.

Ron yelled in shock and backed away as the figures blossomed out of the locket, first chests, then waists, then legs, until they stood in the locket, side by side like trees with a common root, swaying over Ron and the real Harry, who had snatched his fingers away from the locket as it burned, suddenly, white-hot. (*Deathly Hallows* 416)

The physical defence of the locket grows more powerful as this specular projection grows stronger, evidenced by its ability to suddenly burn Harry. The ability of the Horcrux to infect people is also evident here: as Ron becomes further entranced by the vision, Hermione’s earlier warning about parts of a Horcrux being able to flit into another person becomes prophetic. As Harry yells at Ron to stab the locket with the sword of Godric Gryffindor, evidence of the parasitic capabilities of the Horcrux is depicted in a slight, although temporary, alteration in Ron’s appearance: “Ron looked toward him, and Harry thought he saw a trace of scarlet in his eyes” (*Deathly Hallows* 417). However, as with the destruction of the diary, only the shattered Horcrux casing remains after Ron stabs the Horcrux, and there is no indication of the vicious specular haunting that threatened to consume Ron ever having taking place only moments ago.
In a sense, Voldemort acts as Harry Potter’s Horcrux as much as Harry acts as Voldemort’s. Every encounter they have results in Voldemort attempting to resist being infected by what he views to be great weaknesses, such as love, compassion or humanity. These are concepts he treats as abject as surely as Harry and his companions do the qualities that inhabit Voldemort’s deliberately created Horcruxes. It is established from the first novel that Harry has always been protected by something Lord Voldemort can never understand: love. The importance of love is emphasised at the conclusion of *Philosopher’s Stone* when Harry asks Dumbledore why Quirrell – possessed by Voldemort – was unable to touch him. Dumbledore tells Harry of love and its power, a theme that continues to protect Harry and deny Voldemort throughout the sequence:

“Your mother died to save you. If there is one thing Voldemort cannot understand, it is love. He didn’t realise that love as powerful as your mother’s for you leaves its own mark. Not a scar, no visible sign … to have been loved so deeply, even though the person who loved us is gone, will give us some protection for ever. It is in your very skin. Quirrell, full of hatred, greed and ambition, sharing his soul with Voldemort, could not touch you for this reason. It was agony to touch a person marked by something so good.” *Philosopher’s Stone* (321-22)

Voldemort has never understood or known love and he has always despised human weakness. Yet love has always allowed Harry to survive and, despite the fragment of Voldemort residing within him, he has always remained protected. During their final encounter in *Deathly Hallows*, when Harry speaks of how love has saved him (his mother’s sacrifice, his acceptance of death and return), Voldemort only jeers:
“Dumbledore’s favourite solution, *love*, which he claimed conquered death” (809). Yet love does enable Harry to conquer both Voldemort – the part within and what stands before him in this final battle – and, of course, death.

In the Harry Potter world, the conquering of death is not a battle to be won with wands, it is achieved by acceptance. It becomes a matter of choice about how to face the inevitable – that life ends – and Voldemort has sought to defy that natural law. From the first novel, Rowling has been clear about the accepted attitude to death when Dumbledore told Harry, “After all, to the well-organised mind, death is but the next great adventure” (*Philosopher’s Stone* 320). This is an interesting piece of advice to offer an eleven year old, yet it sees Rowling establishing the moral world view early on: death should not be feared and can, in certain instances, be embraced. Harry, who has been surrounded by death, is able to master its inevitability and it is his personal choices throughout the sequence that establish his character and lead him to this point of acceptance. Voldemort, however, fears death, and that is what motivates him to embrace the dark magic that enables the creation of Horcruxes. Harry, as a human, is the antithesis of Voldemort’s character and might in this sense be seen to act as the Dark Lord’s terrible Horcrux – double – that returns to haunt him.

Choice, as mentioned above, is one of the key elements that enables Harry to avoid being consumed by the malignant fragment of Voldemort that resides within him. In *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, when Harry frets about the similarities between himself and Riddle, Dumbledore explains that it is “our choices, Harry, that show what we truly are, far more than our abilities” (358), and this concept of choice
also applies to Lily, who made the decision to sacrifice herself for her son. Harry learns during *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* that Voldemort did offer Lily the chance to stand aside (194), and Harry later witnesses the death from Voldemort’s point of view during *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (381-82). While Voldemort’s own mother died and left him to be raised in an orphanage, Lily Potter sacrificed her own life to save Harry, and that sacrifice magically lives within Harry’s corporeal essence. What Voldemort fails to realise is that by rebuilding his body with Harry’s blood (*Goblet of Fire* 695) and unintentionally redoubling the protection spell cast by Lily Potter, he “tethered” Harry to life while he himself lives (*Deathly Hallows* 777). By creating a final Horcrux in Harry, Rowling has essentially granted a true sense of physicality to the abstract element of the prophecy: “…and either must die at the hand of the other for neither can live while the other survives…” (924). The words of the prophecy are, as a result of the accidental Horcrux, given life through the blood bond between Harry and Voldemort.

Harry’s encounter with Voldemort before his return to a body in *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* sees Rowling provide a visual depiction of what is, essentially, part of the maimed soul of the Dark Lord, and this creates a sense of abjection in both Harry and the reader. Julia Kristeva describes how “what is abject,…the jettisoned object, is radically excluded and draws me towards the place where meaning collapses” (2). Near the end of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, during Harry’s experience in limbo (“King’s Cross”), Harry is confronted with an incarnation of the soul fragment of Voldemort that has been residing within him for most of his life. The “small, maimed creature [that] trembled under the chair” (776) greatly disturbs Harry with its
appearance; it can be considered the physical embodiment of malignant specularity, a
loathsome form of an infant that has been forever ripped apart from its original self:

[Harry] had spotted the thing that was making the noises. It had the
form of a small, naked child, curled on the ground, its skin raw and
rough, flayed-looking, and it lay shuddering under a seat where it had
been left, unwanted, stuffed out of sight, struggling for breath.

He was afraid of it. Small and fragile and wounded though it was, he
did not want to approach it. Nevertheless he drew slowly nearer,
ready to jump back at any moment. Soon he stood near enough to
touch it, yet he could not bring himself to do it. He felt like a coward.
He ought to comfort it, but it repulsed him. (Deathly Hallows 774-
75)

This “thing” is both the personification of what resides within a Horcrux and of the
abject, further described by Kristeva as “A massive, and sudden emergence of
uncanniness, which, familiar as it might have been in an opaque and forgotten life, now
harries me as radically separate, loathsome” (2). For Harry, then, this creature is not
only a part of Voldemort but has, until this moment, been a fragment of himself. It is the
specular fragment of Voldemort’s soul that made Harry function as a Horcrux, and its
appearance as an infant implies its creation at the time Harry himself was a baby, in turn
suggesting an inversion of the process of birth. As a result of this, he is both drawn to
and repulsed by it; this thing that was once without form yet living within Harry as a
result of the killing curse has finally been jettisoned from his body and writhes before
him.
When Harry regards the thing that had latched onto him as a baby, Rowling not only depicts the visualisation of the damage a split self creates, but reiterates that Harry has been the host for one of the most malevolent and parasitic forms of specularity depicted throughout the sequence. Finally, by giving the specular a distinct form in this scene and depicting it as such an abject entity, Rowling is once again harnessing the visual as a method of establishing character. If we regard Harry as a Horcrux – the hero who literally contains and preserves a part of the villain within him – our understanding of the entire narrative of the sequence can be altered: the protagonist and antagonist are split into one another and continually threaten to infect each other. All of the malice and abjection surrounding Voldemort, the dark legacy surrounding even speaking his name aloud, becomes associated with Harry Potter. If we consider that the hero is a fragment of the villain – a Horcrux that in fact keeps Lord Voldemort alive after death – we must then reconsider each instalment with the knowledge that the title character is infected by the antagonist, a process which necessitates a thorough re-evaluation of crucial elements of the narrative as these have been previously understood.

In revealing Harry Potter as a Horcrux, Rowling transforms this brand of specular self into a physical manifestation that threatens to challenge the notion of the hero. This is achieved by merging a physical piece of evil into the body of what the readers have been guided to believe to be that of a good person. Rowling’s Harry Potter books, like the diary of Tom Riddle, exude a form of control over their readers by guiding them through the narrative. While we know from Harry’s choices and protection by love that he is not simply a vessel of Voldemort, the fact that he is a figure of death – he is
haunted by it and longs to recall those taken by it – is dramatically re-emphasized by the discovery that he is a Horcrux.

With their ability to invade minds and bodies, Horcruxes allow Rowling to challenge the way the visual is traditionally depicted by enabling the specular to corrupt the realm of the corporeal. From their introduction in *Half-Blood Prince*, these specular devices are clearly aligned with evil and inhumanity, but it is because of their visual nature that Horcruxes are able to leak into that which is good and humane within the world of the sequence. From the Riddle of the diary to the specular fragment of Voldemort inhabiting Slytherin’s locket, Rowling demonstrates how these malignant variants of specularity are able to influence and poison those they come into contact with. As containers for the specular selves that populate their pages, moreover, Rowling’s novels themselves might also be seen to function as Horcruxes in that they are possessed of countless riddles that the reader is required to decipher by assembling the hidden fragments. Just as Voldemort intends to split himself into seven pieces, so too does Rowling divide the sequence into seven instalments: perhaps, then, the reader is intended to function as an accidental eighth Horcrux of the Harry Potter sequence in that by reading and rereading, we continue to sustain its essence.
Chapter Four

Inverting the Specular Selves: Magical Incarnations and Mechanisms

The magical incarnations and mechanisms of specularity I examine in this chapter continually challenge the boundary between the realms of the specular and corporeal and are consequently the most “spectral” of the specular selves investigated in my thesis. These specular selves are, paradoxically, depicted as the most embodied of those encountered throughout the sequence and in some cases act as inversions of previous forms of the specular I have examined in earlier chapters. Moreover, as entities, and unlike most of the specular entities and objects examined so far, they literally inhabit the physical world of the characters. I term these particular incarnations and mechanisms “magical” because they are not specular beings bound to recognisable Muggle objects that have achieved sentience through magic, as are the pictures, mirrors, and Horcruxes that I have examined previously. Instead, they are distinct visual entities that, as specular mechanisms, enable Rowling to further subvert narrative expectations, provide startling character reversals and revelations while challenging and reinforcing the world-view of the sequence. As types of specularity that are incarnate, they move from visual depictions of depth into the realm of the physical because, despite their specular essence, they inhabit the corporeal realm.

Throughout the Harry Potter sequence, magical incarnations and mechanisms of the specular challenge and transform the ideological values that other forms of specularity address, such as attitudes concerning selfhood and the human condition. Several specular or spectral selves that I examine here are associated with violence and death,
but not in the blatantly parasitic form of the Horcruxes I examine in the previous chapter. Instead, as visual entities, they evoke more human emotions such as loss, terror, fear, and love. Jann Lacoss, writing on “Reversals and Revulsions at Hogwarts”, argues that

Rowling omits the gory details found in adult novels and primetime crime dramas. Rather, she leaves the particulars to the imagination of the reader. In so doing, she invokes a safety valve of sorts: the reader’s imagination. (80)

Due to the prominence of the specular selves and their association with, at times, gore and death, the reader is able to visualise certain particulars that Rowling does not in fact describe and this recalls Laura M. Sager Eidt’s ekphrastic category of “interpretive ekphrasis”, which can be defined as when “the image may function as springboard for reflections that go beyond its depicted theme” (51). For example, the ghosts of the sequence are a permanent image of their own deaths because their forms are a visual imprint of the moment that they died and in their early appearances, Rowling does not explicitly draw attention to the brutality of this – instead, it is portrayed as almost comical. The reader, then, is able to imagine the brutality behind their deaths from their ghostly appearances without actually having to witness these events; for example, nearly headless ghosts or ghosts that have arrows protruding from their bodies reveal fairly unambiguously the cause of death without Rowling explicitly providing a backstory. This demonstrates the ability of specular selves to convey important ideas to the imaginative reader without direct exposition.
In the first section of this chapter, I employ an ekphrastic analysis to examine the changing functions that ghosts play throughout the sequence. What the ghosts of the sequence represent is a defiance of the boundaries between the realms not only of the specular and corporeal, but of the living and the dead. Because they exist between the margins of these worlds, they are able to interact with the world of the flesh. Indeed, they are the most active non-corporeal forms portrayed throughout the sequence, and nearly all of those considered in this chapter enable Rowling to explore the dark side of human nature despite initially being depicted as comedic or atmospheric. Rowling insists throughout the sequence that there is no magic that is capable of truly resurrecting the dead, yet specular and – in this case – magical incarnations repeatedly attempt to challenge this most definitive boundary. While, with the exception of certain Horcruxes, the specular selves that I have previously examined remained separated from the realm of the corporeal, these magical incarnations overlap the boundary of the two worlds. This enables Rowling to reverse and challenge certain fundamental aspects of the narrative that I have explored thus far.

The ghosts of the Harry Potter sequence are the closest to a visual embodiment of the deceased that Rowling presents us with throughout the sequence. The ghosts, along with the enchanted portraits of my first chapter, demonstrate how the alignment between the specular and death has been present throughout the sequence from the first novel. I examine how this relationship evolves over time, considering the ability of certain embodiments to function as emotional mirrors that, like the mirrors in Chapter Two, force the viewer to confront a submerged aspect of selfhood in the form of fear or death. These forms of specularity, with their parasitic desire to feed on fear, recall certain
elements of behaviour seen in Voldemort’s Horcruxes (Chapter Three). Finally, I turn to
the magical mechanisms that are capable of calling forth specular selves or projections
from beyond the boundary of life and death. The magical technologies that enable these
temporary transgressions between realms demonstrate how Rowling herself has
continuously recalled the dead throughout the sequence via the visual: the implications
for Harry Potter’s character and his complex relationship with death would not be
evident if not for the prevalence of the evolving specular selves. This chapter examines
how Rowling employs these visual entities and manipulates their connection to fear and
desire in order to construct, and refine, attitudes towards life and death.

Ghosts in the Harry Potter Sequence: a Permanent State of Death

In the Harry Potter world, ghosts, we learn, are an imprint of a long deceased witch or
wizard that has made a choice to remain behind after dying (Order of the Phoenix 946).
These ghosts, while able temporarily to affect temperatures, are unable truly to interact
physically with the corporeal world that they inhabit: however, they can monitor the
happenings surrounding them, and this recalls the notion of specular surveillance
explored in my earlier discussion of portraits (Chapter One above). During Harry Potter
and the Philosopher’s Stone, as Harry and his fellow first years are waiting outside of
the Great Hall to be sorted into their respective houses, we are introduced to the
embodied specular in the form of ghosts:

[Harry] gasped. So did the people around him. About twenty ghosts
had just streamed through the back wall. Pearly-white and slightly
transparent, they glided across the room talking to one another and
hardly glancing at the first years. They seemed to be arguing.

*(Philosopher’s Stone* 127).

This moment establishes that the ghosts, while visible to the physical world of the living, have their own specular society; indeed, during *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, it is revealed that the Hogwarts ghosts even have a council where they convene to discuss whether or not Peeves, the poltergeist, is welcome to attend the dinners in the Great Hall. By establishing that the ghosts have a society of their own, Rowling demonstrates that despite their transgressive specular status they continue to mimic and echo the behaviours of the living. While initially they are depicted as merely a part of the magical atmosphere, retrospectively the reader is able to infer that this brief insight into their ghostly society hints at their tragedy – of being in a permanent state of death and, we later learn, being unable to move on. That is, while the ghosts inhabit the specular realm, they strive to maintain a semblance of what it means to be living as a method of making the most of the existence they have in the wizarding world where they are accepted as, like other forms of magical occurrences, the norm. This existence is, it appears, all that they have left and it is a permanent state of in-between death and the after-life.

The ghost who provides the most insight into the nature of ghosts themselves is the Gryffindor ghost, Nearly Headless Nick, with whom Harry interacts frequently throughout the sequence. At the beginning of the first novel, after being sorted into Gryffindor House, Harry sits opposite Nick and when the ghost pats his arm, Harry has “the sudden, horrible feeling he’d just plunged it into a bucket of ice-cold water” *(Philosopher’s Stone* 134). The sensation Harry experiences when making contact with
the ghost distinguishes how these incarnations of the specular differ – with the exception of the Pensieve that creates a physical sensation as a person enters the specular memory – from those images examined in previous chapters. The ghosts are able to induce a physical sensation – generally unpleasant – in those they make contact with. Shortly after this moment, the Gryffindor ghost is asked by a student how someone can be “nearly Headless”:

“Like this,” [Nick] said irritably. He seized his left ear and pulled. His whole head swung off his neck and fell onto his shoulder as if it was on a hinge. Someone had obviously tried to behead him, but not done it properly. (*Philosopher’s Stone* 136)

The fact that the failed beheading is a permanent fixture of Nick’s ghostly embodiment demonstrates that the ghosts are not only echoes of what they were in life, but also how they were in death: the ghost of Sir Nicholas will always be “Nearly Headless,” and as other ghosts are encountered throughout the sequence, it is evident that they are permanently marked by the manner of their demise. The ghosts are, as Shira Wolosky argues, “a failed relation between life and death” because, as they are forever caught in the past so they are forever caught in their deaths (159). Certainly the botched beheading that resulted in his death is a great source of bitterness for Nick, who despairs at being refused a place in the Headless Hunt during *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*. Nick’s despair indicates that there is a hierarchy amongst this form of embodied specular self: “But you would think, wouldn’t you,” he erupted suddenly, pulling the letter back out of his pocket, “that getting hit forty-five times in the neck with a blunt axe would qualify you to join the Headless Hunt?” (*Chamber of Secrets* 135). While this moment can initially be read as simply a source of comic relief, it
establishes that the ghosts, despite being able to exist in the world of the corporeal, still belong to the world of the specular. Helene Cixous argues that “the ghost erases the limit which exists between two states, neither alive nor dead” (543), and this is how they function as magical incarnations in Rowling’s sequence. They transgress the boundary between two realms: they blur the division, yet cannot escape it, and so they cling to both life and death as time passes them by. This signifies the permanency of their in-between state, and their desire to mimic the living is evidence of their inability to face the true nature of their deaths, which mark their appearances, it seems, for all time.

The ghosts of Hogwarts demonstrate an investment in the passing of time since their transition into the specular, which Nick chooses to mark with a celebration of his “five hundredth deathday” (Chamber of Secrets 142), an occasion which signifies the permanency of this form of ghostly existence. This event, which Harry and his companions reluctantly agree to attend, is presented as an inversion of the traditional celebration that revolves around birth and life. Once again, Rowling demonstrates the ability of ghosts to disturb the physical environment they inhabit:

It was an incredible sight. The dungeon was full of hundreds of pearly-white, translucent people, mostly drifting around a crowded dance floor, waltzing to the dreadful, quavering sound of thirty musical saws, played by an orchestra on a raised, black-draped platform. A chandelier overhead blazed midnight-blue with a thousand more black candles. Their breath rose in a mist before
them; it was like stepping into a freezer. (*Chamber of Secrets* 144-45)

It has already been established that to make contact with a ghost results in an icy sensation, but by depicting how a large number of ghosts are able to drop the temperature in a room to near freezing Rowling reinforces the notion that ghosts are transgressive incarnations whose presence in the living realm interferes with and alters the normal world in which they do not belong.

This depiction clearly shows how ghosts can be understood via ekphrastic analysis. Their representation can be understood as a form of “dramatic ekphrasis.” Laura M. Sager Eidt explains, “In this type of ekphrasis the images are dramatized and theatricalized to the extent that they take on a life of their own. Thus, this category has a high degree of *enargeia*” (56). Murray Krieger argues of *enargeia* that it “collapses distance between subject and object, in effect subjectifying the experience, since we are obviously being called upon to identify ourselves with the poet in participating similarly (or rather identically) in the described experience” (Krieger 94). For the majority of the sequence Rowling aligns the reader with Harry’s experience, and because we generally encounter the specular from his point of view, the rich depiction of specular selves often threatens to collapse distances between a subject and object as they are presented as having a “life” of their own – even if it is one marked by death.

These ghosts, some of whom are related to the founders of Hogwarts, have been dead and existing in their spectral form for centuries, yet they cling to traditions of the living
and long for the simple pleasures of life, as evidenced by how the deathday party unfolds in a twisted caricature of a traditional celebration. The ekphrastic representation of this scene places the reader in the moment and in turn transforms the reader into a watcher. While Nick’s deathday celebration allows for the living and dead to mingle, it also serves to remind both living and specular beings that they are permanently separate despite being able to interact with one another. The inversion of festivity is further conveyed when Harry and his companions make their way towards the food on offer:

On the other side of the dungeon was a long table, also covered in black velvet. They approached it eagerly but next moment had stopped in their tracks, horrified. The smell was quite disgusting. Large, rotten fish were laid on handsome silver platters; cakes, burned charcoal-black, were heaped on salvers; there was a great maggoty haggis, a slab of cheese covered in furry green mould and, in pride of place, an enormous grey cake in the shape of a tombstone, with tar-like icing. (Chamber of Secrets 145-46)

After one ghost passes through the rotting salmon and laments that he can “almost” taste it, Hermione theorises that the ghosts let the food rot so that it has a stronger flavour. Fabio Parasecoli suggests that “food memories…interact uninterruptedly with our emotional, physical, and motivational states” (113), but for the ghosts of Hogwarts, consumption is not possible, and the moment highlights how they are, despite the moments of comic relief they provide, embodiments of death longing for life. Jann Lacoss argues that “ghosts are the opposite of humans: noncorporeal and nonliving” and that their “food appropriately reflects this opposition”, with this “particular reversal simply emphasiz[ing] the nonhumaness of the group members” (72). While I agree
that ghosts are non-corporeal and nonliving, ghosts in Rowling’s sequence do not emerge as the “opposite” of human. After all, Hermione defines Horcruxes, which are distinct from ghosts as a type of specular self, as being in direct opposition to what it is to be human during *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (120). Instead, I argue that ghosts – as specular entities – straddle the boundary between death and the after-life, and certain behaviours that they exhibit only reinforce that status as permanently removed from humanity because – as emphasised by their visual appearance – they represent their own deaths.

At a metacritical level, the deathday scene allegorically demonstrates the limits of ekphrasis, because, as Shadi Bartsch and Jaš Elsner explain, “[ekphrasis] even at its most visual – when words grope to represent images – finds itself straying to the evocative resonances of the other senses: sound, smell, taste, and touch” (ii). Evoking visual images and depicting them as vivid in turn suggests other senses within the reader. The ghosts’ use of the rotting banquet of food in an attempt to trigger memory might thus be seen as Rowling’s metacritical comment on the experience of ekphrasis itself; the depiction is an attempt to trigger alternative senses in the reader to bolster the visual. Yet this scene also presents as a grotesque extravagance that repulses the living characters while ultimately reminding the ghosts of what they can no longer take part in: food is to nourish the living and these ghosts are imprints of the dead. The ekphrastic vividness of the scene evokes repulsion within the reader, aligning us clearly with the living because the notion of rotting food induces a natural sense of recoil. Regardless of the humour of the deathday scene, Rowling has – by positioning the reader with the protagonist’s revulsion – aligned the ghosts of the sequence with death and contrasted
them with the natural order of the living. As specular entities, then, the ghosts are paradoxically separated and joined to the corporeal world. By casting their behaviour as grotesque, Rowling depicts this type of specular existence as accepted yet ultimately undesirable in the worldview of the sequence.

Harry’s experience of the ghosts affecting the physical and emotional atmosphere of Hogwarts, and his encounters with them as individuals as varied in personality as in life, evoke a sense of the dead surrounding the living throughout the sequence. Wolosky highlights how events such as the deathday celebrations, “which mirror and invert the Potter books’ birthdays, are overcast with nostalgia for life lost, a state that defines the ghosts generally” (159). Of the specular beings we encounter, ghosts are depicted as the most desperate to remain connected to that which they have lost – life; the ghosts attempt to remain so connected by recreating the aspects of the living realm, but instead their status as specular dead is only foregrounded, as the depiction of the banquet of rotting food demonstrates.

Harry’s encounters with the ghosts of Hogwarts, which occur in the first two instalments of the sequence, serve to support the notion that Rowling surrounds Harry with death from the beginning of the sequence. Cixous argues that “‘Death’ does not have any form in life” (543), but throughout the Harry Potter sequence, specularity grants death and an aspect of “after-death” the most vivid of depictions. As a result of the ekphrasis employed in the representation of these entities, Rowling is able to establish ghosts – as she did enchanted portraits – as distinct characters from their first
appearance, and, as was the case with the portraits, this enables their functions to evolve as the sequence unfolds.

The ghosts are initially depicted as playful, contributing to the magical appeal of Hogwarts Castle, but by the second novel it is clear that some of them at least are characters in possession of important knowledge regarding past events. Despite being deceased for a very long time, many of these ghosts assist Harry and his companions in their encounters with Lord Voldemort by providing vital information. Like the portraits that inhabit the office of the headmaster, the ghosts have inhabited Hogwarts for countless years and demonstrate a sense of awareness of events that unfold around them. Professor Binns, who teaches History of Magic at Hogwarts, “had been very old indeed when he had fallen asleep in front of the staff room fire and got up next morning to teach, leaving his body behind him” (Philosopher’s Stone 146), yet he is still able to shed light on past incidents that eventually prove helpful – generally after Hermione has deciphered what information he has provided. Similarly, when trying to discover the entrance to the fabled Chamber of Secrets, Harry asks the ghost Myrtle about the day she died and how it happened. Her answers provide Harry with important clues regarding the nature and controller of “Slytherin’s monster,” the creature thought to inhabit the Chamber. The fact that ghosts are knowledgeable and choose to share their information not only establishes them as being capable of influencing the narrative of the sequence but enables Rowling to flesh out, so to speak, their roles as characters. Their permanency in this state allows Rowling to utilise them – as she does other types of specularity – to shape certain elements of story, character and (wizarding) world history. They can be used for this function at any time during the sequence because, as
ghosts, they are timeless, and throughout the sequence Rowling’s narrative method sees her employ the specular as a way of bypassing the rules of time as a means of story progression and character development.

The stare of the Basilisk, the monster lurking within the Chamber, is fatal to those that are living, but for Nearly Headless Nick, who encounters the creature as a ghost, the result is quite different. Once again, it is a ghost that is able to provide a clue to the nature of the threat that Harry and his companions are dealing with because of its very nature – that of a specular entity. Harry realises that Nick has come across Slytherin’s monster when he encounters the ghost in a school corridor: “It was Nearly Headless Nick, no longer pearly-white and transparent, but black and smoky, floating immobile and horizontal, six inches off the floor. His head was half off and his face wore an expression of shock” (Chamber of Secrets 219). Despite being struck by the Basilisk’s stare, Nick does not die again; instead, he is frozen until a further magical intervention, in the form of a potion, restores him to his normal ghostly state. The important revelation here is that Nick cannot die again, and implies the state of a ghost is one of eternal limbo.

During the early novels of the sequence, Harry’s encounters with ghosts, although they may be practically useful, seem simply atmospheric; like the living portraits and moving photographs, they form part of the decor that make Hogwarts magically charming. As the sequence progresses and grows darker, however, the nature of the ghosts and their relationship to life and death becomes itself a focus of Harry’s, and therefore the reader’s, attention. Nearly Headless Nick provides information regarding ghosts and
what it truly means to remain an earthbound, or Hogwarts-bound, imprint during *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*. Harry, grieving the recent loss of his godfather, eagerly expects that the newly dead Sirius will return as a ghost and is disappointed with the responses that Nick offers him:

Nick turned away from the window and looked mournfully at Harry.

“He won’t come back . . .

“Wizards can leave an imprint of themselves upon the earth, to walk palely where their living selves once trod,” said Nick miserably. “But very few wizards choose that path.” (*Order of the Phoenix* 945-46)

The implication here is that this ghostly type of magical existence, if chosen, is irreversible, and, moreover, not necessarily desirable. While these ghosts can, as Nick says, walk and talk amongst the living, they are never truly a part of it. The specular beings that inhabit the pseudo-world glimpsed through the portraits examined previously demonstrate that they are able to live in that world, if the various celebrations between the Fat Lady and Violet are any indication (see Chapter One). Ghosts, however, are an imprint of a deceased form, unable to enjoy the delights of the living or the truly specular in their embodied forms. This suggests that, despite their occasional banter, ghosts are experiencing a form of eternal punishment. The representation here is of an afterlife-in-death. Rowling’s depiction of ghosts, as the sequence unfolds, does not align them with evil – like Voldemort’s Horcruxes – but instead casts them as spectral embodiments of a failed understanding of the nature of life and death.
Nick’s attitude during this exchange with Harry suggests that the choice to become a
ghost is, in the worldview of Rowling’s sequence, an eternal error of judgement. Harry
asks Nick what it means to “go on” and why everybody who dies does not choose to
“come back”. Once again, Nick’s answers do not satisfy Harry:

“I cannot answer,” said Nick.

“You’re dead, aren’t you?” said Harry exasperatedly. “Who can
answer better than you?”

“I was afraid of death,” said Nick softly. “I chose to remain behind. I
sometimes wonder whether I oughtn’t to have… well, that is neither
here nor there… in fact, I am neither here nor there…” He gave a
small chuckle. “I know nothing of the secrets of death, Harry, for I
chose my feeble imitation of life instead.” (Order of the Phoenix
946)

Nick’s description of what a ghost is, as “neither here nor there,” suggests that this
form of specularity is an incarnation that results from fear of death and “moving on,”
and the fact that Nick refers to his existence as a ghost as “a feeble imitation of life”
implies regret and bitterness at the decision to remain in this form. As a result, a ghost is
ultimately a fixed echo of death itself. This is not just because they are ghosts of the
dead permanently marked by their fatal wounds, but they are – like the specular Riddles
that lurk within the Horcruxes– preserved in appearance as they were at the time they
died, as a result of their soul or essence being permanently divided from their physical
form. Nick’s poignant comments in response to Harry’s frustrated questioning during
this exchange suggest that the decision to remain a ghost becomes retrospectively a self-
conscious failure and highlight how, at this point in the sequence, Harry is still yet to
comprehend the permanent divide between the living and dead. Harry’s ignorance of the established order of life and death demonstrates his inability to accept the permanency of death. The ghosts, like Voldemort, are incapable of leaving life, and their spectral imprints are mirrors of the specular selves inhabiting the Horcruxes that the Dark Lord creates in his effort to defy death. While the society of ghosts may appear to revel in Headless Hunts and deathday celebrations, Nick’s admission ultimately depicts this variation of specularity as a transgression where existence is a permanent state of regret and unsated desire from which there is no return. Once again, Rowling is fashioning an attitude towards life and death, and ghosts, as Nick’s words reveal, act as a warning – more subtle than the appearance of Voldemort after splintering his soul – against attempting to transgress the established binary between the living and the dead.

Feelings of self-conscious failure and regret amongst ghosts are reinforced in the story of the Bloody Baron and the Grey Lady. In this instance the magical incarnation of the ghost is employed by Rowling as a manner of bringing together the past, present and future through death. In *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, Harry seeks information about the lost diadem of Rowena Ravenclaw (one of the four founders of Hogwarts), believing it to be the most elusive of Lord Voldemort’s Horcruxes. Harry confronts and interrogates the Grey Lady, the patron ghost of Ravenclaw. The Grey Lady identifies herself as Helena Ravenclaw, daughter of Rowena, and confesses to having stolen her mother’s diadem so as to make herself cleverer and more important. Helena Ravenclaw clearly chose initially to remain as a pale echo of herself in the form of a ghost out of guilt over her betrayal of her mother. While Helena’s tale again shows a specular entity acting as a source of information like the enchanted pictures and magical mirrors, it here
emphasises Rowling’s concern with the relationship between love and death. Through the Grey Lady’s narrative, Harry discovers the history of the Bloody Baron, the Slytherin ghost who has made appearances as a ghost feared amongst ghosts since the first novel: his unrequited love resulted in murder/suicide, and both he and the object of his desire, the Grey Lady, remain earthbound as tragic embodiments of their own failures. As a result, their permanent state of being – one of death – reveals their tragic character flaws to the living world for all of eternity.

By existing on the fringe of two realms, these spectral entities are not only a record of the past, but also observers of the present and influencers of future outcomes. The tale that Helena relates to Harry highlights how ekphrasis, as Bartsch and Elsner argue, seems to present countless opportunities for the discovery of meaning: it has been variously treated as a mirror of the text, a mirror in the text, a mode of specular inversion, a further voice that disrupts or extends the message of the narrative, a prefiguration for that narrative (whether false or true) in its suggestions. (Bartsch and Elsner i)

As entities that capture these opportunities for discovery in the sequence like other forms of specularity I have examined, the ghosts evolve from their initial playful appearances to finally extend underlying themes of the sequence concerning humanity. Here, Helena reinforces the consequences of failed love, regret and failing to accept death, themes that have permeated the sequence from the first novel. Helena, like Nick, is permanently marked by her death which she reveals in the form of a “single dark wound in her white chest” (*Deathly Hallows* 676) and, she informs Harry, so is the
Baron. Overcome with remorse, he took the weapon that had claimed her life and used it to kill himself: the chains he wears (in his ghostly existence) are an act of penitence (676). This depiction, which explains why the Slytherin ghost has always been depicted as covered in silver bloodstains (Chamber of Secrets 145), adds further significance – in retrospect – to the evocative nature of ekphrasis in Rowling’s detailed depictions of the ghosts throughout the sequence. The ghosts of the sequence, whose existence blurs yet foregrounds the boundary separating specular and corporeal, encapsulate the tragedy of human error because their fear of death and longing for life drove them to remain behind: ultimately, the motivations for such a choice were – despite being cast as wrong in the moral world view of the sequence – very human.

**Private Phantoms: the Terror of the Specular**

A number of the forms of specularity that I have examined previously in this thesis, such as Lord Voldemort’s Horcruxes, have demonstrated parasitic abilities when the need for self-defence arises, or, as is the case with projection-based specularity, a need to establish a connection with the living in order to function. I turn now to consider how Rowling utilises those forms of specular incarnation that are predatory or fear-based in their behaviour. These examples of specularity are able to be harnessed as types of weapons or safeguards; they function by consuming happiness and projecting fear by exploiting or creating specular images based on one’s deepest memories, and, ultimately, this reveals an aspect of hidden selfhood grounded in terror. For example, the various forms of malevolent specularity that protect the cave housing Salazar Slytherin’s locket, one of Lord Voldemort’s Horcruxes, create a theatre of death for those unfortunate enough to interact with them. As with Riddle’s diary – and providing
an apt reflection of Voldemort, who has employed these predatory safeguards to protect this Horcrux – these specular mechanisms need to interact with the living in order to function. Specifically, in order to obtain the locket the intruder must drink a hallucinatory potion so that the predatory incarnations can begin their feast on that person’s deepest fears.

In *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, while hunting for Lord Voldemort’s Horcruxes, Harry and Dumbledore discover what they believe to be one of these, Slytherin’s locket.¹¹ Deep within a cave, the locket sits in a basin in the middle of a dark lake. The lake itself contains bodies known as Inferi, defined earlier in the novel by Snape as “corpse[s] that have been reanimated by a Dark wizard’s spells. [An Inferius] is not alive, it is merely used like a puppet to do the wizard’s bidding” (*Half-Blood Prince* 545). The Inferi function as one unit, their goal being to drag the living into the depths of the lake. By consuming the living, they increase their numbers, and they induce fear because they are a literal incarnation of death that is animated by the spell of a dark witch or wizard. The Inferi, as corporeal forms, paradoxically embody the very absence of life, in contrast to the specular forms of death that Rowling has previously portrayed. Their very depiction aligns them with death, Voldemort, and Dementors (which I examine later in this section), and the fear they trigger relates to their physical form: corpses. As puppets devoid of any life, aside from the spell that controls them, they evoke the terror that Harry or any person he has known or loved could become one of these incarnations of death. To be confronted with such a version of a familiar

¹¹ The locket is belatedly discovered to be a replica that was placed there years earlier by Regulus Black with the assistance of Kreacher the House-Elf in an effort to foil Lord Voldemort.
person, as an animated corpse, evokes a sense of abjection, aligning the Inferi with the fragment of Horcrux that Harry encounters in *Deathly Hallows* (Chapter Three).

As Harry and Dumbledore consider the contents of the basin on the island, Dumbledore warns that the liquid is “something more worrisome than blood and bodies” (*Half-Blood Prince* 671). This moment provides an inversion of the operation of the Pensieve, for the liquid there housed memories and revelations yet posed no physical danger to the person exposed to its contents. Determining the liquid to be a potion, one that he warns “might paralyse me, cause me to forget what I am here for, create so much pain I am distracted, or render me incapable in some other way” (*Half-Blood Prince* 673), Dumbledore orders Harry to ensure that he drinks all of it despite any protests he may offer. This information, coupled with Dumbledore’s assurances that the potion is likely to be more worrisome than the Inferi, suggests that the consequences of consuming this liquid will be potentially terrifying, and in this way Rowling establishes a sense of dread regarding the potion before it is consumed. Indeed, the specular visions that proceed to torment Dumbledore render him helpless, and Harry is forced to feed him the rest of the potion in order to attain the locket:

Dumbledore began to cower as though invisible torturers surrounded him; his flailing hand almost knocked the refilled goblet from Harry’s trembling hands as he moaned, “Don’t hurt them, don’t hurt them, please, please, it’s my fault, hurt me instead.” (*Half-Blood Prince* 677)

Dumbledore’s pleas suggest that the potion acts as a magical mechanism that creates a personal hallucination of terror, one that plays on the deepest fears of the subject in
order to render them paralysed by tormentors that, to them, appear real yet are invisible to everybody else.

The magical mechanism here, a hallucinatory potion, sees the power of the image represented via absence. The image is being harnessed as a weapon in this instance, but, most importantly, this is the only visual experience that is never witnessed from Harry’s point of view. However, this does not mean ekphrasis does not apply. Simon Goldhill argues in the 2007 article, “What is Ekphrasis For?” that

rhetoric’s interest in ekphrasis cannot be separated from its understanding of enargeia and phantasia, and this means thinking above all about the psychology of influence. Enargeia… is a way of provoking emotion, of bypassing the intellectual and critical faculties. (7)

Jana Noel explains, “Phantasia is popularly translated as imagination” (290), which underlines Harry’s experience of watching Dumbledore viewing his private projection of fear: the protagonist can only construct an image based on what Dumbledore is saying and the physical effects Harry sees result from drinking the potion. Goldhill, citing Longinus (15.1), defines the function of phantasia:

The term phantasia is used generally for anything that in any way suggests a thought productive of speech; but the word has also come into fashion for the situation in which enthusiasm and emotion make the speaker see what he is saying and bring it visually before his audience. (Longinus in Goldhill 6)
Harry never experiences the directly hallucinatory effects of this potion, but the reader infers the specular terror as a result of the effects Dumbledore suffers as a result of drinking the potion. The ekphrasis unfolding as the potion works its cruel magic is informed by Harry’s witnessing the effects and so, the character’s *enargeia* and the reader’s own *phantasia* result in other senses being evoked in the reader as they are forced to imagine what Dumbledore is seeing.

Dumbledore is not the only character to endure the specular horrors that this potion creates in those who consume it. During *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, while trying to determine the location of Voldemort’s real locket-Horcrux after having discovered the one retrieved from the cave was a substitute, Harry and his companions question Kreacher, the House-elf Harry has inherited upon the death of his godfather, Sirius. Kreacher explains how Regulus Black, Sirius’s brother and Death Eater, had recruited the House-elf to aid Lord Voldemort in hiding the locket in the first place. Kreacher was enlisted to drink the potion:

“Kreacher drank, and as he drank he saw terrible things …

Kreacher’s insides burned … Kreacher cried for Master Regulus to save him, he cried for his Mistress Black, but the Dark Lord only laughed … He made Kreacher drink all the potion … He dropped a locket into the empty basin … He filled it with more potion.

“And then the Dark Lord sailed away, leaving Kreacher on the island …” (*Deathly Hallows* 217)
Kreacher explains the method by which the potion finally lures a person to their death: thirst. Dumbledore, too, had requested water, and by disturbing the lake, Harry had awoken the Inferi (*Half-Blood Prince* 679). Kreacher’s information provides further insight into the effects of the potion, and establishes it as a generator of nightmarish images based on the fears of whoever consumes it. The potion projects a type of specular vision that is designed as a weapon because the private visions drinkers see effectively paralyse them. The descriptions of how the potion induces terrifying visions – the physical toll it takes on Dumbledore after rendering him helpless and Kreacher’s recollection of “terrible” things – followed by the fact that whoever has been subjected to the potion is simply unable to fight when pulled into a lake of the dead, make this one of the more deadly variations of the specular that Rowling mobilises throughout the sequence. Kreacher’s tale reinforces the fact that this is the only type of specularity that is never experienced from Harry’s point of view. The difference here is that Rowling provides us with a description of what the drinker of the potion experiences and *sees*: the power of the specular and its terror in this instance operate via its absence.

Rowling’s blending of specular and corporeal in the sequence results in certain specular incarnations having power over aspects of the physical realm, creating a heightened sense of danger. It has been established from the first novel that Dumbledore is one of the most powerful wizards in the world of the sequence – perhaps the only one that Voldemort has ever feared. If the specular terrors produced by this hallucinatory potion can reduce him to a state of utter defencelessness, then Rowling is positioning this potion and its effects as both dangerous and powerful. The potion produces visions based on personal fears that obliterate one’s will to fight and live, rendering a person
utterly without hope. They reverse the fantasy of reflection as it was depicted in the Mirror of Erised: there is no enthralment here, only terror, but as with the Mirror of Erised, the viewer’s perception is private. It is the absence of direct representation of the visual here that forces the reader to imagine what the potion drinker is seeing: the nature of Rowling’s ekphrasis complicates and enhances the power of the image as, despite the images being invisible to Harry and so to the reader, characters’ responses to what they see are represented as having enormous emotional effect.

**Magical Incarnations and Projections of Fear**

The magical creatures known as Boggarts function in a similar way to Voldemort’s potion in that the form they take is based solely on the fear of the person looking at them. First encountered in *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* and initially utilised by Harry’s third year Defence Against the Dark Arts instructor Remus Lupin, the Boggart is a creature described by Hermione as “a shape shifter” that “can take the shape of whatever it thinks will frighten us most” (*Prisoner of Azkaban* 146). Nobody knows what a Boggart looks like when it is alone, but Lupin explains that they favour dark spaces such as cupboards or underneath beds. Moreover, the best way to deal with a Boggart is in company because it will become confused when trying to select a single fear-based shape to take. During this class, Lupin has several students confront Boggarts and he teaches them that the incantation “*Riddikulus*”, coupled with laughter, is the best method for confusing and defeating it. The Boggart adopts various forms unique to the fears of each student who tackles it – Professor Snape, a spider, a mummy, and so on – demonstrating, importantly, that it is capable of replicating the abilities of whatever form it adopts.
*Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* is the only novel where Voldemort – or a fragment of Voldemort – does not make an appearance, but Rowling employs the power of the specular to give form to the protagonist’s fear of Voldemort while also suggesting that replication is possible via a Boggart. Remus Lupin intervenes before Harry has his turn and later explains why he did this: “Well,” said Lupin, frowning slightly, “I assumed that if the Boggart faced you, it would assume the shape of Lord Voldemort” (*Prisoner of Azkaban* 169). The magical power of the Boggart is its projection of fear, and, because a Boggart in the form of Voldemort would induce a shared fear in all present, it could remain in that form indefinitely and act as a replica of the original Dark Lord. During *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, Molly Weasley unintentionally strengthens a Boggart as it displays her deepest fears, appearing as the bodies of each member of her family, as well as Harry, as she fails to apply the *Riddikulus* charm with success (197-98). The fact that the appearance of a Boggart is based on the innermost fear of those looking at them, as opposed to desire, means that this magical creature provides an inversion of the Mirror of Erised in its function. A significant difference between the two, however, is that whereas the Mirror’s reflections remained private to the individual spectator, what the Boggart projects is visible to anyone in their vicinity; the Boggart does not merely reflect an image but becomes an incarnation of a person’s fear. Thus if a specular copy of Lord Voldemort had materialised in Hogwarts during the class in *Prisoner of Azkaban*, the Boggart would have grown stronger as the appearance of Voldemort – specular or not – would have resulted in a room, indeed a school, filled with fear to feed on, allowing this magical creature a potentially endless feast. Inverting the function of the mirrors that I examined in Chapter Two, the Boggart replaces desire with fear, but, in projecting a reflection
based on hidden selfhood, this specular entity provides a revelation of selfhood by allowing one’s deepest fears to literally become embodiments.

In *Prisoner of Azkaban*, after Lupin expresses his concern that Harry’s Boggart would have taken the form of Lord Voldemort, Harry confesses that it was not the Dark Lord he thought of, but Dementors, another dangerous magical creature. Dementors are utilised as guards at Azkaban prison and are described by Lupin as

“among the foulest creatures that walk this earth. They infest the darkest, filthiest places, they glory in decay and despair, they drain peace, hope, and happiness out of the air around them. Even Muggles feel their presence, though they can’t see them. Get too near a Dementor and every good feeling, every happy memory will be sucked out of you. If it can, the Dementor will feed on you long enough to reduce you to something like itself — soul-less and evil. You’ll be left with nothing but the worst experiences of your life.”

(*Prisoner of Azkaban* 203)

While Dementors are not specular beings, they are predatory beings whose existence is based on consuming the vitality of human existence: an individual’s happiness and, eventually, their soul. Throughout the sequence, Dementors are depicted as malevolent, and their association with decay, despair and death is evident from the first encounter Harry and the reader have with one:

Standing in the doorway, illuminated by the shivering flames in Lupin’s hand, was a cloaked figure that towered to the ceiling. Its
face was completely hidden beneath its hood. Harry’s eyes darted downward, and what he saw made his stomach contract. There was a hand protruding from the cloak and it was glistening, greyish, slimy-looking, and scabbed, like something dead that had decayed in water.

*(Prisoner of Azkaban 93-4)*

The physical description of the Dementor shares similarities with that of the Inferi, in that both creatures appear to be in a permanent state of decay and both induce a sense of dread that results in the imagination creating images of terror. However, the Dementors do not prey on fear; rather, they literally suck the happiness out of a person and render their victims shells with only memories of terror remaining. It is implied from what Lupin tells Harry that their goal is like that of the Inferi: to render their prey as they are.

Both the Dementors and Inferi, as embodiments of death and decay, share similarities in physical description with the resurrected Lord Voldemort, whose appearance is depicted at the climax of *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* as inhuman and snake-like. The ability of Dementors and Inferi to evoke a sense of abjection, as well as their clear association with death, enables Rowling to clearly align the nature of these predatory beings with Lord Voldemort and positions readers and critics to view such entities as foul and inhuman. As Lupin says, Dementors turn their victims into something resembling themselves; so too do Voldemort’s Horcruxes, as they corrupt those that have extended contact with them. By clearly positioning Dementors as creatures of decay that literally feast on the happiness of their victims; Rowling establishes them too as parasitic entities.
The Dementor, then, like a Horcrux, needs to devour life in order to fulfil its purpose as an incarnation of decay, and that can, in the case of the “Dementor’s Kiss”, include consuming the essence of humanity in the form of a person’s soul. During _Prisoner of Azkaban_, Lupin explains what the Dementor’s Kiss is, much to Harry’s horror: “It’s what Dementors do to those they wish to destroy utterly. I suppose there must be some kind of mouth under there, because they clamp their jaws upon the mouth of the victim and — and suck out his soul” (268). Harry asks if this means the Dementor kills a person, and Lupin’s answer emphasises the importance of the soul in Rowling’s world:

“Oh no,” said Lupin. “Much worse than that. You can exist without your soul, you know, as long as your brain and heart are still working. But you’ll have no sense of self anymore, no memory, no… anything. There’s no chance at all of recovery. You’ll just exist. As an empty shell. And your soul is gone forever… lost.” (_Prisoner of Azkaban_ 268)

Voldemort’s mutilation of his soul when creating his Horcruxes is depicted as being immoral in the world view of the sequence and Rowling, in the later books of the sequence, advances the claim that the soul – which she depicts in specular form – is vital to the human condition and is intended, by nature, to remain intact.

As parasitic agents seeking to consume the living, or rather, that which makes a person a “human”, Dementors, like Inferi and Horcruxes, are aligned with the undead. Sirius Black, reflecting on his time in Azkaban prison, provides further insight into how the Dementors function and explains how they do not _see_ in the traditional sense:
“They feel their way towards people by sensing their emotions …
they could tell that my feelings were less – less human, less complex
when I was a dog … but they thought, of course, that I was losing my
mind like everyone else in there, so it didn’t trouble them.” (Prisoner
of Azkaban 400)

Because Dementors sense rather than see, they share similarities with variations of
mind-reading specular technology that I have previously examined (Chapter Two). As
incarnations, Dementors are not restricted to any particular realm (specular or magic)
and are capable of influencing the Muggle world as well as the wizarding one. During
Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince, Cornelius Fudge explains to the Muggle Prime
Minister that the Dementors have deserted Azkaban prison and joined with Voldemort
and have begun attacking people – magical and non-magical – all over the place (23).
Fudge warns that the Dementors are breeding (24) and causing “the chilly mist” (8)
which the Prime Minister had noted earlier. Recalling that Dementors are the creatures
that drain hope and happiness out of people, the Prime Minister feels faint at the idea of
“invisible creatures swooping through the towns and countryside, spreading despair and
hopelessness in his voters” (24). It does not matter that Dementors are unable to see and
that Muggles cannot see them, because they are able to feel and sense one another. For
Muggles, then, the fear evoked by Dementors is intensified, like the hallucinations
created by Voldemort’s potion, precisely because they are invisible. Like ghosts,
Dementors affect the world around them but, despite feasting on the very essence of
humanity and life, they are incarnations firmly aligned with death and decay whose sole
purpose is to consume the soul: they are portrayed, like Voldemort, in opposition to the
essence of humanity yet, like ghosts, they seek a part of it to sustain their own existence.
Expecto Patronum: Specular Guardians Revealing the Self

A Patronus, while designed to ward off Dementors and unique to an individual witch or wizard, possesses an emotional or familial link to the wizard or witch that conjures it. This specular guardian is the only known method of defence against Dementors and is described by William Indick as “more of a psychological image than a physical or spiritual being” (104). A Patronus, Lupin explains, “is a kind of positive force, a projection of the very things that the Dementor feeds upon – hope, happiness, the desire to survive – but it cannot feel despair, as real humans can, so the Dementors can’t hurt it” (Prisoner of Azkaban 257). Each Patronus, which takes the form of a certain animal, is unique to the witch or wizard who conjures it and it requires a single happy memory in order for the charm to work (“Expecto Patronum”).

The Patronus, then, is not only a temporary specular incarnation of the self, which can serve as a messenger, but a form of the double. The Norwegian equivalent of the double, the “vardøgr,” has more in common with how the Patronus functions and L. David Leiter defines a vardøgr as “premonitory sound or sight of a person before he arrives” (621). Rodney Davies simplifies the definition of the vardøgr to “following spirit” (30). Both definitions fit Rowling’s Patronus. The Patronus acts as a messenger, and, because it is recognisable as belonging to a witch or wizard, it works like the vardøgr by acting as the sight and/or sound of a character that precedes their appearance. I should clarify here that I am discussing the Patronus in its “true” form: initially, Harry is only able to produce a semi-transparent and ineffectual cloud. Lupin explains that a “true Patronus” is capable of charging down Dementors (Prisoner of
Azkaban 266-67). In *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, this true Patronus is referred to as a “corporeal Patronus” (380); this type of specular self is therefore a magical incarnation. There are several instances of the Patronus going before a person or acting as a “following spirit” throughout the sequence, such as in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* when Kingsley Shacklebolt speaks through the mouth of his lynx-shaped Patronus to warn those gathered at the Weasley residence that the Ministry of Magic has fallen into Lord Voldemort’s hands (180), and when Minerva McGonagall sends forth three cat-shaped Patronuses to advise the other Heads of Houses of Harry’s return to Hogwarts (654). The Patronus also functions as a guide in the same novel: a Patronus in the form of a doe appears to lead Harry to the location of the sword of Godric Gryffindor (*Deathly Hallows* 405-07), one of the few weapons capable of destroying Horcruxes.

The specular incarnation of the Patronus sometimes unintentionally reveals the source of happiness of the witch or wizard that casts it. For example, during *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* Snape comments that Nymphadora Tonks’s Patronus has changed and that he preferred her old one. At the novel’s conclusion Harry discovers that Tonks is in love with Lupin and infers that her new Patronus, which he has previously seen and interpreted as doglike, must be a wolf: Snape, who loathes Lupin as a werewolf, has perceived this and therefore been able to wound Tonks. The Patronus therefore functions as an emotional mirror that can reveal the truth of individual characters to other characters within the world of the sequence. Moreover, as Rowling depicts in the final novel, the Patronus can provide important insights to readers as well. Snape’s own Patronus ultimately reveals where his loyalties lie and what the most
significant source of his happiness has been. During *Deathly Hallows*, as Harry sees through Snape’s memories in the Pensieve and finally discovers the truth about his former Potions Master, Harry realises just who had earlier cast the mysterious doe Patronus that guided Harry to the sword of Godric Gryffindor:

> From the tip of [Snape’s] wand burst the silver doe. She landed on the office floor, bounded once across the office, and soared out of the window. Dumbledore watched her fly away, and as her silvery glow faded he turned back to Snape, and his eyes were full of tears.

> “After all this time?”

> “Always,” said Snape. (*Deathly Hallows* 753)

Ever since childhood, Snape had loved Harry’s mother Lily, and had – despite his loathing for James Potter – sworn to protect Harry and assist Dumbledore in bringing down Lord Voldemort, acting as a double agent in the process. Snape’s Patronus demonstrates how, in addition to the other functions it is able to perform (as a defence against Dementors, as a messenger or guide), the Patronus reveals an aspect of the emotional self that is temporarily projected into the physical world, and thus works as a mirror of selfhood.

All of the magical incarnations examined here are portrayed as the most life-like – though not necessarily human-like – embodiments of the specular encountered throughout the sequence. Significantly, they also reveal hidden elements of selfhood, as the characters encountering these entities are forced to confront their own fears. Death, fear and desire are granted form in the mind of the reader; once again, the image is
presented as vital to understanding character in the sequence. The private specular hauntings that Lord Voldemort’s potion induces are paralysing enough to act in a manner similar to a Dementor: the subject is weakened by visions of fear and, without the strength of will, finds itself pulled into a lake of Inferi – destined to become a literal incarnation of death. Boggarts have no true form and instead become specular incarnations of terror, acting as a malicious inversion of the Mirror of Erised by duplicating the object a subject fears and replicating that creature – and its abilities – to perfection. As long as there is fear to feast upon, a Boggart can theoretically retain its appearance (based on the subject’s terror) indefinitely, unless it becomes confused. Its form is not limited to the living or dead, but it is essentially a reflection of fear without identity: it becomes the literalisation of a person’s innermost terror.

The Patronus, once conjured, is a temporary separate double of the witch or wizard who casts it: there is still a connection between Patronus and wizard, in that it can be used as a messenger, but the Patronus is able to act independently. These incarnations of magical specularity, then, are linked with the deepest identity of a wizard, but while the predatory form would seek to consume or exploit this vital aspect of selfhood, the Patronus is instead a direct specular projection of the inner self that protects the corporeal self. Each type, while distinct, reflects a part of the witch or wizard as a specular entity, and this in turn reflects an emotional characteristic of selfhood for the world to see.

Magical Mechanisms Recalling the Specular Dead
Several specific magical mechanisms and technologies enable temporary manifestations of the deceased to be recalled from the dead during crucial moments during the sequence. Despite an initial resemblance between the two, the specular dead are distinct from the ghosts that inhabit Hogwarts. The significant difference between this type of incarnation and ghosts is that while ghosts exist independently, these evoked echoes of the dead require a magical mechanism in order to be projected. For example, during the climactic wand battle between Harry and Lord Voldemort in the fourth novel, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, the phenomenon described as “Priori Incantatem” occurs in which, as Dumbledore explains, when a wand battles its brother “One of the wands will force the other to regurgitate spells it has performed – in reverse” (*Goblet of Fire* 756). Harry’s wand and Voldemort’s wand are “brothers” because they share the same core, with each containing a feather from the same phoenix. In this case, since Voldemort’s most recent acts with the wand have been murders, when his wand connects with Harry’s the “Reverse Spell effect” (756) acts as a form of specular technology to produce projections of Voldemort’s deceased victims. Rowling describes how Voldemort’s wand emits “echoing screams of pain”, before something much larger began to blossom from Voldemort’s wand tip, a great, greyish something, that looked as though it were made of the solidest, densest smoke… It was a head… now a chest and arms… the torso of Cedric Diggory.

If ever Harry might have released his wand from shock, it would have been then, but instinct kept him clutching his wand tightly, so that the thread of golden light remained unbroken, even though the thick grey ghost of Cedric Diggory (was it a ghost? It looked so
solid) emerged in its entirety from the end of Voldemort’s wand, as though it were squeezing itself out of a very narrow tunnel… and this shade of Cedric stood up, and looked up and down the golden thread of light, and spoke.

“Hold on, Harry,” it said. (Goblet of Fire 721)

The description here of the specular Cedric as appearing “too solid” to be simply a ghost implies that this is a different form of entity than that of the ghosts, and therefore a type of specularity that has not been encountered before. For Harry, who has only just seen Cedric murdered, the sight is both stunning and comforting; for Voldemort, it is disconcerting.

The behaviour of the specular Cedric and subsequent emanations from the wands suggests that the echoes projected by the wand are aware of how their original selves died and who is responsible. The words of encouragement offered by these echoes, from people Harry never met in his or their life, demonstrate that these specular beings possess an awareness of the world as time passes after their deaths, and this further implies that they hold – even if temporarily – an investment in the lives of those left behind. The fact that Voldemort is able to see these specular incarnations establishes that (unlike the visions produced by the hallucinatory potion) they are not simply projections personalised for Harry’s benefit. Nevertheless, the echoes that surround the two wizards choose to assist Harry: “Voldemort’s dead victims whispered as they circled the duellers, whispered words of encouragement to Harry, and hissed words Harry couldn’t hear to Voldemort” (Goblet of Fire 722). In specular form, the echoes of Voldemort’s victims hold power over the Dark Lord, for they appear to have conquered
death in a way he would never have considered: he murdered them, yet his connection
with Harry has temporarily recalled them, and their behaviour demonstrates their
autonomy.

These Priori Incantatem echoes grant power to Harry, who, despite being surrounded by
death since infancy, does not fear dying in the same way that Voldemort does. Indeed,
the specular selves that are recalled from death are what give Harry strength in this
moment as the next two victims of Voldemort emerge – his parents. Paradoxically, this
is the most interactive specular depiction of James and Lily Potter Harry has
encountered at this point in the sequence; although Harry has seen them in specular
form in earlier novels through the Mirror of Erised and magical photographs, this is the
first time that they are able to speak to him directly. From an ekphrastic viewpoint, the
specular is now elevated to almost living and is depicted as having power over both the
living and dead. Moreover, the fact that Voldemort’s wand emits screams of pain (721)
before recalling these spectral echoes of the dead suggests that this action is an
unnatural rebirth. It is no accident that the wands are linked by a connection to the
Phoenix, a creature that rebirths itself from the ashes.

Until this point in the sequence, Harry has recalled the dead in one specular form or
another (the Mirror of Erised, photographs, the specular Riddle, or the Patronus), but in
this instance, they are almost in the corporeal realm beside him. The closer Harry is to
death, then, the more life-like the specular dead become for him, and this movement
progresses across the sequence. Such specular entities were charming, entertaining, and
atmospheric during the first novel, but as their function, like Harry’s relationship with
death, grows more complex, so their depiction becomes more life-like and capable of evoking a sense of real character for the reader.

After Harry has returned to the safety of Hogwarts and escaped Voldemort once more, Dumbledore provides Harry with at least a partial explanation for their appearance:

“No spell can reawaken the dead,” said Dumbledore heavily. “All that would have happened is a kind of reverse echo. A shadow of the living Cedric would have emerged from the wand… am I correct, Harry?”

“He spoke to me,” Harry said. He was suddenly shaking again.

“Th… the ghost Cedric, or whatever he was, spoke.”

“An echo,” said Dumbledore, “which retained Cedric’s appearance and character. I am guessing other such forms appeared… less recent victims of Voldemort’s wand…” (Goblet of Fire 756)

Dumbledore continues to refer to these magical incarnations as “shadows” or “echoes,” suggesting that these apparitions, despite profoundly affecting both Harry and Voldemort, were only temporary projections. They are not capable of lingering permanently, as ghosts do; nor do they remain lurking within an object like a Horcrux or inhabiting a pseudo-world glimpsed within a frame like the portraits. Their temporariness suggests that – like a mirror reflection in the sequence – connection must be maintained in order for the projection to continue.
The fact that the Priori Incantatem echoes affect Harry so deeply highlights how at this point in the sequence, the fourth novel, the specular has evolved to become more complicated in behaviour and to appear more life-like. As a result, the ideological worldview towards death that Rowling has been forging since the first novel is continually being revised via imagery. It is dependent upon the visual, and, as the sequence takes a darker turn from the end of *Goblet of Fire*, characters are able to emotionally respond to the specular representations of death and its differing representations. During the duel, the specular dead that Harry continually seeks to recall throughout the sequence are able to assist him: however, for Voldemort, who fears death above all else, these echoes represent the inevitability of death.

The most important projection of the specular and its function occurs with the introduction of the three magical objects known as the Deathly Hallows in the final novel – one in particular. As Dumbledore says, no magic or spell is capable of truly reawakening the dead. Nevertheless, Harry learns in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* that a magical object known as the Resurrection Stone appears to have this ability. As he discovers in the sequence’s final chapters, however, the Stone “recalls” specular projections of the deceased that, unlike those produced by “Priori Incantatem,” are only visible to the person holding the Stone. The Resurrection Stone, according to the fairy tale “The Tale of the Three Brothers” that the characters read, was given to the second brother of the tale and this allowed him to recall the dead. Upon arriving home after receiving the object, the second brother

> took out the stone that had the power to recall the dead, and turned it thrice in his hand. To his amazement and his delight, the figure of the
girl he had once hoped to marry, before her untimely death, appeared at once before him.

Yet she was sad and cold, separated from him as by a veil. Though she had returned to the mortal world, she did not truly belong there and suffered. Finally the second brother, driven mad with hopeless longing, killed himself so as to truly join her. (*Deathly Hallows* 452)

This tale of the second brother and the Resurrection Stone implies that the specular incarnations that the Stone projects contain a sense of awareness and, like the ghosts of Hogwarts, are neither here nor there, separated from the world of the living by a veil and pulled – unwillingly, in this case – from the land of the dead. The story of the second brother and his encounter with the specular echoes Dumbledore’s warnings to Harry during the first novel, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*, regarding the Mirror of Erised. In the case of the Resurrection Stone, however, the heart’s desire is able to be recalled back to life rather than projected in a fantasy mirror.

The Resurrection Stone forces the dead to defy the boundary by recalling them from beyond, unlike ghosts who have chosen to transgress the boundaries between the living and dead. As a result, the specular dead that the Stone recalls are denied a choice. In the story of the second brother the specular incarnation seems bitter, aware of her status as dead, yet pulled back into the corporeal world against her will to remain as an echo. The tale suggests that the Resurrection Stone’s incarnations of the dead draw back into life entities that have made their choice to “go on”; the user of the Stone violates that choice. Thus, the revenants may demonstrate resentment, as is the case for the second brother, if they are called back to fulfil selfish desires on the part of the living.
Moreover, danger to the user lurks within this magical mechanism, because the specular selves – the dead recalled as they appeared in the prime of their lives when Harry uses the Stone – have the potential to lure the living toward death. This effect ironically reverses the ostensible function of the Resurrection Stone, which is to recall the dead to life, because when Harry finally activates the stone it is to reconcile himself towards a death that he feels is inevitable and necessary (to fulfil the prophecy, destroy the Horcrux within him and consequently render Voldemort vulnerable). This initial attraction to the specular dead is hinted at when, after having heard the story of the Deathly Hallows, Harry and his friends talk about which Hallow they would want. Harry says he would want the Stone: “. . . if you could bring people back, we could have Sirius … Mad-Eye … Dumbledore … my parents …” (460). This reveals his desire to see his deceased loved ones again – even if they were not truly back from the dead. When Ron and Hermione say nothing in response, Harry thinks of the tale of the second brother and deduces that the people he loves would not want to come back. However, he obsesses over the Stone to an extent that recalls his early obsession with the Mirror of Erised. Even now, in the final novel, Rowling is demonstrating Harry’s desire to recall the dead via specular technology, and his response here exhibits an inability – like Lord Voldemort – to accept the permanency of death.

When they discuss the Deathly Hallows later, Hermione warns of the Stone, “Those kinds of…pale imitations aren’t the same as truly bringing someone back to life” (471), and reiterates that magic cannot bring people back from the dead. When Harry counters that “…the second brother still got to see her and talk to her, didn’t he? He even lived
with her for a while…” (471), the reactions of his friends hint at their own understanding of the permanency of death and their awareness of the lure of the Resurrection Stone and the danger it can pose. “He saw concern and something less easily definable in Hermione’s expression. Then, as she glanced at Ron, Harry realised that it was fear: he had scared her with his talk of living with dead people” (Deathly Hallows 471). Harry’s motivations here are to recall his lost loved ones, but Hermione and Ron, who have not suffered such losses, regard his desires here with fear. The second brother of the tale, out of despair at the misery of his resurrected fiancée, committed suicide so as to “truly” join her, and Hermione and Ron appear to understand the danger of wanting to live with “dead people” even if Harry does not. Harry’s continued obsession with death demonstrates how the lure of the specular pulls him away from the reality of the corporeal world: recalling Dumbledore’s words from Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone, he is dwelling on dreams and forgetting to live.

Despite Harry’s vulnerability to the lure of such agents, or perhaps because of it, the Resurrection Stone is bestowed on Harry by Dumbledore at the beginning of Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, although Harry does not realise this: the Stone is hidden within a golden Snitch with the words “I open at the close” engraved upon it. The riddle here is that the Snitch will only open when Harry is ready to accept death and this harkens back to the quotation on the tombstones of the Potters, which Lavoie interprets as “trust in the life to come” (49): “The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death” (1 Corinthians 15:26, Deathly Hallows 268). The “destruction” of death throughout the Harry Potter sequence lies in the acceptance of its inevitability; to greet Death as an old friend (the Tale of the Three Brothers) or treat death as an adventure
(Dumbledore’s words in the first novel), rather than attempt to fly from that which is the most natural thing in the world (as Voldemort seeks to do). The reader must infer that to recall the dead early – before having gained such an acceptance regarding the natural order of life and death – would, most likely, have resulted in madness, the same type of madness the second brother experienced and that Dumbledore warned of in the first novel, when Harry was so enthralled with the projection of his deceased family in the Mirror of Erised. The Resurrection Stone, then, combines the sinister elements of the Mirror of Erised and the Philosopher’s Stone that Harry encounters in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* because it recalls those most desired and – in its ability to resurrect – projects a false immortality.

As Harry walks through the forest to confront Voldemort and face death, it is implied that he is employing the Resurrection Stone in fact to prepare for death: when Harry first uses the Stone, he believes that the specular echoes of his parents, Sirius, and Lupin are fetching him instead of the other way around. Because the dead are depicted in such a life-like specular form, the living owner of the stone is ultimately compelled to join them; the lure is that these incarnations are ultimately a projection of the user’s deepest desire, to be reunited with the dead. The Resurrection Stone allows Harry to be reunited with those he desperately wishes to see again – his deceased loved ones – and having them projected in the most life-like of incarnations allows him to surrender to death by enabling him to accept and even embrace it. For Harry, these copies of his deceased loved ones become the source of his courage; they also become more real than the living.
His body and mind felt oddly disconnected now, his limbs working without conscious instruction, as if he were passenger, not driver, in the body he was about to leave. The dead who walked beside him through the forest were much more real to him now than the living back at the castle: Ron, Hermione, Ginny, and all the others were the ones who felt like ghosts as he stumbled and slipped toward the end of his life, towards Voldemort… (*Deathly Hallows* 767-68)

The Resurrection Stone, then, despite its positive power in conjuring incarnations of deceased loved ones and thus giving Harry courage, may be seen as one of the most dangerous forms of specularity depicted throughout the sequence. Out of all of the examples examined so far, it is the only variation that tempts the living to join the ranks of the dead, because the projections it pulls from the mind of its owner are the most tangible of the specular selves represented.

The fact that Harry considers the dead walking beside him to be more real than the living demonstrates the seductive power of the Resurrection Stone. These are the people he longs to see the most, and their reassurance in this moment – particularly the appearance of Lupin, whose dead body he has only recently beheld – present death as more appealing and permanent than the temporariness of living. This is because of the dramatic ekphrasis evident during the activation of the Resurrection Stone. Sager Eidt describes dramatic ekphrasis occurring when images are dramatized to the point where they “take on a life of their own” (56). Rowling, despite having had various characters reiterate throughout the sequence that the dead cannot return, brings the dead to life in this moment by having Harry experience the specular in such detail.
When Harry uses the Resurrection Stone, he believes he is about to face his death at Voldemort’s hand and has accepted that he is about to die. Whereas he feels his own body as mortal and fragile, he perceives the specular images of his parents, James and Lily Potter, godfather Sirius Black, and family friend and former teacher Remus Lupin, as young and healthy – the way Harry has seen them in photographs or Pensieve memories, but never with his own eyes. This suggests that the Stone is, like other forms of specular technology such as the Mirror of Erised, capable of projecting the specular at their most lively, as opposed to the ghosts of Hogwarts, whose embodied incarnation echoes their appearance at their moment of death. The appearance of these incarnations differs again from other embodiments of the specular encountered throughout the sequence and examined in this chapter:

They were neither ghost nor truly flesh, he could see that. They resembled most closely the Riddle that had escaped from the diary so long ago, and he had been memory made nearly solid. Less substantial than living bodies, but much more than ghosts, they moved toward him. And on each face, there was the same loving smile. (Deathly Hallows 765)

These incarnations are depicted as the closest to life-like in the Harry Potter sequence, even more so than the specular Riddle who emerged from the diary in Chamber of Secrets. Harry’s explicit comparison of them with Riddle invites us to interrogate their status and see them as genuine fragments of their living selves. However, when he drops the stone they vanish, demonstrating that they are in fact projections brought about by the magic of the Resurrection Stone.
The projections reflect Harry’s perennial desire to recall his family, but in a new way: now he is ready to join them, instead of pulling them into his world permanently as he has previously wished to do. Harry desires his specular dead to remain by his side and they grant him reassurance, reminding the reader of the power of the image not only for Harry but for the overall sequence:

“You’ll stay with me?”

“Until the very end,” said James.

“They won’t be able to see you?” asked Harry.

“We are part of you,” said Sirius. “Invisible to anyone else.”

(Deathly Hallows 767)

Rowling presents the dead as almost living, blurring the established boundary between life and after-life. The living user – Harry in this case – believes he is about to die and therefore engages with the specular dead. Their presence is no longer a fantasy, as in the Mirror of Erised, as Harry’s dead appear as incarnations with whom he can interact. Herein lies the distinction and the dangerous power of the Stone for Harry. His dead have continuously been recalled throughout the sequence via specularity; now it is specularity that is accompanying him towards what seems, at this point in the narrative, an inevitable death.

Ekphrasis is important here: Rowling’s narration depicts these specular entities as living characters despite their respective deaths. By linking this form of specular technology
with a psychological desire to recall family and loved ones, Rowling forces the reader – via the protagonist of the sequence – to challenge the moral attitudes that she has established since the first novel. That is, while Rowling has insisted that no spell can bring back the dead and that death is part of the natural order of life, the specular continues to reverse this perception by recreating the deceased throughout the sequence in various forms.

Following Harry’s apparent death at Voldemort’s hands, he passes into a limbo he perceives as resembling King’s Cross station, where he encounters a spectral form of Professor Dumbledore, who has been dead for nearly a year (since the end of *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*). When Harry comments that Dumbledore is dead, the former Headmaster replies matter-of-factly, “Oh, yes,” as they sit beneath a high, sparkling ceiling (*Deathly Hallows* 775). At this point, Rowling is making it clear that the specular Dumbledore is – despite being present in this space with Harry – still quite dead. Harry regards his companion in limbo and notes: “Happiness seemed to radiate from Dumbledore like light, like fire: Harry had never seen the man so utterly, so palpably content” (*Deathly Hallows* 776). The depiction of this incarnation – a copy in the after-life – as like “light” and “fire” can be immediately contrasted against the ghosts, Dementors and Inferi, whose characteristics are associated with ice and darkness. This establishes this form of specular “after-death” as desirable, even if Rowling never provides an explanation as to what this variation of Dumbledore actually is. When Dumbledore comments that Harry could, if he chose, board a train that would take him “on”, Harry thinks of his living loved ones, and they ultimately lure him to return to their world – the world of the living. Harry’s initial reluctance to return to the
world of the corporeal is evident when he considers his spectral surroundings: “it was warm and light and peaceful here, and he knew that he was heading back to pain and the fear of more loss” (Deathly Hallows 792). Although he chooses to return in order to finally and permanently defeat Voldemort, the lure of the realm of the deceased – the place of which Nearly Headless Nick has spoken forlornly and which we can infer is depicted like this place, welcoming and bright – is still strong, and part of that lure is his recent experience of the warmth and love of his dead parents and their friends.

During their specular encounter in “King’s Cross,” the location of which (being “real” or within Harry’s head) remains indeterminate, Dumbledore explains to Harry that only someone “worthy” could wield the Deathly Hallows – unlike Dumbledore himself. Dumbledore confesses that the Resurrection Stone was the Hallow that he had coveted since his youth, for his original intention had been to recall his parents from beyond so that he – as a young wizard – could live out his dreams. Dumbledore’s discovery of the Stone within the Gaunt Ring, while searching for Voldemort’s Horcruxes, has led him to forget himself. Indeed, Dumbledore admits, “I quite forgot that it was a Horcrux, that the ring was sure to carry a curse. I picked it up, and I put it on, and for a second I imagined that I was about to see Ariana, and my mother, and my father, and to tell them how very, very sorry, I was…” (Deathly Hallows 789). This exposition suggests that the lure of the Resurrection Stone and the specular projections it allows the user to call forth is powerful enough to cause the wearer, in this case Dumbledore, to momentarily forget the danger of the Horcrux which binds it. It seems appropriate, though, that the curse of the Horcrux is one of death, because, in its own way, the projections the Resurrection Stone conjures force the living to be confronted and, potentially, comforted by the dead.
The Stone and its projections once again see Rowling constructing an attitude towards death via specularity: Dumbledore’s carelessness, the second brother’s selfish desire, and Harry’s eventual acceptance demonstrate how an individual’s approach to this form of magical technology informs the results of its use. Rowling’s use of ekphrasis when depicting the power of Resurrection Stone implies that those who would choose to deny the specular dead a choice in being recalled would fall victim to a projection of personalised punishment. However, when Harry is ready to face death the Stone depicts the specular dead as the more favourable alternative to the corporeal living.

The magical incarnations and mechanisms that I have examined throughout this chapter differ from other examples of specularity because they exist in the periphery of death and life and are, as Nick says, neither here nor there. Because they are depicted as incarnations existing within the dimension of the living, as entities that erase and exist within the boundary between the realms, Rowling establishes this variety of specular as simultaneously the most alluring and most lethal, because for the protagonist they act as a temptation.

The power of the magical incarnations is in their ability to transcend the realm of specularity and influence the corporeal world: variations such as Boggarts that force characters to literally confront their fears in visualised form invert the function of the Mirror of Erised (Chapter Two). Like Dementors and the potion, which Voldemort deploys as weapons, these devices result in a revelation of character because – via terror
Rowling is able to reveal a submerged aspect of an individual. The Patronus, an emotional mirror of selfhood, results in a re-evaluation of character because it is the source of personal happiness that is projected into the world as a guardian against spectral terror. In the case of Severus Snape, this results in a complete character reversal that retrospectively alters our understanding of his role throughout the entire sequence as – finally – his true motivations are revealed to the reader. These magical incarnations and mechanisms, then, enable Rowling to further develop the characters that populate the sequence by visualising hidden facets of their character and nature.

The final form of the specular I examine here, that of the Resurrection Stone, not only enables Harry’s dead family members to appear as they would have in the prime of their lives but depicts essence in a manner that inverts how other visual forms have previously done so. That is, while I have examined incarnations of the dead depicted as visual entities in the form of ghosts or Inferi, the Stone depicts death in both a positive and life-like way; fear of loss is negated for Harry because those who have been lost are now a positive emotional shield. Importantly, though, as with other varieties of the specular that I have examined throughout this sequence, the visual entities examined in this chapter demonstrate how Rowling has, since the beginning of the sequence, been aligning the specular with attitudes to humanity and the nature of death. The Resurrection Stone is arguably the most powerful and deadly specular mechanism in this sense, because its ability to project the deceased as happy and healthy is in fact deadly. This is because such a specular projection inverts the notion of death in the mindset of the holder, negating fear, by seemingly resurrecting the dead in the form of spectral entities and – once again – demonstrating the power of the visual within
Rowling’s sequence. By enabling a projection of a desire linked with loss, this brand of the specular not only strengthens the relationship between the image and the after-life. Instead, it shifts the balance of power between the two so that death, via the specular, holds the greatest power over the living unless the wielder of the Resurrection Stone has – as Harry finally does – accepted the nature and inevitability of death.

From the moment Rowling depicts Harry and his companions first arriving at Hogwarts, they are surrounded by various incarnations of the specular, and each subsequent encounter with these visual entities demonstrates a transgression that defies the established order of life and death in this world. Dumbledore’s assertion that there is no spell or magic capable of bringing back or resurrecting the dead underlines how Rowling clearly establishes the boundary between life and death, but the specular selves always offer at least a window into this other realm of the dead. The tragedy for some, it seems, is that they chose such an existence, while others – recalled from beyond – have it forced upon them thanks to the magical mechanisms of specular technology. The specular embodiments of the Harry Potter sequence, then, challenge the finality of death in the eye of the beholder. Simultaneously, these specular forms reinforce the attitude Rowling constructs towards acceptance of death because their temporary existence, appealing as it may initially seem, ultimately transgresses against the natural order.
Conclusion

In its broadest parameters, the Harry Potter sequence ultimately questions what it means to be human. I argue in this thesis that this is achieved through Rowling’s depiction and deployment of “specular selves,” which illuminate important aspects of life, death and the after-life. The specular, as I have examined it in this thesis, is unexpectedly central to the production and representation of key concepts that enable Rowling to address the concern that lies at the very core of the sequence: what it means to be human. The specular selves that I examine in the preceding chapters illuminate, and help readers evaluate, different aspects of humanity, and this in turn informs the ideas Rowling’s sequence investigates about the nature of life and death.

In my first chapter, I demonstrate how the specular selves of the enchanted portraits of the magical world exist in their own pseudo-world, which essentially functions as an after-life in canvas. This pseudo-world cannot be entered into and the characters of the portraits are unable to take corporeal form – that is, they are unable to quit their panel and enter into the physical domain into which they look out, but they are still “living” in this form and so echoing what it means to act human. For example, the portrait of Dumbledore in the office of the Hogwarts Headmaster is the fourth specular variant that Harry encounters during *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (after seeing a photograph of a young Dumbledore laughing with Grindelwald, encountering a spectral version in “King’s Cross” and being immersed in a memory in the Pensieve) and they share an emotionally charged conversation towards the conclusion of the final novel after Lord Voldemort has finally been defeated. This establishes that the specular self of
the portrait – at least in the case of those residing within the current Headmaster’s office
– functions as a visual double after death. The pseudo-world of the portrait, then, is
almost a reward offered by the corporeal location in which the picture is housed. It
appears to be a reward based on, or rather, informed by location, if we consider the
behaviour of Mrs Black (Chapter One) whose purpose in the “after-life” is to haunt and
taunt those inhabiting what was once her family home. This suggests, then, that the
(unexplained) magic that creates a portrait is linked with the “home canvas”:
Dumbledore, who fulfilled his role to the school in corporeal life, is bestowed an after-
life in the form of a living portrait. This type of specularity does not challenge the moral
world view of the sequence and does not complicate his “moving on,” nor does it affect
Harry’s encounter with the dead – yet specular – Dumbledore in “King’s Cross” limbo.
Instead, this brand is Rowling’s closest depiction to a reward for acceptance of death as
opposed to the existence that ghosts choose – out of fear of death – that sees them
permanently branded by their death.

The enchanted portraits examined in this first chapter of this thesis present specular
selves as initially separate and yet connected with the world of which they are a part.
The question of the possibility of life in and after death is first raised here, particularly
after it is revealed that several of the characters that exist as portraits have taken this
form after dying in the physical world (Dumbledore, Ariana, Phineas Nigellus, Mrs
Black). As with the ghosts that I analyse in Chapter Four, the subjects and functions of
the portraits change dramatically from their first appearance in *Harry Potter and the
Philosopher’s Stone*. Initially playful and atmospheric, both the portraits and the ghosts
of the sequence evolve to serve a more complex role in commenting on death and the
after-life. No explanation is ever provided for the creation of these enchanted portraits – magic, perhaps? – yet in *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, Nearly Headless Nick’s explanation of choosing to become a ghost reflects the attitudes surrounding the acceptance of death that Rowling has consistently been building into the sequence from the beginning. Rowling’s depiction of the ghosts, that is, entities that are permanently marked by their moment of death, reflects their fear of accepting death and the tragedy – not only of their own death but of their inability to move on. In contrast, the inhabitants of the portraits – with all their varied appearances and personalities – are presented as positive and lively. The characters of the portraits never exhibit a sense of regret at their state of being. They are after all mere copies of the original subject, which has presumably “moved on” where the ghosts, specular survivals of real entities, have not. The portrait characters, as framed visual doubles, are capable of living indefinitely in the pseudo-world. Whereas, to quote Nick’s poignant exchange with Harry, the ghostly existence is a “feeble imitation of life” (*Order of the Phoenix* 946), the often drunken shenanigans of the portrait characters of the Fat Lady and Violet (see Chapter One) suggest that the after-life within the pseudo-world of the canvas is often one of enjoyment. Unlike ghosts, the inhabitants of the enchanted portraits are able to actually consume (painted) food or liquid and, as a result, faithfully mimic the life that they look out at.

Portraits and ghosts, as types of specular self, convey the importance Rowling places throughout the sequence of accepting the nature of life and death: ghosts desire to remain human, regardless of their permanent state of limbo; however, portraits – being successful copies of their original subjects – appear content to simply observe the world
of the corporeal and exist within their own pseudo-space or “after-death”. This suggests that Rowling’s view of life and death, and after-life/death, is dependent upon an acceptance of the natural order. To contravene nature in this sense, whether it is to corrupt the soul or choose to remain as a “feeble” spectral imitation, results in the specular self of the after life or death acting as a hallmark of failure. In contrast, those who “accept” death as a natural part of life appear, in the sequence, to receive a reward and to be granted after-life existence in the form of a copy – a copy that is capable of enjoying its spectral, if separate, existence.

The specular self in its other, later forms teases, cruelly at times, at the idea of an after-life, but only the portraits of the sequence appear to offer such an existence. The magical photographs of the sequence, which are capable of movement, initially hint at offering an afterlife, but this is deceptive because, despite the subjects of these pictures “interacting” on a loop, they are essentially a recording on repeat. To a degree, the memory sharing device known as the Pensieve suggests a similar specular after-life in the form of a recording, but this mechanism only enables a temporary collapse of time: by this I mean that the present, in the form of a still living and embodied character, is able to immerse itself in the past memory of another person. In the case of magical photographs, the specular takes the form of countless copies of various characters; in them, via magical technology, a character’s specular double is “captured” without their awareness. In such photographs, however, as also in the Pensieve, the specular doubles seem limited, as the portrait characters are not, to their existence in the photographed or remembered moment. The magical photographs of the Harry Potter sequence are specular copies that share an emotional link with the original subject, but they offer no
new communication with viewers the way that portraits do. The space that they inhabit appears to be one of endless repetition: they will smile, wave or move around for the viewer, or shriek in indignation when someone throws their photograph into a garbage bin – but this is never depicted as an after-life or after-death because there is no new interaction. These specular copies, however, can be duplicated and used by others (notably in the commercial media or Ministry propaganda); Rowling’s representation of this use subverts previous emotional connections a viewer (or reader) may have initially forged with the image, and suggests that while photographs help establish a sense of belonging and desire, this same visual technology can be transformed and inverted so as to corrupt the initial reaction to the photograph.

Through the Pensieve, which allows memories to be viewed, Rowling not only represents consciousness in visual form, but demonstrates how all characters are potentially “recording” a memory that might, at a later date, be viewed by others in specular immersion. The act of looking takes on an extra meaning here: not only are characters, and readers, looking at the specular but they are transcribing specularity. The message here is that everyone may potentially contain or generate a specular self, whether or not they are alive or dead. With the specular selves being so prominent and vital to Rowling’s sequence, it is little wonder that any character can have a specular copy created (with or without their knowledge or permission). Consider how many specular copies of our Muggle selves exist in all sorts of locations and let us be thankful that “magic” or technology has, so far, prevented these visual copies from becoming independent entities. The proliferation of the multiple copies of the self in specular form – from the first Harry Potter novel to the last – establishes how identity is formed, moral
attitudes (in society) are constructed, and how what we believe, via the visual, can ultimately be transformed and reversed.

The magical mirrors of the sequence, discussed in Chapter Two, and their inversions, analysed in Chapter Four, enable a detailed investigation into Rowling’s vision of key elements of human nature: love, desire, fear, choice and acceptance. Encounters with specular selves enable characters of the sequence, particularly Harry, to grow throughout each novel, and magical mirrors are vital to this process. First, it is a magical reflection that allows Harry to visualise his unconscious desire – to recall the family who died when he was a baby – and this desire evolves throughout the sequence. After first introducing magical mirrors in relation to desire, Rowling then harnesses the visual as a means of literalising terror, with the end goal being a revelation of character that results in a reconsideration of the narrative. When Rowling creates visual mechanisms that rework the functions of her mirrors (Chapter Four), she challenges the reader’s understanding of characters to date and forces a transformation as both Harry and reader are taught, via the image, how to read and recognise hidden complexity. Emotion, then, whether based in desire or fear, is revealed via the specular and this in turn informs the construction of character throughout the sequence. Importantly, as a type of specularity, magical mirrors enable such emotional revelations of character after death because – particularly in the case of the Pensieve – immersion into a past stream of consciousness, which alters the point of view of the narrative, creates a shift in preconception as a full picture of events is established.
Voldemort’s Horcruxes, clearly established as a malignant form of the specular, ultimately reveal the complexity of the antagonist of the sequence because they represent the aspects of his nature that he has strived to keep hidden. That is, the Horcruxes represent the fractured character of Voldemort; they ultimately enable the reader how to recognise what he is – a complex riddle that is revealed to be the antithesis of human nature within the Harry Potter sequence. Horcruxes, created to evade death, are nevertheless representations of death: a death of the self. The specular manifestations that lurk within the Horcruxes afforded the most narrative space throughout the sequence represent the permanent division of Voldemort’s soul, and their depiction – that is, their malignant behaviour and violent mode of destruction – casts them as inhuman. If we consider these forms of the specular as being “riddled” with a nature that evokes the parasitic, an apt reflection of their creator, the Horcruxes with their initially alluring nature – particularly the Diary of Tom Riddle – can be read as an allegory for the enthralling process of reading. The specular, then, not only enables Rowling to examine the theme of humanity from different angles, but provides a visualisation of the manner in which we read. That is, as Rowling shows Harry Potter doing throughout the sequence, we read and recognise character and narrative, only to identify the complexities and re-evaluate our initial understanding of what once seemed a perfectly clear picture of people and events.

What Rowling’s sequence suggests is that whoever beholds a specular self can, to an extent, become a mirror of specularity. Therefore, all corporeal forms contain an element of the specular within. Because the specular is able to depict these aspects of humanity – love, loss, fear and desire – any visual copy can, potentially, not only reflect
but transform the moral nature of the sequence. Specularity, as it concerns the nature of life and death as I investigate it, lends itself to types of immortality – even in the Muggle world – because, as in the Harry Potter sequence, the specular is embedded within the narrative of our own world. Rowling, then, compels her readers to sustain the specular selves as they read the sequence. This in turn compels us to form a connection and engagement not only with the narrative, but with the depicted specular. The novel, then, is itself a form of specular technology because we grant form and life to the visual entities and in turn the sequence, through the act of reading. Importantly, specularity and the act of reading create a life within a pseudo-world – that of imagination – and while this realm is frequently entered into, it is, like the projection within the Mirror of Erised, unable to be truly shared because the experience of reading, like constructing the specular through ekphrasis, is unique for each individual. As the sequence unfolds and the specular alters narrative, character and world view; preconceptions informed by the specular are ultimately transformed. Consequently, the Harry Potter novels and the specular selves galvanize each other throughout the sequence, providing a deeper understanding into the nature of humanity, life, death, and the after-life of the image.


