

Spoiler Warning: If you have not completed Book Six, the following essay contains details and excerpts that reveal important elements of Book Six.

Harry Potter and the Power of Love

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Is Dumbledore Right?
Is Love “a force that is at once more wonderful
and more terrible than death”?

Synopsis: At the end of Book Six, Albus Dumbledore has seemingly made a grave mistake in trusting Severus Snape, who has murdered him. His trust in the power of love has perhaps been misplaced, too. Is there more at stake than just his seeming error in judgment in believing a repentant Snape? Does his shocking death also mock his belief in the power of love as a power above all others, most certainly more powerful than death?

In this essay I will present the thesis that J. K. Rowling means for her readers to raise such far-reaching questions. Moreover, I will suggest that she has raised a central question of the Christian faith, namely, the question of Holy Saturday when death appears to have defeated Jesus and all that he stood for. Is the unconditional love of God truly the greatest power on earth? And is the Easter morning overturning of that apparent Good Friday defeat enough to create faith in his disciples to truly live by that power of love?

I suggest that the situation at the end of *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* is similar to that of the disciples on Holy Saturday. Dumbledore appears to have been beaten by the Dark Lord through a gross miscalculation on his part regarding Severus Snape. More than that, Dumbledore’s death seems to mock what he stood for, the power of love as the power above all other powers in this world. Is there a triumph of Dumbledore’s still to come in Book Seven, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*? Is there an Easter-like victory — through Dumbledore’s phoenix perhaps? — that can create faith in his students (most notable, Harry) to lead them to trust the power of love above the powers of death that Voldemort wields?

Lord Voldemort fears something even more than he fears his old teacher, Albus Dumbledore. He fears death. The revelation of Voldemort’s obsession with Horcruxes¹ in Book Six shows to what great lengths he will go in order to conquer death. Vanquishing death is his stated goal in life

¹See footnote 7 for an explanation of Horcruxes.

(see HP4, 653).² The Dark Lord wields wholesale death upon others in his quest to be immortal. He clearly gives to death the status of great power.

Albus Dumbledore is of a different mind. He accords the higher station and power to love. And the ending to Book Six, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, could scarcely leave the reader with a more dramatic positioning between these two alternatives to power. Who is right? Voldemort or Dumbledore? The power of death has seemingly vanquished Dumbledore. Voldemort's followers, his "Death Eaters," have succeeded in their mission of seeing Dumbledore murdered.

Or, even in the face of death, is Dumbledore mysteriously right? Is his death at the hands of Severus Snape actually a self-sacrificial act of love, an act that will ultimately issue in the triumph of love over death? This second interpretation of Dumbledore's death is one that I will argue for here. It is the more difficult position to maintain, waiting for Book Seven to either prove or disprove.

None of the main characters, at Book Six's end, can glimpse anything but death's triumph over Dumbledore, so I need to ask: Has author J. K. Rowling given the reader any clues to anticipate an alternative interpretation that her characters have not yet realized at his point in the narrative? I believe so. My argument will revolve around two plot moves that Rowling has carefully and painstakingly developed throughout the narrative: (1) the ambiguities around the person of Severus Snape because of his double agency, and (2) Rowling's own firm portrayal of Dumbledore as a champion of the power of love as signaling her own position on the matter.

The first plot move comes in the mystery-laden characterization of Dumbledore's murderer, Severus Snape, who is presented as a double agent. The reader is presented with a choice as to where Snape's true loyalties lie, namely, between Dumbledore's Order of the Phoenix (an obvious symbol of life) or Voldemort's Death Eaters. Snape murdering Dumbledore seems to place him squarely in Voldemort's camp, but Rowling's skillful development of Snape's character might caution the reader to withhold judgment.

Not only is the mystery fostered by the double agency but the reader comes to increasingly see that Snape is a highly skilled wizard, the "Half-Blood Prince," whose abilities even appear to rival those of Dumbledore and Voldemort along some fronts. We learn, for example, that Snape is well-practiced in the art of both of Legilimency, of penetrating and glimpsing into the minds of others, and of Occlumency, of being able to block Legilimency. The reader comes to assume that Snape's ability as an Occlumens is what enables him to be a double agent. He is one of the few wizards capable of blocking the Dark Lord's Legilimency.³

Our awareness of Snape's abilities thus adds to the mystery of the murder. In the brief moment before Snape kills Dumbledore, Dumbledore voices Snape's name in a pleading manner. But with two accomplished Legilimens facing each other, does an unspoken message pass between them?

The drama of this engagement between two great wizards is already set in the second chapter of Book Six ("Spinner's End"). The reader finds out that Draco Malfoy, Harry's greatest enemy

²References to the *Harry Potter* books will be made with the abbreviation "HP" followed by the number of the book in the series of the American editions [New York: Scholastic Press] and the page number(s). So, for example, "HP4, 653" makes reference to *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, page 653.

³How far back does Snape's double agency go? In Book Six we find out that Snape came to Dumbledore with great regret when he found out how Voldemort interpreted the prophecy to be about Harry's parents (HP6, 549). We might assume that it was sometime after James and Lily Potter were killed. But in *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* the Minister of Magic, Cornelius Fudge, is talking about events leading up to the Potters' deaths and says that Dumbledore "had a number of useful spies. One of them tipped him off, and he alerted James and Lily at once" (HP3, 204). Was this spy already Snape — having already come to Dumbledore with regret even before the murders?

among the Hogwarts's students, has been given a task by the Dark Lord at which "nobody has yet succeeded" (HP6, 33), not even the Dark Lord himself. Draco's mother Narcissa Malfoy comes to Snape for help, fearing that this assignment is revenge against her husband for failing the Dark Lord, and pleading with Snape to do it for her son. For: "You would succeed, of course you would, and he would reward you beyond all of us —" (HP6, 34). She convinces Snape to make an Unbreakable Vow that, if Draco seems to fail his mission, Snape will "carry out the deed that the Dark Lord has ordered Draco to perform" (HP6, 36). Our awareness of his being a double agent prompts the reader to ask: Does Snape consent to such a vow because he is actually a Death Eater anyway, or because he feels pressured to keep his cover as a spy for the Order of the Phoenix? Or does Snape actually care enough about Malfoy that he would risk sacrificing himself?

In the climactic scene, then, a number of things are made clear. First, we learn for certain that Draco's formidable task is to kill Dumbledore. The reader finally comes to know what the dangerous task is because Dumbledore himself tells us in telling Malfoy: "You have been trying, with increasing desperation, to kill me all year" (HP6, 585). The implication is that Dumbledore has known because Snape told him, and thus "Professor Snape has been keeping watch over you on my orders —" (HP6, 588).

Two further things are made clear: that Draco is both meant to do the job alone (an unnamed Death Eater twice stops the werewolf Fenrir Greyback from killing Dumbledore; HP6, 594-595) and that Draco suffers a failure of nerve to do so. As Snape arrives late on the scene, seemingly not knowing the details of Draco's plan, the crucial scene of Dumbledore's murder swiftly unfolds:

"We've got a problem, Snape," said the lumpy Amycus, whose eyes and wand were fixed alike upon Dumbledore, "the boy doesn't seem able —"

But somebody else had spoken Snape's name, quite softly.

"Severus. . ."

The sound frightened Harry beyond anything he had experienced all evening. For the first time, Dumbledore was pleading.

Snape said nothing, but walked forward and pushed Malfoy roughly out of the way. The three Death Eaters fell back without a word. Even the werewolf seemed cowed.

Snape gazed for a moment at Dumbledore, and there was revulsion and hatred etched in the harsh lines of his face.

"Severus . . . please. . ."

Snape raised his wand and pointed it directly at Dumbledore.

"*Avada Kedavra!*"

In my opinion, Rowling has masterfully written this scene with subtle ambiguity. On the surface it appears that Dumbledore was wrong about Snape: he *must* have been a Death Eater to have carried out such a dastardly deed. That is how Harry, blinded by his own hatred of Snape, chooses to interpret it. And that is how he conveys Dumbledore's death to other members of the Order of the Phoenix who did not personally witness it — that Dumbledore was tragically mistaken about Snape.

But has Rowling built in ambiguity for the careful reader to parse? Snape, having consented to the Unbreakable Vow, is faced with the decision to "carry out the deed that the Dark Lord has ordered Draco to perform" or to die from breaking the vow.⁴ Dumbledore pleads to Snape out loud — "Severus . . . please. . ." — but the exact nature of the plea is left unsaid. With two Legilimens gazing at one another, we can ask if Dumbledore's plea is for what outwardly makes the most sense,

⁴Rowling does make it clear that the consequence of breaking such a vow is death; see HP6, 325-326.

namely, that Snape *not* kill him. *Or* does the ability of Legilimency raise the possibility of a different plea inward to their two minds, the opposite plea, that Snape *should* kill Dumbledore in order to save himself?

There are at least two points that speak in favor of the latter: (1) Dumbledore has drunk seemingly deadly poison and is characterized by one of the Death Eaters only moments before as “not long for this world anyway” (HP6, 594); and (2) most importantly, unlike Voldemort Dumbledore is not afraid of death. In Book One, when Harry asks about Dumbledore’s friend Nicholas Flamel not having Elixir of Life any longer, Dumbledore replies, “After all, to the well-organized mind, death is but the next great adventure” (HP1, 297). And in Book Five Voldemort’s taunts of Dumbledore for not trying to kill him are followed by this revealing exchange:

“We both know that there are other ways of destroying a man, Tom,” Dumbledore said calmly, continuing to walk toward Voldemort as though he had not a fear in the world, as though nothing had happened to interrupt his stroll up the hall. “Merely taking your life would not satisfy me, I admit —”

“There is nothing worse than death, Dumbledore!” snarled Voldemort.

“You are quite wrong,” said Dumbledore, still closing in upon Voldemort and speaking as lightly as though they were discussing the matter over drinks. Harry felt scared to see him walking along, undefended, shieldless. He wanted to cry out a warning, but his headless guard kept shunting him backward toward the wall, blocking his every attempt to get out from behind it. “Indeed, your failure to understand that there are things much worse than death has always been your greatest weakness —” (HP5, 814)

And so we ask: knowing what will happen to Snape due to the Unbreakable Vow if he and Draco fail the mission given by the Dark Lord, does Dumbledore’s plea express a desire to sacrifice himself and welcome the “next great adventure”?

There is another point of ambiguity in the narrative of Dumbledore’s murder: the “hatred etched in the harsh lines of [Snape’s] face.” It seems reasonable to assume it is hatred for Dumbledore in the act of killing him. Harry has certainly seen that same look on Snape’s face many times, directed at both he and his father (the latter in Dumbledore’s Pensive; more below). But the reader might also ask: has Harry ever before seen that look aimed by Snape at Dumbledore? And, in the light of the alternate view of Dumbledore’s plea presented here, doesn’t it actually make more sense that the hatred etched on his face is for the terrible task that Dumbledore is wordlessly pleading him to do? Instead of Snape sacrificing himself and stopping anyone from murdering Dumbledore, the Potions Master despises the thing which he is being asked to do — to answer the plea of his Headmaster, finishing the job of the poison. Dumbledore’s self-sacrifice will have the positive outcome of not only saving Snape from the effects of the Unbreakable Vow but also of cementing his cover as spy to Lord Voldemort — at the most terrible of prices to Snape, who hates what he is about to do.

There may be corroboration for this interpretation of the look of hatred on Snape’s face in an overheard conversation between Snape and Dumbledore. Hagrid lets slip to Harry that he had heard a heated conversation between the two. Snape sounds like he is trying to back out of something. “I dunno, Harry,” says Hagrid, “it sounded like Snape was feelin’ a bit overworked, that’s all — anyway, Dumbledore told him flat out he agreed ter do it an’ that was all there was to it. Pretty firm with him” (HP6, 405-406). The reader has learned in the climactic tower scene that Snape has told Dumbledore about the plan to kill him. Did he also tell Dumbledore about the Unbreakable Vow? How much have he and Dumbledore discussed the various scenarios and anticipated the outcomes? Could it be that Dumbledore and Snape have anticipated him having to

keep his vow to Narcissa Malfoy, and Snape is not wanting to go through with it? Did Snape even originally make the vow envisioning sacrificing himself to make sure Dumbledore didn't die and, upon telling Dumbledore, find himself ordered instead to sacrifice Dumbledore when the time comes?

That Dumbledore immediately heard from Snape about his Unbreakable Vow and began to anticipate his own fate is hinted at already in the very next chapter. Following the Unbreakable Vow in Chapter 2, "Spinner's End," Rowling gives an account in Chapter 3, "Will and Won't," of something most unusual — a first in the septology — namely, a personal visit by Dumbledore to the Dursley's. At this point, the reader assumes this is for safety's sake. Dumbledore himself comes to escort Harry from the Dursley's to the Weasley's. From the perspective of the book's end, however, Dumbledore's final request to the Dursley's raises an important question:

"The magic I evoked fifteen years ago means that Harry has powerful protection while he can still call this house 'home.' However miserable he has been here, however unwelcome, however badly treated, you have at least, grudgingly, allowed him houseroom. This magic will cease to operate the moment that Harry turns seventeen; in other words, at the moment he becomes a man. I ask only this: that you allow Harry to return, once more, to this house, before his seventeenth birthday, which will ensure that the protection continues until that time." (HP6, 55-56)

Why does Dumbledore ask this of the Dursley's nearly a full year before he needs to? I believe that the best answer is that he has already learned from Snape that there is a good chance that he will be murdered between now and then. Long before the climactic confrontation atop the Astronomy Tower, then, I suggest that both 'murderer' and 'victim' have anticipated and discussed the various outcomes. Dumbledore, in Chapter 3 of Book Six, already knows that he is not only a marked man but that, if he doesn't die, it will be at the high price of the death of either a crucial member of the Order of the Phoenix (due to the Unbreakable Vow) or one of his students (with Malfoy likely killed by Voldemort for punishment of his failure); so Dumbledore has begun to plan ahead for the likelihood of his own death. I find this to be a very compelling consideration in favor of Snape's killing Dumbledore only because Dumbledore wanted him to.

Before leaving the matter of Severus Snape's crucial role in these books, I would like to point to two other clues in previous books that I think Rowling has left us which speak in favor of Snape's being truly on the side of Dumbledore. One comes in Book Five as Dumbledore gives Snape the task of teaching Harry Occlumency. In doing so, Snape's own thoughts and memories will be vulnerable to Harry so he prepares himself by placing into Dumbledore's Pensieve⁵ the memories that he feels most threatened to have Harry glimpse in case the link between their minds backfires (which does happen once when Harry uses a shield charm). We find out what those memories are in their last lesson, as Snape is called away and Harry falls into the Pensieve. Harry intrudes into a memory of his father tormenting Snape while both are students at Hogwarts. This is supposedly "Snape's Worst Memory" (the name of the chapter in which this episode occurs, HP5, 624-650). But if Snape is a double agent who is actually on the side of Lord Voldemort, wouldn't a memory that incriminates him as such be his worst memory, and the one that he would most want to keep from Harry?

The second clue might seem to revolve around an insignificant detail, but it is exactly, I

⁵ A Pensieve is a magical container (introduced in Book Four), a large bowl, into which Dumbledore extracts some of his thoughts and memories for external examination. Once in the Pensieve memories can be entered into by others, so Snape is also taking a risk storing these worst memories in the Pensieve.

think, the kind of clue that Rowling likes to leave her readers. In Book Four, after Harry has returned from his narrow escape with the revived Lord Voldemort in the graveyard, Barty Crouch, Jr. (still disguised as Mad-Eye Moody) whisks Harry away to Moody's office. He attempts to find out what has happened and then complete the Dark Lord's unfinished work by killing Harry. One of Moody's Foe-Glasses — a mirror that reveals the proximity of the user's foes beyond walls and doors — figures more prominently in the narrative than such a minor detail would seemingly warrant. Rowling mentions the Foe-Glass five times in the space of eight pages (HP4, 677-679, 683). The first two times describe how "foggy shapes" (677) "were sharpening" into "the outlines of three people" (678). Sure enough, before Crouch can kill Harry the door is blown in by a stupefying hex and, "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" (HP4, 679). Perhaps so that the reader catches the significance of Snape being in the glass, Rowling singles him out down that same page, looking at himself in the Foe-Glass. Finally, she names the original three in the glass together one more time several pages later (683). If this bewitched mirror truly shows one's foes in it, then would Crouch — who is clearly on the side of Lord Voldemort — be able to see Snape with Dumbledore and McGonagall if Snape was not truly a foe of Crouch's with them? The Foe-Glass seems to be telling us that Snape, Dumbledore, and McGonagall are, in fact, all on the same side together against one of Voldemort's faithful servants.

Perhaps this interpretation of Dumbledore's murder is all wishful thinking on my part. We will see in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*. But my position is that Rowling herself has set more at stake than simply Dumbledore being wrong about Snape. Albus Dumbledore, as the main protagonist alongside Harry himself (who is, after all, "Dumbledore's man through and through" [HP6, 348, 649]), seems to have more at stake with his own murder than just his unwavering trust in Snape. Dumbledore's shocking death seems to mock that which led him to trust people like Snape, in the first place. It mocks his even more unwavering faith in the power of love.

Thus, the second key to maintaining that Dumbledore is right about the power of love is to more directly establish that this is a central theme for Rowling in these books and thus likely to be her own position. Let us make a closer examination of the books for evidence of the theme of love's power.

We begin with the central mystery of the series. Harry is the 'only known person to have ever survived' the killing curse (HP4, 216). He is 'the Boy who Lived.' But why? The only person who seems certain about an explanation to this mystery is Albus Dumbledore. At the end of Book One, he reveals to Harry:

"Your mother died to save you. If there is one thing Voldemort cannot understand, it is love. He didn't realize 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 forever." (HP1, 299)

No one else throughout the course of the series seems to understand the power of love as Dumbledore does. In his explanation of why Harry survives he begins with the *act* of Harry's mother's sacrificial death but then goes on to properly emphasize the power behind the act, the power of love. That *power* is the element which Dumbledore highlights, and that all others tend to leave out — even Harry. In Book Two Harry again finds himself confronted with the question of how he survived the killing curse. From the reviving memory of Tom Riddle, Voldemort's former self as a sixteen year-old student at Hogwarts, Harry hears:

“To business, Harry,” said Riddle, still smiling broadly. “Twice — in *your* past, in *my* future — we have met. And twice I failed to kill you. *How did you survive?* Tell me everything....”

“No one knows why you lost your powers when you attacked me,” said Harry abruptly. “I don’t know myself. But I know why you couldn’t *kill* me. Because my mother died to save me. My common *Muggle-born* mother,” he added, shaking with suppressed rage. “She stopped you killing me.” (HP2, 316)

Notice that Harry emphasizes the *act* of his mother dying to save him but fails to mention the power behind the act, love. Riddle repeats Harry’s mistake to even greater lengths: “So. Your mother died to save you. Yes, that’s a powerful counter-charm. I can see now . . . there is nothing special about you, after all” (HP2, 317). The Dark Lord completely misses what Dumbledore emphasizes, the lasting mark of love on Harry’s life. It is a mistake he repeats on the night of his return to power in Book Four. As Voldemort recounts to his Death Eaters how it is that he has risen again, we read:

“You know, of course, that they have called this boy my downfall?” Voldemort said softly, his red eyes upon Harry, whose scar began to burn so fiercely that he almost screamed in agony. “You all know that on the night I lost my powers and my body, I tried to kill him. His mother died in the attempt to save him — and unwittingly provided him with a protection I admit I had not foreseen. . . . I could not touch the boy.”

Voldemort raised one of his long white fingers and put it very close to Harry’s cheek.

“His mother left upon him the traces of her sacrifice. . . . This is old magic, I should have remembered it, I was foolish to overlook it . . . but no matter. I can touch him now.”

Harry felt the cold tip of the long white finger touch him, and thought his head would burst with the pain. Voldemort laughed softly in his ear, then took the finger away and continued addressing the Death Eaters.

“I miscalculated, my friends, I admit it. My curse was deflected by the woman’s foolish sacrifice, and it rebounded upon myself.” (HP4, 652-653)

Voldemort continues to minimize the fact that he couldn’t touch Harry, that Harry had no special power which resides with him; Harry’s survival is purely a matter of his mother’s “foolish sacrifice.”

There is one other moment in Book Four that points to the ambiguous power of his mother’s sacrifice, the moment when Harry is recounting to Dumbledore and his godfather Sirius Black what Voldemort had done and said:

When Harry told of Wormtail piercing his arm with the dagger, however, Sirius let out a vehement exclamation and Dumbledore stood up so quickly that Harry started. Dumbledore walked around the desk and told Harry to stretch out his arm. Harry showed them both the place where his robes were torn and the cut beneath them.

“He said my blood would make him stronger than if he’d used someone else’s,” Harry told Dumbledore. “He said the protection my — my mother left in me — he’d have it too. And he was right — he could touch me without hurting himself, he touched my face.”

For a fleeting instant, Harry thought he saw a gleam of something like triumph in Dumbledore’s eyes. But next second, Harry was sure he had imagined it, for when Dumbledore had returned to his seat behind the desk, he looked as old and weary as Harry had ever seen him. (HP4, 695-696)

The fleeting look of triumph in Dumbledore’s eyes could be a major clue from Rowling about the

final outcome of love's power in Book Seven. Voldemort himself has seemingly taken on the power of love from Harry's mother which resides in his blood. Yet this is an ambiguous power as long as Voldemort and others continue to ignore it or downplay it in favor of the power of death that they see in her *act* of dying for Harry. In so emphasizing the act of dying in deference to the power of the love behind it, we have thus come around to the opposite of Dumbledore's characterization at the end of Book One in which he emphasizes the special power that resides with Harry "forever," the mark of his mother's love upon him. It is a power that even Harry, by the end of Book Six, has yet to put his trust in.

Harry's lack of faith in love can be seen in two crucial moments, one each in the two most recent books in the series. Dumbledore testifies to the power of love that resides with Harry, and Harry seems skeptical in his reaction. In Book Five, after surviving yet again an encounter with Lord Voldemort — one that even climaxes in the Dark Lord's possessing him briefly — Harry's view is still one of doubting his own powers, which he expresses in reaction to Dumbledore's deciphering of the prophecy:⁶

"He [the eavesdropper, whom we find out in Book Six is Snape] heard only the first part, the part foretelling the birth of a boy in July to parents who had thrice defied Voldemort. Consequently, he could not warn his master that to attack you would be to risk transferring power to you — again marking you as his equal. So Voldemort never knew that there might be danger in attacking you, that it might be wise to wait or to learn more. He did not know that you would have 'power the Dark Lord knows not' —"

"But I don't!" said Harry in a strangled voice. "I haven't any powers he hasn't got, I couldn't fight the way he did tonight, I can't possess people or — or kill them —"

"There is a room in the Department of Mysteries," interrupted Dumbledore, "that is kept locked at all times. It contains a force that is at once more wonderful and more terrible than death, than human intelligence, than forces of nature. It is also, perhaps, the most mysterious of the many subjects for study that reside there. It is the power held within that room that you possess in such quantities and which Voldemort has not at all. That power took you to save Sirius tonight. That power also saved you from possession by Voldemort, because he could not bear to reside in a body so full of the force he detests. In the end, it mattered not that you could not close your mind. It was your heart that saved you." (HP5, 843-844)

A similar conversation in Book Six has the flavor of being a continuation of this one in Book Five, even though it is almost a year later. Dumbledore is revealing to Harry the next layer of the mystery, after the prophecy in Book Five. The first mystery, except to Dumbledore and his belief in the power of love, is that Harry survived the killing curse. The next question is why did Voldemort survive its rebound. Dumbledore, in his research into Tom Riddle's past, has pieced together a theory about how Voldemort has resorted to great lengths of dark magic in order to achieve immortality. The Dark Lord has murdered others in order to parcel out bits of his soul into

⁶For those who have not read all the books, here is the full prophecy spoken to Dumbledore, partially overheard by Snape: "*The one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord approaches.... Born to those who have thrice defied him, born as the seventh month dies... and the Dark Lord will mark him as his equal, but he will have power the Dark Lord knows not... and either must die at the hand of the other for neither can live while the other survives.... The one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord will be born as the seventh month dies....*" An irony of the prophecy is that it also could apply to Harry's classmate, Neville Longbottom, but Voldemort chose Harry.

Horcruxes⁷ as his strategy for conquering death. If anyone is powerful enough to defeat Voldemort, the Horcruxes are the key. We read:

Harry sat in thought for a moment, then asked, “So if all of his Horcruxes are destroyed, Voldemort *could* be killed?”

“Yes, I think so,” said Dumbledore. “Without his Horcruxes, Voldemort will be a mortal man with a maimed and diminished soul. Never forget, though, that while his soul may be damaged beyond repair, his brain and his magical powers remain intact. It will take uncommon skill and power to kill a wizard like Voldemort even without his Horcruxes.”

“But I haven’t got uncommon skill and power,” said Harry, before he could stop himself.

“Yes, you have,” said Dumbledore firmly. “You have a power that Voldemort has never had. You can —”

“I know!” said Harry impatiently. “I can love!” It was only with difficulty that he stopped himself adding, “Big deal!”

“Yes, Harry, you can love,” said Dumbledore, who looked as though he knew perfectly well what Harry had just refrained from saying. “Which, given everything that has happened to you, is a great and remarkable thing. You are still too young to understand how unusual you are, Harry.”

“So, when the prophecy says that I’ll have ‘power the Dark Lord knows not,’ it just means — love?” asked Harry, feeling a little let down.

“Yes — just love,” said Dumbledore. (HP6, 508-509)

Rowling seems to be telling us that not only is the power of love the crucial difference between Harry and Voldemort, but that it is a power difficult to trust above the power of attempting to conquer death through killing — the power in which Voldemort clearly trusts. Even though Harry possesses the power of love in great quantities, a ‘power which the Dark Lord knows not,’ when he is confronted by Voldemort’s brand of power, Harry seems to be allured by it as the only kind of power able to vanquish it. He seems trapped into thinking that he simply needs more of Voldemort’s brand of power to defeat him.

It is an age-old human problem, really. When confronted by powers of violence to kill, the only power we seem to trust to vanquish it is more of the same. We want to rely on a greater power to wield mortal violence in order to stop it. We do not seem able to conceive of a greater power to vanquish such violence and death except by simply having more of the same. That is what Voldemort has always relied on. Like most of us, Harry can see no other way, either.

But Dumbledore can. And I contend that this is the crucial difference which Rowling means for us to ponder. In Book Six, she sets this all up through the main storyline of Harry’s special lessons with Dumbledore. When Harry first tells Hermione and Ron about the lessons, Hermione speculates, “I wonder what he’ll teach you, Harry? Really advanced defensive magic, probably . . . powerful counterurses . . . anti-jinxes . . .” ... “. . . and evasive enchantments generally” (HP6, 99).

⁷ Readers first hear of Horcruxes in a memory of Horace Slughorn explaining them to a young Tom Riddle: “A Horcrux is the word used for an object in which a person has concealed part of their soul.... Then, even if one’s body is attacked or destroyed, one cannot die, for part of the soul remains earthbound and undamaged” (HP6, 497). But there is a great cost to so mutilating one’s soul, both for ripping apart a previously whole soul and in the process of making a Horcrux which can only be done after murdering someone. In the same memory of Slughorn’s we learn that Tom Riddle is fascinated by this way to immortality to the point of splitting his soul into seven parts. He begins to plot splitting off six parts of his soul into Horcruxes. This is the answer to the mystery of why Voldemort himself wasn’t killed when his killing curse rebounded from Harry onto him.

In short, they assume that Dumbledore will teach Harry more of Voldemort's kind of power. When the lessons actually begin, and they are about something completely different — namely, learning about Voldemort's personal history by entering into numerous memories in Dumbledore's Pensieve — Harry's first reaction is to question the value: "Sir . . . is it important to know all this about Voldemort's past?" (HP6, 215). After the second set of lessons, Harry, Ron and Hermione have a frank discussion about the point of these lessons:

[Ron said,] "But I still don't get why Dumbledore's showing you all this. I mean, it's really interesting and everything, but what's the point?"

"Dunno," said Harry, inserting a gum shield. "But he says it's all important and it'll help me survive."

"I think it's fascinating," said Hermione earnestly. "It makes absolute sense to know as much about Voldemort as possible. How else will you find out his weaknesses?" (HP6, 279-280)

The other characters in the story still do not connect with Dumbledore's insight into the power of love.

It is in that second private lesson, in fact, that Dumbledore has begun to highlight to Harry the absence of that power in Voldemort. After showing Harry the memory of the first time he met young Tom Riddle — to invite Tom from life in the Muggle orphanage to the possibility of being trained as a wizard at Hogwarts — Dumbledore emphasizes the lack of love in Voldemort's life by pointing to his lack of friends:

"I trust that you also noticed that Tom Riddle was already highly self-sufficient, secretive, and, apparently, friendless? He did not want help or companionship on his trip to Diagon Alley. He preferred to operate alone. The adult Voldemort is the same. You will hear many of his Death Eaters claiming that they are in his confidence, that they alone are close to him, even understand him. They are deluded. Lord Voldemort has never had a friend, nor do I believe that he has ever wanted one." (HP6, 277)

But it is in the last memory Dumbledore has of Voldemort before his rise to power that makes this all explicit. Voldemort has come to Dumbledore to ask that he might be a teacher at Hogwarts, bragging a bit about the things he has already achieved and might teach to students:

"You call it 'greatness,' what you have been doing, do you?" asked Dumbledore delicately.

"Certainly," said Voldemort, and his eyes seemed to burn red. "I have experimented; I have pushed the boundaries of magic further, perhaps, than they have ever been pushed —"

"Of some kinds of magic," Dumbledore corrected him quietly. "Of some. Of others, you remain . . . forgive me . . . woefully ignorant."

For the first time, Voldemort smiled. It was a taut leer, an evil thing, more threatening than a look of rage.

"The old argument," he said softly. "But nothing I have seen in the world has supported your famous pronouncements that love is more powerful than my kind of magic, Dumbledore."

"Perhaps you have been looking in the wrong places," suggested Dumbledore. (HP6, 443-444)

"Looking in the wrong places." This is where I think that Rowling has led the readers if we

too easily accept the surface interpretation of events that, in the aftermath of Dumbledore's murder at the end of Book Six, Harry and other members of the Order of the Phoenix have accepted. Yes, Dumbledore has been murdered — seemingly defeated, at least for the moment. His prize pupil — dare we call him *disciple*? — may still win the day. Harry Potter may yet destroy all the Horcruxes and thus be able to defeat Lord Voldemort in his quest to conquer death. But the question Rowling seems to be posing to us is: will Harry be able to accomplish his mission if he looks in the wrong places? Will Harry continue to look in dark places of hatred to find at least a smidgeon more of the same kind of power that Voldemort possesses? Or will he finally understand what his headmaster was trying to teach him, and learn to look in the places where the power of love resides? In the power of self-sacrifice, for example, rather than in the ancient powers of sacrificing others. Will Harry come to find out that his headmaster was making the same sort of self-sacrifice as his mother, and so finally begin to understand the power of love that resides in it?

We now arrive at a central thesis of this essay: I believe that — in posing a question to her readers about the power of love as above all powers, namely, Dumbledore's position — Rowling has posed the quintessential question of the Christian faith: do the Cross and Resurrection of Christ show us God's love as a power above all powers?

We might back up a moment and first ask: do Christians even fully appreciate the centrality of this question, in the first place? Perhaps followers of Christ need a break in the narrative, so to speak, akin to the one that readers of Harry Potter series are enduring between the sixth and seventh books. In our Holy Week observances, do we too quickly glide from Good Friday to Easter sunrise? Do we need to linger longer with Holy Saturday questions and doubts that must have tortured the disciples on that grief-stricken day? Does our celebration of Easter too quickly allow us to slip out from under the questions that the cross must have raised for the first disciples, questions that didn't instantly go away at the first sight of their Risen Lord?

In fact, maybe that is the method behind the Gospel of Mark's puzzling ending that hardly allows readers an Easter celebration at all: "So [the women] went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid" (Mark 16:8). In his book *Raising Abel*, author and theologian James Alison begins his chapter on hope⁸ by quoting this verse and commenting, "Whatever Christian hope is, it begins in terror and utter disorientation in the face of the collapse of all that is familiar and well known."⁹ Mark — much differently than the three other Gospel writers — seems to understand that the world-shattering reality of Holy Saturday couldn't have dissipated immediately with the announcement of the Resurrection. Otherwise, the shape of our Christian hope might fall right back into the "familiar and well-known," as portrayed in the best-selling *Left Behind* book series by Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins. To set the stage for their books, LaHaye and Jenkins invoke the popular rapture theology invented by John Nelson Darby in the 19th Century which claims that those who believe not just in Jesus but also in rapture theology itself are rescued from the earth before God's climactic struggle with evil. This struggle will end with Jesus' Second Coming to finish off evil with a vanquishing display of God's superior firepower that slaughters all the wicked, all those "left behind" who remain unrepentant. Isn't this the familiar and well-known? The only way humankind has been able to conceive of a defeat of the powers of death and destruction is by a superior show of the same force.

⁸Chapter 8, "Hope: Where Boldness Blossoms out of Fear." James Alison, *Raising Abel: The Recovery of the Eschatological Imagination* [New York: Crossroads, 1996].

⁹*Ibid.*, 161.

The biggest problem with such theologies, of course, is that they look nothing at all like the confessed center of the Christian faith — the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The world-shattering reality of Holy Saturday is the complete reverse of the rapture salvation story, a tale of violent rescue. Jesus is taunted on the cross, in fact, with just this sort of theology:

Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads and saying, “You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross.” In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking him, saying, “He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he wants to; for he said, ‘I am God’s Son.’” (Matthew 27:39-43)

As if to erase all hope in such a theology, Jesus himself quotes the psalmist, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” Jesus is the quintessential one Left Behind. This is the crushing reality of Holy Saturday. The familiar theology of God rescuing his people from their enemies with sudden finality and superior firepower is erased for Jesus’ followers with a desolating forsakenness.

If the proclamation of a resurrected Jesus is to make any sense at all, it must be through the continued collapse of the familiar, and the emergence of something completely new and unexpected. Jesus’ followers must look back on his message and ministry to recover what they had missed the first time, assuming that Jesus himself had anticipated this new experience of God’s salvation. The Gospels do, in fact, portray both these elements, namely, (1) Jesus’ understanding of God’s power of life as being rooted in the power of love that extends to all creation, even to those perceived as enemies; and (2) the disciples’ continued misunderstanding of this new way to think about God. The latter cannot be broken until the cross shatters the familiar and well-known way of expecting a sacred, divine violence to vanquish all other powers of death.

But on Holy Saturday that familiar way has not necessarily yet collapsed. On the contrary, the familiar way is more likely to raise grave questions and doubts about Jesus’ new way. Whatever he stood for, it must have been wrong. If he had a new sounding message about love and forgiveness from God, it was called into doubt by his apparent defeat at the hands of the powers of death. It is only the fearsome shock of a resurrected Jesus, and their own personal experience of unconditional forgiveness from God, that can set them on the road of recovering the fullness of that message.

Without the serious doubts of Holy Saturday, it is too easy to fall back into the familiar way because it hasn’t been fully experienced in contrast to Jesus’ way of the cross. Perhaps this is the problem of a triumphalist Christianity rooted in a theology that too quickly passes over the cross on the way to Easter morning. One remedy would be a more careful, deliberate observance of the Three Days that doesn’t go too quickly to Easter triumph. Another sort of help is to experience the Christian story through other good narratives.

So it is that I come back to J. K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter* series. I feel it provides precisely such an opportunity to more fully experience the questions of the cross through good literature — especially as the current interlude between Books Six and Seven immerses the reader in the Holy Saturday doubts posed by (self-)sacrificial death. Which is the greater power: the Dark Lord’s powers of death, or the Teacher’s self-sacrificing power of love?

Epilogue — Looking Ahead to Book Seven

It is difficult to avoid the temptation to guess along with millions of others what *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* will bring. It is no doubt a rather futile enterprise, but also a fun one. I’m giving in here to the temptation — with the qualifier that I am perhaps bringing a different sort of

lens to the guesswork, one framed by a theology of the cross.

I am proposing that Rowling is confronting her readers with a question of great importance to Christians. I cannot anticipate that she will provide a ‘Christian answer.’ This is not to say that she won’t, either. The creativity with which she has raised the question has been far more of an achievement than most writers, in my opinion. It’s with considerable excitement that many fans await the resolutions of this complex and wonderful story.

As a fan of the series who is Christian, there is one further passage I would point to in terms of looking forward to Rowling’s answer to the question she has so skillfully raised. Time is growing short for Dumbledore near the end of Book Six, and he is not his usual patient self during a private lesson with Harry. After having the Horcruxes explained to him, Harry has continued to sell short the power of love and to take a fatalistic approach to the prophecy. I quote at length one last time:

“It is essential that you understand this!” said Dumbledore, standing up and striding about the room, his glittering robes swooshing in his wake; Harry had never seen him so agitated. “By attempting to kill you, Voldemort himself singled out the remarkable person who sits here in front of me, and gave him the tools for the job! It is Voldemort’s fault that you were able to see into his thoughts, his ambitions, that you even understand the snakelike language in which he gives orders, and yet, Harry, despite your privileged insight into Voldemort’s world (which, incidentally, is a gift any Death Eater would kill to have), you have never been seduced by the Dark Arts, never, even for a second, shown the slightest desire to become one of Voldemort’s followers!”

“Of course I haven’t!” said Harry indignantly. “He killed my mum and dad!”

“You are protected, in short, by your ability to love!” said Dumbledore loudly. “The only protection that can possibly work against the lure of power like Voldemort’s! In spite of all the temptation you have endured, all the suffering, you remain pure of heart, just as pure as you were at the age of eleven, when you stared into a mirror that reflected your heart’s desire, and it showed you only the way to thwart Lord Voldemort, and not immortality or riches. Harry, have you any idea how few wizards could have seen what you saw in that mirror? Voldemort should have known then what he was dealing with, but he did not!

“But he knows it now. You have flitted into Lord Voldemort’s mind without damage to yourself, but he cannot possess you without enduring mortal agony, as he discovered in the Ministry. I do not think he understands why, Harry, but then, he was in such a hurry to mutilate his own soul, he never paused to understand the incomparable power of a soul that is untarnished and whole.”

“But, sir,” said Harry, making valiant efforts not to sound argumentative, “it all comes to the same thing, doesn’t it? I’ve got to try and kill him, or —”

“Got to?” said Dumbledore. “Of course you’ve got to! But not because of the prophecy! Because you, yourself, will never rest until you’ve tried! We both know it! Imagine, please, just for a moment, that you had never heard that prophecy! How would you feel about Voldemort now? Think!”

Harry watched Dumbledore striding up and down in front of him, and thought. He thought of his mother, his father, and Sirius. He thought of Cedric Diggory. He thought of all the terrible deeds he knew Lord Voldemort had done. A flame seemed to leap inside his chest, searing his throat.

“I’d want him finished,” said Harry quietly. “And I’d want to do it.”

“Of course you would!” cried Dumbledore. “You see, the prophecy does not mean you *have* to do anything! But the prophecy caused Lord Voldemort to *mark you as his equal*. . . . In other words, you are free to choose your way, quite free to turn your back on the prophecy! But Voldemort continues to set store by the prophecy. He will continue to hunt

you . . . which makes it certain, really, that —”

“That one of us is going to end up killing the other,” said Harry. “Yes.”

But he understood at last what Dumbledore had been trying to tell him. It was, he thought, the difference between being dragged into the arena to face a battle to the death and walking into the arena with your head held high. Some people, perhaps, would say that there was little to choose between the two ways, but Dumbledore knew — *and so do I*, thought Harry, with a rush of fierce pride, *and so did my parents* — that there was all the difference in the world. (HP6, 510-512)

Most clear in this passage is the understanding that love means courage to stand against the powers of death. One who also stood for the power of love and truth in this world, Mahatma Gandhi, also said very clearly, “Where there is only a choice between cowardice and violence, I would advise violence.”¹⁰ The power of love means first of all a courage to stand against evil. St. John also tells us that, “There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love” (1 John 4:18). Harry Potter is, in the spirit of his house founder Godric Gryffindor, a courageous young man. The power of love moves him to stand against evil.

Dumbledore is also trying to help Harry understand that love means greater freedom. It gives him more freedom than Voldemort, who is beholden to the powers of death. Even as the Dark Lord thinks he is controlling and vanquishing the powers of death, it is actually the opposite. The threat of death in the prophecy forces Voldemort to act. Harry, on the other hand, has the freedom to respond differently to the prophecy, though love compels him to stand against one who uses death as a power over others, Harry’s loved ones among them. Love gives him a wider range of options within which to act.

It is this latter aspect which is more difficult to learn and carry out, namely, the creativity of action nurtured by the power of love. My hope is that Harry in Book Seven will eventually discover an even greater freedom to stand against Voldemort with his power of love. After quoting Gandhi above when the options seem limited to cowardice or violence, theologian Walter Wink continues, “But Gandhi believes that a third way can always be found, if one is deeply committed to nonviolence.”¹¹ My intuitions are that Rowling has presented Albus Dumbledore as one in the tradition of Jesus Christ and Mahatma Gandhi, namely, as one who truly believes that the power of love is a superior force to the violent powers of death. Love is a power that gives one freedom to act more creatively in ways that avoid violence. In the lengthy quote from Book Six that launched this part of the discussion, Dumbledore is anxious to help Harry understand this freedom. But by the end of Book Six Harry’s situation might be likened to the position of Jesus’ disciples before Easter morning. It is almost impossible for him to fully understand the power of love at this stage. Dumbledore, the wise teacher, knows the difficulty and is almost always patient with Harry, sometimes making the mistake of being over-protective (an error he confesses to Harry at the end of Book Five, HP5, 837-38). He is less patient in this final lesson, however, and so at this stage love’s potential remains ambiguous in juxtaposition to the answer of the cross. Harry still seemingly

¹⁰ Walter Wink, *Jesus and Nonviolence: A Third Way* [Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2003], quoting Gandhi on p. 51. In the endnote, number 18 on p. 109, Wink gives a number of more expansive quotes from Gandhi, citing Joan V. Bondurant, *Conquest of Violence* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958], 28-29, 139 — such as:

At every meeting I repeated the warning that unless they felt that in non-violence they had come into possession of a force infinitely superior to the one they had and in the use of which they were adept, they should have nothing to do with non-violence and resume the arms they had possessed before.

¹¹Ibid.

conceives of his coming “battle to the death” in Voldemort’s terms.

I could, of course, be wrong about what Rowling is up to with Dumbledore. Book Seven may bring a resolution in more conventional terms. In my view, that means it would simply be another age-old tale of love in the conventional way of a hero vanquishing the enemy — for love’s sake, of course! — but by using a superior destructive firepower and not by using the power of love itself. My point in this essay is to suggest that such a conventional answer would *not* be the answer of God’s love on Good Friday and Easter — a self-sacrificing love which extends even to one’s enemies. A conventional resolution in Book Seven would not yet understand that the old heroic tales still wage the battle completely in the same terms of the powers of death, and so remain enslaved to them. Such old heroic tales do not undergo the collapse of the “familiar and well-known” as on Holy Saturday. They do not come to the post-Easter realization that we are all enemies of God precisely in our persisting in the ways of death to wage our battles of ‘good’ over ‘evil’ — even when that evil seems so devoid of love as Voldemort does.

My hope as a Christian reader is that Rowling’s plot resolution in Book Seven will not be of the conventional sort. My reading thus far is that Rowling has at the end of Book Six led readers to the Holy Saturday sort of collapse of the familiar, and to the Holy Saturday questioning of love’s power to vanquish evil. But my hope for Book Seven thus raises one final question: if Harry and members of the Order of the Phoenix find themselves in a Holy Saturday sort of position at the end of Book Six, will there be an Easter sort of experience in Book Seven which graciously begins to usher them into the full truth? Some readers are conjecturing (on Internet chats et al.) that Dumbledore hasn’t really died, or that he will resurrect. I don’t think Rowling will resort to that sort of an answer. I favor a significant role for Fawkes, Dumbledore’s magical phoenix who symbolizes resurrected life.

Finally, the Christian Easter experience also entails an experience of forgiveness and reconciliation. For Harry the most powerful possibility for that experience would lie with Snape — Malfoy to a lesser extent. I’m not expecting a dramatic ‘hug-and-makeup’ sort of reconciliation. Rowling is too much of a realist for that.¹² But, if I’m right about Snape still being on the side of the Order of the Phoenix, it will be Snape who provides the most crucial help in destroying the Horcruxes. Dumbledore implies several times in Book Six that he trusts only Snape with help on this matter.¹³ Snape is apparently the only other person in the Order who knows about them. Could Harry destroy four more Horcruxes¹⁴ with only help from Hermione and Ron? Again, I think that the only realistic solution is to have help from a powerful wizard like Snape, whom the Dark Lord will trust even more because of Dumbledore’s murder.

Of utmost importance to this issue is the fact that Dumbledore forgave Snape. It is at the heart of what this paper is about, namely, whether Dumbledore’s apparent mistake with Snape — on the side of love’s willingness to forgive — throws into doubt Dumbledore’s overall trust in love

¹²It may seem strange to use the word “realist” for a fantasy children’s novel writer. But I find her to be a realist when it comes to human relationships.

¹³When Dumbledore is badly injured destroying the Horcrux of the Gaunt ring, Snape helps him survive it (HP6, 503). And when Dumbledore and Harry return from trying to retrieve another Horcrux, with Dumbledore having drunk poison in the process, Dumbledore insists that they go to Snape alone for help (HP6, 580, 583).

¹⁴To achieve a seven-part splitting of his soul, Voldemort has made six Horcruxes. The first was Tom Riddle’s diary that Harry himself destroyed in Book Two. Dumbledore has destroyed the Horcrux of Marvolo Gaunt’s ring. That leaves four more Horcruxes for Harry to destroy — unless the mysterious note from R.A.B. in the locket Harry and Dumbledore thought was a Horcrux means that R.A.B. destroyed the real one. For a possible clue on that mystery, see HP5, 112, about Sirius Black’s brother Regulus (R. B.), and 116, about “a heavy locket [in the Black’s house] that none of them could open.”

as the greatest power in the world. So I conclude with my wildest conjecture for Book Seven: we will learn that Dumbledore believed in Snape's genuine remorse over his role in the Potters' murders *because he loved Lily Potter*. Harry will have trouble believing this because he heard Snape call his mother a "mudblood" in the Pensieve (HP5, 648). But the scene is fraught with love-hate tensions. Lily acts with a compassion apparently typical for her when she scolds James Potter for his maltreatment of Snape. It is the kind of compassion, perhaps, that Snape had seldom known in his life. It is a compassion that we strongly sense, too, through Horace Slughorn's deep admiration for Lily. And Slughorn, the Slytherin head of house during Snape's school years, presumably had significant influence on him. On the other hand, in the specific memory Harry witnesses — "Snape's Worst Memory" — Lily's compassion reaches out to Snape at a moment of humiliation at the hands of James Potter, Snape's rival. Snape, in turn, lashes out and calls her "mudblood."

But a secret love for Lily Evans-Potter would explain a depth of remorse on Snape's part that would be convincing to Dumbledore. Such a love would obviously have a tougher time of convincing Harry, with whom Snape has only related to the part of Harry he hates, Harry's father. If Snape has loved Harry's mother, Harry has yet to see that side of him through the way Snape treats him. Snape's hatred of James Potter¹⁵ makes it easy for him to keep his cover as a double agent by mistreating Harry.

But we have also seen Snape doing his part to protect Harry, beginning with the quidditch match in Book One. And as Snape is making his escape at the end of Book Six, he prevents other Death Eaters from harming Harry, citing the Dark Lord's orders to finish Harry himself (HP6, 603). Is this protection of Harry genuine obedience to the Dark Lord, or a sign of Snape's true repentance that brought him onto Dumbledore's side in the power of love?

J. K. Rowling, out of her fertile imagination, undoubtedly has a number of surprises brewing for Book Seven. I'm betting that at least one of them will involve the power of love that Lily Potter displayed on the night Harry became the Boy Who Lived. As we have found out more about Harry's mother, especially in Book Six, we have learned that such compassion was not an isolated event for her. And, while other characters in the story have tried to minimize it as such, Dumbledore alone has not underestimated the lasting power of her love. I predict that he will not be wrong.

¹⁵In Book 3 (357), Lupin tells Harry, Ron, and Hermione, "[Severus] especially disliked James. Jealous, I think, of James's talent on the Quidditch field . . ." Doesn't jealousy over Lily make more sense here as the reason why Snape "especially" hates James Potter?