Omar Khadr Is Not Harry Potter

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---. "Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists." -George W. Bush

"...the world isn't split into good people and Death Eaters." -Sirius Black

The twinning which is the subject of this paper first arose simply out of the observation that media coverage of Omar Khadr frequently noted his love of the Harry Potter stories. Khadr discussed Potter at length with fellow Guantánamo prisoners, his lawyers, UN prisoner advocates, even his interrogators. The fictional hero's triumph over institutionalization, exploitation and evil must have resonated with the adolescent Afghan Canadian, captured on an Afghan battlefield in 2002 when he was fifteen. Deeper consideration of the two child soldiers reveals startling differences in the wars which formed them.

**OMAR KHADR'S DEFENSE CANNOT BE HARRY POTTER'S DEFENSE**

Harry Potter belongs to an old-fashioned sort of conflict, and his story is at heart a familiar bildung in which the hero develops what he needs - combat skills, eloquence, the ability to lead both by example and by inspiring others - to succeed at a necessary task which he alone can complete. In the process of developing those skills, at the age of fourteen, Potter is forced to meet his nightmarish enemy in a graveyard. He first defies Voldemort and then fights: "he was going to die trying to defend himself; even if no defense was possible." Because of Potter's resolve to protect himself, he lives.

1 C.F. 60 Minutes, Friscolanti, Shephard Guantánamo's Child, etc.

2 Michelle Shephard, Guantánamo's Child: The Untold Story of Omar Khadr. (Toronto: John Wiley and Sons, 2008), 107, 174, 175, 194.

3 Ibid., 575.
Omar Khadr belongs to the War on Terror, a new type of confrontation according to Slavoj Žižek. Žižek avers that the attacks on the World Trade Centre opened a conflict between the “ideological numbness” of citizens in a global economy and the vital desperation of terrorists whose willingness to die ensures a “direct experience of the real” unprecedented in the West prior to 9/11. For combatants backed by the wealth of the global economy, this was supposed to be a “virtual war fought behind computer screens, a war experienced by its participants as a video game”. In response, impoverished combatants use one of the few effective strategies available to them; Jean Baudrillard asserts that their suicide attacks have “put their own deaths into play” in an unprecedented manner. To those targeted, suicide attacks prove a lack of respect for the codes of war both heinous and illegal, and so “the enemy is criminalized if he simply defends himself and returns fire”.

Consequently, when Captain Mike Silver of the U.S. Special Operations Forces found Omar Khadr in the rubble of the Ab Khail compound, the soldier was disgusted but not surprised to hear the boy beg for death. He was surprised to hear the plea “Shoot me” spoken in perfect, unaccented English. It was as much the shock of confrontation according to Slavoj Žižek, “ideological numbness” of citizens in a global economy and the vital desperation of terrorists whose willingness to die ensures a “direct experience of the real” unprecedented in the West prior to 9/11. For combatants backed by the wealth of the global economy, this was supposed to be a “virtual war fought behind computer screens, a war experienced by its participants as a video game”. In response, impoverished combatants use one of the few effective strategies available to them; Jean Baudrillard asserts that their suicide attacks have “put their own deaths into play” in an unprecedented manner. To those targeted, suicide attacks prove a lack of respect for the codes of war both heinous and illegal, and so “the enemy is criminalized if he simply defends himself and returns fire”.

Omar Khadr failed to bring his own death into play because his speech revealed a globalized identity even as the desire spoken revealed a terrorist. His story thus became one of entrapment between identities in that “desert of the real”, Guantánamo.

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2 Žižek, 37.
4 Žižek 93. Baudrillard also deems suicide attacks eerily apposite in the War on Terror because “when the two towers collapsed, you had the impression that they were responding to the suicide of the suicide-planes with their own suicides” (7).
5 Žižek, 15. Baudrillard also deems suicide attacks eerily apposite in the War on Terror because “when the two towers collapsed, you had the impression that they were responding to the suicide of the suicide-planes with their own suicides” (7).
6 Ibid., 15. These were Silver’s words to fellow Special Operations soldiers.
7 Žižek, 15. The phrase is taken from dialogue in the movie The Matrix directed by the Wackowski brothers in 1999.
He faces five charges relating to the firefight: 1. Murder in violation of the law of war, 2. Attempted murder in violation of the law of war, 3. Conspiracy, 4. Providing material support for terrorism, and 5. Spying. His first tribunal was struck down as unconstitutional in June 2006. The Bush Administration then recast the entire Guantanánamo legal system so they could bring him to his second tribunal in June 2007, where the charges were dismissed without prejudice. Those charges were reinstated on appeal, and he was due to face a third tribunal in November 2008, which was again delayed when his lawyers successfully argued that the prosecution had not disclosed significant documents pertaining to Khadr's mental health.

In February 2008, prior to Khadr's preliminary hearing for the third tribunal, a classified report was accidentally released by the US Department of Defense. It is a statement from "OC-1", one of the American soldiers who entered the compound just after the grenade had been thrown. The soldier

... heard moaning coming from the back of the compound. The dust rose up from the ground and began to clear; he then saw a man facing him lying on his right side. The man had an AK-47 on the ground beside him and the man was moving. OC-1 fired one round, striking the man in the head and the movement ceased. Dust was again stirred by this rifle shot. When the dust rose, he saw a second man sitting up facing away from him leaning against the brush. This man, later identified as Khadr, was moving ...

Based on his extensive combat experience, OC-1 believed that Khadr and the man at the back of the alley with the AK rifle were the only two alive at the time of the assault. He felt that, due to the grenade being thrown simultaneously to the directed rifle fire, the grenade was thrown by someone other than the man (with) the rifle.

Unlike earlier reports, the accidentally-released document shows that Khadr was shot not in the heat of battle, but in its aftermath. More important for his defense, he wasn't the only person who could have thrown the grenade.

In both the fiction and the reports of reality, the crime was initially assumed to be the action of one man: Sirius Black / Omar Khadr.

In both fiction and reality another person survived: Peter Pettigrew / the unnamed combatant killed by OC-1 with a shot to the head.

In the fiction, it turns out that the unsuspected survivor, Peter Pettigrew, was actually the perpetrator of the crime.

In reality, we don't know. OC-1 deduced that Khadr must have thrown that grenade, just like Cornelius Fudge deduces that Sirius Black is guilty.

Sirius, a man well past the age of majority, goes to Azkaban for twelve years of mental torture by Dementors.

Khadr, a minor when captured, was sent first to Bagram Prison in Afghanistan, and then to Guantánamo for, so far, seven years of...well, reports vary.

Bolstered by knowledge of his own innocence and a mutable identity, Sirius escapes his prison.

Trapped between globalism and terrorism, Khadr cannot escape.

THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE IS NOT THE MINISTRY OF MAGIC OR GEORGE W. BUSH IS NOT RUFUS SCRIMGEOUR

... though both "are ready to wreck their own democratic world out of hatred for the ... other".

15 Shephard Guantánamo's Child, 195.
16 Ibid., 213.
19 Rawling Prisoner, 371.
20 Žižek, 85.
In The Half Blood Prince, Scrimgeour tries to persuade Harry, as the “Chosen One,” to do his duty to the magical community by “popping in and out of the Ministry from time to time.” Harry refuses: “I don’t like some of the things the Ministry is doing” he tells Scrimgeour, and flashes the scars across the back of his hand that he got while in detention with Dolores Umbridge, the ruthless Ministry appointment at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry.

When Colonel Morris Davis began his tenure as Chief Prosecutor at Guantanamo, his catch phrase for the tribunals was “full, fair and open.” By the time he resigned in October 2007, blatant, pervasive political interference led him to call them “a disgrace.”

Harry’s scars spell out “I must not tell lies.” He gets them for refusing to lie to Umbridge.

Khadr’s tribunal will have to determine whether or not he lied to mollify his interrogator, Sergeant Joshua Claus. Claus was later convicted in the torture death of a taxi driver named Dilawar brought in by the Americans for questioning about an attack on an American base. Dilawar was exonerated post-mortem. Due to a belated publication ban, Claus is now referred to as “Sergeant C” in media reports.

Dolores Umbridge admits privately that it was she who ordered the Dementors to attack Harry and his cousin Dudley in Little Whinging, though publicly the Ministry of Magic is reluctant even to admit the attack took place, let alone that Dementors will work for whomever allows them to indulge their sadism. Though their Ministry masters attempt to maintain a thin pretense that they use Dementors to punish wrongdoers, the Dementors’ desire only to cause despair, without regard to guilt or innocence.

Hmph. I guess the Department of Defense really is The Ministry of Magic. But surely...

INTERROGATION IS NOT VERITASERUM

Veritaserum is a “Truth Potion so powerful that three drops would have you spilling your innermost secrets.” It is also quite rare. When it is unavailable, the Ministry (in the person of Dolores Umbridge) is willing to fall back on older, more painful methods of obtaining information:

“You are forcing me, Potter... I do not want to,” said Umbridge, still moving restlessly on the spot, “but sometimes circumstances justify the use... I am sure the Minister will understand that I had no choice.”

Malfoy was watching her with a hungry expression on his face.

“The Cruciatus Curse ought to loosen your tongue,” said Umbridge quietly.

Malfoy’s “hungry expression” and Umbridge’s restlessness indicate an avidity for torture that has more to do with sadistic anticipation than with gathering information.

Omar Khadr is charged on the strength of evidence elicited from interrogations by a new division of Military Police at Bagram fond of “the ‘common perineal strike,’ a crippling blow to the thigh that wasn’t to be used unless a guard’s life was in danger but the new unit of MPs used it routinely. Some guards later said they were amused when one of the prisoners screamed out ‘Allah, Allah’ after each strike.”

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22 Ibid., 324-325.
24 Ibid., 220.
27 Rowling Half-Blood Prince, 324.
28 Ibid., 130.
29 I.e. see Rowling Prisoner, 66, 281-282 Goblet of Fire, 681 Order of the Phoenix, 21.
30 Rowling Prisoner, 187-188.
31 George W. Bush is not J.K. Rowling, either; she generated wealth from the war that she authored.
32 Ibid., 448.
33 Rowling Order of the Phoenix, 657-658.
34 Shephard Guantanamo’s Child, 94.
In August 2002, the Bush Administration changed their working definition of torture from the one in the UN Convention against Torture - “an act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining ... information or a confession...”\(^{35}\) - to the much more limited “activities that result in ‘death, organ failure, or the permanent impairment of a significant body function’”\(^{36}\), a definition that leaves plenty of scope for legal play among sadists.

When Harry is threatened with the Cruciatius curse, Hermione pretends to be terrified, and bamboozles Umbridge into following her into the Forbidden Forest where the Assistant Undersecretary to the Minister is abducted by Centaurs\(^{37}\), demonstrating that information elicited through pain or its threat is unreliable.

In interrogation, during which he was physically tortured, as well as threatened with guard dogs, and sexual abuse\(^{38}\), Omar Khadr confessed to throwing the grenade that killed Sergeant. Christopher Speer\(^{39}\).

**OMAR KHADR’S SCARS ARE NOT HARRY POTTER’S SCARS**

Harry Potter has a lightning bolt on his forehead, a remnant of the night Voldemort killed his parents and tried to kill him. It hurts whenever Voldemort experiences emotional extremes.

From OC-1’s shots, Omar Khadr “still has shrapnel in his right shoulder which is painful at night when the temperature drops”\(^{40}\), and “which constantly sets off the metal detector”\(^{41}\) when he is being frisked\(^{41}\).

Potter also has the words “I must not tell lies” etched on the back of his hand, resulting from punishment during detention with Dolores Umbridge\(^{42}\).

Khadr also has “a large scar on his upper torso and a cluster of smaller scars on his left shoulder and a few others elsewhere”\(^{43}\).

Despite being a Seeker, Harry naturally has terrible eyesight, requiring that he wear his signature round glasses\(^{44}\).

When Omar Khadr arrived at Bagram, his shrapnel wounds were so large you could fit a Coke can in the back of his head\(^{45}\). He is now blind in the left eye, vision in the right is deteriorating “because of a piece of shrapnel embedded in the eye’s membrane”\(^{46}\), and he gets terrible headaches. Exacerbating the situation is “the constant bright light to which Omar is exposed, both natural and fluorescent” at Guantanamo. His UN advocates bought him a pair of sunglasses, but he is not allowed to have them\(^{47}\).

Harry Potter’s scars have narrative functions: for example, the scar on his forehead symbolizes his difference from other wizard children and his relationship with Voldemort, even as it works to forward the plot and deepen the tension by informing Potter of his enemy’s actions. The scars on the back of his hand remind him that some adversaries are not immediately recognizable from allies.

Omar Khadr’s scars mean pain.

**OMAR KHADR IS NOT STAN SHUNPIKE**

In The Order of the Phoenix, Harry objects to the Ministry of Magic’s action of throwing the ineffectual and not very bright Stan Shunpike into Azkaban, simply because “They probably want to look as though they’re doing something”\(^{48}\).

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\(^{35}\) Ibid.

\(^{36}\) Ibid.

\(^{37}\) J.K. Rowling Order of the Phoenix, 666.

\(^{38}\) Tietz.

\(^{39}\) Canadian Press.


\(^{42}\) Rowling Order of the Phoenix, 247.

\(^{43}\) Gould, 13.

\(^{44}\) J.K. Rowling, Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows (Vancouver: Raincoast, 2007), 49.

\(^{45}\) Corsetti’s observation, cited in Shephard Guantanamo’s Child, 96.

\(^{46}\) Amégan, 1.

\(^{47}\) Millington, 3, 4.

\(^{48}\) Hermione’s words in Rowling Order of the Phoenix, 209.
By the beginning of The Deathly Hallows, Shunpike is part of a mass prison break of Death Eaters. Even though he rides among the dark wizards, Harry realizes that the pimply youth is too weak to be a fully fledged Death Eater: "I saw Stan Shunpike... you know, that bloke who was the conductor on the Knight Bus? And I tried to Disarm him instead of..."

Even though one of Guantánamo’s UN appointed human rights advocates recently observed that “the [guards and staff] with whom I dealt [believe] that [Khadr] is a ‘non-radicalized’ ‘good kid’”56, one of his colleagues had earlier noted that “Extended detention in Guantánamo would ... run the risk of turning (Khadr) into a radical”51. As early as 2004, a prison psychologist noted that Omar Khadr “has been influenced by the ‘hard men’ among the detainees who have focused on his desire to please people. Umar (sic) ... has demonstrated very little independent thinking”52.

Like Stan Shunpike, Omar Khadr is imprisoned – Shunpike wholly unjustifiably, and Khadr with questionable justification.

Like Stan Shunpike, Omar Khadr has been exposed to corrupting forces during imprisonment. Shunpike succumbs to the Imperius curse, but will Khadr fly with the Death Eaters’ if freed?

OMAR KHADR IS NOT REGULUS ARCTURIUS BLACK

Stan Shunpike comes involuntarily to Dark Magic as a young man, but Regulus Arcturus Black is born to it. In The Order of the Phoenix, Sirius tells Harry that his parents “...thought Regulus was a right little hero for joining up” with the Death Eaters53.

Omar’s father Ahmed Said Khadr began his work in Afghanistan providing charity for widows and orphans of the Russian invasion. Over the decades he became more politicized, until he was actively involved with Al Qaeda54. At one point in Afghanistan the Khadr children played with Osama bin Laden’s children55. Ahmed Said Khadr died in the same NATO raid in Waziristan in 2003 that left Omar’s brother Kareem a paraplegic. Omar’s oldest brother Abdullah was arrested in Pakistan in 2004, after the Americans offered a $500,000 bounty for him; he was deported to Canada where he is now fighting extradition to the US56. In 2005, CBC aired interviews showing Omar’s mother Elsamnah and sister Zaynab vociferously defending the militancy of their family57. This accumulation of evidence led the New York Sun to call the Khadrs “Canada’s First Family of Terrorism.”

But should Omar Khadr be held responsible for his actions in July 2002, whatever they were? He was sent to his first Afghan training camp when he was eleven years old, and was captured by American forces when he was still fifteen58. In 2007, the Guantánamo prosecution leaked a video tape found in the wreckage at Ab Khail, showing Omar Khadr wiring land mines and later assisting to plant them59, evidence intended to be damning. However, it also provides visceral, visual confirmation of his youth at the time of his detention when he was firmly within the jurisdiction of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as the Optional Protocol ... on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, which went into force in the US on January 23, 200360.

Even his captors are inclined to give Khadr the benefit of the doubt. For example, US Army Interrogator Damien Corsetti thought that Omar was “a young kid who got swept up into something because of his family ties and never got the opportunity to make a choice for himself”61. Jim Gould – Canada’s Department of Foreign Affairs representative at the CIA’s 2003 and 2004 interviews of Omar Khadr – observed that “[a]ll those persons who have been in

54 Shephard Guantánamo’s Child, chapters 2 and 3.
55 Ibid., 62.
56 Shephard, "$500,000 Paid”.
57 McKenna.
59 60 Minutes.
60 Ibid., 14-15.
61 Qtd. in Shephard Guantánamo’s Child, 96.
positions of authority over him have abused him and his trust for their own purposes.\textsuperscript{62}

Both Regulus Arcturus Black and Omar Khadr come from families that influenced them to choose paths of violence.

Both enter into that violence with youthful naiveté. Both repudiate the affiliation.

In Regulus Arcturus Black’s case, a true change of heart leads him to strike an unsung blow for good, by stealing Voldemort’s locket horcrux.

One of Omar Khadr’s UN Advocates observed that “his consuming desire is to help people, which he views as his purpose in life.”\textsuperscript{63}

\textbf{HARRY’S “DISCIPLINARY HEARING INTO OFFENCES COMMITTED UNDER THE DECREE FOR THE REASONABLE RESTRICTION OF UNDERAGE SORCERY AND THE INTERNATIONAL STATUTE OF SECRECY” IS NOT THE “RULING ON DEFENSE MOTION FOR DISMISSAL DUE TO LACK OF JURISDICTION UNDER THE MCA (MILITARY COMMISSIONS ACT OF 2006) IN REGARD TO JUVENILE CRIMES OF A CHILD SOLDIER”}

...though the excerpts below show that both have Kangaroo-Court logic at their hearts.

“You received an official warning from the Ministry for using illegal magic three years ago, did you not?”

“Yes, but…”\textsuperscript{64}

“The defense motion states that Congress did not give the commission ‘jurisdiction over juvenile crimes by child soldiers.’ (Paragraph 5a(1), Defense Motion)”\textsuperscript{65}

\textsuperscript{62} Gould, 6.
\textsuperscript{63} Millington 4.
\textsuperscript{64} Rowling \textit{Order of the Phoenix}, 129.
\textsuperscript{65} Brownback, 2, parentheses in original.
“The commission finds that a military commission established pursuant to the MCA is not a 'court of the United States'...”73.

“The witch with the monocle cut across him in a booming voice. 'You produced a fully-fledged Patronus?' 'Yes,' said Harry, 'because –'”74.

“The commission finds that the provisions of the Juvenile Delinquency Act are not applicable to a military commission established under the MCA”75.

'A corporeal Patronus?'

'A - what?' said Harry”76.

“The commission accepts the position of the defense that the ‘use and abuse of a juvenile by al Qaeda is a violation of the law of nations’”77.

'Your patronus had a clearly defined form? I mean to say, it was more than vapour or smoke?'

'Yes,' said Harry, feeling both impatient and slightly desperate, 'it's a stag. It's always a stag’”78.

“The commission further accepts the general statements contained within all of the amicus briefs which point to many ways in which various nation states and the international community are attempting to limit the recruitment and use of child soldiers”79.

"'Always?' boomed Madam Bones. 'You have produced a Patronus before now?'

'Yes,' said Harry. 'I've been doing it for over a year.'

'And you are fifteen years old?' 'Yes, and –'”...

80 Rowling Order of the Phoenix, 129. 81 Brownback, 7. 82 Rowling Order of the Phoenix, 130. 83 Brownback, 5. 84 Ibid., 143. 85 Brownback, 4. 86 Rowling Order of the Phoenix, 129. 87 Brownback, 5. 88 Rowling Order of the Phoenix, 129. 89 Brownback, 5.

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“Impressive,’ said Madam Bones, staring down at him...”80.

“Having accepted these matters, the commission does not find them to be germane to the issue before it”81.

"'It’s not a question of how impressive the magic was,' said Fudge in a testy voice, 'in fact, the more impressive the worse it is, I would have thought...’”82.

“The Defense Motion For Dismissal Due to Lack of Jurisdiction Under the MCA in Regard to Juvenile Crimes of a Child Soldier is denied”83.

OMAR KHADR IS NOT DRACO MALfoy

Draco Malfoy is a cheating, bullying thorn in Harry Potter’s side beginning with their second meeting on the train to Hogwarts84, all the way through The Half Blood Prince in which Malfoy takes on the Dark Mark85, to the final Battle for Hogwarts in The Deathly Hallows. Even though Malfoy and his sidekicks do their best to frustrate Harry’s quest to destroy the horcruxes, Harry rescues Malfoy twice: first from the fiendfyre conjured by Crabbe86, then from an anonymous Death Eater87.

Why go to all that effort to save a boy reeking of arrogance and Dark Magic from the very first book?

Because, despite Draco Malfoy’s becoming a Death Eater88, and his acceptance of the task of murdering Dumbledore, and his bearing mute witness to the murder of Charity Burbage89, and his coerced torture of Voldemort’s victims for him90, and his betrayal of his classmates91,
Malfloy's "soul is not yet so damaged" that he is irredeemable. He has not yet committed murder.62

Dumbledore's faith in Draco Malfloy bears out. The epilogue to The Deathly Hallows, shows Malfloy seeing his son off to Hogwarts.63 Some sort of redemption must have resulted from all the compassion shown the boy, leading to the man on the station platform.

If Draco Malfloy merits such generosity, then why should we deny the same to Omar Khadr?

Because Sergeant Speer died. Unlike Draco Malfloy, Omar Khadr might already be a soul-ripped murderer.

If he threw that grenade. If Speer's death is murder and not an act of war, or of self-defense. If we disregard Khadr's age at the time.

**HARRY POTTER'S RESOLVE COULD BE OMAR KHADR'S RESOLVE**

"...It could be me next, couldn't it? But if it is," he said fiercely, now looking straight into Dumbledore's blue eyes, gleaming in the wand-light, "I'll make sure I take as many Death Eaters with me as I can, and Voldemort too if I can manage it."

"Spoken both like your mother and father's son and Sirius's true godson!" said Dumbledore, with an approving pat on Harry's back.64

"...It could be me next, couldn't it? But if it is," he said fiercely, now looking straight into Abu Laith al Libi's brown eyes, gleaming in the fire-light, "I'll make sure I take as many infidel invaders with me as I can, and General David Barno too if I can manage it."

"Spoken both like your mother and father's son and Osama's true godson!" said Al Libi, with an approving pat on Omar's back.

Hey! That's ... that's not ... you can't DO that!

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62 Ibid., 548.
63 Ibid., 605.
64 J. K. Rowling, Half-Blood Prince, 77-78. Ellipsis in original.
65 In June or July 2002, Omar Khadr's father told Omar to go into the field with Abu Laith al Libi, to act as guide and translator; it was during this mission, Omar's first, that the firefight at Ab Khail took place. Shephard Guantánamo's Child, 22.
67 Baudrillard 19, parentheses added.
68 Ibíd., 19.
me” he tells Aberforth\(^{100}\), and later all the witnesses to the final duel\(^{101}\). A “pig for slaughter,” Snape calls him\(^{102}\).

Like Harry Potter, Omar Khadr defied the odds and survived. But for a fighter using his own death as a strategy, survival means failure. Even though Khadr made the choice of self-destruction, he was powerless to bring it to its terrible fruition.

*It isn’t easy for Potter, either. On the way to Voldemort, he feels “his heart pounding fiercely in his chest. How strange that in his dread of death, it pumped all the harder, valiantly keeping him alive. But it would have to stop, and soon. Its beats were numbered”*\(^{103}\).

OC-1’s shots into Omar Khadr’s back left gaping holes in his chest. His actual, non-metaphorical, beating heart was right there, exposed to any who cared to look\(^{104}\).

*Harry gives himself up to Voldemort. Even though he uses Avada Kedavra, the killing curse, on Harry, the boy survives*\(^{105}\).

At Ab Khail, Omar Khadr begged the American soldiers to kill him, and “every U.S. soldier who walked by Omar longed to put a bullet in his head”\(^{106}\). They refrained, dissuaded by Captain Silver.

*Having survived the killing curse, Harry*

knew his body would not be allowed to remain unsullied upon the Forest floor, it must be subjected to humiliation to prove Voldemort’s victory. He was lifted into the air and it took all his determination to remain limp, yet the pain he expected did not come. He was thrown once, twice, three times into the air: his glasses flew off and he felt his wand slide a little beneath his robes, but he kept himself floppy and lifeless, and when he fell to the ground for the last time the clearing echoed with jeers and shrieks of laughter\(^{107}\).

Omar Khadr was admitted to Bagram where his treatment was “harsher than that of most detainees (and) guards singled him out for the worst treatment, payback for allegedly killing one of their own”\(^{108}\). He “was ordered to clean floors on his hands and knees while his wounds were still wet. When he could walk again, he was forced to stand for hours at a time with his hands tied above a door frame”\(^{109}\). Literally adding insult to injury, “[e]ach time [guards] walked past his cell they would yell: Murderer! Killer! Butcher!”\(^{110}\).

Harry is carried from the forest to the threshold of Hogwarts in the arms of a weeping Hagrid. He daren’t give any clue. that he’s alive; instead, he must lie still, and suffer the through his teachers’ and friends’ despair at his apparent death\(^{111}\).

When not being interrogated, Omar Khadr – like the other prisoners at Bagram – was required to lie still on a six foot square blanket, for twenty-three and a half hours a day\(^{112}\). Under the urgent imperative to get intelligence as quickly as possible, Khadr “was repeatedly brought into interrogation rooms on stretchers, in great pain. Pain medication was withheld, apparently to induce cooperation”\(^{113}\).

*When the battle begins again at Hogwarts, Harry Potter’s intention to sacrifice himself has shielded his friends and allies. He tells Voldemort: “I’ve done what my mother did. They’re protected from you. Haven’t you noticed how none of the spells you put on them are binding? You can’t torture them. You can’t touch them”*\(^{114}\).

Nothing – no legal precedents, no UN Conventions, no International Treaties – protected Omar Khadr. His captors did touch him. They did torture him\(^{115}\).

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\(^{100}\) Rowling *Deathly Hallows*, 564.  
\(^{101}\) Ibid, 590.  
\(^{102}\) Ibid, 531.  
\(^{103}\) Ibid, 554.  
\(^{104}\) Shephard *Guantánamo’s Child*, opposite 127.  
\(^{105}\) Rowling *Deathly Hallows*, 564.  
\(^{106}\) Tietz.
Harry Potter fulfills his heroic destiny when he defeats Voldemort (killed by his own rebounding malice) and saves his world\textsuperscript{116}.

Whether or not Omar Khadr threw the grenade that killed Sergeant Speer, that action rebounded upon him, "a thoroughly screwed up young man who had been used his whole life"\textsuperscript{117}.

**HARRY POTTER’S STORY IS NOT OMAR KHADR’S LIFE**

Until a person’s mid-twenties, billions of grey neural connections continue to develop in his or her brain, with those in the fontal lobe – the seat of judgement – being the last acquired\textsuperscript{118}. The grey matter develops most abundantly when the brain in question is seated in a body that experiences many different things.

*Harry Potter*’s story is one of incident, adventure, peer relationships, role models, reading and study, all of which describe a person in the process of developing rich, profuse grey matter. Part of the joy of reading the novels is watching how he matures, gaining sophisticated judgment while maintaining his embattled sense of morality.

In late 2004, Khadr’s lawyers administered a psychological test to screen for dementia. The results showed that “the impact (of Omar Khadr’s isolation) for over two-and-a-half years is potentially catastrophic to his future development”\textsuperscript{119}.

**OMAR KHADR IS NOT HARRY POTTER**

*Harry Potter’s death and rebirth changed his world; he saved his community from imminent destruction, vanquished evil in the person of Voldemort, and saved the Ministry of Magic from corruption.*

Omar Khadr’s survival and incarceration have rendered him powerless to affect his world. Since his capture, his father has died, one brother is now paraplegic, another is in prison fighting extradition to the U.S, the Khadr family has lost a civil lawsuit brought against his father’s estate by Sergeant Speer’s widow\textsuperscript{120}, and U.S. military laws have been corrupted for the sole purpose of ensuring a guilty verdict when Omar Khadr is brought to a tribunal\textsuperscript{121}.

*Harry Potter’s story follows the growth of a hero determined to develop the understanding and skills he needs to achieve a socially and morally glorious goal.*

Omar Khadr’s life is divided in essence; he is equally Canadian and Afghani, Global citizen and terrorist. His stalemated existence symbolizes the stalemated War on Terror. If the Obama Administration can work with various constituents in that conflict to find a way to resolve Omar Khadr’s case, they will have also found a metonym for resolution of the entire war.

Indifferent to his potential for symbolic significance, Omar Khadr remains so physically and mentally deadlocked that in 2006 he stopped talking about the *Harry Potter* stories. They are, after all, about a boy who can go anywhere he can imagine, a boy with trustworthy friends and wise, edgy, compassionate mentors who help him triumph over adversity. A boy who has hope.

What could any of that mean to Omar Khadr?

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116 Rowling *Deathly Hallows*, 595.
117 Gould, qtd. in Shephard *Guantánamo’s Child*, 126.
119 Shephard *Guantánamo’s Child*, 174, parentheses added.

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120 Shephard “Khadr Goes”.
121 Shephard *Guantánamo’s Child*, 220; Worthington.
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EDITOR’S INTRODUCTION:
The Poetry of Dragica Rajčić

I met with Dragica Rajčić on a mid-summer afternoon, a few days
after the capture of war criminal Radovan Karadzic, and a few days
before she was to fly home to Switzerland. During her year-long visit,
Dragica was a guest of the Max Kade German House and an artist-in
residence at the University of Kentucky. The Croatian-born poet
writes her verse in non-native German and phonetically creates the
words she does not know how to spell. Her five books of poetry have
been uniformly well-received, and her unique perspective on the
intricacies of war lends her poems a real and raw urgency. Dragica
fled to Switzerland at the outbreak of war. Since then she has won
numerous awards and prizes for her poetry and has donated
proceeds from her work to fund humanitarian efforts in Croatia.
Needless to say, I was eager to meet her. I found her at a small, round
table in Common Grounds Coffee House, her arms laden with laptop,
bag, and paper cup. She rose from her chair to greet me, friendly and
bright-eyed.

I cannot deem our meeting an interview. Dragica was more
interested in conversation than questions and answers. When asked
about her decision to write poetry in German, she directed me to
interviews posted on her website. When asked how her role as a
mother affected her poetry, she opened her laptop and pulled up
pictures of her beautiful daughters, designers of elegant clothing,
posed and smiling their mother’s infectious smile. Her son, she said,
was acting as her travel agent. She had been speaking with him on
the phone all morning, planning her return. I stopped reading from
my list of questions, turned off the recorder and began to talk with
Dragica. Later, I revisited and re-read the interviews on her website,
the discussions that detail her awards, her background, her creative
choices in writing poetry. It is information I encourage you to seek,
though it is not the information I gleaned from our casual afternoon
meeting.