

Sublimation and the Snitch

SUBLIMATION AND THE SNITCH: QUIDDITCH IN HUMAN SEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS

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Year Seven Thesis

It is fairly rare, in the Wizarding world, for individuals or even societies of witches and wizards, to make use of Muggle ideals. Muggle items are used every day, and with such frequency that a Misuse of Muggle Artifacts office has been created to deal with problems arising from wizards charming these Muggle objects, such as 'windscreen wipers', to perform magical tasks.

Muggle concepts, however, are rarely put to use or even given a second thought. Take the example of modernisation; while Muggle children write compositions with 'ball-point pens' which dispense ink automatically, Wizarding students still use the traditional quill and inkpot.

Wizards have very little use for the delicate Muggle art of Psychology; we have our own methods of dealing with self-analysis and depression, such as Pensieves, Cheering Charms, and a variety of potions such as the Smilelots Potion, Kersif's Meditationary Draught, and McNaughty's Wondrous Cup[1].

[1] *Snape, Severus (student). Paper. The Art Of Cheering Potions, paragraph 6 (inch 4). Don't worry, Professor, I didn't nick it, he let me see.*

However, it is important to understand the crude Muggle mechanics which govern their investigation of the psyche, which is why I have chosen to devote this paper to an analysis of Quidditch in the past fifty years, as a metaphorical activity replacing the sexual urge in an increasingly repressed society. I intend to present a brief overview of: 1) Social sexual views in Wizarding society; 2) The history of Quidditch and its impact on human romantic relations; 3) Freud's[2] views on the subject of human sexuality as it relates to sublimation; 4) Jung's[3] concepts of symbology as they relate to Quidditch. I will also examine objects used in play (broomsticks, balls, and hoops) as well as society's views on Quidditch.

[2] *A Muggle who, despite professing that every man wishes to sleep with his mother, has gained some accord as a founder in the field of Psychology and its sister discipline Psychoanalysis.*

[3] *It has been observed that Jung was, in fact, a squib of Wizarding parentage, which may explain some of his views on the nature of the universe. To Muggles, these do seem a bit nutty.*

According to Quidditch Through The Ages[4], the very origins of what might be termed "modern" Quidditch -- by which I mean, the first game discernibly Quidditch-like in nature -- are recorded in an odd courtship ritual that any schoolboy may be familiar with, the love/hate relationship between admirer and admired.

[4] *Whisp, Kennilworthy, p.7. I hope you know I had to pay Nox Malfoy to get him to return it to the Library.*

Whisp quotes Gertie Keddle[5] as observing a primitive Quidditch game in the eleventh century. While on the surface Keddle often appears to be hostile towards the game and its players, it is notable that she still watches the games almost daily (although admittedly it is difficult to tell, as every single entry is marked "Tuesday". Scholars still in debate). Of especial interest is her observation of a "big Scottish warlock from up the hill" who joined in the play. It is interesting to note that Gertie Keddle's tombstone actually bears the inscription "Gertie MacDonal" and is accompanied by an "Ardagh MacDonal", quite possibly the "Scottish warlock" of her earlier journal entries. One hopes he taught her what Wednesday is. To this day, of course, it is "often the girls who seem the least interested in Quidditch and make fun of it and that, who really want to get in our graves." [6]

[5] *Keddle, Gertie. Diary, now in possession of the Museum of Quidditch, London, and I do wish you had let me go down there on a week-end to do some research, Professor.*

[6] *Potter, James. Interview, March 25th.*

A century later, Quidditch, a masculine-dominated sport though by no means exclusionary to women, is still intimately connected with romance. Goodwin Kneen writes:

Oona from the inn...let us have free mead all night because we won as well. Gunhilda was a bit angry I got back so late. I had to duck a couple of nasty jinxes but I've got my fingers back now.[7]

So we see that, directly from its beginnings, Quidditch has had a strong connection with love, seduction, and human relationships. What we are trying to discover is why.

[7] *Kneen, Goodwin, quoted by Kennilworthy Whisp. Letter, now in the possession of the Norwegian Ministry of Magic. Really, professor, I could*

have got there and back in a day.

In the past fifty years -- for the sake of clarity, let us take the dates 1925 - 1975 -- British society on the whole has grown more permissive in its sexual attitudes[8]. Divorces are not the scandalous uncommon events they once were[9]; unmarried women are becoming less afraid to bear and raise children alone; and the younger generation has even shown an unprecedented trend in living in co-ed and openly romantic situations without marrying first.

[8] *Spencer, Priscilla, and Wack, Alice. Scholarly Paper. Statistical Survey In An Attempt To Shock The British: Attitudes on sex and sexuality in Britain, 1932 - 1970. Analyses previous studies and incorporates newdata in a study of sexual liberation in the British Isle s.*

[9] *This is, perhaps, owing in large part to King Edward's marriage to an American divorcee after his abdication of the throne; for more information on this Muggle historical event, see Griffee, Jen. "Abdication and Fornication: A Retrospective on Edward and Wallis." Newsweek, June 1965, p. 15.*

In the Wizarding world, however, there has been a reverse trend. As we begin to realise more and more that we must prevent Muggle society from witnessing magic and magical acts, Wizarding communities have drawn in on themselves, and a vague aura of paranoia has begun to prevail, beginning in the 1920s with the more widely accepted use of Muggle recording devices such as cameras (a heavily-used device in the Wizarding world, it should be noted) and "movie film".

At first, during the 1920s and 30s, and even up through about 1945 according to some documents[10], this was an unwritten rule, that Wizards were to keep to themselves and attempt to "blend in" when in Muggle society. As a belief rather than a law, this fostered political and social conservatism, which in turn has kept the Wizarding world well behind the Muggle one in things such as social acceptance of unwed mothers, unmarried couples living together, and sexual depictions or innuendos in advertising, music, and popular fiction.

[10] *Siegs, Allison. Scholarly Paper, Wizard Law Concerning Muggles: The Naughty Bits. Inch 2.*

In the Daily Prophet archives[11], many instances of social and sexual conservatism in the magical world can be found. Perhaps the most intriguing are the society columns of Richard Skeeter, spanning 1930 - 1972, cut short due to a tragic death when he was caught breaking into the home of the Minister of Magic by a guard-Kneazle, and summarily dispatched. Within these nearly forty years, however, are a number of intriguing cases illustrating the point of Wizarding isolationism and continual closed-minded attitudes towards sex and sexual activities.

[11] *Archival office, Hogsmeade.*

On the other side of the Knut we find the enigmatic "Dog" Gordon, a society-columnist for the far less popular National Quibbler[12]. Granted, this newspaper is not considered as reputable as the Prophet, but we are not examining the quality of news -- rather, the attitudes displayed by their treatment of what news they do report.

[12] *Archival office, Sheffield; copy provided by current Editor, who wishes to remain anonymous, and researched by an intern named Lovegood on behalf of myself, who was not allowed to do research in person.*

"Dog" Gordon, whose real name remains unknown, has been a Quibbler society columnist and editorialist from 1943 until the present day, and continues to generate much of the interest the Quibbler maintains. Unlike his fellow star-hunters, Gordon confines himself, generally, to commentary on more reliable sources, with only the occasional interview or investigative column.

Gordon is remarkable not only for being a self-professed werewolf (hence his alias) but also often intimating that his own romantic interests are aimed equally at both sexes. He has often theorised that "if one didn't keep me out of the respectable papers, darling readers, the other almost certainly would." [13]

[13] *Gordon, "Dog". "What Are They Thinking (With)?" Commentary on allowing the first ever Goblin fashion model to participate in a fall robe show. May 1970, p. 2, Paragraph 1.*

Let us compare what may safely be assumed to be the "mainstream" Wizarding attitude of Richard Skeeter with the possibly more frank and visceral attitudes of Mr. Gordon. Consider three events in the Wizarding World of the past fifty years: first, the spectacular and violent public divorce of Cthain Black and Alyssa Weasley-Black in 1943; second, Annalise Malfoy's unwed pregnancy in the spring of 1954, and her defiance of polite Wizarding society; third, the enormous scandal caused when Witch Weekly's Most Handsome Bachelor of 1970, Gerald Bones, was found to have had a decade-long sexual relationship with Terence Richardson, a Muggle-born Wizard who had made Most Handsome Bachelor, in fact, the previous year.

Skeeter, writing about the Black-Weasley divorce of 1932, states that

"...it is shocking and despicable that any two people could have so little respect for each other and for their offspring as to drag their petty marital debates into the public eye. None of us asked to be exposed to rumours about Alyssa Weasley-Black's amorous liaisons with the household staff, which are unfit for children to read. I am sure I am not alone in announcing that we would all be very happy if they would both quit whining, put their differences aside, and if they cannot live peaceably in one bed, at least do not flaunt the fact in public. Cthain Black should certainly exercise more control over his wife, just as Alyssa Weasley-Black should show an ounce of self-control, in addition to using an occasional cheering charm. This issue is inappropriate to be discussed in newspapers, where we would like to hear about actual news."

Obviously Skeeter is of the opinion that, whenever possible, people should seek not happiness, but rather stability. A common theme in Wizarding

newspapers of the last fifty years is the idea that magic can solve the problems of a dysfunctional marriage as easily as divorce.

Gordon, meanwhile, in a far less serious but more emotive reaction, states that

"Alyssa Weasley-Black should divorce that enormous-chinned Cthain, who has yet to stop chasing Emily Snape, and marry me. She could have all the pool boys she wanted as long as I got my fair share. Why shouldn't a woman enjoy a little male company, if she's forced to deal with that chin (oh, that chin!) all day long? Or a little female company, if that's her pleasure? Run away, little Lyss, and find your bliss!"

Several years later, it is perhaps unsurprising to find Skeeter still condemning not only scandal itself, but also the way in which society panders to it; Gordon, meanwhile, has grown slightly mellowed, though no less vocal about the right to enjoy one's own life as one sees fit. Compare Skeeter's socially-acceptable tirade against unwed mothers and bad examples with Gordon's felicitations on the conception of Annalise Malfoy's out-of-wedlock child. Skeeter writes:

"It is inconceivable in this age of civilised discourse and polite rhetoric that anyone should be so shrill as to not only denounce the newspapers, society, and the government, but openly defy all laws of human decency by carrying a fatherless child as she does so. Annalise Malfoy deserves no better than she will get in the end, when she is banned from polite circles by her rude behaviour and from the general population by her outrageous refusal to either quietly have the baby in another country or marry the scurrilous father. Her refusal to name the father of her child at all seems to me to indicate that not only has she been indulging in terrifically inappropriate acts, but quite possibly committing adultery as well. For shame, Miss Malfoy; shame on you and on your unborn child."

Gordon, on the other hand, states:

"I can't believe that anyone can be so blind to population laws that they do not notice that the Wizarding community is far outstripped by the Muggles, especially on this small isle we call home. I, for one, do not propose to do anything about the lack of good magical population -- especially if things with The Mysterious Date I spoke to you of last week heat up, readers, as they seem to delectably indicate -- but I think it is fine that Annalise Malfoy has taken it upon herself to remedy the situation without undue complications. Annalise, may you bear ten wonderful fatherless Wizarding children and send them all to Hogwarts; the Malfoy fortunes can pay for it, and if they all grow up to be revolutionaries like yourself, I have hope for the world yet. We support you, Malfoy!"

It may be pointed out, also, that the marital status of his mother has done Lucius Malfoy little ill; a well-respected young man in the highest circles of Wizarding society, it seems that he has successfully erased all public memory of his unfortunate mother's troubles.

The Bones-Richardson scandal of 1970 may be the best indication of the conflict between collective public libido and social sexual repression in the Wizarding world. The idea that not only were two wizards having sex outside of wedlock, but that it was two male wizards who had been presented to the world as ideal sexual symbols led to a fracas of previously unknown proportion in the society columns.

Skeeter, by this time, had become rather set in his ways, a well-known spokesman for conservative wizards. It is therefore not so surprising that he condemns Bones and Richardson for unnatural and immoral acts, but that he manages to bring himself to discuss it at all. Indeed, he does not devote more than four paragraphs, total, over the course of the three-week media frenzy which followed the publishing of photographs of Bones and Richardson in suggestive if not compromising situations -- the most famous, of course, being what the media dubbed the Kiss, for obvious reasons. Skeeter writes:

"I do not believe it is moral to publish this filth in a respectable paper such as mine; however, I do believe it is the ethical duty of the news-media to call the public's attention to such disgusting displays. I can only imagine (not that I wish to!) what Bones and Richardson get up to in private, if this is the way they behave in public. The youth of Wizarding Britain are impressionable young beings, and I hope and pray that this public disgrace of two former national idols will show them the true path of moral uprightness."

Gordon, in quite a tongue-in-cheek exercise in mockery, replies to Skeeter's comments thus:

"My ladies and gentlemen, who have the good sense to have followed me for the many stagnant years of my career, will be shocked by an announcement I have to make: I agree with Richard Skeeter. It is absolutely wrong to publish an image of two men kissing on the front page of a national newspaper, unless they have committed a crime. The youth of this nation should indeed learn a lesson from this, and I hope they do: you see how Richardson's tongue is moving in that one picture? THAT is how it is DONE, my friends! Take it from an accomplished kisser.

"I support Bones and Richardson wholeheartedly in their endeavours to get a little nookie in what they thought was a deserted alleyway. I think the Kiss is one of the most romantic photographs ever taken, and only proves that true love knows neither camera film, empty alleyways, nor gender lines."

What do these comparisons actually tell us? That the Wizarding public does indeed conform to strict social structures and unwritten rules -- Richard Skeeter did, after all, have a strong solid following and columns in both British and American Wizarding newspapers. However, the wizarding world still craved sexual freedom and expression -- indeed, when Dog Gordon threatened to retire after the Bones-Richardson scandal, public outcry was such that the Quibbler, according to Gordon's column[14], offered him double his current salary to keep him on (Gordon declined).

[14] Gordon, "Dog". *"Why They Pay Me: Cos You Love Me!" National Quibbler, Dec. 1970.*

With the influence of the Bones-Richardson scandal and Gordon's sudden leap in public popularity, this sexual conservatism may have reached a stopping point in the early 1970s, were it not for recent events, specifically the formation of the Death Eaters, which has caused a great deal of worry and strife within the community. This has led to a polarisation of British Wizarding Society which cannot be stressed too heavily in explaining why this trend of conservatism continues.

Sexual energy, however, is a constant presence; it may rise or drop but it is always around. With so many restrictions placed on young people, especially in the Wizarding world, all that libido needs an outlet. Quidditch, it would seem, is the peoples' choice. In recent years there has been an explosion of Quidditch popularity, not only in Britain but around the world.

Speaking symbiologically and psychologically, Quidditch is well-equipped to become the Wizarding substitution for sex. Not only does it contain a wealth of sexual symbolism, but it is playable by both genders, and as a spectator sport allows a mass catharsis. Statistics on births in the Wizarding world[15] show a sharp spike in births precisely nine months after the Quidditch World Cup, from 1925 (Bolivia) up through 1950 (India) and again from 1956 (Canada) up through the last World Cup in 1973 (Australia). Statistics from the 1976 World Cup, however, will have to wait another few months.

In addition, for the past five Cups, Muggle police have noticed an upswing in public indecency in the two weeks following the game, when many wizards choose to have their holiday.

[15] Records, St. Mungo's Hospital for Magical Maladies and Injuries, Archives; statistics gathered from international wizarding hospitals and are on file in Healer's Report #A1428H: "Why Are We Having So Bloody Many Babies?" Which I'm sure they wouldn't have had to copy out and owl to me if I'd been allowed four hours to Floo down there and back. Really, Professor.

In order to analyse the roots of the psycho-sexual Quidditch phenomenon, I have applied the Freudian concept of sublimation, as well as the Jungian concepts of the collective-unconscious and the societal archetype, to the game of Quidditch.

Sigmund Freud believed that individuals unable to gratify their instinctive impulses and desires could indulge in something called "sublimation"[16]. Sublimation occurs when one activity is substituted as a socially or morally acceptable form of another activity[17] -- examples might include chewing the end of a quill instead of smoking a cigarette, breaking inanimate objects instead of someone's nose, or preventing a student from doing the research they'd like to do in place of actually having a social life.

[16] Freud, Sigmund. "Repression." 1915.

[17] Ibid.

In order to sublimate, the ego -- Freud's "rational" side of the personality -- must be in control; as seen above, there is no place where society's egos are collectively controlling them more than Wizarding Britain. Therefore, sublimation, according to Freud, may in fact be at an all time high. The thesis that Quidditch is a sublimated symbol for sex is not difficult to prove.

Having considered the idea that sublimation is a possibility, we set about to analyse how, exactly, the Wizarding world views Quidditch in sexual terms. To use this, we employ the theory of the collective unconscious put forth by Carl Jung on a broad scale, and his theories of symbolism and societal archetypes on a small scale.

Jung believed that there was an undercurrent of thought and emotion which links all people in a society, and is responsible for what seem to be spontaneous creations of ideas, feats of engineering, or scientific breakthroughs in that society[18]. If, as Freud would theorise, Quidditch is an acceptable sublimation activity, it must therefore be a part of the collective unconscious to make it so. How is this done?

[18] Jung, Carl. Lecture. "The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious." 1936.

Quidditch is sexualised through the use of symbolic playing implements and the archetype[19] -- or master-blueprint, a sort of stereotypical representation -- of the Quidditch Player.

[19] An "archetype" is defined by Jung (ibid above) as indicating "the existence of definite forms in the psyche which seem to be present always and everywhere". Which probably doesn't help much, but basically he means they're symbols that everyone agrees stand for the same thing.

Position titles alone are heavily sexual in nature, descriptions of pursuit and capture -- Seekers, Chasers, Keepers, and of course, the most blatant among them, Beaters. It is not coincidence that Beaters have been, in this case correctly, stereotyped as the most extroverted, sexually active and virile members of any Quidditch team; it is a deep-seated societal archetype at work [20].

[20] I am sure, Professor, that Sirius Black's short but spectacular tenure as Gryffindor Beater, before he was thrown off the team for indecent activities[21] in the locker room, bears out this assertion better than any factual quote I could give.

[21] And what goes on in the locker room on his own time and with consenting companions is entirely his own business, I must say, and hardly reason to ban him from playing.

A Quidditch player is often idolised as a sex symbol, and may in fact be indulging in their own personal sublimation -- as with "Dangerous" Dai Llewellyn, who may have been compensating for a lack of social skill by spending an inordinate amount of time in the hospital[22].

[22] Whisp, Kennilworthy. He Flew Like A Madman.

Quidditch players alone, however, cannot account for the game's excessive sexual symbolism. One must also examine the tools of the sport: broomsticks, balls, and hoops.

The setup of the pitch, with its circular hoops at either end marking the goals, makes for an interesting metaphor on basic human sexuality. An oval or cup is often representative, in human culture, of the female genitals; indeed, before the hoops were instituted in the 19th century [23], baskets were used, and a great outcry (a sexual desire being stifled?) was made when hoops were introduced.

[23] *Daily Prophet*, 12 Feb. 1883, quoted in *Quidditch Through The Ages*.

Although some would point out that a ball such as the Quaffle is not an appropriate symbol for the masculine genitalia, just as the hoop is circular rather than oval and therefore not a perfect representation of the female genitalia, it may be maintained that the act of inserting one object through another as a goal is implicitly, symbolically sexual; indeed, the very roundness of both objects seems to indicate that gender is not a consideration, and that it may represent any intimate act, either literal (actual physical penetration) or metaphorical (penetration of privacy).

The average racing broomstick, the Bludgers, and the Snitch are, of course, the focus of the game. One may easily see how a broomstick, which has long been considered a phallic symbol in Muggle society, might be sexualised; in conjunction with a pair of balls (and once again we see the over-virilisation of the position of Beater) it creates a mental image which is laughably obvious. The fact that the Bludgers are considered dangerous is testament to society's paradoxical desire-fear of sexuality, represented by the male testicle, the source of masculine fertility. Beating -- even its very name -- is tantamount to "dangerous" sex, full of violence and fear and raw pleasure.

The Snitch, on the other hand, is an elusive sphere that is not literally representational so much as metaphorically. The Snitch is small, delicate, hard to catch; the Seekers whose job it is to capture the Snitch are generally thought of as nimble, intelligent players. When the Snitch is caught, the game is over, and the team who caught it is awarded a hundred and fifty points, usually guaranteeing a "win". Obviously, considering the "game over" status of the Snitch along with its enormous reward, as well as the typical standing-ovation crowd reaction, this tiny golden ball represents human orgasm. It is no secret that, while Beaters are believed to be the most virile of players, Seekers are considered by far the most attractive, sexually, because of this implied guarantee that they are orgasm-focused.

Add to these considerations the fact that large crowds are drawn to the mass catharsis of cheering on a Quidditch game, answering a certain desire in every human soul for a little bit of exhibitionism, and we see that a collective-unconscious en masse sublimation of repressed sexual urges has been created and maintained. Until such time as Wizarding Britain begins to shed its strict sexual mores, Quidditch will continue to be massively popular, and its players will continue to be viewed as sexual figures, both on the field and in several recent and quite risqué advertising campaigns.

APPENDIX:

If there were any doubt that at least some sector of the population views Quidditch as an inherently sexual sport, I invite the reader to consider these quotes.

Oi, I think Quidditch is the best thing ever. I mean when you're getting to that point where the Snitch is just in sight, and you know you're gonna grab it -- and you're just straining and your heart's thudding and even if it's cold you're sweating and trying so bloody hard...you know, just going for it...and then you grab it! It's the best feeling in the world.

Here, Remus, are you feeling okay? Only you've gone all flushed...

-- James Potter, Gryffindor Team Keeper, Hogwarts School

So....if you're right about all this...then it was my societal duty to get in with that Starling girl in the locker room, right? I mean, it was practically a subconscious imperative. Golly. I want to be a Beater for the REST OF MY LIFE.

-- Sirius Black, former Gryffindor Team Beater, Hogwarts School

I think it's wonderful that our student population is so interested in Quidditch. I can't think of a better way to spend a long spring afternoon than watching an exciting match. Why, I've traveled as much as thirty miles to see a decent amateur match. And I've said many a time that professional players, on a well-prepared pitch and with proper encouragement, can make a man outright gasp. Did I say something funny, Mr. Lupin?

-- Albus Dumbledore, Headmaster, Hogwarts School

Well, that's the universal appeal of Quidditch, innit? Anyone can do it, there's a position for everyone, even the most talentless of people. Puts women on the same footing as men, gives 'em an advantage in some ways. And of course a thousand cheering fans never hurts either.

-- Debra de Masten, Seeker and Captain, Holyhead Harpies, quoted from an interview conducted by owl post

Oh yes, I think Quidditch is brilliant. Molly and I never miss a game. We make sure we go to every one of them. Oh, did you know she's pregnant again? Yes, twins, so this'll make it five. I really don't know how this keeps happening...

-- Arthur Weasley, father of Gryffindor student (first-year) Bill Weasley

The first time I ever saw a Quidditch World Cup was when I was sixteen. I thought it was quite the most wonderful thing ever. I talked about nothing else for weeks. When I became Head of Gryffindor House I was delighted that I would have the opportunity to share Quidditch with the students.

Would you like a glass of water, Mr. Lupin? Are you sure?

-- Professor Minerva McGonagall, Deputy Headmistress, Hogwarts School

Course I like Quidditch. Who doesn't like Quidditch? What kind of daft question is that? Well it's not as though I live and breathe it, I let your mates do that, but I like a good game now and again, especially one-on-one Seeking, now there's a worthwhile pastime. Up for a match? No? Then buggger off, Lupin.

-- Severus Snape, Student, Hogwarts School

Albus Dumbledore looked over his glasses at Remus Lupin, who despite being six feet tall and seventeen years old was managing to look small and fragile in the overstuffed office chair.

"It's not like you to be in trouble, academically, Remus," Dumbledore said. Remus was obviously terrified; Prefect and Teacher's Assistant, and sent to the Headmaster's office like a rank first year!

"Sorry, sir," Remus mumbled.

"Now, let's have a look at why Professor Binns sent you up here," Dumbledore said. The note was contained in quite a large packet. His whole essay had gone into it.

Dumbledore could see the confusion clearly on his face.

He opened the packet and read the note.

Headmaster,

This is the most scandalous abuse of Muggle Studies that has ever come across my desk. Why Mr. Lupin chose to concentrate his History of Magic essay on a collection of Muggle superstitions linking ridiculous symbiology to –

Dumbledore glanced at Remus again, who was staring at his hands, and then down at the essay.

"Quidditch In History: Psychological Links To The Human Libido."

Dumbledore went very still.

"Remus," he said, trying not to laugh, "You wrote a paper on Quidditch as a metaphor for sex?"