The Women of Harry Potter and the Sacred Text

Blessing Ginny Weasley

*theme music*

Ariana: Hi Vanessa.

Vanessa: Hi Ariana.

Ariana: Welcome to The Women of Harry Potter and the Sacred Text.

Vanessa: Thank you. I love it here.

Ariana: It’s pretty great.

Vanessa: Yeah, the music is so good.

Ariana: *laughing* Well, Vanessa, it is your turn to bless a wonderful woman of *Harry Potter*. Who are you blessing this week?

Vanessa: Ginny Weasley!

Ariana: God bless her.

Vanessa: Love myself some Ginny. I’m gonna bless Ginny for something very specific which we did actually just talk about on our main podcast, but I’m very excited to get a lot more detail here. I think that we are in a very exciting moment of retelling old stories about women and retelling them with women at the center of the story. We are retelling the Lorena Bobbitt story not about her husband what happened to him, but with her as a domestic violence victim. We are retelling the Bill Clinton/Monica Lewinsky scandal not as a story of Monica Lewinsky as some vapid adulteress but rather as a victim of mass media. We’re retelling these stories about women, right, and sometimes it goes well and sometimes it goes really badly. Christine Blasey Ford just had to stand up in front of Congress and retell a terrible story about her life, and it felt like on some levels, she was heard, and then on other levels, she was not heard. And, I’m just seeing Ginny in this moment we just read about in Book Five in which Harry is worried that he’s being possessed by Voldemort, and she says “Don’t you think you should’ve asked me about this, the one person you know who’s actually been possessed by Voldemort?” And Harry says, “Oh, I’m sorry. I forgot.” And she says, “Lucky you.” And I think that Ginny can teach us a lot about how beneficial it is when we have women retell their stories and how traumatizing and difficult it is to demand that they retell the stories of the hardest parts of their lives.

Ariana: Yeah. Ginny’s so interesting in these books. She has a huge development as a character. She starts as this annoying younger sister who has a huge crush on Harry. She has this huge moment in the second book where we’re totally focused on her at the end of the book in the way in which she’s possessed and her near death. As we’ve mentioned, she then disappears and then reappears as this funny, charming object of Harry’s desire.
Vanessa: I would disagree. I think you’ve missed a step.

Ariana: Really?

Vanessa: I think she reappears as this fully realized strong women, and THEN becomes the object of Harry’s desire. She’s dating other people. It takes a while for her to enter Harry’s conscious in this way.

Ariana: Right. In the book that we’re currently in, she’s not in Harry’s thoughts in that spot. She’s just reappeared as popular, funny Ginny Weasley who’s good at Quidditch and who has friends of her own that aren’t the trio but is still pals with Hermione.

Vanessa: And is able to be friends with her former crush, which I think is amazing. Yeah, anyway–

Ariana: Yeah, and I think it’s so interesting that you’ve zoomed in on this moment of retelling and hurt for Ginny because I think what you’re pointing to is one of the few moments that we see her reference back to what happened to her in the second book. And I think it’s so easy in the later books to forget what happened to her, and I think one of the great gifts in spending some time focusing on Ginny is thinking about everything that’s happened to her and how that plays into her larger storyline and how she negotiates her sense of self in relationship to that.

Vanessa: And I am also beginning to wonder if part of the reason Ginny sort of disappears for a few books is because after we’re done with victims as entertainment fodder, they disappear from our lives for a while, right? Monica Lewinsky was EVERYWHERE in the news, and then we didn’t think about her for 20 years, and then she reemerged like a phoenix with a TED Talk and an article about bullying, and she was this fully-realized other person to us. And, again Lorena Bobbitt was just a JOKE forever, and for 20 years, we didn’t think about her, and she’s reemerged as this domestic violence advocate. And, what I love about Ginny is that, unlike these characters who, for us are just characters is pop culture or in the popular imagination – like for me, the only things I will ever know Monica Lewinsky, Christine Blasey Ford, Anita Hill for, are the worst moments in their lives. And Ginny is someone who, we know the worst moment in her life, AND we get to know all of these other things about her. So, I guess I’m blessing Ginny for being an avatar for being these other wonderful, strong women, and to try to separate their status as victim from all of the other wonderful things they are.

Ariana: I think that’s beautiful. I also wonder – this is a book from Harry’s perspective, and I think sometimes in the retelling, specifically you mentioned the Monica Lewinsky story, like, how lovely that she went through this terrible thing and now she’s this empowered woman who has a TED Talk. And like we don’t get to see how she struggled to get there and the way in which her life was obliterated by this story, and I do wish we had more of that with Ginny. That we got to see the negotiation of this terrible thing and her struggle to become the hyper-confident woman who she later is because I don’t want Ginny to be the
this-terrible-thing-happened-but-then-she-triumphed-and-now-she’s-great-and-how-great-is-that-for-us-to-read.

Vanessa: Absolutely! I think maybe part of what I’m blessing her for is the time that she was gone and the fact that we don’t know what she went through. I’m guessing there was a lot of crying on Molly’s lap. I’m guessing there were a lot of moments of despair. Right, like, I’m guessing there was a lot of pain, and I would imagine that a lot of our listeners would be in the despair moments before the phoenix-reemerging moments that we see these people for. Yeah, so that’s right, I can’t imagine how much pain she was in. Part of the reason we know she was absent, exactly to your point, it’s from Harry’s point of view. She was probably avoiding Harry. She was probably avoiding him for being embarrassed: for being so in love with him, for being rescued by him, for being at her most vulnerable in front of him. I understand why she has disappeared from Harry and how awful it is that after one of the most painful incidents in your life, you then feel like you have to disappear.

Ariana: That’s so lovely to picture Ginny crying in Molly’s lap. I love you conjuring that for me. Specifically, that helps me because I think the great bane of Ginny’s existence throughout the books is that she’s the youngest and the only girl, and I think she often feels patronized and that she’s not included in the circle. An interesting way to reread that is that Molly almost lost her. There was a threat on her life as a child, and they are so protective of her later in the books because the reality of losing her was so real that they’re trying to keep her safe in those following books.

Vanessa: I mean, Molly definitely. The greatest line in the whole series: “Not my daughter, you bitch.” That line is earned for Molly. She has almost been taken from her once before, and there is this sense of – Fred dies, Percy has been taken away from her for a long period of time. And for Molly, there is this last straw of, “But not my daughter.” And I feel that as the only girl in a family of multiple boys: this special kinship between my mother and I.

Ariana: Yeah, and I think Ginny is so brave and fights so hard against that narrative of herself. She isn’t supposed to be fighting in the Final War: she’s underaged, she’s supposed to be in the Room of Requirement, but she leaves. She leaves to go fight, and she’s always taking that brave step out to be at the forefront. To recreate the DA when Harry has left. Her wanting to be this big strong person – as a phoenix as you say, out of the fire of being so victimized in the past – and Molly saying, “No you are my daughter. I just want you to be safe.” That’s so beautiful, and those two things in conversation with one another is a tug and pull and is also an incredible testament to the women in this book to fight and to protect and to keep everyone safe.

Vanessa: Yeah, I really appreciate – because I did, I came in to bless Ginny for the “Lucky you” moment, but I think that based on the conversation, I’m shifting: I want to bless her for the books we don’t hear about her. Ginny had to go through so much healing in order for her to reemerge the way that she does and for her to be able to say to the boy who in book two – we talked about this as the most embarrassing that ever happened. She wakes up one morning and the boy she’s
in love with is in her kitchen. She can’t even talk. And then later to be able to look at him and be like, “Luck you.” Between those two moments, she gets kidnapped and assaulted by Voldemort and then is silent. That silence was not quiet.

Ariana: Yeah. Everything that we see out of that is productive. She goes from wanting to be part of the trio to abandoning them to have her other friends at Hogwarts, so we know that she’s building friendships.

Vanessa: Yep!

Ariana: We know that she’s identifying and listening to some of the weaker and smaller characters in the text. She goes to the Yule Ball with Neville. She encourages the trio and Neville to sit in the car with Luna Lovegood and says, “She’s not so bad; she’s just a little weird.” And every moment that someone tries to laugh at Luna, she’s there to push forward and be kind and be a friend to Luna. She’s just the ideal of the popular girl. We have this concept of the popular girl as being mean and egotistical and vain, and Ginny is so kind and so insightful and inclusive and so beloved. She is both like this fantasy for us for what it is to come out of trauma but also I think, what you’re pointing to, this silence as a gesture towards the – to how isn’t just a fantasy and you can’t go from trauma right into being a charming, whole, popular woman. There is a period of darkness in the middle of that.

Vanessa: One of the things I would say your amazing analysis just pointed to to me is that Ginny is that, to some extent, Ginny is the perfect victim, which is something that I am excited that we, as a culture, are getting away from. That the district attorney of Chicago just recently did a press conference about going after R. Kelly and asking for victims of R. Kelly to step forward in which she said, “We are no longer looking for the perfect victim. Proving a criminal case against R. Kelly does not mean that you have to have some sort of sterling record and be totally innocent.” You know, these situations are complicated and part of the reason that women have been afraid of coming forward in situations like Ginny’s is that, “Oh, but I had a crush on him too. I said yes to the date, but not to whatever happened after “I had too many beers.” As if that somehow makes you complicit in your own crime, and I am so excited that we are moving away from that narrative and saying that you don’t have to be a blonde, white, angel six-year-old who was taken from your bed in order to be a victim worth listening to and a victim worth being treated with dignity. And Ginny is, she’s the perfect victim.

Ariana: I think – maybe she’s not. When we imagine our victims, we want them to be ruined: for their whole lives to be torn apart by this thing that’s happened to them, for them to have lost all of their opportunities that were in front of them. And good for Ginny that she didn’t! That both this happened to her and it sucked and we wish this never happened to her, AND she is incredible and she has pulled her life together in this miraculous way and that doesn’t mean that it didn’t happen to her, but she was able to do it.

Vanessa: And she’s going to remind you. She hasn’t forgotten about it. When Harry says “I forgot”, she says “Lucky you. You get to forget. I don’t ever get to forget.” And I think that that
is right. That that is one way that, again, she is an amazing example for us. That you don’t have to be ruined in order for what happened for you to be awful and to stay with you.

Ariana: Yes!

Vanessa: Well, thank you so much for blessing Ginny with me.

Ariana: Oh my gosh, thank you for bringing Ginny to me to bless.

Vanessa: Do you have a game for us?

Ariana: Boy, do I have a game.

Vanessa: Yes!

Ariana: I thought I would bring us a little bit of a silly game because I knew we would be maybe be talking about a heavy subject.

Vanessa: Great! Ginny would approve! Ginny love silliness to break tension!

Ariana: So true! And this game isn’t even that educational, so I’m really breaking my mold of games that I’m bringing to you.

Vanessa: *laughing* Okay. I’ll be the judge.

Ariana: *laughing* I’m not forcing you to learn anything about the history of feminism in America.

Vanessa: Well that’s too bad.

Ariana: What I am forcing you to do is examine some stereotypes you have about younger siblings.

Vanessa: Oh, boy do I ever. I’m a middle sibling.

Ariana: So, we’re going to play a game where I’m going to give you a famous group, a famous trio, a famous quartet. I’m going to ask you, “Which of these people is the youngest?”

Vanessa: Great! I’m going to be *sarcastically* so good at this.

Ariana: Well, we’ll see. The first group I’m bringing to you: The Beatles. Which of The Beatles is the youngest?

Vanessa: Okay. So the least impressive would the youngest.

Ariana: Which is?

Vanessa: Ringo!

Ariana: Wrong!

Vanessa: Awww. The most impressive is the youngest. It’s John.
Ariana: Also wrong!
Vanessa: Is it George?
Ariana: Yes!
Vanessa: George is my favorite!
Ariana: Really?!
Vanessa: Should I – is that how I should guess the rest of them? Should I just tell you my favorite?
Ariana: I think that actually might work for you, looking at my list.
Vanessa: Okay, great! George is my favorite!
Ariana: What do you like about George?
Vanessa: He wrote “Here Comes the Sun” which is my favorite Beatles song.
Ariana: Yeah, that’s true. I was going to tell you that as a piece of trivia, but you already knew it.
Vanessa: Sorry, it’s not just one of my Beatles songs. It’s one of my all-time favorite songs.
Ariana: All right. Let’s take another try at this and see if you can do better. How about the Marx Brothers? Do you know who the Marx Brothers are? Should we explain for the audience? I know you know who the Marx Brothers are.
Vanessa: I was like, as a Jew from Los Angeles, I find that question offensive. The Marx Brothers are one of the greatest comedy –
Ariana: Families.
Vanessa: Families of all time. They did “Duck Soup”.
Ariana: Yeah. It’s kind of Vaudeville-esque.
Vanessa: A little bit late-Vaudeville.
Ariana: One of the first times my parents let me leave the house by myself was to walk to our local revival theater and see a Marx double feature.
Vanessa: That’s the most Ariana story I’ve ever heard.
Ariana: Which Marx Brother do you think is the youngest?
Vanessa: Harpo is the best, so I think it’s Harpo.
Ariana: That’s also wrong.
Vanessa: NOOO! I love Harpo! Sad clown.
Ariana: What is it about Harpo that makes you think he’s the youngest? Is it that he’s the best?
Vanessa: Yeah, you said you thought my favorites would be –
Ariana: Well, you just have the wrong favorites.
Vanessa: Is Groucho your favorite?
Ariana: Yeah.
Vanessa: Yeah, I mean, I love Groucho.
Ariana: It’s kind of also a trick question because Zeppo is technically the youngest.
Vanessa: *laughing* But who cares about Zeppo? *laughing* Can I tell everyone my favorite
Groucho Marx quote?
Ariana: Go for it.
Vanessa: It includes my two favorite things: books and dogs. “Outside of a dog, a book is a
man’s best friend. Inside of a dog, it’s too dark to read.”
Ariana: That’s why he’s my favorite.
Vanessa: So wise.
Ariana: Most of my high school career was spent pretending that Groucho Marx quotes were my
own.
Vanessa: Oh, really? “Recently I saw an elephant in my pajamas.
Both: How he got into my pajamas, I’ll never know.” *laughing*
Vanessa: Okay, so Groucho is great, but Zeppo is the youngest. So, sometimes it’s my favorite,
but sometimes it’s the most inconsequential.
Ariana: Oooohhhhh.
Vanessa: Interesting. All right.
Ariana: Here’s one for you. You love “Grey’s Anatomy”.
Vanessa: I do. So much! We’re going to do a “‘Grey’s Anatomy’ as a Sacred Text” show
whenever we have 400 years to do it.
Ariana: So I tried to look up who the youngest on “Grey’s Anatomy” is, and, you know, the
thing about TV is, they have a lot of writers and a lot of seasons, and they can’t get dates
straight.
Vanessa: Yes. That is true.
Ariana: So what I can tell you, is the youngest actor in the first season of “Grey’s Anatomy”.
Vanessa: So we’re talking about the youngest between Izzy, George, Alex, Meredith, and Christina.

Ariana: I’ve never seen the show, but that sounds right.

Vanessa: And we’re talking about which of those actors is the youngest.

Ariana: Yes.

Vanessa: And you said it’s my favorite.

Ariana: This one I can’t tell you because I’ve never seen the show.

Vanessa: Well, let’s just – I want to talk about Sandra Oh, so let’s just say Sandra Oh. Is she the youngest?

Ariana: The only thing that makes you think it’s Sandra Oh is that she’s your favorite?

Vanessa: Yes.

Ariana: I feel like we’ve destroyed the premise of this game.

Vanessa: So youngest sibling. I happen to know that Ellen Pompeo, who plays Meredith, is much older than she looks, so it’s not her. George has a real baby face so I think he might be the youngest.

Ariana: The right answer is Katherine Heigl who I believe plays someone named Izzy.

Vanessa: *surprised* That is…true. Whoa!

Ariana: She is, in fact, six years younger than the rest of her cast.

Vanessa: She was a wee lass!

Ariana: Yeah. Does that surprise you? What was the point of this game?

Vanessa: That’s interesting. I don’t know if that surprises me. She quit first. So she was the most immature of the actors.

Ariana: That’s some kind of logic.

Vanessa: Yeah, thank you.

Ariana: Okay. My last one: Scooby Doo Gang.

Vanessa: *laughing* Whooaa. So it’s Velma –

Ariana: Well it’s Scooby. And it’s Shaggy. And it’s Velma. And it’s Daphne. And then there’s Fred.

Vanessa: I’m gonna say Shaggy looks the most stunted so he’s actually the oldest.
Ariana: That is correct!
Vanessa: And we’re saying Scooby not the youngest oldest because we’re counting dog years?
Ariana: Right, so I think Scooby is supposed to be 7 years old.
Vanessa: So he’s actually 49.
Ariana: Right.
Vanessa: He’s an old pup. So handsome. Love Scooby. Velma and Daphne both just seem so mature. I’m going with Fred.
Ariana: It actually is Velma.
Vanessa: Velma is the youngest?
Ariana: She’s precocious.
Vanessa: Ooohhhh. Good for her.
Ariana: I know. Velma is the Ginny of that story.
Vanessa: I mean, “Scooby Doo as a Sacred Text”.
Ariana: Oooohhh.
Vanessa: What’s the Scooby Doo song?
Ariana: *singing Scooby Doo song* Scooby Dooby Doo where are you?
Vanessa: *to the tune of Scooby Doo song* As a sacred text yeah
Ariana: Well, thank you for playing this game.
Vanessa: Well, it was a great game. Thank you for making it up.
Ariana: You’re welcome. I’ll talk to you in two weeks where it will be my turn to bless. You can hear that episode on Patreon.
Vanessa: This episode of Women of Harry Potter and the Sacred Text was produced by Not Sorry Productions. Our music is by Nick Bohl.
Ariana: Ariana Martinez had this week off.
Vanessa: Good work, Ariana Martinez.
Ariana: I’m sure they’re doing great, whatever they’re doing out there.
*music fades*