



Death and Resurrection :

Religious Parallels in J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*



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ABSTRACT : *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, released on 21st July 2007 by Bloomsbury Publication in the United Kingdom is the seventh and final novel in the Harry Potter series, by J. K. Rowling. The title of the book refers to three mythical objects featured in the story, collectively known as the “Deathly Hallows” – the Elder Wand, an unbeatable wand; the Resurrection Stone, able to summon the dead and Invisibility Cloak. Harry realizes that Voldemort is seeking the Elder Wand, won by Dumbledore, the Resurrection Stone found by Dumbledore which became the second Horcrux and his own inherited Invisibility Cloak as the third Hallow. Though Death is the major theme in the novel, the presence of Christian allegories can be easily speculated. Harry dies and then comes back to life to save mankind, like that of the Christ. This paper deals with Harry Potter's fight against the dictator figure to protect his people and the presence of religious parallels and resurrection.

KEYWORDS : Resurrection, Elder Wand, Invisibility Cloak, Religious Parallels

RESEARCH PAPER :

Though the world of J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter is fictional, it still has a strong socialist edge and religious overtones that allow the readers to meditate upon different themes and viewpoints. In her final novel "*Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*", the link between the obvious and the underlying is particularly strong as Harry dies, and then comes back to life thus conquering death itself in the process symbolizing resurrection. Rowling seems to have drawn inspiration from non-Christian traditions. Harry Potter series is seen as a portrayal of magic and celebration of pagan mythology which is considered by some a threat to Christian values. The episodes of Harry's adventures from the start of the series were over loaded with some elements of racism, class discrimination and abuse of power. The death and war sufferings take centre stage in almost all the novels of Rowling. In the process, the young heroes of the series respond with horror and grief as they try to prevent or minimize the effects of evil characters like Voldemort and his supporters, aptly described as "Death Eaters".

Rowling's final novel looks like a world-changing story if studied from religious angle. It will definitely affect the personalities, politics and morality of young people today. Both the Bible and the "*Boy Who Lived*" pointed the way to hope in the face of death. In Rowling's fictional works, the dark wizard Lord Voldemort was defeated not by power but by love by a young mother (Lily), who sacrificed her life to save her young son (Harry). In Rowling's world this kind of love is stronger and can even conquer death. Finally, there is a deeper significance to the Deathly Hallows as, Harry is expected to encounter in the "*Forbidden Forest: death.*"

In *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, J. K. Rowling drew numerous "*religious parallels*" between the motif of "*dying and rising*". There is centrality of death and resurrection of Harry Potter like that of Jesus Christ. The major themes interspersed in this novel are death living in a corrupted society and its different forms. Contemporary critics have compared them to Christian allegories.

In *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, Harry is about seventeen years when he loses protection of his home. Harry is taken to a new location by the order of phoenix but is attacked upon departure. Harry's friends Ron and Hermione accompany him to finish Dumbledore's quest: to hunt and destroy Voldemort's four remaining Horcruxes. They receive from Dumbledore's possessions-a Golden Snitch for Harry, a Deluminator for Ron and a book of fairy tales for Hermione. Voldemort is seeking the Elder Wand, won by Dumbledore, the Resurrection

stone as the second Horcrux and his own inherited Invisibility Cloak as the third Hallow. Nagini was the last horcrux of Voldemort killed by Neville Longbottom to make Voldemort vulnerable. Lastly, Voldemort uses the killing curse and Harry does not defend himself. This curse only sends Harry into a limbo-like state between life and death. Later, Harry is awoken as Voldemort's killing curse had no effect on him but in turn kills Voldemort as his own killing curse backfires against Harry's disarming curse.

Shira Wolosky (2010) explains that remorse is the opposite of the soul-damaging act of murder. It opposes and counters the ultimate image of evil in the books, which is the destruction of the life and selfhood of others, not only killing but by reducing others to objects for control and use. This evil reducing remorse is present in the novel:

“As remorse is the last thing on his mind, Voldemort is never a full human being after creating a horcrux: he leaves behind the last vestiges of his youth in the diary, his most animalistic self in Nagini and other parts of himself, most likely, in the other Horcruxes. It is interesting that the destroyed Horcrux within Harry's mindscape at King's Cross takes on the form of a miserable and tortured child. Horcruxes are a way of become less human. It is the last Horcrux Voldemort knowingly makes is Nagini, his snake” (178).

Many of the characters in the Rowling's novels are always busy in actions. Dumbledore appears to Harry not in a cloud like God the Father, but on a railway platform proclaiming how well pleased he is with Harry's actions. Dumbledore confesses his own youthful arrogance in words that echo the ending of the Lord's Prayer: “lead us not into temptation.”

He then heavily admits his own sins:

“I am not so sure. I had proven, as a very young man, that power was my weakness and my temptation” (Rowling, 2007: 575).

Harry interrupted again so he can sneak up on people :

“Death got an Invisibility cloak... The Elder Wand, the most powerful wand ever made. The Resurrection stone. The cloak of Invisibility. Together, they make one master of death.” (Rowling, 516).

When they finally learn the legend of the Deathly Hallows, the trio finally has some answers. With this information, they have a clear idea of what Voldemort is seeking instead of just wandering around blindly in the woods.

Dumbledore tells Harry about it:

“You are the true master of death, because the true master does not seek to run away from Death. He accepts that he must die and understands that there are far worse things in the living world than dying.” (492)

The idea of Deathly Hallows drives away the fear of death calling it as the most powerful thing in the world. Voldemort overlooks in his rise to power that the Hallows are hidden within the folds of History, old magic and fairytales. Beedle the Bard, in *The Tale of the Three Brothers*, explains that Hallows are powerful magical objects that support their masters in different ways. In some ways, these are the objects that can help their masters to cheat death: the Elder Wand, powerful enough to ward off any foe, the Resurrection stone, to bring back the dead in a form at least more tangible than that of ghosts, but certainly not back to life and the Cloak of Invisibility, to hide from Death’s sight. The true master of the Deathly Hallows does not use these magical objects to avoid death. Harry’s mastery is deeply connected with his clarity and acceptance of his own death while marching finally to the Forbidden Forest to allow Voldemort to kill him.

In the end Harry walks into Voldemort’s presence and mystery and love, owns his life for his friends, not only Ron, Hermione and Neville, but all the students at Hogwarts and for the wizards and muggles in the world. He will die in order that others can live happily. There is no obvious pain or glory in what he is doing. Dumbledore encourages him that he is the most loved one and can defeat the evil wizard Voldemort, who lacks the power to understand love. It is the reason Harry can walk calmly and deliberately into the mouth of death and lay down his life.

In “*The Deathly Hallows*,” Harry visits his parents’ graves at Godric’s Hollow and sees two biblical references on his parents’ tombstones.

By the end of the book Harry becomes the “*Master of the Death*” and “*resurrects*” from the dead spirits of his parents, his godfather Sirius Black and his old teacher Remus Lupin.

Though critics always believed that Rowling’s books contain religious themes, the church going Rowling has revealed that she struggles with believing in a basic Christian tenet of life after death.

Van Inwagen proposes by giving an account of resurrection:

“At the moment of each man’s death, God removes his corpse and replaces it with a simulacrum which is what is burned or rots.”

Thiselton Anthony, in a statement noting the trend toward witchcraft and new age ideology had publicly criticized the novel by saying that ‘it’s difficult to ignore the effects such stories might have on young, impressionable mind.’ (p.92).

The Deathly Hallows includes the entire literary requirement to designate Harry Potter as a dying and resurrecting savior of the type that has been celebrated in various traditions for thousands of years. Harry went willingly to his death, gave no resistance and was hit by a killing curse. It was the intent of his self-sacrifice that sealed his victory over evil. He found himself in a heaven of sorts “*King’s cross station*” where he was able to talk to his deceased friend and guide, Dumbledore:

“But I should have died-I didn’t defend myself! I meant to let him kill me!”

“And that,” said Dumbledore, “will, I think, have made all the difference” (p.567).

Thus, the legend of the Deathly Hallows has the echoes of the death and resurrection. There are religious parallels that define Harry to some extent as the torch bearer of Christianity. He is required to die in order to save all mankind from the Dark Wizard Voldemort, who personifies sin. In short, by choice or by fate, Harry plays the Role of the prophet and saves mankind. In this way, Harry Potter and the biblical parallels striking in the novel suggest that love can save you from death and a sacrifice in the name of love can bring you back from death to life.

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