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Resistance to Fascism in J. K Rowling's Harry Potter Series

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Abstract

The term 'fascism' refers to an agency or state which uses violence, terror and propaganda to attain its objectives. As an anti-democratic approach, fascism rejects liberalism, pluralism, socialism, feminism and cosmopolitanism, giving importance to the binaries superior and inferior, male and female, rich and poor. It follows the concept of Social Darwinism that promotes the creation of strong people to survive in a world defined by perpetual national and racial conflict. Rowling's *Harry Potter Series* illustrates the theme of fascism through the mythical character of Lord Voldemort, putting him on equal footing with Hitler who ruled Germany in the first half of the 20th century. Rowling juxtaposes two worlds: realistic world of Hitler and magical /mythological world of Harry Potter to show the continuity of fascism from the past to the present. The more it represses people, the more they are forced to go rebellion against the unjust and violent ideology. Harry Potter and his friends defy and defeat the hegemony of Voldemort, underscoring democratic values and principles. The author employs her fiction to praise and extol the democratic and pluralist life in harmony, projecting Harry as a defender of democratic values and human rights.

Keywords

Resistance, Fascism, Nazism, Hogwarts. Pluralism, Cosmopolitanism.

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The term 'fascism' refers to an agency or state which uses violence, terror and propaganda to attain its objectives. As an anti-democratic approach, fascism rejects liberalism, pluralism, socialism, feminism and cosmopolitanism, giving importance to the binaries superior and inferior, male and female, rich and poor. It follows the concept of Social Darwinism that promotes the creation of strong people to survive in a world defined by perpetual national and racial conflict. It stresses violence in all spheres of life to weaken the power of the opponent. To a fascist, conflict is a law of nature and peace, security, solidarity and comfort impede the development of man. It advocates the government of elite class based on birth, wealth and education. It requires "strong leadership, singular, collective identity and the will and ability to commit violence and wage war to keep the nation" (Grcic 120). To avoid any kind of decadence it stresses the use of science and technology. Its stress on the use of science and technology suggests that "it is anti-conservative" (Blamires 451). It also gives an excessive importance to the system of hierarchy to create a controlling mechanism in the state and occupy the top slot on the basis of power and to claim "an unquestionable right to dominate the nation" (Renton 19).

In contemporary times, the regimes headed by Hitler and Mussolini exemplify the one based on racial purity. Both the leaders followed Aryan ideology but with different interpretations in consolidating their fascist regime. In Nazi Germany, citizens were provided with power and superiority through the network of kinship to preserve racial purity. Non-Aryans were not given equal rights and powers. But all this is "based on subjectivism, emotionalism, irrationalism and vitalism" (Sternhell 169). Blood relations were primarily perceived as an appeal for nationalism in a fascist regime. Hitler conceived the creation of a 'racial utopia' following the elimination of Jews from Germany through militarism. But In the Post-1945, anti-

fascism gained currency with the emergence of parliamentary parties. As a result, the idea of anti-fascism became very popular in communist, humanist and liberal circles.

Rowling's *Harry Potter Series* illustrates the theme of fascism through the mythical character of Lord Voldemort, putting him on equal footing with Hitler who ruled Germany in the first half of the 20th century and was responsible for the genocide of six million Jews. Voldemort in the series shares many features if looked at from a psychological perspective. Rowling juxtaposes two worlds: realistic world of Hitler and magical /mythological world of Harry Potter to show the continuity of fascism from the past to the present. Nazism in Germany is known for the massacre of the Jews whereas in the World of Harry Potter, Muggles are persecuted by Voldemort and his followers, Death Eaters. Rise and fall of Voldemort reminds the reader of the rise and fall of Hitler in Nazi Germany.

The feature of fascism prevails in the early novels in the series and towards the end in the later novels the theme of fascism keeps diminishing. Even the first two novels contain dark issues such as "racism, the conflict with a powerful villain, and the loss of loved ones" (Martín 202). Hitler obsessed with the idea of 'the chosen one' tried to make Germany a pure Christian state, cleansing Jews. Likewise, Voldemort in the *Harry Potter Series* tries to triumph over his enemies for the sake of preserving the pure blood. To achieve this end, he creates a hierarchy in which he stands as the sole, power-claiming leader of his bloody minded followers, Death Eaters. In the fight for preserving the pure blood wizard, Voldemort poses himself as an icon for his wicked followers. In *Order of the Phoenix*, the trial of Harry before the Wizengamot at the Ministry of Magic reveals how power is used to silence the dissenting voices. Harry is shown guilty of the crime that he has never committed. Dumbledore points out that Fudge, in his "haste to ensure that the law is upheld...overlooked a few laws" himself. Fudge then says, "Laws can be changed" (*Order of the Phoenix* 149). But this repression does not last long as it fails to silence dissenting and protesting voices for a long time. The more it represses people, the more they are forced to go rebellion against the unjust and relentless system.

In *Deathly Hallows*, as Voldemort comes to the full powers, he tries to take full control of every institution or organization such as school, media, law courts and economy. With the takeover of the Wizarding world by Voldemort, society moves from open to closed one: from freedom to slavery; from expression to repression. The ruling party does everything possible to terrorize the public not to discipline or improve them but to control and contain them from taking any step against the state. Voldemort expressed his intentions about the Muggles: '...we shall cut away the canker that infects us until only those of true blood remain...' (Rowling. *Deathly Hallows* 11). His followers not only idealize him but also idolize pure bloods. But what is an irony that their own leader, Voldemort, is half-blood with a Muggle father. Voldemort can go to any extent to possess and monopolize the wand. Voldemort imbued with sense of superiority attempts to defeat his enemies by creating an army of bloody minded followers, Death Eaters.

In the *Harry Potter Series*, Lord Voldemort, known as 'Dark Lord' among his followers, is found excessively obsessed with gaining power to dominate the Wizarding world. He tries to justify this right to rule, using the illogical stratification and classification of living beings as superiors and inferiors. As Voldemort grows older; the world of Harry Potter takes on more dangerous dimensions with the threatening presence of Voldemort along with Death Eaters. Harry Potter and his friends struggle to defy and defeat the hegemony of Voldemort, underscoring democratic values and principles. The author employs her fiction to praise and extol the democratic and pluralist life in harmony, projecting Harry as a defender of democratic values and human rights.

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Rowling clearly criticizes the use of power for the suppression of minorities. Harry Potter and his friends are in search of a life which entertains diversity of world views. They live in harmony though they are different beings with sometimes contradictory natures. The sincere friendship between Harry and Dobby is based on a kind of mutual and equal intimacy, not on vested interests. Harry rejects the use of abusive and sadistic power control, underscoring the importance of human virtues and democratic values. In *Prisoner of Azkaban*, Harry attempts to save the life of a hippogriff from death sentence given for harming a student slightly. Harry comes to the rescue of hippogriff making him run away from the scene when the latter is likely to be attacked by the father of Garco with a magic wand. Later when Harry is attacked by hippogriff protects him. In addition to Harry's extension of helping hand to people across different cultures, Hermione Granger, a mudblood, strives to set the house elves free from the cruel clutches, challenging their enslavement. The author tries to reconstruct the relationship on the basis of mutual respect between different species

Inter-racial love is a strong element in Rowling's fiction to undermine the racist segregation. This sort of love is neither biased nor prejudiced. Individual differences are respected in the relationships between Fleur, magical female character and Bill Weasley, a pure blood magician, Ron Weasley, pure blood wizard and Hermione Granger, mud blood and Harry Potter, half blood and Ginny Weasley, pure blood. But such relationships for Voldemort are interpreted as paving way for a damned extinction of pure blood, so the complete extinction of the pure blood must be avoided at all costs Harry Potter acknowledges and appreciates these differences as inter-marriages are a deviation but a creation of harmonious relationships. The author presents the inter-racial marriage as a sacred bond that could overcome the perceived differences, creating peace. The defeat of Voldemort towards the end of the narrative and killing the pet snake suggest the defeat of racism and hegemony. The author underscores the view that unless and until the serpent in the heart is not killed, the evil of racism cannot be eliminated.

The foregoing discussion reveals how racism and fascism caused human miseries not only of the past but also brings the reader face to face with the fascist forces in the present times. Her Rowling's criticism of the present world order signifies her search for a better world order where racial and social differences are looked at as discrepancies. Love is considered the best way to establish harmonious human and social relationships. For Harry and his parents, love is the cornerstone of personal and social relationships. Harry makes the point that Voldemort be defeated to defeat the racist forces which is reflected in the way Harry and his friends defy this formidable enemy by exalting democratic values, respect for the other and life in harmony. Harry Potter and his friends with a similar worldview do not create such classification and differences for decimation and abuse. Rowling undermines the idea that typical qualities of a certain group cannot be marks of stigmatization. In her worldview, racial or individual differences should be respected and tolerated as necessities of a life in harmony. The author underscores the need for friendship, love, mutual dependence, equality, compassion and peace to defeat the fascist forces.

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