The Past is Present and Future: Recurring Violence and Remaining Human in J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* Series

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Abstract

J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter series of seven novels span the historical period immediately before and after 9/11. Although the series does not deal directly with the events of 9/11, the Harry Potter storyline provides a powerful psychological representation of both the accelerating threat of violence and the intergenerational trauma. These themes are expressed and explored both through a variety of symbols and themes within the novels as well as through metanarrative elements. Ultimately hopeful rather than nihilistic, Rowling's series explores the challenge, importance and promise of remaining human in the face of overwhelming challenge and loss, as well as the results of the fragmentation and loss of self that occur when ethical human virtues are abandoned. Through the creation of a magical world that both echoes and embellishes reality, Rowling shows her keen awareness of events and her orientation toward tolerance, equality and humanity.

Keywords: Harry Potter, Voldemort, Rowling, terrorism, 9/11, post-9/11 literature, trauma, fragmentation

Introduction

J. K. Rowling, best known as the author of the world-renowned *Harry Potter* series of children's novels (albeit with great crossover appeal for adult readers), has been unusually outspoken via social media on the subject of terrorism and the political and social response to it. Unusually, that is, for an author of fiction, but Rowling clearly does not limit her intellectual role to that of a creator of fictional worlds. Rather, she is firmly rooted in and highly opinionated regarding the instability and difficulties of the current, real world. For example, her Twitter comments on the recent Finsbury Park mosque attack criticized British media coverage and the initial reluctance to label the acts of a white man's attack on Muslims as "terrorism". Soon after the event, Rowling tweeted: "The Mail has misspelled 'terrorist" as 'white van driver.' Now let's discuss how he was radicalized" (pic.twitter.com/HPw2czZiV9[1] cited by Coleman).

Throughout what is now a 20-year publishing history and elevation to the status of a worldwide phenomenon, Rowling's books about the orphaned boy wizard have won acclaim, crafting stories of wizardry school and battles against a dark wizard who threatens both the magical and non-magical worlds. Perhaps because of the level of acclaim they have garnered – and, of course, their popularity with children – the books have also fallen under adult scrutiny, more so than most other children's literature. Christian and conservative groups have opposed the series because of its "occult" subject matter and liberal ideals. The quality and sheer entertainment value of these books precludes the idea that they are the vehicle for a political agenda; however, there is no doubt that certain social values are embraced and embedded in the novels. A fair assessment of Rowlings' social messages as transmitted by Harry Potter may be the following:

> J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* saga can be considered, in a contemporary political context, a liberal-slanted series with a setting that includes corrupt government, resistance to injustices, ideal characters, and underlying messages about how to treat people. (Iafrate, 2009, n.p.)

There are definite allusions to real politics and history within the *Harry Potter* series. For example, in an interview published as "J. K. Rowling at Carnegie Hall" (2007), the author answers a question in this regard:

> Q: Many of us older readers have noticed over the years similarities between the Death Eaters tactics and the Nazis from the 30s and 40s. Did you use that historical era as a model for Voldemort's reign and what were the lessons that you hope to impart to the next generation?
> A: It was conscious. I think that if you're, I think most of us if you were asked to name a very evil regime we would think Nazi Germany. There were parallels in the ideology. I wanted Harry to leave our world and find exactly the same

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[1] Rowling later deleted this quote, but her point regarding unequitable reporting and the reluctance of the media to ascribe the label of terrorism on a white man attacking Muslims stands: "I deleted my tweet about *the Mail* not calling the #FinsburyPark attacker a terrorist because many rightly pointed out that the headline was written before charges had been brought against him," she later tweeted. "I was angry at what I saw as victim blaming in their immediate coverage (the mention that an Islamist had preached in the area three years ago)". She continued: "I'm still angry about that, but I fully accept that in the immediate aftermath, it isn't reasonable or responsible for a newspaper to rush into judgement without knowing the facts".
Read more at http://www.marieclaire.co.uk/entertainment/people/jk-rowling-finsbury-park-516290-516290#f2083cRH95kXI5HK.99

problems in the wizarding world. So you have the intent to impose a hierarchy, you have bigotry, and this notion of purity, which is this great fallacy, but it crops up all over the world. People like to think themselves superior and that if they can pride themselves in nothing else they can pride themselves on perceived purity. So yeah that follows a parallel. (n.p.)

Specifically, the Death Eaters emphasize a sort of racial purity, and their views, once nearly extinguished, reemerge within the time frame of the novels. Moreover, the writing and publication of the series of books spans the period in history both before and after 9/11, and the increasing number of acts of terrorism in the West. While Rowling's fiction does not engage directly or metaphorically with the events of 9/11 *per se*, she does depict, particularly in the later books (written and published after 2001), a world in which peace is repeatedly and increasingly disrupted by acts of terror. This world of fiction has both familiar echoes of and overt references to the violation of the peace in real life that characterizes the post-9/11 era.

Harry Potter as Post-9/11 Literature

The identification of the Harry Potter series as "post 9/11" literature is of course open to debate. The series was begun before the events of 9/11, and the action of the whole cycle of stories had been planned by the author prior to writing. Therefore, one can assume that the plot of the novels had been created prior to the events of 9/11 and that similarities to real-life acts of terrorism in the books are coincidental or are the result of the universality of such acts and their aftermath. On the other hand, the dark tone of the later novels, the consciousness that the characters are living in a new world in which the battle between good and evil is coming to a showdown, and the clear messages regarding the antecedents and after-effects of violence, all of these characteristics suggest that the later Harry Potter books were indeed influenced by the events of 9/11 and the realities of a newly dangerous world. Moreover, JK Rowling's narrative cycle encompasses and embodies significant insight into the roots of violence, reactions to violence and the ways in which these can be overcome – messages as highly relevant to a post 9/11 society as are Rowling's topical and pointed tweets. It has been remarked with regard to the effects of 9/11 on literature that ". . . the event was such a fissure in the history of the world that it dates books in a particular way – it is immediately clear whether a book is set before or after 2001" (London, 2011, n.p.). Engaging only selectively with the real world and focusing on the magical world with which it co-exists, the Harry Potter series is not perhaps overtly "dated" by the events of September 11, 2001. Nevertheless, a shift in the tone of the books may serve as a similar marker. Moreover, Rowling stresses the continuity and cyclical resurgence of violence and terror. These occur both at a personal level, as an individual deals with traumas of the past and present, and more broadly, at the collective level.

Post 9/11 literature is not an academic term, but one used to describe the literature that emerged after the terrorist attacks on the USA on September 11, 2001 that deals directly or indirectly with these attacks and their aftermath. Post 9/11 literature may also include literature which specifically references the emergence of altered social and political realities after the 9/11 attacks. Several critics cite both the difficulty of grappling with topics related to 9/11, and the importance of doing so – the topic is "unpossessable" but ironically also "must be possessed" in order for society, collectively, to move on (Versluys, 2009, p. 3). Narratives that fail to grapple with the events and aftermath of 9/11 may, after the fact, seem inappropriate, just as "Writing poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric" (Theodor Adorno, qtd. in DeRosa, 2011, p. 607). The value of post 9/11 literature seems to lie in the promise of understanding or resolution of the horrifying and inexplicable event that has occurred. Thus, the discussion of post 9/11

literature almost inevitably (and appropriately) includes a discussion of the psychological effects of both the literature and the collective trauma that preceded it.

Literature, it is acknowledged, is useful in transforming and defining trauma. A traumatic event such as 9/11 leads to a "collapse of a network of significations" – that is, the world is suddenly changed, and familiar things have lost their accustomed connotations (Versluys, 2009, p. 4). As a remedy, "a narrative is needed to restore the broken link" – reassigning meaning (Versluys, 2009, p. 4). Moreover, narrative can restart emotional processing and experiencing, whereas trauma may stymie this process:

> Traumatic memory must be turned into narrative memory (French psychiatrist Pierre Janet cited by Versluys)…. Trauma makes time come to a standstill as the victim cannot shed his or her remembrance and is caught in a ceaseless imaginative reiteration of the traumatic experience. Narrativizing the event amounts to an uncoiling of the trauma, an undoing of its never ending circularity: springing the time trap. (Versluys, 2009, pp. 3–4)

Others echo this opinion regarding the importance of narrative in a post-traumatic situation or setting. Interestingly, narrative seems to play a healing role distinct from and more powerful than that of mere memory:

> Cognitive scientist Kitty Klein argues that for psychologists tracking the value of narrative for healing trauma, "the emphasis is on how developing a narrative produces a new version of the original memory as opposed to helping a person understand what 'really' happened" (65). That is, rather than recovering lost memories or seeking mimetic repetition—two approaches privileged in contemporary trauma theory—we might be better served by producing new versions of the original. (DeRosa, 2011, p. 607).

In the case of JK Rowling's *Harry Potter* series and the attempt to cast it as post 9/11 literature, an obvious additional factor must be taken into account, namely, the fact that the *Harry Potter* stories are fantasy literature, and even, ostensibly, children's literature. As such, even though they are set in part in a realistic world, the novels are bound to veer from the predictable understanding of the topic and construction of the post 9/11 narrative – one which, like Don DeLillo's *The Falling Man*, deals directly with the event. Moreover, as fantasy, Rowling's work occupies a different arena in which themes related to social and psychological reality may be explored. This does not make Rowling's work less relevant as post 9/11 literature, but it does mean that her willingness to deal with socially engaged themes within a fantasy context (and with the ultimate triumph of good over evil) gives her work an additional advantage which a strictly realistic narrative would not have. Bruno Bettleheim established the "uses of enchantment" in his famous work by that name. For Bettleheim, "fairy tales give children the opportunity to understand inner conflicts which they experience in the phases of their spiritual and intellectual development, and to act these out and resolve them in their imagination" (Vom Orde, p. 17). I would argue that JK Rowling's *Harry Potter* novels, with their occasionally mature subject matter, vast crossover appeal, and grounding in imagination and the ultimate triumph of the hero, occupy a unique and valuable niche in the realm of post 9/11 literature.

Inter-generational trauma; history re-embodied

Violence and trauma, as embodied in the *Harry Potter* stories, are not the result of a single event occurring at a discreet point in time. Rather, violence is something that emerges, subsides, reemerges, and is rooted in earlier generations. As such, it re-occurs throughout the generations until ultimately resolved. This element by no means weakens the relevance of the novels in relation to the resolution of a single, discreetly occurring traumatic event. Rather, it encourages its broad understanding. Trauma is generational and recurring. It does not spring out of nowhere, and understanding its origins is vital to combatting or overcoming it (this is consistent with Rowling's early tweet following the Finsbury Park attacks – "how was he radicalized?"). In the Harry Potter series, as well, this is the question that Rowling poses and answers. In the process, she also answers an accompanying question – how and why was the hero of the narrative cycle *not* radicalized.

The concept of generational trauma emerged from the effects of abuse in residential schools on consecutive generations of North American indigenous children. The children of those taken from their parents and subjected to abuse and forced cultural assimilation in residential schools did not experience that abuse themselves. They did, however, experience the results – being parented by parents who were raised without their own, and being raised by parents who were traumatized and therefore less emotionally available. Of course, there is also considerable evidence that children who were abused are more likely to be abusers themselves, and that generational abuse is likewise a feature of generational trauma.

The concept of generational trauma is, of course, universally applicable. It is implicit in the trope of the orphan as hero, which Rowling clearly makes use of in the *Harry Potter* series. However, it is also embodied and writ large, as it were, in the emergence and reemergence of terror in the *Harry Potter* books as experienced by their eponymous hero.

Terror is present in Harry's past and present throughout the narrative cycle, and finally resolved at its conclusion. The terror in question, the result of the rise of a dark wizard, Voldemort, has its roots before Harry's birth in an era characterized by discrimination, intolerance, violence, and the subjugation of others to one individual's narcissism and hunger for power. It affects the world depicted in the novels, as both the magical and non-magical spheres are affected by terrorist-like violence. (There are also suggestions that wizards were implicated in WWII.) It affects Harry directly and particularly, as his parents are killed by Voldemort when Harry was a small child. As Harry grows up, he must grapple directly with Voldemort and ultimately overcome his power, while recognizing similarities and differences between himself and his enemy.

Harry must also grapple with the residue of terror and trauma within himself. Through the use of symbolic, magical elements, Rowling shows herself to be well aware of the congruence and co-existence of recurring acts of terror in society and of their involuntary reenactment within the individual who has experienced trauma – namely, post-traumatic stress disorder or PTSD. Much as the experience of trauma symbolically "makes time come to a standstill" (Versluys, 3–4), the experience of PTSD catapults the individual into the earlier time through powerful visceral memories and flashbacks. Unsurprisingly, according to psychologists, PTSD is also implicated in the passing on of trauma through generations. For example, "adult offspring of Holocaust survivors showed significantly higher levels of self-recorded childhood trauma... The difference [being] largely attributable to parental PTSD" (Yehuda et. al., 733). Psychologists find, moreover, that the specific cause of the inciting trauma is largely irrelevant

with regard to the outcome. That is, the specifics of history all but disappear and the effects on the psyche remain constant:

> I have worked with patients whose communist families lived through the period of American state terror known as McCarthyism; with Vietnam war vets and the children of veterans; with survivors of state terror and torture in Bosnia, Iran, Africa and South America; and with children of survivors of the Shoah. In each of these instances, one recognizes the legacies of psychic and physical trauma. There are striking similarities in the generational transmission of these terrors through psychological structures...indeed, the tyranny of history is perpetuated through these transmissions (Katz, 200).

Rowling is never heavy-handed in the application and representation of these and other powerfully affecting psychological factors, though she does, clearly, engage with them. Moreover, through the power of fiction to employ symbolism, metaphor, and to unite realistic and fantasy worlds, Rowling also accomplishes something else – she powerfully weaves the continuity of trauma throughout a fairly defined and realistic historical period, in a bid to explain it and ultimately overcome it.

Within the last hundred years, citizens of Britain have lived through the First World War, the Second World War, the scarcity and rationing that followed WWII, IRA bombings during the "The Troubles", the knowledge of 9/11, the subsequent war in Afghanistan, the 7/7 attacks, and the most recent terrorist attacks on London Bridge and Finsbury Park – obviously, the list is not exhaustive. Terrorist incidents in England since the 1970s number in the hundreds. As in the stories, violence and terror are present in the history and the present reality of people in Britain. It is a violence that always lurks in the present as a memory of the past and a fear for the future. Violence is absent for a time and then there is another wave, and another. Those who have been marked by it recognize it. In history, however, the various incidents throughout the decades are linked to different events and sources. In the fictional world of JK Rowling, which echoes and represents the emotional reality of those living among and in the midst of recurrent waves of violence, all can be ascribed to a common source that can ultimately be overcome.

There is great value in such an approach. First, following Bruno Bettleheim's thesis, a fantasy tale in which a great challenge is overcome can act as a psychological "training ground" for reality. Second, the psychological truth regarding recurring violence is acknowledged – the trauma of one generation, regardless of what its source may be, does indeed lead to psychological damage and deprivation in the next generation. Third, the link between the individual and the larger society is established. Just as an individual may experience PTSD following a traumatic event, and therefore be subject to the seeming recurrence of the trauma through flashbacks – remaining, as it were, stuck in time – so, for society as a whole, recurring waves of violence may represent a sort of society-wide PTSD or re-traumatization. Resolution, therefore, must take place on both an individual and a collective basis. Finally, the similarities between victim and perpetrator are firmly established in Rowling's novels, the all-important distinction between them being choice and the voluntary retention or relinquishment of one's human qualities.

Rowling uses various devices to explicate and elaborate upon the above themes and messages, while consistently engaging and entertaining the reader. A full discussion of these would likely fill a volume as long as the latter three *Harry Potter* books. However, the flavour of Rowling's

accomplishment and contribution to post 9/11 literature can be experienced and tracked through the following elements. Some are internal whereas others are elements of metanarrative, transcending the writing itself and commenting on the role that the Harry Potter phenomenon has had in the world and in community:

> Harry Potter's scar
> Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry
> The Wizarding World
> The Real World, History and the `Harry Potter Generation'
> Dementors and Horcruxes – Loss of Soul

Harry Potter's Scar

It is Harry's early trauma and Harry's scar that is the metaphorical path that leads the narrative to its resolution, which is also, of course, the resolution of the trauma itself. The scar is a visible manifestation of the dark events in the protagonist's past, as he sustained it during the attack by Voldemort that killed his parents; it is his scar that, throughout the novels, aches when his nemesis is near, or is trying to control Harry's thoughts, much like intrusive thoughts and flashbacks intrude upon the emotional scars of PTSD. Harry, of course, functions as a microcosm for the entire world that he inhabits, a world that grows more expansive and complete as the narrative progresses. Whereas at the start there is just Harry, his aunt and uncle and cousin, and the strange inhabitants of the world into which he is inducted, eventually, it becomes clear that the events that have affected Harry have also defined the experience of a whole generation, and promise to do so for the following generation (Harry's own) as well. In other words, the generation of Harry's parents as well as his own generation have been or will be people at war. Ordinary concerns such as schooling fall away in the last novel as the young wizards are called upon to reassemble the Order of the Pheonix, to combat that evil that has infiltrated their world and that of the Muggles (non-magical folk). Harry himself, and more specifically Harry's scar, is a flashpoint – an epicenter, as it were, of the past and recurring threat. As Dumbledore explains to Harry:

> It is my belief that your scar hurts both when Lord Voldemort is near you, and when he is feeling a particularly strong surge of hatred [. . .] Because you and he are connected by the curse that failed [. . .] That is no ordinary scar. (OP 164–6)

To anyone with experience of PTSD, the significance of Harry Potter's scar is both apt and eloquent. It is a physical manifestation of a past trauma and its ability to influence the present. Just as people with PTSD are suddenly transported into the past through reminders or proximity with people or places that evoke the traumatic event, so Harry's scar remains a liability, but one that "sleeps" and does not bother him all the time. When it wakes, however, it pulls him back into the past event, showing that this event has become integrated into his being and will reemerge, never leaving him in total peace. Much like certain viruses lie dormant in the body for many years, flaring up suddenly and creating illness, trauma can lie dormant in the psyche, reemerging suddenly when one is triggered by a reminder or reference to the traumatizing event. This is why trauma tampers with one's sense of time, and can in fact appear to contract time or fold it in upon itself: "Trauma makes time come to a standstill as the victim cannot shed his or her remembrance and is caught in a ceaseless imaginative reiteration of the traumatic event" (Versluys, 3–4). In PTSD, the victim cannot move on because he or she is constantly vulnerable to being called back into the past – in fact, to the worst part of his personal past – at a second's notice. In much the same way, Harry's scar is a point of pain that can quickly take

him back to an association with the initial, traumatizing event in his life – the moment when Voldemort fails to kill Harry, but succeeds in killing Harry's parents. The connection with the attacker is maintained through that point of impact.

The idea that the scar is also a point of communication between Harry and Voldemort is significant. As Voldemort rises to power again, Harry is bothered by pain in his scar more frequently. In *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, it is discovered that Harry can sense Voldemort's emotions through his scar, and that Voldemort may be able to hear Harry's thoughts. Ultimately, we discover that Harry himself holds part of Voldemort's fragmented soul, and that the pain in his scar when Voldemort is near (as explained by Rowling in an interview) is because that fragment of Voldemort is struggling to pull itself out of Harry and rejoin the rest of Voldemort. There are in fact many hints throughout the stories that Harry may, if he chooses or allows himself, become much like Voldemort himself (for example, in the first book, he is given the option of being sorted into Slytherin house, from where dark wizards emerge, with the indication that he would do well and become powerful there. Later, on hearing the history of Tom Riddle – who becomes Voldemort – we realize that, like Harry, he was a lonely, orphaned boy, who once showed great promise at wizarding school.)

Harry's scar and his identification with Voldemort being evidence of trauma and the vehicle by which it is perpetuated, the similarities between Harry and his enemy take on a more complex and, I would argue, dual meaning. The connection between the victim and the perpetrator of an assault remains strong, as the latter is a powerful source of embedded trauma. For as long as the evidence of trauma exists and is not resolved, the one who perpetrates it has a sort of power over the victim – whether or not that individual is actually present. The mention of one's attacker, for example, or the presence of someone who looks, speaks or acts similar, can evoke a long-past event, making it present once again. (It is interesting to note that Voldemort has a particular talent for doing so, sometimes by design. Harry's scar serves a similar function, in a way, to the marks on the arms of Voldemort's followers, the Death Eaters. He can summon them through these marks, which are part of their bodies. The dark power of Voldemort is such that marks the lives of many, and in some cases this is voluntary on the part of those who are thus marked – they chose the association with him and continue to be compelled by it.)

On the other hand, there is certainly a message implicit in the fact that Harry Potter and Voldemort/Tom Riddle are so similar to one another, while polarized on the scale of morality – one hero, one villain. It indicates that, as Andrea Kuszewski points out in her 2011 article "Walking the Line between Good and Evil: The Common Thread of Heroes and Villians", there may in fact be relatively little difference between a hero or extreme altruist (X-altruist) and a sociopath. Both, for example, show disregard for the rules in their desire to achieve their goals. Moreover, both Tom Riddle and Harry Potter survive loss, marginalization, and persecution. On the one hand this might seem to encourage a measure of sympathy for the villain while still condemning his actions. On the other hand, the idea of the inevitability of evil action – the determinism – is powerfully rejected, and individual choice affirmed. This underlying belief influences Rowling's thinking with regard to terrorism and other forms of evil.

Finally, even though Harry's scar is a mark of what has happened to him and an ongoing connection to his trauma – one that he will bear for a lifetime – it is also iconic, and holds an undeniable aesthetic appeal as evidenced by the prevalence of artwork, costumes and temporary tattoos that commemorate it. The fact that the scar is in the shape of a bolt of lightning indicates that it is magical, perhaps numinous – a symbol of the boy's particular power

as well as his vulnerability. In fact, it is a representation of his power as the one whom Voldemort could not kill with a murderous spell, as well as a legacy of the power that nearly shattered his life, killing his parents and leaving him vulnerable and inextricably tied to the evil power in his past. The ambiguity of this – the fact that the lightning bolt scar is both a liability and a symbol of magical power – orients the reader to a potentially transformative relationship with the wounds of real life. They can be a source of weakness or of power. And, in the end, they can lose their power and become a mere mark upon the skin – as is the case at the very conclusion of the story cycle, which revisits the characters as adults. The last line of the last book is: "The scar had not pained Harry in nineteen years. All was well" (DH, 607).

Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry – The Limits of Sanctuary

As the inciting, "call to adventure" aspect of the Harry Potter narrative cycle, Harry is summoned to Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. It appears, at first, to be a refuge, even a happy conclusion to the early sequence of the story that takes place at the Dursleys' home, a place where Harry is mistreated. Upon being transported to Hogwarts, amid the protest and attempted interference of his aunt and uncle, Harry accesses important advantages of which he was previously deprived. He is welcomed, wanted, accepted and understood. He is free, to a large degree, of the threat of abuse, which has been prevalent at his uncle's home. Moreover, at Hogwarts (and in the period of time, in the first book, leading up to his first term at the school) Harry's previously deprived social condition is reversed. In the Dursleys' home, he is disadvantaged and impoverished, sleeping in a "cupboard under the stairs" rather than a bedroom, his only possessions being the poor remnants of his cousin's castoff possessions. In other words, in the Dursleys' home (and by extension, their community) Harry is materially and socially disadvantaged, while at Hogwarts, this reality is reversed.

Once at Hogwarts (and in the period leading up to his entry, after leaving the Dursleys' home) Harry has material advantages in the form of a bank vault full of gold, more than enough to cover his expenses. He acquires mentors and friends, and eventually a surrogate family. He finds, as well, what he has craved the most – a connection with his parents, who had both attended the school. Moreover, while his obscurity within the Dursleys' home and social circle was extreme, at Hogwarts he is well-known, and favoured – sometimes to the degree that this arouses jealousy. To put it simply, the difference is one of privilege. Before entering Hogwarts, Harry Potter enjoys no privilege at all, while after entering Hogwarts, he acquires or uncovers significant privilege. Not surprisingly, Hogwarts becomes Harry's true "home".

The interesting factor with regard to Rowling's social messages in the novel involves a revelation that takes place with regard to the more complex role of Hogwarts. While it initially appears to be a haven, in fact it shares the same hard realities as the real world. It is inhabited by characters that cover the gamut of human qualities, both virtues and vices. In creating privilege, it also fosters prejudice – and even the version of racism found in Rowling's story cycle, the discrimination against "mudbloods" (wizards with one or both parents being "muggles"). While Hogwarts is protected by powerful charms and is considered as near as possible to a "safe" place, it increasingly becomes clear that it is not, in fact, safe. As the narrative cycle progresses, outside influences invade Hogwarts – abusive teachers, infiltrators, and the Dementors of Azkhaban, the wizarding prison – who remove happiness and ultimately one's very spirit (a metaphor, perhaps, for depression). Moreover, Tom Riddle emerged from Hogwarts, where he was favoured; undoubtedly, his evil grew there as his powers developed.

Through this primary setting for her work, Rowling shows that communities and their influences are ambiguous and, perhaps, ultimately amoral. Evil can arise from a place that is "good", and where positive values are transmitted. Likewise, experiencing deprivation and abuse, as Harry does at the Dursleys', does not lead directly to a tendency to do evil. Within the context of a post-9/11 world, in which the antecedents to terrorism are inevitably a focus, Rowling's message is important. Radicalization, she may be warning us, cannot be simplified and ascribed simply to one's nurture within a specific setting. The same settings may produce both good and evil – and frequently do. Nonetheless, privilege and deprivation, and one's response to them, undoubtedly play a role, albeit not a strictly deterministic one. Moreover, as was found to be true in the post-9-11 era, places previously assumed to be safe, like Hogwarts, are vulnerable to invasion, and this invariably produces a sense of disbelief and grief.

The Wizarding World and Echoes of Realism

Unlike in many other fantasy novels, the wizarding world in the Harry Potter books coexists with the "real" world of Britain in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. The wizarding world and the world of the "muggles", non-magical people, are defined as separate spheres, but they certainly connect interact and co-exist. While some elements are pedestrian, familiar aspects of everyday life for the reader, the magical world exists just in the background. Then, the scene can abruptly shift, causing the magical world to become the foreground of the action instead. The impression is one of an extra dimension added on to everyday life. The scenes in which the muggle world and the world activated by magic come into direct contact are very compelling and numerous. They engage the childlike sense in perhaps every reader that the world is a little more than one has bargained for, or can clearly see.

At the same time, in the later novels, it is from the wizarding world that acts of terror are perpetrated, some of which affect the realistic, "muggle" world of Britain. These acts have muggle victims and are reported upon in the non-magical, muggle media. Through their suddenness and barbarity, these acts of terror clearly call to mind some that have occurred in the recent history of Britain and beyond. The presence of the magical world and the suddenness of acts of terror have an important factor in common – namely, the fact that they both demonstrate clearly that the world we live in day to day may be illusory in its simplicity and predictability. Magic and acts of terror may be on opposite ends of the spectrum as elements of fantasy vs. realism, but both reveal that they lurk within convention and routine. The acts of terror in the Harry Potter narrative cycle, which emanate from disturbances in the wizarding world but are strongly reminiscent of contemporary newsworthy events, tend to weave more tightly the web of associations between the two worlds.

The Real World, History and the "Harry Potter Generation"

The Harry Potter series has a stronger and more intimate connection to a real historical time period and movement through that period than do most other works of fiction. This is because of the overwhelming and unexpected success of the books (the original print run was only 1000 copies, 500 of which were destined for libraries; Rowling was advised to get a day job) and the emergence of a generation of children who self-identify and are identified as what Gierzynzki and Eddy call the "Harry Potter generation".

With whom or what, exactly, are these now-young adults identifying? We meet the eponymous hero of the stories when he is almost 11 years old. For Harry Potter, life has been overshadowed by the events that happened earlier, when he was a year old. The death of his parents and the

events that led to it have left an indelible mark on Harry. His present deprived circumstances are the result of the same initial event.

As Harry grows older, his awareness of the ways in which the present affects the past grows concurrently. His parents reemerge through magic, multiple times throughout the seven-novel series, which follows Harry from the age of 11 to almost 18 (with a flash forward to 19 years later). The image of Harry's parents is revealed to him in the mirror of Erised, which shows one's heart's desire. Harry discovers his ability to hear his parents' voices multiple times during attacks by Dementors and is at one point convinced that the sees his father, though it turns out to be Harry himself. Lily and James Potter, Harry's parents, make various other appearances through the memories of other characters, made visible through magic. These events and sightings accelerate the development of Harry's character, backstory and growth to maturity, while he remains focused on fighting off and eventually conquering Voldemort. The social and political context within which his parents had functioned becomes tangible and present, returned to present life, as Voldemort comes back to power. This necessitates the re-grouping of the Order of the Phoenix, a counter-terrorist organization that Harry's parents were a part of.

The timeline of the events of Harry's life extend further backward through the necessary delving into Voldemort's past, and into the roots of evil that extend beyond the lifetime of Harry's parents. Harry's search for horcruxes (objects that hold a part of one's spirit) takes him back into a time that is several decades earlier, to the aged Dumbledore's youth. The fact that, unlike many fantasy stories (as Boucquet points out) these events take place in real historical time, the fantasy element being always melded to realism, builds a stronger sense of the tangible historical context of the Harry Potter novels.

There are few dates mentioned in the novel to root the action to historical periods. There are no references to events such as the world wars, or, indeed, the 9/11 attacks – however, there is a strong intimation that the traumatic events perpetrated in British society were the result of dark magic, or, at least, that dark magic contributed. In the past, the wizard Grindelwald is defeated in 1945, the same year as the end of WWII. In the present, non-magical citizens of England are affected by Voldemort's rise to power. For example, at the start of *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, the British Prime Minister (unnamed) is advised that a murder and the toppling of a bridge are the work of a dark wizard.

Despite the fact that no dates are mentioned, there is from the start of the series a strong indication that the time frame shares the same "present" as its readers. At the beginning of the first book, for example, Harry's cousin receives for his birthday "a cine-camera, a remote control aeroplane, sixteen new computer games and a video recorder" (PS, p. 17). When Harry arrives in London, there are references to escalators, the ticket barrier on the Underground, and other ordinary and familiar elements of the everyday landscape powerfully interspersed with the magical ("This was just an ordinary street full of ordinary people. Could there really be piles of wizard gold buried miles beneath them? PS, p. 58.) There is every suggestion, in short, that Harry Potter lives in a time and place familiar to readers of the books. Therefore, the references to Dumbledore's youth would carry one back to the 1930s, while the flash-forward scene that ends the series might carry the reader briefly to the mid-2020s (with the assurance that all is well).

The "Harry Potter generation" of children are roughly the age of Harry Potter or a little younger (born in the1980s or early 1990s) and effectively, grew up along with Harry. The sequential

release of the Harry Potter books and movies and their overwhelming, international popularity built a keen sense of anticipation of every new release. Book shops and movie theatres capitalized on this by releasing books and movies at midnight, and hosting events surrounding the launch of each. These events punctuated the lives of many children of the "Harry Potter generation" and increased their sense of identification with the hero. It was not uncommon for young readers to line up (with their parents) for the release of a new book at midnight on the release date, then proceed to read all night and the following days until the book was finished. The emergence of social media in the early 2000s made communication about the books and movies, and the emergence of fandoms, possible. Children of the 'Harry Potter generation' effectively grew up along with Harry and his cohorts. Harry is young at the beginning of the series – 11 years old – and the early books were shorter and lighter, more suitable for younger readers notwithstanding frightening elements. Harry grows up as the series progresses, to age 17 by the end, at which time he is, because of degenerating social circumstances, effectively living the life of an adult. Young readers who read (or were read) the first Harry Potter books while in elementary school were, likewise, teenagers by the time the series ended. Overall, the Harry Potter phenomenon was almost unprecedented in the history of publishing. The keen anticipation of every new book and the close identification of children of a particular generation with the Harry Potter books has subsequently been confirmed by various phenomena – for example, the fact that the books, though they remain popular, do not have nearly the readership with children born post-2000 as they did with those born a decade earlier. Also, one need only consider the popularity of Harry Potter themed tattoos among adults in their early or mid-twenties to gauge the impact of the books on the generation!

Like Harry Potter himself, British children of the "Harry Potter generation" are situated within a historical context of violence. Their parents may have come to adulthood at a time when IRA attacks were common in London. Their parents' parents, certainly, would have been marked by the effects of World War Two, even if they were born in the 1940s or 50s, as the effects and vivid memories of that war persisted throughout their childhoods. Then, for children of the Harry Potter generation, 2001 brought the 9/11 attacks and subsequent British and American involvement in the "war on terror". The typical child of the "Harry Potter generation" would have been 8, 9, or 10 years old at the time of the 9/11 attacks – old enough, certainly, to be conscious of the event, though their perception and understanding of it would be very much that of a child. Subsequently, of course, came the 7/7 attacks in London. These took place the same month as the release of the last Harry Potter book – too late to affect the writing of the book, but not the reading of it. The Harry Potter movies, moreover, became "convergent with events post 9/11" (Hartmann-Warren, p. 48).

The violent effects that the children of the Harry Potter generation witnessed or were influenced by generationally were seemingly unrelated. In contrast, the violence in Harry Potter has a continuity, being constantly from a common source that subsides and then reemerges. This portrayal of violence and its effects as a reemergence of a force that is rooted in society and must be repeatedly beaten down and finally overcome represents if not a factual truth, a psychological one.

The familiarity that follows violent events inter-generationally stems not only from the inherent similarity of such events – the fear, the sense of being under attack, the constriction of civil freedoms – but also from the fact that traumas of the past are, indeed, alive in individuals of subsequent generations. In this sense, violence in society does, indeed, subside and then reemerge, from a single source that is as embedded in an individual and family as it is within a society.

Dementors and Horcruxes – Fragmentation and Loss of Soul

The third book of the Harry Potter series marks a sort of transition to a darker, more mature consciousness. Harry (and the readers that have followed his story from the beginning) is getting older. The danger in the story is becoming more imminent – and the wizarding world is beginning to impact the muggle world, through the reporting of an escaped criminal, Sirius Black. Black's escape and the rumour that he is looking for Harry lead to the presence of Dementors at Hogwarts.

These are magical creatures with no pretense of humanity. Profoundly frightening, they pull the joy out of humans they encounter. Ultimately, they perform the "Dementor's kiss", designed to suck the life or the soul out of a person. This is understood to be a serious punishment, tantamount to execution, at Azkaban, the wizard prison.

Harry is more profoundly affected by the Dementors than are his friends – in fact, he is considerably bothered by the fact that whenever they appear, he passes out from the strain of their presence. We come to understand that this is because he has experienced darker events in the past. As a teacher explains to Harry, "The Dementors affect you worse than the others because there are horrors in your past that the others don't have" (PA, p. 140). In other words, Dementors affect those most strongly who have suffered trauma previously. This is confirmed by the fact that, during subsequent Dementor attacks, Harry hears his mother and father being murdered by Voldemort. He even recognizes that his desire to hear them, distressing though it is, is preventing him from being able to counteract the Dementors (PA, p. 180). The antidote to a Dementor attack – one which Harry must master through the course of the book – is to create a patronus, a spell composed of joyful thoughts.

Metaphorically, of course, Rowling is describing depression and its association with past trauma. The more one has suffered in the past, the more one may be subject to loss of pleasure (anhedonia), anxiety, re-traumatization, and ultimately the unwillingness to go on living (the Dementor's kiss). The immediate first-aid measure is chocolate – known to produce endorphins and serotonin. Ultimately, though, the only defense is cultivating positive, happy thoughts, manifested in the patronus. For Harry, the patronus has a close association with his father. Near the end of Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban, when he has mastered his fear of the Dementors, Harry produces a stag patronus. Time traveling, he thinks he sees his father on the other side of the lake, producing the patronus, but really it is himself. This is the beginning of an amelioration of his loss. If he begins to find the strength of the father he has lost within himself, then the loss is addressed and Harry becomes truly less susceptible to the Dementors and all they represent.

It can be no coincidence that the fate worse than death – the Dementor's kiss – and the mechanism that is ultimately revealed to have given Voldemort his power – the creation of horcruxes – both involve the loss of one's soul. In one case, however, it happens unwillingly and represents a loss of self, life, and all agency. In the other instance – namely, in the stories, Voldemort's rise to power through the creation of horcruxes, which hold elements of his split soul – this same loss of one's human soul is deliberate and a source of great power, even immortality. However, it comes at the cost of humanity and the proof of such.

The phenomenon of the man without a soul, or whose soul has become fragmented, is that of a powerful vortex of energy, drawing individuals to him and remaking them in his image – hat is, fragmented – while binding them to his bidding. The narrative importance of this is clear –

Voldemort provides what the story cycle requires, a compelling, powerful and complex villain. The psychological truth of this aspect of the narrative, at the same time, is undeniable.

The damaged, narcissistic person – the abuser – has the unique power or ability to exert power over others by causing similar to analogous damage to them as well. This, of course, occurs in families and in communities, as the bullied becomes a bully, and the abused becomes the abuser, always seeking to fill in parts of what he lacks, and in the process causing damage and dependence in others. The danger of fragmentation and loss of self is confirmed through the example of other characters, invariably ones who have fallen to the dark side. Peter Pettigrew, one-time friend to the Potters but turned traitor, loses his identity, spending years hiding in the form of a rat and in fact unrecognized by anyone throughout most of the narrative cycle. When finally returned to human form, Pettigrew is forced to sacrifice part of his body for his master, and then in turn loses his dignity by groveling for it to be replaced (Klemt 117).

Another iteration of the loss of soul and identity is through the character Quirrel and his peculiar symbiosis with his master. In the first book of the series, Voldemort is little more than a spirit, having not yet attained the power to "come back" corporeally. However, he is able to exert influence and agency through his follower, Professor Quirrel, a teacher at Hogwarts. Quirrel is hesitant, timid, and indecisive – a shadow of a man. The reason, as is revealed near the end of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, is the Voldemort has been living through Quirrel, even to the point of sharing his body. Quirrel is obviously terrified of his master, who, even without a body of his own, orders Quirrel to accomplish challenging tasks and punishes him when he fails. One critic describes Quirrel as the "abused spouse archetype", even drawing a fascinating comparison with Rowling's life:

> Prior to beginning the writing of the Harry Potter saga, Rowling was an impressionable young teacher who went to a foreign country to gain experience and teach. She fell in love, married and bore a daughter to a man who became an abusive and controlling master. She fled back to Scotland, and the rest is history…. Prior to the beginning of *Sorceror's Stone*, Quirrel was an impressionable young teacher who went to a foreign country to gain experience to improve his teaching. He was seduced by a dynamic stranger who became an abusive and controlling master. He returned to Hogwarts in Scotland, and the rest is history. (Miller, p. 128)

In the *Harry Potter* series, particularly the latter books, Rowling demonstrates the ways in which this simple mechanism – the perpetuating and spreading of individual harm, dehumanization and fragmentation – is identifiable on an individual level as what we would call abuse, and on a societal level as what we would call terrorism. Ideologies that encourage fragmentation of a body of people or of a community – for example, racism and discrimination in its various guises – are the vehicles through which the harm to society occurs, but would be simply abhorrent to one who had not already experienced fragmentation within himself. Thus, the metaphor of the horcruxes – the fetishized objects in which one deposits bits of one's life force, and the loss of integrity that results – are used to explain evil, on both an individual and a societal level. Whether or not horcruxes are involved, however, the fragmentation of the individual will, body or psyche, or of the community, is identifiable with evil and harm.

Conclusion – the Way Out

Among some First Nations communities, there is a belief that one's current actions affect the next seven generations. This also means that we are affected by the actions of those seven generations back. Generational trauma takes on a new importance if we accept that this is true. Actions as far away in time can impact the present and, through the present, the future as well.

What solution is then possible? What are Rowling's thoughts on solutions or methods of healing society– as, clearly, there is an optimistic rather than nihilistic tone to the narrative, however dark it may become. Perhaps the answer lies in the words spoken to Harry by Dumbledore upon the death of his godfather. In this scene, Harry is devastated and furious at experiencing yet another abrupt loss of a parental figure. Dumbledore consoles him: "Harry, suffering like this proves you are still a man! This pain is part of being human –" To which Harry responds: "THEN – I – DON'T – WANT- TO- BE- HUMAN!" (OP, p. 824). The sentiment is understandable, but the word choice is hardly accidental in relation to the core themes of the narrative cycle. At a basic level, the *Harry Potter* series is the story of not one but two orphaned boys. One remains human, the other does not. Rowling's development of both characters and their back stories provides one answer to the implicit question of how acts of violence and terrorism can be prevented, while reinforcing the close two-way association between violence and individual trauma.

Hogwarts, Harry's alternate and compensatory "home", in various ways ameliorates his early losses by meeting his needs for "mirroring" and identification with his dead parents. At the age of 11, he sees a reflection of himself at the heart of a loving family in the mirror or Erised. Later, memories of his parents are accessed through Dumbledore, Snape and others – it is essential, according to Hippard, that these memories are not uniformly positive, but are realistic – for example, through Snape's memories, Harry witnesses his father as a teenager bullying the unpopular Snape. Thus, Harry is able to avoid the trap of idealizing the deceased parent (Hippard, p. 92). Voldemort, on the other hand, lacks these advantages or any compensation for the early loss of his mother, and this early, unresolved loss leads to his dehumanization:

> Voldemort's family ... suggests a dysfunctional, tragic environment in which to raise a child. His mother's death and the absence of supportive caregivers predispose Voldemort to overwhelming feelings of loss and abandonment. Mastering his legacies of catastrophe, along with the resultant emptiness and insecurity, proves impossible. Harry suffers some neglect, to be sure, during his days living under the cupboard at the Dursleys, but he is not psychologically overwhelmed, even as additional trauma occurs (Hippard, p. 88).

As a result, Harry is capable of "… integrating the broken pieces and losses of his life, rather than enduring a fractured existence" (Hippard, p. 94). The results of a "fractured existence" are, as we have seen, devastating not only to the individual himself but to all those around him, extending, dependent on that individual's scope of power, to the broader community or even the world.

It would seem, then, that Rowling's own answer to the question she posed via Twitter regarding the Finsbury Park terrorist – "How was he radicalized?" – must involve a lack of influences as well as a surfeit. It must involve loss and deprivation, perhaps spanning generations, that has not been addressed. It must involve fragmentation and loss of one's self, or the extensions of self: family and community.

The power and the inherent appeal of the Harry Potter series lies at least in part in its ability to meld fantasy and realism. The humour and imaginative qualities of the series have hardly been touched upon here, though they are considerable. But at the root of the powerful appeal of the books for a generation of children (and adults) may have been the fact that they were *lived* rather than just read. Children and parents lined up at midnight at bookstores or movie theatres to be the first to experience the next installment of Harry's adventures. As the world changed on September 11, 2001, readers of all ages, in any country, found a true reflection of their experience in the darkening and increasingly dangerous world of Rowling's magical/muggle hybrid portrait of England. As readers became aware of how the world's challenges intersected with their own present and inherited traumas, Harry Potter, "the boy who lived", became a model of the way out, and of what it means to remain human.

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