

Horcruxes and Rings: A Foucauldian study of Power in association to the soul as presented in the Fantasy genre

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Introduction

Fantasy is a genre in which very little scholarship has been conducted in. However it remains one of the most influential genres in society. According to Ola Kowalczyk in her piece: *Most popular book genres of all time*. Fantasy genre is only second in popularity to Children's fiction. The line between fantasy and Children's fiction has blurred over the years. For an example, Harry Potter by J.K. Rowling (HP), The Lion, the witch and the wardrobe by C.S. Lewis which falls under the Fantasy genre due to its dominant fantastic features are still considered Children's Fiction (Kowalczyk, 2014). Thereby it is evident that the Fantasy genre has a massive impact on the society, especially children.

Objectives

This paper looks at the concept of power in relation to the soul within the genre of Fantasy. Power is a vast topic that dominates the world, a topic that research has been heavily conducted on. Due to the very reason that Fantasy is viewed as Children's fiction many scholars have overlooked the fantasy genre in the discussion of power. Thus the world of literature scholarship has been denied of a significant contribution.

Scholarship with regard to various social aspects of power is present in abundance, the concept of the soul and the power within it is less explore, especially within the genre of Fantasy, where it is a predominant theme.

Through this paper I attempt to explore alternative views of power that is present in the less explored genre of fantasy through the concepts of the much acclaimed theorist, Michael Foucault. I believe Foucault being a respected theorist within the discourse of power would validate my research further.

Methodology

The paper will explore how power is located within the soul in the Fantasy genre. The concept of power will be explored through the use of three Foucauldian concepts: "The soul is the prison of the body" as presented in *Discipline and Punish* (Foucault, 1975), "Power is everywhere" as presented in *The History of Sexuality* (Foucault, 1976), interdependence between knowledge and power as presented in *The History of Sexuality* (Foucault, 1976).

These three concepts will act as the three main chapters of the paper discussing the concepts in line with how the soul is presented in the Fantasy genre, thereby the paper will maintain a thematic analysis featuring the Foucauldian concepts. For the exploration of

the themes, the paper will use the two series: Harry Potter by J.K. Rowling (1997-2007), and Lord of the Rings by J.R.R. Tolkien (1954-1955).

The paper pays special attention to *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (2003), *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* (2005), and *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (2007) while looking at *Fellowship of the Ring* (1954), *Two Towers* (1955), and *The Return of the King* (1955) from the *Lord of the Rings* (LOTR) series.

It is important to acknowledge that the dedication of the analysis is devoted only to the concept of the soul and not the complete content of the six books. The concept of the soul as represented in the genre of Fantasy will be analysed by three concepts within *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975) and *The History of Sexuality* (1976).

Chapter Wise Findings

Foucault's Concept in 'Discipline and Punish: 'Body of the Condemned' where the Soul is the Prison of the Body

According to Foucault, "soul is the prison of the body", in his book 'Discipline and Punish' Foucault while discussing the penal system, suggests that the movement from corporeal punishment to non-corporeal punishment is indirectly a crippling of the soul (Foucault, 17-18). He believes that the body can be made docile through what he calls the 'modern soul'

The paper shows how both Tolkien and Rowling place power in the soul and how the separation of it gives more power for the 'villains'. However we also see that by destroying their soul they cease to exist thus an interdependence of the soul and the body can be observed.

Foucault's Concept, "Power is everywhere" as Mentioned in "The History of Sexuality"

This chapter reveals the uncanny places that power is present. The chapter explores the idea that "power is everywhere, not because it embraces everything but because it comes from everywhere," (Foucault, 1984). We can see that power is not necessarily found in the typical dynamic of: ruler and the ruled or that of the superpower and the oppressed, it is found in all dynamics

Foucault's Idea in "History of Sexuality" that Power and Knowledge Goes Hand in Hand

The most common outlook of power in the Fantasy genre is that of repression. According to Foucault in his "The History of Sexuality", repression alone is not power. He believes that there is power in resistance as well. It is his view that power has the capacity to produce: it produces discourse, and it produces knowledge. The Productivity that is inherent in power according to Foucault creates knowledge, it creates the concept of truth: "it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its regime of truth, its "general politics" of truth" (Foucault, 1984). Thereby the paper analyses the protagonists' of the series, because both Frodo and Harry blindly follows instructions given by Gandalf and Dumbledore, who are considered to be the good in LOTR and HP.

Conclusion

Through a thorough analysis of the series (HP and LOTR) and the three Foucauldian concepts as presented in *Discipline and Punish* and *The History of Sexuality* it was possible to see that though Rowling and Tolkien provides questionable prominence to the notion of 'greater good' and 'villainy', they also provide space for the readers to look at both Superpowers (Voldemort and Sauron) in a different angle; an angle that is not just limited to the negative view of power.

It is interesting to note that the notions of 'greater good' and 'villainy' are woven around the ever present concept of the soul. I was able to determine that the two series' takes a view similar to Foucault's view that the body devoid of the soul is able to be free in the dynamic the ruling power. I was also able to determine that the release of the soul is necessary for the body to reach its potential, because the soul is made docile by years of conditioning through different institutions. We see that it is not only an act of 'villainy' but also an act of resistance.

While the knowledge given by the beholders of the accepted norms of power suggests that having the soul intact with the body is a sign of goodness, this provides them the control of the vast majority. Thereby I was able to discern the 'villainy' is simply a synonym for resistance.

An overall conclusion is possible through the analysis of these three concepts. With each analysis, it becomes clearer that we cannot look upon power as completely 'evil' or repressive. Repression being a part of power may come from all directions: from those considered 'good' and through those considered 'evil'. Similarly, resistance too comes from all directions regardless of their characters. Thus, this paper provides results that are beneficial for both the discourse of power and the genre of Fantasy. We see that the fantasy genre provides a rich contribution to the discourse of power. Through this paper it is also evident that even a genre such as Fantasy where the line between 'good' and 'evil' is considered to be solid, we are able to diminish the line through a different view of power.

Keywords: Fantasy; Foucault; Power; Soul

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