J. K. ROWLING'S MESSAGE IN HER 'THETALES OF BEEDLE THE BARD'

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Abstract: Focusing of some ideas found in TheTales of Beedle the Bard by J.K. Rowling, ideas that seem to express quite clear the meaning of the author's Harry Potter's books. The confusion, willingly introduced between a clever and creative person on one side and a „common" person on the other, is able to determine some questions about the values promoted by J. K. R.' writings.

Key-words: sorcery, negative values, children, confusion, influence

Introduction

It must be said from the beginning that this paper is not situated on the side of Harry Potter series' author. Also, this article does not consider that the message of the volumes is one that has to be inoculated to children as it happens today, not that an extraordinary sales success gives to a book a literary value and humanist content. Concerning H.P. series, the values are rather confused, changeable and reader almost does not know any more what is good and what is wrong - except the very clear expressed idea that to do magic is a very good thing. Psychologically speaking, success indicates the fact that in this very epoch of high technology, the mythological elements (in the broadest acceptation) are absorbed by the human soul, responding to a genuine and even acute need. On the other side, these volumes would not have the expected success if non-literary interests had not created and promoted a miraculous hallo around them.

However, the present article does not refer to the Potter series, which, undoubtedly, will be sank in oblivion, but to one of its extensions, a volume having a romantic and attractive title: *The Tales of Beedle the Bard*.

The Tales of Beedle the Bard

We shall leave aside the relations of this book with the H.P. series, though it is introduced in one of the volumes. The name of the tales' "translation from the runic original is also known from the Potter's volumes. Certainly, to feel comfortable while reading the book is better if one reads the seven books before. But this only at the beginning. The tales are enough disparate and in any case, independent as content. What is common is the author's ambition to philosophize.The tales' titles is likable, suggestive and whipping up the reader. The five stories are: *The Wizard And The Hopping Pot, The Fountain Of Fair Fortune, The Warlock's Hairy Heart, Babbitty Rabbitty And Her Cackling Stump, The Tale Of The Three Brothers*. They are addressed to the persons (not to the children only) who do not believe in sorcerers or even worse, do not even have special powers to be used, that are the Muggles. The name of this category of persons, taken over from the jargon area, could be explained as confused people, with a mind misled by wrong ideas. As the H.P. series, this little book is a plead for magic; not for fairy tales, not for fairies and fantasy, but for magic. A magic existing among people, here and now, assumed by superior people who obtain everything they wish.

Concerning their content, the tales are short and rather simplistic, without a well developed plot. Despite of the excessive use of the odd names and the utilization of the different magic tools, the

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booklet is rather poor. It is true, this impression is accentuated by the complete absence of the artistic language; the writing is flat, informative, with tormented attempts of abstracting.
What unifies, in the author's intention, the five tales are the so called commentaries of the professor Albus Percival Wulfric Brian Dumbledore. He is the wise intellectual, trying to give weight and value to the stories, underlying their moral, either these ones have a moral or not.

From the beginning, it is created a differentiation in the language one could say an ideological discrimination between the sorcerers and the rest of the world. The introduction specifies that the book is only for the best, for the most gifted people, that is for the young sorcerers. The implied conclusion: if you want to count yourself among the chosen ones and not to be Muggles anymore, the solution is to become sorcerers. The Muggles are good people but ignorant. Actually, it is stressed that the sorcerers' As it can be seentales look like ordinary people's tales. On the other side, *there are* important differences:
- The Muggles consider that the witchcraft is the cause of all the difficulties that the hero has to overcome in the tales; but this is obviously, a lie, because the magic and witchcraft are activities as any other, creating problems but also solving them.
- The heroes of the Muggles' tales are generally, passive (for example, they sleep a hundred years waiting their savior) but the heroes from the sorcerers' tales are independent and active. They succeed by their own means.

The Wizard and the Hopping Pot. An old man uses his magic pot to help people in need. Upon his death, he leaves it to his only son. Bitter for having nothing left but a pot, the son refuses every person coming to ask for his help. Each time he does so, the pot takes on the symptoms of the ones who ask for help. The noise that the pot was making became unbearable and forced by it, the young man finally gives up, and providing aid to everybody was refused. Upon doing this, the pot's ailments were removed one by one. Since then, the young wizard helps everyone with his magic pot.

As it is seen, it is about a very simple schema; the young warlock starts to help people only to escape from the terrible noise made by the pot. But in Dumbledore's commentaries, the explanations are of the high spirituality: the young man's conscience awakes to life. Then, without too much coherence, he reminds the inquisition's treatment toward magic, only to valorize the witchcraft.

The Fountain of Fair Fortune. In this story, there is a fountain where once per year, one person may bathe to have his or her problems answered. Three witches: Asha, Altheda, Amata decide to try to reach the fountain together. The first one has disease, the second one is very poor and the third was left by her beloved. A knight also joins them, too. Along the way they have to face three obstacles, three riddles: to show the proof of their pain (that will be the tears), the fruit of their labors (sweat) and to pay a river crossing with the treasure of their past (that is their memories). At the fountain, they realize that could solve their problems without the magic water and allow the knight to bath in the water. He solves the problem of the third witch, asking her hand. So, they did not even become aware that the fountain is not magic at all.

Despite the complete lack of style and literary development, the story seems to be a little richer in meanings though the challenges are rather stupid than intelligent obstacles. In the same flow of nonsensical talking - in a literal sense, Dumbledore's commentaries are inscribed; perhaps this was the purpose? The name (*Dumb*ledore) is purposely chosen.

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The Warlock's Hairy Heart. A young, handsome, rich and talented warlock decided to never fall in love, so he uses Dark Arts to prevent himself from doing so. One day, he heard two servants whispering about him not having a wife, so he decided to find a suitable witch and marry her. Meeting a wonderful girl, he invited her at his castle. The feast begun and a lot of guests attend the feast.. Before to accept his proposal she said that she needed to know if he had a heart. The warlock showed her his beating hairy heart inside a crystal box. The witch begged him to put it back inside himself but he did so, his dried and hairy heart became savage, pushing him to tear out the witch's heart trying to replace his own. His dry heart opposing to go back in the box, he cut his chest with a dagger, falling over the witch's dead body.
Dumbledore start beginning his commentaries with an affirmation that is surprising for the reader. He considers that the first two stories treat subjects as generosity, tolerance and love. Given the content of the two tales, one can hardly accept this affirmation. Concerning the content of the third tale, he considers that is about the wish for an emotional invulnerability. There are some contradictory affirmations, too: on one side Dumbledore, that is the author, affirms that this thing is impossible, but on the other side she affirms that this is possible but risking the dryness and hairiness. Thus, if one understood something from this horror story, he is lost again.

Babbitty Rabbitty and her Cackling Stump. A king wanted to be the only one having magic powers. That is why he decided to kill all the sorcerers but also, to call an instructor in magic. Because no sorcerer dared to come, a charlatan has presented himself as having magic power. He became rich using different tricks. One day, Babbitty, the king's washerwoman, laughs at the king as he attempts to do magic with an ordinary twig. The king, upset, asked the charlatan to join him in a public demonstration of magic. Witnessing Babbitty performing magic in her house, the charlatan obliged her to help him in that public demonstration and she did it. But the king asked the charlatan to bring back to life a hound, which Babbity could not do and the charlatan, fearing to be beheaded, accused her of blocking his magic. Babbity fled into a forest and disappeared at the base of an old tree. The charlatan had the tree cut down. From the stump, Babbity exposed the charlatan and threatened the king with a curse if he ever will kill a sorcerer. Also, she asked him to build a statue of Babbitty on the stump. Later, an old and fat rabbit, with a wand in its teeth, left the kingdom.

The story affirms that not anyone has magic talents and any impostor receives his punishment. The sorcerers are good people, and the representative person for this category is a nice, good and modest old woman who did not need wealth, being content to gain her daily life by small magic acts as washing the king's laundry. Certainly, the good is victorious and a statue is built in the witch's honor. In this story, the most trenchant affirmation is made, concerning the two categories of beings: people and sorcerers. The first are ignorant, conceited, absurd, charlatans, and the last ones are good people, innocent victims trying to protect themselves in a non-aggressive way. Obviously, any condemnation of the witchcraft is an unfair act with negative effects upon the ones practicing it.

Dumbledore's commentaries confer a very large space to the warlock's possibility to transform him in animals (a rabbit in this case) or plants. He passes quicker over another affirmation but places it at the beginning of his notes, just to make it more visible. He says that not even Magic can resurrect dead people. In other words, if not even the sorcerers can, *nobody* else can. However, few lines further, one gets a hope, because the sorcerers did not discover *yet* the modality of resurrection; so, there is a problem of time and aptitudes.

The Tale of the Three Brothers. This last story has horror aspects.
Three brothers with magic powers, traveling together, reach a very dangerous river. They make a magical bridge over the river but on the bridge, they meet Death, angry for losing her. Pretending to be

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impressed by them, he promises to fulfill a wish for each. The eldest brother wanted an ever victorious dueling wand, the second brother's wish was the ability to resurrect the dead, but the youngest brother not trusting Death, asked Death to not follow him. In this way, he receives the Death' cloak of invisibility. Then, each of the brothers took another direction. After one week, the eldest brother was robbed and killed during the sleep. The middle brother brought back to life the woman who loved and died just before the wedding but he could not bear her dryness and sorrow, so he killed himself.
Death could not find the youngest brother until he willingly gave the cloak to his son and meet Death as an equal.

The story is quite spooky. People are killed (more concrete- their throat is cut), commit suicide or in any case, they died. There is no chance to escape from death. Death is the main and victorious hero, and the only normal behavior is to retard him as much as possible, but also to accept him. This is the tale that Albus Dumbledore likes the most and his commentaries are much longer than the story itself. His conclusion is that death is an enemy which cannot ever lose.

With the exception of this last tale, the commentaries have a nuance of humor of the kind: either this or this, increasing in this way the confusion. One cannot see anymore what it is all about; what is the intended message.
One thing *is* clear: the author presents everything as being of an absolute normality. We have to understand that witchcraft is part of our lives. That there is a category of people, more gifted than others, dealing with magic. Magic is a normal and good thing, with the exception of course, of the black magic. But there are not many sorcerers doing this. Generally, the warlocks and witches are well-intended people, like the other people, though in Beedle's stories one can see clear that the human beings are inferior - full of prejudices, ambitions and ignorance. That is why they are called Muggles. This ignorance made them cruel towards sorcerers, burning them.

The language of these so called tales is, as it was already said, dry, strict narrative, devoid of color. There is a temptation towards bloody and hard expressions as there are actually, the stories' plots. People die, are killed, suicide or kill in a horrible way. The first two stories are milder: there are "only" horrible blotches, pains and terrible distresses, major despair. And, though, except the tale of the hairy heart, the other finals are a little brighter, the ultimate sentiment is dark, heavy and confuse. Really, one cannot know anymore where the good is and where is the evil, especially when one finds out that the warlock Loxias's own mother made efforts to kill him, it seems, successfully (p. 104).

There is no other science higher than the sorcerers' one and there is no other alternative to follow in this life.
The hidden message of the text is sustained by the author's drawings. There were many editions of this book but she did not renounce the cover and the title page: skull, wand,
the chopped trunk, the snake, the snail without shell, the hairy heart in a slop of blood. Inside of the book - the same kind of drawings One cannot pass over the very large and well shaped slop of blood, under the two dead bodies from the *Hairy heart*.

Despite all of these, no one can contest the success of the Rowling's books. Apart from a manipulating advertising, apart from the use of the visual instruments (the movies) it is necessary to recognize a reality - the content of the books and the (non-literary) modality to transmit it, responds to the today young people's conceptions and ways of reaction, as they are shaped by the contemporaneous ideologies: the lack of the real values that are replaced with the values of the power of any kind.
The children of the modern society feel a profound frustration; the conflict between the requests of their own development and the educational requests of the society, as well as the conflict between their

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development and the "hidden curriculum" of the society that can be in an opposition with the declarations of the educational institutions, all of these made the children and young people to look for the emergency exit doors

The books that valorize the children's power of doing things are normally, appreciated. However, from the Antoine de Saint Exupery's *Little Prince* toward Roald Dahl's *Matilda* and finally to *Harry Potter* with all its extensions, a progressive degradation of the approach and solving the situations (situations that indeed, are harmful to the children of today).
The therapeutic solution found by J.K.Rowlings seems to be situated at a low level of the message. Perhaps her wish was to equalize Tolkien or C.S. Lewis, for not mentioning Lewis Carroll.. Surely, she did not succeed.

Conclusions

Leaving aside the sales success, sustained by movies and the publicity of keeping the secret, is advisable that the adults to exercise their discrimination. The opinion that is better the children to read J.K.R.'s books rather to waste their time watching TV or lost in the computer is heard very often. To read only for to perform an act of reading, this is nonsense; reading, a person assimilates correctly or not, the meanings and values transmitted through the text. In many cases, it is more recommendable to not read anything than to read something filling your own soul with black ink.
Academic and religious personalities have tried to oppose, unsuccessfully, to the "epidemic" of the magic provoked by J.K.Rowling among children. Their strategy was wrong. In this case, to ignore is the most suitable technique. Further, is only a matter of time.

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