The Fall of Hogwarts: Rewriting the Trojan Horse Scene in Modern Epic

In J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* (2005 [*HBP*])¸ book six of the heptalogy, Draco Malfoy is reluctantly revealing to Headmaster Albus Dumbledore how Voldemort's Death Eaters gained entry to the Hogwarts Castle. Draco admits that he mended a vanishing cabinet inside the Castle to magically transport people between there and a shop in London. The device defies all the Castle's magical protections therein leading to Voldemort and his Death Eaters felling Hogwarts by their occupation. The striking image of the Greeks destroying Troy via the wooden horse immediately comes to mind. The Trojan Horse motif in this scene, appears to be a deliberate reception from ancient Greek Epic.

This paper seeks to place the *Harry Potter* heptalogy as a "new mythography" of modern epic reinterpreting Classical myths and structure (Paul 2017). Harry, the main protagonist, follows a hero's archetypical journey of growing up and learning that his destiny is sacrificing himself to defeat Voldemort (Boll 2011). The story is Epic in scale, scope, and space. The Hogwarts Castle has been neglected as an avenue of interest to Classical reception. My framing of *Harry Potter* as a "new mythography" considers the Castle within the epic tradition vis-à-vis Troy in the Homeric legends.

The Hogwarts Castle as an archetypical setting for epic myth provides a frame for analyzing Classical reception: with respect to the Trojan horse. *Harry Potter* builds reader suspense to this inevitable location. Hogwarts, like Troy in the *Iliad* and the *Aeneid*, must fall as a crucial plot device known as an *urbs capta* (Lowe 2000; Paul 1982). None of the extant Greek epics – *Iliad, Odyssey* – provide an in-depth picture to the sack of Troy, except in its aftermath. Virgil's *Aeneid* fills in this lacuna albeit in a Roman context ca. 700 years later. Rowling's conscious adaptation of the Trojan Horse motif is standard practice for authors negotiating

their work with ancient Epic (Soloman 2007). Rowling explicitly connects the fall of Troy to the fall of Hogwarts by including an epigraph from Aeschylus' *Libation Bearers* at the beginning of the final book *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (2007 [*DH*]). This paper shelves the intertextual debate between Rowling and Aeschylus (Rogers 2017) opting to open the door for comparisons of setting between Hogwarts and Troy.

I will argue that Rowling treats Draco as an anti-Odysseus in chapter 27 of *HBP* due to his consciousness rejection of murdering Dumbledore. However, Draco displays Odyssean qualities of opportune cleverness, wielding a grudge, and intense familial loyalty throughout the *Harry Potter* series. Rowling transforms the characterization of a rapacious warlord Odysseus to a manipulated scared Draco who cannot comprehend the severity of his actions (*Od.* 4.303-306). Odysseus, on the other hand, had no problem slaughtering Trojans outside of the Horse (*Od*. 8.577-584). Indeed, the handiwork of deception that Draco and Odysseus employ to destroy their *urbs capta* are similar. Their motivations are ultimately different. This crucial difference makes Draco Odyssean but not Odysseus. Thus, he can leave behind his transgressions in *DH* whilst Odysseus must keep fighting to never face his own (*Od.* 24.590-597).

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