FEATURED

TROUBLED BLOOD

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The Rowling Library
www.therowlinglibrary.com

Vol 45 - Year 4
September 2020

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J.K. Rowling’s new book as Robert Galbraith is out.

The long awaited fifth installment in the Cormoran Strike series is the longest one, as it happened in the Harry Potter series with Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix. But if this is the first time you hear of Cormoran Strike or Robert Galbraith, do not be afraid: it is not completely necessary to have read the previous books to enjoy Troubled Blood because the mystery case stands on its own. And if there are any doubts or questions about what happened in the previous books, J.K. Rowling gives small tidbits of information to brief the reader on the events that precede this novel (which is useful also for those who did read the books but do not remember every detail).
Troubled Blood, as it has been promoted for the past weeks, begins when a woman approaches our favourite detective and asks him to solve the case of a missing woman. The tricky detail on this puzzling request? This missing woman disappeared forty years ago. The characteristics of a cold case make it a very interesting one for our detectives because it is the first time that Cormoran Strike and his now partner Robin Ellacot face something like this. And although there are difficulties in investigating a case of which little remains beyond the memories of witnesses, there are also simplifications: neither Cormoran nor Robin take any major risks. That is why, perhaps, the novel may lack action sequences, but that does not make it any less bearable. On the contrary, the explanations of a case that happened four decades ago are all very well accomplished: through conversations and memories of the different characters who knew Margaret “Margot” Bamborough (the missing woman) and also through the conversations between the two detective partners, who advance the plot with their own conclusions.

As it happens in the previous books, a tangled web of facts and suspicions is presented to the reader, but although at first glance the number of characters and the relationships between them may appear overwhelming (this added to the fact that like in every crime story all characters may be liars and the truth is hidden), the story is very well told and easy to keep up with. It is perhaps one of Rowling’s high points in this novel, along with the realistic dialogues – perhaps the best in her career – and the internal monologues of both Cormoran and Robin. There is also a mystery within a mystery: if in Lethal White the two cases ran in parallel (though feeding off each other), in Troubled Blood we go full meta to find a mystery within the main one: it is the notes (and behaviour) of Bill Talbot, the first detective who officially handled the case, and who in the midst of madness, believed that the answer and solution to it was in the zodiacal signs. Throughout the whole story we are able to see the writings he left on his notebook, not only through descriptions, but also through illustrations of said notebook. Even if Talbot’s notes are not useful and only serve as a distraction, (and here comes a spoiler) we end up without knowing why he was convinced zodiacal signs were the answer. His obsession is left without much explanation and it is just a plot device to distract the protagonists from the real case, a plot device that remains unsolvable at the end of the story.

It is perhaps on zodiacal signs that J.K. Rowling did a great deal of research, and without us knowing, some of that research was included in her Twitter header images, where Tarot cards appeared, and even Aleister Crowley’s own natal chart, which is mentioned several times in Troubled Blood. This is where Rowling once again shows off as a mystery writer: between ups and downs that involve confessions, talks and red herrings, Cormoran and Robin (because the credit goes to both of them) manage to solve a case that happened forty years ago and they do so, not by using magic and occultism, but by using the scientific and deductive method that identified them in the previous cases. As it mentioned, except in one particular scene, the danger is almost nil and the lives of the protagonists are never felt to be at risk. In fact, the most fervent scenes are unrelated to the main case: situations between Cormoran Strike and members of his family or his ex-fiancée. Cleverly, the couple of detectives are hired for a year, which gives them a temporary constraint: if not, there would be nothing to compete against in the search for Bamborough’s killer.

The title, Troubled Blood, is almost a hint to several symbols that appear throughout the novel, very similar to what Stephen King did with Carrie and all the allegories to blood. In Rowling’s latest novel, one of the characters is a hematologist and suffers from hemophilia, Robin’s new roommate has heart problems, and a blood sample in an old notebook may be a clue to find
the killer. But not always are the 
hints to blood so literal: the story 
is anchored to the relationships 
between fathers and sons which 
are always problematic. From life 
to death, through abortions and 
pregnancies, troubled blood is 
present in one way or another.

Beyond the extensive research 
that the author does so that every 
fact and location is real, there 
are also parts that come directly 
from her life. What could be a hint 
to Harry Potter, Robin Ellacott 
also answers “I am a what?” in a 
confusing revelation, and there are 
references to trials that prohibit 
the release of books, something 
similar to what J.K. Rowling 
experienced with the website “The 
Harry Potter Lexicon”. Another part 
of the book is also mixed between 
fiction and real life: a seven-year-
old Cormoran Strike is pressed by 
an older woman at the school gate 
to receive a letter and hand it to 
his father, an experience similar to 
that of Rowling’s daughter when 
she was still in school. Also, as a 
jest to herself, Rowling makes 
Cormoran Strike say “One of her 
[mother’s] best mates did my full 
horoscope for her when I was 
born. I should have recognized that 
straight off”, when talking about 
the kind of people his mother used 
to be friends with. Rowling herself 
used to create natal charts for her 
friends’ children when they were 
born.

The common thread running 
through all five books so far – and 
perhaps the million dollar question 
for readers – is if something 
finally happens between Robin 
Ellacott and Cormoran Strike. 
Spoilers ahead, but fans who were 
equipped a kiss or even a small love 
confession will be disappointed. At 
least both characters seem to have 
accepted their fate. Every other 
character seems to agree with 
most of the readers: they have to 
together. The question is not 
anymore an if now, but when. 
Although the expectations are not 
met, that does not mean there 
are no interesting encounters 
between them: a heated discussion 
halfway through the book, and 
an interrogation sequence that 
seems on the verge of a romantic 
conversation at the end could have 
finished in a different way, if not for 
a friendly interruption. The readers 
will probably be happy anyway, but 
there is always room to see what 
will happen in the next book, both 
on a sentimental level and on a 
mystery one. And although Strike 
might follow Mazankov’s and 
Krupov’s steps, we hope that he 
doesn’t suffer the same fate.
Dirty deeds are not exclusive to Voldemort, Bellatrix Lestrange and the Death Eaters. Many characters in the wizarding world do terrible things. Events are not black or white. They are many shades of grey.

Voldemort’s crimes include patricide, attempted infanticide, grave robbing, regime change, mass murder... and he’s a terrible houseguest. Other magic folk are more selective in their unpalatable behaviour. While wickedness can be understandable, explainable, forgivable, bad acts should not be forgotten. The winners write the history but does that let them off the hook?

This article is (a) about the bad things that wizards do and (b) not at all balanced.

1. Invasion of Privacy

Spying is a normal part of wizarding life. The Hogwarts’ postmaster knows exactly who’s in what bedroom at Four, Privet Drive from one day to the next and batty Mrs Figg is Dumbledore’s secret mole. Ron’s rat turns out to be a grown man, while Hermione’s cat passes gossip to an escaped convict. Mundungus cross-dresses as a hag down the pub, Rita Skeeter is an animagus bug and Dobby Apparates into Harry’s bedroom any time he likes. Is nowhere sacred? At least Sirius schedules his fireplace pop-ups. The dogfather gives Harry a tool to open locked doors. Psych! The Trio long ago mastered Alohomora. Even in Muggledom, the Prime Minister must put up with unscheduled magical visitors. A wizard arrives precisely when he means to! Profiting from paranoia, the Weasley Twins invent Extendable Ears to listen in on those few remaining private conversations. (“The safe word is Mollywobbles.”) Polyjuice Potion makes identity theft accessible
even to 12-year-old schoolkids. Those same students already have an Invisibility Cloak for sneaking. Little wonder that, in *Half-Blood Prince*, Draco breaks Harry's face on the train for eavesdropping. Malfoy must be sick of snoops. Even the portraits spy.

2. Roofies

Love potions are, in the stories, a woman's weapon. Approved by a giggly Molly Weasley in Book Three, love potions emerge as hot product in her sons' shop, Weasley's Wizard Wheezes – packaged in the Wonderwitch brand's furious pink. Gender normative sells! Shameless Gryffindor student Romilda Vane spikes some Valentine chocolates and wins the temporary affection of food disposal unit Ron. But a cautionary tale comes to light via the Pensieve. Merope Gaunt potion'ed a local Muggle and gave birth to notorious buzzkill Lord Voldemort. The uncomfortable subtext on seduction drugs: no man would use a potion to score with the witches. Not even the sexually frustrated Ron Weasley, who takes every advantage of Fleur Delacour's Gallic affection. C'mon, it's fine. She's practically family.

3. Incest

Pureblood means cousins marry. Imagine Sirius Black betrothed to Bellatrix, Narcissa or Andromeda. No wonder the family went loco when he came out as Gryffindor. Blood traitor! Meanwhile in Little Hangleton... the Gaunts take Salazar Slytherin's pureblood legacy to the extreme. Inbred, deranged and living in a hovel, daddy Marvolo, son Morfin and daughter Merope have two Slytherin heirlooms and no prospects. The other wizarding families do not trouble themselves with the end of this noble-defiled bloodline: Marvolo and Morfin go to Azkaban and Merope is left free to ensnare a Muggle baby-daddy, the handsome landowner's son Tom Riddle. But, prior to his mishap with the Ministry man, papa Marvolo surely had a plan to extend the family tree. Options are limited and inbreeding is on the table: had she not escaped, Merope's husband would be her near-feral brother. If not her father.

4. Abuse of Power

Powered by slavery (they're sooo like us), the wizard world is rife with abuse of power. Some of these are kind of funny: who invites a vampire to a party full of teenage girls? Other are disturbing. A wizard will wipe your memory as soon as look at you! As ghastly as the Dursleys are, they live in fear and have no magic. Harry doesn't even need a wand to blow up Vernon's sister. Hagrid didn't get the spell right when he gave Dudley a tail. He meant to turn him into a pig. Which is, hmm, not okay. The balance of power is held by the wizards yet a whole lot of magic folk turn up to intimidate The Dursleys, including Mad-Eye Moody and Albus Dumbledore. Even in the final book, when Harry and Dudley make peace, it's the Muggle cousin who bears the burden. Harry kinda laughs and makes a joke at the big lad's expense. Hey, wizard-boy! How about: “Sorry I threatened you with magic. Sorry my half-giant gave you a pig's tail. Sorry the red-headed twins poisoned you. Sorry that monster nearly sucked your soul. Sorry you have to go on the run. And sorry for all the fat jokes.”

5. Seriously, Hermione!

Hermione Granger transforms from earnest, honest swot into a liar, a rule-breaker, a thief and a ruthless abuser of magic. And, naturally, Dumbledore guides the behaviour modification via the Trio's 160 House Points, the discrete loan of the Time Turner and other acts of faith. After the early Troll-side deceit in Book One, Hermione sets fire to Professor Snape (little wonder he dislikes her) and body-binds Neville. Book Four ends with the disclosure that she has kidnapped Rita Skeeter. Hermione blackmails the journalist in Book Five. She terrifies the House-elves by trying to trick them into freedom's void. She horribly, visibly disfigures Dumbledore's Army drop-out Marietta Edgecomb. In Book Six she confounds Cormac McLaggen and attacks Ron with a pecking, clawing flock of birds. Later Hermione steals Dumbledore's forbidden books and, shockingly, condescendingly, rewrites her own parents' memories. Magically brainwashed, the befuddled Grangers emigrate to Australia. Some months later, in Godric's Hollow, Hermione steals Bathilda Bagshot's copy of *The Life and Lies of Albus Dumbledore*. She doesn't know Bathilda's dead. She just wants the old lady's book. This is Hermione Granger at 18-years-old. Two decades later, says J.K. Rowling, she becomes Minister for Magic. After all, who would dare tell her no?
DARK MAGIC ADDICT

Dumbledore “wouldn’t give me the Defence Against the Dark Arts job, you know. Seemed to think it might, ah, bring about a relapse... tempt me into my old ways.” - Severus Snape to Bellatrix Lestrange (Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince)

Do we ever really know Severus Snape? The Prince’s Tale chapter in Book Seven, which explains all, is the only time we see Severus unmasked: real Snape forbids even an oil painting to say “Mudblood.” Because Snape is a spy and nothing he says (outside of the Pensieve) can be trusted. But lies reveal some truth. The best liars deviate from the facts as little as possible.

What if Snape is a recovering addict of dark magic? He got in with the wrong crowd at school, picked up the habit and, soon enough, he was hooked. Next thing you know he’s got a tattoo, he’s not washing his hair, he’s wearing all black and he’s falling out with his childhood friend...

In Book Seven’s extended flashback in the Pensieve we see Lily Evans – the love of his life – unable to persuade Snape to give up the Death Eaters. When Snape wins the Defence Against the Dark Arts (DADA) post in Book Six, he teaches with a passion not seen in his Potions classes. He’s even kinda nice to Hermione. Dark magic high? By contrast, when he teaches a DADA class in Book Three, to cover for Lupin, he ends the book frothing like a mad man. “Fellow seems quite unbalanced,” observes Cornelius Fudge, Minister for Magic.

Snape has the best motive not to relapse into dark magic – love for Lily Evans. He is utterly repentant and determined to prove himself a good man. And his passion for Defence Against the Dark Arts may derive from fresh insight into Dumbledore’s plan. In Half-Blood Prince, Snape has reasons to want the students to pay close attention. They will need this stuff! The prior teaching has been lamentable.

WAVE A WAND

BY ALAN DELL’OSO

CEDRIC DIGGORY’S

The first time we know about Cedric is in book 3, Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban, for being Hufflepuff’s Quidditch team seeker and captain, but he’s much more famous for being the Goblet of Fire’s choice to become the only Hogwarts Champion at the Triwizard Tournament, well... at least for a few minutes until Harry’s name decided to pop out. Sadly for Cedric, everything went wrong at the last minute, when the Triwizard Cup turned out to be a portkey heading to Little Hangleton graveyard. There, Peter Pettigrew was waiting to start the reviving-the-Dark-Lord ritual. Then he murdered Cedric with the killing curse under Voldemort’s order.

The Wand

Cedric’s wand has a pretty simple design. It is a wooden stick that interpolates thickness from the bottom to the tip. Very comfy, very simple, I think that works very well.

It has some carved alchemic-like symbols in the bottom part of the wand, preceded by these pepperoni pizza shaped circles, which determines the end of the handle (or so it seems).

Almost the whole wand is brown except the tip. The tip is solid black, like it’s been dipped in a black paint can.
Ollivander Facts
According to Ollivander in Book 4, when he has to check Cedric's wand, he reveals that it is made out of ash wood, with a single hair of male unicorn as core (which almost nailed its horn to Mr. Ollivander when he was trying to cut its tail). Finally, the wand is 35.5 cm long.

Curiosities
It looks like Padma Patil's wand has exactly the same design as Cedric's wand, but with a uniform darker wood color in the whole wand.

Cedric's wand replica by The Noble Collection measures 37.5 cm, which probably is the same length of the movie prop.

“Every Auror in the Ministry was – and is – trying to find him and round up his followers, but we happen to be talking about one of the most powerful wizards of all time, a wizard who has eluded capture for almost three decades!”

Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince
J.K. Rowling
If you are a Percy Jackson fan, you will absolutely love this book. There are myths (not only Greek or Roman), there’s magic, suspense and thriller... I assure you that once you open this book you will not be able to stop reading it.

Even with the modern context in which the story is set, you can learn a lot about different myths. There’s a lot of cultural representation -even in a questionable context-, but this book should have a place on your library and here is why:

**THIS ETERNITY OF MASKS AND SHADOWS**

In a city of gods and mortals, secrets never die.

The gods walk among us. Some lurk in the shadows, masquerading as mortals; others embrace their celebrity status, launching careers from Hollywood to Capitol Hill.

One of them just murdered Cairn Delacroix’s mother.

As Cairn sifts through the rubble, she uncovers a conspiracy two decades in the making: a cursed island, the fellowship of gods who journeyed there, and the unspeakable act that intertwined their fates. One by one, the members of that voyage are dying, and Cairn’s investigations land her in the crosshairs of the rogue goddess responsible.

With the help of Nanook, a polar bear god turned detective, Cairn descends into Boston’s underworld of supernatural crime and political aspiration. To avenge her mother and unmask her assassin, she’ll first have to reckon with a gut-wrenching secret that will rewrite the life she thought she knew.

Karsten Knight has created a world where the myths are real and the Gods from every culture are real and they live among us as mortals, through reincarnation they have walked this Earth in different eras in secret until someone caught them on film and uploaded it on social media. Now the mortals have discovered that Gods and Goddesses are real and they somewhat occupy relevant positions in our society, from celebrities and politicians to those who belong to the mafia. I loved the way it was constructed, in a way it reminded me a bit of Rick Riordan’s Percy Jackson World, with the twist that the Gods do live and interact with mortals and they are not only Greek or Roman. It was very fresh reading a story like this where different cultures could live together. Seeing interactions between Nordic, Egyptian, Maori, Greek and Inuit Gods and Goddesses was totally amazing, although I think that this world is still under construction as some of its rules are not very clear or well developed.

The story centers in the mystery involving the tragic deaths of the members of a group of Gods and Goddesses that work as Centinelas for a non governmental group created by a Goddess that wanted to create peace in the world. It starts with the death of Sedna, Inuit Goddess of the Sea and Marine Animals, she was navigating with her daughter, her husband and her daughter’s girlfriend when she started acting strange and committed suicide.

Cairn, Sedna’s daughter, starts developing depression and her duelling time is taking its toll, she
is destroying her relationship with her girlfriend, Delphine. That is until she discovers that her Goddess mother has been having a second life and she intends to discover what happened to her mother and why she never noticed the apparent struggle that she was having with her mental health. But nothing with Sedna was as Cairn believed. Sedna apparently became a centinela, during the day she worked as a respected marine biologist and by night she fought against criminal Gods and Goddesses.

Her death is not what it seems. And Cair has to trace back her mother’s steps if she wants to find the murderer, as it is now clear that Sedna has been murdered as every member of the initial group of centinelas. With the help of a Inuit God turned police, Nanook or Nook as he likes to be called, she will discover who is behind these assassinations.

Knight's narrative is so full of details that it is impossible to stop reading, the thrill and the suspense is great, you can see the research that he did to create this story. His characters are very interesting, even the antagonist, there's only one bit of Cairn's character that is somewhat fluked: her toxic relationship with Delphine. However in a way it is very realist, as it depicts that some relationships on the LGBTQ+ community can be as abrasive and intense and toxic as are cis relationships.

One quote that I loved the most, because it reminded me of a Dumbledore's one, was:

«One horrible deed doesn't make a person evil. When it's time to be judged at the end of our lives, it's the sum of our actions that ultimately defines us.»

This Eternity of Masks and Shadows is a book that everyone should give a try and I hope that this is not the only one adventure of this world.

Without further ado... Mischief Managed!

J.K. Rowling
(Words with Jam, 2011)
Most people dislike Pansy Parkinson. She is portrayed as a spiteful and cruel person. This is, of course, in classic children’s-story fashion made clearer by the fact that she is, apparently, ugly and “pug-faced”.

But the main reason Pansy Parkinson is hated is the comment she made in Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows.

Then a figure rose from the Slytherin table and he recognised Pansy Parkinson as she raised a shaking arm and screamed, “But he’s there! Potter’s there! Someone grab him!” - Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows

By the same logic, everybody should hate Albus Dumbledore.

There are two main reasons for this:

Pansy was willing to sacrifice Harry to end the war. So was Dumbledore. Dumbledore’s willingness to do this is arguably worse: he let Harry grow very fond of him and he also allowed himself to become attached to Harry. This is why many people dislike Dumbledore; they feel betrayed by his transformation from a kind, eccentric grandfatherly old man into a cunning and complex character. I personally do not hate Dumbledore, for a number of reasons I will discuss in length on a later date. It is fair to assume that she is scared (her arm is shaking) and she is trying to end the conflict in the best way she knows how. If the series were written from a different perspective, most of us would probably see bravery in her actions.

I also do not understand why everybody was willing to attack her over this. Perhaps the reign of the Carrows was truly horrific and the pupils simply were willing to have peace. But, it seems to me, that they are shown as doing this to show that Pansy (and the Slytherins and anybody who does not follow Harry Potter) are evil. The fact that every person in the school, apart from the Slytherins, is ready to attack a pupil and dear McGonagall does nothing is also somewhat off-putting. Everybody opposes her because what she has said is simply wrong. It is evil. It is not right. No good person could stand to listen to somebody who is willing to sacrifice Harry Potter.

Well, what about the esteemed Albus Dumbledore?

Pansy was willing to sacrifice Harry to guarantee the safety of everybody else. Dumbledore claimed he was willing to sacrifice everybody else to protect Harry.

“I cared about you too much,” said Dumbledore simply. “I cared...more for your life than the lives that might be lost if the plan failed...What did I care if numbers of nameless and faceless people and creatures were slaughtered in the vague future, if in the here and now you were alive, and well, and happy? - Albus Dumbledore in Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix

I personally have never understood the reason that Dumbledore likes Harry more than the other pupils, apart from the fact he is the Boy-Who-Lived. Leaving that aside, many people still like Dumbledore despite this statement. Many people find this heart-warming for some bizarre reason (admittedly, it is meant to be comforting—at least Dumbledore’s idea of comforting). Oddly enough, Dumbledore himself, the shining paragon of goodness and morality, was absolutely disgusted with our Half-Blood Prince for being willing to sacrifice James and Harry Potter to save Lily Potter, when he
was willing to do—arguably—worse. I genuinely do not think Pansy made that comment out of an evil intent, as difficult as it is for those of us immersed in Harry's perspective to believe. To her it seemed fair. She was also likely not acting in a fully rational manner; despite allegedly being an evil Death Eater in the eyes of many fans, she was afraid when Lord Voldemort threatens the school. She had no emotional attachment to Harry or any loyalty to the cause of Dumbledore. Pansy came across to me as a frightened person who, in a moment of panic, did the same things for which Dumbledore is forgiven.

I do not think that anybody in the books is fully good or evil. In a sense, they are all morally grey, although that is an appellation, apparently, only applicable to Snape. We read these books from Harry's perspective, but some of us decide to use his opinions as our own judgements instead of forming our judgements independently.

You can read more articles by Rowena on her website:
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and you can follow her on Instagram and Twitter: @the45girl

RIDDIKULUS!

Erik (@knockturnerik on Instagram) plays with original artwork from the Harry Potter books! Follow @knockturnthepages on Instagram for more humour!

Is that the new iphone, Ron?

Obviously! See the two antennae?

ORIGINAL ILLUSTRATION BY MARY GRANDPRÉ FOR HARRY POTTER AND THE DEATHLY HALLOWS (SCHOLASTIC, 2007)