

Creating Equality Through Quidditch:

A Rhetorical Analysis of Female Quidditch Blogs

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In an attempt to bring their magical fantasies out of the fictional world, *Harry Potter* enthusiasts came together to create groups and organizations that embodied the spirit of *Harry Potter*, such as the Harry Potter Alliance, massive open online course (MOOC) versions of Hogwarts's classes, and even Quidditch. In the novels, Quidditch is played in the air with magical broomsticks, but fandom athletes have managed to adapt the sport to be played without magic and thus without flying. Even with this major difference, modern Quidditch maintains the standards of equality set by J. K. Rowling. The sport has become so popular that the International Quidditch Association (IQA) was developed to regulate the thousands of college and university teams across the country. Today, Quidditch maintains the co-ed team structure that J. K. Rowling wrote into the *Harry Potter* series, unlike traditional sports that separate males and females at a very young age. IQA organizers, as well as players across the nation, are working to include people of all genders and identities into their league at the same time. Therefore, Quidditch functions as potential site for feminist activism as men and women share the same playing space. Unfortunately, there has been little, if any, research on Quidditch as a source of feminist agency. In my proposed chapter, I will suggest that Quidditch blogs function as a sight for feminist activism.

Many scholars argue that J. K. Rowling conforms to traditional gender roles through her narration of the *Harry Potter* series. Pugh and Wallace (2006) argued that even though the books seem support of those that are different, there are many instances where gender stereotypes are perpetuated. Ruthann Mayes-Elma (2006) found that throughout *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, the female characters were given strict gender boundaries and labeled as the "other." Additionally, she claimed that these characters were only allowed to triumph when it benefited a male character. Heilman and Donaldson (2009) argued that females were subjected to the same forms of rhetoric when J. K. Rowling described Quidditch. She stated that female players experienced traditional male-dominated sport inequality by never being allowed to score, or score only when it didn't change the outcome of the game.

While many literary scholars suggests that all aspects of J. K. Rowling's text represent women in a subordinate position (Mayel-Elma, 2006; Heilman & Donaldson, 2009; etc.), I propose to show that through the translation of Quidditch to a muggle sport, J. K. Rowling's concept of Quidditch breaks traditional gender roles and stereotypes in modern sport by serving as a site of feminist rhetoric. These sights of feminist rhetoric appear in the form of blogs, specifically, womeninQuidditch.tumblr.com, myQuidditchlife.tumblr.com, the goldensnitchy.tumblr.com, and reddit.com/r/Quidditch. Using a close text analysis of Quidditch blogs since the 2012 World Cup, I argue that the IQA has truly created an inclusive sport. Drawing upon a combination of critical theory, feminist theory, and theories of agency, I argue that the female voice found in Quidditch blogs serve as a site for feminist agency.

References

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