



Your silence won't save you

Description

UK: The liberal elite's failure to stand with JK Rowling is disgraceful.

Imagine if Philip Roth, when he was alive, had been subjected to anti-Semitic abuse every single day. Imagine if hateful mobs had bombarded him with slurs and threats. Imagine if he couldn't so much as switch on his computer without being called scum, a cunt, a shit, with some people going so far as to send him extreme pornographic images and threats of violence. You imagine there would have been some pushback, right? The White House would surely have said something – Roth, after all, was one of America's best-known cultural figures and a winner of the National Humanities Medal. The literary world would have rallied behind him. Columnists would have expressed their horror at this obscene hounding of a man who had given so much to American culture.

And yet fast-forward to 2021 and a contemporary literary figure is being abused, insulted and threatened every day and from much of the political, media and literary establishments there is silence. Deathly, yellow-bellied silence. JK Rowling is not quite a Roth, but she's a writer of great importance nonetheless. She is arguably the most important cultural figure Britain has produced in the past 20 years. And she is being ceaselessly subjected to vile misogynistic abuse, to hateful tirades unrepeatable even in a publication that believes in frank, free discussion as much as this one does. 'Kill yourself.' 'Bitch I'll murder you.' 'Die bitch.' 'This woman is complete scum.' 'Shut the fuck up.' 'I will beat the fuck out of you.' These are all messages Ms Rowling has received. There are many, many more, some of them far worse.

How is it possible that Britain's best-selling author, a woman credited with having encouraged an entire generation of children to read more books, can be subjected to such gutter abuse and threats of murder and yet the prime minister says nothing? And the *Guardian* shuffles its feet? And the literary set carries on chatting about what fun last month's Hay Festival was, pretending not to notice the thousands of people calling one of their number a disgusting old hag who should be forced to fellate strangers or, better still, murdered with a pipe bomb? It's because ours is an era of moral cowardice. Of fainthearts and wimps. An era in which far too many who should know better have made that most craven of calculations – 'If I keep quiet, maybe they won't come for me'.

Rowling's speechcrime, of course, is that she thinks biological sex is real. She thinks there are biological differences between men and women. She thinks if you were born male, then you are male, and you should not enter into spaces that are for females only: changing rooms, women's prisons, domestic-violence shelters. Five years ago these were perfectly normal views to hold and express. Express them now and you will be hounded, demonised, No Platformed, potentially sacked, told to 'suck my dick', and maybe even taunted with the possibility of a pipebomb being sent to your home, as Ms Rowling was this week.

No one who believes in freedom, reason and equality can stand by and watch this happen. Watch as the reality of sex is erased by trans activists promoting the hocus-pocus view that some men have 'female brains'. And as words like woman, mother and breastfeeding are scrubbed from official documents to avoid offending the infinitesimally small number of campaigners who think their feelings matter more than our common language. And as female writers, columnists, professors and campaigners are censored and threatened merely for discussing sex and gender. And as JK Rowling is transformed into an enemy of decency deserving full, Stalinist destruction of her reputation and her life.

And yet stand by is what many are doing. When three black England players, including national treasure [Marcus Rashford](#), were sent racist messages on social media – mercifully few in number, and many from overseas – it was frontpage news for days. The Twitterati spoke of little else. Politicians clambered over one another to wave their hastily written condemnations under the public's noses. And yet these same people are schtum about the far more intense and violence-tinged maligning of one-time national treasure JK Rowling. The PM hasn't said a word. The culture secretary (Oliver Dowden) appears to have been struck dumb. The 'Be Kind' brigade must be having the summer off.

Of course there are honourable exceptions. Some columnists have defended Rowling. Some feminists put up posters saying 'I Love JK Rowling' (one, in Edinburgh Waverley train station, was taken down on the basis that it was 'offensive'. The misogynistic mob wins again.) But too many so-called progressives and liberals have said sweet FA. Or, worse, they have helped to stir up the warped animosity against Ms Rowling. Radical leftists' incessant branding of any woman who questions the ideology of transgenderism as a bigot or a TERF – a 21st-century word for witch – is the foundation upon which much of the more unspeakable hatred for sceptical women like Ms Rowling is built.

In many ways, the liberal elite's silence over the abuse of JK Rowling is worse than the abuse itself. The hateful, threatening messages come from people who have clearly lost touch with morality, who have been so corrupted by the narcissism of identity politics and the delusions of the transgender lobby that they have come to view those who question their worldview as trash, essentially as subhuman, and thus requiring ritualistic humiliation and excommunication from normal society. But the quiet ones in the political and literary worlds are making a greater moral error. Because they *know* that what is happening to Ms Rowling is wrong, and horrific, but they opt not to speak about it because they want to avoid the attention of the mob. Like the identitarian persecutors of Ms Rowling, they put their own feelings – in this case, their narrow desire for an untroubled life – above doing what is right and true.

They think this will save their skin. How wrong they are. It should be clear to everyone by now that looking the other way as woke mobs set upon wrongthinkers and speechcriminals does not dampen down these people's feverish urge to persecute those who offend them. On the contrary, it *emboldens*

them. Consider the experience of actress Sarah Paulson. She shamefully sided with the anti-Rowling mob, approvingly retweeting a man who told Rowling to 'shut the fuck up' and called her 'complete scum'. And yet far from forcefielding herself from the fury of the trans mob, Paulson attracted its attention. Tweeters recently raged against her for failing to include her pronouns in her Twitter bio. Seriously. This [headline](#) – 'Sarah Paulson Ignites Twitter War Over Absence of Pronouns in Bio' – was actually published. 'So your pronouns are dumb / whore.' 'She's a cunt.' 'What a shitty person.' These are some of the messages Ms Paulson received.

Her unsisterly siding with the sexist mob hounding JK Rowling did not protect her because when you give in to a mob you make it more powerful, more insatiable. Likewise, your silence will not protect you. The forces of unreason, illiberalism and denunciation that are now central to woke activism, and especially trans activism, cannot be countered by keeping quiet. They won't just fade away. They have to be confronted, forcefully, with clear arguments in favour of [freedom of speech](#), rational discussion and women's rights. It's the Rowling Test – will you or will you not speak out against the misogynistic persecution of JK Rowling and others who have been found guilty of thoughtcrime by the kangaroo courts of the regressive regime of wokeness? Right now, many are failing this test, miserably.

by Brendan O'Neill is editor of *spiked* and host of the *spiked* podcast, [The Brendan O'Neill Show](#).
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