



Araştırma Makalesi / Research Article

**CARVED IN STONE, WRITTEN IN LAW: MATERIAL-DISCURSIVE POLITICS OF
MAGICAL GOVERNANCE IN THE POTTERVERSE**

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Abstract:

This article analyzes the juridical, visual, and economic apparatuses that structure interspecies relations in J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter series, reading them through critical posthumanism and biopolitical theory. While the series celebrates moral courage and anti-authoritarian resistance, it also stages a world organized by species hierarchies, anthropocentric law, and aestheticized sovereignty. Drawing on Karen Barad's agential realism, Giorgio Agamben's concept of bare life, and Rosi Braidotti's posthumanist ethics, the study examines three sites: monumental statuary such as the "Fountain of Magical Brethren" and the "Magic is Might" sculpture as material-discursive apparatuses encoding wizard supremacy; the Ministry of Magic's evolving classifications of "beings," "beasts," and "spirits" as regulatory fictions rooted in anthropocentrism; and goblins' exclusion from wand ownership and juridical agency as symptomatic of inclusive exclusion. Across these sites, the article argues that magical governance operates not as neutral bureaucracy but as an onto-epistemological matrix that legitimizes inequality while enabling moments of ethical friction and cross-species solidarity. Thus, the study contributes to scholarship in fantasy studies, political theory, and critical posthumanism, revealing how the wizarding world mirrors and critiques real-world regimes of classification, representation, and exclusion, while leaving the horizon of multispecies justice tantalizingly unfinished.

Keywords: *Harry Potter*; Posthumanism; Biopolitics; Species hierarchy; Magical governance; Agency

JEL Codes: Q57, Q58

**TAŞA KAZILI, YASADA YAZILI: POTTER EVRENİNDE BÜYÜLÜ YÖNETİMİN
MADDESEL-SÖYLEMSEL POLİTİKALARI**

Öz:

Bu makale, J. K. Rowling'in Harry Potter serisinde türler arası ilişkileri yapılandıran hukuki, görsel ve finansal aparatları ele alarak bunları eleştirel posthümanizm ve biyopolitika kuramı ışığında incelemektedir. Seri, ahlaki cesareti yüceltip kötü yönetimi irdelerken, aynı zamanda tür hiyerarşileri, insan merkezci hukuk ve estetikleştirilmiş egemenlik tarafından biçimlendirilen bir dünya da sahneler. Karen Barad'ın eyleyici gerçekçiliği, Giorgio Agamben'in çıplak hayat kavramı ve Rosi Braidotti'nin posthümanist etiğinden yararlanan bu çalışma, üç alanı analiz etmektedir: büyücü üstünlüğünü kodlayan "Büyücü Kardeşler Çeşmesi" ve "Sihir Güçtür" heykeli gibi anıt niteliğindeki kamusal sanat eserleri gibi maddesel-söylemsel aparatları, insan merkezci kökenlere sahip düzenleyici kurgular olan Sihir Bakanlığı'nın "varlık," "canavar" ve "ruh" kategorilerini ve "dahil ederek dışlama"nın bir örneği olarak goblinlerin asa sahipliğinden ve hukuki temsilden dışlanmasını. Makale, bu alanlar üzerinden, büyücü yönetiminin tarafsız bir bürokrasi değil, eşitsizliği meşrulaştırırken türler arası dayanışma ve etik gerilim anlarına zemin hazırlayan onto-epistemolojik bir matris olarak işlediğini savunur. Böylece bu çalışma, fantezi kurgusu çalışmaları, siyaset teorisi ve eleştirel posthümanizm alanlarına katkıda bulunarak, büyücü dünyasının gerçek dünyadaki sınıflandırma, temsil ve dışlama rejimlerinin hem bir yansıması hem de eleştirisi olduğunu, ancak çok türlü adalet ufkunu tamamlanmamış bıraktığını ortaya koyar.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Harry Potter*; Posthümanizm; Biyopolitika; Tür hiyerarşisi; Büyülü yönetim; Eyleyicilik

JEL Kodları: Q57, Q58

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Introduction: Bureaucracy and biopolitics in the wizarding world

Often celebrated for its themes of moral growth, solidarity, and resistance to tyranny, the Harry Potter series (1997–2007) simultaneously constructs a magical world shaped by hierarchical governance and institutional exclusions. In this regard, the wizarding society cannot be viewed as a utopian realm of post-discriminatory harmony since it is characterized by deeply ingrained structures of regulation and stratification, particularly in its treatment of nonhuman beings. From the internal divisions of the Ministry of Magic to the symbolism of public monuments, the magical world reveals a system of biopolitical control that determines the rights, visibility, and agency of its denizens according to species-based classifications.² Rowling’s series “reveal[s] an extremely complex social structure that is not so different from the problematic, hegemonic power structures of our muggle (human) world,” a world in which “we arbitrarily decide which creatures are worthy of our care and which are worthy of exploitation” (Batty, 2015, p. 25). In this light, this article interrogates the modalities of governance in J. K. Rowling’s wizarding world by focusing on three interrelated domains: the juridico-political apparatuses that define “beings” and “beasts”; the visual semiotics of monumental statuary; and the marginalization of goblins within the onto-epistemic and legal frameworks of magical society. Drawing on posthumanist theory, the analysis situates the Harry Potter series not only as a bildungsroman or ethical fantasy, but also as a speculative map of post-Enlightenment governance—one that exposes how bodies are included in, or excluded from, the political order based on onto-epistemological differences.

At the heart of this article’s inquiry is the understanding that magical governance operates through what Karen Barad calls an “apparatus” which is not merely a neutral administrative structure or a set of human-devised instruments, yet a dynamic material-discursive practice that enacts boundaries, defines what matters, and produces particular realities. As Barad emphasizes, apparatuses are not external, fixed arrangements, but “specific material reconfigurings of the world” that “iteratively reconfigure spacetime-matter” and form the constitutive grounds for the co-appearance of meaning, matter, and subjectivity (2007, p. 142). Far from being passive tools, apparatuses actively participate in the multifarious becomings of the world; they are “boundary-making practices” (Barad, 2007, p. 146) that produce the very phenomena they purport to observe or manage. Following from this, in the world of Harry Potter, the Ministry’s Department for the Regulation and Control of Magical Creatures, for instance, should not be read as a static bureaucratic structure, but rather as an apparatus in Barad’s sense: a historically contingent and materially embedded configuration through which concepts such as “creature,” “being,” “beast,” and “spirit” are given substance while others are excluded. This apparatus iteratively (re)produces hierarchies and boundaries between wizardkind and nonhuman magical subjects through legal, spatial, and ontological cuts that are performatively enacted rather than pre-given. Considered thus, the regulatory function of the Ministry exemplifies not simply the enforcement of law, but the active reconstitution of matter and meaning, echoing Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s (1987) notion of “striated” space, where zones of order and classification delimit the possibilities of agency and recognition. In this sense, the Ministry’s classificatory schemes work like striations which carve up otherwise fluid social and ontological terrains, turning what could be open and indeterminate encounters into patterned grids of inclusion and exclusion. Thus, magical governance emerges as a generative matrix of exclusion and articulation rather than an inert background. For this reason, it has taken the role of a techno-political apparatus through which the

² For a Foucauldian analysis of speciesism and blood-based discrimination in the Harry Potter series, see Sümeyye Güllü Aslan, *A Foucauldian Reading of Power in Harry Potter Series: Speciesism and Discrimination Based on Blood Status* (2018). While this article develops a distinct argument and theoretical framework in posthumanist critique and around material-discursive entanglements in the series, Aslan’s thesis represents an earlier contribution to this field of inquiry.

posthumanist question of who or what counts as a subject is materially negotiated. Put differently, “[m]agic is the wizarding world’s technology and science” (Nguyen, 2020, p. 208); in other words, participation in magical practices simultaneously means participation in the techno-political paradigms of magic, while those excluded from such practices and recognition remain ontologically marginalized. For this reason, Rowling, as explained by Noel Chevalier, “is careful to represent it [magic] as a natural, not supernatural, science” (2005, p. 408). Accordingly, the practice of magic is framed as a legitimate science rather than an esoteric gift since it requires practitioners to fit into the definition of a proper wizard/witch within the socio-political apparatus.

The legal history of species classification within this magical world reflects a politically charged and anthropocentric logic. As Newt Scamander records in *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* (2001), the term “being” has undergone multiple redefinitions, from the simple capacity for speech to participation in magical governance (pp. x–xiii). Yet each redefinition fails to account for the ethical and ontological complexity of magical creatures, often excluding house-elves and centaurs while paradoxically including ghosts. These inconsistencies affirm Jacques Derrida’s critique in “The Animal That Therefore I Am,” in which he argues that the very linguistic and juridical structures that distinguish “human” from “animal” are inherently violent, reducing nonhumans to speechless, rightless others outside the law’s concern (2002, pp. 394–395). In the wizarding world, this violence is not abstract but material: House-elves are linguistically defined as servants rather than beings, centaurs are legally dismissed despite their intelligence and speech, and ghosts—lacking bodies altogether—are nevertheless granted inclusion. This paradox reveals how classification operates less on consistent ethical reasoning than on the preservation of wizarding hegemony. In other words, the Ministry’s shifting definitions expose the law as a tool of domination, one that produces categories sustaining asymmetrical power relations and forecloses the possibility of genuine recognition for nonhuman others. Beyond juridical mechanisms, the symbolic economy of the wizarding world further reinforces species hierarchy through public art. The “Fountain of Magical Brethren” in the Ministry Atrium, which depicts a benevolent wizard surrounded by a witch and adoring nonhuman creatures, projects an illusion of harmony that masks asymmetrical power relations. Similarly, the “Magic is Might” statue in *The Deathly Hallows*³ visually encodes wizard supremacy by depicting Muggles crushed beneath a towering throne. These structures function, as many new materialist scholars like Barad and Rosi Braidotti would contend, as instances of matter that matters: These materials are not passive ornaments but active participants in the reproduction of anthropocentric ideology by encoding a hierarchy of bodies and values into the very architecture of magical society. The consequences of such ideological and bureaucratic structures are not just symbolic. Magical creatures are subjected to a spectrum of control, disenfranchisement, and disposability. For example, Aragog, the acromantula, is hunted as a dangerous beast as a result of a false accusation for the first opening of the Chamber of Secrets; house-elves are bound by magical contracts and punished without recourse; goblins are relied upon economically yet remain politically marginalized. In this respect, Giorgio Agamben’s notion of “bare life” becomes especially pertinent (1998, pp. 6–11): These beings exist in a state of suspended personhood. They are alive, yet not fully juridically recognized, and thus vulnerable to exploitation or erasure without institutional accountability.

At the same time, this reading does not negate the series’ investment in ethical resistance. On the contrary, the narrative often foregrounds the struggles of characters, most notably Harry, Hermione, and Dobby who attempt to challenge or circumvent these structures of exclusion.

³ To maintain clarity, only the latter portion of each individual *Harry Potter* book title will be provided throughout the article.

However, as this article argues, these resistances operate within a larger political ecology that deserves scrutiny. By analyzing the material and symbolic infrastructures of the wizarding world, this study reframes the Potterverse as a literary site for interrogating the interrelations between species, law, and governance in a posthumanist frame. The sections that follow will examine firstly how visual representations such as monumental statues shape the political unconscious of wizarding society; secondly, how the legal category of “being” functions as a regulatory fiction rooted in anthropocentrism; and finally, how goblins, often positioned at the limits of magical law and economy, embody both resistance to and exclusion from dominant onto-epistemologies. In tracing these threads, the article aims to contribute to contemporary conversations in critical posthumanism, fantasy studies⁴ and political theory by reading Rowling’s phenomenal series as a generative text for exploring the ethics and exclusions of human-centered governance.

1. The Fountain and the Statue: Wizarding Visual Regimes of Supremacy

The ideological scaffolding of wizarding supremacy in the Harry Potter series extends beyond legal codes and cultural norms. Actually, it is materially and affectively encoded in monumental public arts that reproduce species hierarchy through spatial and aesthetic regimes. Two iconic sculptures, i.e. the “Fountain of Magical Brethren” introduced in *The Order of the Phoenix* and the “Magic is Might” statue installed in *The Deathly Hallows*, serve not merely as decorative features of institutional architecture, but as what Barad calls “[m]aterial-discursive apparatuses” that participate in the ongoing intra-active constitution of power and difference (2007, p. 206). In their formal composition and strategic placement within the Ministry of Magic, these statues function as agentic participants in the governance of magical subjectivities.⁵ Read this way, Rowling’s sculptures belong to a longer tradition in which monuments do political work in public spaces. As James E. Young observes in his interview with Jennifer L. Geddes (2007), “memorials seem to remember just about everything except their own coming into being,” a forgetting which effaces the power relations behind their commissioning, siting, and style. Building on Young’s observation, this section interrogates the Ministry’s monuments as instrumental apparatuses which naturalize authority by concealing the decisions of casting, placement, and scale through which they are indeed authorized.

As the first case, the “Fountain of Magical Brethren,” positioned prominently in the Atrium of the Ministry, exemplifies a symbolic order in which wizardkind occupies the apex of a benevolent hierarchy. It has five “larger than life-size” statues made of gold “in the middle of a circular pool,” and the fountain’s central figure is “a noble-looking wizard with his wand pointing straight up in the air,” who is surrounded by “a beautiful witch, a centaur, a goblin and a house-elf” (Rowling, 2003, p. 117). Despite the arrangement to evoke a tableau of pseudo-harmony, the only correct monumentalization is given with the common view of house-elves who are typically associated with servitude. Yet, others look unconvincing since the witch is merely reduced to her sex while “wearing a vapid smile like a beauty contestant,” and the goblin and the centaur are illustrated as inferior creatures “staring so soppyly at humans” in the center (Rowling, 2003, p. 142). “Harry knows that,” as explicated by John S. Nelson, “even admiration from a centaur and a goblin is unrealistic; but he sees the house-elf’s servility as creepy, not false”; that is to say, during “the Fudge regime, these fountain figures are speci[esi]st, sexist, self-congratulatory propaganda pieces for mage (and wizard) superiority in magical Britain” (2021, p. 209). While the woman is typically bound to her femininity and attachment to the man, the nonhumans are totally subjugated below

⁴ For a detailed argument on fantasy’s capacity to stage posthumanist critique, see Safak Horzum, “Posthumanist Subjectivities of Fantastic Creatures in the Harry Potter Series” (2025), which applies a five-step “Pentacle” model to *Harry Potter*’s fantastic creatures, framing them as posthumanist subjects rather than allegorical stand-ins.

⁵ For a Foucauldian scrutiny of these statues, see (Erdem Ayyıldız, 2020, pp. 88–89).

both the humans. The only self-centric and independent subject is obviously presented as the man, or the wizard.

Linguistically as well, the series reinforces this hierarchy through the consistent use of “wizarding” as a metonym for the entire magical community, while omitting any parallel term such as “witching,” thereby underscoring an androcentric worldview. As Alison Phipps puts it, “[l]anguages are shifting agents along frontiers of the self. [...] They are marks and they mark” (2003, p. 15), and Rowling’s linguistic choice is telling in this regard. *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines “wizard” in historically male-centered terms, while “witch” appears more gender-neutral in it. However, popular fantasy traditions have strongly gendered the two, casting wizard as male and witch as female. Rowling apparently follows this modern convention and extends the use of wizard through its derivations like “wizarding” and “wizardkind” which function like the word “mankind”—a term meant to encompass all humans yet charged with patriarchal discourse.

This linguistic privileging of the wizard finds a direct analogue in the “Fountain” itself. The vertical arrangement, where the wizard is physically elevated and robed while the nonhuman beings gaze upward in adoration, materializes “the visual regimes” of Western liberal humanist representation, in which the white, male, rational subject occupies the normative center of power and intelligibility (Braidotti, 2003, p. 149). In this tableau, the fountain does not merely decorate the Ministry’s Atrium; it monumentalizes an ontological order structured by speciesism, gender hierarchy, and visual domination. Through this continuity of language and image, Rowling encodes hierarchy both discursively and materially in the narrative. People who witness it already understand that “public monuments and other memorials are ventures in political mythmaking” (Nelson, 2021, p. 209). Thus, the sculptural arrangement idealizes a social fantasy of interspecies unity while eliding the structural inequalities that define magical governance. The centaur is depicted like a passive figure molded into acquiescence, but not as the autonomous ones like Bane and Ronan who, in *The Philosopher’s Stone* (Rowling, 1997, pp. 187–188), reject human interference and later join the opposition to Voldemort’s regime. As for the house-elf, it is stripped of individuality and bears no resemblance to those like Dobby whose resistance to servitude becomes emblematic of ethical agency. In a similar vein, the goblin, typically portrayed as skeptical of wizard law and economy, is rendered docile and compliant. These representations enact what Barad terms “iterative reconfigurings” (2007, p. 235), which uphold dominant onto-epistemologies by obscuring alternative ones. Crucially for readers’ worlds, this is not merely a fantasy problem. Pierre Nora’s account of *lieux de mémoire* reminds us that monuments are “sites of memory” which crystallize national narratives precisely when living, contested “*milieu de mémoire*, real environments of memory” recede (1989, p. 7; italics in the original). As a site of memory, the “Fountain” freezes hierarchy into permanence by naturalizing inequality as civic common sense.

Unlike the “Fountain,” the “Magic is Might” statue offers no illusion of benevolent hierarchy. Commissioned under Voldemort’s regime, it is installed in place of the “Fountain,” which was already destroyed in the legendary duel between Dumbledore and Voldemort in the same Ministry Atrium. It consists of “a witch and a wizard sitting on ornately carved thrones” in a gigantic black stone, whose ornamentations are noticed to be “hundreds and hundreds of” nonmagical people’s “naked bodies, men, women and children, all with rather stupid, ugly faces, twisted and pressed together” (Rowling, 2007, pp. 198–199). The Muggles in the statue are stripped of clothing, names, and subjecthood altogether and serve as the literal foundation upon which wizarding power is enthroned atop these naked and contorted Muggle bodies with the images of a witch and a wizard. The statue materializes Agamben’s concept of “bare life,” “a limit-figure of life, a threshold in which life is both inside and outside the juridical order,” subjected to sovereign power without the protections of legal personhood (1998, p. 27). The “Magic is Might” statue does not

simply symbolize this exclusion, yet it performs it. Depicted as abject matter, the contorted Muggle bodies are expelled from political standing and yet instrumentalized to uphold it. Their status exemplifies the logic of “inclusive exclusion” through which, as Agamben argues, life is captured by law only by being excepted from it: “This is why it is not by chance that [Walter] Benjamin [...] concentrates on the bearer of the link between violence and law, which he calls ‘bare life’” (1998, pp. 27, 65). Sovereign violence, in this sense, resides not just in the statute books but in the aesthetic and architectural encodings of power such as that statue which blur the boundaries “between nature and culture, between violence and law” (Agamben, 1998, p. 35). Here, the continuity with state statuary is stark. For instance, Dell Upton notes that many monuments in the US civic space were installed “as affirmations that the American polity was a *white* polity” (2017; italics in the original), their civic presence working to naturalize segregation and racial hierarchy. To confront them is to recall, in New Orleans’s 61st mayor Mitch Landrieu’s words (2020), that “[t]here is a difference between remembrance of history and reverence of it” through such public materials. Rowling’s statues thus read as part of an allegorical archive in which matter, affect, and ideology are co-constitutive across magical and non-magical orders.

The shift from the “Fountain”’s smiling paternalism to the statue’s brutal authoritarianism is thus tonal, not structural. Both encode wizarding exceptionalism: The former cloaks it in sentimental aesthetics, the latter exposes its violent foundation. In both cases, the non-magical are denied full subjecthood. But whereas the “Fountain” imagines a hierarchical coexistence, the statue stages domination through dehumanization. In this way, Rowling’s magical world, especially in its representations of public symbols and state iconography, offers a critical tableau for examining how biopolitical regimes aestheticize sovereignty through the onto-epistemological reduction of others to what Agamben terms *homo sacer* whose life “*may be killed and yet not sacrificed*” (1998, p. 8; italics in the original). Set alongside modern monument debates, these statuary scenes in the Potterverse invite readers to see how bronze and marble, whether in London, New Orleans, or the Ministry’s Atrium, help “make straight a wrong turn” or a lie, to borrow Landrieu’s phrasing (2017), by canonizing exclusion as common sense.

These spatial regimes of power correspond to what Deleuze and Guattari, drawing on Bernhard Riemann and Henri Bergson, define as “striated space,” which is a metric, segmented organization of spatiality governed by measurable magnitudes and subordinated to the logic of the State apparatus (1987, pp. 482–488). More than an architectural site of transit, the Ministry of Magic’s Atrium is a paradigmatic instance of such striation since it channels movement along orthogonal vectors, converts intensities into extensities, and inscribes subjects within a regime of visual and spatial surveillance. As Deleuze and Guattari observe, striated space “intertwines fixed and variable elements, produces an order and succession of distinct forms,” and imposes a system of magnitudes over what might otherwise be a topology of affective distances (1987, p. 478). The golden statues at the Atrium’s center exemplify this operation. Their hierarchical alignment from wizard and witch to goblin, centaur, and house-elf renders species difference as measurable rank, translating affective or historical multiplicities into visible, sedimented symbols. These visual-statist inscriptions function akin to the rectilinear, representative line in imperial art—“*a line that delimits nothing, that describes no contour*” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, pp. 497–498; italics in the original), tethering power to form and space to subjectivity.

Yet the Ministry’s space is not exhaustively striated. According to Deleuze and Guattari, striated and smooth spaces “exist only in mixture” (1987, p. 474), and their political valences emerge from how one captures, resists, or transforms the other. Ametric, continuous, defined by ordered differences and directional variation, the smooth space does not announce itself with banners and persists within the Ministry not as liberation *per se* but as potential. Figures like Dobby, Hermione Granger, or Kingsley Shacklebolt are not merely subjects with dissenting thoughts, but vectors of deflection. They traverse through the Ministry corridors as anomalies, as what the text calls “free

action,” as bodies unaccounted for by the orthogonal calculus of bureaucratic vision (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 490). They introduce fissures in the enclosure, intervals where determination blurs—“zone[s] of indiscernibility proper to ‘becoming’” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 488)—a place not of negation but of transformation unmeasured by scale or rank. In this light, the Atrium becomes more than a hall; it is a loom. A woven “fabric” where “infinite [...] length” unspools in gold and black, yet always within a narrow “width” of difference, a corridor of spectacle disguised as neutral passage (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 475). To walk here in the Atrium is to be sewn into role, stitched into visibility, hemmed into species. But here, resistance does not arrive as rupture; rather, it murmurs as modulation. Thus, the Ministry is not merely a site of control, but a zone of oscillation as it has turned out to be a battle map reconfigured through flows and frequencies, through what moves too softly to be measured. Where form is sediment, rhythm is insurgency. Where governance claims extension, life reclaims direction. In ethical terms, foregrounding this continuity helps clarify the stakes of fantasy critique: These Atrium scenes resonate because the statues in the contemporary world still inscribe structural and ideological power into public space, whether by celebrating racial orders, colonial conquests, or national myths.

Even though the statue stands out in its supremacist matter-discourse that not only discards nonhumans but also situates Muggles as mere tools to support the pure-blood wizarding community, it demonstrates more than a replacement. It might not seem to represent a radical rupture in ideology; nonetheless, it is actually intensification of latent structures because every nonmagical person is “a threat to the established order” (Lopes, 2022, p. 179) and their differentiation is an outcome of “power struggles and potentially oppressive practices” (Fettke, 2012, p. 5) by wizards. As Farah Mendlesohn argues, Rowling’s *Potterverse* is embedded in ideological contradictions, dramatizing institutions like Hogwarts and the Ministry of Magic as spaces where hierarchical structures are both contested and reinscribed. Her analysis reveals that the books ultimately produce “a muddled morality that cheats the reader” (2002, p. 181) by promoting fairness rhetorically while structurally perpetuating privilege and exceptionalism—not just as “elitism” but “in a specifically hereditarian context that protects some while exposing others” (2002, p. 181). This ambivalence, as Mendlesohn puts it, stems from “a distinctively English liberalism” that insists it is only “fair” while masking its own ideological function (2002, p. 159). The Ministry of Magic, for instance, is the site of both oppressive bureaucracy and anti-fascist resistance. Likewise, public monuments in the series register both hegemonic power and its eventual contestation. The destruction of the “Fountain” during the battle at the Ministry and the later collapse of Voldemort’s regime may symbolically gesture toward justice, but they also leave unresolved the deeper, systemic inequities that the monuments materialize. From this perspective, even acts of liberation are framed within a moral vision that “argue[s] for tolerance and kindness toward the inferior while denying the oppressed the agency to change their own lives” (Mendlesohn, 2002, p. 181), reinforcing a hierarchy disguised as fairness.

As such, the ideological continuity between these two sculptures, despite their divergent affective registers, showcases the series’ nuanced portrayal of structural power. Rowling does not endorse wizarding supremacism;⁶ rather, she constructs a world in which its aesthetics, institutions, and rituals are subject to critique and reform from within. The very fact that characters like Dobby, Hermione, Griphook, and Firenze challenge these orders testifies to the narrative’s ethical trajectory toward inclusion, even if that trajectory remains incomplete. In sum, these statues operate not merely as scenic backdrops but as fantasy’s visual archive of liberal humanist

⁶ To avoid a category mistake, this essay does not engage current disputes about the author’s positions on gender. The analysis treats the series as a self-standing aesthetic object and assesses its portrayal of supremacism within the narrative’s own ethical logic. This bracketing neither endorses nor rejects any extra-textual viewpoints; it simply delineates the scope of the present argument.

exclusion. They stage a material-symbolic order wherein species difference is sculpted into spatial hierarchy, affective response, and onto-epistemological sedimentation. Through the lens of posthumanist theory, we can read them both as representations of ideology and as participants in the ontological production of the wizarding world. As Barad (2003) reminds us, “matter and meaning are mutually articulated” as they are not separate elements but entangled in what she calls “the ongoing reconfigurings of the world” (2003, pp. 822, 818). Within the magical world, even bronze and marble are not inert since they are complicit in the distribution of power, difference, and visibility.

2. Bureaucratic Speciesism: Codifying Magical Otherness in Law and Policy

The legal-bureaucratic infrastructure of the wizarding world in the Potterverse is given as a fully articulated political system in which anthropocentrism is codified through magical law. Central to this system is the Ministry of Magic’s classification of magical creatures into “beings,” “beasts,” and “spirits” (Scamander, 2001, p. xvi), a taxonomy that has undergone multiple revisions yet continues to enforce hierarchical species distinctions. As presented in Scamander’s *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*, these categories function not only to describe but also to regulate the rights and statuses of magical subjects. Despite the apparent magical diversity of the world, this classificatory regime privileges anthropomorphic norms such as walking upright, speaking human language, and subscribing to wizarding legal epistemologies as preconditions for legal personhood.

In Scamander’s historical account, the Ministry’s first attempts at defining “being” status rested on the criterion of bipedality and speech. Although intended to foster “a spirit of friendship,” such a definitive criterion as bipedalism wreaked havoc at the Council’s first meeting, as goblins “crammed” the meeting with “two-legged creatures” as many “as they could find”; this resulted in the attendees’ lack of shared interest, purpose, and seriousness required for “the affairs of wizard government” (2001, pp. x–xi). It also excluded physiologically semi-human and nonhuman species like four-legged centaurs and tailed merpeople. Moreover, in those early attempts, an anthropocentric standard obviously prioritised human language as the medium of negotiations in the governing body. Besides, it disregarded that other nonhuman communities have long had their own native languages like Gobbledegook for goblins. This linguistic and ableist standard did not last long as it, for instance, excluded merpeople who are able to speak the human tongue underwater.

A subsequent redefinition sought to resolve these contradictions by framing “being” as “any creature that has sufficient intelligence to understand the laws of the magical community and to bear part of the responsibility in shaping those laws” (Scamander, 2001, p. xii). On the surface, this appears to broaden the criteria for inclusion; yet it continues to rely on wizard-centric measures of intelligence, responsibility, and legal participation. Moreover, as the policy exception granted to ghosts demonstrates, even this framework was unevenly applied. While ghosts contested their classification as “beings,” wryly claiming “it was insensitive to class them as ‘beings’ when they were so clearly ‘has-beens,’” the Ministry accommodated their objection by creating a separate “Spirit Division,” thereby materializing metaphysical difference into bureaucratic order (Scamander, 2001, p. xiin2). This comic interlude with Rowling’s tongue-in-cheek wordplay with “has-beens” and the spectral indignation it provokes serves as a moment of levity within the text; however, it simultaneously exposes how even the dead are subject to exclusionary legal taxonomies, underscoring the far-reaching absurdities of bureaucratic governance. Still, the ghostly delegation attending the Council under Chief Burdock Muldoon’s term later “left in disgust at what they [...] termed ‘the Council’s unashamed emphasis on the needs of the living as opposed to the wishes of the dead,’” underscoring that even nominal inclusion did not translate into equal ethical regard (Scamander, 2001, p. xii). Drawing on Barad’s notion of agential realism (2007, pp. 149–152), we can understand this definitional apparatus as materially productive and

performative: It does not just describe ontological distinctions, but enact “ontological boundaries” (Holbraad & Pedersen, 2017, p. 201; Lemke, 2021, p. 64) that delimit whose concerns are intelligible within the socio-legal space of the wizarding world. Beings such as merpeople, whose aquatic civilizations maintain nonhuman modes of authority and knowledge transmission, are granted only contingent recognition. Giants, by contrast, are systematically excluded from all but disciplinary governance, their diasporic presence fragmented through carceral and militarized interventions. Ultimately, the evolving definitions of “being” reveal a shifting apparatus of inclusion which frames rights through proximity to wizardly norms of embodiment, cognition, and speech, instead of reflecting a neutral expansion of recognition.

These legal inconsistencies are perhaps most evident in the case of werewolves who are positioned as liminal figures periodically crossing the human/animal divide. While they retain full human consciousness and are “as harmless as any other human” in their non-transformed state (Scamander, 2001, p. 41n16), they are systematically subjected to social exclusion and legal ambiguity. The discriminatory policies that govern their lives such as restrictions on employment, housing, and even freedom of movement testify to the institutionalized fear of bodily and ontological instability. Remus Lupin, one of the series’ most ethically grounded and morally admirable characters, illustrates the tragedy of this condition: Despite his demonstrable virtue and restraint, he remains an object of public suspicion and legal marginality. This marginality is codified in the Ministry of Magic’s classificatory system. As noted in Scamander’s compendium, “werewolves, meanwhile, have been shunted between the Beast and Being divisions for many years” and are governed inconsistently by the “Werewolf Support Services” (under Beings) and the “Werewolf Registry and Werewolf Capture Unit” (under Beasts) in the Ministry (2001, p. xiii). This bureaucratic schizophrenia exposes the incoherence of the anthropocentric order, which cannot accommodate hybrid or transgressive subjectivities. The Ministry’s attempt to discipline and contain werewolves through both care and capture reinscribes Agamben’s (1998) “bare life”: beings whose biological existence is exposed to law’s violence but who are excluded from full juridical and political belonging and who “may be killed and yet not sacrificed” (1998, p. 8; italics removed). Werewolves become *homo sacer* figures—at once feared and regulated, yet deprived of the full protection accorded to either humans or animals. Such framing pathologizes their condition and justifies preemptive exclusion, producing what Mel Y. Chen might call “animacy hierarchies” (2012, pp. 26–30) that align sentience, danger, and worth. From a posthumanist perspective, werewolves challenge the foundational human/nonhuman binary by existing in a state of temporal flux, neither fully animal nor permanently human. This mutable embodiment could have been an opportunity to explore relational ethics and multispecies solidarity; instead, the wizarding world responds with suspicion and sovereign force. Thus, the werewolf’s condition becomes a test case for the limits of magical governance and moral inclusion. Therefore, it would not be wrong to exclaim that their exclusion is constitutive of the magical order’s underlying speciesist and essentialist logic.

The institutional framework that oversees these classifications, the Department for the Regulation and Control of Magical Creatures, exemplifies the technocratic apparatus of species governance. Its subdivision into separate offices for “Beast,” “Being,” and “Spirit” affairs reflects what Barad calls a “material-discursive apparatus”—a system that both speaks and acts the “boundaries, articulations and exclusions” of subjectivity (2007, p. 235). The very terminology of “regulation” and “control” signals the administrative ethos underlying interspecies relations. Within the wizarding world, it is wizards who write the laws, enforce them, and interpret them, often without meaningful consultation with the communities they affect. One must also consider the historical depth of this legal infrastructure and its occluded violences. Mentioned and assigned as homework periodically in Hogwarts classrooms (Rowling, 1997, p. 179; 2000, p. 206), the goblin rebellions are often represented as insurrections rather than liberation movements. Their historical

grievances, including the wizarding community's refusal to recognize goblin concepts of ownership and autonomy, are largely elided from dominant magical discourse. The absence of any interspecies legislative council, or of a formal platform for nonhuman beings to articulate their needs and rights, points to a structural silence; that is, a failure of representational justice.

Yet this system is not uncritically embraced by all. Figures such as Rubeus Hagrid, a half-giant who literally lives on the margins of wizard society (i.e., Hogwarts), model alternative forms of cross-species empathy and kinship. Hagrid's respect for 'dangerous' creatures and his commitment to caring for beings like Buckbeak the Hippogriff and Grawp the giant exemplify what Braidotti terms a "*zoe-centred egalitarianism*" (2013, p. 60; italics in the original), one that values life in its multiplicity, beyond the narrow confines of human exceptionalism. Hermione's campaign of "the Society for the Promotion of Elfish Welfare" (S.P.E.W.) (Rowling, 2000, p. 198), though often treated as comic relief, represents a nascent political awareness of systemic injustice, even if its effectiveness remains limited by her own positionality within wizarding privilege. As the posthumanist critique insists, "speciesism is employed to subjugate all bodies, both human and animal" (Batty, 2015, p. 28), a hierarchy the house-elves' condition makes painfully visible. Characters like Arthur Weasley, despite their liberal leanings, still function within the speciesist bureaucratic system and rarely question its foundational assumptions. This mirrors what Derrida critiques as the "noncriminal putting to death" of animals (Derrida & Nancy, 1991, p. 112) since it is the normalized, everyday violence that sustains anthropocentric legal regimes. Viewed through this lens, the Ministry's species classifications are more than mere fantasies because they are allegorical of real-world legal systems that have historically excluded women, racialized populations, indigenous peoples, and nonhuman animals from full political personhood.

The being/beast dichotomy thus functions both as an ontological distinction and as a political tool. It encodes who is eligible for rights, protection, and recognition, and who is rendered killable, exploitable, or invisible. Like the historical categories of "savage," "lunatic," or "subhuman," the term "beast" is loaded with juridical and affective force. It regulates not only the treatment of magical creatures but also the boundaries of moral imagination. In attending to these legal and administrative mechanisms, the Harry Potter series and Scamander's supplementary book offer not just a fantasy of magical law, but a subtle critique of liberal humanism by exposing the strategic and contingent nature of personhood. While the world Rowling creates is not utopian, it is capable of staging moral conflicts in which young heroes and heroines are positioned to recognize and, at times, challenge these injustices.

3. Goblins and the Politics of Ownership

Among many nonhuman beings in the wizarding world, goblins occupy a uniquely ambivalent and politically charged position. As custodians of Gringotts Wizarding Bank, they hold substantial economic influence, yet remain excluded from juridical authority and full politico-cultural personhood. Therefore, their institutional centrality is shadowed by ideological marginalization. It is acknowledged that goblins "are curious magical others in their ability to monopolize metallurgy and banking, securing a more favorable position in the magical hierarchy" since humans "need their services in accumulating, protecting, and creating material wealth" (Chica, 2022, p. 81). However, due to "clause three of the Code of Wand Use" which dictates that "[n]o *non-human creature is permitted to carry or use a wand*" (Rowling, 2000, p. 119; italics in the original), goblins cannot possess wands, the most symbolically potent instrument of magical agency, despite their "being" status and wandless magical prowess. Wizards' refusal "to share the secrets of wandlore with other magical beings" like goblins exemplifies the deep-rooted hypocrisy underlying the beast/being divide: a political fiction that functions to "deny [goblins] the possibility of expanding [their] powers" and asserting autonomous subjectivities (Rowling, 2007, p. 395). This denial may be motivated by historical anxieties, especially regarding exceptional

half-goblin figures such as Professor Filius Flitwick who was an adored student among his peers, is a renowned “dueling champion” (Rowling, 1998, p. 199), and becomes a heroic defender in the Battle of Hogwarts. Instances like Flitwick expose the dissonance between exclusionary policies and the undeniable presence of goblin-associated magical excellence. Rather than being celebrated as legitimate magical subjects, goblins have long been positioned as epistemological threats to wizarding hegemony, as beings whose modes of value, knowledge, and kinship exceed the narrow bounds of anthropocentric governance.⁷ Their “supposedly prestigious position” in the banking sector (Lopes, 2022, p. 182) does not compensate for the denial of their ontological identity. Rather, it masks the persistent fear that goblins, if enfranchised, might rob “the liberal humanist subject (the wizard) of agency and control—the ability to exploit—in these relationships” (Harrison, 2018, p. 331). In this light, goblins are not merely disenfranchised political actors; rather, they represent an epistemological rupture within the magical grid, operating through divergent systems of value, knowledge, and kinship.

Codifying this ambivalence, the prohibition against goblins owning or wielding wands functions as the juridical hinge of inclusion-through-exclusion. Although never justified in magical law, this interdiction inscribes what Agamben names the structure of sovereignty: “Life, which is thus obliged, can in the last instance be implicated in the sphere of law only through the presupposition of its inclusive exclusion, only in an *exceptio*. There is a [...] a threshold in which life is both inside and outside the juridical order, and this threshold is the place of sovereignty” (1998, p. 27). Here the textual reminder of “clause three of the Code of Wand Use” (Rowling, 2000, p. 119) grounds Agamben’s juridical abstraction in a concrete magical interdiction. The wand, as Barad might frame it, is not merely an object but part of a “larger apparatus” that materializes inclusion and exclusion (2007, p. 329). By denying wands to goblins, wizarding law makes them the exception that grounds the rule: “[T]he exception is included in the normal case precisely because it does not belong to it” (Agamben, 1998, p. 22). Hence, the goblin is rendered as in the “bare life,” as a being within the magical community whose capacities are utilized, but whose rights are suspended. Yet, paradoxically, the wizarding elite entrust goblins with safeguarding their most valuable possessions at Gringotts, a paradigm of what Agamben observes with reference to Deleuze and Guattari’s discussion of the sovereign’s capacity to internalize its nonconforming others: “It has often been observed that the juridico-political order has the structure of an inclusion of what is simultaneously pushed outside” (1998, p. 18). In this light, the durability of the wand-rights doctrine appears less a neutral norm than a rule that “does not only confirm the rule; the rule as such lives off the exception alone” (Agamben, 1998, p. 16). This is because, as Agamben explicates, “[l]aw is made of nothing but what it manages to capture inside itself through the inclusive exclusion of the *exceptio*: it nourishes itself on this exception and is a dead letter without it” (1998, p. 27). Also, Giselle Liza Anatol underlines that “the goblins did not riot unexpectedly, but rather in response to laws that prohibited their carrying of wands” (2009, p. 121), and that Griphook frequently uses the so-called demeaning term “wand-carriers” for wizards and witches to expose wizarding dominance. The contradiction, which is the economic trust coupled with the juridical exclusion, thus mirrors historical colonial structures in which the colonized were permitted roles as technicians or custodians but were excluded from juridico-political participation (Said, 2003; Mbembe, 2001).

This paradox is legible at the level of both practice and history. Most vividly, Griphook exemplifies it: While he faithfully adheres to the ethical codes established by his species such as the injunction never to “speak of the secrets of Gringotts” and the principle that goblin-made items like Godric Gryffindor’s sword revert in ownership to goblins (Rowling, 2007, pp. 396, 409), he

⁷ While Nilay Erdem Ayyıldız frames wand prohibition as a Foucauldian dispositif of vulnerability (2020, p. 117), I argue that the denial functions less as disciplinary regulation and more as an ontological foreclosure since it bars goblins from participating in what counts as “magic” itself, rendering them juridically nonhuman.

asserts his dignity directly: “I am not a house-elf” (Rowling, 2007, p. 244). He remains constrained within a system that refuses him full magical recognition. This ontological separation renders goblins wary of interfering in wizarding affairs, especially given their historical subjugation; Gringotts itself, though run by goblins, has once operated “under wizarding rule,” and goblins “suffered losses” with no intervention or redress during Voldemort’s first rise (Rowling, 2007, p. 395; 2003, p. 81). As Griphook later insists, “[b]ut it is, it is about precisely that! As the Dark Lord becomes ever more powerful, your race is set still more firmly above mine! Gringotts falls under Wizarding rule, house-elves are slaughtered, and who amongst the wand-carriers protests” (Rowling, 2007, p. 395)? In the aftermath of such moments that stripped them of socio-cultural, political, and even ontological standing, the wizarding world remained largely indifferent. Their magical subjectivities, for which they have repeatedly rebelled, have been deliberately suppressed for centuries, born of a wizarding fear of losing symbolic and institutional dominance. Nevertheless, goblins are not passive subjects of this exclusion. As highly intelligent beings, they “don’t need protection [...] and a]re quite capable of dealing with wizards,” to the extent that they even “tried to attend [the meeting of the International Confederation of Wizards] and been ousted” from it (Rowling, 2000, p. 390; 2003, p. 640), which is, indeed, a blunt demonstration of their exclusion from global magical governance. The denial of wand use to goblins thus marks a fundamental boundary between those considered full magical subjects and those reduced to magical laborers. It is not just about the wand as a tool, but the wand as a symbol of juridical inclusion. The recurrent goblin rebellions throughout magical history must therefore be understood as sustained resistance against systemic disenfranchisement rather than aberrant outbursts.

Framed by this long history of erasure, wizarding historiography which is also epitomized by Professor Cuthbert Binns’s dry and detached pedagogy, recounts goblin uprisings as disruptions to peace rather than expressions of political will. The silencing of goblin-authored perspectives within the education and archive of the dominant party reproduces what Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak terms “epistemic violence” (1988, p. 280). This violence also structures the most conspicuous site of goblin-wizard tension: ownership. In *The Deathly Hallows*, goblins’ philosophy of ownership is explained in detail: For them, material goods crafted by goblins belong not to their purchasers, but to their creators, and must be returned to the creator upon the owner’s death (Rowling, 2007, pp. 408–409). This challenges the wizarding paradigm of inheritable possession and reflects a deeper onto-epistemological disjunction. The contested claim over the sword of Godric Gryffindor, for instance, foregrounds this divide. While Harry, as a proud member of the Gryffindor House, views the sword as a rightful inheritance and a gift from the past, the goblin Griphook deems its retention a violation of goblin craftsmanship ethics. “Wizards,” as observed by Christina M. Chica, “maintain their favorable origin stories and hold fast to acquired property rather than engage in a wider search for truth” (2022, p. 81). William (Bill) Weasley, who has worked as a cultural intermediary with goblins and befriended them for years, further explains goblins’ “notions of ownership, payment and repayment” as entirely different from human notions: Any goblin-made object, for them, rightfully belongs to “the maker, not the purchaser,” as there can be no act of buying but rather renting for the purchaser’s lifetime; and therefore, they demand such objects be returned to their makers rather than inherited by wizards’ descendants (Rowling, 2007, pp. 417–418). Bill’s explanation makes goblin economics crystal clear. They have a set of material-discursive policies related to their species and thus demand that these policies be understood, respected, and practiced by wizards if inter-species interactions are to occur on equal grounds. As Bill explains, “ownership, payment and repayment” are not merely financial terms for goblins but indices of cultural sovereignty—a sovereignty wizarding society persistently refuses to acknowledge.

Against this background, Griphook’s arc of a so-called cross-species fraternity exemplifies the precarious possibilities and ultimate limits of cross-species solidarity in the face of such epistemic

asymmetry. Initially inclined toward cooperation after witnessing Harry's deeply affective and laborious burial of Dobby (Rowling, 2007, p. 393), which is an act that temporarily breaks the anthropocentric hierarchy of care, Griphook himself remarks: "Goblins and elves are not used to the protection, or the respect, that you have shown this night. Not from wand-carriers" (Rowling, 2007, p. 394). His decision to later abscond with the sword when the trio enters Bellatrix Lestrange's vault at Gringotts is often read as a 'betrayal,' but from the goblin's perspective, it is a reassertion of justice rooted in an alternative conception of property, one in which "the rightful and true master of any object is the maker, not the purchaser" (Rowling, 2007, p. 418). This tension crystallizes around the sword itself, which, as a magical artifact that "imbibe[s] only that which strengthens them" and "that sword's impregnated with Basilisk venom" (Rowling, 2007, p. 250), also functions as an ideological node: It absorbs and reflects the contest between dominant and subaltern modes of cultural knowledge. The trio's assumption that their benevolence or shared goals automatically entail mutual trust reveals a latent colonizer's gaze: an expectation that the nonhuman other should defer to wizarding norms. In refusing to assimilate goblin economic ethics into the dominant juridical structures of wizarding society, the series subtly exposes its own inconsistencies which extoll cross-species alliances while leaving intact the conditions of their impossibility. In this respect, Griphook's refusal to acquiesce to this expectation is symptomatic of a deeper structural failure which is the wizarding world's persistent refusal to treat goblin knowledge and custom as epistemologically valid. This conflict highlights the shift from a multicultural to a social justice lens in Rowling's depiction of race: The goblins "interact with wizards in many ways as equals, a power relationship that causes much tension," and their narrative arc underscores "the ways that institutional and cultural racism can lead dominant group members to oppress racial others even when they do not intend to" (Horne, 2010, pp. 80, 88). Rather than a cultural misunderstanding, the clash over Gryffindor's sword illustrates incompatible worldviews. Whereas wizards view objects as tokens of lineage and legacy, goblins perceive them as extensions of artisanal labor whose worth is inseparable from their makers.

Aesthetically, goblins are also subject to symbolic marginalization. While such traits as hooked noses, sharp features, and dark eyes belong to a longstanding fantasy/folklore convention and are not unique to Rowling, their recurrence within a storyline which associates goblins with banking, contractual disputes, and legal outsiderhood invites a different critical reading. In this specific context, such visual markers, some critics have argued, align uncomfortably with anti-Semitic physiognomic tropes (Sundmark, 2018, p. 171; Murphy, 2025, pp. 323, 339).⁸ While this does not necessarily reflect authorial intent, it illustrates how fantastic representations can reproduce real-world anxieties. The goblins' refusal to assimilate, their alternative ethics of ownership, and their enduring craft traditions complicate any simplistic moral judgment. In fact, it is precisely this resistance to wizarding norms that renders them compelling figures of posthumanist subjectivity. To turn back to Griphook once more, for example, he neither aligns with the antagonists nor fully joins the protagonists, and his ultimate decision to take the sword after aiding the trio's Gringotts infiltration can be interpreted as a refusal to be instrumentalized during the course of the wizards' actions. From a wizard-centric perspective, this act may seem treacherous, but within goblin logic, it is entirely coherent. Griphook's agency destabilizes the moral binaries of the narrative. He is not selfless like Dobby, nor docile like other house-elves. Instead, he represents a third space by becoming a nonhuman actor who does not mimic human ideals but asserts a resistant subjectivity. This third space also extends into the realm of knowledge. Griphook's expertise in security

⁸ Later representations in the Pottermore universe complicate these stereotypes. In *Fantastic Beasts* movie series (2016–2022), goblins appear not only as Gringotts-style bankers or Orientalized tricksters, but as working-class figures, jazz musicians, and even mobsters. Red the elevator operator and the goblin jazz singer evoke African American labor and artistic culture of the 1920s, while Gnarlak embodies Italian- or Jewish-American gangster archetypes (Rowling, 2016). For further discussion, see (Swank, 2019, pp. 171–174).

systems, magical metallurgy, and enchantment-crafting proves indispensable to Harry's quest. Yet his knowledge is never institutionally recognized or culturally legitimized. Often utilized but not honored, it is an extractive logic that resonates with postcolonial critiques of how indigenous and non-Western knowledges are appropriated under modernity (Smith, 2021, pp. 67–84). Goblin knowledge, from this vantage, becomes a form of what Michel Foucault calls “subjugated knowledges” which “have been disqualified as inadequate to their task” (1980, p. 82) yet vital to power's functioning. By this, I mean that wizarding institutions routinely draw on goblin craft and technique as in banking security, metallurgy, and artifact lore while withholding epistemic authority, curricular visibility, legal recognition over the objects and processes goblins develop. In my reading, this is not a peripheral contradiction but a structural feature of governance. Goblin know-how is shown to be indispensable precisely because it is kept outside the circle of sanctioned knowledge, where it can be extracted without ceding authority. Therefore, Griphook's claim to the Sword of Gryffindor reads less as betrayal and more as an act of restitution or a demand that production and expertise carry ownership and voice.

Viewed through a posthumanist lens, goblins function as material-discursive agents who expose the limits of anthropocentric ethics and liberal inclusion in the wizarding society, at least in Britain. Their ontology, grounded in reciprocal relations between maker and object, challenges the wizarding world's presumptions about value, inheritance, and mastery. As Braidotti argues, posthumanist ethics demand an attentiveness to “non-unitary, multilayered” subjectivities (2014, p. 180), a framework Griphook embodies thanks to his position of being both a collaborator and a critic of wizards when he refuses assimilation and insists on the autonomy of goblin culture. Here, goblin autonomy names a plural, relational self-organization established in goblin craft-ethics and overlapping legal orders (i.e., goblin property norms *versus* wizard inheritance law). Ultimately, the political exclusion of goblins highlights the fragility of magical liberalism. While some wizards, such as Harry or Hermione, exhibit moments of empathy and ethical self-reflection, their actions rarely translate into structural changes. For that reason, the persistent legal and symbolic marginalization of goblins suggests that posthumanist justice in the wizarding world requires not just interpersonal alliances but epistemic and institutional transformation, which would lead to a recognition of alternative logics rather than their containment.

4. Conclusion: Towards a Posthumanist Ethics of Magical Governance

Rowling's series, while rightly celebrated for its resistance to authoritarianism and its valorization of courage and care, is structured by an ontological order in which species hierarchies, legal exclusions, and visual regimes shape the lived experience of magical and nonhuman beings. Read through a posthumanist lens, these asymmetries are not incidental flourishes of world-building as they operate as material-discursive formations that naturalize wizardly normativity. On the flip side, the same narrative also stages moments of ethical friction and cross-species affinity that gesture toward alternative futures. The result is a transitional ethical space that presents a world which critiques domination even as it struggles to imagine fully co-constituted multispecies life.

This ambivalence is legible in the series' most charged interspecies relations. “Harry never acts alone,” states William V. Thompson, “[a]s a hero, Harry is both relational and interdependent” (2016, p. 42), relying on others' willingness to join his quests even as the series ultimately recenters liberal humanist agency. As observed above, Harry's alliance with Griphook during the Gringotts infiltration appears at first reciprocal in terms of the combination of human cunning and goblin expertise but culminates in deception over the Sword of Gryffindor and thus reiterates a colonial grammar of instrumentalization. The uneasy transaction between Harry and Griphook exemplifies the failure of wizarding heroes to decenter their own epistemological assumptions. Griphook is not seen as an equal subject but as a strategic necessity. Harry resists Voldemort's supremacism, but his ethical horizon too often remains bounded by liberal humanism, by recognizing cruelty without reconfiguring the ontological ground on which beings meet. Likewise,

Hermione's S.P.E.W. activism dramatizes the limits of a well-intentioned, humanist rescue ethos. Her slogans, petitions, and attempted unionization name exploitation but do not take seriously the house-elves' own modes of dignity, memory, and communal agency. Hermione's advocacy, while well-intentioned, reflects a humanist desire to save the other rather than to hear the other. Winky's grief, Kreacher's complicated loyalties, and the elves' embedded socialities reveal that freedom, if conceived exclusively in wizarding terms, can reproduce the very hierarchy it seeks to undo. In both cases, the ethical shortfall is not reducible to personality; it is symptomatic of a narrative economy that privileges human protagonism as the locus and measure of justice.

Posthumanist theory clarifies why these gestures fall short. For Barad, ethicality emerges through "intra-action," wherein agencies are co-constituted rather than pre-given (2007, p. 33); for Haraway, living well requires "becoming with" others rather than benevolent inclusion (2008, p. 4). Harry's freeing of Dobby, Hagrid's care for fantastic creatures, and Luna's attention to Thestrals are vivid scenes of cross-species regard, but they remain episodic, individualized, and insufficiently institutional. They mark affective recognition without systemic redress. Thus, the series "forces us to acknowledge both humans and animals as embodied creatures that change and suffer," and in doing so "asks us to reevaluate the hierarchical framework that justifies the mistreatment of animals" (Batty, 2015, pp. 27, 36). The world's aesthetic architecture mirrors—and legitimizes—such ethical boundaries. The "Fountain of Magical Brethren" and, later, the "Magic is Might" statue are not neutral ornaments but affective technologies of governance but, in Jacques Rancière's terms, instruments of "a certain recasting of the distribution of the sensible, a reconfiguration of the given perceptual forms" (2004, p. 63). Their vertical compositions choreograph who stands above and who bears the weight below, suturing a commonsense of wizard superiority to the very stones of the Ministry, precisely the kind of ordering by which "[t]he visibility of a form of expression as an artistic form depends on a historically constituted regime of perception and intelligibility" (Rancière, 2004, p. 50). If the aesthetic regime once "dismantled [the] correlation between subject matter and mode of representation" (Rancière, 2004, p. 32), these monuments stage their return by reinstalling a representative hierarchy where some bodies are made to signify nobility and others servility. This foreclosure of equality also rests on a vantage of authority, for, as Rancière cautions, "[w]here one searches for the hidden beneath the apparent, a position of mastery is established" (2004, p. 49): Here, a wizardly mastery that naturalizes who may appear and how. In Braidotti's terms (2013, pp. 60–61, 111–112), the visual grammar reiterates a bios/zoe distinction that privileges some lives as fully political while relegating others to attenuated vitality. Seeing, here, is already a form of ordering, already political because it is already distributive: "[A]n aesthetic politics always defines itself by [...] the distribution of the sensible," deciding "what is visible and audible as well as what can be said, thought, made, or done" (Rancière, 2004, pp. 63, 85) and thus converting vision into governance.

If fantasy is, as Mendlesohn and Edward James suggest (2009, pp. 1–6), a laboratory of onto-epistemological experimentation, then *Harry Potter's* laboratory results are diagnostic and invitational. The text exposes the contradictions of liberal sympathy when confronted with multispecies entanglements and thereby primes readers to imagine a different ethical grammar. A posthumanist ethics of magical governance would not begin with tolerance or tokenistic inclusion. It would pivot from control to co-constitution. Nonhuman beings would cease to function as metaphors, instruments, or laboring backgrounds and would instead be recognized as agents who affect and are affected within shared ecologies. Such a reorientation repositions figures long treated as narrative accessories. Griphook's rejection of wizard property norms, Firenze's refusal of species classification, Kreacher's trajectory from servitude to self-directed attachment, and Grawp's unruly kinship all mark sites of what Braidotti calls nomadic subjectivity as becomings that trouble fixed identities and verticalized orders. In this light, the question is not whether the series achieves a thoroughly posthumanist polity—it does not—but whether it equips us to

perceive the conditions under which one might be imagined: shared ontological ground, distributed agency, situated justice, and institutional forms capable of registering more-than-human claims.

Accordingly, the ethical task is twofold. First, to read the series against the grain of its own anthropocentric defaults by tracking how monuments, ministries, and narrative focalization stabilize wizard supremacy even as acts of care flicker across species lines. Second, to translate episodic care into the thought-experiment of structure: What would laws look like if goblin craft and custody were juridically legible? What forms of labor governance would honor house-elf temporalities and attachments? What representational regimes would place centaurs and giants as co-authors of the sensible order rather than its margins? Answering such questions would realize what this study sees as the necessary ontological reorientation, recognizing magical beings not as supplements to human protagonism but as subjects of world-making in their own right. In exposing the fractures beneath the polished marble of the Ministry, the series offers more than moral fable while it becomes a site of speculative worlding. Its imperfect coalitions and unresolved tensions invite us to imagine magical ecologies grounded in accountability, reciprocity, and co-becoming. From domination to fraternity is thus not a path the text completes but a horizon it makes visible: a posthumanist ethics of governance that remains to be thought, narrated, and, within the logic of the wizarding world and our own, made.

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