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"They like being enslaved"?

British Imperialist Rhetoric and the Wizards'

Hegemonic Discourse in *Harry Potter*

Juliana Valadão Lopes

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Dissertação realizada no âmbito do Mestrado em Estudos Anglo-Americanos, orientada pela Professora Doutora Maria de Fátima de Sousa Basto Vieira e coorientada pelo Professor Doutor Miguel Ramalhete Gomes

Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto

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Sumário

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Porto, 27 de setembro de 2019

Juliana Valadão Lopes

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Resumo

Harry Potter é uma narrativa influenciada por inúmeros elementos da história, da literatura e da cultura britânica. Inserindo esta obra de J.K. Rowling na tradição literária vitoriana do romance de aventura, estabeleço uma comparação entre a retórica imperialista britânica e o discurso dos bruxos na saga, considerando principalmente a forma como ambos criaram e mantiveram hierarquias sociais. Assim, pretendo mostrar a continuidade, no presente, do passado imperial britânico pelo exemplo de uma ficção contemporânea e extremamente popular, escrutinada por um viés pós-colonial aplicado a conceitos como hegemonia e subalternidade. Em primeiro lugar, apresento um breve contexto histórico sobre o Império Britânico, analisando justificativas e mecanismos sociais, políticos e econômicos usados não apenas para a criação do império, mas também para o estabelecimento de hierarquias entre os povos da Grã-Bretanha e de suas colônias. Em segundo lugar, investigo algumas das formas que povos subalternos e colonizados encontraram para se rebelar contra a dominação britânica. Aplico, então, minha análise sobre o Império Britânico na narrativa de *Harry Potter*, usando criaturas como goblins, centauros e elfos domésticos como exemplos de povos subalternos na saga. Analiso os mecanismos usados por bruxos para inferiorizá-los e como essas criaturas subvertem a ordem hierárquica da comunidade mágica. Concluo discutindo a (falta de) possibilidades para as criaturas em questão para deixarem seu lugar de subalternidade, e quais são as implicações disto para a narrativa e para o leitor.

Palavras-chave: Imperialismo, Literatura Britânica, Estudos coloniais, Estudos pós-coloniais, *Harry Potter*.

Abstract

Harry Potter is a story influenced by uncountable elements of the British history, literature and culture. Inserting J.K. Rowling's work in the Victorian tradition of the adventure novel, I establish in this dissertation a comparison between British imperialist rhetoric and the discourse of wizards in the saga through the way both created and maintained social hierarchies. Thus, I intend to show the presentness of the British imperialist past through the example of a contemporary and extremely popular story, scrutinised under a post-colonial approach to concepts such as hegemony and subalternity. Firstly, I present a brief historic background on the British Empire, analysing the social, political and economic justifications and mechanisms not only for the creation of the empire, but also for the establishment of rigid hierarchies between the peoples of Britain and of its colonies. Secondly, I investigate some forms that subaltern colonised peoples had found to rebel against British domination. Then, I apply my analysis on the British Empire on *Harry Potter*, using creatures like goblins, centaurs and house-elves as examples of subaltern peoples on the saga. I analyse the mechanisms used by wizards to keep them in an inferior position and how these creatures subvert the hierarchic order of the magic community. I conclude by discussing the (lack of) possibilities for the referred creatures to leave their place of subalternity, and what are the implications of it in the story and for the reader.

Keywords: Imperialism, British literature, colonial studies, post-colonial studies, *Harry Potter*.

Thus the native discovers that his life, his breath, his beating heart are the same as those of the settler. He finds out that the settler's skin is not of any more value than a native's skin; and it must be said that this discovery shakes the world in a very necessary manner. All the new, revolutionary assurance of the native stems from it. For if, in fact, my life is worth as much as the settler's, his glance no longer shrivels me up nor freezes me, and his voice no longer turns me into stone.

Frantz Fanon, "Concerning Violence", 35

Introduction

      Harry Potter is undeniably a very British saga. It is influenced by and reproduces a series of literary and cultural aspects of traditional British Literature, such as the medieval *The Canterbury Tales*[1] and the Victorian orphan hero.[2] Since J.K. Rowling's books are deeply inserted in Britain's culture, which is inextricable from its history and politics, to analyse certain elements of the narrative implies the scrutiny of aspects of British history itself. As Giselle Lisa Anatol astutely argued in her article "The Fallen Empire: Exploring Ethnic Otherness in the World of *Harry Potter*", "although the Potter series attempts to embrace ideas of global equality and multiculturalism, the stories actually reveal how difficult it is for contemporary British subjects such as Rowling to extricate themselves from the ideological legacies of their ancestors" (165).

      A good example that Anatol pointed out is *Harry Potter*'s continuity of the British tradition of the adventure story, a kind of narrative that celebrated the various aspects of the British Empire and that became really popular in the Victorian Era. The stories told the adventures of British men who went overseas, to "exotic" and "dangerous" lands, to fight "beastly" peoples and to "civilise savages", establishing a rigid division between "us" (white, British, civilised colonisers) and "them" (non-white, Other, uncivilised colonised people). As Patrick Brantlinger observed in *Victorian Literature and Postcolonial Studies*, "[t]hroughout the Victorian era, imperialist adventure fiction, whether set in the past or the present, and whether aimed at adults or juvenile readers, promoted the 'manifest destiny' of the Anglo-Saxon race […] to conquer and rule or else to exterminate the non-white races of the world" (35).

      At first sight, it might seem a little extreme to defend that this kind of ideology is present in the series. In fact, Harry does not even leave Britain and the contact that he has with people from different nationalities is quite limited. However, if we consider the socio-political structure of the magic community, especially how it revolves around archaic racial hierarchies, we will see many similarities with British Empire and its own hierarchies. In this dissertation, I aim to establish a comparison between the wizarding society's discourse and the British Imperialist rhetoric, investigating how they create and

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[1] J.K. Rowling's short story "The Tale of the Three Brothers", part of her book *The Tales of Beedle, the Bard*, is inspired by Geoffrey Chaucer's "The Pardoner Tale", a story of *The Canterbury Tales*.
[2] Beatrice Groves's chapter "Harry Potter's Medieval Hallows" discusses Chaucer's influence on Rowling's text, while Alison McKeever's Masters' dissertation, *Dickensian Characters in J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter*, discusses the figure of the Victorian orphan hero in the saga.

maintain power structures that subjugate entire races. In the first chapter, besides characterising this rhetoric and identifying the mechanisms used by it to perpetuate power hierarchies, I will investigate the need to create a subaltern other, reinforced by the racist discrimination of a supposedly monstrous body, in order to establish the political and cultural supremacy of a selected group. I will also explore what are the forms of resistance found by these subaltern peoples to counter-attack the hegemonic power. In the second chapter, I will compare British imperialist rhetoric and the wizarding society discourse in *Harry Potter*, looking in the books for examples of mechanisms of subjugation that are similar to the ones used by the British Empire. Considering goblins, centaurs and house-elves as examples of subaltern races, I will also scrutinise the reasons why the wizards want to dominate these creatures and whether they succeed or not. In the third and final chapter, I will examine the solutions found by these minorities in *Harry Potter*, searching if there is any possibility of transformation of that society and if these creatures are able to improve their living conditions. Thus, through the analysis of selected passages in relation to a postcolonial approach to concepts such as hegemony and subalternity, I intend to show the presence of the British imperialist past, brought up in *Harry Potter* in all that surrounds these creatures: their marginality within the wizarding society, their lack of rights and the prejudice against them that even "good" characters help to perpetuate.

Many adventure stories did question both the right of colonisers to conquest lands and the atrocities committed by Europeans in defence of "civilisation". In *The Heart of Darkness* (first published in 1899), for instance, Joseph Conrad wrote: "The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much" (6). However, as Edward Said noticed, at the same time that Conrad criticised the imperial ideology, he also reproduced it (*Culture and Imperialism* xxv). Considering that *Harry Potter* continues the tradition of the adventure story, and considering this genre's simultaneous criticism and glorification of the British Empire, one of the questions that this dissertation intends to answer – or, at least, to problematise – is the nature of this relation that Rowling's text establishes with the imperialist rhetoric: does *Harry Potter* criticise it, reproduce it or does it do both at the same time?

There are, indeed, some scholars who have already discussed the power structures in the saga's wizarding society. However, they usually deal with "Muggles" (non-magic humans) or real-life minorities as representative of subaltern groups. Since the issue of

the human hierarchy in the magic community has already been extensively explored, especially if one considers Voldemort's persecution towards Muggles and Muggle-borns, I chose a different approach.[3] Not many academics have studied how the non-human minorities in the books, especially goblins, house-elves and centaurs, suffer from the mechanisms that are the basis of that society's rigid hierarchy, nor have they established a comparison with the British Empire. Gisele Anatol's above-mentioned article, which did discuss the influence of the British Empire on *Harry Potter*, focused mainly, in her own words, on "the depiction of *literal* Otherness in the predominantly white, British environs of Hogwarts" (173, my emphasis). Brycchan Carey's "Hermione and the house elves: the literary and historical context of J.K. Rowling's Anti-slavery Campaign" also refers to the Empire, but in exclusive relation to slavery. Jackie C. Horne's excellent "Harry and the Other: Answering the Race Question in J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter*" discussed the various layers of race, from Muggle-borns to centaurs, goblins and house-elves, providing many pertinent examples of the racial issue throughout the books. However, Horne did not systematise the rhetorical aspects that create and enforce racism on these groups, and barely mentioned imperialism. Likewise, Bethany Barratt's serious, extensive and well-researched *The Politics of Harry Potter* analyses the political environment of the narrative without ever mentioning the relevance or the influence of the British Empire on the books, rather focusing on some similarities with American history and with World War Two politics. In addition to that, as far as I am aware, no author has presented these creatures' forms of subversion other than Hermione's timid S.P.E.W., an NGO-like movement in defence of house-elves' rights, or goblins' and centaurs' non-acknowledgement of the wizards' superiority.

Considering all the intelligent and conscious creatures that the *Harry Potter* universe presents, one could question why I chose these three instead of others. Firstly, I want to deal with groups that have some political role in the story, and that is why I ruled out Veela.[4] Despite the fact that the discussion around the stunningly beautiful Veela as an idealised representation of women, similar to the classic representation of sirens in Ancient Greece, can be very relevant to gender studies, they show no political interest in

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[3] To read more about the issue of discrimination against Muggle-borns and the human hierarchy in the wizarding society, see Ann Curthoys's "*Harry Potter* and historical consciousness: Reflections on history and fiction", Elaine Ostry's "Accepting Mudbloods: The Ambivalent Social Vision of J.K. Rowling's Fairy Tales" and Carin Möller's "Mudbloods, Half-bloods and Pure-bloods: The issues of racism and race discrimination in J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter*".

[4] The Veelas are portrayed as extremely beautiful female creatures, who have a body shape similar to the human one and who can charm and enchant humans with their beauty.

the magic community. The case of merpeople is similar. Even though they are intelligent and have an organised society, these creatures who live in Hogwarts's Dark Lake rarely come up to the surface. Thus, their role in the wizarding society would not be that relevant to the development of this dissertation.

Secondly, I decided to select races not very different from the human form, because I believe they could be more relatable to both characters and readers and, therefore, better represent and discuss issues of discrimination and racism. Acromantulas (highly intelligent enormous spiders) and other animalesque beasts were left out for that reason. Werewolves could bring forth a valid and important discussion around prejudice and discrimination, since they are, according to J.K. Rowling herself, an analogy to people with AIDS.[5] However, when they are transformed into wolves, they act basically as mindless beasts. Besides, they do not seem to be an organised group in society, such as the creatures I chose to analyse.[6]

Some other creatures, like the giants, I decided not to analyse because I do not believe that there are sufficient examples to establish an argument on how they act politically as a group. It is true that giants, as a group, chose the side of Voldemort at the Battle of Hogwarts, showing that they do have a sense of community and take political actions in the wizarding world. Nevertheless, except for the poor articulated Grawp and the half-giants Rubeus Hagrid and Madame Maxime, Harry and his friends do not talk to any giant.

As far as the selected bibliography is concerned, I chose to analyse eight books written by J.K. Rowling: the seven main books of the *Harry Potter* series – in chronological order: *The Philosopher's Stone* (which I will refer throughout the text as "*PS*"), *The Chamber of Secrets* (*CoS*), *The Prisoner of Azkaban* (*PoA*), *The Goblet of Fire* (*GoF*), *The Order of the Phoenix* (*OotP*), *The Half-Blood Prince* (*HBP*) and *The Deathly Hallows* (*DH*) – and *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* (*FB*). Due to the length of the present work, I chose not to analyse in detail the eight *Harry Potter* movie adaptations, nor the *Fantastic Beasts* movies. However, I used relevant available material about goblins, centaurs and house-elves that might come from the movies and

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[5] Rowling said, on the e-book *Short Stories from Hogwarts of Heroism, Hardship, And Dangerous Hobbies*, that "Lupin's condition of lycanthropy (being a werewolf) was a metaphor for those illnesses that carry a stigma, like HIV and AIDS."

[6] To read more about discrimination towards werewolves, see Brent Stypczynski's article "Wolf in Professor's Clothing: J.K. Rowling's Werewolf as Educator".

Pottermore, *Harry Potter*'s official website with texts and material written or authorised by J.K. Rowling.[7]

Gladly, 19 years have passed since Harold Bloom polemically defended that the (then) 35 million *Harry Potter* readers were wrong and would "continue to be so for as long as they persevere[d] with Potter", and academic opinions such as Bloom's have been increasingly hard to find. *Harry Potter* became the main subject of conferences, edited volumes and even university classes.[8] My objective with this dissertation is to continue the work of demystifying the saga as a subject worthy of academic, social, cultural and literary analysis, bringing the story to reality through a lens that takes into account British history. I expect not only to present new perspectives and approaches that will throw a light on Rowling's narrative, but also to use *Harry Potter* as an innovative way to look at some aspects of one of the most influential empires in the world.

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[7] Having in mind that the *Harry Potter* universe is constantly expanding, with more movies, websites, theatrical plays, books and electronic games being released every year, the incompleteness of the present work is inevitable.

[8] According to the website *HuffPost*, until June 2017 there were at least 9 university courses that explored various aspects of the saga. "Muggles, Mermaids, and Metaphors: Race in *Harry Potter*" (Stanford University), "Ethical Leadership in the Wizarding World" (Drake University) and **"**The Creative Impact of *Harry Potter*" (University of Pennsylvania) are just a few examples of them.

1) The *Imperius* curse: characterising and subverting British imperialist rhetoric

1.1)   Understanding British imperialist rhetoric

In the *Harry Potter* books, it is quite common to find wizards who not only are not opposed to the house-elves slavery, but who also truly believe that they like to be enslaved (*GoF* 198) and that to free them would be something "unkind" (*GoF* 233). In addition to these common-sense ideas, many mechanisms of oppression against this and other groups of creatures are established, such as physical and psychological forms of violence and lack of political rights. These elements on the wizarding world's social structure are part of an ideological apparatus that subjugates other races, aiming to maintain the power on the hands of a certain group. This is not exclusive to the magic community, though: I believe that the ideology that supports the subjugation of creatures like house-elves, goblins and centaurs to the wizards' domain is a form of continuation of the discourse that allowed the British Empire to rule so many territories and their respective peoples. Thus, in order to investigate how these creatures could free themselves from the hierarchical rules of the magic world, it is necessary, first, to understand and characterise the imperialist rhetoric that helped to establish and maintain these rigid structures of hegemonic power. In addition to that, it is also crucial to provide some of the British historical background, along with some key concepts of colonial and post-colonial theories, such as empire, imperialism, colonialism, hegemony and scientific racism.

Although the origins of the British colonisation overseas can be traced back to the 16th century, with many territories being incorporated in the so-called First (1583-1783) and Second (1783-1815) British Empires, it was actually in the 19th century that the British Empire truly began its consolidation. When Napoleon and his French Empire were defeated in the Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815), leaving Britain with no significant imperialist rivals, the British became responsible for many territories in India and Africa. It was with those new colonies in the East that the British Imperial Century (1815-1914) began. It was in the interwar period (1918-1939), though, that the Empire reached its pinnacle in terms of territorial length, becoming the largest empire of the history in terms of geographic extension. Over 60 countries were part of the colonies and, by 1913, around 412 million people were ruled by the British Empire (Maddison 97).

Michael Doyle classified the term "empire" as "a relationship, formal or informal, in which one state controls the effective political sovereignty of another political society. It can be achieved by force, by political collaboration, by economic, social, or cultural dependence" (45). However, as Eric Hobsbawm pointed out, it is important to bear in mind that empires had existed for a long time, and it was not a new form of ruling other nations. The true novelty in the 19th century was imperialism (60), which Edward Said defined as "the practice, the theory and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a *distant territory*" (*Culture and Imperialism* 8, my emphasis). While in the Roman Empire, for instance, Rome was geographically near the nations it was ruling, the British Empire, through the process of colonisation, had power over nations across oceans in all continents. Said claimed that, although quite related, imperialism and colonialism are not interchangeable concepts. Colonialism, then, could be described as the process of implementation of settlements in a territory (*ibidem*). In other words, colonialism is the local enforcement of the imperialist power.

These imperialist forms of domination are composed of various layers, and it seems clear that the economic, political, social, geographic, biological and rhetoric aspects of imperialism are intrinsically connected. For this dissertation's purpose, I would like to consider Britain's imperialist rhetoric as a guiding aspect. According to the scholar Richard Toye,

> [r]hetoric cannot be conceived purely in terms of text and language, separate from the technical means by which it is conveyed to listeners and readers. In addition to textual analysis, we need to consider how the 'symbolic ritual dimension of politics' […] affects what rhetorical messages are produced and how they are received. […] The 'meaning' of a given set of words cannot be derived purely from an analysis of the text, in isolation from an examination of the circumstances in which that text was delivered, mediated, and received. (4)

Thus, I understand Britain's imperialist rhetoric as the set of mechanisms used to assert the metropolis' superiority and to dominate the colonies' natives, considering the circumstances in which this discourse was produced and how it affected the colonised peoples. Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin claimed that "it was the power of *imperial discourse* rather than military or economic might that confirmed the hegemony of imperialism in the late nineteenth century" (127, my emphasis). It is essential then to characterise and analyse the discourse produced by the metropolis to and about the natives, considering specifically how this rhetoric intends to justify the imperial economic intentions through the establishment of a biosocial (or racial) hierarchy.

The concept of hegemony is useful to understand how colonised people were subjected to another culture through the imperialist rhetoric. In the 1930s, the Italian Marxist thinker Antonio Gramsci defined hegemony as "domination by consent", or as "the power of the ruling class to convince other classes that their interests are the interests of all" (*apud* Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin 116). Gramsci claimed that the unity of dominant groups is established and maintained by the state and violent institutions, and civil society institutions, like schools, religion, art and media, play an equally important role in establishing and preserving hegemony (*apud* Durham & Kellner xv). Through the imperialist discourse, "[e]urocentric values, assumptions, beliefs and attitudes are accepted as a matter of course as the most natural or valuable", which, as a result, makes "the colonised subject understand itself as peripheral to those Eurocentric values, while, at the same time, accepting their centrality" (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin 117). Thus, the imperialist rhetoric favours the establishment of a hegemonic power, and since this discourse comes from many different areas (social, biological, judiciary, economic), it is harder to institute and fortify some kind of resistance.

Aiming to establish its economic hegemony, and with England's ever-increasing population,[9] urbanisation and industrialisation during the 19th century, there came the need to explore different markets[10] and, of course, the cheap raw materials found in the colonies. Today, it is clear that one of the strongest reasons for the formation of the British Empire was the economic and political power that came from the domination and exploration of foreign countries' natural resources and their cheap/slave labour. Thus, it was necessary to propagate an ideological excuse to justify the colonisation not only to the colonies, but to the English people as well.[11]

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[9] According to the website *A vision of Britain through time*, organised by the University of Portsmouth, in 1801, there were around 7 million people living in England. By 1851, this number doubled: there were over 15 million people there. By the beginning of the 20th century, in 1901, there were 30 million people.

[10] From 1815 to 1915, the British Empire expanded its reach on India, some isles on the Pacific Ocean, some countries in Africa and in the Middle East, just to mention a few territories. Some of the colonies, such as Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, were also dominated by Britain during this century, but they became independent before 1915 (their independence was in 1867, 1901, 1907 and 1910, respectively).

[11] Friedrich Engels in his work *Anti-Dühring*, first published in 1878, argued that the history of class struggle "are always the products of […] the *economic* conditions of their time" (26), and that "the economic structure of society always furnishes the real basis, starting from which we can alone work out the ultimate explanation of the whole superstructure of juridical and political institutions as well as of the religious, philosophical, and other ideas of a given historical period" (*ibidem*). In other words, Engels defended that the economic basis of a certain society would surely influence or even determine the ideology behind its institutions.

For the British metropolis, it was "useful" to make people believe that some human beings were biologically inferior than others, since the colonised peoples would be more easily contained if they believed that they were intrinsically lesser than their colonisers. The inevitable and unchangeable aspect of biology aided the hegemonic power to maintain these groups subjugated – they were born (supposedly) inferior, and there was nothing they could do to reverse their own position in the social rank. In addition to that, these peoples suffered a constant process of dehumanisation, through which they were considered monstrous and savages. The main argument used overtly by the British Empire was that those who lived in these foreign countries were barbarians, and that the colonisation would "help" them to develop culturally and economically.

As Albert Memmi aptly described in *The coloniser and the colonised*, the colonisers constantly stated that the colonised were weak, and, consequently, that they needed protection. Because of that, they were also "excluded from management functions", and the responsibilities and the control were maintained at the coloniser's hands (126). Memmi argued that "[w]henever the coloniser adds […] that the colonised is a wicked, backward person with evil, thievish, somewhat sadistic instincts, he thus justifies his police and his legitimate severity" (*ibidem*). This paternalistic point of view was essential to perpetuate England's image as a virtuous nation: although it was not noble to invade other countries to explore their people and their natural resources, to teach them the wonders of civilisation and save them from their own state of savageness was honourable.

There came a need to develop ideological tools to scientifically support this argument. Many theories around race had been developed before the nineteenth century, like Montesquieu's racial hierarchy theory of social evolution (1748), for instance. [12] However, during the Victorian Era (1837-1901) and the rise and consolidation of British Imperialism, "scientists reified the concept of race" (Barkan 15), establishing some sort of "scientific" hierarchic value based on race. According to Elazar Barkan, "in the first half of the century, polygenism became popular and the perceived distinctions among races sharply widened. Physical differences were correlated with cultural and social status through biological justification" (15-6).

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[12] In *The Spirit of the Laws*, Montesquieu defended that the climate and geography of a country influence the behaviour of its inhabitants, so the laws of each nation should be different, according to the temperament of its people. In his own words, "[t]he inhabitants of warm countries are, like old men, timorous; the people in cold countries are, like young men, brave" (246). Considering that the European countries were cold and that the vast majority of the colonies were warm, this theory only reinforced Europe's alleged superiority.

These theories around racial biology (nowadays referred to as "scientific" or "biological racism") established, supported and propagated racist common-sense beliefs that any race other than Caucasian was inferior. The types of body that were different from the white, European coloniser were considered ugly, monstrous, beast-like, which only reinforced the theory of white cultural, physical and intellectual supremacy. Understandably, the most prominent writers on the subject, such as the German Johan Blumenbach, the French Arthur de Gobineau, and the English Francis Galton and John Beddoe, were all Europeans.

Blumenbach was the first to classify the human race among species, and he named the "white race" Caucasian because he believed that the people from the Caucasus were the most beautiful people on Earth, revealing a biased and hierarchic point of view. Still, Blumenbach knew that it was not possible to establish fixed limits between the different races, and believed that the various races formed a wide spectrum on what it meant to be human (*apud* Barkan 15). Gobineau, on the other hand, was strongly against miscegenation and believed not only that white people were the most beautiful race, but also the only race capable of intelligence and the only capable of creating beauty – that is, art. He dismissed all the other races' culture and art as ugly, inferior and unworthy (*idem* 16-7). Similarly, Francis Galton, who was Charles Darwin's cousin, defended through his concept of eugenics an "improvement" of a species through artificial selection. In other words, some races could be "improved" by avoiding miscegenation, a theory that implied not only that some races are better than others, but also that there are people who are apt to reproduce and there are those who are not (*apud* Kühl 4).[13] Lastly, John Beddoe claimed that progress and civilisation were a result of the physical superiority of the upper classes (*apud* Barkan 22-3).

This "biologic hierarchy" was maintained by keeping the economic power in the hands of a selected European elite and by preserving the exploited labourers from the colonies at the basis of the social pyramid. That is why miscegenation was so condemned during the British Empire: it was a threat to the established racial hierarchy that undoubtedly permeated the colonial societies. These forms of social stratification facilitated the domination and exploration of the people from the colonies.

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[13] Later, in the 20th century, Nazi Germany used the concept of eugenics to establish a policy of "racial hygiene". The Nuremberg Laws forbade German people to marry Jews, or people with mental, contagious or hereditary diseases. Besides, there was the compulsory sterilisation of people with hereditary conditions (Proctor 131-2).

Along with the pseudoscientific support of these racist theories, the British religious background was crucial for the justification of the domination of other peoples. During the 18th and 19th centuries, there was an Evangelical Revival in England, and the British Protestants defended not that there was a natural and biological racial hierarchy, but that it was England's moral duty to guide less civilised societies towards a process of cultural development. It was a belief based on the Enlightenment's idea of progress: different societies were at different stages of progress, and the European society was at the top. Consequently, what is non-European was portrayed depreciatively as un-civilised – the more different from the Europeans, the more savage. In fact, according to Frantz Fanon, "the terms the settler uses when he mentions the native are zoological terms" (32-3).

With this conviction in mind, missionary societies that combined humanitarian activism with cultural and religious prejudice were instated throughout the colonies. The Evangelical Revival and its missions set the ground for the idea that was *not* morally corrupt for the Europeans to go overseas and Christianise (the first step to Europeanise) other peoples. On the other hand, one needs to acknowledge that Evangelical Revival and Enlightenment ideals like liberty and equality strengthened the anti-slavery movement that culminated in the abolition of slavery in 1833.[14] But even these abolitionists believed and defended the white, European superiority.

Since Africans, Asians and Middle Eastern people were considered racially inferior according to the European science, discourses that reproduced and reinforced this racial hierarchy became more and more widespread. In fact, the colonised peoples were so often told they were inferior that they began to internalise and disseminate the coloniser's discourse. It was expected, then, that it would soon begin to shape the social norms, the common sense, and, consequently, what was natural, right and unquestionable.

If these peoples were inferior, their languages, cultures and other aspects that formed their identities were constantly depreciated and regarded as inferior as well. Once they acknowledged their own inferiority, they began to abandon their own identities in order to be more like the superior dominant group. This direct and indirect imposition of the British culture and civilisation over the colonies was a form of psychological violence. At the same time, once the colonised's notion of identity was shaken, it was easier for the dominant group to mould the subaltern group according to its own interests.

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[14] According to the economist Angus Maddison, "[t]he British abolished the slave trade in 1807, and slavery in 1833, with £20 million compensation to slaveowners and nothing for the slaves" (101).

The stereotypification and uniformisation of the colonised people was also part of the imperialist rhetoric. This kind of disseminated behaviour was identified and classified by Edward Said as "Orientalism", the structures of a discourse used by the West to regard the East. In other words, all the knowledge propagated about the Orient (that is, the subaltern subject) is based upon how the Occident (the dominant, hegemonic power) perceives it. The Occident disseminates a stereotyped portrayal of the peoples of the Orient as exotic, primitive, sexualised, savage, backward and mysterious, and the colonised body is examined as the Other, as exotic,[15] as strange and even as monstrous.

According to Linda Hutcheon, the ex-centric, the off-centre, is "ineluctably identified with the centre it desires but is denied" (61), and one recurrent example is the figure of the freak. The Victorians took an enthusiastic interest in freak shows, and soon it became one of the most popular forms of entertainment in England at the time. Since freak shows put in evidence mainly people with rare physical disabilities or coming from what were called "exotic" regions, the popularity of Darwinist theories of evolution combined with the growing English imperialist ideals undoubtedly helped to establish a favourable mindset to the popularisation of this kind of entertainment. Laura Grande argued that "freak shows introduced the average layman to medicine and science" at the same time that amused the British people with stories of "exotic" and "mysterious" people who were from the colonies (20).

Although some people defend that the freak shows helped the Victorian audience to get in contact with difference, stimulating tolerance, the relation between performers and audience was not egalitarian. Thus, more than just entertainment, freak shows were a clear mechanism of a culture interested in perpetuating a domination over human beings they considered to be inferior. Since Victorian society promoted a normative look over these "exotic" bodies, both biologically and culturally, freak shows were a tool to reinforce the Victorian manners – in other words, what it meant to be British in opposition to the foreign Other.

Freak shows are only one of the many physical and psychological forms of violence that maintained imperialist power structures. It is quite shocking to notice that, as reported by Bernard Porter, "there were just 2.000 British imperial servants 'in the

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[15] Many Brazilian thinkers decompose the term "exotic" in two parts, "ex" and "optic", meaning something or someone that is usually out of sight – that is, out of the optic. The psychanalyst Rubem Alves, for instance, characterizes "ex-optic" as something "strange, offensive and surprising" (155, my translation). The ex-optic is a concept many times used as a synonym of the capitalised "Other".

field' over the whole of British India in the 1900s, plus about another 2.000 for the rest of the Empire: just 4.000 to control hundreds of millions of native subjects" (11). The dominated peoples' interests and rights, however, were underrepresented, despite the fact that the majority of law enforcers were natives themselves. According to Rob Fletcher, the British Empire had the local collaboration of native princes and chiefs, and many of them maintained their position of power while the metropolis' will was guaranteed (University of Exeter, module 6.2). It is also important to notice that, besides finding alliances with local politicians, the Empire used the differences that already existed between native communities as a form to keep control over them. In other words, the British not only imposed their own racial hierarchy in the colonies, but also adapted local forms of social stratification.

The physical and military violence used by British Empire in its colonies was undeniable – and not only during the Imperial Wars (such as the Opium Wars, from 1839 to 1842 and from 1856 to 1860; the Anglo-Zulu War, in 1879; and the Boer Wars, from 1880 to 1881 and from 1899 to 1902).[16] To maintain the supposed order of the Empire and to suppress insurgencies, the British Royal Air Force (RAF), for instance, commonly bombed colonial villages, killed women and children, destroyed crops and patrolled villages with gun fire. Their "justification" for not attacking only military targets was that they were dealing with "semi-civilised" or "uncivilised" peoples (*idem*, module 2.11).[17] Furthermore, they argued that in such societies violence against women and children was common and that all men were seen as potential soldiers, so it was very difficult to differentiate militaries and civilians. The destruction was such that, many times, just the vision of an air patrol was enough to end local revolts (*idem*, module 2.9). Similarly, the colonial police also represented an omnipresent threat, even when the policemen were not physically attacking the natives.

Violence also had an "educational" role in the colonies because of the very convenient racist belief that the natives would understand physical discipline better than intellectual argument (*idem*, module 2.2). To discipline the mind, however, was as important as to discipline the body. Thus, indirect psychological violence, like the

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[16] To read more information about the British Imperialist Wars, see Bernard Porter's *Empire Ways: Aspects of British Imperialism*, Saul David's *Victoria's Wars: The Rise of Empire* and John Newsinger's *The Blood Never Dried*.

[17] According to module 2.11 of the online course *Empire: The Controversies of British Imperialism*, ministered by the University of Exeter, "in the RAF war manual of 1935, […] there is a section on semi-civilised peoples which indicated that you could behave towards semi-civilised peoples in a different way from the way you might use the RAF against so-called civilised peoples."

inculcation of fear or systematic discrimination, was omnipresent and essential to maintain order.

Another form of non-physical violence was the enforcement of colonial law, which justified the confiscation of lands, the control of the natives' rights whenever the coloniser felt the need to maintain power in his hands and the very imposition of British "civilised" standards of behaviour. The rights of assembly and freedom of speech were then quite scanty, and there was censorship against those who opposed the colonial system, which enhanced the voicelessness of the colonised. This inability to speak up against imperialist power could also be found in the legislative and judicial systems in the colonies. Besides, the efforts made in order to expand the native population's access to education were quite ambiguous. It is true that many natives learned English and had access to other kinds of knowledge through the agency of Christian missionaries or official imperial institutions (*idem*, module 3.6). However, one should not forget that this could be seen as another form of imposition of the colonisers' culture and education.[18]

The last right to be taken from the natives was their very freedom. Although slavery was abolished in 1833, relatively early in the imperialist domination, the working force was soon replaced by indentured labour (or indentured servitude) in plantation economies. This type of work, comparable to slavery, consisted in working for a fixed amount of time in exchange for small wages, transportation and accommodation. The racial hierarchy present in the Empire was equally relevant to indentured labour, since there was a common-sense belief, for instance, that those coming from tropical regions were naturally (and even biologically) prone to work in heavy plantation labour.

After the end of the Second World War, because of the horrors implemented in Nazi Germany in name of eugenics, the association of supposedly scientific racial theories with imperialist ideology was considered more and more problematic. The British then chose to regard their colonies with some sort of racial paternalism. Instead of simply granting them independence, the British claimed that it was their responsibility to guide the colonies to their independence, since their local politics were not considered well-developed. At the same time, however, the British Empire became weaker as nationalist movements in Africa and Asia became stronger, until it eventually collapsed. These movements noticed the contradictory discourse propagated by the British during the war, a discourse that defended the socio-political freedom of peoples and nations and

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[18] To read more about the imperial education in the British colonies, specifically in the British Raj, see Clive Whitehead's *Colonial Educators: The British Indian and Colonial Education Service 1858-1983*.

their right to choose their own government. With the fortification of human rights and these movements, the empire and its violent, racist, patriarchal and extremely hierarchic rhetoric became unendurable.

1.2) *Expelliarmus!* The subalterns' resistance and counter-attacks

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, one of the most prominent thinkers of postcolonial studies, resignified the concept of subalternity within a postcolonial approach, defining the subaltern as someone or some group who is out of the hegemonic discourse and its socio-political representation. She claimed that the term "subaltern" refers to "the bottom layers of society constituted by specific modes of exclusion from markets, political-legal representation, and the possibility of full membership in dominant social strata" ("Foreword: Upon Reading the *Companion to Postcolonial Studies"* xx). Although "subaltern" is a term originally coined by Antonio Gramsci, who used it practically as a synonym for the oppressed proletarian class, I intend to use here Spivak's interpretation of subalternity, which I believe is more adequate for this dissertation's purpose. After having characterised the imperialist rhetoric in the first part of this chapter, in this section I will explore some of the forms of resistance developed by subaltern subjects against British hegemonic power. More specifically, I will analyse the development and strengthening of collective and individual identities, the act of speaking up against oppression and the use of violence as counter-attack.[19]

Considering the decades of imperial influence in the colonies, it would be expected that the local and the coloniser's cultures mingled. Although one may argue that the metropolis' culture was also influenced by its colonies, the impact of the coloniser on the colonised was evidently and incomparably higher. The biggest issue, thus, was not the contact and natural influence between cultures in itself. The critic Stuart Hall even defended that "the greatest danger now arises from forms of national and cultural identity […] which attempt to secure their identity by adopting closed versions of culture or community and by refusal to engage" ("Culture, community, nation" 361). The problem is when there is a hierarchy established between both groups, with the colonised people's cultures and identities being constantly lessened and undermined, frequently subject to different forms of physical violence in order to believe in their alleged inferiority.

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[19] Rather than trying to point out all the forms of resistance developed by native people, I will only focus on those which are presented in *Harry Potter* as a counter-attack from goblins, centaurs and house-elves.

The Martiniquais critic Frantz Fanon addressed the issue of the ever-present colonial violence in his essay "Concerning Violence", where he argued that it was one of the most basic and crucial characteristics of colonialism (27). From their first encounter, all relation between settler and native was marked by violence, either directly by physical force or indirectly by cultural discrimination and dehumanisation (28). Fanon exposed the irrationality and desensitisation of imperialist brutal force, saying that "[c]olonialism is not a thinking machine, nor a body endowed with reasoning faculties. It is violence in its natural state" (48). The documentary *Concerning Violence: Nine Scenes from the Anti-Imperialistic Self-Defence*, inspired by Fanon's work, denounced a few effects of this European imperialist violence on African and Asian colonies. In addition to many murders, mutilations, attacks on native soldiers and civilians, the movie shows an interview with Tonderai Makoni, a PhD scholar who was imprisoned for five years in the 1960s in Zimbabwe as a result of his anticolonial behaviour. He tells that all of the violence that was used against him made him indifferent and led him to "just take life as it comes" – in other words, he was turned into what Michel Foucault called a "docile body", a body "that may be subjected, used, transformed" by a disciplinary process (136). In order to be able to endure an ever-constant violence, many oppressed people developed a form of apathy – which, although it cannot be considered active resistance, is certainly a strategy of survival.

According to Fanon, "the colonial world is […] cut in two" (29), with well-defined boundaries between "us" and "them", coloniser and colonised, oppressor and subaltern, the Eurocentric imperialist and the foreign Other (even if foreigners are, actually, the Europeans who live in the colonies). Since "[t]he first thing which the native learns is to stay in his place, and not to go beyond certain limits" (40), colonial violence exists to keep the natives on their imposed identities as Others, as subalterns by force and by fear. If one of the mechanisms of domination established by imperialist rhetoric is the imposition of a stereotyped, excluding, inferior, ridiculed and bestialised identity on the native people, a new identity must be developed in order for them to resist and overpower the metropolis. On *Identity*, Zygmunt Bauman talked about two kinds of oppressed subjects and their relation with identity. In the first group are (38):

> […] those whose access to identity choice has been barred, people who are given no say in deciding their preferences and who in the end are burdened with identities enforced and imposed by others; identities which they themselves resent but are not allowed to shed and cannot manage to get rid of.

In addition to them, Bauman also described an even lower position in the society: the underclass, "people who are denied the right to *claim* an identity as distinct from an ascribed and enforced classification" (39). Those who belong to this social position face "an *absence of identity*, the effacement or denial of individuality". Since they do not have the right to identify themselves, the coloniser identifies them as a bestialised, barbarian Other. Considering that the "longing for identity comes from the desire for security" (29), the feeling of being out of place is transformed into a feeling of belonging through the creation and strengthening of individual and collective identities.

The concept of identity is quite turbulent, though, and Bauman even said that "[w]henever you hear that word, you can be sure that there is a battle going on" (77). Throughout all of his essay "Who Needs Identity?", Stuart Hall reinforced the idea that, no matter how problematic, flawed and incomplete the notion of identity might be, this can be no reason for us to dismiss it as an invalid concept – but we do need to be aware of its limitations. The idea that identity is a concept that represents something unified and complete is no longer compatible with how post-modern critics understand the term. According to Hall, "identities are never unified and […] *[are]* increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions" (4). Rather than a rigid block, the notion of identity should be seen as a juxtaposition of aspects, most of them socially and culturally constructed, such as language, collective history, race, class and gender. Besides, "identities are about questions of using the resources of history, language and culture in *the process of becoming rather than being*" (*ibidem*, my emphasis).

As Tzvetan Todorov argued in *The Fear of the Barbarians*, "[c]ollective identity […] is already fully formed by the time the individual discovers it, and it becomes the invisible foundation on which her identity is built" (57). Collective identities are formed through a never completed process of *identification*, which, as Stuart Hall pointed out, works through the "recognition of some common origin or shared characteristics with another person or group, or with an ideal, and with the natural closure of solidarity and allegiance established on this foundation" ("Who Needs Identity?" 2). A sense of collective identity helps the subaltern peoples to organise themselves in communities and, consequently, it also helps them to create or re-appropriate spaces as their own. Besides, it is easier to resist and defeat the dominant power if there is little dissidence within the group. The individual can only identify or disagree with a group, however, if s/he identifies some characteristics in him/herself first. Even if the subject is not aware of an

individual identity, some sort of personal "protoidentity" is necessary for the process of identification.

Whenever someone chooses to highlight a certain aspect of his/her identity, it also means to reject or set aside a number of elements with which s/he do not identify. In other words, to recognise in other people what is alike implies to recognise what is different, with frontiers and boundaries being established to identify what belongs to one identity and what does not – what Hall called the identity's "constitutive outside" ("Who Needs 'Identity'?" 3). As Bauman highlighted, "[i]dentity battles cannot do their job of identification without dividing as much as, or more than, they unite. Their inclusive intentions mingle with (or rather are complemented by) intentions to segregate, exempt and exclude" (79).

Claude Lévi-Strauss said that "[h]umanity is confined to the borders of the tribe, the linguistic group, or even, in some instances, to the village" (17). Similarly, Todorov also mentioned these borders when he described the concept of barbarians according to its most primitive usage, which came from Ancient Greece:

> It was contrasted with another word, and together they made it possible for the population of the whole world to be divided into two unequal parts: the *Greeks* (or 'us'), and the *barbarians* (the 'others', the foreigners). In order to recognise whether a person belonged to one or other group, you resorted to the Greek language: the barbarians were all those who did not understand it or speak it, or spoke it badly. (14)

To Todorov, "barbarians are those who deny the full humanity of others. This does not mean that they are really ignorant or forgetful of their human nature, but that they behave *as if* the others were not human, or entirely human" (16). And he added that "countries are not barbaric when citizens are treated on an equal footing and can participate in the conduct of the business of the community" (*ibidem*).

These concepts help us to question, then, the alleged barbarism of the colonised peoples and the alleged superiority of European civilisations. This is what Claude Lévi-Strauss characterised as "paradox inherent in cultural relativism": "the more we claim to discriminate between cultures and customs as good and bad, the more completely do we identify ourselves with those we would condemn" (12). According to Hall,

> Precisely because identities are constructed within, not outside, discourse, we need to understand them as produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices […]. Moreover, they emerge within the play of specific modalities of power, and thus are more the product of the marking of difference and exclusion. ("Who Needs 'Identity'?" 4)

In the British colonies, one of the most evident and immediate excluding identity was racial identity. Since the body works as a "signifier of the condensation of subjectivities in the individual" (*idem* 11), the racialised body in the imperialist context immediately evoked a number of imposed and stereotyped aspects about the subalterns. According to Fanon, "the settler paints the native as a sort of quintessence of evil. […] [H]e represents not only the absence of values, but also the negation of values. […] [H]e is the deforming element, disfiguring all that has to do with beauty or morality" (32). The racialised body of the native evokes this constructed evilness, constituted discursively "through the regulatory normative ideal of a 'compulsive Eurocentrism'" ("Who Needs 'Identity'?" 16).

An important question to be asked is whether these subaltern peoples identify (or refuse to identify) with the identities that were imposed on them (*idem* 14). To reject a degrading identity would be perhaps the first step of resistance against imperialist rhetoric. However, this is not an easy task, as Fanon highlighted: "the settler only ends his work of breaking in the native when the latter admits loudly and intelligibly the supremacy of the white man's values" (33-4). The development of an identity, thus, is a necessary first step and works as a long-term form of resistance, rather than as definitive emancipation from the hegemonic discourse.

Another form of resistance, which is strengthened once the collective and individual identities are more and more developed, is to fight the attempts to be silenced and to speak up against the oppressive structures of power. It might seem obvious to point it out as a form of resistance, but considering how subaltern individuals are usually punished for speaking up, this is an action whose importance must be highlighted. In *Can the Subaltern Speak?*, for instance, Gayatri Spivak discussed the lack of political voice and power of subaltern people. At the end of her essay, Spivak concluded that the subaltern (specifically the subaltern women) cannot speak. Her conclusion implied two aspects that must be discussed: firstly, that they cannot speak because of the forms of repression that they are subject to if they dare to speak (here, the meaning of the verb "can" is related to permission and prohibition, rather than capacity). Secondly, that, even if they do dare to speak, their discourse will be dismissed and will not be considered relevant by those in positions of power.

In her essay "Talking Back", the African American writer bell hooks defined "back talk" and "talking back" as "speaking as an equal to an authority figure", either to disagree or to express an opinion (5). To talk back equals people in different positions in

a certain hierarchy, and in order to prevent authorities from being questioned, the consequences of talking back usually involve physical forms of punishment. Rather than letting it silence the questionings, though, hooks claims that, at least in her own case, these punishments had actually toughened her (7). She sees the act of breaking the silence as an "act of resistance, a political gesture that challenges the politics of domination that would render us nameless and voiceless" (8), and acknowledges it as a threat to oppressive powers.

Similarly, the Caribbean American writer Audre Lorde defended that individuals who belong to oppressed groups should not be afraid to speak because, as she said in the essay "The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action", "your silence will not protect you" (2). Despite the fact that silence might look like an effective form of protection against the many forms of violence instilled by the hegemonic power, Lorde pointed out that these individuals would suffer whether they spoke or not. Besides, even though the writer admitted that to transform silence into language is indeed a frightening and courageous act, she also believed that to be silent does not mean to be less afraid of the system.

Many times, though, to be self-conscious of one's own identity and to dare to claim one's rights through speech only generates more violence from the oppressors in an attempt to suppress the natives' forms of insurrection. On the introduction to the documentary *Concerning Violence*, Gayatri Spivak said that "Fanon's lesson is that you use what the masters have developed and turn it around in the interest of those who have been enslaved or colonised". Considering the frequent institutionalised and legal forms of violence suffered by the natives, it was expected that, sooner or later, they would fight back with the same violence they had endured for decades. Even though it can be quite controversial to present violence as a form of counter-attack, it is a necessary discussion to better understand not only the cases of violence against the colonisers, but also the uncountable cases of violence against any kind of group that oppresses another one.

In the 1950s and 1960s, the African, Asian and Middle-Eastern colonies began to rapidly and massively obtain their independence in a process of decolonisation that was not homogeneous. Through the Commonwealth, Britain changed (or rather masked) its imperialist discourse, highlighting a partnership with its ex-colonies. However, it is questionable if these countries became truly independent, and if the imperial domination was truly over. Richard Toye, for instance, argued that even though the British Empire *per se* did come to an end, British Imperialism has not (University of Exeter, module 6.5).

Likewise, the president of independent Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah, referred to this process of continued economic exploitation of the former colonies by its Western metropolis as "neocolonialism".[20] Professor James Mark claimed that in places like China, the Soviet Union, "and amongst progressive movements across the 'global South', the very term decolonisation was rejected. Rather, the process was portrayed as the 'anti-imperialist struggle' – a term that gave agency to the liberated, and suggested the necessity of an ongoing battle against neocolonialism" (*idem* module 6.6). The rejection of the term "decolonisation" demonstrates a conscious effort to problematise (neo)colonial discourse, a crucial step for a more definitive liberation.

In her work *On Violence*, Hannah Arendt critiqued Marxist thinkers who defended violence as a valid answer, such as Fanon and Georges Sorel. However, she admitted that "[i]f Gandhi's enormously powerful and successful strategy of nonviolent resistance had met with a different enemy – Stalin's Russia, Hitler's Germany […] instead of England – the outcome would not have been decolonisation, but massacre and submission" (53). What Arendt's discourse does not consider, though, is the fact that many countries who were colonised by England, just as Gandhi's India was, had their independence movements violently repressed by the metropolis. Both movements that used nonviolent tactics, such as Egypt's civil disobedience, and those who formed armed resistance, such as Kenya's Mau Mau Uprising, were violently repressed by the British rule (even if Britain would later recognise their independence as legitimate).

The civil rights movement activist Malcolm X believed that "violence was but one, and indeed a last, means for attaining justice" (Ambar 76). However, he understood that the principle of nonviolence, rather than an essential form of obtaining political rights, should be based on reciprocity, and that violence as a counter-attack is a "right of oppressed peoples […] when all else had failed." (88). Similarly, Fanon advocated violence as defence because, as he argued, one cannot be naïve and think that the subalterns' freedom will come through the "cooperation and goodwill" of the imperialist power (84). In addition to that, he claimed that colonial violence "will only yield when confronted with even greater violence" (48) and that the process of "decolonisation is always a violent phenomenon" (27). In fact, in Fanon's opinion, a truly revolutionary process of decolonisation can only happen if the natives turn violently against their colonisers.

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[20] To see more about it, see Nkrumah's "Neocolonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism", first published in 1965.

According to Fanon, violence has an empowering role because it "frees the native from his inferiority complex and his despair and inaction. It makes him fearless and restores his self-respect" (74). The violence used by the natives in the process of decolonisation would help to create new men, who would actively abandon their bestialised identity, imposed by the coloniser, and fight to earn back their own humanity – as he puts it, "the 'thing' which has been colonised becomes man during the same process by which it frees itself" (28). In fact, what he calls "new men" is actually the development of an individual and collective identity that is not subjected to the imperialist rhetoric.

To Gramsci, the only way to be freed from subordination is through revolution, "and even that does not occur immediately" (*apud* Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin 216). Malcolm X said that "[r]evolutions are never peaceful, never loving, never nonviolent" (203). However, in an interview with BBC, he said that there could be a solution for a gradual social change that did not involve a violent rupture "if the proper type of education is brought about, to give the people the correct understanding of the causes of these conditions that exist, and to try to educate them away from this animosity and hostility" (*apud* Ambar 85).

These forms of resistance – the development of individual and collective identities, the act of talking back and the use of violence as counter-attack – establish an effective and solid basis against the mechanisms that constitute an imperialist rhetoric. On the next two chapters, I will investigate and compare, in the *Harry Potter* books, how the hegemonic discourse used by wizards is similar to the British imperialist rhetoric. In addition to that, I will also explore how subaltern groups in the saga use the above-mentioned forms of resistance in order to fight back the domination they are subjected to.

2) Beyond Beings and Beasts: British Imperialist Rhetoric in *Harry Potter*

In the *Harry Potter* saga, the dominant classes, namely pure-bloods and half-bloods wizards, reproduce many of the quintessential elements of the hegemonic imperialist discourse. Through their imperialist rhetoric, both British and wizards defend, by claiming their own innate superiority, the permanence of a determined group in its high position in society. Because of that, both develop various mechanisms to subjugate other groups.[21] Having this in mind, the present chapter applies the already mentioned theories around the imperialist rhetoric to the *Harry Potter* story, identifying and analysing how certain characters and narrative devices reproduce the very same kind of rhetoric used to overpower other peoples in biological, economic, political and social levels.

2.1) Divide and conquer: classifying races and establishing hierarchies

J.K. Rowling's books portray a highly stratified magic society, in which the main division is between Muggles (non-magical people) and wizards/witches. Among wizards, there is another division: pure-bloods (those whose parents are both wizards), half-bloods (those who are born from a wizard and a Muggle) and Muggle-borns[22] (wizards and witches who are born from Muggle parents).[23] Among humans, Muggles are the ones who are lowest in the social hierarchy, and Muggle-borns are slightly above. This division creates the illusion that some people are truer wizards than others, which enhances the prejudice and discrimination towards Muggles and Muggle-borns and favours the rise of wizard supremacists, such as Lord Voldemort and Gellert Grindelwald.[24] Social class is

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[21] It is important to notice that, despite the relation of dominance between the different classes in the story, this hierarchy is not intrinsically established nor based on nationality issues. It does not mean, however, that there are not transnational themes in the novels. To read more about foreign characters and how they are portrayed, see Giselle Liza Anatol's article "The Fallen Empire: Exploring Ethnic Otherness in the World of Harry Potter", in which she analyses the role of non-white British (such as Lee Jordan, Cho Chang, Angelina Johnson, Parvati and Padma Patil) and white non-British characters (such as Madame Maxime and Igor Karkaroff).

[22] Although some critics call Muggle-borns "mudbloods", this is a very pejorative and offensive term. According to Hagrid in *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, "Mudblood's a really foul name for someone who is Muggle-born — you know, non-magic parents. There are some wizards — like Malfoy's family — who think they're better than everyone else because they're what people call pure-blood." A few lines later, Ron Weasley adds: "It's a disgusting thing to call someone. [...] Dirty blood, see. Common blood. It's ridiculous. Most wizards these days are half-blood anyway. If we hadn't married Muggles we'd've died out" (121-2).

[23] There is still a fourth and rarer group. Squibs are people born from wizards, but do not present any capacity to perform magic. They are usually hidden away in the society and are almost as inferiorised as Muggle-borns.

[24] Curiously, Lord Voldemort and Dolores Umbridge, two of the most segregationist villains in the story, are not pure-bloods, but half-bloods. Their hatred towards Muggles and Muggle-borns is explained in a psychological way, since both of them had issues with their Muggle parents (Voldemort's father and

also another relevant kind of segregation, as the reader perceives how the rich Malfoy family mistreats the Weasley family, which, although composed only by pure-bloods, is considerably poor.[25]

According to Cassandra Grosh in her essay "Freaks and Magic: The freakification of magical creatures in *Harry Potter*", "since wizards are still considered human, they have been able to create a permanent social hierarchy, *based solely on physical characteristics*, that places them in complete control at the top" (91, my emphasis). In relation to these hierarchies, Kingsley Shacklebolt, who would later become Minister for Magic, says in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*: "I'd say that it's one short step from 'Wizards first' to 'Pure-bloods first,' and then to 'Death Eaters'". "*We're all human, aren't we? Every human life is worth the same*, and worth saving" (440, my emphasis). Shacklebolt's speech refers to the equality between Muggles and wizards, between Muggle-borns and pure-bloods, but if one analyses its deeper meaning, it arouses a very important issue: if every *human* life is worth the same, what about all the *non-human* lives present in their society? The dangerous hierarchy on which he alerts has a first step, mentioned by Shacklebolt himself: humans first.

Within the magical community, there is a high number of non-human species: giants, werewolves, Veela, merpeople and leprechauns, among many others, each one of them subjugated and marginalised by the wizards to a greater or lesser degree. Hermione Granger, a Muggle-born who is one of Harry's best friends, even addresses this issue when talking to Remus Lupin, a werewolf and her former professor at Hogwarts. Shocked and worried with the slavery of house-elves, she argues that their lack of rights "[i]s the same kind of nonsense as werewolf segregation, isn't it? It all stems from this horrible thing wizards have of thinking they're superior to other creatures" (*OotP* 155).

In the present work, I chose to analyse the three groups of creatures in which I believe these power relations are most evident: house-elves, goblins and centaurs. They are quite different among themselves in terms of their relationship with wizards, of how they are perceived by wizards, by each other and by themselves, of their occupations, of the places they attend to, and so on. This diversity of backgrounds is precisely what makes

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Umbridge's mother). Up to this date, however, there is no information if Gellert Grindelwald is pure or half-blood.

[25] To read more about social class in *Harry Potter*, see Suman Gupta's chapter "The Question of Class", on her work *Re-reading Harry Potter*.

it is fruitful to compare and contrast the various ways the wizards found to dominate these creatures.

The contrast between magical creatures and wizards is immediate and obvious through the corporal dimension, since there are physical characteristics that differentiate them. Unlike Muggle-borns, who are also in a lower position in the society, but are human and easier to mingle among wizards, the creatures' difference is explicit. This hierarchical difference is established in a stronger and more institutionalised way to all of those who have a different body, who belong to a different race. If, on one hand, the physical aspect is one of the most crucial and instantaneous elements with which to identify these creatures in opposition to the wizards, on the other hand, the distinction between the creatures themselves happens through the kind of relation they have with the wizards. In a racial and racist hierarchy with the wizards (and, in comparison, with white Europeans) at the top, there are many nuances among the subaltern peoples.

In the magic community, besides the above-mentioned differences between humans, there is a categorisation between non-humans as well. All non-human creatures are divided between being and beast, a classification that supposedly grants or denies rights to them. Beings, creatures like goblins and house-elves[26], are supposed to be slightly more dignified than beasts, but even among beings there is a hierarchy: goblins, for instance, are clearly in a higher position than house-elves. This division between beings and beasts is one of the biggest mechanisms that legitimise and institutionalise the discourse that reproduces these hierarchies. Explored by Newt Scamander in *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*[27], these definitions are clearly given through socio-political arguments, much more than biological ones. According to Scamander,

> [n]ot until 1811 were definitions found that most of the magical community found acceptable. Grogan Stump, the newly appointed Minister for Magic, decreed that a "being" was "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". (xii)

Beings, then, would be those creatures who are able to live in and cope with the wizarding society. In practice, it means that they are those creatures considered "civilised" enough to understand the wizards' laws and to live by it – even when these

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[26] Although it is not explicit that goblins and house-elves are beings, their close interaction with the wizarding society, in addition to the fact that they are not listed as beasts in the book *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*, indicates that it is highly likely that they are beings.

[27] *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* is, originally, a book written by J.K. Rowling, parallel to the *Harry Potter* saga, in which the fictional magizoologist Newt Scamander defines and explains issues related to the magical creatures that appear in the books.

laws discriminate and harm them. Besides, it is necessary to point out that this classification is quite slippery, something that Scamander himself pointed out (xiii). House-elves, for example, indeed understand the magical laws, but have no power to shape them. In addition to that, there are creatures like centaurs and merpeople that, despite being extremely intelligent, opted for being classified as beasts.[28] The impreciseness in the definition of terms evidences how these divisions, classifications and hierarchies are artificial and socially constructed, instead of being biologically confirmed. Because of that, this institutionalised classification is very analogous to theories on scientific racism, which worked as the unquestioned[29] basis that justified one people's alleged superiority and consequential domination over others.

2.2) "It's in their nature": perpetuating the prejudiced *status-quo*

To legitimise the idea that one group is superior to the others is to generate and propagate various practices and beliefs that soon become common sense. In *Harry Potter*, unlike what many readers might think, it is not only Voldemort and his followers who perpetuate this kind of supremacist discourse, nor it is an issue exclusive of the Ministry of Magic's discriminatory laws. In fact, it is something so rooted in the wizarding society that even characters that also suffer prejudice for different reasons, such as Molly, Fred, George and Ron Weasley (who are poor), Sirius Black (who is unjustly accused of murder), Rubeus Hagrid (who is a half-giant), and even the main hero, Harry Potter himself, contradictorily reproduce unfounded beliefs against these creatures.

The group which probably suffers the most with the perpetuation of the *status quo* by common-sense beliefs are the house-elves, domestic slaves that serve traditional and wealthy families or institutional buildings, such as Hogwarts. They are expressly forbidden to disobey their superiors in any way – if they do, they must be physically punished, either by their masters or by themselves. Besides, unless they receive clothes, they are bound to the family they serve for as long as they live. Along the seven books, the three main house-elves are Dobby, the Malfoy family's elf, who is freed by Harry and is extremely grateful to him for his liberty; Winky, the Crouch family's elf, unwillingly

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[28] According to Scamander, "the centaurs objected to some of the creatures with whom they were asked to share "being" status, such as hags and vampires, and declared that they would manage their own affairs separately from wizards […] The Ministry of Magic accepted their demands reluctantly" (*FB* xiii).
[29] Even with all of these incongruities, throughout the 7 books there is no effort from the wizards to alter the classification criteria, nor to eliminate the division itself.

freed by her master; and Kreacher, the Blacks' elf, who is involved in the death of his own master, Sirius.

As it becomes clear when Harry, Ron and Hermione meet Winky and other elves who work at Hogwarts, liberty is not something approved by the majority of the house-elves, and Dobby's esteem for his freedom is an exception. Their behaviour towards liberty is surely reinforced by the idea, common among wizards, that they actually like to be enslaved. The Weasleys and Hagrid, for instance, defend the permanence of the power structures that allow elf enslavement, which are the same that subjugates them for being poor or part-giant, respectively. When Hagrid refuses to join Hermione's Society for the Promotion of Elfish Welfare, he says that "it's in their *nature* ter look after humans, that's what they like, see? Yeh'd be makin' 'em unhappy ter take away their work, an' insultin' 'em if yeh tried ter pay 'em" (*GoF* 233, my emphasis).[30] That is precisely the same kind of imperialist belief that propagated racial hierarchies by saying that those who were from tropical locations were biologically better equipped to work in plantations.

Likewise, Fred, George and Ron perpetuate the idea that house-elves are happy within their slavery – therefore, it should not be changed (*GoF* 198, 211, 320). Dialogues as the next example are quite common in the fourth book:

> "Why doesn't anyone do something about it?"
> "Well, the elves are happy, aren't they?" Ron said. "You heard old Winky back at the match … 'House-elves is not supposed to have fun'… that's what she likes, being bossed around …"
> "It's people like you, Ron," Hermione began hotly, "who prop up rotten and unjust systems […]" (*GoF* 112)

If humans are led to reproduce this kind of belief, house-elves themselves are brainwashed into believing that they are, indeed, inferior to wizards. Surprisingly, though, they do not believe they are inferior to other creatures. The house-elf Winky, for instance, says to Dobby: "[a]nd next thing I hear you's up in front of the Department for the Regulation and Control of Magical Creatures, like some common goblin" (*GoF* 90). To

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[30] Hagrid seems to be a perfect example of the issues involving a human who is a direct descendant of a magical creature. Portrayed as "wild" by the narrator, especially in the first book, he lives in a cottage between the Forbidden Forest and Hogwarts' castle, as a representation of the limit between what is wild and what is civilised. Perhaps because he is part-creature, he has an unusual interest in magical creatures such as dragons, acromantulas and hippogriffs. During his adolescence, Hagrid was unjustly expelled from Hogwarts because he was the main suspect of being the responsible for a student's death. Therefore, he is deprived of studying magic and he loses the right to own a wand. When Harry is on his third year at Hogwarts, however, Dumbledore hires Hagrid to teach Care of Magical Creatures. To read more about Hagrid's duality, see "Azkaban" and "Purebloods and Mudbloods", in Bethany Barratt's *The Politics of Harry Potter*.

the majority of the house-elves, their servitude to wizards is something honourable and praiseworthy, and to go against wizards to claim their rights is shameful.

Centaurs and goblins, on the other hand, believe that their own race is superior to many others, humans included. Centaurs refer to humans as "limited" (*OotP* 531), and the centaur Magorian says to Umbridge: "Our intelligence, thankfully, far outstrips your own" (*OotP* 665). In comparison to other races, in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, a goblin even says "I'm not a house-elf" (244). It is curious to notice that the magic community is so hierarchised that there does not seem to exist a group which believes fully in the equality among the species, nor in the equality of rights among them.

It becomes clear how these hierarchies and pre-conceived beliefs are socially constructed when the reader compares the behaviour of wizards who were born and raised in the magical community to those who were raised in a Muggle environment, like Harry and Hermione. It seems that the first group is, at least in a first moment, more prejudiced than the second one. In Harry's second year at Hogwarts, for instance, when he meets the house-elf Dobby, he is particularly worried not to sound impolite, as it is clear from the following excerpt:

> He wanted to ask, "What are you?" but thought *it would sound too rude*, so instead he said, "Who are you?"
> "Dobby, sir. Just Dobby. Dobby the house-elf," said the creature.
> "Oh — really?" said Harry. "Er — *I don't want to be rude or anything*, but — this isn't a great time for me to have a house-elf in my bedroom. … *Not that I'm not pleased to meet you,"* said Harry quickly*, "but, er, is there any particular reason you're here?" (*CoS*, 13, my emphasis)

Harry sees the difference between them, but since he does not know the position of house-elves in the community's hierarchy, he does not assume that the house-elves are inferior beings. However, even if Harry himself does not mistreat Dobby in the next books, a clear hierarchy is established between them. In an attempt to prevent Dobby and Kreacher from fighting each other, Harry says: "I'm forbidding you to fight each other! Well, Kreacher, you're forbidden to fight Dobby. Dobby, I know I'm not allowed to give you orders", to which Dobby replies: "Dobby is a free house-elf and he can obey anyone he likes and Dobby will do whatever Harry Potter wants him to do!". However, when considering the possibility of failing Harry, Dobby adds: "And if Dobby does it wrong, Dobby will throw himself off the topmost tower, Harry Potter!" (*HBP* 420-22). Besides, despite the fact that he considers Dobby a friend, the boy rarely visits him in the Hogwarts kitchen, and the vast majority of times he visits him is merely to gather information about something or to ask him favours.

2.3) "Filthy half-breeds": diminishing races through language

Another mechanism utilised to diminish those who are at a lower rank in the magic community is the use of offensive and degrading terms. Although Hagrid usually has a cordial relation with the centaurs most of the time, he does call them "a bunch of old mules" (*OotP* 616) when angry at them. Professor Dolores Umbridge, a defender of pure-blood superiority, calls them "filthy half-breeds", "beasts" and "uncontrolled animals". Another professor who offends centaurs is Sybill Trelawney. Insecure about being temporarily replaced by the centaur Firenze as Hogwarts' Divination teacher, she is constantly trying to diminish him by evoking, in a racist manner, his species and by calling him "horse" and "nag" (*HBP* 317, 426, 544). This degrading nomenclature, especially when related to the level of civilisation of a determined group (such as "barbarian", "beastly", "savage", "uncivilised") solidifies the positions of both dominant and dominated groups.

Not even the narrator seems to be impartial. The elves' physical differences, for instance, which is what makes them "inhuman", are constantly reinforced throughout the narrative – especially their small stature, bat-like ears, huge eyes, big noses, long fingers, ugliness, weirdness and what seems to be an emotional unbalance. This characterisation, thus, underlines the differences that would make them inferior to the wizards. Even in the website *Pottermore*, an official online extension of the series, the true living condition of house-elves is softened when they are referred to as "*loyal* magical creatures bound to their owners as servants for life" (my emphasis). In *Monsters, Creatures, and Pets at Hogwarts,* Peter Dendle calls our attention to the way house-elves are characterised at the Battle of Hogwarts:

> Our last major scene involving elves is their siding with the wizards against the Dark Lord at the Battle of Hogwarts, but here our closing visualisation of them is hardly flattering: "hacking and stabbing at the ankles and shins of Death Eaters, their tiny faces alive with malice." Why malice? Neville, Harry, McGonagall, and many others all fight in the same battle: are they too beings of malice? (168)

Goblins, a group of magical creatures composed mostly by bankers who take care of the wizard's wealth at the Gringotts bank, are also being constantly portrayed in a negative way by the narrator. Their legitimate attempts to earn their rights through battles are described as "bloody and vicious" (*PoA* 342), and they are often referred to as violent, menacing, unfriendly, ugly, bloodthirsty and malicious.[31] In addition to that, the name of

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[31] Considering how biased the narrator is, it is difficult to precise whether goblins were indeed violent in the battles they fought against the wizards throughout the centuries. As Hermione highlights, "wizarding

the goblins' language is Gobbledegook. Considering that the word "Gobbledygook" is a synonym of gibberish, this nomenclature dismisses everything they say as nonsense, as meaningless noises. A whole language with such a name, spoken by a subaltern people, is a way in which the goblin's culture is portrayed as something not to be taken seriously, either by the wizarding society or by the reader.

It is true that centaurs, who reject, as much as possible, any contact with the wizarding society, are not depicted as negatively as goblins and house-elves. However, their characterisation is not much flattering either. With the exception of Firenze, who does not refuse to help – or to serve – wizards, centaurs are generally described as angry, murderous and menacing. Hermione, who is one of the most conscious characters on issues related to the minorities' rights, more than once proffers offensive comments about centaurs. When one of her colleagues asks if she regrets not attending Divination classes now that they had a handsome centaur teacher, Hermione answers: "Not really. […] I've never really liked horses." Shocked with her comment, another colleague answers back that he is not a horse, but a centaur. Hermione then says coolly: "Either way, he's still got four legs" (*OotP* 528). These are quite bestialising pronouncements, surprising to hear from a character like Hermione. It only shows that mistreatment towards non-human creatures is so widespread in the wizarding community that not even those who constantly question the social structure are immune from reproducing the very same ideas that fortify these hierarchies.

One can also consider the creatures' names and their etymology as indicative of how they are portrayed. The centaur's name Bane, for instance, can be related to Old English, Proto-Germanic, Old Norse and Old High Germanic words that mean "killer" "slayer", "murderer", "death", "devil", "wound" and "destruction" (Merriam-Webster). Dobby, a house-elf, means literally "household sprite", or, in other words, an elfish creature that works as a servant (Harper). The most significant name is possibly Kreacher, homophone of "creature", which means that, probably, the house-elf's master simply did not bother to give him a name – Mrs. Black, his original owner, just started calling him "creature".

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history often skates over what the wizards have done to other magical races" (*DH* 409). In other words, the point is that wizards were possibly equally or more violent than the other races they frequently see as menacing and dangerous.

2.4) Different bodies, different rights

It is curious to notice that if, on the one hand, a discriminatory discourse against house-elves, goblins and centaurs is actually common sense, on the other hand, the same kind of discrimination against Muggle-borns is overtly condemned. In fact, what seems to define if one character is considered morally corrupt or non-morally corrupt (or simply "good" or "evil") is how s/he treat his or her fellow Muggle-borns. While characters like Voldemort and his Death Eaters clearly see Muggle-borns as less capable – even though Hermione, who is born from Muggle parents, is by far the best student in her year –, every character on Harry's side repudiates any kind of prejudice or discrimination against them.

In addition to that, despite the fact that non-human creatures had been deprived of their rights for centuries, it is only when humans (i.e. -Muggle-borns) begin to have their rights taken away that some counter-action is effectively taken. In the last two books, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* and *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, Lord Voldemort and his followers get more power and, consequently, many Muggle-borns lose their rights. The discrimination against them becomes much more institutionalised: they are not allowed to own a wand anymore, for instance, and many of them are persecuted and prosecuted by the Ministry of Magic (*DH* 212-5). Although this discrimination is indeed revolting, most of the magic creatures in the story have been suffering throughout centuries what Muggle-borns had suffered for two years. In other words, pure-bloods treat Muggle-borns and Muggles the same way that wizards in general have treated non-humans for centuries. Thus, it is not by chance that more characters who are creatures, like Firenze, Griphook, Dobby and Kreacher, have a bigger relevance to the story from the fourth book onwards, when Lord Voldemort returns and begins his ascension. Why, then, it is only when humans suffer that there is an actual battle to challenge those who subordinate the minorities?

One of the possible reasons for this disparity in the treatment of minorities of different species is the immediate prejudice and repulsion towards what is different from oneself, towards what is Other. Having this in mind, one can infer that it is easier for the Weasleys or even for Hagrid to empathise with Muggle-borns because of the physical similitude between them. The implicit contrast between the wizards and the grotesqueness of goblins and house-elves' bodies, in addition to the lust with which the centaurs' bodies are portrayed, reinforce what it means to be a wizard.

Goblins, house-elves and centaurs have certain human features, and it is precisely because of some similitudes that their differences are so stressed. Goblins have a shorter

body, sharp teeth, big noses and ears. Similarly, house-elves are also shorter, with bigger eyes, nose and ears, with thin limbs and different skin tones. Centaurs, on the other hand, have a human torso and horse-like limbs. Their humanoid appearance receives a new meaning when one compares them to the marginalised groups of colonised peoples, whose humanity was constantly questioned throughout history whenever they were called "beast", "savage" or "wild".

Their bodies instantly deny any possibility of full membership in the dominant part of the magic community. In a society that discriminates anyone who is not a wizard or a witch, their own bodies are constant reminders of difference. Throughout our real-life history, dominant cultures have often highlighted the physical and cultural differences of other peoples in order to diminish them and establish their own appearance and beliefs as the norm and the normal, as natural and correct. Thus, the dominant discourse of the wizarding society resembles a lot Victorian England's imperialist mentality. Aware of the similitudes, Cassandra Grosh even compares centaurs, house-elves and giants to those who performed in freak shows. More than just entertainment, these shows were a clear mechanism of a culture interested in perpetuating a domination over what they considered inferior ones by exposing different bodies as something monstrous.[32]

Prejudice is undeniably one of the main reasons for wizards to try to subjugate their non-human fellows. However, there is a crucial factor that cannot be forgotten and which is rarely explored: house-elves, goblins and centaurs are powerful,[33] and, therefore, could represent a threat to the established order. Goblins and centaurs do have a better perception of the institutional power of the wizarding society than the house-elves, as well as a more developed class conscience, and, because of their political awareness, their domination is given mainly through the deprivation of socio-political rights. Besides, at least the goblins show that wizards have concrete reasons to fear a dispute for power: their own society is organised, they have some control on the economy, and, most

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[32] In *The Crimes of Grindelwald* (2018), the second film of the series *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*, there is a group of non-human and semi-human creatures who are exploited in a freak show in Paris. Some of them, like the Maledictus Nagini, are from Oriental countries, which reinforces the argument that, here, the idea of "us" (wizards) versus "them" (non-human creatures) is as present as the notion of "Europe" versus "Orient", always from a hierarchic perspective. As Edward Said claimed in *Orientalism*, "the major component in European culture is precisely what made that culture hegemonic both in and outside Europe: the idea of European identity as a superior one in comparison with all the non-European peoples and cultures" (7).

[33] House-elves are able to Apparate (that is, teleport) and to execute magic without wands; goblins are very talented metalsmiths, whose artefacts are capable of destroying powerful dark magic; and centaurs are pointed as remarkably intelligent and physically strong creatures, in addition of holding a profound knowledge on astrology and astronomy.

importantly, they have fought against the wizards' domination in countless rebellions throughout their history.

In spite of not being as politically engaged as goblins and centaurs, though, house-elves are possibly the most powerful among the three groups, since they can harm wizards without the use of wands (*CoS* 357) and can also physically control other wizards (*GoF* 596). In *Deathly Hallows*, in a room with a goblin, some young wizards and Garrick Ollivander, the most powerful wandmaker alive, Dobby is the only one able to Apparate in and out of it. It does not seem a coincidence, thus, that they are also the most subjugated race, not only through the wizarding laws, but also through a *mental* domination that makes them reproduce the same discourse that enslaves them. The following passage shows how wizards disregard the elves' magic powers:

> 'Elf magic isn't like wizard's magic, is it?' said Ron. 'I mean, they can Apparate and Disapparate in and out of Hogwarts when we can't.'
> […] 'Of course, Voldemort would have considered the ways of house-elves far beneath his notice, just like all the pure-bloods who treat them like animals… it would never have occurred to him that they might have magic that he didn't.'
> 'The house-elf's highest law is his master's bidding,' intoned Kreacher. 'Kreacher was told to come home, so Kreacher came home…' (*DH* 161)

Considering that the wizards fear the development of the innate abilities of these creatures, it is natural that the wizarding community develops a series of social, political and economic mechanisms to limit their power. Since each of the races has different characteristics, strengths and weaknesses, there are different sets of tools to subjugate them. The goblins' biggest struggle is to acquire the basic right to own a wand, something that is denied to all non-human creatures.[34] Griphook says in *The Deathly Hallows* that "[t]he right to carry a wand […] has long been contested between *wizards* and goblins", and, despite the fact that goblins are able to perform magic without wands, Griphook explains that, by refusing to "share the share the secrets of wandlore with other magical beings", wizards deny them the possibility of extending their powers (*DH* 395).

The centaurs, on the other hand, do not seem to want a wand, but the Ministry of Magic restrains their most precious good: their land. In *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, the centaur Magorian asks Harry, Hermione and Dolores Umbridge: "What are you doing in *our* Forest?" (my emphasis). Umbridge, then, answers: "'Your Forest?' said Umbridge, shaking now not only with fright but also, it seemed, with indignation. 'I

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[34] The only groups of wizards which are not allowed to own a wand are children under 11 years old and criminals.

would remind you that you live here only because the Ministry of Magic permits you certain areas of land –'" (*OotP* 665). Though the centaurs claim (rightfully) that the forests in which they live in are their own land, they only live there with the "concession" of the Ministry, which makes them indirectly subaltern to the Ministry.

One of the most obvious forms of domination of these creatures is through physical violence. Throughout the narrative, there are many examples of explicit and implicit violence against house-elves, either made by a wizard or self-inflicted. Dobby, for instance, has his hands ironed (*CoS* 186), his ears shut in the oven (*idem* 16), constantly hits objects against his head to punish himself (*idem* 18, 188) and even says that he is used to death threats, because he "gets them five times a day at home" (*idem* 187). Besides, the narrator reports that the Black family had the tradition of beheading house-elves when they got "too old to carry tea trays" (*OotP* 105), displaying the house-elves heads in the corridors of their house.

In relation to goblins, apart from a few murders performed by Voldemort's followers in the last book, there are few reports of violence against them. However, there were numerous battles of wizards *versus* goblins throughout the centuries, in which both parts were violent against each other. As Hermione says in *Deathly Hallows*, "Goblins have got good reason to dislike wizards […]. They've been treated brutally in the past", to what Ron answers: "Goblins aren't exactly fluffy little bunnies, though, are they? […] They've killed plenty of us. They've fought dirty too" (409).

In the books, the centaurs are victims of a violent behaviour only once, but it is a quite representative violence.[35] In *The Order of the Phoenix*, Dolores Umbridge casts the spell "Incarcerous" towards Magorian: "Ropes flew out of midair like thick snakes, wrapping themselves tightly around the centaur's torso and trapping his arms" (*OotP* 665). To tie down a non-human creature in this way implies an attempt to capture and immobilise not a sentient race, but a wild, dangerous and irrational beast – which is precisely what Umbridge believes that the centaurs are.

Besides, there are indirect forms of physical violence as well. In *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, for instance, Horace Slughorn, the Potions teacher at Hogwarts, asks a house-elf to taste every bottle he receives after poisoning Ron accidentally (485). Pretty much like animals in labs or even as groups of subaltern people who had been used

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[35] Firenze is hurt during the Battle of Hogwarts (*DH* 597) and some centaurs are accidentally hurt by Grawp, Hagrid's giant brother (*OotP* 669). However, these injures do not seem to be related to the fact that they are centaurs, nor can they be considered racist forms of violence.

in scientific experiments throughout history, their lives are clearly seen by a portion of the wizarding community as expendable.

2.5) Ministry of *Magic* or Ministry of *Wizards*? The creatures' (lack of) political representation

Another form of domination is through the lack of political representation faced by house-elves, goblins and centaurs. Despite the fact that one of the traits that identify beings is the capacity to "help" wizards to shape the laws of the magic community, when one examines the actual political representation and action of these beings, it is evident that they have very reduced participation in "shaping the laws". It favours supremacist wizards, like Dolores Umbridge, to make attempts to reduce their rights even more. In *The Order of the Phoenix*, for instance, Sirius Black mentions that Umbridge "drafted a bit of anti-werewolf legislation two years ago that makes it almost impossible for him *[Remus Lupin]* to get a job", and that she "campaigned to have merpeople rounded up and tagged", just like common fish (*OotP* 271). It is true, though, that there is in the Ministry of Magic a Goblin Liaison Office, a Centaur Liaison Office[36] and an office for House-Elf relocation, all of them part of the Department for the Regulation and *Control* of Magical Creatures (my emphasis). However, all of these creatures' interests are represented by wizards (which certainly reinforces their political dependence), who will probably act in favour of the maintenance of the established order.

In addition to that, throughout the seven books, the only moment when one of the referred creatures goes to the Ministry is when Hokey, an old female house-elf, is convicted of accidentally poisoning her mistress, Hepzibah Smith. Actually, it was Lord Voldemort who killed Smith, modifying Hokey's memory in order for her to confess. In *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, Dumbledore says: "the Ministry was predisposed to suspect Hokey —' '— because she was a house-elf", said Harry. He had rarely felt more in sympathy with the society Hermione had set up, S.P.E.W." (*HBP* 439). However, the only depiction of these creatures within the Ministry building is through a statue on the entrance hall that displays them in a subjugated (and idealised) way, reinforcing the common-sense thought that wizards are superiors:

> Halfway down the hall was a fountain. A group of golden statues, larger than life-size, stood in the middle of a circular pool. Tallest of them all was a noble-looking wizard with his wand pointing

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[36] Newt Scamander says, though, that "no centaur has ever used it." (*FB* xiii)

straight up in the air. Grouped around him were a beautiful witch, a centaur, a goblin and a house-elf. The last three were all looking adoringly up at the witch and wizard. (*OotP* 117)

In *The Origin of Others*, the American writer Toni Morrison analyses Flannery O'Connor's short story *The Artificial Nigger*, which debates the relevance of the statue of a black man in a white town of the United States. This statue helps to dissipate the differences within the community, since this representation of a black man reminds them of a bigger difference. In addition to that, "this process of identifying the stranger has an expected response – exaggerated fear of the stranger" (Morrison 24). Reinforcing the differences between black and white people and enhancing the fear of the stranger, one creates "the illusion of power through the process of inventing an Other" (*ibidem*). That is precisely what happens in *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*: "From what Harry knew of goblins and centaurs, they were most unlikely to be caught staring so soppily at humans of any description. Only the house-elf's attitude of creeping servility looked convincing" (142).[37]

About this statue, Dumbledore says later in the book, after Harry's godfather, Sirius Black, is killed because of his house-elf, Kreacher:

> 'Sirius did not hate Kreacher,' said Dumbledore. 'He regarded him as a servant unworthy of much interest or notice. Indifference and neglect often do much more damage than outright dislike… *the fountain we destroyed tonight told a lie*. We wizards have mistreated and abused our fellows for too long, and we are now reaping our reward.' (*OotP* 735, my emphasis)

The three creatures here analysed have culture, beliefs and mindsets completely different from those of the wizards, and, especially considering the statue, it is clear that wizarding perspectives are privileged over the point of views of other species. Wizarding ideals on property and ownership, for example, are normalised, while the views of goblins are portrayed as strange, threatening, dubious and morally questionable. Bill Weasley (one of the few Weasleys who actually seems to develop a political conscience towards non-human creatures), calls Harry's attention when he finds out that the boy made an agreement with the goblin Griphook: "You don't understand, Harry, nobody could understand unless they have lived with goblins. To a goblin, the rightful and true master

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[37] In *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, this statue is replaced by another one: "Now a gigantic statue of black stone dominated the scene. It was rather frightening, this vast sculpture of a witch and a wizard sitting on ornately carved thrones, looking down at the Ministry workers toppling out of fireplaces below them. Engraved in foot-high letters at the base of the statue were the words: MAGIC IS MIGHT. […] Harry looked more closely and realised that what he had thought were decoratively carved thrones were actually mounds of carved humans: hundreds and hundreds of naked bodies, men, women and children, all with rather stupid, ugly faces, twisted and pressed together to support the weight of the handsomely robed wizards. 'Muggles,' whispered Hermione." (*DH* 198-9)

of any object is the maker, not the purchaser. All goblin-made objects are, in goblin eyes, rightfully theirs" (*DH* 418). Similarly, the centaur Magorian explicitly tells Hagrid: "Our ways are not yours, nor are our laws" (*OotP* 615).

Goblins themselves are portrayed as traitors, especially after Harry, Ron, Hermione and Griphook break into Gringotts in the last book. Despite tricking the goblin, Harry gets mad when Griphook decides to break their deal and take the sword of Godric Gryffindor: "It was Griphook who had seen it and Griphook who lunged, and in that instant Harry knew that the goblin had never expected them to keep their word" (*DH* 436). However, goblins seem to have a very firm and consistent moral code, which is explicit throughout the novels – from the first time Harry visits Gringotts, in the *Philosopher's Stone*, until the last book.[38]

2.6) The magic community economy

According to Patrick Brantlinger on his *Victorian Literature and Postcolonial Studies*, "[t]hroughout the Victorian Era, explanations of historical change as the result of conflict between races were far more common than Marx and Engels' contention that the major causal factor in history was class struggle" (37). J.K. Rowling apparently based the whole conflict of the story on this Victorian concept of racial struggle, rather than basing it on class, considering the work relations and adopting a Marxist approach. The lack of an advanced stage of capitalism in the wizarding society complexifies the position of goblins, house-elves and centaurs in relation to the magic community's economy and in their hierarchical position.

It is important to notice first that if, on the one hand, the imperialist mentality underlies the social hierarchy of the magic world, on the other, the wizarding economy seems to be still on some sort of "protocapitalist" stage. There are no references to industries or mass production of items, and the few places in which wizards can buy products, such as the Diagon Alley and the Hogsmeade village, are all run by small merchants. In fact, with the exception of the broomsticks Nimbus 2000, Nimbus 2001 and Firebolt, released in subsequent years to outdate the previous model, there seems to be no or little intention to sell or to buy for any other reason than need. Apart from that, the competition between brands is insignificant.

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[38] See *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (78) and *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (chapters 24 through 26).

Besides, analysing the wizarding society's structure, it would not make sense, from an economic point of view, to have slaves, since house-elves are not trafficked in the books. Even though Molly Weasley says that she would like to own an elf to help her in the daily chores (*CoS* 30), elves seem to be more a display item in traditional families. In other words, their job is not essential to the wizarding society, since they are a symbol of status and only wealthy families own them; their slave labour, unlike the slave labours in our "Muggle" society, does not generate any profit.[39]

Actually, most house-elves do not generate profit at all, since another mechanism used to control other creatures – or at least the house-elves – is the exclusion from the wizarding economy. In *Harry Potter*, centaurs and house-elves do not have any participation as active buyers or sellers, but for different reasons. As slaves, house-elves learned that the idea of an elf earning a salary is insulting and embarrassing. Since their lack of income makes them even more dependent on wizards, it is an undeniable mechanism of subjugation, and it is not by chance that the house-elf who shows more signs of independence is precisely Dobby, the one who fights to earn a salary. The centaurs' exclusion from the market, however, is coherent with their lifestyle – in addition to rejecting any contact with the wizarding society, they live in the forest and, therefore, do not seem to need money or manufactured goods. It is still curious, though, that precisely the group that rejects the most to participate in the wizarding world is the one which does not have any relation to money whatsoever – and the only "beasts", even if by option, among the three species.

It is true that, unlike the other two types of creatures, goblins not only participate in the market but also own and run the *wizards'* bank, Gringotts. Other than goblins and the dragon that protects the vaults, there is not any register of creatures even going there – consequently, there is not any register of creatures having any kind of riches deposited there either. However, their participation in the wizarding society in a supposedly prestigious position does not mean that they are not subjugated in other ways. In addition to that, as Alice Nuttall argues in "Wand Privilege: Perceptions of superiority and inferiority in wizarding society", "goblins are rarely in a position to defy wizards openly; on the occasions they have done so, wizards, with their superior magical resources, have triumphed" (82).

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[39] With the exception of Dobby, the house-elves who work at Hogwarts do not receive salary because they believe it is humiliating, but Dumbledore's statements indicate that he would pay them if the elves accepted it (*GoF* 331).

2.7) Diversity among professors and homogeneity among students: unbalanced education

Another significant mechanism of exclusion is given through the way knowledge is shared. One may argue that Hogwarts is a place that embraces and accepts difference, since professor Flitwick, head of Ravenclaw, is a descendant of goblins (*PS,* Ravenclaw edition, 344), the centaur Firenze becomes the Divination teacher, professor Binns is a ghost, professor Lupin is a werewolf and Hagrid, who is a half-giant, is the Care of Magical Creatures teacher. The fact that these professors were found to be the most adequate to teach there is a recognition that other races also hold valuable knowledge, and it certainly helps to demystify some prejudices. However, even if these creatures (or part creatures) have permission to share their knowledge with wizards, wizards are not so fond of sharing their own education with non-human people. Although Lupin has studied in Hogwarts and Flitwick was presumably a student there too,[40] during the seven years in which Harry studies there, Hogwarts does not have any non-human student.[41] It can be seen as an evident mechanism to constrain these creatures' access to knowledge and, consequently, as a way to undermine their possibility to expand their powers.

There is no doubt that to be a teacher at Hogwarts is a prestigious position in the magical society, especially for non-human creatures or part-human beings. Firenze's case is particularly interesting. The announcement of his nomination is made by Dumbledore as soon as the former Divination teacher, Sybill Trelawney, gets fired by Dolores Umbridge, who represents the conservatism of the Ministry of Magic at Hogwarts. It is a clear defiance to the Ministry's and Umbridge's power within Hogwarts, not only because it was done in front of all the students and without Umbridge's knowledge, but mainly because Firenze is a non-human creature.

It is true, though, that Divination, the subject he teaches, is not considered respectable: characters described as intelligent and serious, such as Hermione, McGonagall and Dumbledore himself, believe it is extremely imprecise and, therefore, must not be considered. Sybill Trelawney, the other Divination teacher, is frequently characterised as an impostor and the students who like the subject, like Lavender Brown and Parvati Patil, are portrayed as highly impressionable. However, Firenze's knowledge

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[40] As stated above, Hagrid had begun his studies in Hogwarts as well, but was unjustly blamed as the killer of one girl, having been expelled from the school.
[41] The only part-creature student that attends Hogwarts is Fleur Delacour, a French exchange student from the Beauxbatons Academy of Magic, who is part-Veela.

about Divination seems to be much more accurate exactly because, unlike Trelawney, he is aware of the impreciseness of predicting the future through the movement of planets.

This contact between human students and creature/part-creature teachers is quite relevant to analyse, especially if one considers that this is the first contact that many of them have with an individual of a certain species. The passage below shows how Gryffindor students react to the centaur Firenze:

> 'My herd has banished me.'
> 'Herd?' said Lavender in a confused voice, and Harry knew she was thinking of cows.
> [...] 'There are more of you?' she said, stunned.
> 'Did Hagrid breed you, like the Thestrals?'[42] asked Dean eagerly.
> Firenze turned his head very slowly to face Dean, who seemed to realise at once that he had said something very offensive.
> 'I didn't – I meant – sorry,' he finished in a hushed voice. (*OotP* 530)

This excerpt shows how difficult this interaction can be. Lavender's shock in discovering that there is a community of centaurs and Dean's (unintentional) offensive question, as if they were mere unintelligent animals, indicate that wizards in general do not know much about other creatures. Their ignorance towards different species makes the wizards reproduce prejudiced common-sense beliefs against these creatures.

2.8) Conclusion

All of the previously mentioned institutional discriminatory measures, which perpetuate the non-human races' oppression, are maintained through the propagation and repetition of prejudiced beliefs. If wizards truly believe that goblins and centaurs are violent (therefore, it would be dangerous to give them wands) and that house-elves enjoy being enslaved, no one will take any action in order to change that. When Hermione finds out the degrading condition in which most house-elves live, she says: "Elf enslavement goes back centuries. I can't believe no one's done anything about it before now" (*GoF* 198). As Jackie C. Horne defends the cyclicity of prejudice and discrimination in her essay "Harry and the Other: Answering the Race Question in J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter*":

> Institutional oppression leads to personal enmity, enmity that can easily lead those who experience it to forget their knowledge of a larger institutional problem. It's easier to hate a specific individual than it is to hate a faceless institution; it is also easier to hate an entire racial group than it is to consider how racial oppression may have led that group to feel enmity toward yours." (93)

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[42] Thestrals are a species of magic horse-like creatures.

The ultimate right the wizards take from these creatures is their freedom. Despite the fact that the literal freedom of the house-elves, bound to serve throughout their entire lives, is the most evident kind of imprisonment, the centaurs' geographic restriction and the goblins' limitation of power are also ways in which their freedom is restricted. In fact, their lack of freedom comes as a major result of all the previously analysed mechanisms of control. Their various degrees of imprisonment, however, seem to be intrinsically connected to their own degree of conscience of the place they occupy in the magical community hierarchy. Goblins and centaurs, who are clearly less subjugated than house-elves, have a notion of collective identity that does not seem to be influenced by the way the wizards regard them, and they understand their own needs as what is in the best interest of the group. House-elves, on the other hand, reproduce the subjugating discourse uttered by the wizards. In the next chapter, I will explore this subject, discussing the forms of resistance that goblins, centaurs and house-elves have found to combat the dominance imposed by the wizarding community.

3) Undressing the Cloak of Invisibility: Forms of Resistance against Imperialist Rhetoric in *Harry Potter*

Unlike the statue on the hall of the Ministry of Magic, goblins, elves and centaurs did not stand immobile as the wizarding society crushed them. Having struggled against wizards for centuries, these creatures have found some ways to resist. As I have pointed out in the previous chapter, wizards try to force on goblins, centaurs and house-elves the idea that these creatures are innately inferior to wizards and that, because of it, they should accept the wizards' domination. This imposed hierarchy creates a set of expected stereotypical and prejudicial behaviours towards these creatures, like the beliefs that goblins are inherently violent, that centaurs are irrational animals and that the "submissive" and "docile" house-elves like to be enslaved, for instance. At the same time that wizards propagate an image of centaurs and goblins as being at least hostile, they paradoxically expect that these creatures will not only accept the inferior role they were assigned to, but also acknowledge and respect wizards as a superior race. Among the three creatures, however, only house-elves "accept" the inferior identity that was built by wizards for them.[43] Even so, one can certainly affirm that all of these creatures develop mechanisms to survive, resist and counter-attack the wizards' hegemony.

3.1) "I am not a house-elf": the development of individual and collective identities

Since wizards try to impose a diminishing identity on them, I argue that the first and most important way to resist, as observed in the words and actions of goblins, centaurs and house-elves, is through the creation and development of collective and individual identities, by which they would reject the one that shows submission to the wizards. None of the creatures identify with the wizards, and all of them understand and accept their identity as goblins, house-elves and centaurs as different from the dominant race, which certainly helps to the strengthening of their identity as a group. However, goblins and centaurs, who are able to develop more of an independent collective identity, are unquestionably much more independent than house-elves, and it is only with this sense of collectivity that they can claim rights to the group they belong. It helps them to question the alleged superiority of the wizards through an organised and unified process

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[43] It is hard to be precise whether house-elves accept an inferior identity because of their enslavement or if they are enslaved because they accept an inferior identity. It is probably a cyclical process of domination.

of resistance. This social hierarchy is the very basis of any attempt to dominate other races, so to oppose it means to slowly begin to break the hegemonic power.

These creatures are not only conscious that to be incorporated by the wizarding society is to be subjugated to it, but they are also aware of the constant attempts to control non-human creatures. An unnamed grey centaur says to Harry and Hermione: "We are an ancient people who will not stand wizard invasions and insults! We do not recognise your laws, we do not acknowledge your superiority" (*OotP* 667). Besides, the reason why the herd had banished Firenze from the forest is because he accepts Albus Dumbledore's request to teach at Hogwarts, which is seen as "servitude to humans" (*idem* 615) and "a betrayal of [their] kind" (*idem* 530). Besides, he would also be giving a form of the centaurs' power to the wizards: their expertise in astronomy and astrology. As Magorian says, "[h]e is peddling our knowledge and secrets among humans" (*idem* 615). Firenze, however, reinforces the centaurs' mindset at Hogwarts, when he says to his students that "centaurs are not the servants or playthings of humans" (*idem* 530).

Likewise, the goblin Griphook explains to Ted Tonks that he left Gringotts because the bank was no longer under the exclusive control of his race. "I recognise no wizarding master", he says. Because of that, he had refused to fulfil what he calls "an impertinent request", "duties ill-befitting the dignity of my race". He concludes by saying: "I am not a house-elf" (*DH* 244). If, on the one hand, it is undeniable that house-elves can be considered subordinated to wizards, it is clear, on the other hand, that centaurs and goblins do not see themselves as such. However, since the wizards see all of them as inferior – and, most importantly, since the wizards are able to constrain their magical powers –, one can conclude that, despite their self-consciousness, centaurs and goblins can also be regarded as subalterns.

Unlike what it may seem in a superficial analysis, house-elves do have some sort of collective identity, but it is the vision of the dominant group and they are not active in the construction of this identity. According to the elf Winky in *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, for instance, good house-elves are basically those who do what they are told (76), who subjugate themselves to their masters. Therefore, the reader might infer some attitudes that would characterise a "bad" elf, such as acting according to his or her own will, not accepting to be physically or verbally punished, or not following the master' orders, if it is something with which the elf does not agree. All of these factors, which would be perfectly acceptable in a relation between two beings in the same hierarchical

position, are inadmissible for a house-elf, who would not perform his or her social role and who would subvert the identity that the wizards created for the house-elves.

Zygmunt Bauman says in *Identity* that "asking 'who you are' makes sense to you only once you believe that you can be someone other than you are; only if you have a choice, and only if it depends on you what you choose" (19). That is why, for the house-elves, the problematisation of their identity and the development of an independent one was not even an issue: for them, their identity is something fixed, rigid and immutable. Their identity is what wizards told them that they were, without any possibility of change. House-elves would be those who "never had a chance to think of moving places, let alone to seek, discover or invent something as nebulous (indeed, as unthinkable) as 'another identity'" (*ibidem*).

While it is true that elves do not have an organised process of resistance as a group, they do manifest punctual oppositions against their oppressors individually. The most important aspect of the development of an individual identity is, perhaps, to have enough autonomy to be able to disagree with the group and to act according to one's own beliefs. In *Harry Potter*, those creatures who have a well-developed individual identity, like the centaur Firenze and the elf Dobby,[44] complexify the socio-political debate by presenting a counter-point to their groups' perspective. In each group, though, to be against the majority and the collective identity means something different. In the case of house-elves, for example, to oppose the group means to resist their oppression and slavery, which is extremely revolutionary for them. In the centaurs' case, however, it is much more complicated to label Firenze's attitude as conservative or rebellious. Considering that centaurs had their land restricted by wizards, but also considering the respect with which they regard Dumbledore, both points – the centaurs' hostility to humans and Firenze's acceptance of the headmaster's invitation – are valid and understandable.[45]

Centaurs' and goblins' hostility towards wizards come from the fact that they have their rights taken or restricted by them, and they fight in different ways to get them back. Since they present different degrees of subalternity, each of these groups claims different rights. Besides, it is only when they know who they are that they can claim what they

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[44] Despite the fact that two goblins, Griphook and Gornuk, leave Gringotts and the other goblins when the bank becomes partially dominated by Death Eaters, they cannot be considered as individuals against the group. They only disagree with wizards, not with goblins.

[45] To label it as conservative, however, could be too radical, while calling it rebellious would ignore the suffering that wizards had caused to centaurs for ages. Thus, rather than affirming that Firenze is either one or the other, I chose to simply point out the complexities of this dilemma.

need. Centaurs, for instance, basically just want their privacy, in addition to the wizards' respect for them and their boundaries. House-elves as a group do not claim anything, because most of them are submissive to their slavery, but, as an individual, Dobby claims his right to freedom and his labour rights.

In *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, for example, Dobby says that "most wizards doesn't want a house-elf who wants paying, miss. 'That's not the point of a house-elf,' they says, and they slammed the door in Dobby's face! Dobby likes work, but he wants to wear clothes and he wants to be paid, Harry Potter… Dobby likes being free!" (*GoF* 330). However, shortly thereafter, when Hermione protests that his suggested salary is too low, Dobby says that Dumbledore offered him a higher payment, but he refused. He concludes by saying that "Dobby likes freedom, miss, but he isn't wanting too much, miss, he likes work better" (*GoF* 331). It shows that, despite the fact that Dobby undoubtedly progresses towards the discovery and development of an individual identity, he is still too stuck to the kind of discourse that enslaves house-elves.

Goblins, however, who live within the wizarding society like house-elves, make several political claims. They want the right to be taught the wizarding knowledge and the right to carry a wand, for instance, since, besides being the symbol of power in the wizarding world, the wand is also a symbol of identity: it is the wand that chooses the wizard, based on his personality, and each wizard has a different, unique wand (*PS* 89-90). Thus, not to own a wand means not to own a wizard identity, which means owning the identity of an Other, besides being considered hierarchically inferior.

3.2) Identity and resistance through speech

Since these creatures do not obtain their rights, either consciously or not they develop all sorts of disruptions to the hegemonic power by subverting what the wizards expect from them. The centaurs' behaviour seems to be quite consistent with their own beliefs, since their main form of revolt and disobedience against the wizards is given through the refusal to join their society. With the exception of Firenze, most centaurs only meet with wizards outside their space of the forest to fight in the Battle of Hogwarts.[46] With goblins, however, it is slightly different. Despite the fact that they have a history of rebellions against the wizarding society throughout the centuries (their battles are constantly mentioned at the classes of History of Magic), and even though they seem to

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[46] They do briefly leave the depths of the forest to attend Dumbledore's funeral and to pay homage to him, at a distance and on the edge of the forest (*HBP* 645-6).

be the most politicised group among the three creatures chosen, they are also those who have taken fewer *actions* effectively against the wizards' hegemony. The majority of their subversion, at least in the seven years that comprise the books, is through their discourse, and they only seem to effectively act in the last book. Despite the fact that some of them do seem to be allied to Voldemort as a form of survival, goblins' allegiance is, actually, only to themselves either as individuals or as a group.

This is clear if we consider Griphook, a fugitive goblin trying to escape Voldemort's rule, who promises to help Harry in exchange for a sword that goblins believe belongs to them. Harry and Ron, however, try to trick the goblin, by wanting to give him a fake copy of the sword and by being careful "to avoid telling him exactly *when* he can have it". When Hermione protests, though, Harry says: "He can have it […] after we've used it on all of the Horcruxes." (*DH* 410-11). After helping Harry, Ron and Hermione to break into Gringotts – and doing his part of the agreement –, Griphook takes the sword and leaves them behind, mingling among the other goblins at the bank and yelling "Thieves! Help!". As soon as Griphook takes the sword, Harry realises that "the goblin had never expected them to keep their word" (*DH* 436), which only reinforces how goblins do not trust wizards. Although the first impulse of the reader is to blame Griphook for his "double-crossing" behaviour, according to Ron (441), the goblin's conduct is not much different from Harry's own deceitful actions. Besides, Harry and Ron's misleading intentions emphasise the goblins' impression that wizards cannot be trusted.

Surprisingly enough, after an attentive reading of the novels, one can infer that, actually, house-elves are those who take the most transgressive and subversive actions. One must point out, though, that they usually act not as a group, but as individuals. That does not necessarily mean, however, that most of them have a well-developed individual identity. A very poignant example of their lack of individuality is the fact that every house-elf refers to himself in the third person, by his own name. Although their name is something that does give them some kind of identity, they seem to be incapable of appropriating their own identity, mainly when they use their own name instead of the pronoun "I", which they rarely use.[47] It is as if they were never the subject that speaks, the first person of speech. In *Can the Subaltern Speak?*, Gayatri Spivak mentions precisely this incapacity, mainly from the dominant classes in seeing the Other, the subaltern, as a subject, capable of acting and of speaking for him/herself. Since it is this

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[47] Most house-elves have grammar issues, usually failing to conjugate verbs according to the subject. To read more about the subject, see Molly Brown's "Harry Potter and the Unsettling Subaltern".

dominant class that forms and imposes the identity of the elves, they will also have difficulty in seeing themselves as subjects. In one of the most iconic passages of the books, answering Bellatrix – "talking back", to use bell hook's term – five years after he is freed, Dobby says in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*: "Dobby has no master! [...] Dobby is a free elf" (384). Notice that he does not say "*I* don't have a master". The notion of an "I", socially constructed and completely null in house-elves, is complicated for Dobby to develop, mainly because his free and proud behaviour is not encouraged by the other house-elves with whom he lives and works at Hogwarts.

The poor-developed individual identity is quite evident in the cases of Winky and Kreacher. After Winky is freed, something she believes she must be embarrassed about, Winky sinks into a deep depression and, consequently, becomes an alcoholic. Almost like Herman Melville's Bartleby, the Scrivener's disobedience through his statement "I would rather not to", all of Winky's subversions are through the denial of her duties. She should not drink and she should be able to manage her domestic labour. Her depression is her silent, involuntary and unconscious way of not accomplishing what wizards expect from her.

Her mental enslavement becomes evident when Hermione tries to persuade Winky that her master should be ashamed, since he mistreated her, and the elf answers back: "You is not insulting my master, miss! [...] Mr Crouch is a good wizard, miss! Mr Crouch is right to sack bad Winky!" (*GoF* 331). Dobby then explains to Harry that "it is part of the house-elf's enslavement" to not be able to say what s/he thinks about his or her master, and that "Winky forgets she is not bound to Mr Crouch any more". Harry asks if Dobby could say what he wanted about his old masters, the Malfoy family, and after saying that "his old masters were – were – *bad Dark wizards*!", Dobby simply has the same reaction he used to have when he disobeyed the Malfoys before being freed, two years before: "Dobby stood for a moment, quivering all over, horror-struck by his own daring – then he rushed over to the nearest table, and began banging his head on it, very hard, squealing, '*Bad Dobby! Bad Dobby*!". Similarly, four years after the elf is freed, as soon as Dobby says that Draco Malfoy is "a bad boy", he runs at the fire, "as though about to dive into it". Harry then holds him and prevents him from injuring himself, to which Dobby thanks the wizard and says: "Dobby still finds it difficult to speak ill of his old masters…" (*HBP* 452). These passages highlight how slavery is something deeply rooted in the house-elves mentality and how the act of liberation is not enough for the alteration of behaviour. Besides, it also shows that, if there is this kind of resistance in

Dobby, an elf that not only embraces, but truly enjoys and defends his liberty, it is expected that there is a much greater resistance in elves like Winky, who do not wish for their own freedom.

Apparently, Kreacher had shown some signs of autonomy, more than Winky, at least, and he dared to be even more unsubordinated to Harry and Sirius, his masters after Regulus Black's death, than Dobby was to the Malfoys. In *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, for instance, Kreacher's Christmas gift to Harry was a package full of maggots (339). Besides, it was also because of a lie that he told that Sirius died.[48] When Harry met Kreacher and asked if Sirius was at home, the elf "looked delighted about something, though he seemed to have recently sustained a nasty injury to both hands, which were heavily bandaged". A few lines later, Kreacher said gleefully: "Master will not come back from the Department of Mysteries! […] Kreacher and his mistress are alone again!" (*OotP* 652-3). Kreacher's injures, his certainty in the fact that Sirius would not come back and mainly his happiness mean that the elf knew that not only he was disobeying his master, but that he was probably leading him to his death – and he rejoiced in that.

However, this apparent rebellion was, actually, a reinforcement of his slavery. When he disobeyed the current masters, Sirius and Harry, he was being faithful to the old masters, the prejudiced Black family. Kreacher reproduced faithfully the ideas of Sirius and Regulus Black's mother, who, belonging to a traditional pure blood family, said the worst insults against Muggles and Muggle-borns. Mrs. Black's opinions are part of a much broader rhetoric, which claims that all those who are not pure blood wizards are inferior. This discourse, which allows and favours the permanence of the house-elves' slavery, is the same discourse that allows and favours wizards like Lord Voldemort to rise as powerful figures.

Without realising that what he repeats abases himself, Kreacher offends Hermione uncountable times for being a Muggle-born. Despite the fact that it makes Ron and Harry angry, Hermione understands the house-elf's background and forbids the boys from mistreating the elf. Similarly, Dumbledore tells Harry that "Kreacher is what he has been made by wizards" (*OotP* 733). Kreacher himself says that he longs to have his decapitated head hung side by side with the previous elves of the Black family at their home's

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[48] While Sirius was safe at his house, the elf lies to Harry, saying that his master was at the Ministry of Magic. Harry goes out to look for Sirius, but it is actually an ambush to Harry and his allies. Sirius goes there in an attempt to save Harry, but he is killed by Bellatrix Lestrange.

entrance hall – which shows that he does not fully understand which discourse is good for him as an elf.

Dobby, however, seems to be the only house-elf portrayed in the book who shows some signs of an individual identity that is good for him as an elf. In *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, Dobby says:

> "Ah, if Harry Potter only knew!" Dobby groaned [...] "If he knew what he means to us, to the lowly, the enslaved, we dregs of the magical world! Dobby remembers how it was when He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named was at the height of his powers, sir! We house-elves were treated like vermin, sir! Of course, Dobby is still treated like that, sir," he admitted [...] "But mostly, sir, life has improved for my kind since you triumphed over He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named". (188)

Dobby's pronouncement indicates that, in addition to a feeble notion of individual identity, he also has some consciousness of collective identity, some small degree of autonomy and a very acute perception of the inferior place that house-elves occupy in the social hierarchy. Dobby's fragile notion of individuality does not stop him, however, from searching for a new identity (even if it is just as fragile).

Zygmunt Bauman, quoting Max Frisch in his book *Identity*, says that identity would be "the *rejection* of what others want you to be" (38), and that is precisely what Dobby does. Dobby subverts the identity of what it means to be a house-elf when he does the opposite of what defines an enslaved elf: he wears clothes, earns a wage, has days off and, most important, he truly enjoys his freedom. Besides, he actively and consciously disobeys his masters. Though the Malfoys expect loyalty to their family, the elf visits Harry more than once, without their permission, to warn him about "a great danger" he would face if he went to Hogwarts that year. When it becomes clear that Harry would not listen to his warnings, Dobby acts: not only does he block the passage to platform 9 ¾, but he also tries to injure Harry badly enough so he could be sent home.

In addition to that, in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, Dobby disarms his old mistress, Narcissa Malfoy, as soon as he realises that she would hurt Harry. Bellatrix Lestrange then says: "How dare you take a witch's wand, how dare you defy your masters?" (*DH* 384) It indicates that, besides the fact that the house-elf's insubordination is something completely unthinkable, conservative wizards will hardly recognise the legitimacy of a house-elf's freedom, since Bellatrix says it five years after Dobby is freed.

Another very subtle aspect of how these creatures' identity is reflected and how they subvert what is expected from them is through what they wear. When Harry asks Dobby why he always wears a filthy pillowcase, the elf answers: "'Tis a mark of the house-elf's enslavement, sir. Dobby can only be freed if his masters present him with

clothes, sir" (*CoS* 187). In fact, there are some elves who are so indoctrinated to fear and to be offended by freedom that some masters, like Sirius, even threat them with clothes (*OotP* 109). Beyond the literal meaning of freedom, clothes can be seen as a metaphor of the house-elves dignity. While unsatisfied with their masters, Dobby and Kreacher wear filthy rags. When Dobby is freed, though, he begins to dress clean and extravagant clothes, proudly expressing his freedom. Although Kreacher is not freed, Harry does begin to treat him with kindness after hearing what the goblin had been through with Voldemort.[49] From this point on, Kreacher begins to dress only in clean towels. Besides, he begins to cook and clean the house he was in charge of, Grimmauld Place, which had been filthy since Harry, Ron and Hermione first saw it two years before. Similarly, the elves that work at Hogwarts, who clearly have better working conditions than most of the elves who work for families, wear clean tea-towels stamped with the symbol of the school as uniforms. There is a counterpoint, though. Winky gets miserable when she is freed, and when she goes to work at the Hogwarts' kitchen, she gets so depressed that she stops taking care of herself – and that includes not wearing clean clothes. Thus, it is clear that, more than freedom or slavery, what the elves wear and its neatness implicitly reveal how satisfied or dissatisfied they are with their current life.

In the centaurs' and goblins' case, it is different, though, since the issue of cleanliness does not apply. These creatures' clothes – or lack of them –, which are an important aspect of their identity, are intrinsically connected to their work,[50] either through the uniforms that goblins wear at Gringotts,[51] through the rags elves wear or through the extravagant clothes that mark Dobby's freedom. It also means that the very identity of many of them is inseparable from their work, because all the creatures who do have a job work for wizards. The elves' identity, for instance, does not exist outside the work relation. To be slaves is part of their identities, of who they are – or, at least, of who they have been in the past centuries. Marx says that class is the main determinant factor of social identity and denounces that, when it is no longer possible to exploit an

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[49] Voldemort used Kreacher to place one of his horcruxes, a locket, in a cave, making him drink a painful potion and abandoning the elf there. Later, he watches his beloved master, Regulus, poison himself to death in an attempt to destroy the locket (*DH* 157-165).

[50] The only exception is Firenze, who walks around naked even when he becomes professor at Hogwarts. The centaurs, who claim their "bestiality", reject clothes, a human convention, as both a mark of "civilisation" and subservience.

[51] Unlike house-elves, goblins' clothes are not described when they are not working. It only reinforces how these creatures' identity is inextricably linked to the way they serve wizards through their work, and, although the goblins do not acknowledge the wizards' supposed superiority, they do bow to Harry and Hagrid when they first visit Gringotts (*PS* 78), and later in *The Chamber of Secrets* as well (59).

individual, s/he is excluded (*apud* Bauman 40). That is precisely what happens with house-elves from the moment they are freed, since they no longer serve their social purpose – slavery. Clearly, freedom begins to change their situation and begins to create an identity that exists beyond work relations. However, when Dobby denounces the difficulty that he faced when he looked for salaried work, he shows that, in the social hierarchy of the magical community there is not an already established space for a free house-elf.

3.3) The "bad" savage: violence as reaction

Another form that these creatures find to resist – or to fight back against – domination is through physical violence towards the wizards, but each of them in a different way. It is important to highlight that, despite the fact that physical violence can be obviously harmful, the creatures do not have the means to enforce other kinds of violence against their oppressors, like institutional or psychological violence.

Despite the already mentioned fact that Sirius dies because of Kreacher – even though he was not the one who effectively killed the wizard –, the background of Kreacher's situation must be explained and considered. As Hermione points out in *The Deathly Hallows*,

> Sirius was horrible to Kreacher, Harry, and it's no good looking like that, you know it's true. Kreacher had been alone for a long time when Sirius came to live here, and he was probably starving for a bit of affection. I'm sure 'Miss Cissy' [Narcisa Malfoy] and 'Miss Bella' [Bellatrix Lestrange] were perfectly lovely to Kreacher […] I've said all along that wizards would pay for how they treat house-elves. Well, Voldemort did… and so did Sirius. (164)

Besides, as Dumbledore tells Harry in *The Order of the Phoenix*, despite the fact that Kreacher had given precious information to Death Eaters like the Malfoys, Sirius and the other members of the Order should treat him with kindness and respect. The headmaster then says: "I do not think Sirius took me very seriously, or that he ever saw Kreacher as a being with feelings as acute as a human's" (733). Kreacher's indirect violence, thus, is seen as a clear *reaction* to the way he was (mis)treated by Sirius.

Dobby's moments of violence are quite specific. After he is freed, Dobby significantly hurts two wizards, Lucius Malfoy and Bellatrix Lestrange. When Malfoy tries to attack Harry because the boy had freed his elf, Dobby shouts "[y]ou shall not harm Harry Potter!". After that, "[t]here was a loud bang, and Mr. Malfoy was thrown backward. […] He got up, his face livid, and pulled out his wand, but Dobby raised a long, threatening finger." Dobby then "fiercely" says to Malfoy: "You shall not touch

Harry Potter. You shall go now" (357). Five years later, to save Hermione, Dobby drops a chandelier on Bellatrix (383-4). Although he injures his old master and his mistress's sister, which is certainly representative of his insubordination, his "violence" is not, like Kreacher's, a form of personal counter-attack. It is indeed used as a defence, but not as self-defence: being used to be harmed by his masters, he is only violent when he needs to protect his wizard friends.

Centaurs and goblins, on the other hand, use violence as an organised weapon of resistance against wizards. As it happens with Kreacher, they only present a hostile behaviour when they are mistreated, offended or physically attacked. Despite the fact that many wizards expect an animalesque, bestialised and violent behaviour from the centaurs and goblins, to talk back and to react violently is indeed a form of subversion of what is expected from them because the wizards in general expect that these creatures acknowledge and respect the supposed wizarding superiority. One example is the already mentioned passage when Professor Dolores Umbridge is in the Forbidden Forest. When she says that she is from the Ministry of Magic and offends the centaurs, they answer her back and throw an arrow in her direction (intentionally missing), which only makes Umbridge more shocked with indignation with their insubordination (*OotP* 665).

Apart from the various goblins' rebellions described at the History of Magic classes as "bloody and vicious" (*GoF* 342), some as early as 1612 (*PoA* 77), during the seven books goblins only seem to want to physically harm wizards when they attempt to steal something from Gringotts. That is what happens when Harry, Ron and Hermione need to escape furious goblins in *The Deathly Hallows*. Since the wizards had broken in and stolen a valuable object, a golden cup which was a Horcrux, goblins start to persecute them.

One of the most obvious aspects of violence as resistance, which wizards seem to rarely consider, is the fact that all of these examples are actually *counter*-attacks. Dobby only attacks those who present any harm to his friends, Kreacher is violent towards those who despise him, centaurs only physically harm wizards when they are offended and goblins have only engaged in numerous rebellions because wizards refused to grant them equal rights.

3.4) An additional help: wizards fighting for elves' rights

Having analysed the most important forms of resistance developed by goblins, elves and centaurs, it is important to point out, though, that at least the house-elves receive

extra help from wizards – or, better saying, from a witch. Bauman defended that "[o]nce identity loses the social anchors that made it look 'natural', predetermined and non-negotiable, 'identification' becomes ever more important for the individuals desperately seeking a 'we' to which they may bid for access" (24). It is Hermione, one of the few people to realise the seriousness of the situation that the house-elves are subjected to, who puts in question the predetermination of the house-elves' servitude. Even without the support of any of her friends, she creates the Society for the Promotion of Elfish Welfare, whose objectives are, basically "to secure house-elves fair wages and working conditions", in addition to "changing the law about non-wand-use, and trying to get an elf into the Department for the Regulation and Control of Magical Creatures", because, according to Hermione, "they're shockingly under-represented" (*GoF* 198). Unfortunately, the organisation does not achieve many accomplishments, mostly because, if on the one hand Hermione is not supported by practically any of Hogwarts's students, on the other hand, her ideas are completely rejected by the house-elves who work at Hogwarts themselves, who believe that the basic rights Hermione claims for them are outrageous.

It is told that, during the Middle Ages, it was Helga Hufflepuff, one of the four founders of Hogwarts, who took house-elves to work at the school as a way to protect them from the marginalisation they suffered at the time (*CoS*, Ravenclaw Edition, 362). To take them to Hogwarts was to give them shelter and a dignified working condition – and even until Harry's time (the 1990s), the house-elves who were better treated by their masters were those working at the school. However, although Dumbledore cares about the house-elves dignity, he does not seem to do anything to help to raise any kind of socio-political awareness in them. It is true that he is one of the few – perhaps the only one – who supports Hermione's S.P.E.W. However, even if the headmaster treats the kitchen elves with a minimum of dignity (not imposing physical punishment, for instance) and even if he encourages them to speak what they think of him, the truth is that he is still the master of over a hundred house-elves.

Besides, the fact that elves are well treated in Hogwarts, or at least not mistreated, maintains them in inertia. Actually, it is possible that Dobby's insubordination comes precisely from the fact that he is very mistreated by the Malfoys. The freedom that he gladly embraces after years of physical torture is seen as a completely unnecessary extremism by the Hogwarts's house-elves, who work with some degree of dignity. At the same time, with the exception of Dobby, house-elves do not have vacation nor days off:

they must serve their masters literally all the time. Zygmunt Bauman's opinion on workers' routine could be applied to the elves' rhythm of work as well: "[a]midst the daily effort just to stay afloat, there is neither room nor time for a vision of the 'good society'" (35). With so many domestic tasks to do, it is expected that they do not have time nor energy to think about their own lack of liberty, especially if they are not being tortured.

Dobby's liberty shows the reader that, either before or after house-elves are set free, they need the wizards' help to survive. Just like he needed Harry to be freed, he needs Dumbledore's kindness to get him a job (he had looked for a job for over one year without finding anyone who accepted to pay him a wage) and he needs Hermione to fight for the rights of his fellow elves. Despite the fact that his liberty was undoubtedly an important step for Dobby and for the elves' situation in general, it is clear that there is still a long way for these creatures' effective autonomy.

Goblins and centaurs, however, do not need this kind of help, despite the fact that some wizards might think so. Ron, for instance, asks Hermione, comparing the needs between house-elves and goblins: "Thinking of starting up S.P.U.G. or something? Society for the Protection of Ugly Goblins?". Hermione then answers: "Goblins don't need protection. […] [T]hey're quite capable of dealing with wizards […] They're very clever. They're not like house-elves, who never stick up for themselves" (*GoF* 390). This passage shows that many wizards do not see the particularities of each race and believe that all or most of them are helpless creatures. Hermione understands, though, that goblins are perfectly able to revendicate their rights by themselves. Instead of external help, goblins and centaurs need the wizards' acknowledgement of their claims and their rights.

3.5) Conclusion: The Battle of Hogwarts

The Battle of Hogwarts, when Harry defeats Voldemort at last, could be the place in which these various species unite to fight against the pure-blood ideology praised by Voldemort. It is not what effectively happens, though. Here, it is important to highlight that there are various layers of meaning in the saga, and readers from different ages and backgrounds will discover and access them at different moments. There is a passage in *The Order of the Phoenix* that works to the attentive reader as a foreshadowing moment of what would happen in the subsequent years. During a duel between Albus Dumbledore and Lord Voldemort at the Ministry of Magic, the statue of the goblin, centaur and house-elf looking at the witch and the wizard is destroyed. The statue is brought to life by

Dumbledore and it defends both Harry and Dumbledore, its parts acting as expendable soldiers in a battle. Curiously, the centaur, the wizard and the witch are completely destroyed, but the house-elf and the goblin survive. Though it is a form of representation that is extremely idealised and far from reality, it somehow stands for a minimally pacific conviviality between the wizards, witches, house-elves, centaurs and goblins. Its destruction symbolises the end of that conviviality, which comes with the ascension of Voldemort's power. That is an accurate portrayal of what happens when two factions of the hegemonic power fight for the right of government: the whole magic community is affected.

At least goblins and centaurs are pressured into choosing sides, despite the fact that most wizards look down on their magical abilities and dismiss them as inferior. Wizards like Bill Weasley and Remus Lupin debate in *The Order of the Phoenix* whether goblins would take Voldemort's side, to which Lupin answers: "I think it depends what they're offered […] And I'm not talking about gold. If they're offered the freedoms we've been denying them for centuries they're going to be tempted" (81). In the last book, a goblin astutely argues that they are not on Voldemort's side because they take no sides, since that was a *wizards'* war (243). However, goblins are one of the few relevant species that do *not* fight in the Battle of Hogwarts. In addition to giants and werewolves, who fight on Voldemort's side, even the centaurs join the wizards' side at the battle, after they believe that Harry had died – and after being pressured by Hagrid when he says: "Happy now, are yeh, that yeh didn' fight, yeh cowardly bunch o' nags? Are yeh happy Harry Potter's – d – dead…?" (583).

With the house-elves, the opposite happens, though. In a crucial moment that expresses that Ron begins to change his consciousness, he says, in the middle of the Battle of Hogwarts, that they should come back for the elves. Harry asks, then: "You mean we ought to get them fighting?", to what Ron answers seriously: "No … I mean we should tell them to get out. We don't want any more Dobbys, do we? We can't order them to die for us –" (502). In fact, the elves do fight at the battle, but it is Kreacher that, by himself, guides the house-elves into action against the Death Eaters, claiming: "Fight! Fight for my master, defender of house-elves! Fight the Dark Lord, in the name of brave Regulus! Fight!" (588). The elf's leadership over other elves, along with his argument that they should fight for his master because he is a defender of the elves, mean that Kreacher begins to develop a small notion of individual and collective identity.

It is probable that the life of magic creatures would be worse under the rule of Voldemort, but they are not fighting for improvement, only for the maintenance of the current order – which is already bad enough for most of the creatures. Besides, wizards offer absolutely nothing to centaurs and house-elves. We can conclude, then, that the Battle of Hogwarts is the epitome of a *wizards'* war, not a war of the whole magic community. Because of that, as I will explore next, the end of the battle – or even the end of the book – do not mean the end of the resistance against the hegemonic power.

Final considerations: "All was well"?

It is undeniable that the *Harry Potter* books deal with tolerance for difference (especially in the relation between Muggle-borns and pure-blood wizards), and it overtly condemns certain kinds of prejudice. However, as a conclusion after analyzing the discourse of multiple characters and the relation between goblins, house-elves and centaurs with wizards, it must be said that these creatures are constantly discriminated by wizards. Besides, their rights and sociopolitical claims are not respected and, most of the times, are not even considered. As a result, the book ends with a highly ambiguous closure (or rather with a lack of closure) for these referred creatures.

Even after the Battle of Hogwarts, there seems to be little improvement in their living and working conditions, despite the fact that centaurs and house-elves fought in along with the wizards. It is true that there is a moment, right after the battle, when "nobody was sitting according to house any more: all were jumbled together, teachers and pupils, ghosts and parents, centaurs and house-elves" (*DH* 597). It surely gives the idea of cooperation and equality, and it would be quite a hopeful ending towards the establishment of a more decentralised and less hierarchical society. However, in the last sentence before the epilogue, Harry wonders whether Kreacher, who fought at his side against Voldemort at the Battle, "might bring him a sandwich there" (600). It seems that the *status quo* is reaffirmed and no change is made. In fact, with the exception of Hermione, it seems that all of the characters who are wizards fight, to a greater or lesser degree, for the *permanence* of order – ultimately, the basic rights of any non-human creature are not a priority to be discussed, and their only aim seems to be to control Voldemort, a menace that endangers established society.

This point becomes even more evident if we think about the lack of reasons to keep Kreacher as a slave. Throughout the books, both Sirius and Harry show their intentions of freeing Kreacher, but Dumbledore argues that the elf knows too much and that it would be imprudent to free him, especially if one considers his allegiance to Death Eaters. After Harry gives the elf a medallion that belonged to Regulus Black, Kreacher begins to change sides and to be more sympathetic to Harry's cause – and, of course, fights in Harry's side at the final battle. Considering that Voldemort dies and his followers lose their powers, there would be no point for Harry in keeping Kreacher as an enslaved personal house-elf. When Harry wonders if the elf could make him a sandwich, without

even thinking about freeing him, he is perpetuating the same hierarchical system that puts pure-blood wizards at the top of the society. It reflects that it takes much more than killing one single villainous figure in order to revolutionise the structure of society.

In the very last sentence of the last book's epilogue, the narrator says that "[a]ll was well" (*DH* 607), meaning that, for at least 19 years after the Battle of Hogwarts, the magic community did not have to face an evil and powerful wizard like Lord Voldemort. Considering, though, that there is no mention to goblins, house-elves and centaurs in the brief epilogue, one could wonder if all was also well with these groups. Were house-elves finally freed? Did goblins earn the right to own a wand? Were the centaurs widely acknowledged as an autonomous and intelligent group – and not as "filthy half-breeds", "horses" or "nags"? Was there any possibility of transformation in the wizarding society, so that these creatures could leave their condition of subalterns? Most importantly, were *the wizards* able to deconstruct their imperialist rhetoric of superiority over other races in order to establish an egalitarian community?

Up to this date, it is impossible to know for sure the answer. Not even the fact that Hermione becomes the Minister for Magic in the play *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*, also set 19 years after the battle, seems to solve anything, since there is no mention whatsoever to these creatures' situation, especially the house-elves' slavery.[52] Nevertheless, we can draw some conclusions from the saga's apparent lack of solutions. If, on the one hand, J.K. Rowling does not present an obvious and definitive solution to these creatures' problems, on the other, I believe her (lack of) answer was probably the most passible of happening in real life. Rowling seems to be aware that the process of liberation of a group cannot be completed in two decades. The answer to the marginalisation of these creatures, then, is not through a quick and effective solution of the issue, but through a long process of emancipation and discovery of their own identity – at least for house-elves.

It does not seem to be by chance that Rowling presents other marginalised groups of creatures. Despite each group's specificities, these other races could be seen as more advanced stages of the process of development of identity – and, consequently, of the process of liberation from the wizards' domain. Goblins, for instance, have organised rebellions for the right to own a wand since the Middle Ages, and, even if they do not have wands, they hold the economic monopoly of the wizarding society. Centaurs, on the

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[52] Goblins and centaurs are mentioned in *Cursed Child*, but there are no indications whether they were able to earn their rights or not.

other hand, knowing wizards, decided to reject the wizarding society, living self-sufficiently in their own community. Thus, what varies from group to group is precisely the degree of submission to the wizards and how the development of an identity is connected to that. Therefore, if there is the possibility of a partial solution to goblins and centaurs (that is, the fact that they are not enslaved), there might be one for house-elves as well. That, I believe, would be the awareness of the necessity of an insurrection against the wizards' hegemony: only a group secure of their identity has the clarity to, knowing who they are, know what they need.

As with the liberation of enslaved peoples in the real world, this process of emancipation goes through a deep alteration in various layers of society. Besides, the end of slavery is just a first step, which Rowling shows by not solving all of their problems when they are freed. This, I believe, can be seen as a way in which the story criticises the outcomes of imperialist societies. Freed elves face new issues that enslaved elves do not, such as not finding employers willing to pay wages. Thus, more opportunities for freed house-elves should be created for them to be inserted in the wizarding society. In addition to that, due to centuries of mental enslavement as well, house-elves would need to be socially and psychologically rehabilitated as a way to promote an egalitarian conviviality in society.

The story shows us, however, that strengthening individual and collective identities is only a part of the process of independence from domination. Besides, to present a strong notion of identity does not necessarily guarantee the acquisition of the subaltern group's rights – goblins, for instance, have been fighting for their rights for centuries. The full acquisition of rights, at least in this case, passes through the wizards' concession, and the narrative does not present the reader with effective short-term solutions (or solutions at all) to improve these creatures' lives in this aspect. Considering that the sociopolitical order of the wizarding world is never shaken by centaurs, goblins or house-elves, the most important step towards an effective change in the structures of the magic community is, in fact, the deconstruction of the wizarding hegemonic discourse.

Unfortunately, this rhetoric is reinforced at the end of the book. As it was discussed, the discourse used by the magic community has many structural similarities with the British imperialist rhetoric. Therefore, when the story emphasises the order of the wizarding society instead of deconstructing it, it also reproduces imperialist beliefs (so, in fact, the narrative reproduces and criticizes the imperialist rhetoric at the same

time, just like Victorian adventure novels). The saga's conservative essence stands out not by the lack of solution in itself, but by the fact that this lack of solution does not seem to disturb any wizard. As long as wizards – whether Muggle-borns, half-bloods or pure-bloods – do not have their rights toiled up, "all is well". Besides, those who better represent the strength of rebellions, insurrections and resistance (instead of war) are not Harry and his friends through their battle against Voldemort, but house-elves, centaurs and goblins. To not give a closure to their struggle might also be interpreted as a disregard for the fights of many minorities' groups in search of rights. As Todorov said, "two stages have to be crossed before anyone can become civilised: in the first stage, you discover that others live in a way different from you; in the second, you agree to see them as bearers of the same humanity as yourself" (21-2). Just as the British Empire enthusiasts, wizards have failed to acknowledge not one race's superiority over others, but the essential equality beyond the apparent differences.

Considering the ever-expanding *Harry Potter* universe, Rowling could already have used her saga's unique transmedia to explore this theme and present an effective solution to all creatures. It is true that she does introduce, in the movie series *Fantastic Beasts,* two types of creatures that had not been mentioned before, namely, female goblins and half-elves. However, she portrays them in a way that perpetuates their subaltern position within the wizarding society.[53] In addition to that, the complexities and interesting details of goblins, house-elves and centaurs were undoubtedly erased from the eight *Harry Potter* main movies. Characters like Winky and Hokey simply vanished from the adaptations, just like Hogwarts' hundreds of house-elves. Hermione's S.P.E.W. and her preoccupation with the elves' welfare are never even mentioned. Besides, many dialogues in which characters discuss these creatures' rights were left out of the movies.

Recently, a problematic text called "To S.P.E.W. or not to S.P.E.W.: Hermione Granger and the pitfalls of activism" was published in *Pottermore*. The author[54] argues that "Hermione's dream of an elf in government might be far-fetched, but there's merit in wanting to protect the vulnerable and *allow* them more choices. However, she ought to be careful – *'tricking' elves into freedom is arguably as unethical as enslavement*" (my emphasis). Firstly, the idea of an elf in government should not be seen as far-fetched –

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[53] The female goblin is a jazz singer that performs in a secret (and apparently illegal) club in 1920's New York, while the half-elf Irma Dugard is a housekeeper for the Lestrange family in France in the beginning of the 20th century. Considering the extreme subjugation of house-elves and their slavery, it is highly likely that Dugard's elf parent was raped.

[54] The texts posted on *Pottermore* that are not written by Rowling do not give the name of the author.

they are sentient creatures and should be able to represent themselves. Secondly, wanting to protect them and allow them more choices is a paternalist view that implies that they are not capable, maintaining the agency in the wizards' hands. At last, to trick elves into freedom against their will is indeed problematic, and Hermione should have presented another solution to the Hogwarts' house-elves – but it is hardly as unethical as to enslave an entire race, making them subject to physical and psychological traumas throughout their whole lives.

Harry Potter's conservativeness, however, does not invalidate it as a worthy subject of study, on the contrary: it provokes a debate. As Jackie C. Horne well observed, "it is easy to imagine collective action when the enemy is clearly defined, and is clearly evil, as are Voldemort and his power-hungry followers. It is much more difficult to imagine what collective action might look like when deployed against one's own social institutions, and especially against one's own naturalised beliefs" (98). By describing the wizarding's social structure with all of its flaws and by not presenting solutions to its deeply-rooted sociopolitical issues, *Harry Potter* exposes and denounces our very own. In particular, it exposes what happens to subaltern peoples when these discriminatory institutions and the prejudicial discourse that endorse these institutions are not deconstructed. In fact, to the attentive reader, the discomfort caused by this lack of solution might even work as an impulse to change his own reality.

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