



The Portrayal of Non Human Beings in the *Harry Potter Series*

Dr. N. Ruba

Assistant Professor of English

Government Arts and Science College, Valparai.

The Harry Potter series is one of the most significant and popular works of the twenty-first century. Despite being children's literature, the series drew readers of all ages and mirrored different modern realities of the twenty-first century. The series addresses the topic of eco-friendly human existence and the difficulty of establishing a truly hyper-inclusive universe of living things that transcends gender and species limits. The series addresses this topic by depicting a world in which humans and animals live in such close proximity and symbiosis that the line between the two frequently collapses, resulting in concepts such as human-animal hybridity. This article examines the nature and function of human-animal hybrids in the Harry Potter series to shed light on the author's approach to the problem of inclusion on planet earth.

As a fantasy book, the Harry Potter series has various fantastical elements. The existence of human-animal hybrids is one example. Rowling has developed these hybrids like werewolves, animagi, and centaurs and allowed them to explore the magical world of the work. "The terms human-animal hybrid and animal-human hybrid refer to an entity that combines human and animal characteristics" (Johnson). In terms of the human-animal interaction, the authors' invention of such beings reflects the current state of their society's mentality. After the twelfth century in the western world, the barrier between human and animal nature began to dissolve, and societies frequently understood the human-animal relationship and the manifestation of animal nature in humans as a spectrum of emotional and behavioural stages. The twelfth century coincided with the emergence of a more ambiguous interaction between humans and animals (Salisbury 114).

Prejudice, fear, and consequently discrimination and isolation have always been the treatment and attitude towards such expressions in humans. Such attitudes continue to exist in the twenty-first century, but there is a greater and more deliberate awareness of the importance of creating an inclusive society, which continues to confront age-old intolerance and prejudice. In the Harry Potter series, Rowling depicts the contemporary actuality of the social movement of the moment. She permits her hybrids and humans to engage on all levels regularly, bringing out the various nuances of relationship between them. On the one hand, there is prejudice, oppression, and segregation, and on the other, there is support, acceptance, tolerance, and inclusion. While the evil that attempts to exert human dominance over the other represents prejudice, the good that ultimately prevails over evil represents an inclusive society. The narrow interpretation of Normalcy yields to superiority, and the so-called pure blood tries to exert its dominance over the other.

The appearance of human-animal hybrids allows Rowling to emphasise that Homo Sapiens are not aliens, but rather an integral part of the earth's biological network. The feature also enables her to demonstrate the many reactions and attitudes of individuals toward an inclusive society. While some members of society view all living things as equal, others view them as inferior. Rowling is also able to convey the realism of human-animal hybrids, removing the fear of the unknown in the minds of the general public. She demonstrates the hybrids' nobility and greatness via their actions, not their nature. Rowling's characterization of hybrids as both good and evil demonstrates her realistic approach of the fantastic. By offering such a

comprehensive image, Rowling is able to assign the basically human characteristics of unpredictability and possibility.

In the series, Rowling not only develops complete and substantial human-animal hybrids, but also imparts many simple animal traits to humans. The capacity to speak snake-language and Voldemort's slow transformation into a snake-like creature indicate that all humans possess an innate animal nature. Rowling uses the fantasy genre to weave this concept into the Harry Potter series, albeit with some exaggeration. We continue to employ animals as human exemplars and accept their uses as symbols of human attributes because "animals have been used repeatedly to represent human traits in literature" (Cohen 60). Rowling's portrayals of her characters suggest that people preserve a universal and innate link to animal nature, similar to images of humans and animals throughout history that "display an awareness of the animal that is within each of us" (Salisbury 160). While Salisbury debates mediaeval literature, "Occasionally, the animal characteristics were unpleasant, such as desire, cannibalism, or aggression. At other times, animal characteristics like as strength or cunning were desired" (Salisbury 160). Rowling employs this concept in the connection of human and animal nature to allow her characters' most human traits to show through their animal shapes (Salisbury 160). In the series, such characteristics can be observed in werewolves, animagi, and centaurs.

In the Harry Potter books, J. K. Rowling depicts Werewolves as being both dangerous and human. In the series, a werewolf's worth is determined by its actions, not its nature. A werewolf is a 'wolf-person' who "is a human with the ability to shapeshift into a wolf (or, particularly in modern film, a therianthrope hybrid wolflike creature), either intentionally or after being placed under a curse or affliction (often a bite or scratch from another werewolf), with the transformations occurring on the night of a full moon" (Wikipedia). Even in its definition, a sequence of biases and calamities are linked to werewolves. A werewolf is seen as an evil monster. The capacity of a human to transform into a wolf is considered a disease. There is a connection between the lunatic moon cycle and the nature of a werewolf. All of these classic characteristics make a werewolf a pariah, the most dangerous and undesirable member of any society.

Remus Lupin and Fenrir Greyback are two of the most prominent werewolves in the Harry Potter series. While Lupin is portrayed as a gentle, noble, and helpful individual who suffers from the werewolf condition, Greyback is portrayed as a nasty, inhuman creature who bit Lupin and infected him with the awful condition. Rowling develops two werewolves whose personalities are diabolically opposed yet sharing a common nature. In the series, Rowling establishes multiple parallel entities that interact with one another, allowing her universe to develop. Remus Lupin's attempts to lead a regular life continue to be difficult. He desires acceptance, acknowledgment, and kind treatment. Despite being half-wolf, he attempts to lead a normal human life. Greyback, on the other hand, surrenders his human nature to his wolf-half and continues to act monstrously.

The culture of the series, particularly the magical community, harbours a tremendous animosity for werewolves based on fear and ignorance. This has been the sole definition of the werewolf's created status in the Harry Potter universe. Rosemary Ross Johnston believes that "the other" has come to refer to the discursively generated axis of relationship between some form of generally accepted cultural standard and that which deviates from the norm (45). Lupin and others like him have always been persecuted since werewolves do not conform to the conventions of Harry Potter's society. Dumbledore explains to Harry, Ron, and Hermione the standing of werewolves in the social structure of the Harry Potter universe: "Werewolves are so mistrusted by our sort that Lupin's backing will carry little weight" (Rowling, *Prisoner of Azkaban* 392). In every manner, the world of magic is a reflection of the sense and sensibility of the genuine global society, in which both sides exist.

In the universe of Harry Potter, werewolves are a distinct subgroup. Remus Lupin was unable to assimilate himself into society despite his efforts. The civilization continues to keep human-animal hybrids on the margins of the community with the aid of the legal system. Johnston says that "otherness — alterity — refers to people who have been marginalised and denied a voice" (45). In the Harry Potter series, werewolves are always the other as defined by law and language. On the one hand, Rowling depicts Lupin as the victim of relentless persecution, while on the other, she allows him to strive and succeed in demonstrating his genuine

humanity to the readers, if not to his immediate wizarding community. Understanding how and why his culture sees him as it does demonstrates Lupin's maturity. Lupin wore a sardonic grin. Tomorrow at this time, parents will begin sending owls; they will not want a werewolf teaching their children, Harry. And after yesterday night, I understand their point of view. I could have bitten any of you... that must never occur again." (Prisoner of Azkaban 310, Rowling)

Lupin is unable to blend into society despite his best efforts. His life ends in a noble manner, and he obtains recognition and approval from just a tiny group of those who know him as a person. The Ministry of Magic draughts legislation that relegates werewolves to the fringes of society, such as the werewolf ban created by the Department for the Regulation and Control of Magical Creatures (Rowling, Prisoner of Azkaban 321) and the Guidelines for the Treatment of Non-wizard Part-Humans (Rowling, Prisoner of Azkaban 321). (Rowling, Goblet of Fire 147). Werewolves become the other and symbolise otherness (Johnston 45). Werewolves symbolise the fusion of the human and animal worlds. Therefore, they are unidentified entities. Humans dislike werewolves as a natural reaction to their unfamiliarity. Professor Lupin and Fenrir Greyback are 'semi-outcasts' and despised by society because, as werewolves, they exist on Rowling's manufactured boundary between human and animal nature (Bernhardt-House 160).

In addition to werewolves, who turn unwillingly into wolves on particular days, Rowling has described humans with the magical capacity to change into an animal at whim. Even though it is a difficult and laborious procedure, humans are able to shift into animals. They are known as Animagus (single) and Animagi (plural) (plural). The authorities continue to mistrust anyone who voluntarily or involuntarily shift into animals. The ministry of magic retains authority over animagi, including werewolves. In addition, an Animagus would be able to effortlessly turn into an animal that represents the individual's most prominent trait, such as bravery, grace, or strength. Black transforms into a dog to show his loyalty, whereas Pettigrew transforms into a rat to represent his submission and cowardice.

It is forbidden for Animagi to keep their power to morph a secret. In order to prevent mischief, the law requires that they be registered with the ministry of magic, which would continue to monitor the animagi in the country. The government continues to mistrust the animagi because of their ability to shift into animals. Hermione explains the transformations of Animagus to Ron and Harry "It takes years to become an Animagus, after which you must register yourself and everything else (Rowling, Goblet of Fire 487). In one of her Transfiguration lessons, Professor McGonagall explains further that the Ministry of Magic tracks witches and wizards who can transform into animals.

Humans that transform into animals do not totally give up their humanity to the animal form. Their cognition remains human, and their vision of the environment, as well as their behaviour, including mannerisms, are identical to that of humans. This is proof from the series' very first book. "She said, "How did you know it was me?" I have never seen a cat sit so stiffly, Professor. (The Sorcerer's Stone, Chapter 9) Even after transforming into animals, all animagi in the Harry Potter series remain human. They have the option to maintain their mental faculties, and they do so with diligence. While in Animagus form, witches and wizards can keep their human qualities and personalities through the use of human choice. There is no mental transformation, only bodily transformation. Even when characters like Pettigrew remain in animal form (rat) for as long as possible to avoid the wrath of mankind, the Animagus retains human consciousness.

Animagus' change of humans into animals is believable to humans, but not to animals. The majority of animals readily and effortlessly recognise the animagi for what they are. For instance, Hermione's cat immediately recognises Sirius Black in his dog form. Black comments, "This cat is one of the most intellectual of his species that I've ever encountered; when he met me, he recognised I wasn't a dog" (Rowling, Prisoner of Azkaban 364). Therefore, the metamorphosis of animagi should be viewed as a disguise and not as an actual transformation of humans into animals. It is equivalent to the portion of Polyjuice that temporarily enables people to transform into another person or animal. In a sense, Animagus represent a greater level of Polyjuice portion impact.

Similar to earlier literary works, notably fables, Rowling has employed the animal forms of the animagi as symbols. The cat belonging to McGonagall represents the human quality of mild ferocity. Black's dog shape symbolises loyalty and sacrifice. Sirius fulfils this symbolic position of sacrificial animal in the series

because, according to Boguet, "the role of the dog may be seen as symbolic because it is accountable for the change to the divine." (6). Similarly, Rita Skeeter, a journalist, has the ability to shift into a beetle. This symbolises the character's petty-mindedness. Rowling desires to portray the character as unclean, so she permits the transformation into a beetle. Rita Skeeter is an unregistered Animagus, Hermione says. She can transform into an insect" (Goblet of Fire 727, Rowling). Insects are portrayed as inferior and filthy in all literary works, including the classics. It frequently appears in the fables. In his story "The Bug," Odo of Cheriton uses a beetle to symbolise "an impious, cursed, and unnatural person" (Jacobs 103).

Rowling's use of conventional symbols to symbolise her characters facilitates a stronger connection with her audience. As a result, she employs the traditional symbolism of dogs and insects, as well as cats and rats. "they reveal that many symbols we consider to be contemporary have roots in ancient ideas" (Weisl 15). Skeeter devotes her life as a tabloid journalist to uncovering the sensual pleasures and rumours of the wizarding world. Similar to the insects in Aesop's fables, she presents this "dung" as worthy of newspaper display. Not only does Rowling's description of Rita Skeeter expand these associations to the current period, but so do popular modern conceptions of the press with insects. On the trip home after a year of Rita Skeeter's searching for tales, Hermione recognises this connection in the Harry Potter books. Hermione said with delight, "She's been buzzing around for stories all year" (Rowling, Goblet of Fire 727).

Skeeter exemplifies these bad implications in their whole. Skeeter's beetle form becomes a symbol for her debasement as a tabloid journalist, and as Weisl argues, "the generated object is an essential part of the remedialization of contemporary culture, both in [its] ability to tie history to the present and [its] preservation of a mediaeval sense of objects" (Weisl 15-16). While the introduction of werewolves into the stories allows Rowling to introduce the concept of good in evil and evil in good: She is able to demonstrate that Lupin is a true human despite being a werewolf, the introduction of animagi allows Rowling to highlight the dominant animal-like quality in her male and female characters. While the nature of the interaction between man and animal looks to border on the classical, it provides the series the required bizarre hue and enables the author to develop her characters on a fundamental level. There is a discernible distinction between animal and human in the series' hybrid characters.

There are numerous hybrid characters in the Harry Potter series, including werewolves and animagi. The shift from human to animal is forced in werewolves but voluntary in animagi. In contrast to werewolves, who lose their humanity upon transformation, animagi retain their humanity. Both hybrids are used to illustrate that humans are essentially a collection of emotions and personality traits that are fundamentally animal in nature. Rowling also suggests that, even when attempting to shift into an animal, man attempts to retain his humanity. Constant efforts to develop a component that would allow a werewolf to maintain human consciousness after transformation provide proof for the claim. Rowling has enabled such hybrids to roam freely throughout the novel to give it a magnificent quality, and she is also able to draw upon the classical principles of symbolic representations and the significance of the human-animal relationship through the hybrid characters in the Harry Potter series.

Works cited

- Bernhardt-House, Phillip. "The Werewolf as Queer, the Queer as Werewolf, and Queer Werewolves." Eds. Giffney, Noreen and Mya J. Hird. *Queering the Non/Human*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008.
- Boguet, Henri. "Of the Metamorphosis of Men into Beasts." Trans. E. Allen Ashwin. *Discours des Sorciers* (1929).
- Cohen, Esther. "Animals in Medieval Perceptions: The Image of the Ubiquitous Other." Editors Aubrey Manning and James Smell. *Animals and Human Society: Changing Perspectives*. New York, Routledge, 1994.
- Johnson, Alan. "Human-animal mix might become illegal". *The Columbus Dispatch*, 15 Nov. 2012, www.dispatch.com/content/stories/national_world/2012/11/15/human-animal-mix-might-become-illegal.html. Accessed 10 Mar. 2020.
- Johnston, Rosemary R. "In and out of otherness: Being and not-being in children's literature." *Neohelicon*, Vol. 36, iss. 1, 2009.
- Odo of Cheriton. *The Fables of Odo of Cheriton*. Trans. Jacobs, John C. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse U P, 1985.
- Rowling, J. K. *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*. New York, NY: Scholastic, 1997.
- . *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*. New York, NY: Scholastic, 1999.
- . *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*. New York, NY: Scholastic, 2000.
- Salisbury, Joyce E. "Human Animals of Medieval Fables." Edited by Nona C. Flores. *Animals in the Middle Ages: A Book of Essays*. New York, Garland, 1996.
- Weisl, Angela Jane. "The Hawk, The Wolf, and The Mouse: Tracing the Gendered Other in Richard Dormer's *Ladyhawke*." Ed. Lynn T Ramey and Tison Pugh. *Race, Class, and Gender in "Medieval" Cinema*. New York, NY: Palgrave, 2007.