

Anna Mik

MAGIZOOLOGY: THE MAGICAL CREATURES STUDIES J. K. ROWLING'S POSTULATES ON ANIMALS IN "FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM" ON EXAMPLES FROM GREACO-ROMAN MYTHOLOGY¹

Faculty of "Artes Liberales", University of Warsaw

INTRODUCTION

Human-Animal Studies (HAS) are nowadays one of the most popular cross-disciplinary research fields within the New Humanities². The postmodern way in which many scholars look at humans and other animals seems to apply also to children's and young adult culture due to the fact that its creators, including writers, are more aware than others of certain issues concerning animals and methods of exploring topics connected to them. HAS serve as a tool of reading texts addressing such matters as animal rights, subjectivity, freedom, etc. Therefore, scholars are often used to unravel what is hidden in a particular work and to search for the author's point of view on the subject of relations between humans and other animals. One of these authors is J. K. Rowling,³ who in the *Harry Potter* series (1997–2007), as well as in *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* (2001), managed to incorporate some thoughts on non-human animals, mainly using legendary and mythological figures. These figures' behaviour and interactions with the series' characters show not only how Rowling perceives real so-called "animals", but also how they see each other.

¹ The research results presented in this paper have been achieved within the project Our Mythical Childhood... The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak at the Faculty of "Artes Liberales", University of Warsaw, with funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme – ERC Consolidator Grant (Grant Agreement No 681202).

² A symbolic beginning of human–animal studies is traditionally associated with Peter Singer and his work *Animal Liberation* (1975). Followed by Jacques Derrida and his essay *Animal Therefore I Am (More to Follow)* (1997), animal studies are now represented by many scholars from different disciplines, just to mention Kari Weil or Donna J. Haraway.

³ The choice of mythological creatures might be motivated by Rowling's education – she is a classical philologist.

What is more, they seem to ask what does it mean to name somebody “a beast”. This paper is an attempt to investigate Rowling’s works using HAS to create and to discuss how fantasy fiction reflects the contemporary world’s issues.

WHERE IS ‘THE ANIMAL’?

One of the most vital sentences, although nowadays maybe a little stale, in Jacques Derrida’s essay *Animal Therefore I Am (More to Follow)* is “Animal is a word that men have given themselves the right to give.”⁴ In the referred paper, according to Kari Weil, Derrida denounces the notion of “the animal” as a ‘capacious concept’ used to mark every living thing that exists while not being a human⁵. “The animal, what a word!”⁶ and, as we will see later, what a word indeed. The use of this term and its consequences are also an issue discussed by Donna J. Haraway, who highlights the problem of perceiving non-human animals from the anthropocentric point of view. Starting off with a topic of language describing animals, which already settles the way of thinking about these beings, the mentioned scholars discuss the problem of categorizing non-human animals by using the power of discourse.

Weil in her most famous work, *Thinking Animals: Why Animal Studies Now?* (2012), proves (inter alia) that simple usage of language determines the relationships to attain within human’s power. Some non-human animals can learn to communicate on the basic level, but it is the human who puts out the idea of language itself which is always conceptual⁷.⁸ Such concepts, however, can be very dangerous. As Ludwig Wittgenstein said years ago, “The limits of my language mean the limits of my world”⁹, and it is human decision where those limits are to be laid down – should other animals be included or excluded from the universe of discourse reserved for and distributed by *Homo sapiens*?

Children’s and young adult literature also reflects the figures created in the world of language, which is – once again – a powerful tool to utilize in every discourse. In this paper only human language will be discussed, since it is the “terror of naming” the subject and object at the same time. Naming and being named; both these actions settle the hierarchy of who stands above whom. The one who has the power to categorize a being as ‘the Other’ gains a far more importance than the ones who are named. In this paper, ‘the Others’ are non-human animals – their position in our world is undoubtedly lower than the position of humans. In the horrific act of

⁴ J. Derrida, “Animal Therefore I Am (More to Follow),” *Critical Inquiry* 28.2 (Winter, 2002), p. 400.

⁵ K. Weil, “The Report on the Animal Turn,” *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 21.2 (2010), pp. 16–17.

⁶ J. Derrida, op.cit., p. 392.

⁷ K. Weil, op.cit., p. 22.

⁸ Ibidem.

⁹ *Ludwig Wittgenstein Between Analytic Philosophy and Apophaticism*, ed. S. Mitralaxis, Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015, p. 54.

naming, we should seek for the hidden ethical dialogue, developed and commented by various authors, including the ones who write children's and young adult books. In this article, I will take a closer look at J. K. Rowling's works, *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* (2001) in particular, which may be seen as an attempt to create a manifesto concerning magical creatures' rights in the world of Harry Potter.

WHERE IS 'THE BEAST'?

For many human-animal studies scholars, naming a being 'an animal' (or 'a beast') is, as it was mentioned before, a powerful, yet severe act. It is all the more crucial, and even a little bit surprising that we can find a similar issue discussed by Rowling, especially in *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*. In this book, the author plays with the tradition of bestiaries and introduces the audience to 'Wizard–Magical Creatures Studies'. Her name does not appear on the cover of the book and the work is credited under the pseudonym 'Newt Scamander' who in the Harry Potter universe wrote this textbook – we see it on Harry's supply list for his first year. It contains the history of Magizoology and describes 85 magical species from all around the world.

In the introduction to *Fantastic Beasts...* we find theories of Magizoology, which resemble our-world HAS in many ways. According to Newt Scamander, "the definition of a beast has caused controversy for centuries"¹⁰ and wizards are still struggling with the idea of differing 'a being' and 'a beast'. The problem of categorizing magical creatures is vividly shown in the introduction to the book:

Werewolves spend most of their time as humans (whether wizard or Muggle). Once a month, however, they transform into savage, four-legged beasts of murderous intent and no human conscience. The centaurs' habits are not human-like; they live in the wild, refuse clothing, prefer to live apart from wizards and Muggles alike and yet have intelligence equal to theirs. Trolls bear a humanoid appearance, walk upright, may be taught a few simple words and yet are less intelligent than the dullest unicorn and possess no magical powers in their own prodigious and unnatural strength. We now ask ourselves: which of these creatures is a 'being' – that is to say, a creature worthy of legal rights and voice in the governance of the magical world – and which is a 'beast'?¹¹

Scamander focuses on the same crucial problem that Weil and Haraway did: how can we say if a being is 'human enough' to be treated like one? Magizoologist underlines that the whole process of deciding whether something should be named 'a beast' or not was "extremely crude"¹². At the beginning of the historical dispute the criterion was to be a "two-legged"¹³ creature, then – to "speak the human tongue"¹⁴. But, once again, the wizard community have not worked this issue out. In the beginning of

¹⁰ J. K. Rowling, *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*, London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2009, p. xviii.

¹¹ Ibidem, p. xix.

¹² Ibidem.

¹³ Ibidem, pp. xix–xx.

¹⁴ Ibidem, p. xxi.

the 19th century, a new definition of a ‘a being’ was introduced. It stated that “any creature that has sufficient intelligence to understand the laws of the magical community and to bear part of the responsibility in shaping these laws”¹⁵ can be named ‘a being’. This, of course, included one in the group of ‘beings’ by excluding others. Wizards, similarly to non-magical people in our world, are still finding it difficult to place non-human animals in the artificial hierarchy that helps to define both human and non-human animals’ places not only in their magical world, but also in the real one. One might be based on the biblical tradition where man is above all other animals and have been given domination over them. The other might be related to law, slightly different in every country, still setting boundaries between human and animal world. Why does Rowling try to change it? Scamander seems to have an answer to that too: “to ensure that future generations of witches and wizards enjoy their strange beauty and powers as we have been privileged to do.”¹⁶

There are only four types of characters in Harry Potter series which qualify as creatures that we can, without a doubt, call mythical: centaurs, merpeople (sirens), phoenixes, and Cerberus. Using their problematic status (whether they are called ‘a beast’ or not), Rowling tries to answer some questions posed in *Fantastic Beasts...* and to decentralize the human position in the world of magic.

CENTAURS – ALSO HUMANS

In Greek mythology, Centaurs were depicted as wild and brutal creatures: half-men, half-horses. They were eating raw meat and their customs were unusually wild: they were famous for raping and drinking, almost every single one of them was identified as savage creature that endangered humans on their travels. However, two of them, Chiron and Pholus, were born as demi-gods and their personalities were different: they had a quiet disposition and were friendly towards humans.¹⁷

It seems that Rowling based her main centaur characters on Chiron and Pholus. In the first book of the series, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (1997), we meet a centaur friend of Hagrid, Ronan, who is kind towards all characters and not aggressive at all from the very beginning. His knowledge about the world seems to be much deeper than that of wizards themselves. He says: “Mars is bright tonight [...] Unusually bright,”¹⁸ as if he gets to know Harry and his friends’ future.¹⁹ While Ronan is making this remark, another centaur, Bane, joins the company. He is described as looking wilder than Ronan, however he says exactly the same phrase: “Mars is

¹⁵ Ibidem, p. xxii.

¹⁶ Ibidem, pp. xxxiii–xxxiv. This statement is of course still very anthropocentric.

¹⁷ Centaurs are mentioned in (among others): Pindar, Pythian Ode 2. 33 ff (trans. Conway) (Greek lyric C5th B.C.); Pseudo-Apollodorus, Bibliotheca E1. 20 (trans. Aldrich) (Greek mythographer C2nd A.D.).

¹⁸ J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 1997, p. 185.

¹⁹ Centaurs can read the future from the stars. One of the centaurs teaches astronomy in Hogwarts.

bright tonight.”²⁰ Hagrid’s comment on this sentence is quite accurate: “Never [...] try to an’ get a straight answer out of a centaurs. Ruddy star-gazers. Not interested in anythin’ closer’n the moon.”²¹ As he continues with “They’re deep, mind, centaurs... they know things... jus’ don’ let on much”²², we might be sure enough of their knowledge and customs, which are far from aggressive or savage. When they read stars, one of them warns his companion: “Remember, Firenze, we are sworn not to set ourselves against the heavens,”²³ and to the heavens they are faithful the whole time. However, in the fifth book of the series, *Harry Potter and the Order of Phoenix* (2003), we find out that Firenze betrays centaurs in order to help Dumbledore; he becomes excluded from the centaurs’ community and banished from the forest.²⁴

Even though the picture of centaurs is seemingly different than the mythological one, later on Rowling shows that some wizards still believe in the old myths about these creatures. We can find depiction of these prejudices also in *The Order of the Phoenix*. One scene shows centaurs as confronted by Dolores Umbridge, a villain and future servant of Lord Voldemort, the main antagonist, identified as political evil power investigating Hogwarts. Lured into to the Forbidden Forest by Hermione, she expects to discover Dumbledore’s secret weapon. Instead, she encounters centaurs, or, as it is figuratively stated by Rowling, the resistant group hiding in the forest. Umbridge’s legitimacy as a member of the Ministry of Magic only makes things worse: she has no authority here. When centaurs are capturing her, she screams: “Filthy half-breeds! [...] Beasts! Uncontrolled animals!”²⁵. Centaurs kidnap her and probably mete out well-deserved punishment²⁶. However, their wild behaviour is not caused by their nature (or just partly so), but by their anger towards the Ministry of Magic²⁷. At the moment of confrontation, one of the centaurs says: “We are a race apart and proud to be so,”²⁸ which underlines and justifies their behaviour towards humans, who are in this case intruders.

Information on centaurs from *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* can be treated as a commentary to what happens in the series. Rowling mostly focuses on the legal issues of the categorization of centaurs in the wizard’s artificial hierarchy²⁹. We read:

²⁰ J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*, London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 1997, p. 185.

²¹ Ibidem.

²² Ibidem.

²³ Ibidem, pp. 187–188.

²⁴ Eadem, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2003, p. 667.

²⁵ Ibidem, p. 665.

²⁶ It can be interpreted, but not necessarily, as an act of rape.

²⁷ Because of their exclusion.

²⁸ Ibidem, p. 667.

²⁹ Although the hippogriff as such does not appear neither in Greek nor Roman mythology, it is used by Rowling as a legendary figure that symbolizes mainly freedom and independence – also reserved for animals. In the third book, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, we meet hippogriff named Buckbeak that is mistreated and sentenced to death – not because of his aggressive nature, but

Being intelligent and capable of speech, it should not strictly speaking be termed a beast, but by its own request it has been classified as such by the Ministry of Magic. [...] The centaur is given an XXXX classification [Dangerous/requires specialist knowledge/skilled wizard may handle – A.M.] not because it is unduly aggressive, but because it should be treated with great respect. The same applies to merpeople and unicorns.³⁰

For centaurs, the agreement to any categorization would be an equivalent to treason of their kind and the submission to the authority of humans. Presumably, they do not really care how people name them in their language – as long as they will be treated with respect for their autonomy.

The main question that rises within these two depictions of centaurs (savage rebels and calm thinkers) is how should the status of one be established? From human perspective, these creatures are somehow between non-human animals and *Homo sapiens* – are they human because of their upper part or animal because of the lower one? Rowling focuses rather on political matter than on the real-life differentiation and shows how categorization of living creatures can be as unjust as it is unnecessary. This literary depiction can be connected with not only the discourse on non-human animals, but also human rights movements, involving striving against racism, anti-Semitism, homophobia or antifeminism, as certain groups of people were (and in some cases still are) excluded from social life as not ‘normal enough’ human beings³¹. This may also be applied to animal rights movements which try to include animals in human world not as a nourishment or clothing, but as legitimate living creatures³².

MERPEOPLE – ALSO BEASTS

In *Fantastic Beasts...* Rowling points out that, “[...] love of music [...] is common to all merpeople”³³ which somehow connects them directly to the mythical sirens, and by extension to the legendary mermaids, who lived in isolation and mislead sailors with their beautiful voices, being also able to play the instruments very well. The image of the sirens has evolved through the centuries; nowadays, in popular culture, we more often deal with

humans’ recklessness and stupidity. In order to approach a hippogriff, one should bow to him and do not break the eye contact. Unless he does not bow back, no one should come near this creature or it will attack you. This rule is broken by Draco Malfoy during the Care of Magical Creatures class with Hagrid. Buckbeak attacks the boy, and although he is not seriously injured, Malfoy’s starts a trail which leads to the death sentence. Only thanks to Harry and Hermione Buckbeak is saved, however justice in the wizarding world does not work for magical animals, even if they are innocent. Human comfort will always be a priority, and animals will be treated as second rate [?] creatures. Vide: J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 1999.

³⁰ Eadem, *Fantastic Beasts...*, op.cit., p. 11.

³¹ This issue is discussed in: A. M. Green, “Revealing Discrimination: Social Hierarchy and the Exclusion/Enslavement of the Other in the *Harry Potter* Novels,” *The Looking Glass: New Perspectives on Children’s Literature*, 13.3 (2009).

³² The example of combining HAS and sociology might be: C. R. Kruse “Social Animals: Animal Studies and Sociology,” *Society & Animals*, 10.4, (2002), pp. 375–379.

³³ *Ibidem*, p. 55.

mermaids than sirens – the creatures that have fish tails instead of birds wings³⁴. These creatures were probably prime inspiration for Rowling to create an underwater kingdom of merpeople, although mythology would still be an important relation source.

Merpeople's status in the world presented in Harry Potter series, especially in the fourth book, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* (2000), is also quite 'mythological': they live at the bottom of Hogwarts' Great Lake but are rarely seen. Wizards' notions about them are also different from who they really are. In the book we read: "Harry saw faces... faces that bore no resemblance at all to the painting of the mermaid in the Prefects' bathroom."³⁵ Their looks scare him a bit too: "The merpeople had grayish skins and long, wild, dark green hair. Their eyes were yellow, as were their broken teeth, and they wore thick ropes of pebbles around their necks."³⁶ With this 'culture come-back' to the 'real' mythological sirens, Rowling tries to change readers' perspective and their ideas of anthropomorphized, Disney-like creatures, that in 'reality' look and behave quite differently – she even resists the name 'mermaid'. This literary depiction can also be related to any animal-like cultural representation of simplified creatures who do not have to be like this.

Merpeople were also well-organized as a community:

A whole crowd of merpeople were floating in front of the houses that lined what looks like a mer-version of a village square. A choir of merpeople were singing in the middle, calling the champions towards them, and behind them rose a crude sort of statue; a gigantic merperson hewn from a boulder.³⁷

They create their own communities in different kinds of water reservoirs, and they do not interfere in the affairs of the on-land world. Just as centaurs, merpeople have rather difficult relationship with humans: convinced by Dumbledore, they participate in the Triwizard Tournament but are definitely not friendly nor helpful towards four young contestants. At some point, Harry even wonders if merpeople eat human flesh³⁸.

"Like the centaurs, the merpeople have declined the status of 'being' in favour that of a 'beast' classification."³⁹ This sentence might be a way to show the wizards that these creatures do not need human approval to be what they want to be. Apart from all that was mentioned above, merpeople have their own language – Mermish. Weil says, after Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, that if the establishment will give people the right to use the language, they will be going to use the language of the establishment, not their own⁴⁰. This does not apply to merpeople who choose to use their

³⁴ Although the cultural image of sirens/mermaids is quite complicated because of the different cultural influences.

³⁵ Eadem, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2000, p. 432.

³⁶ Ibidem, p. 432.

³⁷ Ibidem.

³⁸ Ibidem, p. 435.

³⁹ Eadem, *Fantastic Beasts...*, op.cit., p. 54.

⁴⁰ K. Weil, op.cit., p. 3.

own language, even if it causes difficulties to the wizard community. The Ministry of Magic had struggled with the decision of including them in any official discussion because their language can be understood only under water which would cause inconveniences to witches and wizards. Real-world animals also are excluded from every human discourse because their 'language' is not known to people. However, contrary to non-human animals, there is a way to communicate with merpeople – one just has to go underwater. In the case of animals, it is obviously impossible. Therefore, the exclusion of merpeople can be interpreted as an exclusion of a minority similar to the case of centaurs.

PETS AND THEIR OWNERS⁴¹

The Phoenix originated in Ethiopia, although this bird was frequently mentioned by Greek and Roman writers such as Hesiod and Herodotus⁴². Its feathers were multicoloured, and they shined with fire-red, sky blue and gold. On the day a Phoenix dies, it bursts into flames and its offspring is born out of parent's ashes. In *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (1998), Phoenixes "burst into flame when it is time for them to die and are reborn from the ashes."⁴³ This moment is called the Burning Day, similarly to Hesiod or Herodotus' descriptions⁴⁴. This connection, not directly underling the Graeco-Roman origins, might prove Rowling's inspiration to create character of Fawkes, Dumbledore's faithful pet, based on the myth itself.

This example would be the case of Rowling's interpretation of a relationship between human and a pet, also widely discussed in HAS discourse⁴⁵. Dumbledore, 'the owner' of a phoenix, seems to understand that this relationship is not an ordinary one, especially when we acknowledge the fact that Fawkes and Sparky⁴⁶ are the only

⁴¹ Another example of a magical pet 'taken' from Graeco-Roman mythology is Fluffy, Hagrid's Cerberus. The mythological origin of this creature is quite direct and obvious. In Greek mythology Cerberus was a three-headed dog with a snake for its tail. He guarded the entrance to Hades and was once put to sleep by a beautiful melody played by Orpheus. Fluffy guards the entrance to Hogwarts' undergrounds where the philosopher's stone is hidden, and it also can be put to sleep only by music. Cerberus is not particularly developed as a character by Rowling. Fluffy is viewed by other characters as a 'monstrous pet' – used as a guarding dog, not a companion. Here mythological connection seems to be more important for Rowling than potential tool in her animal discourse. This hypothesis may be supported by Cerberus' absence in Rowling's bestiary. Vide: J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher Stone*, op.cit.

⁴² Hesiod, Precepts of Chiron Fragment 3 (from Plutarch de Orac. defectu 2.415C) (trans. Evelyn-White) (Greek epic C8th or C7th B.C.); Herodotus, Histories 2. 73 (trans. Godley) (Greek historian C5th B.C.).

⁴³ J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 1998, p. 155.

⁴⁴ Hesiod, op.cit.

⁴⁵ Examples: D. Haraway, *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness*, Chicago 2003; M. DeMello, *Animals and Society: An Introduction to Human-Animal Studies*, New York–Chichester 2012.

⁴⁶ J. K. Rowling, *Quidditch Through the Ages*, London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2009, p. 80.

two ‘domesticated’ phoenixes in the diegetic world. Dumbledore says: “Fascinating creatures, phoenixes. They can carry immensely heavy loads, their tears have healing powers, and they make highly faithful pets.”⁴⁷ As we read in *Fantastic Beasts...*, “Phoenix’ song is magical: it is reputed to increase the courage of the pure of heart and to strike fear into the hearts of the impure.”⁴⁸ Even though throughout the series phoenixes are called the wizards’ pets, they are still treated with great respect and understanding. Their bond with humans is literally magical⁴⁹.

The proof for this unusual connection is presented at the end of the second book of the series. When Harry encounters danger posed by Tom Riddle (memory of Lord Voldemort), his loyalty to Dumbledore is rewarded by Fawkes’s presence and help. Tom’s pet, the Basilisk, a legendary creature that once served the great ancestor of Voldemort, follows his master’s orders and tries to kill Harry. When Fawkes and the Basilisk fight, we observe two human-pet relationships in a contrast: while phoenix chooses to help Harry because of his act of loyalty, Basilisk follows the orders of his master and therefore is destined to fail. The rules of the diegetic world makes its success impossible as only the use of ‘good’ magic (here – loyalty) determines the happy ending, and that is developed by such feelings and emotions like: love, courage, loyalty and friendship. What is more, the way in which Voldemort treats his pet (as many people do in reality) is far removed from these noble feelings.

Fawkes helps Harry because of his faithfulness towards Dumbledore, not because of the magical bond between them. In this relationship, the roles of pet and the owner (here represented by Fawkes) are actually reversed: Harry becomes Dumbledore’s pet and is rewarded thanks to his loyalty. The magical bond between Dumbledore and Fawkes expands: now Harry receives gifts that previously were reserved only for the owner and the pet, and therefore becomes a pet himself. Development of this newly stated relationship may be observed throughout the series, especially in the last two books of the septology (which is, however, a material for a separate paper).

HAGRID IN BETWEEN

Rubeus Hagrid, a half-giant, half-wizard⁵⁰, is the Keeper of Keys and Grounds at Hogwarts, and Harry’s best friend and guardian. We meet him in the *Harry Potter and the Philosopher Stone*, first when he brings the protagonist to Dursleys after his parents died, then again when he picks him up from Dursleys’ cabin during a storm. When he enters, the impression is bloodcurdling:

⁴⁷ Eadem, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, op.cit., p. 155.

⁴⁸ Eadem, *Fantastic Beasts...*, op.cit., pp. 61–62.

⁴⁹ Hagrid had a giant mother and a giant half-brother.

⁵⁰ Eadem, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*, op.cit., p. 39.

A giant of a man [...]. His face was almost completely hidden by a long, shaggy mane of hair and a wild, tangled beard, but you could make out his eyes, glinting like black beetles under all the hair.⁵¹

Although his appearance might be frightening, Hagrid's personality is far from being redoubtable or scary. Throughout the series he had proved many times that he is nothing more than a caring and loyal friend, sensitive, even if thin-skinned, especially when it comes to 'animals' or 'animal-like' creatures. At the same time, he is someone in between: not only because of his gigantic origins, but also because of his place in the world of magic.

In Harry Potter universe, giants are less intelligent than wizards, but they have their own language and customs, they can learn human languages and read, and even use magic, although their favourite and apparently basic occupation is to kill – it does not matter if the victims are others or within their own circle. Due to this reason they are feared and hated by the wizard community, although some of them are able to cooperate with humans. Due to this connotation, Hagrid (and Madame Maxime⁵²) does not want to be associated with his ancestors, even though many people already know his family roots.

As a half-giant, he is automatically excluded and becomes 'the Other'. In the second book, Tom Riddle says that Hagrid, not anybody else, will be blamed for the death of a student although it does not matter that he would be the last person to do so⁵³. He is often treated with contempt and lack of respect by other wizards and witches. One might say that in the wizarding world Hagrid is some kind of a monster: half-giant, 'weirdo', squib, and outsider. He is excluded from both the human and the giant community. As 'the Other', he does not belong anywhere, so he has to stay 'in between'.

From the very beginning of the series Hagrid treats magical creatures with great love and understanding: in the third book, he becomes the Care of Magical Creatures teacher⁵⁴. He is the one who is able to tame dragons, three-headed dogs, hippogriffs; take care of flying horses and be friends to gigantic spiders. He is maybe the only person who is tolerated by most of the creatures in the Forbidden Forest. There is also something symbolic in placing Hagrid's Hut at the edge of the Forbidden Forest, between two worlds: wild space with dangerous and misunderstood magical creatures and the 'civilized' world of wizards. Thanks to Hagrid, the main characters (and also readers) have an opportunity to get to know both of these worlds and at least try to change the approach of wizards towards magical 'animals'. By creating this character, Rowling might have wanted to show her future readers that however

⁵¹ We meet Olympe Maxime in *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*. Just like Hagrid, Maxime is half-giantess, and also the headmistress of one of the schools participating in the Triwizard Tournament, Beauxbatons Academy of Magic.

⁵² Eadem, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, op.cit. pp. 205–206.

⁵³ Ibidem, p. 73.

⁵⁴ Eadem, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, op.cit., p. 117.

crazy it might be (Hagrid is not the most reasonable person), caring for animals only proves that one is a good person that is able to show empathy and understand those who are mostly misunderstood and feared, much like Hagrid himself.

CONCLUSIONS

In the fifth book, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, when Harry is on the way to a hearing at the Ministry of Magic, he notices a fountain halfway down the hall:

A group of golden statues [...] stood in the middle of a circular pool. Tallest of them all was a noble-looking wizard with his wand pointing 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.⁵⁵

When Harry leaves the facility, he takes a closer look on the statues:

He looked up into the handsome wizard's face, but close-to Harry thought he looked rather weak and foolish. The witch was wearing a vapid smile like a beauty contestant, and from what Harry knew of goblins and centaurs, they were most unlikely to be caught staring so sopfully at humans of any description.⁵⁶

As he noticed, the hierarchy represented by the fountain that stood in the centre of political life of the magical world is a falsehood. Centaurs would never look at wizards with admiration – at this point it would be rather disgust and anger. In the last book, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, the fountain is replaced by a monument: witch and wizard sitting on the thrones made out of Muggles, with no other magical creatures around them, with the inscription: MAGIC IS MIGHT⁵⁷. In both cases these monuments represent the actual outlook of the current authority on the wizard's place in the society which (again – in both cases) situates them in the highest position. Rowling invites us to take a closer look – just like Harry did – on what the authority is representing and compare it with the knowledge gained from the Forbidden Forest.

There is no doubt that what Rowling states in *Fantastic Beasts...* is not just a playful treatment of the bestiary conventions, a reflection of fun she had while creating yet another magical catalogue of beasts. Her awareness of literary tradition in the humanities leads to reading the whole *Harry Potter* series in a completely different context. Although not everything that appears in the series can be considered pro-animal (where does dragon blood come from?), she definitely tries to convey some kind of message, as she often does on a everyday basis⁵⁸.

⁵⁵ Ibidem, p. 142.

⁵⁶ Eadem, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2007, pp. 198–199.

⁵⁷ Rowling is a philanthropist. She supports many charities, such as: Gingerbread (One Parent Families) or Multiple Sclerosis Society. She also founded the Children's High Level Group in 2005.

⁵⁸ *Birthday Beasts' Book. Where Human Roads Cross Animal Trails... Cultural Studies in Honour of Jerzy Axer*, ed. Katarzyna Marciniak, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo „Wilczyńska”, 2011, p. 154.

What Rowling did is a quite opposite to what is practiced by many children's literature writers in the past. Instead of anthropomorphing 'animals', she gives them back their own voice, and therefore the right to exist in the community. Her work contributes to human-animal studies discourse in children's literature. At the same time, she also acknowledges that there is a very thin line between human and beast which has also been pointed out by Adam Łukaszewicz. In his opinion: "All animals are equal, but some animals are truly beasts. The human beast is much more beastly than other beasts."⁵⁹ Rowling incorporates into her novels a discussion about animals as a parallel strand to her defence of all who are different, queer, excluded, misunderstood, and most of all – magical.

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⁵⁹ *Birthday Beasts' Book. Where Human Roads Cross Animal Trails... Cultural Studies in Honour of Jerzy Axer*, ed. Katarzyna Marciniak, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo „Wilczyńska”, 2011, p. 154.

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SUMMARY

MAGIZOOLOGY: THE MAGICAL CREATURES STUDIES ROWLING'S POSTULATES ON ANIMALS IN "FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM"

The Harry Potter universe is constructed of symbols and images that have their roots in many different cultural traditions – among others in Greek and Roman mythology. J.K. Rowling, as a classicist, has exploited these traditions in a consequent way to create a specific, yet still vividly mythological representation of the magical creatures. These creatures primarily are: Centaurs, Merpeople (Sirens), a Phoenix, and a Cerberus.

I analyze these figures in the context of animal studies, focusing on the matter of naming them either „beasts”, „pets” or „beings”. I try to show how this authoritative procedure influences the perception of magical creatures in the social and political life of the wizarding world by placing them on an artificial hierarchical scale.

The research material consists of the Harry Potter series as well as Rowling's book, *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*.