

## A Comparative Analysis of Power Strategies Used by Voldemort and Grindelwald Over Their Followers Through Foucault's Perspective

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### ABSTRACT

Power in the Wizarding World is never static; it seduces, coerces, and eventually collapses. This article examines the contrasting strategies of Lord Voldemort and Gellert Grindelwald in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 1 and 2* and *Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald* and *The Secrets of Dumbledore* through Michel Foucault's framework of sovereign power, disciplinary power, biopower, governmentality, and resistance. Voldemort governs through terror and spectacle, enforcing obedience while fostering silent rebellion. Grindelwald, in contrast, wields ideology and charisma to secure loyalty, until coercion exposes the fragility of his control. As Foucault posits, power is relational and fluid, destined to provoke resistance. Beyond fantasy, these narratives reflect enduring truths about authority, its seductive nature, and its inevitable unravelling.

**Keywords:** *Harry Potter; Fantastic Beast; Foucault; Power Strategies*

### INTRODUCTION

Fiction functions not merely as escapism but as a cultural space where power, ideology, and identity are constructed and contested. While Farner (2014) notes that fiction need not mirror truth, fantasy narratives often reflect real social dynamics, offering insight into authority, resistance, and moral complexity. The *Harry Potter* and *Fantastic Beasts* franchises illustrate this, particularly through their central antagonists, Lord Voldemort and Gellert Grindelwald. Voldemort rules through fear, violence, and coercion, enforcing obedience through rigid hierarchies, embodying Foucault's concept of sovereign power. In contrast,

Grindelwald initially employs charisma and ideological persuasion, framing his vision as “the greater good” to attract followers and cultivate voluntary devotion. This form of control, reflecting Foucault’s concept of governmentality, operates through ideological allure rather than force. However, as his power consolidates, Grindelwald’s persuasive tactics increasingly blur into coercion. This shift, which moves from ideological persuasion to manipulation and force, complicates Foucault’s distinction between sovereign power and governmentality, revealing the fluidity of power as relational and dynamic. Using Foucault’s framework sovereign power, disciplinary power, biopower, governmentality, and resistance. This study examines how each leader constructs and sustains authority. Foucault (1978) views power as relational and embedded in networks, enabling a nuanced analysis of how their regimes produce both compliance and resistance.

Previous studies have highlighted the effectiveness of applying Foucauldian analysis to literature and film. For instance, Paris (2021) examines power relations in Miklós Jancsó’s films, Mutiara (2015) critiques the dynamics of totalitarianism and democracy in *The Hunger Games* trilogy, and Ismael et al. (2023) explore discursive control and female resistance in *The Handmaid’s Tale*. Similarly, Hajigholam et al. (2018) discuss the intricate relationships between power, knowledge, and resistance in *Faustus*. However, much of this scholarship tends to isolate specific Foucauldian concepts or focus on particular genres, leaving a gap in comparative studies that explore how various forms of power intersect and interact within popular fantasy narratives.

This study addresses that gap by applying a broad Foucauldian lens to *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Parts 1 and 2* and *Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald* and *The Secrets of Dumbledore*. Through a detailed textual and visual analysis, this research focuses on key scenes where authority is asserted, challenged, and undermined, offering a deeper understanding of the interplay between different forms of power. By analyzing how Voldemort’s and Grindelwald’s regimes deploy sovereign power, disciplinary power, biopower, and governmentality, the study goes beyond traditional moral or character-driven interpretations. Voldemort’s regime is marked by sovereign power manifested in overt

violence and fear while Grindelwald's use of governmentality and biopower operates through more insidious and ideological methods, shaping beliefs and actions without direct physical coercion.

Furthermore, the study examines how these regimes not only rely on coercion but also regulate the behaviour of their followers, influencing and controlling their thoughts and beliefs. In doing so, this research contributes to both literary and cultural studies by demonstrating how fantasy cinema mirrors the fluid, relational, and contested nature of power. Ultimately, the study argues that these narratives do more than just depict struggles for dominance and freedom; they challenge viewers to critically examine the dynamics of authority and resistance in their own social realities, moving beyond simplistic moral interpretations to reveal the complex and shifting nature of power.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study employed a qualitative descriptive method to explore how power operates in four films: *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 1 & 2* and *Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald* and *The Secrets of Dumbledore*. These films were treated as texts, with key scenes and dialogues repeatedly reviewed, transcribed, and coded according to Foucault's concepts of sovereign power, disciplinary power, biopower, governmentality, and resistance. The research focused on narrative elements, specifically dialogue, character interactions, and plot development, to investigate how power is constructed, maintained, and lost by the characters. The decision to exclude visual elements, such as scene framing, cinematographic symbolism, and cinematic techniques, was made intentionally to maintain a tight focus on verbal communication and narrative dynamics. This approach aligns with the study's goal of exploring power as relational and unstable, which can be effectively examined through dialogue and character relationships, rather than through visual representations of power.

While visual choices like cinematography and scene framing play an important role in filmmaking, this study deliberately chose to prioritize narrative and dialogue as the primary lens for analyzing power dynamics. Power, in the context of this research, was viewed

through the lens of interpersonal relationships and verbal exchanges between characters like Voldemort and Grindelwald. These dialogues reveal how power is negotiated, shifted, and contested, reflecting Foucault’s notion that power is not simply about dominance but about relational dynamics. The use of dialogue allows for a deeper understanding of how characters express their authority and influence, making power appear less fixed and more fluid and unstable. Thus, while cinematic symbolism and visual techniques are essential for conveying meaning, the study argues that dialogue and character interactions are sufficient to understand the instability and relational nature of power. By concentrating on these narrative elements, this research addresses how power is not only oppressive but also contested and subject to change through the relational dynamics between characters.

## DISCUSSION

The analysis applies Foucault’s theory to examine how Voldemort and Grindelwald use sovereign, disciplinary, biopower, and governmental power, as well as how resistance forms in their systems. Key scenes and dialogues *from Deathly Hallows Part 1 and 2* and the two *Fantastic Beasts* films are used as evidence to support these findings.

**Table 1.** Power Strategies Used by Voldemort and Grindelwald Over Their Followers

No	Foucauldian’s Power Strategies	Grindelwald	Voldemort
1	Disciplinary	5	2
2	Sovereign	5	15
3	Biopower	5	1
4	Governmentality	26	0
5	Resistance	14	6
<b>Total</b>		<b>55</b>	<b>24</b>

The data presented in Table 1. shows the power strategies employed by Grindelwald and Voldemort toward their followers, based on Foucault's theoretical framework. A total of 79 data were collected, consisting of 55 related to Grindelwald and 24 related to Voldemort. The findings reveal a clear divergence in their methodologies of control. Grindelwald's strategies are most prominent in the governmentality category with 26 data, followed by resistance with 14 data, and disciplinary power, sovereign power, and biopower with 5 data each.

### **Analysis of Voldemort's and Grindelwald's power strategies using Michel Foucault's concept of power.**

This analysis highlights the sharp contrast between Voldemort's brute-force domination and Grindelwald's sophisticated ideological manipulation. By examining their use of sovereign power, disciplinary power, biopower, and governmentality, the discussion reveals how these strategies shaped their regimes, fueled distinct forms of resistance, and determined the unique trajectories of their downfall. The sections that follow analyze Voldemort's fear-driven tyranny, Grindelwald's persuasive political approach, and the inevitable resistance each system provoked.

### **Disciplinary Power**

Disciplinary power controls individuals by shaping their behavior and bodies through surveillance, training, and normalization. It operates in institutions like schools, prisons, and hospitals, where people learn to internalize rules and self-regulate. Its goal is to make individuals both obedient and productive, bodies become useful by being controlled, and controlled by being useful.

### Excerpts 1

#### Grindelwald

*Grindelwald clambers inside and retrieves the vial from Abernathy's mouth by the chain, casting a spell that grants Abernathy a new forked tongue.*

*Grindelwald: You have joined a noble cause, my friend.*

(00:14: 56 - 00:14:59)

#### Voldemort

*Lucius: Look closely, son. (He tensely said, coming closer to draco and put his hand on the back of his neck.)*

*If we are the ones to hand Potter over to the dark lord... everything would be forgiven.*

*All -all would be as it was, you understand?*

(02:02:17 - 02:02:19)

Grindelwald's interaction with Abernathy demonstrates disciplinary power by inscribing loyalty directly onto the body. The physical alteration of Abernathy's tongue into a forked shape symbolizes his obedience, transforming his body into proof of devotion to Grindelwald's "noble cause." This alteration functions not only as a reward but also as a form of ideological branding, aligning the follower's identity with Grindelwald's ideals. By modifying Abernathy's body, Grindelwald encourages self-regulation, where compliance becomes internalized, and obedience is tied to personal identity rather than external force. In contrast, Lucius Malfoy's influence over Draco operates through fear-based interpersonal coercion, which can be seen as capillary power in Foucault's terms. Lucius's promise that "everything will be forgiven" if Draco captures Harry uses emotional leverage and appeals to Draco's desire for restored status, employing negative reinforcement rather than ideological transformation. This method relies on Draco's self-monitoring and fear, rather than the internalization of a belief system. Unlike Grindelwald's use of symbolic bodily alteration to instil discipline, Lucius uses the psychological pressure of love, fear, and status to enforce compliance.

While both systems enforce internalized norms, the key difference lies in their method of control: Grindelwald shapes his followers' identity through physical transformation, subtly promoting self-regulation through ideological devotion, while Voldemort, through Lucius,

enforces compliance via psychological coercion and fear. Although both methods promote obedience, the borders of power are more evident in Voldemort's regime, where emotional pressure leads to resistance in the form of moral doubt (as seen in Draco's hesitation). Grindelwald's system, although seemingly more sophisticated, is still susceptible to resistance, particularly when followers question the ideology behind the body modification. This aligns with Kaziliūnaitė (2020), who argues that disciplinary power extends beyond formal institutions and operates through surveillance, normalization, and psychological regulation. In Grindelwald's case, biopower is exerted through the control of identity and body, creating followers who internalize discipline. However, the resistance in Grindelwald's system, though not overt, reveals that even internalized obedience is vulnerable to questioning and doubt. Similarly, Lucius's coercion under Voldemort highlights how power operates through fear, and how even fear-based compliance can lead to passive resistance, as seen in Draco's moral hesitation. Both instances reveal that even the most refined power structures cannot entirely suppress internal resistance or doubt.

## Excerpts 2

### Grindelwald

*Rosier: When we've won, they'll flee cities in the millions. They've had their time.*

*Grindelwald: We don't say such things out loud. We want only freedom. Freedom to be ourselves.*

(00:24: 24 - 00:24:35)

### Voldemort

*Bellatrix: [Panting] Don't be shy, sweetie. (She grabs Draco's hand gently and pull him closer.)*

*Now, if this isn't who we think it is, Draco and we call him, he'll kill us all.*

*We need to be absolutely sure.*

(02:02:43 - 02:03:56)

Grindelwald's correction of Rosier, where he stops the discussion of violent plans and reframes it as a fight for freedom, exemplifies his use of disciplinary power. By controlling language and prohibiting expressions that cast their movement in violent terms, Grindelwald shapes the narrative to align with his ideological goals. His insistence on freedom as the

central theme redefines their actions and internalizes norms within his followers, guiding their thoughts and behaviours without the need for overt coercion. This form of linguistic regulation becomes a subtle, yet powerful tool for ideological normalization, embedding obedience within the very language they use.

In contrast, Voldemort's use of coercion, as seen through Bellatrix's intimidation of Draco, relies on fear and physical force to enforce compliance. Bellatrix's warning that Voldemort will kill them all if Draco fails enforces self-regulation through anxiety rather than ideological adherence. Here, the emphasis is not on internalizing a belief system but on surviving under intense pressure. Draco's hesitation reflects a fear-based response, showing that under Voldemort's regime, power is maintained through the threat of violence and physical domination, which contrasts sharply with Grindelwald's more sophisticated method of using language and ideology to create compliant subjects.

This comparison between Grindelwald's ideological discipline and Voldemort's coercive control illustrates how both forms of power work to shape their followers, but in fundamentally different ways. While Grindelwald creates internalized, ideological compliance by guiding thought and speech, Voldemort's regime operates on fear and psychological intimidation, leading to compliance under duress. This aligns with Ajie et al. (2023), who argue that disciplinary power works through regulation of language, behavior, and public presentation. In Grindelwald's case, compliance emerges from internalized beliefs, while in Voldemort's case, it is enforced through coercion and fear. Both forms of power reveal how language, behavior, and embodied actions are shaped by authority, with resistance manifesting in different forms depending on the method of control.

**Excerpts 3**

**Grindelwald**

*Krall: Well, we know where the boy is, don't we? Why don't we grab him and leave!*

**Voldemort**

*None*

*Grindelwald (to Krall): He must come to me freely – and he will.  
(00:49:02 - 00:49:10)*

Grindelwald's rejection of Krall's suggestion to simply "grab him and leave" illustrates his use of disciplinary power by controlling not just the objective, but also the method and timing of actions. His insistence that Credence must come "freely" underscores his need to regulate the procedure itself, establishing his approach as the normative standard. This correction to Krall's plan reveals how Grindelwald enforces ideological conformity, guiding his followers to internalize his methods as the only acceptable course of action. The directive to act voluntarily creates the illusion of freedom while subtly enforcing compliance within Grindelwald's ideological framework.

By monitoring and intervening in Krall's approach, Grindelwald exemplifies hierarchical observation, ensuring that subordinates align with his goals. This reinforces Foucault's concept of biopower, where power is exerted by controlling not only actions but also the procedures and thoughts that lead to those actions. As Krall's doubt about the procedure emerges, it signals that even in a highly controlled system, resistance can manifest not as open defiance, but in the form of subtle questioning of the established norms.

This situation illustrates how Grindelwald's power, though built on internalized norms and ideological control, is still vulnerable to challenges in the form of resistance to the methods he imposes. Krall's moment of doubt signals the limits of Grindelwald's influence, suggesting that even when compliance appears voluntary, it can still be contested when the underlying ideology is questioned. This reflects Foucault's view that power is never absolute, but always relational, constantly susceptible to resistance and negotiation from within.

In contrast, Voldemort's public spectacle as exemplified in his more direct use of violence works differently. His approach does not rely on the internalization of ideology or the subtle regulation of actions, but on the overt display of terror, which can suppress open resistance but does not allow for the same kind of internal compliance or voluntary submission that Grindelwald's methods aim to create.

This comparison reveals how Grindelwald's more refined use of power through procedural regulation and ideological alignment exposes the inherent fragility of his system, with resistance appearing in the form of doubt or questioning. In contrast, Voldemort's coercive power might quash overt defiance, but lacks the same subtle manipulation of thought that Grindelwald achieves through biopower and disciplinary control.

This aligns with Ismael and Saleh (2023), whose Foucauldian reading of *The Handmaid's Tale* shows authority enforcing obedience by dictating proper procedures and monitoring subordinates for ideological consistency. Like Gilead's structured control, Grindelwald normalizes specific methods to produce self-regulating followers. His strategy replaces direct force with managed conditions that create the appearance of voluntary compliance, ensuring obedience through internalized norms rather than overt violence.

### **Sovereign Power**

Sovereign power is a centralized, traditional authority, often held by monarchs or autocrats, that rules through visible force and the legal right to punish or kill. It enforces order through laws, prohibitions, and public displays of domination like executions, using external coercion rather than internalized control to maintain hierarchy and authority.

#### **Excerpts 4**

##### **Grindelwald**

*...blood spatters the flagstones, the glimmering blade in Grindelwald's hand running red. Queenie's breath catches - almost too softly to hear.*

(00:13:55 - 00:14:02)

##### **Voldemort**

*Snape studies the scene, then his eyes rise. Revolving slowly near the ceiling, as if suspended by an invisible rope, is an unconscious woman (Charity Burbage).*

(00:04:32 - 00:04:36)

Grindelwald's killing of the qilin, witnessed only by Queenie, represents a covert act of violence, symbolic in nature, yet profound in its ideological manipulation. This act, which violates sacred life, is not just a physical elimination but also a symbolic gesture that reorders moral meaning. It conceals its violence while using it as a tool to legitimize his rule, turning the creature's purity into a political asset. However, this hidden violence highlights a limit in Grindelwald's power, as its covert nature cannot be entirely hidden from his followers, revealing a subtle form of resistance. Though Grindelwald seeks to manipulate the ideological narrative, the concealed violence still carries the potential for rejection or doubt from within the system.

In stark contrast, Voldemort's approach to violence is overt and public. His suspension of Charity Burbage is an explicit pantomime of terror, where death becomes a spectacle designed not only to instill fear but also to assert his absolute authority. The public nature of this act, performed in front of his followers, aims to reinforce obedience through terror, turning the act of killing into an exhibition of sovereign power the ability to dominate life and death.

While Grindelwald uses covert violence to manipulate ideology and appear more subtle in his control, Voldemort's public display functions as a ritualized assertion of dominance. Both leaders use death not just to eliminate but to communicate their dominance, yet Grindelwald's violence remains symbolic, while Voldemort's violence is theatrical, marked by its visibility and public execution.

This comparison reveals that while Grindelwald's power may appear less direct, it still holds its own limitations. The resistance that arises from within Grindelwald's more covert violence even if subtle shows the fragility of his control. The hidden violence, although not fully visible to the public, still creates the potential for questioning and resistance among his followers, as the covert nature of the act cannot completely erase doubt.

Both approaches reflect Foucault's concept of sovereign power, where control over life and death is not merely about eliminating a target but about communicating dominance. As Foucault argues, sovereign power is personalized rule that is often enforced through

visible or symbolic violence. However, the limits of both systems emerge when resistance is internally generated whether through doubt in Grindelwald's covert violence or fear-induced compliance under Voldemort's overt terror.

This aligns with Munir and Liaqat (2024), who describe sovereign power as personalized rule expressed through symbolic or public violence that reaffirms supremacy. Violence functions as a spectacle and assertion of exclusive rights over life. Grindelwald's covert symbolic act and Voldemort's ritualized display both secure obedience through the performance of absolute control, but resistance within these systems still reveals the inherent limits of their sovereign power.

### Excerpts 5

#### Grindelwald

*Credence: I don't think so. (With frightening speed, Grindelwald throws Credence back from the pool with a powerful burst of water and pins him to the wall. Grindelwald apparates from the water, his fingers laced about Credence's throat and face. His eyes glitter with anger.)*

*Grindelwald: That's twice you've failed me! Do you not understand the danger you've put me in?!*

(01:33:03 - 01:33:12)

#### Voldemort

*[Screaming is heard from the cellar.]*

*Voldemort: Wormtail! (the people at the table turn to Wormtail) Have I not spoken to you about keeping our guest quiet?*

*Wormtail: Yes, my Lord. Right away, my Lord.*

(00:06:08 - 00:06:17)

Grindelwald's assault on Credence demonstrates sovereign power through direct physical domination. By pinning him to the wall and gripping his throat, he shows that Credence's safety depends on obedience, using violence as a reminder that punishment is his to dispense. The act need not be public; what matters is the assertion of bodily control and the threat of harm. Voldemort's rebuke of Wormtail reflects the same logic, though less physically. His reaction to the screams from the cellar signals that suffering occurs only under

his command, and by correcting Wormtail publicly, he reinforces that even violence must align with his authority.

This aligns with Munir and Shahi (2024), who define sovereign power as personalized domination enforced through the threat or enactment of punishment, injury, or death. Their examples, from Persian imperial rule to British colonialism, show that sovereign power governs bodies and survival, not merely policies. Grindelwald's assault and Voldemort's control over torture operate similarly: violence becomes a symbolic performance of supremacy, reminding followers that authority flows solely from the leader's will.

### Excerpts 6

#### Grindelwald

*(Grindelwald savors the adulation.)*

*Vogel: Gellert Grindelwald is the new leader of the magical world by acclamation.*

*(As the crowd roars, Acolytes on either side of Newt shove him up the steps. Grindelwald nods to Rosier and she brings forth Jacob.)*

(01:52:19 - 01:52:30)

#### Voldemort

*Voldemort: If I am to kill him, I must do it with another's wand. Come, surely one of you would like the honor? Mm? (he holds on Lucius's chairs) What about you, Lucius?*

(00:06:19 - 00:07:18)

Both Grindelwald and Voldemort use public displays of power to assert their dominance and reinforce their control over their followers. In Grindelwald's case, his rise to power is symbolically marked when Vogel publicly names him leader, a moment where celebration quickly shifts into a coercive display of authority. Grindelwald, now publicly legitimized, immediately summons Jacob to the stage, transforming the crowd's adulation into a tool of power. By exposing a political opponent before the crowd, he combines symbolic legitimacy with the power to punish, making his rise not only public but also a statement of

absolute control. This public performance signals that his power is both ideological and coercive, blending public acclaim with the implicit threat of violence.

In contrast, Voldemort's public spectacle is even more overt. His intent to kill is declared publicly, but he demands another's wand, transforming the act of execution into a ritual that tests loyalty. Voldemort's public display is not empowering for his followers; it is instead coercive, forcing participation under the threat of death. The ritualistic execution serves as a stark reminder that survival depends entirely on Voldemort's discretion, emphasizing his control over life and death. The spectacle, designed to instill fear, makes it clear that power in Voldemort's regime is wielded through visible terror rather than the ideological manipulation seen in Grindelwald's approach.

This comparison highlights a key limit of power: while public performances of power can enforce obedience, they also risk revealing the instability of the power dynamics when resistance or doubt arises. Grindelwald's performance, although staged for public adoration, still carries the potential for resistance when public support is questioned or internal doubt creeps in. Similarly, Voldemort's coercive display of violence may suppress open rebellion, but it does not foster loyalty or ideological alignment, and compliance is achieved only under the threat of death.

These dynamics reflect Foucault's notion of sovereign power, where violence and domination are not only about physical control but also about symbolic acts that reinforce the ruler's authority. Foucault argues that public displays of violence often expose the limits of control because they invite internal resistance, whether in the form of doubt or covert defiance. Grindelwald's ideological manipulation and Voldemort's public execution both demonstrate the fragility of sovereign power even when it is publicly displayed, the authority exerted is always subject to resistance from within.

This aligns with Hussain et al. (2016), who argue that sovereign power is often enacted through ritualized, public acts that reinforce a ruler's authority over life and death. These spectacles enforce obedience through intimidation, with Grindelwald's political ritual and Voldemort's staged execution both serving as tools of domination. Yet, as Foucault suggests,

these public acts also reveal the inherent fragility of power, as they can provoke internal resistance or questioning from within the systems they aim to control.

### **Biopower**

Biopower is a form of power that governs populations by managing collective life processes, such as health, reproduction, and longevity, rather than controlling individuals directly. It works through policies, statistics, and systems that optimize a society's overall well-being and productivity, using subtle, preventative strategies instead of overt force, much like cultivating and regulating a garden rather than commanding subjects.

### **Excerpts 7**

#### **Grindelwald**

*Rosier: To annihilate non-wizards.*

*Grindelwald: Not all of them. Not all. We're not merciless. The beast of burden will always be necessary.*

*(They hear the sound of a child close at hand.)*

(00:24: 35 - 00:24:462)

#### **Voldemort**

*Voldemort: To those of you who do not know, we are joined tonight by Miss Charity Burbage (as Nagini starts to move toward the table) who, until recently, taught at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Her specialty was Muggle Studies. (Everyone laughs) It is Miss Burbage's belief that Muggles are not so different from us. She would, given her way, have us mate with them. (Bellatrix gags in disgust and everyone laughs.) To her, the mixture of magical and Muggle blood is not an abomination (he sits down) but something to be encouraged.*

(00:08: 19 - 00:09:00)

Grindelwald and Voldemort both exert biopower, but their approaches to managing life and populations differ significantly. Grindelwald's view of the "beast of burden" reveals his biopolitical strategy for controlling non-wizards. By reducing them to a laboring population, Grindelwald's method seeks to maximize productivity through controlled subjugation rather than destruction. His statement, "The beast of burden will always be

necessary," reflects his belief in the economic utility of non-wizards, framing their existence as subjugated labor to serve his broader goals. This approach highlights Foucault's concept of biopower, where power governs life through managing the function and utility of populations.

In contrast, Voldemort's biopower centers around blood purity and the regulation of reproduction. His humiliation of Charity Burbage for advocating for wizard-Muggle interbreeding reveals his racial ideology, which governs the biological purity of the wizarding world. Foucault's notion of "state racism" is evident in Voldemort's actions, where certain groups are excluded based on their biological makeup. He uses blood-purity as a means to regulate life, defining who is worthy of existence within his world. While Grindelwald seeks to control life through economic utility, Voldemort controls life through genetic purity.

Both Grindelwald and Voldemort demonstrate biopower through their respective control over who may live, reproduce, or serve. Grindelwald preserves life for economic use, while Voldemort preserves it for genetic purity, signaling a shift from sovereign power's right to kill to biopower's "make live and let die" approach. However, both methods have their limitations, as resistance can arise within the system, whether through ideological defection, such as opposition to blood purity, or through disobedience in the face of population control. This shows that despite their ability to control life, both characters' use of biopower faces challenges.

This aligns with Robina and Keerthana M. (2025), who argue that dystopian regimes employ biopower to regulate birth, health, and productivity through surveillance and ideological control. Their work supports the idea that both Grindelwald's exploitation of non-wizards and Voldemort's reproductive regulation highlight how authority governs biological existence, but also reveal the limits of such control when resistance emerges through differing ideologies or uncooperative subjects.

**Excerpts 8**

**Grindelwald**

*Grindelwald enters. A small child looks up, puzzled. Grindelwald contemplates him for a moment, then nods at Carrow and turns to leave.*

**Voldemort**

*None*

*(Another green flash as Grindelwald closes the door.)*

(00:24: 52 - 00:25:26)

Grindelwald's silent order to kill a child is an example of biopower in action, where the decision to eliminate certain populations is framed as necessary for societal health. Grindelwald's detached demeanor and his delegation of the task to Carrow highlight his biopolitical management of populations, treating individuals not as unique persons but as categories to be removed. In this case, the child is not an individual but part of a broader demographic strategy. Grindelwald's act of deciding who lives and dies demonstrates how biopower governs life through decisions about who is preserved and who is discarded.

This aligns with Maiza (2024), who explains that biopower turns biological life into a direct object of governance, where regimes like Grindelwald's can engineer populations through both ideological and coercive mechanisms. Grindelwald's action exemplifies this logic, as he calculates the removal of bodies that do not fit into his vision of a purified society. The elimination of those deemed unfit for his regime is seen not as a personal vendetta but as a necessary step for the future health of the population, reinforcing the biopolitical power he wields.

**Excerpts 9**

**Grindelwald**

*Slowly, Grindelwald retracts his wand, extracting a translucent strand as he does. Queenie attempts to remain composed, watching as - for a fleeting moment - a sense of loss ripples through Kama's face.*

**Voldemort**

*None*

00:53:46 - 00:54:08)

Grindelwald's extraction of Kama's memory is another form of biopower, but this time focused on controlling not the body, but the mind. By altering Kama's memories, Grindelwald reshapes his identity and political alignment, ensuring his compliance through psychological manipulation rather than physical domination. This biopolitical intervention shows how power can regulate not just physical existence but subjectivity and identity, reshaping an individual's perception of their past to ensure alignment with Grindelwald's ideological goals. The sense of loss Kama experiences indicates how biopower can affect one's ability to resist, as it alters the very conditions through which agency is formed.

This psychological alteration reflects Foucault's view that modern power governs not just through overt coercion, but through the management of thought, perception, and subjectivity. Grindelwald's intervention in Kama's mind exemplifies how biopolitical power works by shaping an individual's inner life, thus controlling their resistance. Dhillon and Sharma (2024) similarly argue that biopower operates by regulating thought and experience, ensuring that subjects remain aligned with the regime's goals. Grindelwald's manipulation of memory is a potent reminder of how internalized control can be just as powerful as physical domination in suppressing resistance.

### **Governmentality**

Governmentality is a form of power that governs by shaping how people think and behave rather than using force or law. It encourages individuals to regulate themselves in line with broader goals, using institutions, norms, and subtle guidance rather than direct commands. Because it works through influence rather than authority, it can be exercised not just by the state but also by movements, corporations, and other groups that shape behavior through persuasion and social control.

**Excerpts 10**

**Grindelwald**

*Grimmson: The Ministry won't be happy when I tell them I've missed. They know my reputation.*

*Grindelwald: Listen to me. The disapproval of cowards is praise to the brave. Your name will be written in glory when wizards rule the world. And the clock is ticking faster. You watch over Credence. Keep him safe. For the greater good.*

*Grimmson: For the greater good.*  
(01:04: 23 - 01:04:53)

**Voldemort**

*None*

Grindelwald's persuasion of Grimmson exemplifies Foucault's concept of governmentality, where power operates not through direct force but by shaping values and beliefs. Initially, Grimmson is concerned about his reputation with the Ministry, signaling his loyalty to institutional authority. Grindelwald reframes this fear, calling the Ministry "cowards" and redefining defiance as courage. By doing this, Grindelwald transforms Grimmson's moral compass, making compliance appear as a heroic duty rather than submission. The moral obligation to protect Credence for the "greater good" becomes not just a political strategy, but a shared ideological mission, making obedience feel voluntary rather than coerced.

This reshaping of Grimmson's identity illustrates governmentality, where Grindelwald guides followers to regulate their own actions in line with the movement's goals. His rhetoric encourages Grimmson to internalize obedience, making it appear as though he is acting autonomously rather than under external compulsion. According to Zaheer et al. (2025), this process is akin to how governmentality shapes individuals in dystopian systems like in Brave New World, where subjects self-regulate to align with the ruling ideology. In this context, Grimmson's obedience feels justified, but the internalization of power and ideology exposes a limit of Grindelwald's strategy: while the voluntary compliance may appear stable,

resistance remains possible through ideological defection or doubt about the regime's moral standing.

**Excerpts 11**

**Grindelwald**

**Voldemort**

(01:53: 50 - 01:54:09)

*Grindelwald onstage as the audience*      *None*

*explodes with delight.*

*Their hysteria builds as he stands*

*there, part demagogue, part rock star.*

(01:53: 50 - 01:54:09)

Grindelwald's rally shows another dimension of his governmentality, as he governs through emotion and voluntary alignment rather than force. At the rally, he is not just a political leader, but a cultural icon, blending ideology with spectacle. The enthusiasm of the crowd reveals that Grindelwald's power works by shaping followers' self-perception, making them feel like members of a righteous movement rather than subjects subjected to external commands. By offering a shared destiny and moral purpose, he creates subjects who regulate themselves, internalizing the movement's goals and acting in alignment with them.

According to Faiz et al. (2025), modern governance shapes beliefs and desires so that individuals conform to ruling aims not out of fear, but because they voluntarily embrace the ideology. Similarly, Grindelwald's mix of charisma and ideology generates followers who internalize his goals as their own. The voluntary participation of the crowd signifies that obedience is based on personal conviction rather than coercion. However, this strategy still faces limits: while self-regulation appears empowering, it remains susceptible to resistance when followers begin to question or reject the ideology. Grindelwald's power, therefore, is fragile as it hinges on the voluntary participation of his followers, leaving room for ideological defection or rebellion when dissatisfaction arises.

**Excerpts 12**

**Grindelwald**

*Grindelwald, gesturing at the crowd to settle.*

*Grindelwald: My brothers, my sisters, my friends: the great gift of your applause is not for me.*

*(off noises of denial)*

*No. It is for yourselves.*

*(01:54: 11 - 01:54:25)*

**Voldemort**

*None*

Grindelwald's use of inclusive rhetoric further demonstrates his strategy of governmentality, as he redirects praise back to the crowd, ensuring they see themselves as active participants in the movement. By addressing them as "my brothers, my sisters, my friends", he creates a sense of intimacy and dissolves hierarchy, which makes followers feel as though they own the movement collectively. Rejecting personal applause reframes the movement as a shared cause, making followers feel a sense of belonging and purpose, rather than being mere subjects of power.

In Foucault's terms, this is a clear example of governmentality, where power works by shaping identity and self-understanding, making individuals willingly act in line with the regime's aims. Khan and Rasool (2024) argue that governmentality reshapes identity, creating an illusion of autonomy while ensuring that subjects remain compliant with the regime's ideological objectives. However, this illusion of autonomy exposes a limit of Grindelwald's power: while the followers feel they are the movement, their compliance is still shaped by Grindelwald's rhetoric. This creates an underlying hierarchy that may foster compliance, but also leaves room for resistance when followers become aware of the manipulation behind the rhetoric.

## Resistance

Resistance is not outside power but arises from within it, forming a continuous, reciprocal relationship. Wherever power operates, resistance naturally emerges—not just as opposition, but as a productive force that can challenge, reshape, or even reinforce power. It appears in varied forms, from open rebellion to subtle acts of non-compliance. This dynamic shows that power is never absolute; it is always negotiated and constantly adapting in response to the resistance it generates.

### Excerpts 13

#### *Grindelwald*

*Krall: You really think that he can kill the great -- can kill Albus Dumbledore?*

*Grindelwald: (whispers) I know he can. But will you be with us when that happens, Krall? Will you?*

(00:50:03 - 00:50:21)

#### *Voldemort*

*Bellatrix: "Well?"*

*Draco: (terrified, hesitant) "I... I can't be sure."*

(02:01:11 - 02:02:17)

Krall's dialogue with Grindelwald shows resistance as discursive scepticism: he questions whether Credence can truly kill Dumbledore, challenging the narrative rather than Grindelwald's authority. Grindelwald responds with persuasion instead of punishment, reframing doubt as a test of loyalty and pulling Krall back into ideological alignment. Resistance is thus absorbed because power works through seduction and narrative framing.

Draco's hesitation before Bellatrix represents a different form of resistance rooted in fear and moral conflict. Under Voldemort's coercive regime, even pausing becomes dangerous; resistance must be silent and momentary, driven by self-preservation rather than open dissent. Whereas Krall resists through scepticism within a persuasive system, Draco resists through withholding action under violent domination.

Vakili (2024) supports this view, arguing that resistance is embedded within power relations and shaped by the structures it confronts. Krall's doubt is reabsorbed into ideology, while Draco's hesitation persists only as constrained, covert defiance.

#### Excerpts 14

##### Grindelwald

*Krall, hesitating. Then he decides the circle is the better option, braces himself, runs into the fire –*

*– and is consumed.*

(02:00:54 - 02:01:03)

##### Voldemort

*Bellatrix: Call him. (As she continued pointing her wand to Hermione's neck.)*

*(The others looked towards Draco)*

*(Draco stayed put, hesitation filling him as his father stands closer to him, expectant.)*

*Bellatrix: Call him! (She yelled)*

*(In the end, Lucius stepped forward and draw his sleeves up, his hand preparing to call his lord through the Dark Mark, only to be interrupted by a squeaking sound coming from above.)*

(02:08:11 - 02:08:36)

Krall's moment of hesitation before entering the fire illustrates a brief moment of doubt within Grindelwald's regime. Despite his initial resistance, Krall ultimately succumbs to the pressure and enters the fire, demonstrating how ideological coercion collapses individual reluctance when no alternative is presented. His momentary defiance is absorbed into the system, showcasing how Grindelwald's persuasive authority works to neutralize resistance and ensure compliance. Foucault's concept of biopower aligns here, as power structures internalize compliance, making even the slightest hesitation eventually align with the system's goals.

In contrast, Draco's hesitation under Voldemort's violent rule represents a different form of resistance. Instead of engaging directly, Draco resists by withholding action, remaining frozen despite the external pressure from Bellatrix and his father's expectation. This inaction can be seen as a passive form of resistance that forces others to act in his place, subtly challenging Voldemort's regime without confrontation. This aligns with Wang's (2024) Foucauldian analysis of *Bartleby, the Scrivener*, where resistance is framed as silent non-compliance rather than overt rebellion. Draco's inward refusal exemplifies how even under intense coercion, individuals can maintain resistance through passive defiance, signalling the limits of Voldemort's domination.

Krall's momentary defiance contrasts with Draco's covert resistance, revealing the different strategies each antagonist employs to assert control. Grindelwald uses persuasive authority to force compliance, but Krall's hesitation highlights that even under ideological persuasion, moral doubt can still emerge as a challenge to power. On the other hand, Voldemort's reliance on physical coercion forces passive resistance, where Draco's inaction becomes a form of defiance that is covert but no less significant. Both examples show how resistance operates within power relations, indicating that even under the most oppressive regimes, the power dynamics are not absolute, and internal resistance remains a force, albeit in different forms.

## Excerpts 15

### Grindelwald

*She reads his mind, turns, hesitates, then walks into the blue fire.*

(02:02:41 - 02:02:47)

### Voldemort

*Dumbledore: The prophecy does not refer to a woman. It spoke about a boy born at the end of July.*

*Severus: Yes, but he thinks it's her son. He intends to hunt them down now, to kill them. Hide her. Hide them all. I beg of you.*

*Dumbledore: What will you give me in exchange, Severus?*

*Severus: Anything.*

(01:17:35 - 01:17:58)

Queenie's emotional resistance before the blue fire exemplifies the personal, emotional hesitation that marks a form of resistance under Grindelwald's influence. Queenie's initial doubt arises from her emotional attachment to Jacob, signaling personal resistance before she ultimately surrenders to Grindelwald's ideology. Her emotional conflict is absorbed into compliance, showing how Grindelwald's power can redirect personal doubt into active participation. This dynamic demonstrates that, while Grindelwald may initially struggle with emotional resistance, his coercive power can absorb it when no viable alternatives are presented.

In contrast, Snape's resistance is a more strategic and enduring defiance. Snape secretly undermines Voldemort's plans from within the Death Eater ranks, revealing sustained covert resistance. Unlike Queenie, whose emotional resistance dissolves into compliance, Snape's defiance persists as a covert strategy, showing how Voldemort's power even though coercive and totalitarian can be challenged internally. Rakhmatullaeva (2025) argues that resistance in dystopian power structures may either be momentary (as with Queenie) or long-term (as with Snape). Foucault's theory on governmentality and biopower supports this distinction, demonstrating that while Grindelwald can absorb emotional resistance, Voldemort's power

is challenged from within by a strategic covert defiance that endures despite the intensity of control.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study has examined the contrasting power strategies of Voldemort and Grindelwald through Foucault's lens of sovereign power, disciplinary power, biopower, governmentality, and resistance. Voldemort's regime, based on fear and spectacle, enforces obedience but fails to foster true loyalty, making his control fragile. On the other hand, Grindelwald's use of ideology and biopower aims for deeper, internalized compliance, presenting his vision as a moral cause. However, his eventual turn to coercion undermines this trust and prompts resistance and disillusionment among his followers. These power dynamics illustrate Foucault's assertion that power is relational, unstable, and inevitably contested, offering valuable insights into how authority, obedience, and resistance function within sociopolitical contexts.

Beyond the theoretical analysis, this research also highlights how the power strategies of Voldemort and Grindelwald offer a critique of contemporary forms of authoritarianism, populism, and ideological manipulation. Voldemort's reliance on fear-based coercion mirrors modern authoritarian regimes, where power is maintained through violence and intimidation but remains susceptible to internal resistance. Similarly, Grindelwald's use of moral rhetoric to justify his rule parallels the tactics of populist movements, which often employ ideological appeals to gain support, only to resort to coercion when their promises begin to fail. Both characters serve as reflections on the exercise of power in the real world, revealing that even the most powerful regimes cannot completely suppress resistance, whether in the form of moral doubt, silent rebellion, or ideological defection. These insights demonstrate the inherent instability of such regimes and underscore the limits of power, as outlined by Foucault, showing that no power structure, however dominant, is immune to challenge and eventual collapse.

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