

**‘Harry Potter and the Transmedia
Wizarding World’:**

**Paratexts of the *Harry Potter*
Franchise, 2011-17**

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Abstract

This doctoral thesis examines five *Harry Potter* paratexts created between 2011-17 and seeks to understand their impact upon the franchise's trajectory following the end of the *Potter* books (in 2007) and films (in 2011). As a piece of long-form analysis, the research represents a significant addition to scholarship on contemporary film franchising and *Harry Potter* more specifically. The following work shows how the *Potter* franchise has been purposely sustained, extended and reworked as a result of the proliferation of paratexts, and explores the production contexts of those paratexts as well as their structuring textual concerns.

The thesis takes a case study approach of five paratexts created between 2011-17. Although each chapter is dedicated to a specific paratext, the discussions in these chapters are interconnected due to what I note is an increasingly coherent transmedia strategy across the *Harry Potter* franchise during this period. The first chapter will examine Pottermore (2011—), a website and e-bookstore owned by J.K. Rowling. The second will discuss the 'Wizarding World of *Harry Potter*' theme parks (2011—), spaces that replicate the Hogsmeade and Diagon Alley film sets. The third will look at the 'Warner Bros. Studio Tour, London: The Making of *Harry Potter*' (2012—), a museum and interactive experience based at Warner Bros. Studios, Leavesden. The fourth is dedicated to *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* (2016), the first instalment in a five-film blockbuster series. Finally, the fifth chapter explores the stageplay *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* (2016) and its status as a transitional franchising text.

This research utilises two methodological frameworks, textual analysis and empirical research, in order to shed light on the importance of paratexts – traditionally considered “ancillary materials” – in understanding how contemporary franchising works. I use Jonathan Gray's work as a springboard to consider the role of paratexts in transforming the *Harry Potter* franchise from an adaptation-based phenomenon into a transmedia world-building commercial force.

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Notes on the Text

Throughout this thesis I refer to novels and films in the *Harry Potter* series by shortened titles. These are as follows:

Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone (UK) / *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (US)
= *Philosopher's Stone*

Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets = *Chamber of Secrets*

Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban = *Prisoner of Azkaban*

Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire = *Goblet of Fire*

Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix = *Order of the Phoenix*

Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince – *Half-Blood Prince*

Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows = *Deathly Hallows*

I treat the films *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 1* and *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 2* as separate productions, and refer to them as *Deathly Hallows Part 1* and *Deathly Hallows Part 2*.

For all other instances of cited books and films, I first use the official title followed by, if stated, a shortened form.

Introduction

Page—Screen—Paratext

“Whether you come back by page or by the big screen, Hogwarts will always be there to welcome you home.”¹

On 7th July 2011, J.K. Rowling shared the stage with cast and crew from the *Harry Potter* films at the *Deathly Hallows Part 2* premiere in London. The lavish affair in Trafalgar Square featured speeches from a number of key figures from the franchise, and was filmed and transmitted around the world. 2011 would prove to be a watershed moment in the history of the franchise: the *Potter* arc – the books and films – were at the pinnacle of their success, after over a decade at the top of bestseller lists and the global box office. Simultaneously, it marked the end of a 14-year-long narrative journey that had exploded into a pop culture phenomenon. The *Deathly Hallows Part 2* premiere, featuring a 1.2km-long red carpet and thousands of fans (some of whom reportedly camped for up to seven days)², epitomised the ground-breaking popular success of the franchise at that cultural moment. It also symbolised the creative ascendancy of J.K. Rowling: her speech paid tribute to key figures involved in the film productions, but her own presence on-stage tacitly signalled her inclusion in that same hallowed company. In particular, her claim that fans could come back “by page or by ... screen”³ collapsed the differences between book and film texts, and staked her creative authority over both.

Although the *Potter* books and films had dominated the media landscape throughout the first decade of the new millennium, the franchise has continued to evolve since the series’ conclusion in 2011, however. As this thesis will explore, *Harry Potter* is not merely confined to the “page” or the “screen”, but has been and continues to be reimagined and reconfigured through a number of extratextual products, texts, and experiences – paratexts – that rework the existing *Potter* texts as well as extend the fictional universe into new settings and new cultural forms. What was originally “*Harry Potter*” could now more accurately be termed the

¹Warner Bros. Pictures, ““Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - Part 2” Red Carpet Premiere,” video, uploaded July 2011. Accessed September 11, 2018. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IXXX14F_lgo

²Tim Masters, “Harry Potter premiere: Stars and fans bid tearful goodbye,” *BBC News*, accessed September 11, 2018. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-14060308>

³Warner Bros. Pictures, “Red Carpet Premiere.”

“Wizarding World”, a development which has been echoed in the introduction of the term as a branded trademark in 2017⁴. The “Wizarding World” represents a transmedial, world-building franchising force that continues to expand from *Harry Potter*’s roots as a book series and subsequent film adaptation. The *Deathly Hallows Part 2* film premiere therefore marked a crucial point of transition, a time when a celebration of the *Harry Potter* texts would soon give way to shifting franchising strategies designed to sustain the brand while generating new intellectual properties. The concept of transition is a recurring theme that emerges throughout this thesis, in fact: as the *Harry Potter* franchise entered into a period of flux, so is this arguably echoed in the nature of many of its paratexts. As the following chapters will explore, transformation, transition and a sense of duality characterise many of the new products and experiences generated since the end of the *Potter* books and films: from the ‘Warner Bros. Studio Tour, London: The Making of *Harry Potter*’ (hereafter ‘the Studio Tour’ or ‘the Tour’), for instance, which incorporates occasionally clashing conventions of the theme park and the museum, to *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* (hereafter *Cursed Child*), whose narrative, setting and stage design is in part preoccupied with blurring the boundaries between past and present.

This thesis considers the role that paratexts – products, texts, and experiences that exist outside but “intrinsically part of” a media text⁵ – played in sustaining and extending the *Harry Potter* franchise between 2011-2017. Although paratexts were also present and important in the years preceding 2011, I have selected several significant paratexts released after the end of the *Potter* books and films in order to understand and evaluate the brand strategies at work in this crucial stage in the franchise’s development. The structure of this thesis is split five ways: the first chapter explores Pottermore and J.K. Rowling’s authorship, and offers ways of understanding the rest of the thesis; the second, the ‘Wizarding World of *Harry Potter*’ (hereafter ‘Wizarding World’) theme parks; third, the Studio Tour in Watford, England; fourth, the film *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* (hereafter *Fantastic Beasts*); and fifth, the stageplay *Cursed Child*, live in London and New York at time of writing. A concluding chapter draws together key themes and concepts, and proposes avenues for further research.

⁴“New logo marks an exciting year ahead for the Wizarding World,” *Pottermore*, accessed September 11, 2018. <https://www.pottermore.com/news/wizarding-world-brand-logo-launch>

⁵ Jonathan Gray, *Show Sold Separately: Promos, Spoilers, and Other Media Paratexts* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 16.

Thesis context.....

This thesis has undergone significant change since its inception in early 2014. The original idea that would eventually become this thesis was born in my Masters dissertation, which explored Foucault's theory of 'heterotopia' in relation to spaces in *Harry Potter*⁶. Although I had initially intended to explore spaces within the *Potter* texts specifically, the dissertation eventually became split in half, with one section exploring heterotopic spaces within the texts – moving staircases, the Room of Requirement, Hogwarts Castle – and the other exploring real-world franchise spaces such as the 'Wizarding World' theme parks. Coming into this PhD, then, I wanted to keep the commercial and cultural context in which *Harry Potter* operates at the heart of the work, while continuing to incorporate elements of textual interpretation.

Originally, this thesis was situated most neatly within adaptation studies: how paratexts circulate and produce meaning in a media environment containing both the *Potter* books and films, two overlapping – and arguably occasionally competing – *Harry Potter* texts, was an interesting site of tension. As I began my PhD, however, it became increasingly obvious that the *Harry Potter* franchise was undergoing a radical shift in strategic direction. *Fantastic Beasts* was first announced in September 2013⁷, with the *Cursed Child* announcement following in June 2015⁸; and one of the paratexts I had originally been most keen to discuss, Pottermore, was completely overhauled in September 2015. As a result, the focus of this thesis has developed over time in response to these changes, and the case studies I have chosen reflect what is arguably an intensification of a transmedia franchising strategy taking place between 2011-17, a period this thesis occasionally refers to as 'the post-*Harry Potter* era'.

There has been very little scholarly work conducted into this period of the *Harry Potter* franchise's history. This is likely due to its contemporary nature; I am particularly fortunate to be finishing this work in 2018, where I have been able to observe gradual shifts over the period of seven years since the end of the books and films. Indeed, however, one of the potential limitations of this thesis is that the *Harry Potter* franchise shows every sign that

⁶ Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," trans. Jay Miskowicz, *Diacritics* 16, no. 1 (Spring 1986): 22–27.

⁷ Michael Rosser, "Warner Bros, JK Rowling Team for Harry Potter Spin-Off Series," *Screen International*, September 12, 2013. Accessed October 7, 2018. ProQuest. <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1440852212?accountid=10472>

⁸ Elizabeth Paton, "JK Rowling reveals Harry Potter stage play to open in London," *Financial Times*, June 25, 2016. Accessed October 5, 2018. <https://www.ft.com/content/84ffa53a-1bda-11e5-a130-2e7db721f996>

it will continue to produce new content, and new paratexts, in the future, and therefore evolve beyond the scope of the present work. Although this necessarily presents a challenge to the ongoing relevance of the research produced here, this is a threat that by definition faces much work on contemporary popular culture, new media, and digital technologies; it is hoped that this thesis will nonetheless offer insight into a specific period of history in the *Harry Potter* franchise, and contribute to scholarship relating not only to *Harry Potter* but to the wider fields of contemporary franchising, the film industry, and adaptation studies.

In particular, this thesis aims to address a gap in *Harry Potter* scholarship that so far largely neglects the wider industrial conditions in which the franchise operates, and the strategies employed by various creative and commercial forces – such as Warner Bros. or J.K. Rowling – that have affected the trajectory of the franchise. My literature review expands in greater detail on the history of *Harry Potter* scholarship, but it bears mentioning here that academic work in the humanities has been slow on the whole to address the franchise in any structured or methodologically unified way. What work exists largely revolves around the political and social themes of *Harry Potter* or an examination of fan activities, and very few research groups or similar environments exist in which new research can flourish. Both fan studies and textual analysis facilitate important and valuable bodies of research, but they are by necessity limited without a consideration of the context in which *Harry Potter* has developed. Similarly, some of the more mainstream work on *Harry Potter* often fails to rigorously critique common cultural myths or perceptions surrounding the franchise. One particular example is J.K. Rowling's author-brand, which this thesis addresses in Chapter 1. Rowling's biographical background has been tied to *Harry Potter*'s success since the books' infancy: much of her public image revolved around her position as a first-time writer and poverty-stricken single mother in early-1990s Britain who went on to acquire immense cultural and financial success from writing *Harry Potter*. The cult of personality arising from her author-brand emphasises values such as humility and modesty, alongside notions of her creative genius and her preference for solitary introversion as perpetuated by her avoidance of traditional media publicity. It is important to interrogate these dominant ideas surrounding the *Harry Potter* franchise, and Rowling's authorship, in order to evaluate their promotional function and their role in defining the franchise. This is an issue I tackle at length in Chapter 1.

This thesis aims to contribute towards a growing field of *Harry Potter* scholarship that assesses its role as a media phenomenon, then, including from the likes of Paul Grainge⁹, Noel Brown¹⁰, Stephen Brown¹¹, and James Russell¹². The work of Jonathan Gray has also been particularly influential on the methodology of this thesis, as I will discuss in more detail later. In his book *Show Sold Separately*, Gray claims that paratexts “are not simply add-ons, spinoffs, and also-rans: they create texts, they manage them, and they fill them with many of the meanings that we associate with them”¹³. Instead of understanding the central media text – which, in this thesis, would constitute the *Potter* books or films – as the sole site of meaning, Gray seeks to shed light on how “how hype, synergy, promos, narrative extensions, and various forms of related textuality position, define, and create meaning for film and television”¹⁴. His work is situated within a field of scholarship that seeks to reevaluate the importance of sometimes overlooked media products – from marketing materials, to television idents, to trailers and posters – that might otherwise be dismissed as ancillary materials or mere exercises in profiteering. Gray’s work – and those following similar methodologies – is easily applied to *Harry Potter*, a franchise that has generated, and continues to generate, a vast number of paratexts as a result of its immense popularity and its translation into numerous media and cultural forms, from books to films to plays to theme parks.

An increased focus on paratexts, then, alongside texts, helps to elucidate the modes of media production and the strategies driving transmedia franchising in the twenty-first century. This thesis examines paratexts that might otherwise be considered subsidiary to the phenomenally successful *Harry Potter* book and film texts, in order to highlight their cultural and textual significance in the transmedia franchising environment. Although Gray is often focused on particular forms of promotional marketing such as “ads, previews, trailers, interviews with creative personnel ... merchandising, guerrilla marketing campaigns, fan creations, posters, games, DVDs, CDs”¹⁵, this thesis differs slightly in its approach. In this work, I identify five paratexts of the *Potter* franchise that specifically comment on, reinforce

⁹Paul Grainge, *Brand Hollywood: Selling Entertainment in a Global Media Age* (London: Routledge, 2008)

¹⁰Noel Brown, *British Children's Cinema: From the Thief of Bagdad to Wallace and Gromit* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2017); Noel Brown, *The Hollywood Family Film: A History, From Shirley Temple to Harry Potter* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012)

¹¹Stephen Brown, *Wizard! Harry Potter's Brand Magic* (London: Cyan Books, 2005)

¹²James Russell, “Authorship, Commerce and Harry Potter,” in *A Companion to Literature, Film, and Adaptation*, ed. Deborah Cartmell (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 391-407.

¹³Gray, *Show Sold Separately*, 16.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 13.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 11.

or challenge the *Potter* texts to a significant degree, either through their nature as a franchising tool or their potential to operate as texts in their own right. That is not to say that these paratexts do not fulfil a promotional function like other paratexts; but that the scale on which they operate is considerably larger than more traditional forms of promotion such as advertisements, marketing campaigns, film posters, and DVDs.

***Harry Potter: the phenomenon*.....**

The origins of *Harry Potter* are an oft-repeated story: J.K. Rowling is said to have conceived of the boy wizard while on a train from King’s Cross to Manchester, working on the first novel until 1995¹⁶. She faced numerous rejections from publishers for its uncharacteristically long word-count for a children’s novel, but eventually Bloomsbury published *Philosopher’s Stone* in the United Kingdom in 1997¹⁷. US publisher Scholastic then reportedly purchased the rights to publish the series in North America for \$105,000¹⁸. The global popularity of the books continued to rise, with *Goblet of Fire* selling over 250,000 copies in Britain in its opening day¹⁹ and 3 million copies in the US opening weekend²⁰. It spawned midnight release parties at local bookshops, something which would characterise all future *Potter* releases²¹. The final instalment, *Deathly Hallows*, sold 15 million copies worldwide in its first day²². By this point, books in the series had been translated into over 70 languages²³.

Although popular criticism of the books does exist – for instance, in 2000 Harold Bloom notably published a scathing review in the *Wall Street Journal*, claiming that the series possesses no “authentic imaginative vision”, and that “35 million readers” were wrong²⁴ – the *Harry Potter* novels also garnered considerable critical acclaim. The series has been credited with inspiring a young generation to read: for example, one 2005 study found that 59% of children surveyed claimed that the *Potter* books improved their reading skills,

¹⁶“Harry Potter – History of the Books,” Andrew Sims, *Hypable*, accessed September 11, 2018. <https://www.hypable.com/harry-potter/book-history/>

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Emma Jacobs, “How JK Rowling built a \$25bn business,” *Financial Times*, June 26, 2017. <https://www.ft.com/content/a24a70a6-55a9-11e7-9fed-c19e2700005f>

¹⁹“Potter sales smash record,” *BBC News*, July 11, 2000. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/entertainment/829238.stm>

²⁰“Harry Potter wizardry smashes UK book sales record,” *Reuters*, July 11, 2000. http://www.cesnur.org/recens/potter_048.htm

²¹“Potter sales,” *BBC News*. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/entertainment/829238.stm>

²²Andrew Sims, “History of the Books.”

²³“The List,” *PotterGlott*, accessed September 11, 2018. <https://www.potterglot.net/the-list/>

²⁴Harold Bloom, “Can 35 Million Book Buyers Be Wrong? Yes.” *Wall Street Journal*, July 11, 2000. Accessed October 9, 2018. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB963270836801555352>

and just over 50% said they wanted to read other books as a result of *Harry Potter*. Meanwhile, 84% of teachers surveyed said that *Potter* had a positive impact on children's literacy, and two-thirds claimed that the books had turned non-reading pupils into readers²⁵. The series has also been credited with transforming the children's publishing industry: Rebecca McNally, publishing director of Bloomsbury, claimed that *Harry Potter* has been largely responsible for the doubling in global sales of children's books in the two decades since its publication in 1997, and that its success purportedly opened up opportunities in children's publishing for new authors and styles of writing.²⁶ The ethics and politics of *Harry Potter*, too, are credited with inculcating young people with progressive and liberal values. A study published in the *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* aimed to discover if extended reading of the *Potter* novels increased positivity towards stigmatised social groups. The study concluded that "reading *Harry Potter* novels ameliorated already moderately positive (or not excessively negative) attitudes toward stigmatized out-groups" and that "reading the novels can potentially tackle actual prejudice-reduction".²⁷ The veracity of these ideas remains open for debate; it is important to note, however, that these notions of *Harry Potter*'s cultural value persist, and continue to inform wider perceptions of the brand.

Meanwhile, the *Harry Potter* films followed a similar pattern of increasing success following the release of Warner Bros.' adaptation of *Philosopher's Stone* in 2001. Although the books and the films are closely linked textually, some elements of the films' particular trajectory and production context are nonetheless different. Importantly, the films were produced within a media environment that was increasingly shaped by corporate conglomerates. Film studios such as Warner Bros., Twentieth Century Fox and Universal operate as subsidiaries of larger companies, a process which began in the 1960s and accelerated in the 1980s and 1990s²⁸. In the late 1990s, Warner Bros. was owned by Time Warner, which also controlled corporations such as HBO, Time magazine, CNN, and Cartoon Network. (In 2000, when *Philosopher's Stone* was in production, AOL and Time Warner merged to form AOL-Time Warner, although the partnership proved financially disastrous

²⁵ David Smith, "Potter's magic spell turns boys into bookworms," *The Guardian*, July 10, 2005. Accessed October 9, 2018. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2005/jul/10/books.harrypotter>

²⁶ Rebecca Fulleylove, "The Enduring Magic of The "Harry Potter Effect" 20 Years Later," *Google Arts & Culture*, accessed September 11, 2018. https://artsandculture.google.com/theme/BOICb_K5wDNKLg

²⁷ Loris Vezzali et al., "The greatest magic of Harry Potter: Reducing prejudice," *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 45, no. 2 (February 2015): 105. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/jasp.12279>

²⁸ Kristin Thompson, *The Frodo Franchise: The Lord of the Rings and Modern Hollywood* (London: University of California Press, 2007), 4.

and lasted only until 2003²⁹.) The prevailing strategy for media conglomerates at this time was to create media content – “television spinoffs, product tie-ins, movie soundtracks, promotion Web sites and other multimedia means”³⁰ – which could be marketed and distributed through broadcasting and online channels all controlled by the same conglomerate. This principle of synergy, or media convergence³¹, led to increased pressure on Hollywood film studios to deliver maximised profits through the production of incredibly successful content appealing to the widest audience: children and their parents³². As a result, studios “fled to safety by cutting back on the number of pictures they produced and by relying on big-budget tentpoles and franchises more than ever to target young people and families”³³. Tino Balio notes that serial productions based on pre-existing intellectual property – adaptations – were the safest bet during this time, because they “were instantly recognisable, easily marketable and exploitable across all divisions of the studio ... into sequels and franchises”³⁴. Franchising was by no means a new phenomenon – since the 1960s, blockbuster franchises such as James Bond, *Jaws*, and *Star Wars* provided a template of financial and cultural success³⁵ – but the “intensity of its implementation” was considerably higher in the 1990s and 2000s³⁶.

Harry Potter proved to be the linchpin of this strategy for Warner Bros. in the new millennium. The film series embodied some of the key trends in Hollywood in the early 2000s: it was a big-budget, digital effects-based serial production replete with opportunities for synergy, merchandising and “multi-platform release plans”³⁷. *Potter*, alongside other hits such as *Lord of the Rings* (Peter Jackson, 2001—2003) and Christopher Nolan’s *Dark Knight* trilogy (2005—2012), enabled Warner Bros. to dominate the global box office for a decade, significantly contributing to the studio’s aims to become what CEO Alan Horn called a “franchise factory”³⁸. Rowling had sold the film adaptation rights for *Harry Potter* to Warner Bros. in 1999, and, with Chris Columbus directing, relatively unknown child actors

²⁹ James Russell and Jim Whalley, *Hollywood and the Baby Boom: A Social History* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), 266.

³⁰ Tino Balio, *Hollywood in the New Millennium* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 41.

³¹ Henry Jenkins et al., "Editorial: Convergence Culture," *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies* 14, no. 1 (2008): [6.http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1354856507084415](http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1354856507084415)

³² Russell and Whalley, *Hollywood and the Baby Boom*, 258.

³³ Balio, *Hollywood in the New Millennium*, 3.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Thompson, *The Frodo Franchise*, 4.

³⁶ Balio, *Hollywood in the New Millennium*, 25.

³⁷ Russell and Whalley, *Hollywood and the Baby Boom*, 270.

³⁸ Balio, *Hollywood in the New Millennium*, 41.

were cast alongside acclaimed British thespians such as Dame Maggie Smith, Robbie Coltrane, and Julie Walters in the film version of *Philosopher's Stone*³⁹. The blockbuster was released in November 2001 to immediate success, earning almost \$1 billion at the global box office, the highest-grossing film of the year⁴⁰. Despite directorial changes in the early instalments, with Columbus departing after *Chamber of Secrets*, Alfonso Cuarón directing *Prisoner of Azkaban* and Mike Newell *Goblet of Fire*, the film franchise retained David Yates from *Order of the Phoenix* onwards, a factor which helped to establish a coherent vision for the series. Other creative figures such as Steve Kloves (screenwriter) and Steve Kloves (head of production design) also remained mostly the same throughout production, lending further stability⁴¹. The final instalment, *Deathly Hallows Part 2*, earned over \$1.3 billion at the global box office, becoming the highest-grossing film of all time at that point⁴².

The *Harry Potter* books and films, then, had a resounding cultural impact in the 14 years of their ongoing production from 1997 to 2011. They dominated both the publishing and film markets globally and set new profit records, offering an incredibly lucrative template of success that other franchises would attempt to follow. Furthermore, *Harry Potter* was characterised by its format as a series, with each instalment following Harry through each year at Hogwarts School. This slotted into contemporary franchising strategies that prioritised serial productions, recycling familiar characters and settings and offering existing intellectual property to exploit across multiple media channels. Crucially, however, the structure of *Harry Potter* also signalled an eventual end-point to the series in which Harry's school years – and thus the series – would be concluded. Significantly, despite this inevitable conclusion (in 2007 for the books and 2011 for the films), the *Potter* franchise has continued to develop new texts, products and experiences that either rework the original texts or extend the wizarding world beyond the original narrative framework. Interrogating the purpose of these 'paratexts', and how they interact with *Harry Potter*, is one of the central aims of this thesis.

That is not to say that paratexts did not play a significant role during the books' and films' release; on the contrary, extratextual materials proliferated throughout this time. Obvious examples include trailers, posters and DVD content for the *Potter* films, which

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ "Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone Box Office Statistics," *Box Office Mojo*, accessed September 11, 2018. <https://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=main&id=harrypotter.htm>

⁴¹ Balio, *Hollywood in the New Millennium*, 41.

⁴² "All-Time Global Box Office Statistics," *Box Office Mojo*, accessed September 11, 2018. <https://www.boxofficemojo.com/alltime/world/>

guided interpretations of each instalment before and after release. ‘Adult’ covers of the books were published alongside the regular print run, versions which made no changes to the text but featured more minimalist and sombre cover art targeted at older audiences. Merchandise from the Noble Collection provided high-quality ‘authentic’ replicas of magical artefacts from the *Potter* films, such as the Time-Turner necklace or a Wizards’ Chess set. Making-of books provided insight into filmmaking methods, while interviews with cast and crew (and Rowling) maximised hype for future instalments.

The kinds of paratexts produced in the post-*Potter* era in some ways differ from those from period of the books’ and films’ production, however. From 1997-2011, it can be argued that the purpose of the vast majority of paratexts was to promote the *Harry Potter* books and films, attempting to shore up the central texts’ ongoing popularity and, furthermore, to emphasise their meaning and value. This thesis argues that, from 2011 onwards, a number of key texts, products and experiences were created *in response to* the conclusion of *Harry Potter*, and thus according to markedly different strategies. While some of these paratexts served to sustain the longevity and prestige of the original *Potter* texts, others provided new ways of reimagining those texts, or worked to expand the fictional universe into a wider, endlessly exploitable ‘wizarding world’. The illustrated editions of the *Potter* books are a good example of a post-*Potter* paratext that seeks to reinvent a central text (in this case, the novels). The oversized illustrated editions feature art from concept artist Jim Kay and ostensibly offer a new way of experiencing the *Potter* books. They also, however, offer a separate iconography from those established by the *Potter* films, reinforcing the books’ creative authority. It is interesting, too, that the illustrated editions emphasise the value of the printed book at a time when the *Harry Potter* e-books (which have only been available since 2011) entered the market. (See Chapter 1 for further discussion of the *Harry Potter* e-books’ emergence and their relationship to J.K. Rowling’s website Pottermore.)

The illustrated editions of *Harry Potter* books are simply one example of the multifaceted role that paratexts continue to play in the development of the franchise. This thesis examines five other paratexts which similarly complicate, reimagine and extend the *Harry Potter* – or indeed the ‘Wizarding World’ – franchise. These five paratexts – Pottermore, the ‘Wizarding World’ theme parks, the Studio Tour, *Fantastic Beasts*, and *Cursed Child* – can be understood as part of a wider trend towards expanding the fictional universe while ensuring the longevity of the story at its heart.

Why Harry Potter?.....

As Jonathan Gray notes, “we need an "off-screen studies" to make sense of the wealth of other entities that saturate the media, and that construct film and television"⁴³. The importance of paratexts in promoting, sustaining and extending a franchise, then, is certainly not unique to *Harry Potter*. What makes the case of *Harry Potter* so interesting – and significant – is in the details of its history. A story told through a sequence of books and films has endured beyond its original shelf-life arguably because a multitude of paratexts have been produced to sustain and expand it. While film adaptations of other young adult fantasy novels such as *The Hunger Games*(2012, 2013, 2014, 2015) and *Twilight*(2008, 2009, 2010, 2011) were blockbuster successes in their own right, they have not followed similar trajectories in which their longevity has been extended as a result of new texts and products. *Harry Potter*, on the other hand, has similar literary origins but has adapted to a media environment dominated by franchises such as the Marvel Cinematic Universe and *Star Wars*, in which superhero stories are produced according to a network of synergy, transmedia storytelling and world-building strategies. The purposely engineered development of *Harry Potter* beyond the original books and films is arguably part of an ongoing attempt by Warner Bros., J.K. Rowling and other invested partners to secure the franchise’s ongoing dominance in the contemporary media landscape.

For instance, J.K. Rowling has been a key factor in facilitating *Harry Potter*’s ongoing success and evolution from 2011-17, and as a result her authorial role is central to this study. Rowling’s authorship is interesting in the sense that she has transcended the traditional role of print author and retained a close association with the franchise throughout its development. In the early years of the franchise, the books were still in publication while the films were being produced, and consequently her brand was tied unusually strongly to the films because of her responsibility for concluding the series. Her creative authority was also heavily emphasised in promotion during the years of the films’ production; for instance, as James Russell notes, the extra content in the *Prisoner of Azkaban* DVD portrays Rowling’s vision as the ideal to which the creative team naturally deferred⁴⁴. Although the approval of authors is frequently co-opted to promote film adaptations, Rowling’s contribution has extended considerably beyond those bounds, however. As the opening statements of this chapter suggests, the *Deathly Hallows Part 2* film premiere in 2011 epitomised a period in

⁴³ Gray, *Show Sold Separately*, 14.

⁴⁴James Russell, “Authorship, Commerce and Harry Potter,” 391.

which Rowling's perceived authority over the franchise was paramount. Significantly, though, she has remained involved as both a promotional figurehead and as a creative contributor to new texts post-2011. The following chapters often identify a sense of tension or instability at the core of some *Potter* paratexts, and this can arguably be linked to Rowling's evolving mode of authorship – from traditional author to multimedia brand guardian – and the increasingly diverse transmedial texts over which her authority is stretched. Furthermore, Rowling's authorial position is arguably unique in the media industries. George Lucas held indomitable control over the creative and commercial direction of *Star Wars* for several decades, but he was a filmmaker first and foremost, and his role stayed largely the same throughout his time at Lucasfilm. Instead, *Harry Potter* began as a print series that accrued immense cultural capital before the film franchise was born, and Rowling has gradually diverged from her roots as a print author into a multimedia brand manager. George R. R. Martin, author of the *A Song of Ice and Fire* series which was adapted into television series *Game of Thrones* by HBO, is, like Rowling, an author whose series of novels was unfinished when the TV show was greenlit; in fact, Martin has in some ways retained an even closer association with the adaptation of his works than Rowling, given his role as executive producer for the show. However, the HBO series has taken a different trajectory than *Harry Potter*, because *A Song of Ice and Fire* remains unfinished, while the *Potter* films were able to build on the momentum of Rowling's continued release schedule of novels.

Interestingly, Rowling's authorship is itself a paratext of *Harry Potter*. According to Gérard Genette, who coined the term "paratext" to describe extratextual features of published books, paratexts come in two forms: "peritexts", which are tangible features such as titles and fonts, and "epitexts", which are less tangible but no less significant, such as interviews and an author's brand⁴⁵. Significantly, however, this thesis will demonstrate how Rowling's influence – itself a paratext - permeates yet other paratexts and defines much of the content produced in the post-*Potter* era. Chapter 1 explores Rowling's authorship in particular detail, but it is nonetheless a factor that resonates throughout this work. If the longevity and ongoing presence of *Harry Potter* in popular culture is in large part a consequence of the work of paratexts in extending, reworking and reimagining the franchise, then Rowling is an indelible part of understanding how those paratexts work and what they mean for the wizarding world from 2011-17. One of the key aims of this thesis is therefore to trace how her authorship has

⁴⁵Gérard Genette et al., "Introduction to the Paratext," *New Literary History* 22, no. 2 (Spring 1991): 263-4.

changed, how it has affected the trajectory of the *Potter* franchise, and how far it impacts the kinds of texts produced. Negotiating Rowling's status as a very visible public author figure also serves to illuminate the ways in which other commercial and creative decisions might be obscured, particularly in the case of Warner Bros.

Focusing on the role of paratexts more widely in the contemporary media environment therefore offers a holistic view of how franchising works, provides important cultural and industrial context, and gives more attention to production and commercial processes that might otherwise be dismissed as ancillary. This feeds into another research question at the heart of this thesis: how might an understanding of paratexts illuminate commercial and creative factors that affect how the *Harry Potter* franchise works? In particular, how have paratexts extended, sustained and reinvented the *Harry Potter* franchise between 2011-17, in the post-*Potter* era?

In addition, this thesis will seek to evaluate the relationship between paratexts and the central *Potter* texts, the books and films. There are several key questions at the heart of the following chapters that attempt to reverse traditional understandings of the central text as the primary site of meaning: instead, this thesis argues, paratexts have a significant impact on the meanings and values of texts, complicating and reworking them. Firstly, then, one aim of this thesis is to evaluate how paratexts might complement or disrupt meanings and values from *Harry Potter*. In what ways might particular paratexts reinforce or obscure the *Potter* books or films as distinct properties? How do paratexts explore, revise or comment on underlying themes of the *Potter* texts, and how might these themes manifest as they are translated into different cultural forms across time? For instance, chapters 2 and 3 examine paratexts such as the Studio Tour and the 'Wizarding World' theme parks, which sell a fetishised version of Britishness to a global audience, a cultural fantasy first established in the books and films. Finally, how far might we understand paratexts to be texts in their own right? New narratives and settings established by (para)texts *Fantastic Beasts* and *Cursed Child*, for instance, have not only changed the strategic direction of the franchise but expanded the textual terrain of the fictional universe.

These questions are designed to extend extant scholarly work within contemporary media franchising. One original contribution of this thesis is in its sustained focus on the *Harry Potter* franchise. As my literature review states in more detail, there is a gap in scholarship for this piece: scholarly work in *Harry Potter* is predominantly situated in textual

analysis or fan studies, from which this thesis consciously departs. In addition, although the business of *Potter* has previously been explored in book chapters and peer-reviewed articles⁴⁶, this thesis offers a long-form analysis that focuses on creative and commercial decisions involved in franchising, in line with similar volumes dedicated to other franchises such as *Lord of the Rings* and *Star Wars* (George Lucas, 1977-83, 1999-2005; J.J. Abrams, 2015; Gareth Edwards, 2016; Rian Johnson, 2017; Ron Howard, 2018)⁴⁷. As I demonstrate in the following section, my methodological framework – combining textual analysis with empirical research – seeks to unite text with production context. In this case, I argue for a decreased focus on what is traditionally considered the primary site of meaning and value – the central text – in favour of paratexts, which have traditionally received less scholarly analysis. As the five paratexts I have chosen are recent developments, and the *Harry Potter* franchise remains in continual flux, this work also offers insight into texts, products and experiences that have not yet been examined in particular detail elsewhere. Finally, the diverse nature of these selected paratexts – a website, theme park, studio tour, film, and stageplay – makes this thesis innately interdisciplinary. Although my methodology is grounded in a media studies approach, I do not limit my analysis to traditional forms of media; instead, I approach diverse cultural forms to demonstrate how the *Potter* franchise has developed into a multitude of transmedial forms.

Methodology.....

This thesis seeks to understand the role of paratexts in the *Harry Potter* franchise from 2011-17. The structure of each chapter takes a case study of a particular text, experience or phenomenon within the *Harry Potter* franchise and seeks to evaluate that (para)text in relation to its production context. As a result, this work predominantly uses two methodological frameworks which are intended to complement each other. The first, textual analysis, allows me to interpret particular texts, products and experiences as fictional constructs and, in line with Jonathan Gray’s work on paratexts, to evaluate the meanings and values they promote. The second, empirical research, allows me to situate my interpretive textual analysis within an understanding of the wider industrial context in which those texts

⁴⁶ Grainge, *Brand Hollywood*; James Russell, “Authorship, Commerce and Harry Potter”; Noel Brown, *British Children's Cinema*

⁴⁷ Thompson, *The Frodo Franchise*; Sean Guynes and Dan Hassler-Forest, *Star Wars and the History of Transmedia Storytelling* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2017)

are produced, and the commercial imperatives that drive media production. For instance, in Chapter 1, I analyse the website Pottermore, examining how and why the website underwent radical change in 2015, and the impact of these changes on the website's design and content. Using empirical research such as annual reports, news articles and financial documents sheds light on how Pottermore operated as a company, revealing factors in its development such as declining profits, its relationship with commercial partners such as Sony and Warner Bros., the success (or lack thereof) of its independent e-publishing model, and evidence of internal restructuring including changing numbers of employees and introduction of new management figures. These key developments contribute to an understanding of how and why Pottermore changed, but I combine this approach with textual analysis to interpret how these changes affect the way Pottermore works as a text. Looking at the differences in Pottermore's content and design over the course of several years consolidates the contextual issues I identify: for instance, by revealing the website's changing commercial motives and its increasingly central positioning within the *Harry Potter* franchise as a means of managing fandom, hype, and promotional content.

This thesis, then, makes use of a wide range of empirical materials. I have used trade journals to examine the industrial conditions at particular times during *Harry Potter*'s history, with online archiving resource Proquest and *Variety* particularly useful sources here. Although this work does not focus in any depth on the reception of the *Potter* franchise through engagement with audiences and fans, I have also drawn on sources such as Box Office Mojo (for box office statistics) and film reviews to provide useful context of the release period of both the *Harry Potter* films and two key post-2011 texts, the film *Fantastic Beasts* and the stageplay *Cursed Child*. I have also conducted research into financial annual reports for Pottermore and Warner Bros. to gain insight into the companies' strategic decisions and financial situation. Finally, I have also utilised articles from the popular press throughout the thesis. For instance, in constructing a timeline of Rowling's biography myth in the early years of *Harry Potter*, it was useful to analyse how popular newspapers framed Rowling as an author figure; I do not engage with these articles as an objective reflection of reality, but instead as a means of measuring the growth of Rowling's author-brand. News articles are used to similar effect throughout this work to explore how the *Harry Potter* franchise is framed and situated as a product within popular culture.

Crucially, I also engage with academic work from a number of key fields and approaches. This will be discussed more extensively in the literature review, but it bears

acknowledging here that this thesis is innately interdisciplinary in its scope, given that the *Harry Potter* franchise – like most franchises in the contemporary era – is increasingly transmedial, with numerous evolving texts and entryways into its textual universe. Although I draw on scholarship from different fields – from theme park studies to museum studies to digital media, for instance – it is not the primary purpose of this thesis to apply diverse theoretical frameworks to the different cultural forms explored in each chapter. Instead, I maintain a consistent methodology by evaluating (para)texts in relation to their sociocultural and industrial contexts. For instance, in Chapter 5, although I discuss various theatrical conventions in *Cursed Child*, the chapter predominantly explores how these conventions contribute to the play’s role within the wider franchise, as opposed to applying any particular framework from academic performance theory. Furthermore, the purpose of this thesis is not to develop new taxonomies or make significant contributions to existing theory, but rather to apply existing taxonomies – namely, Gray’s theory of paratexts, alongside empirical research and textual analysis – to the *Harry Potter* franchise and the media products it has generated. As a result, despite the disparities between vastly different texts such as theme parks, websites and stage plays, my methodological framework remains the same throughout each chapter.

To this end, I engage with these paratexts within an evidence-based film, adaptation and media studies approach influenced by scholars such as Paul Grainge⁴⁸, Henry Jenkins⁴⁹, Simone Murray⁵⁰ and Clare Parody⁵¹, who have called in recent years for an increased focus on the industrial and cultural conditions in which media texts, including franchises, are produced, distributed and received. Jonathan Gray’s theory of paratexts – that they “establish frames and filters through which we look at, listen to, and interpret ... texts”⁵² – is, as I have mentioned previously, of central importance here. These scholars emphasise the value of studying paratexts in order to understand how media texts operate – that the ongoing academic focus on the traditionally ‘central’ media text, at the expense of the phenomena that surrounds it, leads to an incomplete understanding of contemporary media industries and how texts are produced and received⁵³. This thesis follows this lead, although my specific focus

⁴⁸ Grainge, *Brand Hollywood*

⁴⁹ Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York: New York University Press, 2006)

⁵⁰ Simone Murray, *The Adaptation Industry: The Cultural Economy of Contemporary Literary Adaptation* (London: Routledge, 2012)

⁵¹ Clare Parody, “Franchising/Adaptation,” *Adaptation* 4, no. 2 (July 2011): 210–218.

⁵² Gray, *Show Sold Separately*, 11.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 13.

on the paratext and its production, as opposed to its consumption, nonetheless differs slightly in purpose from scholars such as Gray and Jenkins, whose focus in part lies with how audiences engage with paratexts⁵⁴. This thesis does not engage with fan activities and audience studies methodologies simply because it is outside of its scope. In order to maintain a thorough and consistent methodology that places the text and its production context at the forefront, not to mention to keep this work to a reasonable word count, audiences and fandom are only lightly touched upon in the following chapters.

Structure.....

This thesis takes a case study approach, dedicating each chapter to a specific paratext of the *Harry Potter* franchise from 2011-17.

In Chapter 1, I establish Rowling’s function as an author and tie this to her website Pottermore. I first trace Rowling’s development as an author figure throughout *Harry Potter*’s history, in which her origins as a traditional print author have gradually transitioned into a brand management role. I argue that this evolution is mirrored in Pottermore’s own development: in 2011, the website began as a visual adaptation of the *Potter* books, but in 2015, the website transitioned into a cross-franchise content repository. The second half of the chapter therefore seeks to understand Pottermore’s significance, firstly through an exploration of its production history, and secondly from textual analysis of some of its features. Pottermore is particularly interesting because, in addition to its clear links to Rowling, it offers a lens through which to understand the *Harry Potter* franchise’s wider strategic direction: in its first iteration as what Genette would have called a “threshold” to the *Potter* books⁵⁵, Pottermore retained strong links to its roots, but its transformation in 2015 reflects the franchise’s shifting strategy away from a reliance on the original texts and towards a growing transmedia universe that can be exploited through different media and formats.

In Chapter 2, I discuss the ‘Wizarding World’ theme parks and the ways in which the theme park form facilitates a reworking of the *Potter* narrative and setting. I explore some of the theories surrounding theme parks that have been established across academic scholarship,

⁵⁴Ibid., 12.

⁵⁵Genette, et al., *Introduction to the Paratext*, 261.

but ultimately argue that the ‘Wizarding World’ parks represent a more heightened, intensified vision of a theme park than standard models. I explore the concept of authenticity in particular in relation to the ‘Wizarding World’, and how far its heightened immersive potential is potentially at odds with its inherent consumerist underpinnings. The key to understanding the theme parks is, I argue, in relation to its dedication to replicating commercial locations from *Harry Potter* and naturalising the act of consumption within its form – and that, particularly, this naturalisation is facilitated at its core by the corresponding values of the *Potter* books and films.

In Chapter 3, I analyse the Studio Tour, which was built on the same site as Leavesden Studios, the production studios that housed much of the filming for the *Potter* films. I first conduct a history of the Leavesden site in order to explore how far the Studio Tour uses its geographical location to frame the experience as an authentic part of its identity. The second half of the chapter is dedicated to examining three interwoven and occasionally competing functions of the Tour: edification, entertainment, and consumption. The experience’s museum structure frames it as a space that offers valuable insight into high-quality British filmmaking, in addition to being a site of film tourism in which filmic artefacts are preserved and showcased. Alongside this, however, more recent additions are more interactive in nature, which demonstrates, this chapter argues, a duality in function between education and entertainment that is emblematic of museums generally, but particularly relevant for the Studio Tour because it enables the site to re-imagine the franchise’s filmic environments immersively. Opportunities for consumerism – through merchandising in particular – are common, but, significantly, in some instances embedded within the attraction and incorporated into the film sets. Like the ‘Wizarding World’, the Studio Tour works to naturalise the act of consumption in its formal structure, and uses recurring motifs from *Harry Potter* – such as Platform 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ – to achieve this.

While Chapters 2 and 3 explore particular experiences that overtly support the *Potter* films, the final two chapters of this thesis analyse new texts that expand the wizarding world. In Chapter 4, I examine *Fantastic Beasts*, the first feature film released after the *Harry Potter* cycle’s conclusion in 2011. The film, as the first in a five-film arc, establishes the backstory of *Potter* characters Albus Dumbledore and Gellert Grindelwald, transplanting the setting to 1920s New York and featuring a host of new characters and cast members. *Fantastic Beasts* is significant because of its production history (as a book initially published for charity by Rowling in 2001) and as a film text – as a successor to *Harry Potter* whose production values

nonetheless reflect a different media environment and different franchising priorities. The chapter explores *Fantastic Beasts*' evolving textuality, from its origins as a charitable publication to a blockbuster tentpole serving as the foundation of a new franchise that expands the wizarding world into new times and places. In particular, the chapter explores how *Fantastic Beasts* remains tied to *Harry Potter*, not only thematically but as a franchising tool.

In Chapter 5, I seek to evaluate another significant new text in the 'Wizarding World' franchise: the stageplay *Cursed Child*. Like *Fantastic Beasts*, the play interacts with its predecessor *Harry Potter* in complex ways. This chapter explores how one might understand the play as a text in its own right as well as a paratext of a wider franchising phenomenon. For instance, *Cursed Child* has particular exclusionary elements resulting from its form as a play, such as geographical specificity, high ticket pricing, and limited seating. These factors are unprecedented in the history of *Harry Potter*; and although its exclusivity arises directly from its status as a live theatrical production, it is possible to trace how this exclusivity is framed as natural and even desirable through its association with existing themes within *Harry Potter*. Crucially, *Cursed Child* is characterised by its close adherence to *Harry Potter*'s themes and production values on the one hand, and a conscious departure on the other. As this chapter demonstrates, *Cursed Child* – like *Fantastic Beasts* – operates as a point of transition in the *Harry Potter* franchise, a bridge between the original series and a new, endlessly expandable 'Wizarding World'.

The structure of this thesis echoes ongoing developments in the *Harry Potter* – or 'Wizarding World' – franchise. In 2011, following the end of the *Potter* cycle, Pottermore, the 'Wizarding World' theme parks, and the Studio Tour were introduced. These sought to reinforce the value of the *Potter* books and films: Pottermore offered a virtual and visual adaptation of the books, while the theme parks and the Studio Tour replicate scenes directly recognisable from the films. Several years later, *Fantastic Beasts* and *Cursed Child* were announced, two texts that significantly expand the fictional universe first established by *Harry Potter*. The introduction of paratexts in 2011 that were strongly tied to the *Potter* books or films was symptomatic of the franchise at a point when the ongoing cultural success of its central texts was paramount. By 2017, however, it is possible to trace changing strategies in the development of the 'Wizarding World' franchise, most clearly demonstrated

by the creation of new texts to sustain its world-building focus. This thesis reflects these ongoing developments by tackling these developments chronologically.

Literature Review

Because of the interdisciplinary nature of this thesis, there is a wide array of potential sources and theoretical approaches that could contribute to the direction of this work. There are four key areas of scholarship in which I have chosen to situate this research, however. Academic discussion of paratexts, firstly, is useful in understanding the concept, how it has developed, and its theoretical applications so far, as well as the current limitations of those applications. Jonathan Gray's definition of paratexts – as products, texts, concepts or experiences that “establish frames and filters through which we look at, listen to, and interpret texts” – is particularly useful for this study⁵⁶, in its attempt to understand how media paratexts construct meaning and value for central texts. Secondly, this thesis is embedded within work in adaptation studies, particularly in more recent discussions surrounding adaptation's role in the media industries and the industrial contexts in which adaptations are produced. Although this thesis seeks to understand what has happened to the *Harry Potter* franchise since its book-to-film journey, its roots as a literary adaptation into a multi-billion-dollar franchise nonetheless continue to impact its trajectory. Thirdly, this thesis is also grounded in scholarship within the contemporary Hollywood film industry, including work on blockbuster franchising, media studies and new film history. Lastly, my work is informed – and builds upon – existing scholarship surrounding *Harry Potter*. Most existing studies have examined *Harry Potter* through textual analysis of its central texts, or through a fan studies perspective; this thesis, however, departs from this to consider how the *Potter* franchise works as a brand and cultural phenomenon.

These four fields underpin the research conducted for this thesis and are most relevant in relation to my core research questions. Nonetheless, I will refer to a number of other diverse scholarly approaches in the chapters that follow, ranging from children's film and literature, to theme park design, to web design, to museum studies, to theatrical criticism, to organisational planning. These do not necessarily impact the methodological framework of this thesis, but instead provide valuable context surrounding how particular paratexts are produced and how they function in relation to *Harry Potter*.

⁵⁶ Gray, *Show Sold Separately*, 12.

Paratexts.....

The term “paratext” can be traced back to literary theorist Gérard Genette, whose 1987 book *Seuils* (“Thresholds”) introduced the concept of paratexts; its 1997 translation into English as *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* defines paratexts in literary terms, as “what enables a text to become a book ... they surround it and extend it, precisely in order to present it”⁵⁷. He cites features such as prefaces, titles, author interviews, acknowledgements and typeface as examples, breaking these down into “peritexts”, features contained in the book, and “epitexts”, “located outside the book, generally with the help of the media”⁵⁸, such as the reputation of the author. Genette’s focus lay solely with understanding paratexts of books, and viewed them as purely subsidiary to their central text, claiming that “[t]he paratext is only an assistant, only an accessory of the text”⁵⁹.

Since Genette’s work was published – and particularly since it was translated into English – there have been a number of publications in literary criticism that incorporate a theory of paratexts. The first work to transplant the study of paratexts outside of the book and towards a broader media studies perspective, however, came from Georg Stanitzek in 2005. Critiquing Genette for his unwillingness to interrogate the notion of the ‘book’ versus ‘text’ and Genette’s simplification of the role of the author function⁶⁰, Stanitzek expanded paratextual theory into film and media studies by examining features such as film posters, trailers, film credits, and online hyperlinks⁶¹. Although Stanitzek was among the first to adopt the specific term ‘paratext’, a similar concept has nonetheless been articulated using other terminology throughout the history of film and media studies. Paul Grainge in *Brand Hollywood* (2008), for instance, discusses “ancillary materials” that contribute to the branding and marketing of a central text; he uses the example of rivalry between *Harry Potter* and *Lord of the Rings* built up by marketing and publicity surrounding the release of the films in the early 2000s⁶². Similarly, Ernest Mathijs’ edited volume *Lord of the Rings: Popular Culture in Global Context* has a section called “Ancillary Contexts”, which I expand more upon later in this review⁶³; it is worth mentioning here, though, that although it devotes

⁵⁷ Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 1.

⁵⁸ Genette, *Paratexts*, 5.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 410.

⁶⁰ Georg Stanitzek, "Texts and Paratexts in Media," *Critical Inquiry* 31, no. 1 (2005): 35.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, 36.

⁶² Paul Grainge, *Brand Hollywood*, 132.

⁶³ Ernest Mathijs, *The Lord of the Rings: Popular Culture in Global Context* (London: Wallflower, 2006)

a third of its contents to what are essentially paratexts, there is no specific reference to the term as a unifying concept. The use of “ancillary” – which, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, is defined as “providing necessary support to the primary activities or operation of an organization, system, etc.”⁶⁴ – reinforces the idea of paratexts as important but nonetheless secondary to the study of traditionally central texts.

Jonathan Gray’s influential book *Show Sold Separately* (2010), however, provided the first thorough theoretical framework through which to examine paratexts from a media studies perspective. Gray claimed that a “paratext is able to change the cultural and perceived meaning of its original text”⁶⁵ and also to assign value to its partner text by guiding audience interpretation⁶⁶. Among other areas, he studies how trailers can affect audience expectations and generic classifications⁶⁷, and how some paratexts (such as DVDs) can construct or destroy an “aura” of authenticity⁶⁸. In his final chapter, he explores fan-created paratexts, and how they can wrest for creative control with official ones⁶⁹. Paratexts, according to Gray, should not be easily categorised as ancillary materials when brand-building in a cross-media environment requires textual creativity and the generation of audience interaction⁷⁰, much of which takes place in the realm of paratexts. He also argues that to claim a paratext’s role as marketing material “evacuate[s]” it of meaning essentially misunderstands the role of transmedia storytelling in contemporary media, which is essentially the creation and proliferation of paratexts⁷¹. Gray’s consideration of paratexts is symptomatic of a wider movement within franchising, film and transmedia studies that promotes further discussion of commercial and creative contexts within the entertainment industries, with theorists such as Henry Jenkins⁷², Paul Grainge⁷³, Janet Wasko⁷⁴, and Ernest Mathijs⁷⁵ forming the backbone of this approach. (See the franchising section of this literature review for more detailed discussion.)

⁶⁴“Ancillary”, 2018, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/ancillary>.

⁶⁵ Gray, *Show Sold Separately*, 2.

⁶⁶Ibid., 81.

⁶⁷Ibid., 66.

⁶⁸Ibid., 97.

⁶⁹Ibid., 142.

⁷⁰Ibid., 208.

⁷¹Ibid., 209-18.

⁷²Jenkins, *Convergence Culture*.

⁷³Grainge, *Brand Hollywood*.

⁷⁴Janet Wasko, *How Hollywood Works* (London: Sage, 2003)

⁷⁵ Mathijs, *Lord of the Rings*.

From the point of Gray's publication, paratexts have become a more established and respected area of study. Some scholars have attempted to marry Gray's work with Genette's original concept of book-led paratexts. Michael Bhaskar's article "Towards paracontent: Marketing, publishing and cultural form in a digital environment" (2011), for instance, offers an alternative theory for paratexts in digital book publishing – he notes the rise of digital marketing strategies which he calls "paracontent", and which he distinguishes from paratexts because of the need "to adapt Genette for a digital-saturated and market-oriented age of content dissemination"⁷⁶. Attempting "to reconcile media and marketing theories to the specificities and demands of contemporary content industries,"⁷⁷ paracontent describes works that explicitly promote a "central text"⁷⁸ and are particular to contemporary transmedia environment, arising out of publishing industry marketing strategies⁷⁹.

Paul Grainge's edited collection *Ephemeral Media* (2011) further marries paratexts to studies in the media industries by specifically looking at texts that are "evanescent, transient and brief"⁸⁰. Emphasising the importance of a theory of paratexts in order to shed light on extratextual features of the screen industries, the volume's essays build on Gray's focus on meaning and value to consider crucial parts of the contemporary media experience as paratexts because they are "in the between, beyond and below space of traditional media entertainment"⁸¹. *Promotional Screen Industries* (2015) by Grainge and Catherine Johnson expands on this idea by framing paratexts in terms of promotional culture. Arguing that promotional material such as advertising, marketing and branding have "complex meanings and functions"⁸², the authors examine a variety of promotional tools for various media, particularly television. Although much of the book is dedicated to television, of particular interest to my work is their chapter discussing the film trailer; here, the authors analyse the ways in which trailers for contemporary blockbuster franchises like *The Hunger Games* form "one component of a broader promotional infrastructure ... to construct ongoing, targeted and participative relationships with viewers" that nonetheless retain their "status as a primary

⁷⁶Michael Bhaskar, "Towards Paracontent," *Logos* 22, no. 1 (2011): 27.

⁷⁷Ibid., 26.

⁷⁸Ibid., 32.

⁷⁹Ibid., 28.

⁸⁰ Grainge, *Brand Hollywood*, 2.

⁸¹Ibid., 12.

⁸² Paul Grainge and Catherine Johnson, *Promotional Screen Industries* (London: Routledge, 2015), 7.

promotion text for the film industry” by positioning the cinematic release “as a significant event in its own right”⁸³.

Lincoln Geraghty’s book *Popular Media Cultures: Fans, Audiences and Paratexts* (2015) continues in Gray’s tradition, extending his analysis of fan paratexts. Taking as its focus “the related cultural practices that add to and expand the narrative worlds with which fans engage”⁸⁴ in order to understand how fans “play” with paratexts (and thus worlds, narratives and characters)⁸⁵, Geraghty’s work emphasises the importance of studying paratexts and departing from “a mode of analysis that fetishises “the work of art”” as opposed to one “that studies textual imprints on society”⁸⁶. Maria Lindgren Leavenworth’s article “The Paratext of Fan Fiction” (2015) similarly subverts Genette’s original focus on canonical literature by examining fanfiction as a fan-made paratext. By focusing firstly on “the form of fanfic itself and on the material contexts in which it is published” Leavenworth demonstrates how fanfiction “fulfil[s] functions which differentiate them from paratexts in printed forms”⁸⁷, and her discussion of paratexts such as filing options, tags and author notes highlights the effect that fan-created, community-led, digital paratexts can have on the concepts of authorship, distribution and interpretation⁸⁸. Work on fan paratexts – which has also been conducted by Henry Jenkins⁸⁹, Judith Fathallah⁹⁰, and Alexandra Herzog⁹¹, among others – has been a fundamental aspect of developing discourse on paratexts in general. Its application in my work, however, is somewhat limited because of my focus primarily on ‘official’ paratexts.

Overall, then, Genette’s initial definition of paratexts within traditional publishing has been a useful springboard for media scholars’ interpretations to flourish. Despite some resistance to the adoption of paratexts as a valuable area of study, perhaps due to stigma surrounding the subservience of ancillary materials in relation to the central text, theories

⁸³Ibid., 172.

⁸⁴ Lincoln Geraghty, *Popular Media Cultures: Fans, Audiences and Paratexts* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 1.

⁸⁵Ibid., 2.

⁸⁶Ibid., 236.

⁸⁷ Maria Lindgren Leavenworth, "The Paratext of Fan Fiction," *Narrative* 23, no. 1 (2015): 41.

⁸⁸Ibid., 42.

⁸⁹ Henry Jenkins, "'Cultural acupuncture': Fan activism and the Harry Potter Alliance," *Transformative Works and Cultures* 10 (2012). <http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2012.0305>

⁹⁰ Alexandra Herzog, "'But this is my story and this is how I wanted to write it': Author’s notes as a fannish claim to power in fan fiction writing," *Transformative Works and Cultures* 11 (2012). <https://doi.org/10.3983/twc.2012.0406>

⁹¹ Judith Fathallah, "Statements and silence: fanfic paratexts for ASOIAF/Game of Thrones," *Continuum* 30, no. 1 (January 2016): 75-88.

surrounding paratexts have flourished since Jonathan Gray's *Show Sold Separately* in 2010. His work is particularly influential for my thesis in terms of framing extratextual materials as possessing the cultural power to change, mediate and rework the meaning and value of franchise texts. Later books such as *Promotional Screen Industries* by Grainge and Johnson continue to emphasise the importance of paratexts, especially in contemporary franchising, for their role in strategies of transmedia storytelling and world-building. This chimes with one central question of my thesis: what functions do paratexts serve in the contemporary media environment? Much of the work on official paratexts – from Gray and Grainge and Johnson, for instance – has focused on items with an overt promotional function such as trailers, posters, television idents, DVD extras, and adverts; and their work seeks to break down the negative connotations of such promotional content that leads to its dismissal in both academic and popular thought. Highlighting the underrepresentation of these sorts of (para)texts within scholarly discourse is valuable, and the paratexts I examine in this study do serve a promotional function, but my thesis nonetheless departs from this discourse because of the arguably unique cultural scope and capital of the case studies I have chosen. Significant new texts such as *Fantastic Beasts* and *Cursed Child*, and cultural experiences such as the 'Wizarding World' theme parks and the Studio Tour in London, are by form and purpose necessarily different to promotional material such as trailers and posters. As this thesis will go on to demonstrate, the paratexts I have chosen often support the *Harry Potter* texts in curious ways, but they also challenge or subvert those texts, and assert their own meanings and values that complicate our understanding of *Harry Potter* and of the paratexts themselves.

***Adaptation studies*.....**

Adaptation studies as an academic field developed initially from literary criticism, and although the field has undergone several paradigm shifts since its inception, scholarship predominantly remains interested in textual forms of analysis inherited from other disciplines in the arts. George Bluestone's seminal work of 1957, *Novels into Film*, was one of the first major books that defined adaptation studies; the book was initially praised for his criticism of fidelity as a key measure of an adaptation's worth, but in more recent decades has been

critiqued because of his assumption of a natural dichotomy between novels and films⁹². For instance, he remarks that “The reputable novel, generally speaking, has been supported by a small, literate audience, has been produced by an individual writer ... The film, on the other hand, has been supported by a mass audience, produced co-operatively under industrial conditions.”⁹³

For the next fifty years, adaptation studies would evolve from this preoccupation with the essence of film and literature. In the 1980s, adaptation studies adopted theories of semiotics from poststructuralism; Dudley Andrew in *Concepts in Film Theory* (1984) claimed that adaptation’s most “distinctive feature” is “the matching of the cinematic sign system to prior achievement in some other system”⁹⁴. Although these ideas maintain the argument for a structural difference between book and film, Andrew’s work is also notable for his call for a “sociological turn” in adaptation studies⁹⁵, emphasising the importance of examining the role of adaptation in society. Brian McFarlane in *Novels into Film* (1996) attempted a systematic theoretical account for studying “the process of transportation from novel to film”, asserting that narrative is the common denominator between literature and film, where “enunciation”, or specificity of thought or form, “cannot be transferred”⁹⁶. Leaving behind questions of authorship and cultural context, he uses case studies of nineteenth-century canonical literary adaptations in order to tackle the prevalent insistence upon fidelity. The fidelity argument is something that has defined adaptation studies since the beginning, and in the late 1990s a concerted rejection of fidelity led towards the development of theories of intertextuality and dialogism. For instance, Deborah Cartmell and Imelda Whelehan’s edited volume, *Screen Adaptations: From Text to Screen, Screen to Text* (1999) aimed to “further [destabilise] the tendency to believe that the origin text is of primary importance”⁹⁷, focusing on popular texts and other examples that do not fit the novel-to-film paradigm.

Around the turn of the century, work in adaptation studies began to turn towards an understanding of commercial and cultural contexts of adaptation in earnest. James Naremore’s *Film Adaptation* (2000) asserts that “a sociology that takes into account the

⁹²Deborah Cartmell and Imelda Whelehan, eds., *Screen Adaptations: From Text to Screen, Screen to Text* (London: Routledge, 1999), 6.

⁹³George Bluestone, *Novels into Film* (Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 1957), viii.

⁹⁴ Dudley Andrew, *Concepts in Film Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 96.

⁹⁵*Ibid.*, 104.

⁹⁶ Brian McFarlane, *Novel to Film: An Introduction to the Theory of Adaptation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), vii.

⁹⁷Cartmell and Whelehan, *Screen Adaptations*, 3.

commercial apparatus, the audience and the academic culture industry”⁹⁸ is needed surrounding the production of adaptations. His collection marks the first major study that emphasises the importance of “recycling, remaking, and every other form of retelling in the age of mechanical reproduction and electronic communication”⁹⁹, remarking that we “now live in a media-saturated environment dense with cross-references and filled with borrowings”¹⁰⁰. Following on from this, Robert Stam and Alexandra Raengo’s seminal work *Literature and Film: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Film Adaptation* (2005) set out notions of “dialogism” in more detail¹⁰¹. Here, Stam adopted several of Gérard Genette’s theories of textuality from Genette’s book *Palimpsests*¹⁰² and applied them to theories of adaptation. The most salient of these for my study are “intertextuality”, which involves allusion and reference interplay between a film and source adaptation¹⁰³; and “paratextuality”, or what Stam refers to as commercial materials such as “posters, trailers, reviews, interviews with the director [and] ancillary consumer products like toys, music, books, and other products of cross-media synergies”¹⁰⁴. The notion of paratextuality is clearly relevant for my thesis here, although it is worth noting that, again, paratexts are positioned by Stam as ancillary materials.

Linda Hutcheon’s *A Theory of Adaptation* (2006) has become a key text in the adaptation studies discipline, differentiating adaptations between “showing”, “telling”, and “interacting” modes¹⁰⁵. Theorising that adaptation is both product and process, she argues that audience engagement is important for understanding how and why adaptations are created, noting that adaptations in the contemporary environment often form one part of a larger “multitext”¹⁰⁶. Siobhan O’Flynn, in the book’s second edition epilogue, discusses how audience interactivity and transmedia storytelling, which enable multiple points of entry and engagement, are becoming the norm in contemporary culture¹⁰⁷. O’Flynn’s epilogue is a welcome addition to Hutcheon’s text, as many of her points account for how transmedia franchising works in the contemporary media environment.

⁹⁸James Naremore, *Film Adaptation* (London: Athlone, 2000), 10.

⁹⁹*Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁰⁰*Ibid.*, 12.

¹⁰¹ Robert Stam and Alessandra Raengo, *Literature and Film: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Film Adaptation* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 27.

¹⁰² Gérard Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, trans. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky (London: University of Nebraska Press, 1997)

¹⁰³ Stam and Raengo, *Literature and Film*, 27.

¹⁰⁴*Ibid.*, 28.

¹⁰⁵ Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation* (London: Routledge, 2006), xvi.

¹⁰⁶*Ibid.*, xxiv.

¹⁰⁷ Linda Hutcheon and Siobhan O’Flynn, *A Theory of Adaptation*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2013), 194.

Thomas Leitch's article "Twelve Fallacies in Contemporary Adaptation Theory", from 2003, had dismissed previous theories such as Bluestone's "essentialist view" that literature and cinema are inherently different¹⁰⁸. Leitch's seminal 2007 book *Film Adaptation and its Discontents* built upon these foundations, noting the contemporary popular turn towards a "postliterary" phase of adaptation that seeks material from non-canonical sources¹⁰⁹. Leitch remarks that adaptations of popular texts are often received poorly in the field, or neglected entirely, because of "a literary bias that assumes cinema should adapt only originals more culturally respectable than cinema itself"¹¹⁰. This goes some way to understanding the relative lack of analysis of mainstream franchises like *Harry Potter* within adaptation studies, which have been largely absent within adaptation studies. (Cartmell and Whelehan's 2010 edited collection *Screen Adaptation: Impure Cinema* features a chapter by Cartmell on the *Potter* franchise that reads the *Philosopher's Stone* film through Stam's models of transtextuality, but the chapter remains focused on issues of textual fidelity as opposed to examining of the franchising motivations contributing to that text¹¹¹.)

By 2010, however, adaptation studies had begun to pay more attention to cultural and industrial developments in transmedia franchising. Clare Parody's prize-winning essay "Franchising/Adaptation" for the *Adaptation* journal (2011) was a trailblazer for the field, examining how franchise adaptations adapt "a brand identity, the intellectual property, advertisement language, and presentational devices"¹¹², and use techniques such as transmedia storytelling and world-building to increase engagement with the franchise. "Adaptation", says Parody, "is fundamentally sympathetic to the aims and protocols of franchise storytelling ... because any instalment chosen is constantly speaking to the others, extending them"¹¹³. Parody's work is particularly influential for this thesis, not only because of her observations surrounding the role of adaptations in contemporary franchising but because she identifies the dearth of scholarly material on the topic.

Simone Murray goes some way to rectifying this gap in *The Adaptation Industry* (2012), in which she examines the production contexts of adaptations. In this, she takes up

¹⁰⁸ Thomas Leitch, "Twelve Fallacies in Contemporary Adaptation Theory," *Criticism* 45, no. 2 (April 2003): 151.

¹⁰⁹ Thomas Leitch, *Film Adaptation and its Discontents: From Gone with the Wind to The Passion of the Christ* (London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 268.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 258.

¹¹¹ Deborah Cartmell and Imelda Whelehan, *Screen Adaptation: Impure Cinema* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 75.

¹¹² Parody, "Franchising/Adaptation," 214.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 211.

Dudley Andrew's call for a "sociology of adaptation"¹¹⁴, prioritising contemporary literature and the contemporary media environment over what she views as a preoccupation with the canonical nineteenth century. In particular, she lays out some theories for understanding the modern author function in the adaptation industries, evaluating the use of theoretical constructs such as the 'death of the author', and cultural studies' focus on the celebrity author¹¹⁵. Although Murray's work has limited use in my thesis because it revolves around the publishing industry in particular, her methodology is nonetheless similar, and her ideas are relevant particularly for Chapter 1 of this thesis, which analyses Rowling's author-function.

In terms of this thesis, later work in adaptation studies is particularly useful. Progression in the early 2000s towards discussions of dialogics and intertextuality led to an understanding of adaptations as sympathetic to the logics of entertainment franchising¹¹⁶, although any sustained examination of the role of franchising in adaptations has been slow in existing scholarship. Clare Parody's prize-winning essay "Franchising/Adaptation" (2011) is a crucial source in this regard, because she calls for increased engagement with franchise texts and an understanding of how contemporary popular adaptations are produced and disseminated. Her emphasis on understanding the industrial context of the production of adaptations coheres with my work, which is interested in decentering the text as a primary point of analysis. Simone Murray's *The Adaptation Industry* is, despite its focus on literary texts, also useful in terms of our methodological similarities, in particular for my focus on understanding both the commercial and creative considerations that drive the ongoing expansion of the *Harry Potter* franchise.

Franchising and the film industry.....

Film and media studies scholarship that illuminates the commercial and cultural contexts of media production is of particular use for this thesis, because it provides important background for the environment into which the *Harry Potter* franchise emerged. Academic work on the media industries is vast and wide-ranging, and a thorough evaluation of the field is beyond

¹¹⁴ Murray, *The Adaptation Industry*, 4.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 11.

¹¹⁶ Cartmell and Whelehan, *Impure Cinema*; Cartmell and Whelehan, *Adaptation: From Text to Screen*; Stam and Raengo, *Literature and Film*.

the scope of this literature review; the selection I discuss here are some of the key texts that focus directly on franchising, marketing, and paratexts in particular.

Henry Jenkins is a particularly valuable resource for this thesis; his seminal work *Convergence Culture* (2006), for instance, develops a comprehensive account of media convergence in the popular culture industries, defining it as “a move from medium-specific content towards content that flows across multiple media channels ... toward multiple ways of accessing media content, and toward ever more complex relations between top-down corporate media and bottom-up participatory culture”¹¹⁷. In convergence culture, whereby “the economic logic of a horizontally integrated entertainment industry [means] a single company may have roots across all of the different media sectors”¹¹⁸, transmedia storytelling flourishes across brands and franchises. About “more than just synergy”¹¹⁹, transmedia storytelling, according to Jenkins, enables a property to spread across different media, adding to it “in a new and sometimes specific way”, with no fixed point of entry¹²⁰. Particularly designed characters and worlds, according to Jenkins, are easily translatable across different media and encourage “drillability”, or the impulse to go deeper and mine those fictional worlds for innumerable details¹²¹. Jenkins also developed his theory of transmedia storytelling in his online blog post, “Transmedia Storytelling 101” (2007)¹²². His blog is an informal – and open-access – space in which Jenkins shares his academic work to a public audience. Much of Jenkins’ work relates to fan studies; in his early work *Textual Poachers* (1992) he claims to offer “an ethnographic account of a particular group of media fans, its social institutions and cultural practices, and its troubled relationship to the mass media and consumer capitalism”¹²³. Although this thesis does not engage with fan studies or fan paratexts to any significant degree, his dissection of how transmedia storytelling works is nonetheless useful for my study.

In terms of blockbuster franchising, a number of key publications have been written in recent decades that prioritise an understanding of how Hollywood works. Justin Wyatt’s

¹¹⁷ Jenkins, *Convergence Culture*, 254.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 96.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 412.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 405.

¹²¹ Henry Jenkins, “The Revenge of the Origami Unicorn: Seven Principles of Transmedia Storytelling,” *Confessions of an Aca-fan*, December 12, 2009. Accessed September 13, 2018. http://henryjenkins.org/2009/12/the_revenge_of_the_origami_uni.html

¹²² Henry Jenkins, “Transmedia Storytelling 101,” *Confessions of an Aca-fan*, March 21, 2007. Accessed September 13, 2018. http://henryjenkins.org/blog/2007/03/transmedia_storytelling_101.html

¹²³ Henry Jenkins, *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture* (London: Routledge, 1992), 1.

theory of “the book, the look, and the hook”¹²⁴ was developed in *High Concept* (1994), for instance, to account for the specific generic and narrative features that frequently characterise Hollywood blockbusters. By tracing the historical development of the “high concept” in technological advances such as the rise of television and home video, and the need for commercially “safe” products to ensure returns on investment¹²⁵, Wyatt demonstrates how Hollywood films are now commonly “designed to maximize marketability”¹²⁶ through an adaptation or pre-sold narrative premise, stars or special effects, and a stylistic concept that is easily communicated and taps into popular sentiments. Thomas Austin’s *Hollywood, Hype, and Audiences* (2002) incorporates a multi-dimensional approach to popular film by “attempting ... a triangulation between film texts, contexts and audiences”¹²⁷ that draws on political economy scholarship, reception studies and empirical audience research in order to evaluate “popular film culture as a set of articulated economic, social and cultural formations and practices”¹²⁸. Julian Stringer, in *Movie Blockbusters* (2003), addresses a similar need for blockbuster discourse but claims that “the blockbuster has no essential characteristics” whose existence “is a multifaceted phenomenon whose meanings are contingent upon the presence of a range of discourses”¹²⁹. Like Austin’s, the volume considers the political economy of Hollywood alongside technological developments and the generation of cultural value in order to extend critical engagement with popular film¹³⁰.

Janet Wasko, in *How Hollywood Works* (2003), takes a political economic approach to the study of film, focusing particularly on “the social relations, particularly power relations, that mutually constitute the production, distribution and consumption resources”¹³¹ in order to consider problems of policy and morality that arise from these power differentials. In the book she covers various facets of the Hollywood industry, from production and distribution through to retail and industry, emphasising how “these activities usually are under the same corporate ownership ... attempting to maximize profitability by building synergy between their corporate divisions”¹³². In *Understanding Disney*(2001), on the other

¹²⁴ Justin Wyatt, *High Concept: Movies and Marketing in Hollywood* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994), 22.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 188.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹²⁷ Thomas Austin, *Hollywood, Hype and Audiences: Selling and Watching Popular Film in the 1990s* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 2.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹²⁹ Julian Stringer, *Movie Blockbusters* (London: Routledge, 2003), 2.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹³¹ Wasko, *How Hollywood Works*, 7.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 11.

hand, she uses the Disney corporation as a case study, examining from a critical perspective the “entire Disney phenomenon” with the aim of encouraging “analysis of popular culture ... through various approaches and methodologies”¹³³. In addition, Paul McDonald and Wasko make the case in the introduction to their edited volume *The Contemporary Hollywood Film Industry* (2008) that Hollywood’s defining features are “conglomerates, escalating production budgets, [and] exploitation of ancillary markets”, all designed to maximise profits and acquiring licensing and media rights¹³⁴. Philip Drake’s article in the collected essays¹³⁵ talks about film marketing purely in the sense of its value as advertising and promotion for a central text and the move towards brand-building as a response to the need to ensure audience engagement¹³⁶.

Paul Grainge’s book *Brand Hollywood* (2008) posits the growth of “global branding”¹³⁷, and conglomerate control over marketing, synergy, rights, and intellectual property as central to Hollywood and the contemporary film and entertainment industry in the 1990s and 2000s¹³⁸. Grainge also identifies the transmedial turn in contemporary film, prescribing this partly due to branding and brand logos, which enable “the increasingly liquid commodity of film to flow across different texts, products, merchandise and media”¹³⁹. A particularly useful chapter explores the constructed rivalry between *Harry Potter* and *Lord of the Rings*, as generated by Warner Bros. to create distinct and contrasting brand identities for the two franchise properties¹⁴⁰. By tracing New Line’s precarious negotiation between independence and subservience to their parent Warner Bros., Grainge examines how *Lord of the Rings* came to acquire its particular identity through a need to obscure “concentration in corporate media ownership” in a time when so many brands “belong to the same corporate power”¹⁴¹. Following on from this, Catherine Johnson’s *Branding Television* (2012) discusses how branding materials such as logos, slogans and trailers are utilised within the televisual industries¹⁴². Johnson attempts to “develop a theorization of television branding” through historical and empirical approaches that trace developments in television over time, arguing

¹³³ Janet Wasko, *Understanding Disney: The Manufacture of Fantasy* (Cambridge: Polity, 2001), 4.

¹³⁴ Paul McDonald and Janet Wasko, *The Contemporary Hollywood Film Industry* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), 4.

¹³⁵ Philip Drake, “Distribution and Marketing in Contemporary Hollywood”, in *The Contemporary Hollywood Film Industry*, eds. Paul McDonald and Janet Wasko (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), 63-82.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 70-2.

¹³⁷ Grainge, *Brand Hollywood*, 7.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 175.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 142.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 145.

¹⁴² Catherine Johnson, *Branding Television* (London: Routledge, 2012), 2.

that this methodology “offers a useful lens for examining the changes that threaten to undermine our conceptualization of this once-familiar technology”¹⁴³.

Case studies of particular franchises also offer useful sites of comparison. Ernest Mathijs’ edited collection *The Lord of the Rings: Popular Culture in Global Context* (2006) focuses on the production, distribution, reception and consumption contexts, or what the volume calls “the public presence”, of the *Lord of the Rings* films¹⁴⁴. Arguing that *Lord of the Rings* fits with traditional franchising logics because of “its already established popularity, the appeal across demographic groups and the evident merchandising potential”¹⁴⁵, Mathijs’ edited volume features chapters that consider issues such as copyright and ownership, public reception, and construction of paratexts through the lens of political economy¹⁴⁶. In the “Ancillary Contexts” section, one chapter by Erik Hedling analyses the film trailers through Wyatts’ lens of “the book, the look and the hook”, arguing that the trailers paratextually frame the upcoming films’ generic features as an “adventure spectacle”¹⁴⁷. Another chapter by Jonathan Gray examines the DVDs, which “add layers of meaning” and “actively construct an aura around the films that hearkens back to a pre-culture industries vision of art”¹⁴⁸ by glorifying Peter Jackson and emphasising the fellowship between the actors through mimetic repetition¹⁴⁹. Kristin Thompson’s *The Frodo Franchise: Lord of the Rings and Modern Hollywood* (2008) also looks at *Lord of the Rings* as a franchising phenomenon; Thompson offers a sweeping overview of the franchise from its international distribution to the multifaceted nature of online fandom. Her study also includes a detailed description of paratexts such as trailers, posters, making-ofs, and video games¹⁵⁰.

Jonathan Gray and Derek Johnson’s *A Companion to Media Authorship* (2013) claims that it is rare to see promotional or textual content without “invocation” of the author, revealing our still-prevalent “cultural fascination” with the author figure¹⁵¹. It is therefore

¹⁴³ Ibid., 9.

¹⁴⁴ Mathijs, *Lord of the Rings*, 6.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 23.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 9.

¹⁴⁷ Erik Hedling, “Framing Tolkien: Trailers, High Concept and the Ring,” in *Lord of the Rings: Popular Culture in Global Context*, ed. Ernest Mathijs (London: Wallflower, 2006), 232.

¹⁴⁸ Jonathan Gray, “Bonus Material: The DVD Layering of the Lord of the Rings,” in *Lord of the Rings: Popular Culture in Global Context*, ed. Ernest Mathijs (London: Wallflower, 2006), 239.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 233-4.

¹⁵⁰ Kristin Thompson, *The Frodo Franchise: The Lord of the Rings and Modern Hollywood* (London: University of California Press, 2007)

¹⁵¹ Jonathan Gray and Derek Johnson, eds., *A Companion to Media Authorship* (Malden: Wiley, 2013), 2.

valuable to continue to “problematize the question of what authorship *is*”¹⁵² and who benefits from it; if authorship is “about control, power, and the management of meaning and of people as much as it is about creativity and innovation”¹⁵³, the multiplication of fan-created texts disrupts this hierarchy and the cultural processes by which media authorship is produced. Gray and Johnson’s work is particularly relevant for my thesis due to Rowling’s centrality to the *Harry Potter* franchise, and provides useful context for tracing her development from traditional author to brand guardian. Meanwhile, Derek Johnson’s *Media Franchising* (2013) provides a nuanced and detailed discussion of how franchising has developed from the 1950s to the present day. Johnson’s work explores “the process of media franchising constituted by complex social interactions within the industry structures supporting and driving cultural replication”¹⁵⁴, examining “how media producers generate, hold investment in, and extract other kinds of value from creative resources”¹⁵⁵. In addition, he seeks to understand how franchising works as a creative force, noting that “[f]ranchising is a way of life within the media industry that shapes and makes sense of creativity”, and that studies which view franchising merely through “structural accounts of corporate dominance of culture”¹⁵⁶ do not account for how and why franchising has become the dominant mode of production in the media industries.

Building on his earlier ‘History of the American Cinema’ series, Tino Balio’s influential book *Hollywood in the New Millennium* (2013) provides a holistic overview of the industrial changes taking place in Hollywood over the past two decades and is an invaluable resource for understanding how Hollywood works. Balio notes that a decade of corporate mergers amongst media companies in the 1990s had resulted in the creation of mega-conglomerates; as a result, for the first time, film studios formed only one part of a much larger media company. Balio claims that CEOs of those conglomerates were “clear and unequivocal about what they want from their movie studios – more and bigger franchises that are instantly recognisable and exploitable across all platforms and all divisions of the company.”¹⁵⁷ As a result, synergy, or the act of “marrying content – movies and TV shows – and the means of distributing it to consumers via broadcasting, cable, satellite and broadband” became the characteristic strategy of film studios and other content producers in

¹⁵²Ibid., 6.

¹⁵³Ibid., 4.

¹⁵⁴ Derek Johnson, *Media Franchising: Creative License and Collaboration in the Culture Industries* (New York: New York University Press, 2013), 3.

¹⁵⁵Ibid., 7.

¹⁵⁶Ibid., 236.

¹⁵⁷ Balio, *Hollywood in the New Millennium*, 25.

the new millennium¹⁵⁸. Balio's book traces a number of developments, including details from a number of corporate mergers, the changes to Hollywood production policies, the impact of the internet, and declining DVD sales. Balio also undertakes a case study of Warner Bros., arguing that – from the slate of franchises produced in the new millennium, such as *Harry Potter*, Nolan's Batman trilogy and *Lord of the Rings* and corresponding efforts towards synergy and licensing – “no other studio now has so aggressively embraced the franchise strategy, in which films are no longer mere movies but brands.” Balio argues that the *Potter* films in particular were “at the vanguard of a new approach to big-budget filmmaking”¹⁵⁹, and that cross-promotion opportunities were paramount here: “the film had its soundtrack recorded by Atlantic Records, a Warner Music Group label; the film was featured on the cover of Entertainment Weekly, and an advance review appeared in *Time*. AOL promoted it on the internet through games, competitions, sneak previews and advance bookings.”¹⁶⁰

Noel Brown's monograph *The Hollywood Family Film* (2012) provides a historical overview and genre study of Hollywood family films, arguing that, as a genre, they offer a “reasonably coherent body of films, typically sharing specific ideological overtones, emotive aspects and commercial intent”¹⁶¹. Identifying that family films are “woefully underaddressed” in academic scholarship¹⁶², particularly those produced by studios other than Disney, Brown takes a chronological approach that uses “industrial, material and cultural perspectives”¹⁶³ to evaluate the importance of the family film in Hollywood's history. The book's final chapter explores family films post-2000, noting their role in the development of multimedia franchises “because their core brand images are widely accessible, possess an existing consumer base, and lend themselves easily to cross-media exploitation.”¹⁶⁴ Brown's later monograph, *British Children's Cinema* (2017), treats children's films as a separate “generic category”¹⁶⁵, drawing a distinction between children's and family films throughout the book in terms of marketing strategies, ratings, critical responses, and merchandising¹⁶⁶.

Finally, James Russell and Jim Whalley's book *Hollywood and the Baby Boom: A Social History* (2018) traces the impact of the baby boom on the film industry over the course

¹⁵⁸Ibid., 1.

¹⁵⁹Ibid., 41.

¹⁶⁰Ibid., 42.

¹⁶¹Noel Brown, *Hollywood Family Film*, 12.

¹⁶²Ibid., 11.

¹⁶³Ibid., 14-5.

¹⁶⁴Ibid., 192.

¹⁶⁵Brown, *British Children's Cinema*, 5.

¹⁶⁶Ibid., 6.

of several decades using “three prisms: archival sources, audience opinion and filmmaker interviews”¹⁶⁷. Russell and Whalley’s final chapter “looks at the production conditions of films at and after the millennium” through the lens of baby boomer filmmakers, arguing that “the growing commercial significance of high-budget, family-friendly releases” that characterised the top tiers of post-millennial Hollywood filmmaking “must be understood as a key part of the boomers’ legacy”¹⁶⁸. This is particularly important when considering Warner Bros.’ history; Russell and Whalley draws a connection between Alan Horn’s position as studio chairman from 2001 and the subsequent success of tentpole franchises such as *Batman*, *Lord of the Rings* and, of course *Harry Potter*, in the early years of the new millennium¹⁶⁹. Indeed, Russell and Whalley read the *Potter* films as the epitome of this franchising trend: one that was made possible by the potential of synergy, but which had its roots in the 1950s¹⁷⁰.

In the past two decades there has been an increase in studies that examine the social and industrial contexts and processes that underpin the contemporary media industries. Jenkins’ analysis of media convergence in *Convergence Culture* (2006) – and his discussion of transmedia storytelling – is particularly useful for this thesis in terms of understanding how and why conglomerates such as Warner Bros. proliferate paratexts across multiple platforms. Ernest Mathijs’ study of *Lord of the Rings* (2006) offers an interesting foil to this thesis – Mathijs’ volume pays attention to paratexts, although he labels them ‘ancillary contexts’, in addition to chapters dedicated to the commercial context of *Lord of the Rings*. Gray and Johnson’s *Companion to Media Authorship* (2013) addresses questions of authorship that are similar to my thesis, although a proportion of their work also discusses the issue of fan authorship, which is outside the scope of the present work. Finally, scholars such as Janet Wasko, Paul Grainge, and Tino Balio have produced publications that discuss exactly how Hollywood works in the post-millennial media environment, providing important context that illuminates the industrial conditions in place when the *Harry Potter* franchise emerged.

¹⁶⁷Russell and Whalley, *Hollywood and the Baby Boom*, 9.

¹⁶⁸*Ibid.*, 258.

¹⁶⁹*Ibid.*, 262.

¹⁷⁰*Ibid.*, 272.

Harry Potter scholarship.....

Unlike many broader and more established fields in the humanities – such as adaptation studies, examined in a previous section – existing work analysing *Harry Potter* has no particular unified theory, model or methodology, and is not particularly well-developed in terms of rigorous academic examination. Although diverse work on *Harry Potter* has been published since the novels' rise to fame in the late 1990s, academic publications have predominantly utilised textual or fan studies methodologies, and yet more published writing is targeted at a popular audience; examples of these will be briefly touched upon here, to outline the extent to which these publications are useful, but the section will on the whole evaluate the status of academic scholarship on *Harry Potter*.

While the novels were still in publication (1997-2007), much of the published literature claimed to provide insight into Rowling's creation, or emphasised its merits as a literary text. One such example is Suman Gupta's *Re-reading Harry Potter* (2003), which discusses themes such as "the question of class"¹⁷¹ and generic conventions such as its fantasy tropes and roots in the boarding school story¹⁷². Lana A. Whited's edited volume *The Ivory Tower and Harry Potter* (2002) follows a similar theme, dedicating sections to the exploration of issues such as genre, ethics, and representation¹⁷³. Some essays from the volume depart from textual analysis, however, such as one by Rebecca Sutherland Borah which considers the nature of fan communities at that early stage of the franchise's existence¹⁷⁴. Whited's edited collection is emblematic of the direction *Harry Potter* scholarship would take in years to come, with the two strands of textual analysis and fan studies at the forefront. John Granger, meanwhile, is a prolific writer of *Harry Potter* analysis who styles himself as the 'Hogwarts Professor'. While the *Potter* books were still being published, he wrote several companion volumes detailing the thematic relevance of alchemy, religion and philosophy throughout the novels such as *Looking for God in Harry Potter* (2004)¹⁷⁵ and *The Hidden Key to Harry Potter* (2002)¹⁷⁶.

¹⁷¹ Suman Gupta, *Re-reading Harry Potter* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 121.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 55.

¹⁷³ Lana A. Whited, ed., *The Ivory Tower and Harry Potter: Perspectives on a Literary Phenomenon* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002)

¹⁷⁴ Rebecca Sutherland Borah, "Apprentice Wizards Welcome: Fan Communities and the Culture of Harry Potter," in *The Ivory Tower and Harry Potter: Perspectives on a Literary Phenomenon*, ed. Lana A. Whited (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002), 343-64.

¹⁷⁵ John Granger, *Looking for God in Harry Potter* (Illinois: Tyndale House, 2004)

¹⁷⁶ John Granger, *The Hidden Key to Harry Potter* (Zossima Press, 2002)

There were some exceptions to the overwhelming focus on textual analysis and fan studies while the book series was still being published, however. Some texts from this period looked at the developing franchise and its business model, such as Andrew Blake's *The Irresistible Rise of Harry Potter* (2002), which twins textual analysis with industrial context by considering issues such as how the representation of consumer goods and the value of money can be read as partly responsible for the increasing commodification of the franchise¹⁷⁷. The book is by necessity hindered by its early publication date, however, when the franchise was in its early stages. Philip Nel's *J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter Novels* (2001) focuses heavily on the role of Rowling in the genesis of the book series, situating her as the key figure in the success of the (at the point of the book's publication burgeoning) franchise¹⁷⁸. Similarly, the book's early publication date means that it is unable to account for Rowling's growing author-brand post-2011.

Stephen Brown's *Wizard! Harry Potter's Brand Magic* (2004) is another book that explores the *Potter* brand in its early years. The publication is superficially designed for a populist audience, using an informal tone and provocative style to demonstrate its points about the marketing of the series. Brown declares *Harry Potter* an excellent case study for contemporary branding and marketing¹⁷⁹ and includes chapters about the books' inherent marketing potential as well as Rowling's role in developing hype¹⁸⁰. The book also refers to merchandising and adapted offshoots as enabling the franchise to be transmedial and multitextual¹⁸¹, and notes that consumers become fans and participants by contributing to 'an extended market' with fanfiction, fanart and other creations¹⁸². Philip Nel, on the other hand, has authored several publications about *Harry Potter*: in addition to the aforementioned book *J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter Novels* (2001)¹⁸³, he has written a book chapter on the *Potter* books in translation (2008)¹⁸⁴ for Elizabeth Heilman's collection *Critical Perspectives on Harry Potter*¹⁸⁵, which has a section on media studies perspectives but is otherwise largely devoted to literary and thematic interpretations of the series. Gillian Lathey (2005) has also

¹⁷⁷ Andrew Blake, *The Irresistible Rise of Harry Potter* (London: Verso, 2002), 72.

¹⁷⁸ Philip Nel, *J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter Novels* (New York: Continuum, 2001)

¹⁷⁹ Brown, *Wizard!*, 12.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 43.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 144.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 137.

¹⁸³ Nel, *Harry Potter Novels*.

¹⁸⁴ Philip Nel, "Lost in Translation? Harry Potter, from Page to Screen," in *Critical Perspectives on Harry Potter*, ed. Elizabeth Heilman, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2008), 275-290.

¹⁸⁵ Elizabeth Heilman, ed., *Critical Perspectives on Harry Potter*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2008)

explored the novels in translation, and connects the series' extensive translation potential with global marketing structures and *Harry Potter*'s international appeal¹⁸⁶.

Ultimately, there were a series of books published in the early years of *Harry Potter* that offered insight into its themes, authorship, or industrial context; on the whole, however, these are somewhat limited by their lack of rigorous academic analysis, although they provide useful springboards for later works. Brown's book is particularly useful for this thesis because it offers a critical perspective of Rowling's biography and the commercial impetus driving the franchise, which is uncommon especially in the early years of the franchise.

Since the books' completion in 2007, textual analysis of *Harry Potter* remains a popular methodology. Vandana Saxena (*The Subversive Harry Potter: Adolescent Rebellion and Containment in the J. K. Rowling Novels*, 2012) is concerned with the literary origins of the series, "tracing its Greco-Roman elements alongside the religious narrative of Christianity", among other generic and thematic topics¹⁸⁷. Bernt and Steveker's *Heroism in the Harry Potter Series* (2011) develops the historic theme of heroism and reads *Harry Potter* in light of generic conventions such as the Gothic and the literary epic¹⁸⁸. More academic examples abound within this trend, such as Colin Manlove's *The Order of Harry Potter: Literary Skill in the Hogwarts Epic* (2010)¹⁸⁹ and John Killinger's *The Life, Death, and Resurrection of Harry Potter* (2009)¹⁹⁰. The focus on textual issues has been largely the same in academic journal publications, with *Harry Potter* studies often finding a home in journals relating to children's literature. The *Children's Literature* journal for instance, has hosted S. K. Cantrell's application of Foucauldian and Deleuzian theory to spaces in the *Harry Potter* series (2011)¹⁹¹ and Catherine Tosenberger's discussion of slash fanfiction practices in *Potter* fandom¹⁹²; *Children's Literature in Education* published Shira Wolosky's model for

¹⁸⁶ Gillian Lathey, "The Travels of Harry: International Marketing and the Translation of J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter Books," in *Lion and the Unicorn: A Critical Journal of Children's Literature* 29, no. 2 (2005): 141-51.

¹⁸⁷ Vandana Saxena, *The Subversive Harry Potter: Adolescent Rebellion and Containment in the J.K. Rowling Novels* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2012), 2.

¹⁸⁸ Katrin Berndt and Lena Steveker, eds., *Heroism in the Harry Potter Series* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 3.

¹⁸⁹ Colin Manlove, *The Order of Harry Potter: Literary Skill in the Hogwarts Epic* (Connecticut: Winged Lion Press, 2010)

¹⁹⁰ John Killinger, *The Life, Death, and Resurrection of Harry Potter* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2009)

¹⁹¹ Sarah Cantrell, "'I Solemnly Swear I Am Up to No Good': Foucault's Heterotopias and Deleuze's Any-Spaces-Whatever in J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter Series," in *Children's Literature* 39 (2011): 195-212.

¹⁹² Catherine Tosenberger, "Homosexuality at the Online Hogwarts: Harry Potter Slash Fanfiction," in *Children's Literature* 36 (2008), 185-207;

understanding the series' ethics through use of Kant and feminist theory¹⁹³; and *Lion and the Unicorn* published Jackie Horne's article on the representation of race in *Harry Potter*.¹⁹⁴

Since the series was completed, there have been some signs of a discursive shift towards an increased interest in *Harry Potter*'s branding, franchising and transmedia strategy, however. For instance, Susan Gunelius's *Harry Potter: The Story of a Global Business Phenomenon* (2008) attempts to explain the global success of the franchise as a transmedia phenomenon¹⁹⁵. The book acts as a useful companion to Brown's *Wizard!* (2003)¹⁹⁶, with Gunelius's work benefiting from its later publication date in order to draw on more context of the franchise's developments. Furthermore, an article by Yung-Hsing Wu (2010) provides a particularly insightful analysis of the production of *The Tales of Beedle the Bard*, a book within the *Harry Potter* series¹⁹⁷. Wu's article traces the evolution of the book from a fictional artefact within *Harry Potter* to an elaborately constructed artefact within the real world, and how it was later reframed as a mass-produced commodity as a result of Amazon.com's purchase of the book and the rights to mass-publish it¹⁹⁸. The article is particularly useful for the ways it sheds light on how conglomerate companies construct popular ideas of materiality and value, mediating between consumer and text, and consumer and author, and consumer and world.

Noel Brown's previously mentioned monographs, *The Hollywood Family Film* (2012) and *British Children's Cinema* (2017), discuss the importance of *Harry Potter* in Hollywood's commercial logic post-2000. In *The Hollywood Family Film*, Brown notes that *Harry Potter*'s child-friendly fantastical world was "perfect fuel for the synergy machine", and that its phenomenal success stimulated "the development of other lavish family entertainment franchises possessing similar qualities"¹⁹⁹. In *British Children's Cinema*, Brown touches on *Potter*'s post-film development, predicting "the *Harry Potter* franchise will continue for decades to come ... More than any other 'family' entertainment property, with the possible exception of *Star Wars*, it epitomises the modern, synergistic multimedia

¹⁹³ Shira Wolosky, "Foucault at School: Discipline, Education and Agency in Harry Potter" in *Children's Literature in Education* 45, no. 4 (December 2014): 285-97.

¹⁹⁴ Jackie C. Horne, "Harry and the Other: Answering the Race Question in J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter" in *Lion and the Unicorn* 34, no. 1 (2010): 76-104.

¹⁹⁵ Susan Gunelius, *Harry Potter: The Story of a Global Business Phenomenon* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008)

¹⁹⁶ Brown, *Wizard!*

¹⁹⁷ Yung-Hsing Wu, "The Magical Matter of Books: Amazon.com and The Tales of Beedle the Bard," in *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 35, no. 2 (2010): 190-207.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 198.

¹⁹⁹ Brown, *Hollywood Family Film*, 196.

franchise.”²⁰⁰ He also explores “the films’ relationship with broader concepts of ‘Englishness’ and ‘Britishness’”²⁰¹; noting the films’ preoccupation with depicting typical markers of English heritage – through the interiors of Hogwarts, imagery of London landmarks, and quintessential British suburbia, for instance²⁰² – Brown identifies that the series nonetheless possesses a “broader intelligibility” in its themes and social concerns, resulting in what he terms a “socio-political-cultural pluralism”²⁰³.

James Russell’s chapter “Authorship, Commerce, and Harry Potter”, in *A Companion to Literature, Film and Adaptation* (2014), is another useful source for this thesis: it seeks to understand how authorship works in media franchising, and who has creative control in a franchise such as *Harry Potter* that generates a multiplicity of potential authors²⁰⁴. Departing from the traditional consideration of Rowling as sole author, he examines how systems of authorship are constructed within transmedia projects in order to give a veneer of originality and creativity²⁰⁵, and considers how companies such as Warner Bros. and individual figures such as David Heyman and Steve Kloves might also occupy (usually obscured) positions of authorship and authority. Russell notes Kloves’s creation of the Harry and Hermione dance scene in *Deathly Hallows Part 1* and attributes this to Kloves’s ability to “craft ... his own version of the characters”²⁰⁶. The chapter also explores the industrial conditions that impacted the *Potter* productions, including what Russell calls the “visually and structurally experimental” staging and cinematography in *Half-Blood Prince*²⁰⁷, which he claims emerged because of the film’s extra time in post-production during the Writers’ Guild of America strike of 2008. Essentially, Russell argues that we should not understand the commercial and critical success of the *Harry Potter* films as a result of Rowling’s contributions but rather as the result of interplay between corporate and creative personnel²⁰⁸.

Henry Jenkins writes in his blog about his experience attending ‘Harry Potter: The Exhibition’ in Boston, United States, in 2009²⁰⁹, noting its emphasis on reconstructing visual,

²⁰⁰ Brown, *British Children’s Cinema*, 243.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 231.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 233.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 239.

²⁰⁴ Russell, “Authorship, Commerce, and Harry Potter,” 392.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 393.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 399.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 402.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 405.

²⁰⁹ Henry Jenkins, “Harry Potter: The Exhibition, or what Location Entertainment Adds to a Transmedia Franchise,” *Confessions of an Aca-fan*, December 14, 2009. Accessed September 14, 2018. http://www.henryjenkins.org/2009/12/harry_potter_the_exhibition_or.html

filmic elements of the wizarding world through use of space to evoke memories of narratives. Touching upon the concept of “drillability” to explain the attraction of exhibits that allow us to examine minute details of the displayed artefacts, Jenkins nonetheless points to a tension in the exhibit between “the between the desire to immerse us in a fictional realm and the desire to provide the kinds of annotation and background we anticipate from a museum experience”²¹⁰, citing the museum format of video monitors and audio description as sites of complexity whereby it “invited us to think about what we see as real (through suspension of disbelief) and constructed (through our behind the scenes perspective)”²¹¹. This perspective is particularly useful for Chapter 3 of this thesis, where I explore the Studio Tour as a form of museum that is characterised by impulses towards interactivity, immersion, and consumerism. Jenkins has also written about Pottermore in his blog post “Three Reasons Why Pottermore Matters”²¹², where he examines the website through three lenses: as a transmedia project, as fan management, and as an ebook publisher.

Although scholarship seeking to examine the thematic and generic conventions of the *Harry Potter* series has contributed to solidifying the presence of *Harry Potter* as a legitimate field of study within academia, work that concentrates solely on textual analysis has limited use for this thesis. To this end, James Russell’s (2014) article on authorship and the commercial contexts of *Harry Potter* is particularly useful due to its examination of the ways in which authorship is constructed and translated throughout franchise multitexts; and Noel Brown’s exploration of *Harry Potter* in the tradition of children’s film franchising also provides useful context for understanding how *Potter* works. I will also use less scholarly sources from the likes of Stephen Brown and Susan Gunelius to supplement this approach, and this thesis aims to address the current gap in research.

As I have emphasised throughout this thesis so far, my thesis is innately interdisciplinary in its scope. In the upcoming chapters, I will draw on scholarship from other relevant fields – in Chapter 2, for instance, I outline existing work on theme parks and how my work operates in relation to such scholarship, while in Chapter 3 I do the same for museum studies – but, nonetheless, it is not the primary purpose of this thesis to *apply* diverse theoretical frameworks to the different cultural forms explored in each chapter. Instead, I

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Henry Jenkins, “Three Reasons Why Pottermore Matters,” *Confessions of an Aca-fan*, June 24, 2011. Accessed September 14, 2018. http://henryjenkins.org/blog/2011/06/three_reasons_why_pottermore_m.html

seek to consistently analyse how my chosen paratexts work as texts while grounding them within a greater understanding of their commercial and franchising contexts. To this end, I engage with these paratexts within an evidence-based film, adaptation and media studies approach influenced by scholars I have outlined in this literature review. From 2011-17 the *Harry Potter* franchise spawned a number of important texts, products and experiences across a diverse variety of media forms, which this thesis attempts to trace while maintaining a unified, coherent theoretical approach.

The main body of this thesis begins with *Pottermore*, a text whose development, as I shall demonstrate, aptly encompasses some of the wider themes and issues emerging from the *Harry Potter* franchise in the post-*Potter* era.

Chapter One

“I am now in a position to give you something unique”: J.K. Rowling, Pottermore, and Brand Management

The early years of *Harry Potter* were characterised by two different but occasionally competing texts: the record-breaking books (1997-2007) and record-breaking films (2001-2011). Although the franchise originated as a series of novels that have sold over 400 million copies to date²¹³, the cultural legacy of *Harry Potter* is just as much bound up in their blockbuster counterparts: *Deathly Hallows Part 2*, the final instalment in the film series, took over \$1.3 billion at the worldwide box office, a film's highest earnings of all time at that point²¹⁴. Although the books and films follow the same story, the two forms have immensely different production contexts and have accrued their own colossal, sometimes distinctive and sometimes overlapping, cultural and financial capital. Ostensibly, the world of *Potter* stems chronologically from the books; the Warner Bros. film adaptations, however, have generated a plethora of texts, paratexts, products and experiences that respond particularly to the visual universe of the films.

The distinctive visual identity of the *Potter* films was first established by *Philosopher's Stone* and *Chamber of Secrets*, directed by Chris Columbus, but the release of *Prisoner of Azkaban*, directed by newcomer Alfonso Cuarón (associated more with arthouse productions, as opposed to the more 'mainstream' Columbus²¹⁵), inspired the visual direction of future films towards a more gritty realism. Beyond the films, the wizarding world iconography has been proliferated through careful merchandise licensing as well as through paratextual products and experiences such as the 'Wizarding World of *Harry Potter*' theme parks and the Warner Bros. Studio Tour (see Chapters 2 and 3 for more on this). Hogwarts Castle, for instance, is realised with an almost fetishised grandeur in the films, and is replicated in the bigature at the Warner Bros. Studio Tour, in Lego sets and similar toys, and in a physically accessible construction at the Universal Studios theme parks.

²¹³“Harry Potter at 20: Billions in Box Office Revenue, Millions of Books Sold,” *Fortune*, accessed September 12, 2018. <http://fortune.com/2017/06/26/harry-potter-20th-anniversary/>

²¹⁴“Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 2 Worldwide Gross,” *Box Office Mojo*, accessed September 12, 2018. <https://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=harrypotter72.htm>

²¹⁵ Grainge, *Brand Hollywood*, 144.

The *Potter* films, then, have constructed a distinct visual identity for the fictional universe, but the books nonetheless perpetuate meanings and values of their own – in particular, for instance, revolving around their function as edifying sources of children’s literature. Following their unpredicted success in worldwide markets, perceptions of *Harry Potter* as facilitating a generation of child readers have proliferated as a result of wide media attention²¹⁶. As this chapter will explore, author J.K. Rowling has been bound up in these ideas, with perceptions of her personality – and personal life – serving to support ideas of *Harry Potter* as beneficent and wholesome. Her authorship remained particularly central because of the series’ explosive popularity while the books were still being written; her responsibility for finishing the saga enabled her to retain a central position even after the adaptation rights were sold to Warner Bros. Indeed, Rowling’s influence has extended beyond her involvement with the books – her approval of production decisions for the films was often solicited and heavily promoted as a means to ensure a sense of fidelity and prestige for the Warner Bros. productions²¹⁷.

This chapter contains two interlocking strands: one, which examines Rowling’s evolving authorial role from the *Potter* years to the present, and another, which explores the development of Pottermore, a website associated with Rowling which has undergone significant changes since its release in 2011. In the early years of *Harry Potter*’s success, Rowling’s biographical background – a classic rags-to-riches tale of a poverty-stricken single mother who was granted massive success – contributed to existing notions of *Harry Potter* as a life-changing and culturally significant experience. Following the end of the books and films in 2011, however, Rowling has continued to remain involved in various *Potter* projects beyond her initial role as a novelist. One particularly important text is Pottermore (2011—), a website which initially (2011-15) presented chapters of the *Potter* books in a virtual format, supported by added visual and interactive elements. It also featured bespoke writing from Rowling and an e-book store, and consequently was designed to offer a specifically book-led experience. The end of the *Potter* books and films in 2011 initially prompted a shift towards products which developed more distinct identities for the books and the films, of which this version of Pottermore is a leading example. (The ‘Wizarding World of *Harry Potter*’ theme parks, and the Warner Bros. Studio Tour, are experiences which serve to support the films in a similar way, and these will form the focus of chapters 2 and 3.) In 2015, however,

²¹⁶Smith, “Potter’s magic spell turns boys into bookworms.”

²¹⁷ Brian McCabe, *Harry Potter: Page to Screen* (London: Titan Books, 2011), 18.

Pottermore transitioned departed from its original book-focused model, instead operating as a cross-franchise repository for news and articles dedicated to a wide range of *Potter* products.

This chapter will argue that looking at Pottermore's transformation is useful because it echoes Rowling's evolving authorial role: just as Pottermore underwent a change from a book-led experience towards a multimedia promotional platform, Rowling has transitioned from a traditional author figure into a what I call a 'brand guardian'. Crucially, however, Pottermore's development also has implications for understanding the wider *Potter* franchise. Its reinvention as a "digital publishing, e-commerce, entertainment and news company"²¹⁸ in 2015 coincides with the development of new transmedia extensions such as *Fantastic Beasts* and *Cursed Child*. Pottermore's journey from a paratext that sought to preserve and reinvent the books towards a cross-franchise repository therefore arguably finds a parallel in wider changes in *Harry Potter*'s brand management.

I will begin with an analysis of Rowling's authorship over time, tracing key factors in her development from traditional author to brand guardian. Following an analysis of mainstream newspaper articles from the late 1990s that constructed a narrative around Rowling's life, this chapter will examine developments in Rowling's authorial role post-2011, paying particular attention to her increasing use of extratextual sources such as film premieres, book tours and Twitter to extend the wizarding world. One of the key paratexts in this regard is Pottermore, and therefore the second section of this chapter will explore Pottermore's original strategy (2011-2015) as a book-led experience and as an exclusive e-book shop. The final part of this chapter will explore the newest iteration of Pottermore (2015—), firstly looking at how the introduction of the trademark "J.K. Rowling's Wizarding World" on the website signals Pottermore's position within a wider branding strategy, and finally considering three key articles on the website in order to understand how they seeks to position Pottermore 2.0 as the "digital heart of the Wizarding World"²¹⁹.

The overall goal of this chapter is to trace Rowling's evolving authorship and Pottermore's evolving form, using these as a lens through which to understand the wider developments of the *Potter* franchise between 2011-17. While the early years of *Harry Potter* were defined by the release schedule of the books and the films, the void created by the culmination of the story of the Boy Who Lived prompted new franchising strategies which,

²¹⁸ "About Us," *Pottermore*, accessed September 12, 2018. <https://www.pottermore.com/about/us>

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*

as I shall explore, changed over time. Pottermore initially sought to emphasise the value of the *Harry Potter* books, but its later version signifies a transition into a more aggressive form of brand management in “J.K. Rowling’s Wizarding World”.

J.K. Rowling and the author function.....

Historically, the author has held a privileged position in western culture, not only in literature but in other media such as film, in which studies of the auteur filmmaker remain influential. In 1967, however, theorist Roland Barthes notably argued against the prevailing reliance on the author in understanding a text. In his seminal work ‘Death of the Author’, he asserted that authorship should be rejected on the basis that it is in fact “language which speaks”²²⁰. Michel Foucault’s response to this, ‘What is an Author?’, on the other hand, argued that, as opposed to killing off the author, it is important to trace how the concept of the author in society – what he calls the “author-function” – affects how texts are created, disseminated, received and understood²²¹. The ‘Author’, for Foucault, therefore serves a social and historical purpose as a symbol that communicates particular meanings and values about literary works. Although Foucault’s examination of the author-function is a useful starting-point for understanding how Rowling’s authorship works, his ideas – first published in 1969 – were informed by a cultural environment that operated very differently compared to the twenty-first century. The post-millennial media industries, for instance, are in part defined by the logics of transmedia storytelling, which, according to Henry Jenkins, spreads a single narrative or setting across diverse media to provide “drillable” content throughout multiple platforms²²². Foucault’s work, therefore, does not necessarily account for an ‘Author’ like J.K. Rowling²²³, who has not only written the seven *Harry Potter* books and three spin-off publications, but has since written the screenplay for *Fantastic Beasts* and been involved in the story for the West End play *Cursed Child*. This is without mentioning her role as brand guardian and creator of Pottermore, which this chapter will go on to discuss.

Media scholar Jonathan Gray has attempted to expand notions of authorship within the context of contemporary transmedia franchising; he claims that the author figure is

²²⁰Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," *Image / Music / Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 142.

²²¹ Michel Foucault, "What is an Author?" ,*Screen* 20, no. 1 (March 1979): 20.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/screen/20.1.13>

²²² Henry Jenkins, "Seven Principles of Transmedia Storytelling."

²²³Barthes, "The Death of the Author," 143.

particularly useful in promoting certain ideals about a product, often to attach a “vener of artistry, aura and authority” to a text or franchise²²⁴. This is particularly relevant in Rowling’s case, because the ongoing attachment of her authorship to the *Harry Potter* books, films, and other subsequent texts has been utilised to prolong, promote and shape the franchise she represents. Indeed, as this chapter will demonstrate, the scope of her authority has expanded as the franchise itself has expanded as a transmedia phenomenon, and the influence of her authorship often serves to obscure commercial brand strategies. (In the early years of *Harry Potter*, as James Russell notes, Rowling’s authorship served to obscure other creative figures – especially for the films, such as producer David Heyman, the series’ directors, or screenwriter Steve Kloves, for example – and isolate herself as the sole ‘Author-God’²²⁵.) As Thomas Leitch notes, authorial identity can function as a commodity in itself²²⁶, and it is this tension between prestige and commodity that will form one recurring theme throughout this chapter. Indeed, Rowling’s involvement with the *Harry Potter* franchise is arguably significant because of her uncharacteristically high retention of control (or, at least, the appearance of it). She has continued to play a central role in defining ideas of canon, meaning, and value for the wizarding world from *Harry Potter*’s inception through to today, and she is largely inextricable from both the identity and the ongoing success of *Harry Potter*. The rise of *Harry Potter*, as this chapter hopes to argue, is also tied to the rise of J.K. Rowling.

Much of Rowling’s early author-function revolved around values of prestige and respectability, as a result of discourses surrounding *Harry Potter*’s benevolent role in introducing children to reading, and in the books’ supposedly educational messages of anti-discrimination and the agency of children²²⁷. Her aura of generosity was further bolstered by the publication of charitable works *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* and *Quidditch Through the Ages* in 2001, and in the establishment of the charity Lumos, an organisation that aims to end the institutionalisation of children by 2050²²⁸. The “foundation myth” of her biography²²⁹ is perhaps one of the most pervasive manifestations of her author-function, however, and has its roots in the very beginning of her career. Following the UK publication of *Philosopher’s Stone* in 1997 and Rowling’s subsequent rise to fame, certain facets of her

²²⁴ Gray, *Show Sold Separately*, 115.

²²⁵ Barthes, “The Death of the Author,” 145.

²²⁶ Thomas Leitch, *Adaptation and its Discontents*, 256.

²²⁷ Smith, “Potter’s magic spell turns boys into bookworms.”

²²⁸ “What We Do,” *Lumos*, accessed September 12, 2018. <https://www.wearelumos.org/what-we-do/>

²²⁹ Russell, “Authorship, Commerce and Harry Potter,” 394.

life were recurrently invoked by the British media, shaping her public identity and making the discourse of the novels inextricable from that of her own life. The following section will analyse the content of mainstream newspaper sources from 1997-1999 that discuss *Harry Potter*, particularly in terms of how they frame the first book in terms of Rowling's disadvantaged circumstances while writing it.

A common theme in British newspaper coverage of Rowling throughout 1997 discussed the author's transformation from a poverty-stricken mother to overnight cultural and financial success. Several headlines ran with this version of events; *The Telegraph*, for instance, proclaims her journey 'From the Dole to Hollywood'²³⁰, while another remarks on the '\$100,000 Success Story for Penniless Mother'²³¹. Much is also made of her "ill-fated" marriage to a Portuguese journalist, an event which caused her to leave her teaching job in Portugal to return home with a newborn child²³². Media depictions of Rowling's life appear on the whole sympathetic regarding what one *Sunday Times* article called the "benefit trap"²³³ for single mothers in Britain. In order to bolster this image of a rising star, the same short quotation attributed to Rowling is used in numerous articles from the period:

"I was very depressed and having a newborn child made it doubly difficult ... the little money I had went on baby gear and all I could afford on housing benefit was a freezing, terribly grotty little flat. I simply felt like a non-person, I was very low, and I had to achieve something."²³⁴

It is difficult, of course, to know the extent to which Rowling was cognizant of the public image being created around her, and how far she effected its realisation. The relative parity between most newspaper articles from 1997, which often recycled the same quotations and generally-established facts, appears to indicate a lack of extended media engagement from Rowling herself. One issue that this particular quotation illuminates, however, is the suppression of the figure of a depressed, poverty-stricken single mother (a "non-person", to quote Rowling²³⁵) in favour of the rise of the author figure, supposedly a dramatically

²³⁰ Elisabeth Dunn, "From the Dole to Hollywood," *The Telegraph*, August 2, 1997. Accessed on September 12, 2018. Archived online at *Accio Quote!* <http://www.accio-quote.org/articles/1997/0897-telegraph-dunn.html>

²³¹ Nigel Reynolds, "\$100,000 Success Story for Penniless Mother," *The Telegraph*, July 7, 1997. Accessed on September 12, 2018. Archived online at *Accio Quote!* <http://www.accio-quote.org/articles/1997/spring97-telegraph-reynolds.htm>

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Eddie Gibb, "Tales from a single mother," *The Sunday Times*, June 29, 1997. Accessed on September 12, 2018. Archived online at *Accio Quote!* <http://www.accio-quote.org/articles/1997/0697-sundaytimes-gibb.html>

²³⁴ Reynolds, "\$100,000 Success Story."

²³⁵ Dan Glaister, "Debut author and single mother sells children's book for £100,000," *The Guardian*, July 8, 1997. Accessed on September 12, 2018. Archived online at *Accio Quote!* <http://www.accio-quote.org/articles/1997/0797-guardian-glaister.htm>

different ideal. According to the established narrative, only after several years of suffering did Rowling “achieve”²³⁶ (Rowling’s words, again) the supposed success of conventional authorship. This single-mother-to-successful-author narrative, which Rowling propagates with her own words, presents her as someone who managed to escape obscurity and indignity through her tenacity, self-belief, and charmingly “barmy” behaviour²³⁷, transforming her into a figure suitable for respect and admiration in the public sphere: the Author.

On the other hand, there is evidence of some tension between Rowling’s growing author-function and her own experiences. In 1999, she claimed:

“When I read the inaccurate reports that I decided to turn my hand to writing out of poverty, I feel indignant. When I had the idea for Harry and when I started writing the book, I was working full time, as I was for my entire adult life, and I was not a single parent. I finished the book under those conditions. But it obviously does make a better story. It sounds more like a rags-to-riches tale.”²³⁸

Here, Rowling identifies her place in a wider cultural story and acknowledges that her identity is being framed in a way which does not necessarily serve reality but a cultural ideology surrounding the role of the author. Her attempt to correct the inaccuracies about her background, however, foregrounds her own powerlessness in the face of the narrative generated by the author-function. Despite her protests, it is the “rags-to-riches tale”²³⁹ that is instilled in cultural discourse and memory. In fact, her speech here is also significant for the way it implicitly supports the aforementioned notion of authorship as a function that eclipses other narratives and identities – namely, in this instance, poverty and single-motherhood. Rowling’s claim to feeling “indignant”²⁴⁰ by the media’s insistent correlation between her writing and her poverty emphasises her desire to elevate her writing beyond the realm of material concerns. By seeking to dissociate the production of her work from the very real practical and financial needs that preoccupy most people, she contributes to the same narrative that posits authors as a special breed whose success is the inevitable result of inherent creative genius.

²³⁶ Tanya Thompson, "First Attempt at Fantasy becomes a \$100,000 reality," *The Scotsman*, July 8, 1997. Accessed on September 12, 2018. Archived online at *Accio Quote!* <http://www.accio-quote.org/articles/1997/0797-scotsman-thompson.html>

²³⁷ Ann Treneman, "Joanne Rowling's Secret is Out," *The Independent*, November 21, 1997. Accessed on September 12, 2018. Archived online at *Accio Quote!* <http://www.accio-quote.org/articles/1997/1197-independent-treneman.html>

²³⁸ Roxanne Feldman, "The Truth about Harry," *School Library Journal*, September 1999. Accessed on September 12, 2018. Archived online at *Accio Quote!* <http://www.accio-quote.org/articles/1999/0999-slj-feldman.htm>

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

Ultimately, it is this notion of ‘narrative’ that holds the key to Rowling’s author-function, especially in terms of her biography. The threads of Rowling’s life brought together by her unequivocal media portrayal – rejection from publishers, her divorce, depression, and struggle to provide for her daughter – unite to form an impression of a desperately disadvantaged human being who prevailed against the circumstances of her situation, using her innate talent to forge a path to success. This symbolically ties her authorial story with that of Harry Potter himself, the young orphan, overlooked and impoverished, who comes to realise he is the Chosen One and is elevated to a position of wealth, power and popularity (although, as with Rowling, he claims not to be particularly happy about it). Although normally implicit, this phenomenon is even made explicit in one *Telegraph* piece:

“There are appealing parallels between life and art. The isolation of the slight, self-absorbed 31-year-old woman ... is reflected in the life of Harry Potter, spooling from her pen.”²⁴¹

If the construction of the narrative of the author seeks to align real life with the stories he or she tells, then Rowling’s supposed humble beginnings not only serve to sell the story of *Harry Potter*, but the similar values of *Harry Potter* also serve to sell the story of J.K. Rowling. The author-function here connects story and author, lending legitimacy and authenticity to the values of both. This also underlines the transformative power of *Harry Potter*, where the act of mimetic repetition – whereby the process of creating a story echoes the narrative of the story itself – allows the wizarding world to save not only Harry, not only Rowling, but, if common discourse surrounding the series’ global impact on children’s literacy is to be believed, a whole generation of younger readers.

In essence, Rowling’s biography demonstrates the uses to which the author figure can be put in the promotion of a children’s book series, one which holds early potential for development into a global media franchise, in the late twentieth century. The humanisation of the author by dehumanisation of the pre-authorial self acts as a viable method of promoting and selling books; and the next section of this chapter will go on to examine how this author-function was maintained and developed when *Harry Potter* transformed from a children’s book into a multibillion-dollar media franchise.

²⁴¹Dunn, “From the Dole to Hollywood,” *The Telegraph*.

***Rowling as brand guardian*.....**

Throughout the development of the *Harry Potter* franchise, even after publication of the final book in 2007, Rowling maintained a status of perceived authority over the brand, despite the phenomenally successful film adaptations and – as Chapters 4 and 5 will discuss – increasingly shared authorship over the next generation of wizarding world texts. Her public image during the period of the books’ release (1997 – 2007) was connected largely to her position as an author, in particular because of her responsibility for the resolution of the books. Her influence was not entirely restricted to the sphere of novel-writing, however. Rowling’s name has been frequently invoked since the start of the movies’ production, with creative figures such as producer David Heyman emphasising her approval of the films²⁴². Involving Rowling and attaching her name to the productions validates the film venture while simultaneously soothing popular concerns surrounding fidelity to the novels.

Promotion for the films also emphasised her role in shaping their direction. Kreacher the house elf is a good example of this: according to Michael Goldenberg, scriptwriter for *Order of the Phoenix*, Rowling intervened in the filming process to advise him to include the house elf in the film, as Kreacher would be “important” in the soon-to-be-published final book²⁴³. Other anecdotes have been circulated within the mainstream media, such as the case of Rowling revealing Snape’s story to Alan Rickman years before it featured in the final book²⁴⁴, and Rowling’s supposed refusal to allow the *Potter* films to be associated with McDonald’s Happy Meals²⁴⁵. Additionally, much of the films’ promotion was preoccupied with emphasising the productions’ ability to translate Rowling’s writing faithfully into a visual format. For instance, as James Russell notes, in a promotional documentary for the *Prisoner of Azkaban* film, producer David Heyman, director Alfonso Cuarón, and screenwriter Steve Kloves reassure viewers in an interview that their “vision is born very much from the book” and that they “tried to discover the best way to convey what Jo was expressing on the page”²⁴⁶. Interestingly, Rowling also appears in the documentary to support this notion that the film was somehow an extension of her own imagination, by remarking, “I said to Steve Kloves many a time, ‘I wish I had written that.’ ... It’s great when I’m looking around for all these little bits that are completely consistent with the world, but I didn’t write

²⁴²McCabe, *Page to Screen*, 21.

²⁴³*Ibid.*, 153.

²⁴⁴J.K. Rowling, Twitter post, Jan 17, 2016, 11:51pm, https://twitter.com/jk_rowling/status/688992186457788416.

²⁴⁵Gunelius, *The Story of a Global Business Phenomenon*, 36.

²⁴⁶Russell, “Authorship, Commerce and Harry Potter,” 391.

them.”²⁴⁷ As Russell states, the overall aim of the documentary was to situate Rowling at the heart of the *Harry Potter* phenomenon, at the expense of the rest of the filmmaking team²⁴⁸.

This is just one example of how Rowling was co-opted into the creation of the narrative of *Harry Potter* filmmaking, where the film productions borrowed Rowling’s authorial prestige while simultaneously upholding the conventional hierarchy of literature over film²⁴⁹. The precise degree of brand guardianship that Rowling controlled – or how far she intentionally developed her reach over the franchise – has been debated in some marketing-focused *Potter* scholarship thus far²⁵⁰. For instance, Stephen Brown places significant emphasis on Rowling’s “commercial nous”²⁵¹, asserting that “when it comes to teasing consumers, Rowling is a natural”²⁵². Meanwhile, Susan Gunelius posits Rowling’s avoidance of the mainstream media and lack of interviews or official appearances to expert manoeuvring on the author’s part, “leaving fans wanting to hear more”, and suggests that Rowling was in control of the generation of buzz during the books’ publication by only providing teaser information infrequently²⁵³. Regardless of whether this is intentional, the combination of selective silence and selective revelation has historically enabled Rowling to control information about the wizarding universe.

By 2011, Rowling’s entanglement with the film series culminated in her presence at the world premiere for *Deathly Hallows Part 2* in Trafalgar Square. In front of thousands of fans, she joined actors and crew members on stage to pay tribute to the films. Her presence on the stage alongside film industry professionals indicated that, in the public sphere at least, she was considered as much of an authority in representing the vision of the wizarding world. Her presence at the premiere also demonstrates that the films were at that point tied, to some extent, to the image of J.K. Rowling, and that she was beginning to occupy a wider position of brand guardianship. One particularly revealing quotation from Rowling’s speech – which also launches this thesis – demonstrates this: “Whether you come back by page or by the big

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Leitch, “Twelve Fallacies in Contemporary Adaptation Theory,” 154.

²⁵⁰ Brown, *Wizard!*; Gunelius, *Story of a Global Business Phenomenon*; Russell, “Authorship, Commerce, and Harry Potter.”

²⁵¹ Brown, *Wizard!*, 42.

²⁵² Ibid., 44.

²⁵³ Gunelius, *Story of a Global Business Phenomenon*, 42.

screen, Hogwarts will always be there to welcome you home.”²⁵⁴ Here, Rowling places her books on a par with the *Potter* films as equal means of accessing the wizarding world.

As her presence at the *Deathly Hallows Part 2* premiere suggests, Rowling continued to participate in wider franchising and world-building activities following the culmination of the books. Another example can be found in Rowling’s activity on a book tour in October 2007, where she made global headlines by announcing that she “always thought of Dumbledore as gay.”²⁵⁵ Although the character’s sexual orientation is never explicitly mentioned in the texts, the decision to announce this at her book tour indicated a shift in Rowling’s authorial role: where she originally used the published books to reveal new information, in the post-novels environment she was willing to edit and adapt the wizarding world extratextually, retroactively offering new interpretations for characters in published works. This is demonstrative of the extent of her control over the fictional universe as a whole, and, crucially, her willingness to exert that control. Her revelation of Dumbledore’s sexuality is arguably the first example, as this chapter will demonstrate, of what would become a recurring theme towards extratextual editing and world-building outside of traditional print media.

This trend of generating meaning in structures and media outside of the book form comprised a significant part of Rowling’s authorship strategy following the publication of *Deathly Hallows* in 2007, as she transitioned from a traditional author into a brand guardian. Developments in the digital environment over the past two decades have led to increased platforms for not only fans and audiences to collaborate, but for authors and celebrities to communicate with those fans. Rowling joined Twitter in 2009, but the account was almost dormant, with only occasional official tweets about upcoming books or events, until 2014. From 2014-17, however, Rowling increasingly began to use Twitter as another medium through which to shape the wizarding world. For instance, in 2015, Rowling requested the cooperation of fans in tweeting their support for Scotland’s rugby team, promising in return to divulge the birthdate of fictional character Sirius Black:

“Off to Newcastle for #SAMvSCO and if lots of you tweet #AsOne to support Scotland, you can have Sirius's birthday! #RugbyWorldCup” (@JKRowling, 4:29AM, October 10, 2015).

²⁵⁴ Warner Bros. Pictures, “Red Carpet Premiere.”

²⁵⁵ David Smith, “Dumbledore was gay, JK tells amazed fans,” *The Guardian*, October 21, 2007. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2007/oct/21/film.books>

“WE WON!!!!!! And Sirius Black was born on the 3rd of November xxxxxxxx”
(@JKRowling, 8:27 AM, October 10, 2015).

Her confidence in using Twitter further exemplifies the evolution of her authorial position: although in 2008 she used extratextual sources such as her website or book tours to expand the wizarding world, from 2014 she used a social media platform to alter and distil elements of the *Harry Potter* universe within 140-280 characters. It is a symptom of her relative power that by 2014 she no longer relied on the printed word, or even traditional paratexts such as interviews or book tours, in order to impart meaning. This subversion of the traditional role of the author has led to some questioning of the legitimacy of Rowling’s position²⁵⁶ and indeed the legitimacy of using digital formats for world-building. Platforms such as Twitter do not possess the same perceived value as the printed book, arguably because when something is printed and becomes material, it cannot be so easily changed, and carries with it cultural capital and connotations of authenticity²⁵⁷. The fact that the *Potter* franchise stems from books, a historically valued medium less frequently subject to reboots and rewrites, lends its universe stability and credibility for this reason. It is easier to believe in the sincerity of books – something lacking in Rowling’s world-building via Twitter updates, nestled as they are amongst pithy remarks about all manner of topics, from Scottish independence to the merits of biscuit-dunking in cups of tea.

What these features have in common – the outing of Professor Dumbledore, the use of Twitter for world-building, and her presence at the *Deathly Hallows* premiere – is Rowling’s involvement in creating and manipulating paratextual material in order to influence established meanings of the books and films. Rowling’s author-function has always been pivotal in shaping perceptions of the wizarding world, even beginning with the circulation of her rags-to-riches biography, but her influence has shifted over time to encompass a wider sense of brand guardianship, which has led to her present-day attachment to all new major *Potter* products such as *Fantastic Beasts* and *Cursed Child*. This is certainly a far cry from the burgeoning author of 1997 who bowed to pressure to change her penname – because it was feared young boys would not respect a female author²⁵⁸ – and to the re-titling of her

²⁵⁶ Selina Wilken, “Why I’m ignoring J.K. Rowling’s new ‘Harry Potter’ canon,” *Hypable*, September 27, 2015. Accessed September 15, 2018. <https://www.hypable.com/pottermore-jk-rowling-harry-potter-canon/>

²⁵⁷ Murray, *The Adaptation Industry*, 27.

²⁵⁸ “Jo Rowling Interview on Oprah,” *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, video, January 10, 2010. Accessed September 15, 2018. <https://web.archive.org/web/20111219121651/http://www.oprah.com/showinfo/Harry-Potter-Phenom-JK-Rowling>

debut novel, *Philosopher's Stone*, which became *Sorcerer's Stone* in the United States²⁵⁹.

This chapter will now turn to Pottermore, a website that originated in 2011 as the online adaptation of the *Potter* books and which in late 2015 evolved into a content aggregator for the wider franchise. Crucially, the two distinct stages of the website reflect her changing authorial role within the *Harry Potter* franchise, and offer ways of understanding the development of the franchise as a whole in the next generation of the wizarding world.

Pottermore 1.0: the digital adaptation.....

Pottermore, first launched in July 2011, was intended to be the fulfilment of Rowling's pledge to write an encyclopedia of the *Harry Potter* universe²⁶⁰. From its inception, the online project has been tied closely to Rowling and forms one of the transmedia cornerstones in the development of the *Harry Potter* franchise since the culmination of the film series that same year. Pottermore is particularly interesting, this chapter will argue, because of its connections with author J.K. Rowling and its status as a unique digital franchise text that has been updated and rearranged according to shifting brand strategies.

Pottermore has evolved significantly since it first went live worldwide. The first iteration of Pottermore (2011-2015, hereafter 'Pottermore 1.0') was designed as a virtual adaptation of the *Harry Potter* books, and its linear chapter-based storytelling engaged with digital media to provide an online, quasi-interactive and visually-led format for re-reading the novels. The website also functioned as an encyclopedia, featuring new information about the wizarding world written by Rowling, which was tied thematically to the narrative through interactive quizzes and collectible items. In late 2015, Pottermore ('Pottermore 2.0' hereafter) was redesigned with a new layout, user interface and strategic approach. Departing from its previous emphasis on the novels and the reading process, the website now acts as a content aggregator, or a "hub of information"²⁶¹, containing thousands of encyclopedia entries,

²⁵⁹"Red Nose Day" Online Chat," *BBC*, March 12, 2001. Accessed September 15,

2018.<https://web.archive.org/web/20131214105613/http://www.mugglenet.com/books/bbcchat1.shtml>

²⁶⁰ John Crace, "Harry Potter: the last battle," *The Guardian*, March 11, 2008. Accessed September 17, 2018.<http://www.theguardian.com/books/2008/mar/11/harrypotter.law>; Larry Neumeister, "Rowling Testifies in Lawsuit over Harry Potter Encyclopedia," *The Washington Post*, April 15, 2008. Accessed September 17, 2018.<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/04/14/AR2008041402589.html>

²⁶¹ Anna Rafferty, in Philip Jones, "Pottermore readies radical relaunch," *The Bookseller*, September 11, 2015. Accessed September 17, 2018.<https://www.thebookseller.com/news/pottermore-readies-radical-relaunch-312036>

shareable features, news articles, film stills and listicles ranging across the franchise's disparate products, texts and experiences.

Understanding Pottermore is useful because the history of the website is in part a reflection of the history of the *Harry Potter* franchise and the changing industrial context in which it operates. In 2011, at the height of the films' success and facing the end of the seven-book, eight-film saga, Pottermore 1.0, as this chapter will argue, functioned as a paratext that sought to reaffirm the ongoing value of the *Harry Potter* books as distinct properties. By 2015, however, the development of new texts *Fantastic Beasts* and *Cursed Child* signalled a shift towards an increasingly transmedial world-building strategy. Pottermore 2.0 therefore reflects a more transparently commercial attempt at brand management in uniting these various franchising texts, with Rowling at its head²⁶².

I will first examine the context in which Pottermore 1.0 initially emerged – as a successor to Rowling's website, and heralded by a particularly illuminating video by Rowling – before moving into a discussion of the website's form as a book-led experience. The following section will explore how Pottermore functions within the wider context of the publishing and media industries: firstly, in the changes to its e-book shop, and secondly in the creation of the trademark "J.K. Rowling's Wizarding World". The final section of the chapter will turn to some key articles in Pottermore 2.0 in order to demonstrate the ways in which the website's revamp is underpinned by a greater awareness of transmedia franchising than its predecessor. Pottermore 2.0 makes its increasingly promotional function more palatable through its continued association with Rowling; but, interestingly, as the franchise has begun to recognise and recruit other creative and commercial contributors (see Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 for more on this), so too is this echoed in Pottermore. As James Russell notes, "It is easy to identify the author of a novel. It is more difficult to single out one creative participant as the author of an entity as economically and culturally all-encompassing as Harry Potter."²⁶³ Pottermore's growing acknowledgement of the realities of the *Potter* brand's development indicates changing notions of authorship and brand management.

The hype that preceded Pottermore 1.0's introduction in 2011 was spearheaded by J.K. Rowling, who released an online video in June 2011 in order to promote the upcoming

²⁶²Jenkins, "Three Reasons Why Pottermore Matters."

²⁶³Russell, "Authorship, Commerce, and Harry Potter," 392.

website²⁶⁴. The video is interesting firstly for the way it frames Pottermore as a text that bridges the gap between author and reader. Rowling says at one point: “I am now in a position to give you something unique: an online reading experience built around the Harry Potter books ... [and] built, in part, by you, the reader.”²⁶⁵ Rowling’s position of importance is made explicit by her statement “I am now in a position to give you something unique”²⁶⁶, but is immediately balanced by references to the audience, not only in the above quotation but later in the video where she claims “the most important addition ... is you”, because Pottermore 1.0 allows the “digital generation ... to share, participate in, and rediscover the stories”²⁶⁷. Furthermore, Rowling refers to the audience specifically as the “readership”, which demonstrates the website’s overt aim to cater to the books and their readers. The video also features book-themed graphics representing the wizarding world which depart from recognisable film-led iconography: the implication here is arguably that this is the reader’s chance to see Rowling’s vision of the characters and the world. (She does, nonetheless, make reference to the eight films in the video²⁶⁸, which, like her appearance at the *Deathly Hallows Part 2* premiere, indicates her acknowledgement of competing *Potter* texts, and signals the complexity of creating a paratext such as Pottermore which attempts to support one text in an increasingly transmedia environment.)

All these complexities are also present upon the official launch of Pottermore 1.0. Rowling was one selling point, because the website provided the exclusive home of writing by the author. The lack of other mentioned employees of the company served to isolate her as the sole creator, despite the necessity for designers, consultants, board members and marketing staff. (Pottermore’s annual reports, for instance, list 22 employees in 2013, which rose to 40 in 2014.²⁶⁹) Pottermore can be read not only as a successor of the books but also for Rowling’s personal website, which has been active since 2003 and was originally used as a platform for Rowling to post teaser information and interact with fans. During 2011-17, Rowling’s website was considerably more minimalist, however, featuring a timeline whereby visitors could find out more about the author’s life and her *Potter* journey. (See Appendix 1,

²⁶⁴ The Telegraph, "JK Rowling unveils Pottermore website," uploaded June 23, 2011, video, accessed September 15, 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r8UaAK3WkrY>

²⁶⁵ “Rowling unveils Pottermore website.”

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ "Annual Report and Financial Statement for the Year Ended 21 March 2014," *Pottermore Limited*, Companies House, December 31, 2014. 18. <https://beta.companieshouse.gov.uk/company/06979090/filing-history>

Figure 1.) The de-escalation of content on jkrowling.com towards a stagnant timeline coincided roughly with the introduction of Pottermore, Rowling's replacement for actively updated *Potter*-themed content and fan interaction.

On Rowling's old website, clicking on golden keys or moving butterflies led visitors to secret pages. Pottermore 1.0 expanded on this concept: the website consisted of a series of "moments", or visual scenes from book chapters, which could be travelled through in a virtual approximation of reading. Interactive objects were placed into these scenes which unlocked pages of new content from Rowling. Clicking on the flying Ford Anglia in the *Chamber of Secrets* sequence, for example, unlocked new content about King's Cross station (see Appendix 1, Figure 2); and upon reaching the chapter in *Philosopher's Stone* where Harry is sorted into Gryffindor, users could complete a Sorting Quiz written by Rowling. (See Appendix 1, Figure 3.) Rowling's writing was thus tied thematically to the *Harry Potter* narrative through digital interactivity, in an attempt to conflate traditional methods of reading with virtual opportunities for participation. The pages of new content usually contained two headers: the first, "New from J. K. Rowling", provided writing reminiscent of an encyclopedia entry or prose from a novel; the second, 'J.K. Rowling's thoughts', offered insight into the thought processes and opinions of the author regarding the topic at hand. (See Appendix 1, Figure 4.) This emphasis on Rowling's intentions privileged her as a creative authority, and presented Pottermore 1.0 as an authentic extension to the books and a viable alternative text to the movies. Rowling's "thoughts" were the virtual currency of the website, and she exerted her authority over the fiction by emphasising her ability to add to the wizarding world via Pottermore.

Pottermore 1.0, then, reimagined the *Harry Potter* books in a visual and virtual format, emphasising the novels' value as distinct properties in the early years following the culmination of the saga of *The Boy Who Lived*. Crucially, the website, like e-books and audiobooks, essentially repackaged the books in a new medium, thus serving as an elaborate promotional tool for the sale of *Harry Potter* books. Michael Bhaskar identifies a type of paratext that functions primarily as marketing for a central text – "paracontent" – and argues that Pottermore fits this definition. Paracontent distinguishes itself from other types of paratext by its reliance on "what it's 'para' to"²⁷⁰ – whereas in Gray's definition, paratexts

²⁷⁰Bhaskar, "Paracontent," 32.

can usually break off from a central text and form their own values and meanings²⁷¹.

Bhaskar's theory of "paracontent" identifies digital content-based platforms, within the publishing industry in particular, which:

"have become increasingly immersive, sophisticated, and designed to work with brands and products in a more innovative, less invasive way: a social, "gameified" marketing, enabled by, and on, web platforms, embedding the social and interactive aspects of that platform."²⁷²

Viewing Pottermore through the lens of paracontent is useful for understanding how the website embodies contemporary possibilities fuelled by digital technologies, such as interactivity, limitless capacity for world-building, digital publishing, and participatory culture. Bhaskar's model of paracontent, however, does not account for the strategy of transmedia storytelling which is increasingly part of adaptation franchises, and indeed for *Harry Potter*. Henry Jenkins refers to transmedia storytelling as "a process where integral elements of a fiction get dispersed systematically across multiple delivery channels ... Most often, transmedia stories are based not on individual characters or specific plots but rather complex fictional worlds ... This process of world-building encourages an encyclopedic impulse"²⁷³. Viewed through this lens, Pottermore 1.0 is not merely an adaptation of the books, but just one example of *Potter* transmedial extensions that combine to form a web of multitexts with no fixed entry-point. Furthermore, Rowling's exclusive writing exemplifies the strategy of what Jenkins calls "drillability"²⁷⁴, in which world-building franchising initiatives encourage the impulse to drill deeper into the world of the brand.

The multitextual, multilayered world-building strategy of transmedia storytelling does, of course, cause difficulties for Pottermore 1.0's explicit desire to reinvent the *books* specifically. The lack of media referring to the wider *Potter* franchise is integral to the identity of the original Pottermore. Its emphasis on following the narrative of the books, alongside new illustrations that departed from the Warner Bros. films' iconography, promoted one text at the expense of others. The website's insistence on adapting and representing only one property in a media environment characterised by a multitude of products bearing the *Harry Potter* brand – theme parks, movies, movie-making tours, merchandise, games, and so on – conflicts with the inevitable intertextual relationships that

²⁷¹Gray, *Show Sold Separately*, 2.

²⁷²Bhaskar, "Paracontent," 29.

²⁷³Jenkins, "Transmedia Storytelling 101."

²⁷⁴Henry Jenkins, "Searching for the Origami Unicorn: The Matrix and Transmedia Storytelling," in *Film and Literature: An Introduction and Reader*, ed. Timothy Corrigan, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2012), 407.

audiences create with transmedia entertainment franchises, however. One particular piece of content on Pottermore 1.0 was interesting in its uncharacteristic reflection of this: a revealed passage about a minor character, the musician Celestina Warbeck, featured an audio file of a live performance at the ‘Wizarding World’ theme parks in Orlando, Florida. (See Appendix 1, Figure 5.) Pottermore 1.0 was ostensibly dedicated to promoting and reconfiguring the *Harry Potter* books specifically, but nonetheless formed part of a wider transmedia environment which in some cases drew upon materials from the wider franchise.

Finally, it is important to discuss the role of the audience in Pottermore 1.0, or at least how the website sought to manage audience response. The aforementioned launch video emphasised the centrality of the “readership” for the original iteration of the website²⁷⁵; attempts of this kind to foster participatory culture, according to Henry Jenkins, are at the heart of many contemporary blockbuster franchises seeking to harness the creativity, loyalty and capital of fans. An understanding of participatory culture, he argues, “allows us to acknowledge the complex interactions between fans and producers” at a time when a “logic of engagement” shapes how the entertainment industry operates²⁷⁶. Furthermore, Alexis Weedon expands upon Linda Hutcheon’s seminal theory of adaptation by suggesting that the act of “participating” – in addition to “showing” and “telling” – is crucial in understanding the function of contemporary adaptations²⁷⁷. Pottermore 1.0’s ostensible desire to foster fan interaction was, however, realised only superficially. Notably, there were very few means through which audiences could shape their experience of the website: for instance, it was restricted by child protection policies that meant users could not choose their own usernames, create profiles, or communicate privately. Users could post comments on articles or submit fan art, but all submissions were moderated prior to upload. There was also no capacity for users to write fanfiction, a popular practice amongst fan communities; indeed, Bethan Jones argues that Pottermore 1.0’s exclusion of fanfiction served to control the dissemination of meaning and prohibits alternative interpretations such as “slash” fanfiction, which pairs up male characters not romantically connected in the source text²⁷⁸. Henry Jenkins similarly remarks that Pottermore seeks to shape and control fan engagement with the *Harry Potter* series in much the same way that the epilogue to *Deathly Hallows*, set nineteen years later,

²⁷⁵ “Rowling unveils Pottermore website.”

²⁷⁶ Jenkins, *Textual Poachers*, xxii.

²⁷⁷ Alexis Weedon, et al., “Crossing media boundaries: Adaptations and new media forms of the book,” *Convergence* 20, no. 1 (2014): 113.

²⁷⁸ Bethan Jones, “Pottermore: Encouraging or Regulating Participatory Culture?”, in Luigina Ciolfi and Gráinne O’Brien, *Magic is Might 2012: Conference Proceedings* (Sheffield Hallam University, 2012), 169.

“pointlessly” pairs up some of the main characters. According to Jenkins, Pottermore’s attempt to facilitate “fan interactions also represents an attempt to bring fandom more under [Rowling’s control]”²⁷⁹. Pottermore 1.0’s occasionally contradictory approach towards fandom arguably denotes the limitations of a digital platform whose values are subservient to preserving the canonicity, authorship, and child-friendly image of a greater text.

Before moving into a discussion of Pottermore 2.0, it is important to trace the website’s evolving role as an e-book publisher in order to understand how Pottermore’s overarching commercial strategy has reflected wider developments in the *Harry Potter* franchise. In addition to providing a digital adaptation of the novels, Pottermore 1.0 was also the exclusive home of the *Harry Potter* e-books and audiobooks from 2011-15. The website was split into two sections, one for the story, and one for the bookstore, and the implications for Rowling’s control bled into both. Rowling’s exclusive writing gave her the ability to expand the lore of the wizarding world through the storytelling section, while the Shop section enabled her to exert power over the distribution of the books as products. Pottermore Ltd. was shaped by a commercial and creative partnership with Sony at this time, with the electronics company providing financial assistance as well as the interactive technology for the in-site games²⁸⁰. In return, Pottermore spawned three spin-off video games, including *J.K. Rowling’s Book of Spells*, for Sony’s PlayStation 3 console, and Sony’s new e-reader came preloaded with *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*. Sony’s partnership was well-placed to implement the interactive elements of the site, and to launch an identity for Pottermore 1.0 outside the confines of traditional partners such as Warner Bros and Universal; it was, however, not so ideal for penetrating the e-book market – despite, as I shall explore, Pottermore 1.0’s aim to function as a successful, exclusive e-bookstore²⁸¹.

Pottermore 1.0’s digital publishing venture is to date unprecedented within the industry. Rowling, having managed to retain full rights to the electronic publication of her books, founded Pottermore Ltd. in 2009 with CEO Charlie Redmayne (who left the company in July 2013, to be replaced by Susan Jurevics²⁸², who eventually stepped down in February

²⁷⁹Jenkins, “Three Reasons Why Pottermore Matters.”

²⁸⁰ Laura Owen, “J.K. Rowling’s Pottermore gets new CEO: Former Sony exec Susan Jurevics,” *GigaOM*, September 19, 2013. Accessed September 17, 2018. <https://gigaom.com/2013/09/19/j-k-rowlings-pottermore-gets-new-ceo-former-sony-exec-susan-jurevics/>

²⁸¹ Ibid.

²⁸² Ibid.

2017²⁸³) and her agent Neil Blair in order to exploit the opportunities of digital publishing²⁸⁴. Significantly, Pottermore Ltd., was the “exclusive home” of the *Potter* e-books and audiobooks from 2012-2015. (See Appendix 1, Figure 6.) Pottermore Ltd., and Rowling, therefore retained full control over the sale of e-books and audiobooks in the *Potter* series for several years, a feat to which few novelists can attest. Online retailers such as Amazon and Barnes & Noble could list the e-books on their websites, but consumers purchasing the products were redirected to Pottermore for the final sale – cutting out those corporations from the final sales process²⁸⁵. Authorial retention of control over the entire publishing supply chain is a rare occurrence within the industry, and disturbs traditional channels and relationships between media providers²⁸⁶. By maintaining and exploiting the digital rights to her books through her own company, Rowling circumvented and undermined retail giants whose business models rely on creating bespoke file formats designed only for their own branded devices.

Rowling’s decision to wrest control from powerful corporations demonstrated her already formidable influence as an author-brand – and her willingness to develop her brand, and control, further. Terje Colbjørnsen, in his article on Pottermore and digital publishing, saw the website as an extension of Rowling’s already comprehensive brand management within the traditional publishing sphere. During the publication of the books, for instance, new volumes were driven to shops in armoured vans, and retailers were required to sign legal documents to ensure they would not sell or read the books before release²⁸⁷. Colbjørnsen’s article, however, ends on a question; when he was writing (2012), it was too soon to tell if Pottermore 1.0’s digital publishing venture would live up to its potential long-term. Certainly initially, the shop saw high e-book sales, with £3million profits in its opening month in March 27th 2012, and over 7 million unique viewers to the shop²⁸⁸.

By September 2015, however, Pottermore had transitioned to an open-commerce model – the standard industry practice that allows retailers to sell books on behalf of publishers. According to a report published by Pottermore, e-book sales following the switch

²⁸³ Natasha Onwuemezi, "Susan Jurevics stands down as Pottermore chief executive," *Bookseller*, February 1, 2017. Accessed September 17, 2018. <https://www.thebookseller.com/news/jurevics-leave-pottermore-479891>

²⁸⁴ Olivia Solon, "JK Rowling's Pottermore is a landmark for digital publishing," *The Telegraph*, June 23, 2011. Accessed September 17, 2018. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/8593935/JK-Rowlings-Pottermore-is-a-landmark-for-digital-publishing.html>

²⁸⁵ Terje Colbjørnsen, "Harry Potter and the Chamber of Commerce," in Luigina Ciolfi and Gráinne O'Brien, *Magic is Might 2012: Conference Proceedings* (Sheffield Hallam University, 2012), 152.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 151.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 148.

were up “100%” on the previous quarter²⁸⁹. Although no sales figures have been released, it is likely that the open-commerce model was seen to be more financially viable, perhaps due to the international marketing reach and brand recognition of corporations such as Amazon, which can cross-promote its products and take advantage of industry connections in a way that Pottermore Ltd. – for all its support from the most famous author in the world – cannot. Crucially, this transition to the open-commerce model in 2015, away from the original strategy of e-book exclusivity, demonstrates a shift towards a more collaborative – and conventional – commercial approach, which echoes developments in the wider *Harry Potter* franchise and indeed in Rowling’s authorial stance. It is also no coincidence that the same year saw the overhaul of Pottermore 1.0 and the departure of Sony as a partner to make way for the radically different iteration that exists today: one that acknowledges and supports other media companies involved in the growth of *Harry Potter*, such as Warner Bros. and Universal, and a wider range of *Potter* products. Pottermore 1.0 ultimately provided an opportunity for Rowling and Bloomsbury to exploit the opportunities of digital publishing through the synergy offered by the website’s storytelling function, thereby solidifying Rowling’s control over all formats of the books. Furthermore, Pottermore 1.0’s initial reliance on the *Potter* books led to the sidelining of Warner Bros. and the *Potter* films, which aligned the website with properties that Rowling controlled and sought to emphasise an identity for the books as separate from the films. Consequently, one of the most striking changes in Pottermore 2.0 (2015--) is its embrace of wide-ranging *Harry Potter* media, and the far less resistant stance that the website takes to collaborating with other media forces.

***J.K. Rowling’s Wizarding World*.....**

On 22nd September 2015, Pottermore 1.0 was replaced with an entirely new design. The new site, Pottermore 2.0, comprises myriad articles, pictures and facts loosely organised into themed tabs. Where the first iteration of Pottermore sought to distinguish itself as a property associated with the *Harry Potter* novels, Pottermore 2.0 departs from any attachment to a specific media property by acting as a content aggregator for material across the entire franchise. Nonetheless, as this chapter will argue, Pottermore 2.0 remains dedicated to ensuring the continuation of Rowling’s traditional authority despite its attempt to unite various, sometimes disparate products. This is in part achieved through the ongoing presence

²⁸⁹ “Press Release – 27 Jan 2016,” *Pottermore*, accessed September 17, 2018. <https://www.pottermore.com/about/press-27-Jan-2016>

of her exclusive writing and new features such as a Patronus Quiz and Ilvermorny Sorting Quiz, also written by Rowling, but also, significantly, through the creation of the trademarked term ‘J.K. Rowling’s Wizarding World’. The term was used commonly on Pottermore 2.0 between 2015-2017, including in the copyright notes at the bottom of every page and in the ‘About’ page, which labelled Pottermore “the global digital publisher of Harry Potter and J.K. Rowling’s Wizarding World”²⁹⁰. On each occasion the ‘J.K. Rowling’s Wizarding World’ label was used to signify content ownership, and attempted to expand Rowling’s authorial primacy to cover not only the published novels but the wider strategic framework of the wizarding world.

Interestingly, the trademark existed not only on Pottermore; it can be traced through other franchising endeavours from 2015-2017. On 15th December 2015, the trailer for *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* was released, claiming that ‘Writer J.K. Rowling invites you to the return to the Wizarding World’²⁹¹. Official posters for the film were also emblazoned with the phrase. (See Appendix 1, Figure 7.) This is a turn of phrase not previously used in any *Potter* films or other promotional materials. The closer association between Warner Bros. and Rowling is a marked reversal from previous productions and indicates an increased synergy between the two cultural giants. It is also a contrast to the previous approach embodied by Pottermore 1.0, which foregrounded companies like Sony that were largely unconnected with the established *Potter* franchise. Warner Bros. and Rowling appear from 2015 to have begun a mutually beneficial relationship whereby one media corporation could promote another in a capacity that generates the impression of a coherent branded universe and, potentially, a mutually-agreed strategy for further *Potter* expansion. (For more on this, see Chapter 4.) Pottermore 2.0’s use of this trademark therefore demonstrates a wider inclination towards convergence between *Potter*-invested media companies²⁹².

Indeed, Pottermore 2.0 also forms part of this overarching strategy in its increasing turn towards collaborative e-commerce and in its own restructuring as a media company. As I mentioned previously, Pottermore has had its own offices since 2011 employing between 2-40 people, but its initial front-facing website sought to obscure the presence of any

²⁹⁰ “About Us,” *Pottermore*, accessed September 17, 2018. <https://www.pottermore.com/about/us>

²⁹¹ Warner Bros. Pictures, "Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them - Teaser Trailer," April 10, 2016, video, accessed September 17, 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ViuDsy7yb8M>

²⁹² Cassie Brummitt, "Pottermore: Transmedia Storytelling and Authorship in Harry Potter," *The Midwest Quarterly* 58, no. 1 (Autumn 2016): 122.

background staff. In contrast, Pottermore 2.0 is considerably more open about its goals as a media company, listing key company managers in an ‘About’ page and stating:

Pottermore, the digital publishing, e-commerce, entertainment and news company from J.K. Rowling, is the global digital publisher of Harry Potter and J.K. Rowling’s Wizarding World. As the digital heart of J.K. Rowling’s Wizarding World, pottermore.com is dedicated to unlocking the power of imagination. It offers news, features, and articles as well as new and previously unreleased writing by J.K. Rowling.²⁹³

Aside from the fact that it mentions Rowling four times in its opening paragraph, this page is useful in deducing the objectives of the site. Here the focus is primarily on its capacity as, firstly, a digital publisher, and, secondly, an e-commerce company. In seeking to exploit Rowling’s digital publishing rights, Pottermore 1.0 glamorised the experience of reading and sought to revive interest in the books as viable competing properties against the films. Pottermore 2.0, however, unites “entertainment and news” from around the Wizarding World and acknowledges that the books are now one in a series of *Potter* properties in the global cultural marketplace – while emphasising Rowling’s central position of authority²⁹⁴. The descriptor “entertainment and news company” also echoes other leading digital journalism websites such as The Huffington Post and BuzzFeed; BuzzFeed’s “About Us” page similarly describes itself as a “global, cross-platform network” for “a next generation, highly engaged audience that consumes video and content across platforms”²⁹⁵. Websites like BuzzFeed commission, write and appropriate digital content in ways that are “easily shareable, and globally accessible,”²⁹⁶ with its viral sharing model optimised to secure revenue by guaranteeing webpage views to advertisers. Pottermore 2.0’s approach is slightly different, as the site has no advertisements; instead, revenue streams come through the digital sale of the *Potter* books²⁹⁷. For this reason, driving traffic to the site is still important in order to promote the sale of its products. This partly explains the style of content in Pottermore 2.0, in which content resembles ‘clickbait’ articles or is aggregated from a variety of sources. The viral marketing model – in which content emphasises its emotive qualities through eye-catching photos or soundbites that are designed to be shared on social media – enables Pottermore to obtain a larger reach in appealing to a wider audience who can engage with *Harry Potter* content regardless of their level of connection or chosen entryway to the franchise.

²⁹³“About Us,” *Pottermore*.

²⁹⁴ Ibid.

²⁹⁵ BuzzFeed, “About Us,” accessed September 17, 2018. <https://www.buzzfeed.com/about>

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

²⁹⁷“Annual Report and Financial Statement 21 March 2014,” *Pottermore Limited, Companies House*, 7.

Pottermore 2.0: the digital heart of J.K. Rowling's Wizarding World.....

The latest iteration of Pottermore echoes a change in Rowling's authorship – from the website's initial aim to preserve the primacy of the books, towards an acceptance of collaboration with other creators and producers operating within the franchise. The form of the website embodies this approach, whereby different topics are collated into different tabs. Much of Rowling's previously-written original writing, for example, is re-homed in the 'Writing by J.K. Rowling' tab. The 'Explore the Story' tab features a frequently-changing concept from the series and collates a variety of media surrounding that theme. For instance, the 'Minerva McGonagall' theme contains original writing from Rowling; illustrations (film concept art, film stills, and original art from the previous Pottermore); a fact file with basic information about the character; and quotations and recommendations for similar pages²⁹⁸. The remaining tabs include franchising texts such as 'Fantastic Beasts', 'Cursed Child', which house news stories and original content relating to the productions, and are the most immediate sign that the new Pottermore embraces a transmedia franchising strategy. There are also editorial content hubs such as 'Features', which combines a number of different styles of content, from infographics to listicles to articles lifted wholesale from other published works, and 'News', which collates updates from various areas of the franchise. Interactive tab 'Sorting' contains quizzes by Rowling that assign users into houses, and the 'Shop' tab redirects to the ebook store. (See Appendix 1, Figure 8.) Each tab is designed with colourful blocks and large, striking images that dominate the viewing experience, with some articles written by an anonymous "Pottermore Correspondent", which this chapter will return to later.

The remainder of this chapter will examine three articles, each from a different tab. The first of these articles, "Welcome to the new Pottermore", from the 'News' tab, was one of the first articles published on Pottermore 2.0, and attempts to co-opt fans into the new design and establish the website as a "digital heart" of the franchise. The other two articles, however, seek to establish distinct identities for the newest properties in J.K. Rowling's Wizarding World.

²⁹⁸ "Minerva McGonagall," *Pottermore*, accessed September 17, 2018. <https://www.pottermore.com/explore-the-story/minerva-mcgonagall>

The ‘News’ tab collates diverse cross-franchise content, from book-specific coverage (“Celebrate a night of spells with Harry Potter Book Night”²⁹⁹) to merchandising (“First look at Newt Scamander Funko Pop! Figure coming to San Diego Comic-Con”³⁰⁰), to fan activities (“Fans embrace the Dark Arts at Warner Bros. Studio Tour”³⁰¹). Although many articles embody Pottermore’s cross-franchising strategy, the article selected for this chapter, “Welcome to the new Pottermore”, is particularly significant for the way in which it reveals Pottermore’s preoccupation with creating an online community that places Rowling at its heart, but which consequently narrows opportunities for fan participation³⁰². The article, published 22 September 2015, attempted to pre-empt and assuage predicted negative fan reactions to the changing of the site. It predominantly used a question-and-answer format, with questions not sourced by fans but generated by the article’s author; they ranged from serious concerns, such as “But what’s happened to the Sorting Ceremony?”, to light-hearted inside jokes – “Do the Pottermore staff work in a castle?” – which establishes an informal tone that works to place the writer and reader on an equal level³⁰³. The author in question is someone labelled the “Pottermore Correspondent” (‘PMC’ hereafter), supposedly an anonymous journalist responsible for delivering “insider information” and “news, interviews and behind-the-scenes secrets”³⁰⁴. The PMC is a regular figure throughout Pottermore 2.0, and, aside from Rowling, is the only writer given a distinct identity. (Other articles are written by the “Pottermore Team”.) The Pottermore Correspondent writes in the first person and appeals directly to the reader, as in this article when they claim: “I’ve got a lot to tell you”. This unique writing style constructs a superficial personality for this figure, and one which is aligned arguably with *Harry Potter* fans; at one point, the PMC declares, “From the bottom of my Hermione-loving heart...”³⁰⁵.

The depth of this personality, however, is restricted by the author’s anonymity, which raises questions as to whether the PMC is a constructed figure. If the PMC’s function is

²⁹⁹ “Celebrate a Night of Spells with Harry Potter Book Night,” *Pottermore*, February 4, 2016. Accessed September 17, 2018. <https://www.pottermore.com/news/harry-potter-book-night-2016>

³⁰⁰ “First look at Newt Scamander Funko Pop! Figure coming to San Diego Comic-Con,” *Pottermore*, July 7, 2016. Accessed September 17, 2018. <https://www.pottermore.com/news/comic-con-exclusive-newt-scamander-funko>

³⁰¹ Pottermore Correspondent, “Fans embrace the Dark Arts at Warner Bros. Studio Tour,” *Pottermore*, November 3, 2015. Accessed September 17, 2018. <https://www.pottermore.com/news/fans-embrace-the-dark-arts-at-warner-bros-studio-tour>

³⁰² Pottermore Correspondent, “Welcome to the new Pottermore,” *Pottermore*. September 22, 2015. Accessed September 17, 2018. <https://www.pottermore.com/news/Welcome-to-the-new-Pottermore>

³⁰³ Ibid.

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

partly to personalise the experience for fans and take the corporate edge off cross-franchise promotional content, the journalist’s anonymity limits the extent to which their content can generate sustained emotional investment. I would argue that the resulting impersonal author figure stems from an awareness that the site cannot – or should not – recognise a rival authority to J.K. Rowling. By retaining an air of mystery around the Pottermore Correspondent, Rowling faces no challenge to her own authorial control; the PMC’s identity is sublimated to ensure that Rowling’s remains primal. Indeed, Rowling’s central position within Pottermore 2.0 is made evident elsewhere in this article, which declares that the “new Pottermore logo is in J.K. Rowling’s own handwriting”³⁰⁶. The article also promises the continuation of Rowling’s original writing in addition to news about the author, privileging Pottermore 2.0’s connections with Rowling as a means of constructing prestige. Most interesting is the explicit claim that Rowling’s writing on Pottermore 2.0 is official, claiming “yes, [the website is] canon!”. Aligning itself with Rowling enables the website to co-opt her authority, lending power to the article’s claims that it will “deliver insider information” and “new magical experiences”³⁰⁷.

Rowling’s close affiliation is an exclusive selling-point that no fan websites can claim, but, interestingly, Pottermore 2.0 has a particularly complex relationship with participatory culture, even in comparison to its predecessor. In some senses, Pottermore 2.0 seeks to appeal to *Harry Potter*’s extensive fan communities. For instance, in the article at hand, one question – “Are you sure the stage play isn’t a prequel?”³⁰⁸ – implicitly references frustrations that Rowling expressed on Twitter in the early months of 2016:

“#FantasticBeasts: prequel.
#CursedChild: NOT a prequel.
Simple!*

*I’ll be repeating this daily for months.” (@JKRowling, 1:41PM, August 17, 2015.)

“To be clear! The SCRIPT of #CursedChild is being published. #NotANovel #NotAPrequel ;)” (@JKRowling, 1:19AM, February 11, 2016.)

The Pottermore Correspondent’s convivial uses of “you”, “I”, and “we” also attempt to connect the site and its readers³⁰⁹. The extent of participatory culture on Pottermore 2.0 is mostly illusory and superficial, however. Pottermore offers no capacity for fans to comment

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

³⁰⁹ Pottermore Correspondent, “Welcome to the new Pottermore.”

upon features or articles; there are no message boards or, indeed, any way to contact other users; and even the limited avenues for participation which Pottermore 1.0 offered – in the form of house competitions and interactive gaming against other players – were removed. Pottermore 2.0 resembles instead a digital bulletin board, featuring content curated by anonymous journalists, Rowling and the “Pottermore Team”. This newer version of the website on the one hand seeks to encourage fan culture – exemplified in the article by the exclamation “Come back later! Come back tomorrow!”³¹⁰ – but is structurally designed around strict management of fan response.

The news article also attempts to pre-empt potential concerns about the website’s changes, setting up Pottermore 2.0 as an improvement on the original book-led website because of its transmedial focus: “We have so much more to give you; writing, movies, plays, books, characters, places, backstories”³¹¹. The article also includes the “wizarding world” buzzword and explicitly frames the website’s function as a transmedia franchising artefact: “Like any good universe the wizarding world keeps expanding, and Pottermore will expand with it”³¹². The next article that this chapter will explore relates to one of these franchising expansions, *Cursed Child*. The “Cursed Child” tab on Pottermore 2.0 promotes the West End play, a sequel to *Harry Potter* that takes place over nineteen years later³¹³. (See Chapter 5 for more on the play.) The tab provides basic information about the stage production, plus news and features designed to provide added depth or prestige (such as “Cursed Child creatives on bringing Harry Potter to the stage”³¹⁴).

The “Cursed Child” tab is particularly interesting because of the ways it reinforces Rowling’s role as an authority figure while introducing other creative forces. The play, as Chapter 5 of this thesis explores, is a co-written production between Rowling, Jack Thorne, and John Tiffany. Many of the articles in the Pottermore 2.0 tab negotiate the issue of shared authorship arising from this situation, but, nonetheless, Rowling is often promoted as the play’s central figure, as in headlines such as “Cursed Child creatives on collaborating with J.K. Rowling”³¹⁵. In a similar vein, one significant article entitled “Exciting publishing

³¹⁰ Ibid.

³¹¹ Ibid.

³¹² Ibid.

³¹³ “Cursed Child,” *Pottermore*, accessed September 17, 2018. <https://www.pottermore.com/cursed-child>

³¹⁴ The Pottermore Correspondent, “Cursed Child creatives on bringing Harry Potter to the stage,” accessed September 17, 2018. <https://www.pottermore.com/features/cursed-child-creatives-on-bringing-harry-potter-to-the-stage>

³¹⁵ Pottermore Correspondent, “Cursed Child creatives on collaborating with J.K. Rowling,” accessed September 17, 2018. <https://www.pottermore.com/features/cursed-child-creatives-on-collaborating-with-jk-rowling>

programme from J.K. Rowling’s WIZARDING WORLD”, published 10th February 2016, establishes a timeline for upcoming printed media³¹⁶. In particular, it aligns the *Cursed Child* script-book – first released in print on July 31st 2016 – with the written tradition of Rowling’s works. In addition to the script-book, the article promotes reprints of the original novels, new illustrated editions, and “new formats and editions of the Hogwarts Library books” *Quidditch Through the Ages*, *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*, and *Tales of Beedle the Bard*³¹⁷. Establishing a publishing programme makes sense given the literary origins of the franchise, and an emphasis on printed works also plays with the nostalgic history of anticipation that characterised *Harry Potter*’s early years – when book releases spawned midnight parties, sold-out bookstores and months of sustained publicity. It is also traditionally the arena in which Rowling holds unassailable authority.

The *Cursed Child* script-book is the headline product for the publishing programme, and, because the play’s events follow chronologically from the seven-book saga, ‘J.K. Rowling’s WIZARDING WORLD’ can position the script-book as a sequel – evidenced by the article at hand, which calls the script-book “officially the eighth story”³¹⁸ – and capitalise on release-anticipation fever from *Potter* fanaticism of old. (Publisher Little, Brown also hosted midnight release parties for the *Cursed Child* script-book, drawing upon the traditions first established throughout the *Potter* books’ release.) A scheduled publishing programme such as the one detailed in this article also engages with marketing strategies echoed by other leading franchises – such as Disney’s Marvel – to publicise their release schedules in a format that generates buzz, creates an appearance of franchise longevity, and encourages brand loyalty.

The article’s emphasis on the material book notably leaves out other franchise developments, such as the *Fantastic Beasts* film series, despite mentioning the reprints of the charity-written book (from 2001) on which it is based. The article instead co-opts the *Fantastic Beasts* book reprint under Rowling’s author-brand, describing it as a “brand new edition ... with new content by J.K. Rowling”³¹⁹. This is one instance of the way in which Pottermore 2.0 seeks to perpetuate the legacy of the *Potter* books; the article establishes the publishing programme and repurposes the books as one cornerstone of not only the franchise’s past but its future as well. Emphasising the importance of printed publications,

³¹⁶“Exciting publishing programme from J.K. Rowling’s WIZARDING WORLD,” *Pottermore*, February 10, 2016. Accessed September 17, 2018. <https://www.pottermore.com/news/ww-publishing-cursed-child-script-book-announcement>

³¹⁷ Ibid.

³¹⁸ Ibid.

³¹⁹ Ibid.

and separating them from other products, enables Pottermore 2.0 to draw on the cultural capital of the *Potter* books and of Rowling herself, and to perpetuate the ongoing value of those products in a transmedia environment. Recognition of the wider franchise still permeates the article, however. *Potter* fans are referred to as “[r]eaders and moviegoers”, and also as part of the “Wizarding World fandom”³²⁰, drawing a contrast to Rowling’s use of “readership” in Pottermore’s original launch video³²¹. Nonetheless, this article seeks to create a distinct identity for the play as following naturally in the tradition of Rowling’s works. Furthermore, as I explored earlier in this chapter, it is an indication of the strength of Rowling’s author-function in 2016 that this article could praise *Cursed Child* as the eighth story, while immediately referring to it as “a play by Jack Thorne”³²².

In comparison, the “Fantastic Beasts” tab on Pottermore 2.0 is populated with considerably more content than “Cursed Child”, and is reminiscent of more traditional blockbuster promotion. Articles include behind-the-scenes peeks (“Dressing the Goldstein sisters: a closer look at 1920s witch fashion”³²³) and interviews with cast and crew (“I was cast as a No-Maj extra in Fantastic Beasts”³²⁴). While the “Cursed Child” tab largely effaces personality in favour of more neutral coverage, much of the content for *Fantastic Beasts* is written by the Pottermore Correspondent. The colours of the webpage are blue and brown, synergising with the brand’s colours from its trailers, and with Newt Scamander’s striking blue coat and brown briefcase. This is a branding strategy that occurs throughout Pottermore 2.0, with the “Cursed Child” section in yellow to match its pre-existing poster material, the colours of characters’ pages matched with their houses or personality, and so on.

Promotion for *Fantastic Beasts*, however, is significant for its prevalence throughout all areas of Pottermore 2.0, breaking the confines of its assigned tab. Some of the most notable pieces of promotional content are entitled “A History of Magic in North America” (“HOMINA” hereafter)³²⁵, but these are housed in the “Writing by J.K. Rowling” tab. Rowling published HOMINA as four pieces of new content in March 2016 – one released

³²⁰ Ibid.

³²¹ “Rowling unveils Pottermore website.”

³²² “Exciting publishing programme,” *Pottermore*.

³²³ Pottermore Correspondent, “Dressing the Goldstein sisters: a closer look at 1920s witch fashion,” *Pottermore*, February 19, 2016. Accessed September 17, 2018. <https://www.pottermore.com/news/fantastic-beasts-dressing-tina-and-queenie-goldstein>

³²⁴ Pottermore Correspondent, “I was cast as a No-Maj extra in Fantastic Beasts,” *Pottermore*, December 3, 2015. Accessed September 17, 2018. <https://www.pottermore.com/news/pmc-was-cast-as-a-no-maj-extra-in-fantastic-beasts>

³²⁵ “History of Magic in North America,” *Pottermore*, March 2016. Accessed September 17, 2018. <https://www.pottermore.com/collection-episodic/history-of-magic-in-north-america-en>

each day in a week – and they perform a dual function as world-building and promotional tools. The first two pieces, “Fourteenth Century–Seventeenth Century” and “Seventeenth Century and Beyond”, expand the history of the wizarding world into the continent of North America. The writing’s dual objective becomes more overt in the final two pieces – “Rappaport’s Law” and “1920s Wizarding America” – however, which encompass the timeline in which the *Fantastic Beasts* film is set³²⁶. In order to retain their perceived value as world-building exercises, these articles’ relationship with the film series remains implicit, with the film production going unmentioned. Descriptions of wandmakers, or locations such as the American magic school Ilvermorny and the magical governing body MACUSA, serve to provide what Henry Jenkins calls “drillable” media³²⁷ that dedicated fans can plumb into, while simultaneously acting as teaser promotion to heighten anticipation for *Fantastic Beasts*.

Significantly, this breaking news about the world of *Fantastic Beasts* comes from Rowling in an episodic format. Not only did this draw repeated traffic to the site and encourage return viewing to Pottermore – echoing the aforementioned news article’s cry to “Come back later! Come back tomorrow!”³²⁸ – but it also encouraged hype to build as the revealed content drew closer to its central component: the details about wizarding culture contemporary to *Fantastic Beasts*. Rowling therefore lent the power of her authorship willingly to engage with and promote Warner Bros. productions, and it is of course important that, although the “Fantastic Beasts” tab on Pottermore 2.0 contains a variety of features, it was Rowling’s writing that drew press attention globally. The “A History of Magic in North America” sequence drew controversy from some fan communities for its depiction of Native American culture (see Chapter 4 for more on this) – but these debates occurred in separate online spaces, not on Pottermore³²⁹. Pottermore 2.0 provides a means for officially-sanctioned partners to publish and promote material, as opposed to opening a discourse between creators and participants. The fact that this backlash occurred at all, meanwhile, demonstrates the continuing strength of Rowling’s author-function.

Pottermore, then, has undertaken a dramatic u-turn in its strategic approach. Its beginnings as a book-led experience propped up the *Harry Potter* novels, evoking a world largely untouched by its filmic counterparts. Since the website’s inception, however, the franchise has spawned new world-building initiatives that move beyond the original

³²⁶Ibid.

³²⁷Jenkins, “Searching for the Origami Unicorn,” 407.

³²⁸Pottermore, “Welcome to the new Pottermore.”

³²⁹Loralee Sepsey, “Dear JK Rowling: We’re Still Here,” *Natives in America*, July 1, 2016. Accessed September 17, 2018. <http://nativesinamerica.com/2016/07/dear-jk-rowling-were-still-here/>

cornerstones – the books and the films – towards a more amorphous, easily expanded “Wizarding World”, culminating in Rowling’s assertion that “Harry is done now.”³³⁰

Pottermore has thus been shaped by, and reflects, these wider developments, rebranding as an exclusive news and entertainment hub that unites the franchise under one carefully-managed roof.

Conclusion.....

This chapter has sought to examine Rowling’s evolving authorship and Pottermore’s evolving form in order to illuminate wider changes in the development of the *Harry Potter* franchise – or, indeed, the transition from *Harry Potter* to J.K. Rowling’s Wizarding World. Rowling’s role as an author and authority has remained integral to the growth of the franchise, although the nature of that authorship has arguably changed: from a traditional author towards a brand ambassador and guardian. The myth of her biography in the mainstream media tied her inextricably to the *Harry Potter* narrative, but following the culmination of the books Rowling retained a central position by allying herself first with the films, then building her authority through extratextual world-building via book tours, Twitter, and, finally, Pottermore. As later chapters in this thesis will explore, Rowling also remained creatively influential by taking central roles in the production of entirely new texts in the wizarding world, namely *Fantastic Beasts* and *Cursed Child*. Although these projects have involved a greater level of creative collaboration than the *Potter* novels, Rowling’s authority has remained strategically paramount.

Pottermore, meanwhile, exemplifies the challenges associated with *Harry Potter*’s growth – initially, in the void left by the books and the films, the website sought to perpetuate the value of the *Potter* novels, while in the wake of new franchising texts such as *Fantastic Beasts* and *Cursed Child* (2015—), Pottermore has since functioned as a “hub of information”³³¹ that unites otherwise disparate products. Throughout, Pottermore’s existence has been tied to J.K. Rowling, although its more recent iteration has begun to incorporate other creative voices, in line with increasing collaboration in the wider franchise. The voice that has become increasingly muted is that of the fan, while Rowling’s and other creatives are

³³⁰ Alison Flood, “JK Rowling: I think we’re done with Harry Potter now,” *The Guardian*, August 1, 2016. Accessed on September 17, 2018. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/aug/01/jk-rowling-done-with-harry-potter-now-cursed-child>

³³¹ Anna Rafferty, in Philip Jones, “Pottermore readies radical relaunch.”

ascendant; in the absence of opportunities for fan participation, Pottermore is sustained by the prestige generated from the potency of Rowling's author-function. The development of Pottermore ultimately demonstrates an attempt to retain traditional markers of authority such as authorship, fan management and an association with printed media while enabling a drilling deeper into the franchise in search of exploitable intellectual property. In this sense, Pottermore is emblematic of wider changes in the *Harry Potter* franchise between 2011-17.

Chapter Two

Rethinking Theme Parks: ‘The Wizarding World of *Harry Potter*’, Fantasy Absolutely Reproduced

The monumental financial and cultural success of the Warner Bros. *Harry Potter* film franchise (2001-2011) set the bar for high-budget blockbusters in the first decade of the new millennium, providing a benchmark for the glut of adaptations of young adult literature – from *The Hunger Games*, to *Twilight*, to *Divergent* (Neil Burger, 2014) - that followed in its wake. The *Potter* films earned over \$7.7 billion at the worldwide box office³³², but their global impact also arguably stems in large part from the great number of paratexts generated alongside the productions. The DVDs of the *Potter* films, for example, offer behind-the-scenes material to create a sub-narrative that promotes the artistry of various crew members, such as the director or the art department, in addition to enforcing the authorial role of J.K. Rowling³³³. Film posters and trailers also serve to establish the meaning of the film, often prior to the consumption of the film itself, acting as what Genette would call a “threshold”³³⁴ and what Jonathan Gray calls an “entryway”³³⁵ to the text, thus establishing expectations of that text. Gray argues, for instance, that paratexts such as DVDs and trailers have the power to shape the meaning and value of a media text³³⁶. Other extratextual experiences such as the ‘Wizarding World’ theme parks and the Warner Bros. Studio Tour, as the next two chapters will discuss, are distinctive due to their adherence to the visual iconography developed by the films – their depiction of characters, props, and sets – and also through their promotion of intrinsic themes from the films, as well as being informed by the films’ particular contexts of production, distribution and reception.

This chapter will focus on the ‘Wizarding World’, an intensely-themed experience spread across two Universal Studios theme parks in Orlando, Florida. The parks respond in large part to the *Potter* films in their physical and visual reproduction of trademarked

³³² “Harry Potter Worldwide Gross,” *Box Office Mojo*, accessed September 20, 2018. <https://www.boxofficemojo.com/franchises/chart/?id=harrypotter.htm>

³³³ Russell, “Authorship, Commerce and Harry Potter,” 391.

³³⁴ Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, 410.

³³⁵ Gray, *Show Sold Separately*, 75.

³³⁶ Gray, *Show Sold Separately*, 66, 97; Gray, “Bonus Material: The DVD Layering of the Lord of the Rings,” 238-53.

characters, sets and props. The ‘Wizarding World’ recreates the film sets of Hogsmeade and Diagon Alley in a typically westernised theme park format replete with rides, refreshments and shopping opportunities. This chapter will primarily refer to the site in Universal Orlando Resort (hereafter ‘UOR’), Florida, although similar attractions have been constructed at other Universal Studios parks around the globe, including California and Tokyo, Japan. The ‘Wizarding World’ in Florida contains the most extensively constructed theme park space at time of writing: a replicated set of the wizarding village Hogsmeade has been created in one park, Islands of Adventure (2011—), with magical shopping district Diagon Alley in another park, Universal Studios (2014—). The research conducted for this chapter took place in April 2016 after several visits to both sites.

Stefani Klaric claims that the ‘Wizarding World’ represents an attempt to “raise the bar” in immersive world-building³³⁷, while Abby Waysdorf and Steijn Reijnders note that the park “exemplifies a push in the industry towards more immersive theming around known narrative worlds, going beyond rides and souvenirs into full, complete environments promising immersion into a favourite text.”³³⁸ Like the Warner Bros. Studio Tour, which will be explored in the following chapter, the ‘Wizarding World’ is a particularly spatial, physically inhabitable experience that adheres to the visual iconography of the *Potter* films specifically. The first ‘Wizarding World’ theme park, Hogsmeade, was opened after the end of the final *Potter* films, with Diagon Alley following in 2014, and the two theme park segments demonstrate an attempt to extend the longevity of the filmic version of the wizarding world while simultaneously reworking the ways in which audiences can engage with and access that world.

As this chapter will explore, theme parks also offer a space in which the textual themes of *Harry Potter* can physically manifest. The ‘Wizarding World’ was an initial cornerstone of *Harry Potter*’s franchising strategy post-2011, and the intensity of its theming offers opportunities for interactivity with the world, values and narrative of the *Potter* texts – and the films in particular. The inherent impulse towards consumption is a key facet of theme parks, however, and the duality between theming and consumption in the theme park environment will be a key issue that this chapter explores. Through an interrogation of the park both as a text and as a commercial and operational construct, this chapter will examine

³³⁷ Alan Gilmore, quoted in Stefani Klaric, "Narrative Brought to Life: The Wizarding World of Harry Potter," *Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Repository* (Paper 573, June 2012), 34. <http://ir.lib.uwo.ca/etd>

³³⁸ Abby Waysdorf, et al., "Immersion, authenticity and the theme park as social space: Experiencing the Wizarding World of Harry Potter," *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 21, no. 2 (2018): 174.

how the identity of the ‘Wizarding World’ – the rides, performances, shops, restaurants, architecture, layout, atmosphere and narrative journey – generates often conflicting messages that encourage an impulse for consumption while simultaneously attempting to provide an authentic ‘hyperreal’ experience in ways that reinforce the filmic vision of the wizarding world.

This chapter will begin by outlining some key developments in theme park scholarship and evaluating where the ‘Wizarding World’ fits within the theme park industry. Once this context is established, I will go on to explore how the form of the ‘Wizarding World’ is defined by three core interwoven principles: opportunities for consumption, intense theming of the environment, and a negotiation of the boundaries between authenticity and artificiality. First I explore how the parks embed consumption into the experience, but, even more crucially, how the ‘Wizarding World’ echoes, reworks and reinforces existing themes surrounding commerciality and consumerism from the *Potter* series. This will extend into a discussion of merchandising in the theme park, before moving into the importance of theming in the ‘Wizarding World’. The intensity of theming in the *Potter* parks, as I will argue here, is achieved in part through embedding opportunities for consumerism, and is also inherently tied up with slippery notions of authenticity. The chapter will end on a discussion of the rides in the ‘Wizarding World’ in order to demonstrate how the theme park and the films are intricately connected, with the theme parks arguably operating in dialogue textually and contextually with the Warner Bros. productions. Film studies scholarship has traditionally understood theme parks as ancillary experiences in media franchising, but this chapter will demonstrate not only how the ‘Wizarding World’ reconfigures particular elements of the *Potter* series but provokes a rethinking of the relationship between theme parks and film in the post-millennial franchising environment. The ‘Wizarding World’ not only reflects and amplifies values already present in the film texts, but offers a means of reconfiguring those same values.

Understanding the theme park experience.....

Theme parks are a twentieth-century invention, but they have their roots in American amusement parks such as Coney Island, an attraction which famously originated in the late

nineteenth century as a resort and, notably, a brothel³³⁹. Early amusement parks offered a vastly different experience to the typical Disney-style theme park that exists today: there was no price of admission, and instead they charged money for each attraction. They featured eclectic circus shows, fairground rides, and exotic performances, and were a popular and accessible past-time for lower-class groups, and youths in particular³⁴⁰. The Disney Company's first theme park, Disneyland, constructed in Anaheim, California, in 1955, was a clear departure from the unrestrained crowds and working-class environment of amusement parks. Instead, the Disney Company sought to create a self-contained attraction that acted as a microcosm of the world and the values embodied within the Disney brand: a clean, safe, family-friendly society that prioritised creativity and the imagination³⁴¹.

To this end, Disneyland was designed as a series of different worlds through which visitors could travel, with each world organised and differentiated by its separate theme, but unified by an idealised, nostalgic vision of early-nineteenth-century Americana³⁴². Every visible aspect of the park is therefore designed to embody a chosen theme, including employees' uniforms or the design of bathrooms, while more unsavoury elements such as garbage disposal, store cupboards and staff rooms are rendered invisible. The concept of theming, as Salvador Anton Clavé states, therefore dictates the aesthetic characteristics of the segmented worlds, constructing a story or argument that the visitor assimilates and identifies with³⁴³. In 1971, almost two decades after the opening of Disneyland, California, a similar park – Magic Kingdom – was opened in Orlando, Florida. The operational and commercial benefits of the Florida location, which included support from state government and the ready availability of land for further development, contributed to the vast growth of Disney's Orlando empire. Walt Disney World in Florida now contains four parks at time of writing: Magic Kingdom, Epcot (1982), Hollywood Studios (1989), and Animal Kingdom (1998).

Since the unparalleled success of Disneyland in California, the Disney theme park model has been emulated throughout the world. In North America, Walt Disney Resorts dominates sector profits³⁴⁴, with competitors such as Universal Studios, Busch Gardens and

³³⁹ Michael Immerso, *Coney Island: The People's Playground* (London: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 38–42.

³⁴⁰ Gary Cross and John Walton, *The Playful Crowd: Pleasure Places in the Twentieth Century* (Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2005), 168.

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 171.

³⁴² *Ibid.*, 172.

³⁴³ Salvador Anton Clavé, *The Global Theme Park Industry* (Wallingford: CABI, 2007), 32.

³⁴⁴ Christian Sylt, "The Secrets Behind Disney's \$2.2 Billion Theme Park Profits," *Forbes*, July 14, 2014. Accessed September 22, 2018. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/csylt/2014/07/14/the-secrets-behind-disneys-2-2-billion-theme-park-profits/>

Six Flags providing similar experiences that operate through similar commercial and strategic models. The operational design of most popular theme parks revolves around certain key principles: getting visitors to move, to engage with their themes and intellectual property, and to spend money³⁴⁵. For this reason, theme parks require extensive planning in order to direct traffic flow throughout the park and towards hubs of commercial activity and their attractions³⁴⁶. Disney's Magic Kingdom uses the 'hub and spoke' design, for instance, where the long thoroughfare of Main Street USA functions as a channel through which visitors can be funnelled and then distributed to the different 'hubs', the themed lands³⁴⁷. Within those lands are opportunities to eat, watch performances and experience rides; these features are usually positioned around the outside of the hub so that visitors may progress in an orderly fashion, minimising randomness and maximising engagement with opportunities for both entertainment and consumption³⁴⁸. The two Universal Orlando Resort parks in Florida, on the other hand, each utilise man-made lakes that function as a centre point around which the themed lands are congregated. Both 'Wizarding World' lands – Hogsmeade, in Islands of Adventure, and Diagon Alley, in Universal Studios – are situated far from the park entrances on the other side of the lake. The popularity of the 'Wizarding World' after Hogsmeade's opening led to a considerable increase in foot traffic in 2011, and its positioning in the park enabled large numbers of visitors to be channelled slowly into the *Potter* segments, with consumers spending accordingly throughout the park³⁴⁹.

One strand of this chapter will explore the holistic theming of the 'Wizarding World', and in particular how the *Potter* parks reproduce sets and scenes that closely resemble their fictional counterparts. Because of their desire to construct a fantasy in realistic terms, the 'Wizarding World' theme parks can be understood as "hyperreal" environments³⁵⁰, a term first coined by Jean Baudrillard to describe a set of signifiers which represent something that does not exist in reality. In this case, the 'Wizarding World' theme parks recreate inherently fictional environments within real-world spaces to a level of detail and specificity that encourages visitors to believe they are real. Umberto Eco further explored the hyperreal in *Travels in Hyperreality*; he identified hyperreality as a particularly American phenomenon

³⁴⁵Clavé, *The Global Theme Park Industry*, 27.

³⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 370.

³⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 366.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁹ "Top 25 amusement / theme parks worldwide," *2011 TEA/AECOM Theme Index*, accessed September 22, 2018. <http://www.teaconnect.org/Resources/Theme-Index/>, 7. PDF.

³⁵⁰Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), 12.

found commonly in tourist experiences “where American imagination demands the real thing, and to attain it, must fabricate the absolute fake”³⁵¹. Both scholars discussed hyperreality in relation to Disneyland, with Eco claiming that the imitations of historical or fantastical settings in theme parks not only seek to reproduce reality, but to *improve* on it. Constructions such as Main Street look “absolutely realistic”, but the illusion of reality also seeks to offer “*more* reality than nature can”³⁵² (my emphasis): Eco uses the example of crocodiles on the Mississippi River, which can be seen much more reliably in a Disneyland ride than in an actual river cruise. Furthermore, he states that “Disneyland is more hyperreal than the wax museum ... [because] Disneyland makes it clear that within its magic enclosure it is a fantasy that is absolutely reproduced.”³⁵³ It is this notion of reproducing fantasy, rather than real or historical environments, which is particularly important to this chapter, and one which will be returned to. Other scholars have since explored theme parks through similar formal analysis, with Jim McGuigan, for instance, noting that “the Disney universe is often held up as the epitome of hyperreality, a space where representation itself has become more real than the reality it ostensibly depicts”³⁵⁴, while Alan Bryman asserts that “there can be a very real problem of distinguishing the real and the fake” in Disney’s parks³⁵⁵.

Furthermore, consumerism is, according to Eco, inextricably tied to hyperreal environments because of their reliance on signs and signifiers in generating value, as when brands for cars or perfume are tied to particular personality traits or social symbols through marketing. Eco notes that “The Main Street facades are presented to us as toy houses and invite us to enter them, but their interior is always a disguised supermarket”, and that the Disneyland experience is an “allegory of the consumer society” where “its visitors must agree to behave like robots.”³⁵⁶ This notion of control over the environment and its consumers is a key feature of the contemporary theme park, including the Universal parks in which the ‘Wizards World’ is located. Indeed, as this chapter will explore, the ‘Wizards World’ is in some senses the quintessential example of the hyperreal: it is committed to an intensely detailed reproduction of inherently fictional settings from the *Harry Potter* films, but consumerism is indelibly embedded in its structure.

³⁵¹ Umberto Eco, *Travels in Hyperreality: Essays*, trans. William Weaver (London: Harcourt Inc., 1990), 8.

³⁵² *Ibid.*, 44.

³⁵³ *Ibid.*, 43.

³⁵⁴ Jim McGuigan, *Modernity and Postmodern Culture* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1999), 22.

³⁵⁵ Alan Bryman, *Disney and His Worlds* (London: Routledge, 1995), 171.

³⁵⁶ Eco, *Travels in Hyperreality*, 43.

Much scholarship, then, has explored the form of theme parks and their connection with consumerism and the hyperreal. Waysdorf and Reijnders, however, have examined the ‘Wizarding World’ parks from a fan studies perspective, arguing that a focus on postmodern discourses that analyse theme parks as simulacra “overlook the visitors themselves and how they make meaning out of such simulated environments. This means there is only a limited understanding of why theme parks actually appeal to the millions who enjoy them.”³⁵⁷ Waysdorf and Reijnders interviewed 15 visitors to the parks in order to identify their appeal for *Potter* fans. While this chapter does not undertake any significant fan studies analysis, the work of Waysdorf and Reijnders is nonetheless useful because they seek to take theme park studies in new directions, towards an understanding of the function and appeal of theme parks for consumers. Indeed, as they note, such analysis hopes “to shed light on the complex interactions of fandom, commerce and physical space in the 21st century.”³⁵⁸

In this vein, it is also important to note that the ‘Wizarding World’ not only replicates a fantasy environment, but a branded environment in particular. Disney first pioneered the concept of translating intellectual property from the company’s films and TV shows into theme park rides, settings and experiences. Animal Kingdom, for instance, features musical theatre shows showcasing characters from the *Lion King*, while Epcot contains a *Finding Nemo* ride that was repurposed from its original *Captain Nemo* theme after the Disney-Pixar hit film was released. Thus, not only are visitors able to approach the contents of each themed segment with a pre-existing cultural awareness of its content, but the reinforcement and repositioning of these products within the theme park environment in turn increases their cultural value. Most of the largest theme park operators – Universal Studios and Disney in particular – are segments of media conglomerates that produce or distribute intellectual property through films, TV, music and other media. Theme parks in this media landscape therefore provide a useful environment through which to disseminate licensed properties. Furthermore, the experience of Disney-style theme parks can be understood as inherently cinematic. Clavé observes that “it is the language of the cinema that is incorporated into the system of presenting the reality of parks ... which, like cinematography, takes place via scenes and sets in the framework of fantasy”³⁵⁹. According to this logic, themed sections are constructed as though they are film sets, designed to generate spectacle and keep invisible those structures that do not contribute to their *mise-en-scène*. The film sets visually depicted

³⁵⁷Waysdorf, et al., ‘Immersion, authenticity and the theme park,’ 174.

³⁵⁸ Ibid.

³⁵⁹ Clavé, *Global Theme Park Industry*, 16-7.

on-screen are reproduced within a physical space, however, in an attempt to render them inhabitable in particular ways grounded in commercial theme park logics.

Although Universal Studios follows the same model first established by Disney, its theme park history is even more indelibly linked to filmmaking. As early as 1915, Universal Studios co-founder Carl Laemmle was organising behind-the-scenes tours of film productions for the general public³⁶⁰: these events became, in 1964, the basis for the first Universal Studios theme park in Los Angeles, and, in 1990 and 1999 respectively, Universal Studios and Islands of Adventure were constructed in Orlando, Florida, to establish Universal as a direct competitor with Disney. Where Disney incorporates a mix of fantasy and science with its own intellectual property, Universal's parks revolve almost entirely around licensed brands: for instance, *The Simpsons*, Dr. Seuss, *Jurassic Park*, Marvel, and, most recently, *Harry Potter*. The intersection between the form of the 'Wizarding World' and the *Potter* films – their interlocking aesthetics, narrative and values – will form one key facet of this chapter.

'The Wizarding World of *Harry Potter* – Hogsmeade' opened in 2011 in the Islands of Adventure theme park owned and operated by Universal Orlando Resort in Florida, USA. In 2014, a second segment was opened, 'The Wizarding World of *Harry Potter* – Diagon Alley', this time in the Universal Studios park, UOR's other theme park in Florida. The theme park versions of Hogsmeade and Diagon Alley replicate fictional locations from the *Potter* films, with particular attractions embedded into the sets that are characteristic of theme parks, such as shops, live performances, refreshment stations, rides, and intensely themed architecture. The two themed lands reconstruct recognisable sets from the films such as Honeydukes and Weasley's Wizard Wheezes, while also producing other retail environments not depicted on screen, such as Florean Fortescue's Ice Cream Parlour and Madame Malkin's Robes for All Occasions. These shops are themed around their specific merchandise or around the corresponding film sets – and they feature a plethora of both replica artefacts from the films as well as more conventional merchandise such as board games, toys, and t-shirts. In both sections, the streets are optimised to contain open spaces for traffic control as well as performances throughout the day. The 'Wizarding World' also reproduces catering locations such as The Three Broomsticks and The Hog's Head, which mimic British pubs. In terms of rides, Diagon Alley features only one, 'Harry Potter and the Escape from Gringotts,' while

³⁶⁰Ibid., 16.

Hogsmeade features one new ride, ‘Harry Potter and the Forbidden Journey’, plus several other repurposed rides altered from the themed land that previously existed on the site (The Lost Continent). A recreation of the Hogwarts Express enables visitors to travel between the two parks.

The ‘Wizarding World’ as a “utopia for consumption”

Theme parks are fundamentally commercial enterprises. As this chapter has noted so far, the form and structure of theme parks that follow Disney’s design are designed to maximise revenue and incite consumption, commonly through the sale of merchandise and refreshments. The ‘Wizarding World’s strategy is no different, but, crucially, the *Potter* theme parks are significant because they demonstrate an arguably excessive commitment to encouraging consumption beyond standard industry practice. The fictional locations from the *Potter* films that the ‘Wizarding World’ recreates are specifically *shopping districts*: Diagon Alley is the wizarding version of a classic British high street, while Hogwarts students visit Hogsmeade on weekends to buy joke products, sweets, and drinks. The sets reconstructed at the theme parks thus entirely revolve around consumer culture, signifying a dedication to the consumerist impulse at a basic structural level. Profits from merchandising, too, have been maximised by increasing the number and concentration of shopping opportunities available: the Hogsmeade park has five shops and three rides, for instance, where the Diagon Alley park (constructed three years later) has nine shops and one ride. Indeed, I argue that the increase in number of retail outlets over time suggests a solidification of this commitment to commercial principles. While operational constraints may have been a factor here – Hogsmeade was built around a repurposed pre-existing area, whereas Diagon Alley was a new build with greater space to expand – Diagon Alley does nonetheless demonstrate a gradual evolution of the principles first established in the Hogsmeade park.

The world recreated by the two ‘Wizarding World’ parks presents a particularly narrow segment of the world of the *Potter* films, then, and the act of consumption – of buying products – is bound up in the experience of the parks. Although all similar theme park attractions encourage visitors to spend money at post-ride gift shops, souvenir stands, or refreshment stops, the form of the ‘Wizarding World’ is in itself a shopping arcade, and

consequently offers a “utopia for consumption”³⁶¹ that entirely “naturalize[s] the act of consuming”³⁶². Indeed, the retail structure underpinning Hogsmeade and Diagon Alley means that the consumerist impulse is inextricable from any understanding of the identity of the ‘Wizarding World’: the act of spending money shapes the way in which the fictional universe is realised within the theme park space.

Although hubs for merchandising and retail opportunities are key facets of the theme park form universally, the world of the *Potter* films is arguably so seamlessly translated into the logic of theme parks precisely because meanings and values surrounding consumerism are already present in the texts. The fetishisation of buying goods, and spending money, is prevalent, firstly, in the *Potter* books. Stephen Brown suggests that Rowling’s delight in creating shopping districts such as Diagon Alley was evident in her development of evocative names for and intricate details about a wide range of products³⁶³, from Skiving Snackboxes to Bertie Botts’ Every Flavour Beans. Harry Potter himself, too, is not immune to the allure of money, with passages from his first visit to Diagon Alley in *Philosopher’s Stone* rich in description of products:

“The sun shone brightly on a stack of cauldrons outside the nearest shop. *Cauldrons – All Sizes – Copper, Brass, Pewter, Silver – Self-Stirring – Collapsible* said a sign hanging over them ...

Harry wished he had about eight more eyes. He turned his head in every direction as they walked up the street, trying to look at everything at once: the shops, the things outside them, the people doing their shopping ...

Several boys of about Harry’s age had their noses pressed against a window with broomsticks in it. ‘Look,’ Harry heard one of them say, ‘the new Nimbus Two Thousand – fastest ever –’ There were shops selling robes, shops selling telescopes and strange silver instruments Harry had never seen before, windows stacked with barrels of bat spleens and eels’ eyes, tottering piles of spell books, quills and rolls of parchment, potion bottles, globes of the moon...³⁶⁴

Harry’s subsequent visit to Gringotts Bank also sees him awed by the stacks of gold in his vault, and by the opulence on show in the bank: a “vast marble hall” in which goblins were “weighing coins on brass scales, examining precious stones through eyeglasses.”³⁶⁵ Indeed, Harry’s first experience of the wizarding world is in his visit to Diagon Alley, which

³⁶¹ Clavé, *Global Theme Park Industry*, 21.

³⁶² *Ibid.*, 34.

³⁶³ Brown, *Wizard!*, 39.

³⁶⁴ J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* (Bloomsbury: London, 1997), 56.

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 57.

establishes – for Harry and for the reader – the importance of material goods in the wizarding world.

The *Potter* books are careful, on the other hand, to eschew overt classist narratives in some cases, such as when Harry rejects the rich Draco Malfoy’s hand of friendship in favour of the poor but honest Ron Weasley. It is nonetheless true, however, that the books are *concerned with* money, and consumption, and material trappings, in ways that curiously complicates its textual messages. Harry gives away his winnings from the Triwizard Tournament to Fred and George Weasley, for instance, but his charitable act realises the twins’ ambitions of becoming entrepreneurs, and they open a retail business – Weasleys’ Wizard Wheezes – as a result. (Indeed, the products that the Weasleys sell in the books and films have since been translated into real-world merchandise.) The dichotomy between Harry’s previous life with the Dursleys and the position of fame he acquires at Hogwarts is in part defined by the immense wealth he acquires as a birthright; and throughout his adventures, Harry is frequently gifted with expensive or valuable items such as broomsticks and an Invisibility Cloak.

Consumerist messages in the *Potter* books translated smoothly into the Warner Bros. film productions. Many of the products and brands first featured in Rowling’s novels were translated into props within the on-screen adaptations, which were later licensed and manufactured as merchandise purchaseable in real-world shops and, of course, theme parks. The films developed their own aesthetic style – and extensive range of props-as-products – largely through the efforts of the crew and art department. According to lectures given by art designers Miraphora Mina and Eduardo Lima in Chicago in 2012, they worked for months on sets such as the Hogwarts Library, designing sleeves for hundreds of books sourced from Rowling’s descriptions, and – when these had been exhausted – creating their own³⁶⁶. Likewise, the visual world of *Harry Potter* is populated with branded products, including fully designed copies of newspapers *The Daily Prophet* and the *Quibbler*. Mina, Lima and the team also constructed a life-size Weasleys’ Wizarding Wheezes, building the set and decorating its interior, then designing and manufacturing every individual piece of packaging for the shelves³⁶⁷. Many of these replica props, such as Bertie Botts’ Every Flavour Beans and Chocolate Frogs, are now sold at the ‘Wizarding World’. Crucially, these props are available in spaces that resemble the shops from the fictional universe, which creates an

³⁶⁶ Author in attendance.

³⁶⁷ Ibid.

indelible link between the sites of consumption in the films and in the theme park world. Theme parks are therefore a valuable method of brand licensing because they operate as a means through which consumerist values can be performed and made tangible. As a paratext, then, the ‘Wizarding World’ parks are an appropriate tool for translating – and amplifying – messages surrounding consumerism that have always been present in *Harry Potter*. Indeed, the form of the *Potter* parks is ideally suited to give voice to these thematic concerns in the most direct means possible.

The ‘Wizarding World’ also reworks the core narrative fantasy at the heart of *Harry Potter* – that a lucky few can become part of an exclusive world – by offering slices of that world in the form of merchandise. Merchandising has historically been a key aspect of the *Harry Potter* franchising strategy due to its capacity to render the fantastical world real through translation of its fictional artefacts into physical, consumable objects. Rowling first demonstrated the merchandising and world-building potential of the fictional universe with her penning of in-world books *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* and *Quidditch Through the Ages* in 2001, works that were published for charity and personalised by the ‘handwriting’ of Harry and Ron or a blurb from Albus Dumbledore. The appeal of these items in part stems from their role as referents to the fictional universe of *Harry Potter*: like other forms of replica merchandise, they embody the idea that a piece of the magical world can be owned and accessed in the real world. Licensing the iconic visual properties developed by the *Potter* films has also been a key facet of Warner Bros.’ merchandising strategy since the company acquired the film rights in 1999, although it has been observed by trade and mainstream press that Warner Bros. Consumer Products has engaged in comparatively restrained licensing strategies with *Harry Potter*: during the production of the books and films, only 75 licenses were issued in North America, whereas a traditional franchising blitz could produce up to 300 licenses³⁶⁸. Preventing over-exposure and exploitation of the brand has enabled Warner Bros. to keep a tighter rein on the franchise throughout its history, a significant and arguably sensible strategy for a brand characterised by its longevity. The period of 2011-17, however, saw an expansion in licensing agreements to include retailers like Primark (in the UK) and Hot Topic (in the US), as well as consolidating its official presence with stores at King’s Cross, London, online at

³⁶⁸ "Harry Potter and the merchandising gold," *The Economist*, June 19, 2003. Accessed September 22, 2018. <https://www.economist.com/business/2003/06/19/harry-potter-and-the-merchandising-gold>

www.harrypottershop.com, at the Warner Bros. Studio Tour, and, of course, at the ‘Wizarding World’.

The extensive range of merchandise on sale at the theme parks falls into two categories: firstly, reproductions of artefacts from the fictional world, which are characterised by their proximity to their imaginary predecessors; and secondly, supplementary products such as board games, video games, stationery, making-of books, and apparel, manufactured by companies such as Lego, Mattel, Hasbro, and Sony. The physical reproductions of artefacts include replica wands, Time-Turners, scarves, ties, robes, and the Marauders’ Map. These items are often costly – some wands, for instance, retail at \$39, robes at \$80, and the Sword of Gryffindor at \$196³⁶⁹. This is partly due to their use of quality materials, but also arguably because they are positioned as authentic replicas; their aesthetic resemblance to similar products in the fictional universe of *Harry Potter* enables the conversion of their cultural capital into actual capital. In the ‘Wizarding World’ parks, the locations in which authentic replicas are showcased support the prestige of these products: replica artefacts such as jewellery and watches can be purchased at the Scribbulus shop in Diagon Alley, for instance, which is ornately decorated with a domed ceiling, dotted with stars and a colossal gold orrery.

The Diagon Alley section is home to a vaster array of replica artefacts for sale than Hogsmeade, its predecessor, and also contains more supplementary merchandise, such as games, jewellery, plush toys, stationery, joke products, sports equipment, and homeware. Despite the wide range of products in Diagon Alley, they are thematically linked to appropriate retail spaces: Weasley’s Wizarding Wheezes, for instance, is home to joke products; Madam Malkin’s Robes for All Occasions features not only robes but ‘Muggle’ apparel such as t-shirts, shorts and socks; and Knockturn Alley, a sinister side-street from the books and films, boasts its own Death Eater-themed shop Borgin & Burkes. Likewise, more family-oriented items have their place in shops like the Magical Menagerie, which features plush toys of Hedwig, Pygmy Puff, Crookshanks, and Fang. This fusion of different styles and audiences is naturalised by thematically linking shops with particular products, which helps to provide variety and alleviate any suggestion of the exploitation of licensing while sustaining the themes of the park. It also caters to visitors of all levels of engagement, from casual park-goers or parents to more invested fans. Incentivising consumption, then, is a

³⁶⁹ “Harry Potter Shop – Official Licensed Store,” accessed September 22, 2018. <https://www.harrypottershop.com/>

central component of the Wizarding World strategy, regardless of the visitor's level of connection with the *Harry Potter* franchise. (As Henry Jenkins notes, in a successful transmedia franchise “each individual episode must be accessible on its own terms even as it makes a unique contribution to the narrative system as a whole” in order to “expand the potential market for a property by creating different points of entry for different audience segments”.³⁷⁰)

With Universal Orlando Resort operating the shops and restaurants centrally, all retail opportunities are “incorporate[d] into the principles, emotions and experiences”³⁷¹ of the park, with the coordination of the merchandising “creat[ing] perceptions of quality and value.”³⁷² The presence of replica artefacts in particular legitimises the theme parks' spaces of consumption by their contribution to the mise-en-scene. The merchandise forms fictional indexical traces of the *Potter* universe, and, significantly, it is the fact that these magical objects *do not* exist in the physical world that imbues them with authenticity: as referents to the physical film sets, and of the fictional world itself, the replica props offer the closest possibility of the artefact becoming real. As Waysdorf and Reijnders note, “The visitor knows that they are not actually in Diagon Alley or Hogsmeade, but there is no more ‘real’ version, and it is a physical experience with all the cultural markers of reality.”³⁷³ Michael Saler uses the term “ironic imagination” to describe the possibility of consumers remaining emotionally invested in the reproduction of a fictional world despite the presence of indicators that it is fictional³⁷⁴. In this case, the presence of ‘authentic replicas’ for sale within the ‘Wizarding World’ offers “cultural markers”³⁷⁵ that signal the authenticity of the physical experience, despite their positioning alongside potentially thematically disruptive theme park elements such as queue lines, tills, and rides. Waysdorf and Reijnders claim that visitors know theme parks are a “simulation” but that they can nonetheless be accepted as “an authentic environment” when “it feels correct on all sensory levels”³⁷⁶. Like the ‘Wizarding World’ as a whole, the merchandise on offer within the shops can therefore be read as completely artificial yet completely “authentic”³⁷⁷. The following section will go on to

³⁷⁰ Jenkins, “Transmedia Storytelling 101.”

³⁷¹ Clavé, *Global Theme Park Industry*, 381.

³⁷² *Ibid.*, 34.

³⁷³ Waysdorf, et al., “Immersion, authenticity and the theme park,” 181-2.

³⁷⁴ Michael Saler, *As-if: Modern Enchantment and the Literary Prehistory of Virtual Reality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 9.

³⁷⁵ Waysdorf, et al., “Immersion, authenticity and the theme park,” 181-2.

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

³⁷⁷ Klaric, “Narrative Brought to Life,” 75.

explore this concept in more detail, and in particular how theming and consumerism operate in tandem to create an environment that can be considered ‘authentic’ while it is nonetheless inherently artificial.

Theming and the pursuit of authenticity.....

Themed areas in the Universal Studios and Islands of Adventure parks respond to the “cinematographic vocation”³⁷⁸ of the theme parks in Universal Orlando Resort. The Production Central island, another area in the Universal Studios park, features rides derived from film properties such as “Shrek 4-D”, “Despicable Me: Minion Mayhem” and “TRANSFORMERS: The Ride 3D”, for instance, while the Marvel segment in Islands of Adventure embeds various different properties from *Spider-Man* to *X-Men* to *The Incredible Hulk* in which, according to Clavé, “the best things are the density, compression, colour and forms”.³⁷⁹ Although these areas revolve around media brands, they nonetheless differ from the ‘Wizards World’ as they arguably offer less commitment to the precise details of their theme. As Waysdorf and Reijnders note in their article on the ‘Wizards World’, the *Potter* park “is presented as a complete reconstruction of locations from the *Harry Potter* series, rather than an environment that uses elements from it in order to create a general sense of fantasy”³⁸⁰. The Jurassic Park section at Islands of Adventure, for instance, partly draws on specific sets, scenes and characters from the film franchise, but also uses general historical theming to evoke the period in which dinosaurs existed, as well as providing educational opportunities through its Jurassic Discovery Centre. In addition, some areas of UOR are transparently dedicated to “inauthenticity” – as Clavé notes, the park often “themes fantasy, adult and children’s comics, legend, the cinema and cartoons”³⁸¹. The ‘Wizards World’, on the other hand, recreates its theme holistically and in minute detail through its architecture, set design, props, employee behaviour and its recycling of the *Potter* narrative. For this reason it can be argued that the ‘Wizards World’ is even more transparently dedicated to the principle of hyperreality, or making the unreal seem real, than conventional theme park strategy.

³⁷⁸ Clavé, *Global Theme Park Industry*, 374.

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 35.

³⁸⁰ Waysdorf, et al., “Immersion, authenticity and the theme park,” 176.

³⁸¹ Clavé, *Global Theme Park Industry*, 35.

The holistic theming, or absolute reproduction of fantasy, within the ‘Wizarding World’ is also achieved by recreating the narrative of *Harry Potter* and, crucially, by inserting the visitor into the place of the hero, giving “a mission [and] a responsibility that ... singles you out as an individual”³⁸². This is a common element of theme park structure: elsewhere in Universal’s Islands of Adventure, for example, the Spider-Man ride casts its visitors as amateur journalists recording crimes in the city; the journey is then interrupted by the villain, Doctor Octopus, and park-goers accompany Spider-Man in saving the day. This formula combines a re-staging of memorable scenes and characters based on the properties from which the ride is derived, while enabling visitors to position themselves at the centre of that recycled narrative. This chapter will look more closely at the ‘Wizarding World’ rides later in this regard; firstly, however, it is worth turning to the built environments and geographical structure of the *Harry Potter* parks, because they are also crucial in enabling the visitor to assume the hero’s position through traversal of the theme park space.

The spatial organisation of the ‘Wizarding World’ is framed around the narrative of the *Potter* films and facilitates an endless recycling of that narrative in ways that are carefully channelled and monitored. Visitors first enter the ‘Wizarding World – Diagon Alley’ section of the park via bridges which open onto Muggle London. These bridges section off the ‘Wizarding World’ from the rest of the park, while Muggle London features a tableaux of landmarks such as Leicester Square and King’s Cross alongside the facade of Grimmauld Place and the Knight Bus. The visitor is then able to access Diagon Alley by passing through two paths seemingly hidden by a brick wall. This echoes the scene in *Philosopher’s Stone* in which Harry and Hagrid access Diagon Alley for the first time by tapping a stone wall behind the Leaky Cauldron, but is reconfigured differently in the theme park environment in order to facilitate a smooth flow of visitors. Beyond, the panorama immediately opens into a long boulevard of shops that evokes the long shots of Diagon Alley from the *Philosopher’s Stone* film, when Harry visits the shopping district for the first time. This transition is central to understanding the structure of the ‘Wizarding World’: the theme parks recreate the journey from the Muggle to the wizarding world that Harry takes, reconstructing the narrative journey for the consumer and allowing them to mimic a key rite of passage: discovering you are a wizard and entering the wizarding world³⁸³.

³⁸² Klaric, “Narrative Brought to Life,” 22.

³⁸³ *Ibid.*, 34.

The ability to inhabit the wizarding world, however, comes at a price in the theme parks. Intense theming and recycled narratives replicate branded environments, but crucially they also disguise theme park structures and naturalise the act of consumption, as I addressed earlier. For instance, there are numerous snack and refreshment stations positioned around the parks, with some selling exclusive Butterbeer and pumpkin juice. One particular refreshment station in Diagon Alley sells cordial and water in themed packaging, such as bottles labelled ‘Gillywater’, and vials of various flavoured cordials given names including ‘Draught of Living Death’ and ‘Felix Felicis’, reminiscent of potions in the film texts. The act of purchasing water is thus given magical attributes by its association with artefacts from the fictional universe, and then monetised. This corresponds with Clavé’s assertion that, at theme parks, “the conversion of symbolic capital into productive capital is done via an appropriate structuring of the narrative (the theme) it offers”³⁸⁴.

Some layers of theme park content, then, are only accessible when the visitor literally buys into them, tying in the park’s theming with consumerism. Gregorovitch’s Wands, in Diagon Alley, makes the relationship between the two even more explicit: the shop sells replica wands with embedded interactive technology for use around the ‘Wizarding World’ parks. The wands, which operate on motion and voice technology, can be used at various locations in the park to interact with the physical environment. For instance, signage next to a fountain encourages visitors to wave their wand in a particular motion and recite a spell in order to cause water to flow; another sign demonstrates the correct motion to spur a blacksmith’s bellows into motion; or to cause exhibits in the Weasleys’ Wizarding Wheezes shop window to move. Crucially, this is a feature of exclusive use inside the ‘Wizarding World’ environment. These wands contribute to opportunities to playfully interact with the magical world, giving visitors agency to ritualistically re-enact scenes from the films. These opportunities also reveal, however, the commercial underpinnings of the ‘Wizarding World’: this level of engagement is only possible by purchasing the wands and thereby buying into the logic of consumption that drives the park.

Ollivander’s Wands offers another distinct shopping experience, and in a form that combines the act of consumption, theming, and recycling the *Potter* narrative. Groups of visitors are admitted into the shop, and one visitor is chosen to participate in a ritual in which their wand is ‘chosen’ for them by an employee posing as Ollivander. The performance is

³⁸⁴ Clavé, *Global Theme Park Industry*, 32.

reminiscent of *Philosopher's Stone*, when Harry visits Ollivander to buy his wand. In the film scene, Harry is presented with three wands: waving the first disorganises a nearby cupboard; the second causes a vase to break; but for the third, light shines, the music swells and a gust of wind blows. In the theme park, the costumed employee gives a speech about wandlore, then selects a guest from the group. That guest is presented with a wand and asked to perform a task, such as opening a drawer. These activities fail twice until the third wand is used, at which point the visitor is bathed in light, music plays, and wind blows. The visitor is thereby inserted into the recognised narrative of *Harry Potter* and encouraged to assume the position of the hero. As Klaric notes, this scene at the theme park is interesting because it faithfully follows the process established by the films;³⁸⁵ in the books, Harry's chosen wand emits "red and gold sparks" and projects "dancing spots of lights on to the walls"³⁸⁶. Notably, the experience in Ollivander's at the theme park ends with the actor portraying Ollivander encouraging the visitor to purchase the wand that 'chose' them. Where Gregorovitch's Wands offers the prospect of a playful extension of the theme park experience, Ollivander's promises an immersion into the universe of *Harry Potter* that echoes the narrative on which the park is based – but nonetheless both operate according to a logic of consumerism.

As this chapter has previously outlined, the hyperreal environment of theme parks seeks to offer "more" than reality, providing a simulation that feels authentically real "on all sensory levels"³⁸⁷. Theme park environments can be said to exist on a blurred boundary between authenticity and artificiality, however, because while a park's theming works to render "the social relations of production" structurally invisible³⁸⁸ and immerse visitors into a minutely-constructed world, the operational frameworks of theme parks – such as queuing systems, retail outlets and refreshment stops – nonetheless mediate and define the experience. According to Saler, it is possible for visitors to make meaning out of obviously simulated environments such as the 'Wizarding World' because of what he calls "ironic imagination", or "acknowledged imaginary spaces that are communally inhabited for prolonged periods of time by rational individuals",³⁸⁹ whereby visitors are able to remain emotionally invested in a fictional world while simultaneously knowing that it is fictional. Visitors, according to Waysdorf and Reijnders, understand that the experience is fictional, but because "there is no

³⁸⁵ Klaric, "Narrative Brought to Life," 60.

³⁸⁶ Rowling, *Philosopher's Stone*, 65.

³⁸⁷ Waysdorf, et al., "Immersion, authenticity and the theme park," 175.

³⁸⁸ Clavé, *Global Theme Park Industry*, 34.

³⁸⁹ Saler, *As-if*, 7.

more ‘real’ version”³⁹⁰ they are encouraged to “pretend and imagine on a bodily level”³⁹¹ while inside the experience.

In the case of the ‘Wizarding World’, the fictional universe is derived entirely from replicas of scenes and props derived from the visual iconography of the *Potter* films, including recognisable imagery such as the filmic version of Hogwarts Castle. Crucially, then, the perceived authenticity of the ‘Wizarding World’ experience is tied up in the use of recognised intellectual property from the Warner Bros. productions. This synergy between the *Potter* films and the theme parks was achieved in part through the confluence of crew members who worked on both experiences. Stuart Craig, for instance, was head production designer on the *Potter* films and also acted as a consultant for the theme parks, while Steve Kloves wrote the scripts for the rides and the films, and Jany Temime designed employees’ uniforms for the ‘Wizarding World’ and the films in order to ensure every detail was synchronised³⁹². The involvement of these key crew members on both the parks and the films denotes the close relationship between the two forms and their production contexts, a point I will return to later in my examination of the rides in the ‘Wizarding World’.

Consequently, the adherence to the specific aesthetic environments from the Warner Bros. productions sidelines alternative possibilities for physically realising the fictional world. For example, Rowling is, for the most part, absent from the overall ‘Wizarding World’ experience, and while the *Potter* books are available to purchase in some of the shops, they are vastly outnumbered by licensed merchandise corresponding to Warner Bros.’ intellectual property. There are some notable examples that contradict this, however: although Rowling is largely absent within the fabric of the ‘Wizarding World’, her ongoing influence can nonetheless be seen in some of the parks’ promotional marketing. For instance, Alan Gilmore, supervising art director at the ‘Wizarding World’ in Universal Studios Hollywood, which opened in April 2016, claimed that food and drink were shipped to Rowling for a “personal taste test” before the opening of the Hollywood version of Hogsmeade: “She got to see everything. It was a huge effort to get everything exactly right.”³⁹³ He also conflates Rowling’s involvement with that of the film crew, claiming that “the same costume designers, the same set designers, the same artisans, the director, the story writer, J.K.

³⁹⁰Waysdorf, et al., “Immersion, authenticity and the theme park,” 181.

³⁹¹ Ibid.

³⁹² Klaric, “Narrative Brought to Life,” 47.

³⁹³ Steve Baltin, et al., “J.K. Rowling Had Wizarding World of Harry Potter Food Samples Flown to Scotland,” *The Hollywood Reporter*, April 6, 2016. Accessed September 22, 2018. <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/rambling-reporter/jk-rowling-had-wizarding-world-881028>

Rowling” contributed to the design of the park. His comments suggest that Rowling was in particular responsible for some details of the theme park such as interior design and the layout of Hogwarts³⁹⁴. Furthermore, according to Klaric’s interview with Thierry Coup, Creative Director for the ‘Wizarding World’ in Florida, Rowling liaised with Coup in order to ensure the inclusion of the wand-choosing ceremony at Ollivander’s Wands³⁹⁵. The true extent of Rowling’s influence is difficult to conclude, but it is nonetheless clearly the case that she remains an important part of the promotional narrative of the ‘Wizarding World’ parks, despite their nature as an overtly film-led experience. In this instance, it can be said that the spectre of Rowling’s authorship is invoked in order to emphasise the authenticity and legitimacy of the theme parks. Traces of Rowling’s ongoing textual authority, then, can be detected in the way even some of the most overtly film-led paratexts are marketed and framed.

Indeed, although the ‘Wizarding World’ relies heavily on the Warner Bros. productions for its identity, the theme park also offers a space for competing products to exist. This is exemplified in the scheduled entertainment on offer in the parks: in Hogsmeade, for instance, visitors can watch a choreographed sequence by ‘students’ from the three schools – Hogwarts, Durmstrang and Beauxbatons – that echoes the entrances given by the three schools in the *Goblet of Fire* film. In Diagon Alley, meanwhile, visitors can watch a puppet-show of ‘The Tale of the Three Brothers’, first recounted in *Deathly Hallows Part 1*. Interestingly, however, Diagon Alley also offers a live performance by an actress portraying the fictional singer Celestina Warbeck. While the previous examples draw upon and replicate particular scenes from the films, Warbeck is a background character mentioned in the books but absent from the films. The presence of this character in the ‘Wizarding World’ indicates an acknowledgement of other media and products within the *Harry Potter* franchise outside of the films, and its positioning as one experience in a transmedia environment. In this sense, the ‘Wizarding World’ has something in common with Pottermore 1.0, as I explored in Chapter 1.

To return briefly to the concept of Rowling taste-testing food for the ‘Wizarding World’ at Universal Studios Hollywood, this form of marketing is interesting not only because it signifies her ongoing authority within the franchise, but also because it exposes a cultural dissonance between the fictional world of *Harry Potter* and the consumption-driven

³⁹⁴Ibid.

³⁹⁵Klaric, “Narrative Brought to Life,” 39.

theme parks in modern America. If drawing on Rowling's creative authority is designed to bridge the gap between the fictional universe and the theme park environment, the parks similarly attempt to collapse the boundaries between fiction and reality through their appropriation of particularly British settings from the *Harry Potter* films. The *Potter* series depicts a culture that is in some senses identifiably British, or is at least a stereotyped or superficial evocation of Britishness. The books first established the franchise's British context through a number of elements: they draw upon the literary heritage of the boarding school story, for instance, while Muggle suburban living is lampooned in the representation of the Dursleys in Privet Drive³⁹⁶. The Ministry of Magic can be understood as an exaggerated satirical reflection of the British political system: a government filled with power-hungry officials such as Lucius Malfoy, presided over by Fudge – a bungling, easily corrupted Minister – and supported by the regime's mouthpiece, the *Daily Prophet* newspaper. Fictional locations such as Hogwarts Castle, Diagon Alley and the Burrow also borrow from identifiably British cultural and social heritage. The films, too, are bound up with concepts of Britishness, albeit sometimes in different ways; as Noel Brown notes, as well as retaining signifiers of Britishness from the books, the films established a distinctly visual British setting through on-location filming at sites such as Alnwick Castle and Christ Church College Oxford, and reference to other landmarks such as London Bridge, the Palace of Westminster and Big Ben³⁹⁷. Considerable production work was also completed on the Leavesden Studios site, and a largely British film crew and an all-British cast also shaped the identity and the industrial context of the films and contribute towards a sense of the *Harry Potter* films as British productions. (See Chapter 3 for further discussion of Leavesden Studios and the problematic representation of Britishness within the *Harry Potter* franchise.)

The 'Wizarding World' attempts to translate this geographical specificity into its realisation of the fictional universe, embedding themes of Britishness into its environment. One example is the use of snow-topped buildings in the Hogsmeade park, which replicates a scene in *Prisoner of Azkaban* in which Harry, Ron and Hermione visit the village for the first time. The theme parks also suggest an authentic British experience through the food on offer, themed around traditional British pub-lunch cuisine. The Leaky Cauldron in Diagon Alley, for example, promotes its menu of bangers and mash, fish and chips and shepherds' pie within an environment featuring low wood beams and dark wood panelling in the interior.

³⁹⁶ Brown, *British Children's Cinema*, 233.

³⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

Employees also use British accents to consolidate the theming, or what Clavé calls the “packetization”³⁹⁸ of the experience. Indeed, employee interaction with visitors is a key feature of the park, with all staff members dressed in themed uniform – whether Hogwarts robes or other recognisable costumes from the films – to highlight the idea that, much like historical re-enactment villages, once across the threshold into the ‘Wizarding World’, the visitor is transported to another place. Outside King’s Cross in Universal Studio’s Diagon Alley, for instance, a busker strums a guitar; down the street an employee poses as the driver of the Knight Bus. These encounters are significantly more integrated than, for instance, the Disney parks, wherein the employees represent specific characters and visitors can ‘meet’ the character in organised timeslots. Instead, employees in the ‘Wizarding World’ populate the space as non-specific residents of the fictional universe, contributing to the theming while guiding visitors to points of interest (and consumption) throughout the park. The unity of “architecture, technology, and human performance”³⁹⁹ here contributes to the theme park’s “holistic sensory experience”⁴⁰⁰, with every visible feature of the theme park “a sign of what it represents in a shared narrative”⁴⁰¹. In this case, the style and affectations of the employees serve to legitimise a superficially British setting.

In wizarding Britain, it would be normal for snow to fall in winter, to frequent a pub with traditional food and decor, and to encounter British people. The experience of witnessing snow-capped buildings and talking to British school students in tropical Floridian conditions, or navigating a series of metal bars while queuing in the Leaky Cauldron, requires a suspension of disbelief, however. As this chapter emphasised earlier, employing one’s “ironic imagination”⁴⁰² requires an act of “partial memory and partial forgetting”⁴⁰³ which is typical of the hyperreal experience of theme parks. The ‘Wizarding World’ seeks to construct a thematically unified environment and reduce the symptoms of its operational realities, but the inevitable presence of these mitigating factors *also* constitutes another essential factor of the theme park form. Although the ‘Wizarding World’ seeks to bridge the gap between the reality of the experience and the fantasy of visiting wizarding Britain, the theme park experience can be arguably fundamentally understood as an ongoing balance between the

³⁹⁸ Clavé, *Global Theme Park Industry*, 34.

³⁹⁹ Scott A. Lukas, ed., *The Themed Space: Located Culture, Nature and Space* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2007), 5.

⁴⁰⁰ Klaric, “Narrative Brought to Life,” 24.

⁴⁰¹ Sharon Zukin, *The Cultures of Cities* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 64.

⁴⁰² Saler, *As-if*, 9.

⁴⁰³ Kevin Archer, “The Limits to the Imagineered City: Sociospatial Polarization in Orlando,” *Economic Geography* 73, no. 3 (1997): 322.

authentic and the inauthentic that is propped up by opportunities for consumerist behaviour. The final section of this chapter will explore how the rides at the ‘Wizards World’ also seek to bridge the gap between fiction and reality by re-enacting the heroic quest, while offering ways for us to understand theme parks as not merely ancillary experiences to film texts.

Rides: turning theme parks upside down.....

Going on, or queuing for, rides is an activity that consumes much of visitors’ time in theme parks, and they are designed in a variety of forms, from rollercoasters and dark rides to simulators, log flumes and boat rides. In addition to providing a sensory and emotional experience, rides are also useful in contributing to branded environments. Disney’s Magic Kingdom in Florida, for instance, is home to a *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* ride, in which visitors undergo a gentle cart ride through a number of scenes reminiscent of the 1937 Disney film of the same name. At Universal’s Islands of Adventure, ‘Doctor Doom’s Freefall’ is a drop ride themed around licensed character Doctor Doom from the Marvel comics. The form of a ride, however, affects how the brand manifests and how visitors are encouraged to interact with the brand. The ‘Hogsmeade’ section of the ‘Wizards World’ (in the Islands of Adventure park) was repurposed from a pre-existing area, ‘The Lost Continent’, in 2011, and as a result, some of its pre-existing rides were retained but superficially re-designed around the *Potter* theme. Rebranding rides is a common feature in theme parks because it allows attractions to be altered according to particular franchising strategies: one example is the ‘Twilight Zone Tower of Terror’ ride, which opened at Disney’s California Adventure Park in 1994 themed around the television show *The Twilight Zone*. This iteration of the ride lasted until May 2017, when it was redesigned according to a *Guardians of the Galaxy* theme, reflecting Disney’s desire to exploit a particularly popular intellectual property at that time⁴⁰⁴. Some of the rides in the ‘Wizards World’ parks, however, are new constructions, and, as I will explore, these new rides commonly serve to insert the visitor into the fictional world, and specifically into a semblance of the *Potter* narrative. Theme park

⁴⁰⁴Variety Staff, “‘Guardians of the Galaxy’ Ride Coming to Disneyland,” *Variety*, July 23, 2016. Accessed September 22, 2018. <https://variety.com/2016/film/news/guardians-of-the-galaxy-ride-coming-to-disneyland-1201821617/>

rides, far from simply being designed to incite thrill and adrenaline, also offer “a certain way of understanding entertainment”⁴⁰⁵ by transmitting particular values and meanings.

The ‘Dragon Challenge’ in Hogsmeade is one example of a pre-existing ride that has been repurposed; in this case from the ride ‘Dueling Dragons’, which featured two interweaving rollercoaster tracks. Since its update, the ride and its queue have been altered to include dragon-related iconography corresponding with intellectual property from the *Harry Potter* films, including golden dragon eggs and wizarding school banners from the Triwizard Tournament featured in the *Goblet of Fire* film. Similarly, what was ‘The Flying Unicorn’ has been repurposed as ‘Flight of the Hippogriff’: the structure of the ride remains the same – a children’s rollercoaster track – but the queuing experience has been themed around the scene from the *Prisoner of Azkaban* film where Buckbeak evades execution. Props such as Hagrid’s Hut are placed strategically along the queue, with the rollercoaster cart shaped like a Hippogriff, and audio clips – written by Steve Kloves and delivered by Robbie Coltrane as Hagrid – audible along the line⁴⁰⁶. These thematic alterations are interesting on the one hand because they have transformed the rides into branding vehicles, which indicates the ongoing trend in Universal theme parks to create rides and experiences around licensed intellectual properties. Despite these rides’ inclusion of props that resemble on-screen artefacts, however, their positioning in the theme park environment necessitates another instance revolving around “partial memory and partial forgetting”⁴⁰⁷, where obedience to the theme park structure – such as progressing in orderly lines through the queues, and following the instructions of park attendants – is an integral part of engaging with this construction of the fictional world.

Both Hogsmeade and Diagon Alley also contain newly constructed rides that reproduce the *Harry Potter* narrative and place the theme park visitor at their centre. As this chapter previously noted, the geography of the ‘Wizarding World’ replicates the *Potter* narrative by enabling visitors to undertake a similar journey from the Muggle to wizarding worlds. The Hogwarts Express ride operates similarly by emulating the journey to Hogwarts. The queue for the ride winds through props such as the perfume poster in Surbiton train station – from the *Half-Blood Prince* film – alongside thematically-dressed employees such as buskers and train attendants. The train ride physically transports visitors from King’s Cross

⁴⁰⁵ Clavé, *Global Theme Park Industry*, 375.

⁴⁰⁶ Klaric, “Narrative Brought to Life,” 63-4.

⁴⁰⁷ Archer, “The Limits to the Imagineered City,” 322.

(in Universal Studios) to Hogsmeade (in Islands of Adventure), echoing the journey that takes place in the *Potter* films. The view outside the train is obscured by television screens in the place of windows, which play a video featuring characters and key landmarks from the *Potter* films. In practical terms, then, the experience of literally crossing from one theme park ‘world’ to the next is translated into a ride experience and tied to the *Harry Potter* narrative.

Indeed, this idea also correlates with a key theme of the *Potter* texts: travelling between worlds, and the co-existence of different worlds alongside each other. This can be seen, for instance, in the overlap between Muggle and wizarding worlds from the very first chapter of *Philosopher’s Stone*, where Vernon Dursley notices “strangelydressed people” talking excitedly on an otherwise normal street⁴⁰⁸. I explore the importance of the Hogwarts Express further in Chapter 3, arguing that it is a significant motif for expressing the duality between two worlds in the books and films as it provides a means to cross between the two. Here, however, it is important to note that the Hogwarts Express is such an appropriate tool to translate into the ‘Wizarding World’ because the idea of transitioning from reality to fantasy is also central to the form of theme parks. Crucially, the ‘Wizarding World’ offers a self-enclosed world in which the *Potter* narrative can be ritualistically performed, and in order to “enter this normally unattainable fantasy world”⁴⁰⁹, visitors are required to pay for a two-park ticket, usually costing \$55 extra, in order to board the Hogwarts Express ride⁴¹⁰. Participation in the narrative is therefore mediated by the commercial and operational strategy underpinning the parks.

The other two new rides in the ‘Wizarding World’, ‘Harry Potter and the Forbidden Journey’ (‘Forbidden Journey’ hereafter) and ‘Harry Potter and the Escape from Gringotts’ (‘Escape from Gringotts’ hereafter), are dark rides, or dark indoor circuits that “combine the classic elements of movement with film and the objectives and techniques used in the theatre”⁴¹¹. In Hogsmeade, a reconstruction of Hogwarts is positioned upon a hill as a landmark visible throughout the park, and the castle is accessible as the queue for the ‘Forbidden Journey’ ride. (As this chapter has explored, it is opportunities for consumption that are foregrounded in the ‘Wizarding World’, which helps to explain why Hogwarts is configured as a queue for a ride, while the bulk of inhabitable spaces revolve around

⁴⁰⁸ Rowling, *Philosopher’s Stone*, 8.

⁴⁰⁹ Klaric, “Narrative Brought to Life,” 26.

⁴¹⁰ “Park Tickets,” *Universal Orlando Resorts*, accessed September 22, 2018.

<https://www.universalorlando.com/web/en/us/tickets-packages/park-tickets/index.html>

⁴¹¹ Klaric, “Narrative Brought to Life,” 376.

commercial districts.) Queuing visitors pass through areas designed to resemble Herbology greenhouses; in the castle itself, visitors navigate in orderly lines through corridors containing replicas such as ornate statues, moving portraits and house point hourglasses, and through sets that resemble Dumbledore's office and the Defence Against the Dark Arts classroom. The ride itself uses sophisticated high-technology simulation techniques to project footage of recognisable scenes – the Quidditch pitch, or the Forbidden Forest – alongside carriage movement to replicate swerving and dodging on a broomstick, surround-sound to construct the frenetic tension of a high-speed chase, wind and fog effects, plus mechanical objects and animatronics such as a reconstruction of the Whomping Willow to add three-dimensionality and scale. The impression of travel and movement evoked by dark rides aids in recreating a journey or experience, positioning the ride-goer as an active participant in the narrative on display⁴¹². In this case, the ride simulates a broomstick ride throughout Hogwarts which culminates in the vanquishing of Voldemort.

'Escape from Gringotts', on the other hand, is even more explicitly attached to the *Potter* films: it recreates the scene from *Deathly Hallows Part 2* where Harry, Ron and Hermione infiltrate the bank and seek to escape from the vaults on the back of a dragon. Interestingly, while the ride uses cinematic techniques such as "large-scale imagery, stereo, high frame rates, stereoscopic projection, photorealistic animation and visual effects"⁴¹³ to render the film sequence into the ride form, 'Escape from Gringotts' has a yet more interesting relationship with the film sequence to which it refers. Arguably, the form and structure of the ride not only replicates the film scene in Gringotts, but the film scene *also replicates the form and structure of the ride*. For instance, the *Deathly Hallows Part 2* film scene portrays the vaults of Gringotts as an underground maze criss-crossed by rollercoaster-like metal tracks, using first-person shots, fast cuts and unstable camera movements to emphasise the dizzying, juddering journey.

The film scene and the ride also share some important production context. According to Ian Failes' article on the making of the 'Escape from Gringotts' ride, the concept had been in development since 2010 – when the *Deathly Hallows Part 2* film was still in production⁴¹⁴. Visual effects supervisor for the ride, Chris Shaw, notes that he and the rest of the Double Negative effects team were involved in creating the Gringotts scene for the film *and* the ride,

⁴¹²Ibid., 379.

⁴¹³ Ian Failes, "Innovation and immersion: Escape from Gringotts," *FXGuide*, March 29, 2015. Accessed September 22, 2018. <https://www.fxguide.com/featured/innovation-and-immersion-escape-from-gringotts/>

⁴¹⁴Ibid.

an aspect of the film and ride's production conditions that he claims adds "authenticity" to the ride experience⁴¹⁵. Furthermore, Universal hired some of the film's shooting crew in the ride's production, and Stuart Craig was extensively involved in the design of 'Escape from Gringotts'. Cast members, too, were involved in scenes for the ride and film, such as Domhnall Gleeson (Bill Weasley), Daniel Radcliffe (Harry Potter) and Rupert Grint (Ron Weasley). Chris Shaw notes that he was initially hired by Universal Creative, the department responsible for developing 'Escape from Gringotts', because of his experience on all eight *Potter* films⁴¹⁶. There was therefore considerable overlap in the crew that constructed the film scene and the ride.

In the FXGuide interview, Shaw labels the ride "immersive" – because its "attention to detail" and "motion simulation technology" assimilates the ride into the park's "single, seamless world", but also, crucially, because the ride makes visitors feel "like active participants"⁴¹⁷. This directly correlates to concepts present elsewhere throughout the park, such as the Ollivander's Wands experience where visitors are inserted into the setting or narrative. In 'Escape from Gringotts', this insertion of the visitor into the heroic quest is achieved by positioning visitors as fellow travellers alongside Harry, Ron and Hermione in the Gringotts mine cart, and by the main characters looking into the camera lens as if directly conversing with the audience. What is particularly interesting about Shaw's comments, however, is his admission that immersion and theme park practicalities co-exist in a complex balance with one another: although Shaw claims that, for the ride, the creative team "wanted to slow the pace down a little, letting people understand the story structure and giving them time to engage with these beloved characters", he also acknowledges that "[a]n additional second on one scene can reduce throughput dramatically, and that means longer queues ...each scene's action had to fit exactly into the time window allowed for it."⁴¹⁸

Because the film and the ride are linked textually and contextually, the ride arguably has a close relationship with the film that subverts the traditional notion of theme park attractions as ancillary and subsidiary experiences to film properties. It is not simply that the 'Escape from Gringotts' ride experience seeks to recreate the filmic experience with added interactive elements; the film and the ride are connected visually and stylistically, where the ride makes reference to the film scene, and the film scene evokes the conventions of the ride.

⁴¹⁵ Ibid.

⁴¹⁶ Ibid.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid.

⁴¹⁸ Ibid.

The ride and the film sequence were also in production simultaneously, with overlapping crew and design team. The Gringotts scene and the ‘Escape from Gringotts’ ride, therefore, are two different components in a web of meaning, with the film scene’s meaning shaped by its similarity to the ride as much as the ride is shaped by its similarity to the film. As this chapter has demonstrated, the *Harry Potter* films and the ‘Wizarding World’ parks are intricately connected, and textually and contextually this is no more evident than in ‘Escape from Gringotts’.

Conclusion.....

It has been long established in cultural studies scholarship that theme parks hold a close relationship with filmic properties. Nowhere more is this the case than in the Universal Studios parks, which are heavily reliant on manufacturing experiences revolving around media brands. The ‘Wizarding World’, however, arguably takes the principles of the theme park to an extreme end-point, offering a highly detailed and immersive environment that is nonetheless inextricably defined by the operational realities of the modern theme park. As a paratext, the ‘Wizarding World’ is indeed shaped by, and closely linked to, the *Harry Potter* texts, and the Warner Bros. films in particular. Not only do the parks offer the means to inhabit replicas of recognisable sets from the films, but, as this chapter has argued, the parks embody and magnify meanings and values from the *Potter* series within their form.

Consumerist behaviour, for instance, is an indelible part of life in the fictional wizarding world, where purchasing goods becomes a rite of passage and social status is in part derived from what you own; the ‘Wizarding World’ is an ideal tool for making this theme explicit, and consequently the parks weave consumption into the very fabric of the experience. The *Potter* parks also play with and complicate similar structuring textual themes such as Britishness and the blurred boundaries between fantasy and reality, embedding them into the environment.

As this chapter explored in its examination of theme park rides, however, it is not the case that we should view theme parks as in some way subsidiary to the film experience, either because of their adoption of the thematic concerns of media brands or because of their profit-driven motivations. Indeed, as the ‘Escape from Gringotts’ ride shows, theme parks and films can be equally responsible for constructing meaning and value. In an increasingly transmedial environment where franchises are exploited across diverse channels, forms and

media, it is increasingly the case that theme parks, like film properties, serve as but one entryway into a brand, and paratexts can play a significant role in understanding how franchising works.

Chapter Three

Celebrating Authenticity, Heritage and Prestige in the ‘Warner Bros. Studio Tour, London: The Making of *Harry Potter*’

The ‘Warner Bros. Studio Tour: The Making of *Harry Potter*’ was developed on the site of Leavesden Studios, in which much of the filming for the eight *Potter* films (2001-11) took place. After leasing the studio space for over ten years in the early 2000s, Warner Bros. purchased the facility, renovated its production spaces, rebranded it ‘Warner Bros. Studios Leavesden’, and constructed an entirely new public attraction – the Studio Tour – on the grounds. The Studio Tour provides a self-guided tour through a number of reconstructed film props and sets alongside behind-the-scenes facts and filmmaking information. The Tour, as this chapter will demonstrate, ostensibly seeks to encourage an appreciation of the artistry of the *Harry Potter* film production resources and, by extension, of the *Potter* films as discrete texts. The formal structure of the Tour frames the attraction as a space that offers valuable insight into high-quality British filmmaking, and as a site of film tourism in which significant filmic artefacts are preserved and showcased. The attraction thereby positions the *Potter* films as valuable pieces of contemporary British culture worthy of preservation in a museum-like environment.

The nature of the Studio Tour, however, is complex: its representation as an edifying experience that illuminates the production processes of the films in some senses contrasts with other elements of its formal structure. As the upcoming chapter will demonstrate, the Tour’s completed sets reconstruct the precise environments seen in the *Potter* films, but there are markedly few sets that provide detailed accounts of production processes; instead, the majority of the sets on display are, in their scale and detail, designed to be looked at, and looked into. Particularly, I argue here that these sets intend to evoke in visitors a sense of closeness with the world – and the material artefacts within that world – of the film franchise. (Replicas of many of these artefacts can be purchased in the Studio Tour’s shops; the ways in which the attraction seeks to intertwine immersion and consumption will also be explored in the upcoming chapter.) This immersive potential, interestingly, operates alongside the Studio Tour’s didactic purpose. Further, since its opening in 2012, the Tour has continued to add new features which arguably have broadened the gap between its dual functions: while many

of the sets and props on display since the tour's inception are inaccessible, fenced off by railings and ropes, the newer segments opened in more recent years enable visitors to walk through reconstructed versions of sets such as Privet Drive and the Forbidden Forest. This demonstrates, I argue, a continuation of the Studio Tour's commitment to providing not only an informative exhibition but an immersive re-imagination of the franchise's filmic environments. It is an exploration of the ways in which this uneasy duality between education and entertainment manifests in the formal structure of the Studio Tour, and how they serve to secure the longevity of the *Harry Potter* franchise, that forms the crux of this chapter.

Chapter 2 explored how the 'Wizarding World' theme parks attempt to recreate immersive environments reminiscent of iconic sets Diagon Alley and Hogsmeade. The 'Wizarding World' also offers a useful springboard for considering the function of the Studio Tour: the two attractions are both tourist sites which recreate complete, immersive, highly detailed filmic environments alongside opportunities for consumption. Both paratexts seek to recreate the material and visual iconography of the films in order to perpetuate the legacy of the franchise, but the ways in which they use space, form and narrative to construct meaning and value for the *Potter* franchise differ in several key ways. Notably, the 'Wizarding World' parks lack the duality of function – edification and entertainment – that arguably characterises and complicates the Studio Tour. On the other hand, a key characteristic of the theme parks is their spatial and geographical location within the theme park space – in Orlando, Florida – while the Studio Tour is housed in Watford, UK, adjacent to the site in which the filming of *Harry Potter* took place. This forms a connection between the Studio Tour and the regionally specific production history of the *Potter* films. How far this regional specificity is reflected within the experience of the Studio Tour, and how it serves to perpetuate notions of authenticity and prestige for the *Potter* productions and the Studio Tour itself, is another thread that runs throughout the chapter.

The research conducted for this chapter took place on a visit to the Studio Tour in March 2017; consequently, the work that follows derives from observations and analysis performed at that time. The Studio Tour is a public attraction situated ten minutes by car outside of the town of Watford, on the site of Leavesden Studios. Although a large proportion of the site is a functioning film studio, the public-access sections are restricted to two hangars ('J' and 'K') purpose-built for the Studio Tour experience. The Tour begins with a short film in which actors and crew from the films discuss the ongoing value of the *Potter* films; from there, groups of visitors are funnelled into the set of the Hogwarts Great Hall, and then into

‘J’ hangar, at which time the Tour becomes largely self-guided. ‘J’ hangar is an open warehouse filled with props and sets such as the Potions classroom, Dumbledore’s office, the Gryffindor common room, the Hogwarts Express, and the Ministry of Magic interior. There are also a number of interactive activities interspersed with the sets, and a ‘Railway Shop’ in Platform 9 ¾. The open area between ‘J’ and ‘K’ hangars features refreshment options plus other props and sets including the Knight Bus, Privet Drive, and the bridge from *Prisoner of Azkaban*. ‘K’ hangar is more structured: it begins with the Creature Shop, then a reconstruction of Diagon Alley, followed by a room of concept art and architects’ drawings and models. The finale of ‘K’ hangar is the Hogwarts Castle bigature. The Studio Tour culminates in a gift shop, selling a variety of souvenirs and collectibles.

This chapter will begin with a consideration of the history of the Leavesden site, from its beginnings as an aerodrome during World War I to its development into a film studio in the late 1990s and beyond. This will move into an exploration of the extent to which the Studio Tour can be read as an ‘authentic’ site of *Potter* heritage. Although Leavesden was home to much of the production on *Harry Potter*, the Studio Tour is a newly-constructed attraction built nearby; the Tour is therefore able to draw on this geographical proximity in presenting itself as a valuable exhibition, but crucially, the Tour does not exist in *precisely* the same space. This will form a springboard into the next part of the chapter, which reads the Tour as a conflation of two potentially conflicting functions: education and entertainment, museum and theme park, prestige and immersion. The attraction’s formal structure as a museum seeks to attach prestige to the *Potter* productions and the Studio Tour site, but opportunities for entertainment and interactivity are nonetheless woven into the fabric of the experience. Finally, this chapter will address the role of consumerism in the Studio Tour by looking at its two primary retail opportunities, the ‘Railway Shop’ and the post-Tour shop.

***Leavesden’s history*.....**

Leavesden’s history dates back to the early twentieth century, but it was only in the 1990s that its transition into a film studio began. The Leavesden site was originally constructed after the First World War as an aerodrome owned by the de Havilland Engine Company Limited, until it was requisitioned by what is now known as the Ministry of Defence⁴¹⁹ in World War II; in the early 1940s, the Leavesden aerodrome’s extensive 915-metre runway and two large

⁴¹⁹Warner Bros. Studios Leavesden, "Planning supporting statement," January 2010, 19. PDF.

factory complexes were used in the manufacture of Mosquito Fighter and Halifax Bomber aircraft⁴²⁰. After the war, the factory was used by a number of companies – most significantly, Rolls-Royce – in the manufacture of civilian and military aircraft⁴²¹. By 1967, Rolls-Royce controlled the whole facility, employing over 3000 people at its peak. These numbers dwindled over the next two decades to around 1800⁴²², and in 1992, Rolls-Royce closed the factory⁴²³. Its importance in the history of the British film industry began in May 1994, when Eon Productions – producers of the ‘James Bond’ franchise – sought last-minute studio space for the latest Bond film, *GoldenEye*, at a time when Watford Borough Council was searching for potential redevelopment proposals for the Leavesden site⁴²⁴.

With the Bond franchise’s traditional home, Pinewood Studios, booked up with another project, production designer Peter Lamont discovered Leavesden, noting the potential within its 1-million-square-feet of space plus colossal hangars, runway and backlot. Eon Productions obtained a temporary lease from Rolls-Royce and temporary planning consent from Watford Borough Council and Three Rivers District Council, enabling them to use the site for film production⁴²⁵. Although only work strictly required for *GoldenEye* was carried out, resulting in little lasting structural change to the site, the seed was sown for its potential as an independent studio and word soon spread: in 1995, Leavesden was purchased from Rolls-Royce by Malaysian-based Millennium Group for almost £43million, with the intention of investing a further £150million into the construction of a permanent film studio and residential housing⁴²⁶.

By 1996, the Millennium Group was leasing Leavesden for use in high-profile productions such as George Lucas’s *Star Wars Episode 1: The Phantom Menace*, which used the site for pre-production, photography and effects work. This was followed by Tim Burton’s *Sleepy Hollow* in 1998, and the site was also used for a number of shorter leases for advertisements and TV productions. In 1999, however, the Millennium Group sold 100 acres of the Leavesden site to the company MEPC, which turned the buildings adjacent to the site

⁴²⁰ Ibid.

⁴²¹ Ibid.

⁴²² "Leavesden Studios - Chronology," *TheStudioTour.com*, accessed September 24, 2018.

<http://www.thestudiotour.com/leavesden/chronology.shtml>

⁴²³ Ibid.

⁴²⁴ Warner Bros. Studios Leavesden, "Planning supporting statement," 19.

⁴²⁵ Ibid., 20.

⁴²⁶ "Leavesden Studios – Chronology," *TheStudioTour.com*.

into a business park⁴²⁷. A further proposal was drafted, to downscale the site's studio facilities and construct a studio tour in its place, but this was never developed in detail or submitted to the council⁴²⁸. Work on the potential studio tour was never carried out at this time, however, because in 2000 Warner Bros. obtained a temporary lease for the studio facilities to make the first *Harry Potter* film. Daniel Dark, now Leavesden's senior vice president and managing director, comments on the studio's recent history that its "original development plans didn't come to fruition, and the studio went through various different owners until Roy Button, the head of production for Warner Bros., decided to find a facility Warner could fully control for the Harry Potter films."⁴²⁹

Warner Bros.' use of Leavesden for all eight *Potter* films lasted from 2000-2009, employing over 1500 people in peak filming periods.⁴³⁰ Throughout these years, Warner Bros. continually renewed its temporary lease for the film production facilities, but, in response to the latest lease's impending expiration in December 2010, the studio submitted a planning permission application to Watford Borough Council and Three Rivers District Council, detailing its intention to purchase the site outright and "retain and refurbish the existing film production facility at Leavesden Studios and provide two additional stages for the storage and public exhibition of film sets and artefacts"⁴³¹. In detail, the planning permission document states:

"Full planning permission is sought for: 'the continued use of land and buildings for film production and associated activities including retention and refurbishment of existing studios to accommodate stages, backlot, workshops, offices, production facilities, canteen / commissary and ancillary studio facilities and services, replacement and extended workshops, stage and offices. Two new stages (approx. 13,000 sqm floorspace) for the storage and public exhibition of film sets and artefacts (including approx. 380 sqm café and 330 sqm gift shop), new accesses from Aerodrome Way, revised internal road layout and parking, extended backlot, landscaping and associated works."⁴³²

Warner Bros. also stated its "vision to purchase the site to make Leavesden its permanent

⁴²⁷ Warner Bros. Studios Leavesden, "Planning supporting statement," 19.

⁴²⁸ "Leavesden Studios – Chronology," *TheStudioTour.com*.

⁴²⁹ Mark Hope-Jones, "Warner Bros. Opens London Studio," *American Cinematographer - The International Journal of Film & Digital Production Techniques* 93, no. 7 (Jul 2012): 72-73.

⁴³⁰ Warner Bros. Studios Leavesden, "Planning supporting statement," 7.

⁴³¹ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁴³² Warner Bros. Studios Leavesden, "Planning supporting statement," 9.

studio home in the UK”, which it could operate without the involvement of third-party partners⁴³³ and which would be conducive to “long-term aspirations” of the company⁴³⁴. The makeover was anticipated to cost in excess of £100million, requiring a complete overhaul of the production facilities – including demolishing old factory hangars, improving the soundproofing standards and optimising its layout⁴³⁵ – to make room for 10 new sound stages as well as studios, workshops and services for visual effects, prosthetics, animatronics, film editing, and backlot space⁴³⁶. Dark noted that Warner Bros. were “able to consider what today’s filmmakers require” by constructing a tailor-made Hollywood studio that would attract large-scale blockbuster film production⁴³⁷. The acquisition of Leavesden Studios would make Warner Bros. the only Hollywood studio to “possess and operate its own production facility in the UK”⁴³⁸ for half a century⁴³⁹, with Leavesden Studios encompassing 39% of Britain’s stage space for major film production⁴⁴⁰.

In late 2010, Warner Bros. Chairman and CEO Barry Meyer met with Jeremy Hunt, then the UK government’s Culture Secretary, with Meyer expressing his interest in purchasing Leavesden. With the recent abolition of the UK Film Council by the coalition government in 2010, Meyer sought to ensure that the tax credits scheme for British films originally introduced by Chancellor Gordon Brown in 1997 would continue⁴⁴¹. Apparently convinced, on 10th November 2010 Warner Bros. announced its acquisition of the Leavesden site. Meyer then commented:

"For 86 years, Warner Bros. has been intrinsically involved in film production in the UK. Our purchase of Warner Bros. Studios, Leavesden and our multi-million pound investment in creating a state-of-the-art, permanent UK film production base further demonstrates our long-term commitment to, and confidence in, the skills and creativity of the UK film industry.”⁴⁴²

⁴³³Ibid., 7.

⁴³⁴Ibid., 25.

⁴³⁵Press release, "Warner Bros. Acquires Leavesden Studios and Unveils Plans for Major UK Production Base," *Warner Bros.com*, November 8, 2010. Accessed September 24, 2018. <https://www.warnerbros.com/studio/news/warner-bros-acquires-leavesden-studios-and-unveils-plans-major-uk-production-base>

⁴³⁶ Warner Bros. Studios Leavesden, "Planning supporting statement," 9.

⁴³⁷Mark Hope-Jones, "Warner Bros. Opens London Studio," 72-3.

⁴³⁸Press release, "Warner Bros. Acquires Leavesden Studios."

⁴³⁹Mark Hope-Jones, "Warner Bros. Opens London Studio," 72-3.

⁴⁴⁰Press release, "Warner Bros. Acquires Leavesden Studios."

⁴⁴¹Dan Sabbagh and Mark Sweney, "Warner Bros buys Harry Potter studios in £100m boost for UK films," *The Guardian*, November 9, 2010. Accessed September 24, 2018. <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2010/nov/09/warner-bros-leavesden-studios>

⁴⁴²Press release, "Warner Bros. Acquires Leavesden Studios."

Meyer here seeks to draw upon a shared heritage between the Hollywood studio and the media industries in Britain, referencing Warner Bros.’ use of studio facilities such as Teddington in the 1920s⁴⁴³ and Pinewood Studios in subsequent decades, as well as its partnerships with filmmakers such as Stanley Kubrick⁴⁴⁴. The company had in truth, however, become a significant player in the British film industry with the acquisition of *Harry Potter* in 1999, and the purchase of Leavesden arguably sought to capitalise upon the connections and commercial investments that Warner Bros. had made in Britain, and specifically the Hertfordshire media cluster, throughout production on the record-breakingly successful franchise.

In addition to the refurbishment of its studio facilities with the Leavesden purchase, Warner Bros. also announced the construction of two new sound stages – entitled ‘J’ and ‘K’, supposedly in homage to author J.K. Rowling – which would exclusively house a public “studio tour” featuring authentic sets, props, and replicas preserved from the *Potter* films⁴⁴⁵. The planning permission for the studio tour was indelibly embedded within the wider bid to renovate the Leavesden site, with Warner Bros. labelling the studio tour an “essential element of [their] requirements”, and “of critical importance to retaining the *Harry Potter* legacy”⁴⁴⁶. This last is crucial in terms of understanding the role of the Studio Tour in Warner Bros.’ strategy, as this chapter will go on to explore. From the outset, the studio tour, according to Warner Bros.’ planning statement, would be “strongly integrated with the existing studio complex”⁴⁴⁷ and designed to celebrate “artistic creativity and cinematic excellence in the country where the [*Potter*] story and films were conceived and brought to life”⁴⁴⁸. The attraction was also touted as pedagogic in nature, however, through its ability not only to “showcase” the “excellence” of British film industry talent but to promote the possibilities of the creative industries, and its career pathways, to younger generations⁴⁴⁹. Although Warner Bros.’ planning permission bid painstakingly details the projected positive impact of the acquisition on the local economy and wider UK filmmaking, it is also arguable in fact that the company’s insistence on the studio tour as a non-negotiable factor in the Leavesden

⁴⁴³ Dan Sabbagh, "Josh Berger on Leavesden film studios: Harry Potter's new chamber of secrets," *The Guardian*, June 10, 2012. Accessed September 24, 2018. <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2012/jun/10/josh-berger-warner-bros-interview>

⁴⁴⁴ Warner Bros. Studios Leavesden, "Planning supporting statement," 67.

⁴⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁴⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁴⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁴⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

acquisition indicates its attempt to safeguard its own commercial ventures within the recession's "challenging" economic times⁴⁵⁰. The Warner Bros. Studio Tour is the only attraction of its kind in the world⁴⁵¹: it effectively monetises the film studio, providing a potentially colossal revenue stream that reduces the risk associated with the company's Leavesden investment while maintaining *Harry Potter*'s legacy in the public consciousness.

Leavesden, then, as this section earlier explored, had been a proposed site for a studio tour since the late 1990s. Although no initial plans ever came to fruition, Warner Bros. was able to draw on existing council approval of these original proposals to secure agreement for its acquisition of Leavesden and the associated studio tour⁴⁵². Emphasising the site's history as a potential studio tour enabled the company to normalise their plans to monetise the site, to substantially alter the site's geography and facilities, and to create a colossal public attraction that could draw up to 5000 new tourists per day. In the planning permission document, Warner Bros. cited the "very special circumstances" – essentially, their position as a global filmmaking titan, and their influence over the site's recent history – to justify their designs for the studio tour, despite their own acknowledgement that the proposed renovations to Leavesden would break green belt policy which seeks to preserve natural terrain in the outer London area⁴⁵³. Nonetheless, the planning permission bid was approved by Watford Borough Council and Three Rivers District Council, and the Leavesden site was sold to Warner Bros. from MEPC in 2010. Warner Bros. began renovations to the production facilities as well as construction on the brand new Studio Tour, collaborating with the California-based Thinkwell Group as well as crew from the *Potter* films to "conceive, design and produce" the attraction. From conception, both Warner Bros. and Thinkwell were keen to emphasise that the tour would not be a "theme park"⁴⁵⁴, instead using "a combination of theatrical, museum display, and architectural equipment to display and describe both the film artefacts as well as the 'story' of how they were created and used".⁴⁵⁵ The Studio Tour opened on March 31st, 2012⁴⁵⁶.

⁴⁵⁰Ibid., 7.

⁴⁵¹"Warner Bros. Studio Tour London: The Making of Harry Potter," *Thinkwell Group*, accessed September 24, 2018. <https://thinkwellgroup.com/projects/the-making-of-harry-potter/>

⁴⁵² Warner Bros. Studios Leavesden, "Planning supporting statement," 9.

⁴⁵³Ibid., 51.

⁴⁵⁴Adam Dawtrey, "Warners schools visitors on Hogwarts sets," *Variety*, March 31, 2012. Accessed September 24, 2018. <https://variety.com/2012/film/news/warners-schools-visitors-on-hogwarts-sets-1118052109/>

⁴⁵⁵"The Making of Harry Potter," *Thinkwell Group*.

⁴⁵⁶Leavesden Studios – Chronology," *TheStudioTour.com*.

This discussion of Leavesden’s history so far, culminating its acquisition by Warner Bros., has drawn heavily on proposed planning and development procedures for the studio site. The following sections, however, will examine the nature of the Studio Tour experience as a finished product, and will in part evaluate how far it has adhered to the criteria that Warner Bros. laid out in its planning stages. Notably, this includes the claim by Warner Bros. that the Tour a) would create a lasting legacy for the *Harry Potter* films, b) would not be a “theme park”, and c) would serve a pedagogic function and stimulate interest in the British film industry. The rest of this chapter will explore the ways in which the formal qualities of the Studio Tour reveal its underlying purpose as a paratext that ensures the longevity of the *Harry Potter* films, with a view to evaluating the impact of its dual functions as an edifying experience that showcases British filmmaking and as a site of immersive entertainment.

Authenticity, tourism, and the museum.....

The proximity of the Studio Tour to Warner Bros. Studios, Leavesden, the facility in which all of the *Harry Potter* films were produced, is signposted as a key feature according to the Tour’s official website⁴⁵⁷. The studio, as this chapter has previously noted, was home to a considerable bulk of the *Potter* franchise’s production activity and the location was subsequently purchased by Warner Bros. after filming wrapped on the series. As a result, the location is not only useful to Warner Bros. for its *future* potential as a functioning film studio, but also as a *historic* site— a site in which filmmaking took place for one of the most financially and culturally successful franchises in history. In the Studio Tour, it is this past that Warner Bros. seeks to preserve, with its museum structure striving to elevate the immaculately preserved sets, props and costumes into cultural artefacts. This is achieved in large part by repeated emphasis throughout the Tour, and in its promotional materials, that these sets and props are the “real” items used in the filmmaking process: Hermione’s Yule Ball dress on display in the Studio Tour is one worn by Emma Watson; the Mirror of Erised is the same one that Harry looked into in *Philosopher’s Stone*; Michael Gambon stood in this version of Dumbledore’s office. Furthermore, in contrast with the Wizarding World theme parks, this is the “real” Diagon Alley that the actors walked on; this is the “real” Hogwarts Express that the actors sat in.

⁴⁵⁷“Our History,” *Warner Bros. Studio Tour London*, accessed September 28, 2018. <https://www.wbstudiotour.co.uk/our-history>

Proximity to the production resources in the films, then, is a key way in which the Tour presents its experience as ‘authentic’. A sense of authenticity is also constructed by framing *Potter* filmmaking as a historic event. Much like tourists visit the Acropolis to feel a connection with the culture of Ancient Greece, the Studio Tour seeks to offer a means of understanding the culture of *Potter* filmmaking, blending the nostalgia of re-experiencing scenes from the films with the reality of production activity. As Nick Couldry states, studio tours combine two different ways of looking (through the screen, and in person), and two different timeframes (the memory of watching the films, combined with the appeal of seeing those scenes recreated in the present)⁴⁵⁸. What is important to understand here, however, is the relative lack of history that Leavesden Studios possesses: its history as a film studio began only a few years before *Harry Potter* was produced there – and, indeed, the Studio Tour was purpose-built in 2012 for the housing of sets and props, and therefore has no specific history at all. This lack of history is arguably why the Studio Tour aspires to an impression of it.

The Studio Tour’s geographical location at Leavesden is a significant contributor in constructing the experience as authentic because the Tour co-opts the studios’ reputation as a site of filmmaking, despite its status as a purpose-built tourist attraction. From the Studio Tour website:

“The *Harry Potter* film series made Leavesden its home for more than ten years. ... Set adjacent to the working film studios where all eight *Harry Potter* films were made, the Studio Tour offers visitors the unique opportunity to explore two soundstages and a backlot filled with original sets, animatronic creatures and breathtaking special effects.”⁴⁵⁹

Film tourism scholarship has been particularly preoccupied with the importance that a sense of place plays in constructing tourist experiences and perceptions of authenticity. For instance, Deborah Jones and Karen Smith discussed tourism in New Zealand in the wake of *The Lord of the Rings*, drawing distinctions between what they labelled “creative authenticity”, or the closeness of a film tourism site to the artistic and cultural values of the film itself, and “national authenticity”, in which national identity forges a link between the

⁴⁵⁸ Nick Couldry, "The view from inside the 'simulacrum': visitors' tales from the set of Coronation Street," *Leisure Studies* 17, no. 2 (1998): 103.

⁴⁵⁹“Our History,” *Warner Bros. Studio Tour London*.

film and film tourism site⁴⁶⁰. Anne Buchmann, Kevin Moore and David Fisher also explored *Lord of the Rings* film-induced tourism in New Zealand, interviewing tourists on nationwide tours: they found that the natural landscapes led respondents to draw connections between the real place of New Zealand and the fictional land of Middle-Earth: one tourist said, “one can feel as if 8,000 years ago the *Lord of the Rings* actually happened”⁴⁶¹. These tours demonstrate the “embodied” way in which physical places contribute to authenticity in film tourism⁴⁶². Couldry’s analysis of the Granada Studio Tour, the home of the *Coronation Street* set, included interviews with visitors. The tour enabled tourists to walk through the sets and learn behind-the-scenes information about the television show, and is consequently a close parallel with the Warner Bros. Studio Tour. According to Couldry’s data, visitors to the Granada Studio Tour often placed particular emphasis on the set as being the “real” location, the “home”, of *Coronation Street*, blurring the lines between fiction and reality⁴⁶³. Couldry therefore reads this Tour as a “liminal” location in which thresholds of place and media are crossed⁴⁶⁴.

The significance of a sense of place, in which the act of visiting a site is integral to the appeal of the film tourism experience, has therefore been well-established in academic literature as a significant aspect of meaning-making. As opposed to other film tourism sites such as theme parks, the Studio Tour – situated on the grounds of the studios which produced much of the *Potter* films – strives to fit this category of local or geographically-specific film tourism. Although the Tour has been built on the site of *Harry Potter* filmmaking, it offers a different experience from tours such as the aforementioned *Lord of the Rings* tour or the Granada Studio Tour, however. Some attendees on the Granada Studio Tour commented that “being able to walk on the same [*Coronation Street*] set that the actors walked on” was a significant part of meaning-making for them⁴⁶⁵. Although it is possible to say that actors walked on particular sets such as the Gryffindor common room and the Hogwarts Express, the Warner Bros. Studio Tour presents these in an inorganic atmosphere: it is a purpose-built structure that provides a carefully constructed sequence of sets and props displayed for the consumer gaze. These sets have been dismantled, re-constructed and arranged for a new

⁴⁶⁰ Deborah Jones, et al., "Middle-earth Meets New Zealand: Authenticity and Location in the Making of The Lord of the Rings," *Journal of Management Studies* 42, no. 5 (July 2005): 926.

⁴⁶¹ Anne Buchmann, et al., "Experiencing Film Tourism: Authenticity & Fellowship," *Annals of Tourism Research* 37, no. 1 (2010): 238.

⁴⁶² *Ibid.*, 240.

⁴⁶³ Couldry, "Tales from the set of Coronation Street," 98.

⁴⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 101.

⁴⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 98.

purpose and in a new location, removing them from the specific site in which filming took place. ‘J’ and ‘K’ stages at Leavesden, which house the Studio Tour, share the same grounds as the studio in which the *Potter* films were produced, but crucially it is not *precisely* the same space.

The Studio Tour thus benefits from its location at Leavesden Studios because it co-opts the prestige of the accompanying studio in order to situate itself as part of the history of *Harry Potter*. The sets and props created throughout Warner Bros.’ tenure at Leavesden have been dislocated from the spaces they occupied during filming, but the Tour’s perceived authenticity remains intact due to this blurring of history and geography. Curiously, the Studio Tour is also largely divorced from the post-*Potter* realities of production work at Leavesden: despite the studio remaining engaged in film production work – films such as *Paddington*(Paul King, 2014), *Edge of Tomorrow*(Doug Liman, 2014) and *Wonder Woman*(Patty Jenkins, 2017), not to mention the new *Fantastic Beasts* series set in the Harry Potter universe, have used the facilities since the refurbishment in 2012⁴⁶⁶ – the production spaces are segregated from the Tour through carefully placed foliage and fences, and inside the Tour itself, very little reference is made to ongoing studio projects at Leavesden.

Interestingly, too, very little reference is made to the particulars of *Harry Potter* filmmaking at Leavesden within the attraction. For instance, in the numerous plaques and informative segments throughout the Studio Tour, none mention which scenes were filmed in which sound stages, or which section of the backlot was used for particular segments of filming. This omission can be traced to the Tour’s own lack of history, and constructs an experience which is curiously both geographically specific yet simultaneously ageographical. Like the ‘Wizards World’ theme parks, the Studio Tour constructs a self-contained universe that arranges its narrative according to its own internal rules. Indeed, this notion of being in a separate world is introduced before the Tour even begins: the official bus that transports visitors from Watford Junction train station to the attraction has blacked-out windows that obscure the view outside, and the Studio Tour itself is housed within a yellow warehouse-style building. The bus journey, and its culmination, contributes to a sense of being transported to a place outside of reality, but this nonetheless prevents engagement with the industrial and regional contexts in which the films were produced. The Tour environment is therefore one that is constructed for specific franchising purposes, with no historical

⁴⁶⁶ "The Filmography," *Warner Bros. Studios Leavesden*, accessed September 24, 2018. <https://www.wbsl.com/studios/about/filmography/>

precedents and no substantial connection to the film studio, and therefore can arguably be best understood as a tourist facility more easily controlled by Warner Bros. and site management.

Similar fundamental dualities continue with regards to the national framework in which the Studio Tour operates. The *Harry Potter* film series is widely marketed as a British phenomenon, with reference frequently made to the wholly British cast, crew and filming location (with J.K. Rowling's influence attributed as a key factor in these decisions), drawing upon the setting of the novels' fictional universe as a marker of faithfulness to the original books. Despite the obviously British location of the Studio Tour, however, the attraction only obliquely makes reference to its own Britishness, and indeed the British heritage of the *Potter* films. The Tour recreates some sets that overtly reference British culture, such as the Hogwarts Express steam train or Privet Drive, but these are largely divorced from their social contexts. 4 Privet Drive, for instance, is recreated in its entirety but the rest of the suburban Surrey cul-de-sac— a location that carries quintessentially English markers of “petit bourgeoisie” class and status⁴⁶⁷ – is omitted. Instead, the majority of the sets at the Tour recreate magical or otherwise fictional environments, such as the Great Hall at Hogwarts, the Potions classroom, or Dumbledore's office. Many of these sets do contain indirect markers of Britishness – Diagon Alley's cobbled shop-lined streets draw inspiration from York's the Shambles and London's Cecil Court, for instance – but crucially it is the magical elements that are often foregrounded: robes, the Ministry of Magic, potion bottles, moving portraits, and giant spiders.

In fact, the ways in which the Tour explains how these magical features were created in film production – for instance, showing how forced perspective can cause a very small hallway to appear considerably longer – instead seeks to conflate filmmaking skill with the magic seen in *Harry Potter*. The implication that the fictional world of wizardry can be realised by the talents of a film crew is one of the key features underpinning the Tour, although, in this case, arguably at the expense of cultural specificity.

As I explored in Chapter 2, the connection between “hyperreality” and theme parks has been long established in cultural studies scholarship, with Jean Baudrillard and Umberto Eco first discussing hyperreality in terms of tourist attractions that are dedicated to reproducing a historical or cultural event for public consumption; the resulting environment is an “absolute

⁴⁶⁷ Brown, *British Children's Cinema*, 234.

fake” although it is presented as realistically as possible⁴⁶⁸. Sites of film tourism have therefore also been understood through this lens precisely because “access to [the] unmediated reality [of film production] is impossible”⁴⁶⁹. In addition, Buchmann, Moore and Fisher noted that hyperreal environments are often produced when a film tourism site has no specific history of its own, and thus hyperreality “emerges within the context of an ahistorical, consumerist society and involves a strong focus on the spectacular and ‘non-ordinary’”⁴⁷⁰. In the case of the Studio Tour, then, its relative lack of heritage – both in terms of Leavesden’s short history as a film studio, and the Tour’s status as a purpose-built tourist attraction – helps to explain its curiously ageographical approach to presenting the fictional wizarding world.

It is important to note that this conflict between geographical specificity and vacancy has precedent within the *Harry Potter* texts, however. The novels often construct a tension between ‘magical’ and ‘real’ spaces wherein boundaries between the two are constantly flexible, blurred, and negotiated. Many magical locations in *Harry Potter* occupy spaces that should not logically exist or which cannot be scientifically mapped: for example, the entrance to Diagon Alley appears behind the wall of a pub; 12 Grimmauld Place is wedged invisibly between 10 and 14 on an innocuous London street; the Room of Requirement at Hogwarts changes its appearance depending on the will of the visitor. Magical spaces are often mapped onto British topography whilst simultaneously being hazily defined: Hogwarts Castle is located somewhere in the Scottish Highlands, but it is never specified precisely where; the location of the Quidditch World Cup is described only as “what appeared to be a deserted stretch of misty moor”⁴⁷¹; the Ministry of Magic is accessible through various London spots such as phoneboxes and toilets, but its true location remains unknown.

The impression that this geographical complexity gives is of a magical world that exists both in separation from and in connection to the ‘real’ world outside it. Similarly, this conflict between two worlds is also expressed in the texts in its representation of Britishness. On the one hand, the magical world of *Harry Potter* is often entwined with recognisably British cultural heritage, landmarks and characteristics. The boarding school setting of Hogwarts with its houses and prefects draws from the cultural history of the United Kingdom, but also

⁴⁶⁸Eco, *Travels in Hyperreality*, 8.

⁴⁶⁹Couldry, "Tales from the set of Coronation Street," 94-5.

⁴⁷⁰Buchmann, et al., "Experiencing Film Tourism," 231.

⁴⁷¹J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* (Bloomsbury: London, 2000), 70.

from British stories such as *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (1857)⁴⁷². The Ministry of Magic's bureaucracy and political structure echoes the UK Parliament, with Cornelius Fudge and Rufus Scrimgeour drawing parallels with British politicians Neville Chamberlain and Winston Churchill⁴⁷³. The Dursleys, too, represent the iconic if blandly stereotypical suburban middle-class family. Quidditch incorporates elements of popular British sports such as football, polo, and rugby⁴⁷⁴. Even the style of the novels is in some senses quintessentially British: the first line of the series, "Mr and Mrs Dursley, of number four, Privet Drive, were proud to say they were perfectly normal, thank you very much" immediately establishes an undercurrent of British humour⁴⁷⁵.

On the other hand, essentially globalist themes and social concerns permeate the *Potter* novels and films. As Noel Brown explores in *British Children's Cinema*, the *Harry Potter* texts "deal in universals such as friendship and family, maturation, and concepts of good and evil, as well as broadly-intelligible – and certainly transatlantic – socio-political currents such as classism, racism, internecine warfare, and terrorism"⁴⁷⁶, leading to "broader resonances" that help to explain *Harry Potter's* global success and relatability⁴⁷⁷. Brown also notes that the texts contain particular parallels with American culture; for instance, the scene in the *Half-Blood Prince* film where Dementors destroy London's Millennium Bridge draws upon, he argues, imagery relating to the 9/11 terrorist attacks in 2001⁴⁷⁸.

Indeed, the influence of America on *Harry Potter* is even more evident in the films' production conditions. Although Heyday Films – a British production company – was brought on to produce *Harry Potter*, apparently at the behest of Rowling⁴⁷⁹, it was nonetheless a co-production with Warner Bros., who were responsible for the financing, distribution and marketing of the films. The series conformed to a typical Hollywood blockbuster franchising model with international reach and success, adopting the classic "Hollywood action-adventure structure and trappings" in its form⁴⁸⁰. Paratextual activities have been global in scope as well, with a particular emphasis on America: with theme park rights licensed to Universal, parks have been constructed in the USA and Japan;

⁴⁷² Brown, *British Children's Cinema*, 233.

⁴⁷³ *Ibid.*, 239.

⁴⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 233.

⁴⁷⁵ Rowling, *Philosopher's Stone*, 7.

⁴⁷⁶ Brown, *British Children's Cinema*, 233.

⁴⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 235.

⁴⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 234.

⁴⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 233.

⁴⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 239.

merchandising spans the globe; and the *Fantastic Beasts* film series demonstrates that the franchise is now expanding outwards, away from its steadfastly British setting, towards one that incorporates America in its vision (see Chapter 4). Indeed, the Studio Tour in Watford is the only one of its kind dedicated to a specific franchise, but it has its ancestry in the studio tours of the early Hollywood system, as I explore in the following section. Just like the Studio Tour, the *Potter* series embodies what Noel Brown calls a “socio-political-cultural pluralism”⁴⁸¹, where it appropriates recognisable concepts of Britishness while retaining markers of its global outlook.

The Studio Tour, then, as a paratext, reflects and amplifies some of the enduring themes of the *Harry Potter* texts while simultaneously embodying the global status of the franchise. Indeed, this is a common thread between the next generation of *Harry Potter* paratexts – they continue to draw on and expose some of the key formal and thematic concerns of the novels and films while also operating as part of wider franchising strategies. In the case of the Studio Tour, the physical space embodies the conflict between its British and global contexts that it arguably first inherited from the books and films. Interestingly, the ‘Wizarding World’ theme parks also seek to draw on the productions’ British context, but this manifests differently. Retaining some sense of cultural specificity differentiates the Studio Tour from the ‘Wizarding World’ theme parks: the Tour is not necessarily *more* (or less) authentic, but it projects a different kind of authenticity, one based on a sense of place and a sense of heritage, and one which is arguably just as fragile.

Education + entertainment = edutainment.....

Studio tours have a long history beginning in the early Hollywood studio system. In the first decades of filmmaking, as the bulk of production shifted from New York to Hollywood, Universal was the first to monetise its studio; Carl Laemmle charged members of the public 25 cents per tour⁴⁸². Another early form of film tourism developed throughout the early years of Hollywood: studios would frequently construct permanent sets to re-use in a vast number of films, which attracted visitors from surrounding towns⁴⁸³. Warner Bros. also has a long

⁴⁸¹ Ibid.

⁴⁸² Clavé, *Global Theme Park Industry*, 16.

⁴⁸³ Warwick Frost, "From Backlot to Runaway Production: Exploring Location and Authenticity in Film-Induced Tourism," in *International Tourism and Media Conference Proceedings* eds. Sue Beeton, Glen Croy and Warwick Frost (Monash University, Australia, 2006), 70-8.

history of studio tours, beginning in the 1930s when President Jack Warner hosted private tours of the studio backlot for executives and shareholders. These were discontinued after several years but resurfaced in 1973 with the opening of the Tour Department⁴⁸⁴. In 2015, Warner Bros. unveiled the new re-branding of its Hollywood tour, entitled ‘Warner Bros. Studio Tour Hollywood’ – featuring the studio’s extensive backlot and a museum of props and artefacts, Stage 48⁴⁸⁵. The reconstruction of the Hollywood tour is particularly interesting because it was designed to unite its branding with its sister tour in the UK⁴⁸⁶.

Both Warner Bros. Studio Tours in Hollywood and London are a much sleeker, more commercialised experience than the studio tours of early Hollywood; in both cases, the studio presents a carefully managed lot with immaculately preserved sets and props from culturally significant productions in order to reinforce its branding and its status as a key international film and television distributor. Most of the current major studios offer tours of some description in California – Disney, Universal, Warner Bros. and Paramount in particular – and although these differ widely in form and style, their continued existence in Hollywood indicates their ongoing relevance for film tourism. The Warner Bros. Hollywood tours, for instance, offer an experience that purports to be educational regarding the reality of the film industry, and, due to its Los Angeles location, a central component is its access to locations in which famous productions were (and are) made. One of the key locations in the Warner Bros. Studio Tour Hollywood as of 2017 is the *Big Bang Theory* lot, in which the television show is filmed. Visitors are able to access the lot, which preserves several of the key sets and the audience seating used for filming⁴⁸⁷. Visitors are encouraged to examine the minutiae of the sets independently, replete with small details such as books, toys and games. The emphasis here is placed on the authenticity of the location as the ‘real’ place in which the production is made. Although features such as lighting rigs and cameras demonstrate the falseness of the in-show universe and overtly signal the fictional nature of the production, the tour experience nonetheless gains a sense of authenticity from these same features because it is the legitimate site in which the production took place.

Some studios offer tours more reminiscent of a theme park experience, however, in which the tour resembles a ride. Visitors at the Universal Studio Tour in Hollywood (which is

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁵ Robert Niles, "Warner Bros Goes After the Studio Tour Market Universal Left Behind," *Theme Park Insider*, July 16, 2015. Accessed September 25, 2018. <https://www.themeparkinsider.com/flume/201507/4656/>

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁷ Research gathered during a visit by the author in July 2017.

embedded within its California theme park, Universal Studios) travel on a cart which, at varying points throughout the tour, simulates falling over a rickety bridge, or being overcome by a tide of water, in order to ostensibly demonstrate practical special effects⁴⁸⁸. Arguably, these kinds of tours facilitate a film-like experience that reconstructs, as opposed to deconstructs, films. A studio tour at Universal Studios simulates the precipitous catastrophe of a cart wobbling over a bridge in order to immerse visitors in a filmic environment, blurring the conditions between fiction and reality; on the other hand, the Warner Bros. tours expose the conditions between fiction and reality by offering a superficial exploration of behind-the-scenes filmmaking, building a bridge between the two.

Interestingly, however, the ‘Warner Bros. Studio Tour, London: The Making of *Harry Potter*’ has arguably incorporated *both* education- and entertainment-based elements. As the previous section of this chapter explored, the Studio Tour in London is situated on the site in which *Potter* production took place, but it is not precisely the same site. Unlike the Warner Bros. Studio Tour Hollywood, then, which offers a tour around working film sets and specific environments, the *Harry Potter* version resembles a museum in which a number of sets, props and artefacts from the *Potter* films have been reassembled and recontextualised for public consumption. It is useful, therefore, to consider how the Studio Tour in London is structured as a museum that simultaneously incorporates a number of interactive and immersive exhibits. Museum studies scholarship has in recent decades been preoccupied with analysing the growing trend towards “edutainment”⁴⁸⁹, or the conflation of a museum’s ostensibly educational purpose with entertainment-based strategies for participation and engagement⁴⁹⁰. Scholars have suggested that the increasing use of more typically entertainment-based activities in museums – particularly by employing interactive technologies such as touch-screens, social media and games⁴⁹¹ – is a response to pressures on museums to increase attendance numbers in order to secure continual funding from donors and arts bodies. The Studio Tour, however, is a private attraction owned and operated by Warner Bros., and as a result its amalgamation of education and entertainment stems from

⁴⁸⁸ Research gathered during a visit by the author in July 2017.

⁴⁸⁹ Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and Education: Purpose, Pedagogy and Performance* (London: Routledge, 2007)

⁴⁹⁰ Michela Addis, "New Technologies and Cultural Consumption - Edutainment is Born!" *European Journal of Marketing* 39, no. 7 (2005): 729-36; Pierre Balloffet, et al., "From Museum to Amusement Park: The Opportunities and Risks of Edutainment," *International Journal of Arts Management* 16, no. 2 (Winter 2014): 4-18.

⁴⁹¹ George Lepouras, et al., "Virtual museums for all: employing game technology for edutainment," *Virtual Reality* 8, no. 2 (June 2004): 97.

different factors. As I will show, its museum structure enables the Tour to position the *Potter* films as venerable, culturally legitimate productions worthy of preservation, while its incorporation of entertainment-based elements draws on the richly detailed visual universe created by the film texts themselves as a means to emphasise their cultural value.

Alan Bryman uses a concept he calls “Disneyization” in order to interrogate what he reads as the thinning boundaries between entertainment and education in western cultural life⁴⁹². He defines the term as “the process by which the principles of the Disney theme parks are coming to dominate more and more sectors of American society as well as the rest of the world”⁴⁹³. Scholars such as Nadine M. Kalin have since applied this idea to museums to explain how such sites use theming “to maximize their allure to visitor/consumers as they advertise and present every new attraction as an experiential destination that promises to immerse visitors”⁴⁹⁴. Some commentary – including from academic and mainstream sources – has decried the perceived “Disneyization” of museums, with fears that museum curators have “swallowed Mickey's message, and are somehow sacrificing learning to make their exhibits palatable to an ever more demanding public”⁴⁹⁵. Kalin, however, asserts that museums and theme parks in fact have much in common at their core; she argues that both “have a history of trivializing culture, inequality, and conflict in representational practices that, by their very nature, involve simplification of or disregard for the complexities of the past and/or the present.”⁴⁹⁶ This notion that museums and theme parks, and the dual modes of entertainment and education that they represent, are not diacritically opposed is important here. As I explore in this chapter, the Studio Tour incorporates a mixture of traditional museum conventions alongside entertainment-led activities, and these arguably co-ordinate to emphasise the importance of preserving the *Potter* films.

If the Studio Tour’s purpose is to secure the *Potter* films’ legacy, then its formal structure is designed to maximise this. The Tour’s exhibits – the sets and props – are arranged separately around the space with the purpose of enabling visitors to look into them and examine minute details. This configuration frames the site as a museum; its corresponding educational potential, however, is established but arguably not fully realised. For instance, the Tour is largely unguided aside from the optional audio headsets, with plaques and boards

⁴⁹² Alan Bryman, “The Disneyization of Society,” *The Sociological Review* 47, no. 1 (February 1999): 26.

⁴⁹³ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁴ Kalin, “Disneyized Participation in the Art Museum,” 193.

⁴⁹⁵ Bethan Marshall, “That's edutainment!”, *The Independent*, September 19, 2006. Accessed September 25, 2018. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/thats-edutainment-1363993.html>

⁴⁹⁶ Kalin, “Disneyized Participation in the Art Museum,” 200.

operating as the primary means of providing information around the space. One significant example is an electronic touch-screen board in 'J' stage, which is designed as a graphic representation of the Marauders Map labelled with key Hogwarts locations. The locations on the screen – such as the Potions classroom, the Astronomy Tower, and the Prefects' bathroom - can be tapped by visitors in order to find out more information about their corresponding sets. These sets are not featured in the Studio Tour, so the electronic board ostensibly possesses educational value in enabling visitors to learn more about missing locations. This kind of interactive board is a significant example of edutainment at work, wherein information is imparted through new technologies and formats which encourage playful learning⁴⁹⁷. Interestingly, the educational nature of the electronic board is as limited as the traditional plaques elsewhere in the space: despite the intuitive Marauders' Map design, it is relatively empty of content, with pages largely consisting of a image from the *Potter* films alongside a few lines of text.

The plaques and boards in the Tour, then, tend to provide only superficial context. Instead, much of the attraction revolves around the spectacle of viewing the fully-recreated sets recognisable from the *Potter* films, or participating in interactive and immersive activities. These activities include green-screen rides on broomsticks or entering accessible sets such as Privet Drive or the Forbidden Forest. Interestingly, the number of immersive activities at the Studio Tour has increased over time between 2012-2017. When the attraction opened in 2012, only a few of the sets were designed to be physically accessible: the Great Hall, a powerful spectacle at the start; Diagon Alley, one of the centrepieces of the second half of the attraction; and the bridge across Hogwarts first featured in *Prisoner of Azkaban*, which visitors can walk across and use as a photo opportunity. In March 2015, however, the Hogwarts Express was installed as part of a recreation of Platform 9 ¾, and acts as the climactic element of 'J' stage. The original train used in film production, visitors can climb up into the structure and walk through a corridor, looking into a series of compartments. The seven compartments have been altered to display key props from each of the films, as opposed to being preserved as they were used in filming. The Privet Drive set, meanwhile, has been a feature since the opening of the Studio Tour in 2012, but remained merely a facade until May 2016, at which time the space became accessible to the public: the set features an accessible narrow corridor looking into a space resembling the Dursleys' living room, in which dozens of Hogwarts letters are suspended by minute cables from the ceiling,

⁴⁹⁷Lepouras, et al., "Virtual museums for all," 97.

as if frozen in a frame from *Philosopher's Stone*. Finally, the Forbidden Forest was added in March 2017, and the holistic spectacle it presents arguably demonstrates an even higher commitment to the immersive principle. Visitors progress through a corridor at the end of 'J' stage, entering into a dark space featuring climactic music from the *Potter* films and decorated with (artificial) trees and (artificial) bark underfoot. This is a markedly different environment from the rest of 'J' stage, a large warehouse that amalgamates many different sets and props but ordinarily uses rails or glass to clearly distance the visitor from the scene. Small groups are taken through the Forbidden Forest exhibit by a Tour employee, who pulls a lever to dim the lights, and spiders drop from the ceiling or lunge out from the shadows. The experience is bookended by plaques explaining some of the effects used in creating the Forbidden Forest, but the interactive space itself is devoted to provoking a visceral emotional response.

A move towards increasingly immersive and spectacular environments, then, is emblematic of the development of the Studio Tour. Other interactive activities dotted throughout the Studio Tour provide, like the 'Wizarding World' theme parks, opportunities to entertain visitors by recreating key scenes from the films, featuring visitors in the starring roles. (See Chapter 2.) For instance, in one section of 'J' stage, visitors can chant 'Up!' to levitate a broomstick, or take duelling lessons with a costumed employee. There are also various locations in which visitors are encouraged to purchase an official commemorative photo, such as at Platform 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ next to the Hogwarts Express. The purpose of these types of activities is to slot visitors into scenes from the films, fostering a sense of immersion in the filmic universe that is achieved through proximity to the 'authentic' sets from the *Potter* films. Nonetheless, many interactive activities also embody the dual functions of the Studio Tour: to entertain and to educate. For instance, the Tour offers a green-screen ride on a broom that provides information about how the cast and crew filmed the Quidditch scenes, or the opportunity to feature in a Wanted poster similar to those from *Prisoner of Azkaban*, which gives information regarding computer-generated imagery. It is this educational purpose which differentiates the Tour from a theme park, and offers the experience a sense of prestige and a different kind of authenticity to that which exists at the 'Wizarding World'. Despite the prevalence of interactive activities, meanwhile, the majority of the originary exhibits in 'J' stage remain cordoned-off behind fences and railings, reinforcing the impression of their status as museum artefacts. The meeting of Death Eaters at Malfoy Manor in *Deathly Hallows Part 1* is recreated in one corner of 'J' stage, but visitors are unable to join the table.

Snape's Potions classroom is reconstructed in painstaking detail, but ropes prevent visitors from touching any of the bottles and vials along the walls. This duality between immersion and preservation, between spectacle and production resources, between entertainment and education, between fiction and reality, defines the Studio Tour experience.

An ongoing dynamic between education and entertainment can be further witnessed in some of the exhibits in 'K' stage. Whereas 'J' stage is largely comprised of full sets and interactive activities, 'K' stage contains more references to behind-the-scenes production information (although it does also present some dramatic fully-formed sets, as I will discuss later in this chapter). The first room in 'K' stage is the Creature Workshop, featuring animatronic heads from goblins, dragons, and other magical creatures such as Buckbeak and Dobby. The room is designed to resemble a working studio with tools and half-finished artefacts positioned haphazardly throughout the space. Videos featuring Warwick Davis and various members of the crew explain how the creatures were made and how practical effects were used in the films. At several points, the Warwick Davis in the video pushes levers, which correspond with the physical environment at the Studio Tour, causing the model of Buckbeak to move its head, for instance, or the Hungarian Horntail dragon from *Goblet of Fire* to stand up. This emphasis on the importance of practical effects, which are intended to appear all the more impressive by their perceived invasion of the Studio Tour space, is a common theme not only in promotion of *Harry Potter* but in other fantastical films of the period. (Jonathan Gray, for instance, explores how the DVD box-sets of *Lord of the Rings* discuss practical effects as a means of establishing the value of the franchise⁴⁹⁸).

The set of Diagon Alley follows the Creature Workshop in 'K' stage. The set is designed to immediately evoke a sense of awe due to its colossal size, intricate prop design and minute architectural detail. This section of the Tour is significant on the one hand because it enables visitors to walk along the same cobbled streets seen in the eight films and glance into the windows of the shops. However, there are limits to its immersive capacity: the street is lined with metal railings preventing visitors from touching the set. The Diagon Alley of the Studio Tour is in some senses operating along similar lines to the Diagon Alley of the 'Wizarding World' theme parks as explored in Chapter 2; the attractions offer a holistically themed experience that enables visitors to situate themselves within the fictional universe of *Harry Potter*, or at least within the closest possible experience. Arguably, however, the set's

⁴⁹⁸Gray, "DVD Layering of the Lord of the Rings," 239.

significance in the Studio Tour should also be understood within the context of practical effects that was established by the Creature Workshop in the previous room. Because the layout of 'K' stage requires visitors to progress through each room uniformly, arguably the spectacle of Diagon Alley – as emphasised by the earlier Creature Workshop – can be read as a homage to the power and value of practical effects, set-building and traditional film production work. Situating the immersive set of Diagon Alley in 'K' stage also underlines its importance as an authentic environment: the iconic location from the *Potter* books and films was not rendered on a green-screen, or recreated later as in the 'Wizarding World' parks, but was physically constructed by film crews and is now accessible to visitors. The Diagon Alley set thus can be viewed as a demonstration of the power of film in producing magical environments. This emphasis on practical effects contributes to one of the aims of the Studio Tour: to show that the filmic world of *Harry Potter* can be real, and accessible, in specific and particular ways as dictated by the Studio Tour and by Warner Bros. In this instance, the role of practical effects in rendering the visual universe is emphasised in order to bridge the reality of film production and the fiction of the *Harry Potter* films, and the Studio Tour forms the paratextual gateway that makes such unification possible.

The Diagon Alley experience is bookended on one side with the Creature Shop, and on the other with a room of architects' drawings and three-dimensional models of sets such as Ottery St. Catchpole, the Burrow, and Hogwarts. This continues the thread of practical effects running through 'K' stage, the hand-crafted work this time suggesting the talent and depth of detail involved in the *Potter* productions. The values instilled by the Studio Tour culminate, however, in the model in the final room of the Tour: the Hogwarts Castle bigature. The colossal construction of Hogwarts is designed to evoke awe, beginning with the elevated entrance into the room which facilitates a panoramic view of the castle. The room has also been rigged with lighting equipment which fades into different colours, simulating different times of day. There are several plaques in the room, but the room's layout guides the visitor around a set path around the exhibit. The slope of the path ends with the visitor positioned below the castle, looking up at the towers.

Although the Studio Tour's structure does not follow the narrative of the film texts, or even the chronological process of film production, it still follows its own internal logic which is arguably brought full circle by the Hogwarts bigature at the close of the attraction. The Tour begins with the Great Hall, a colossal set that is designed to impress the scale and significance of *Harry Potter* filmmaking upon the visitor, setting expectations for the rest of

the attraction. The following sets in ‘J’ stage are smaller in scale, but replete with minute details; these self-enclosed, fully-recreated sets serve as a reminder of the holistic world represented on screen, enabling visitors to re-visit iconic elements of the filmic universe which have been transplanted into the Studio Tour space. If ‘J’ stage reconstructs *Potter* film sets and encourages an appreciation of their completed forms, ‘K’ stage then deconstructs those same sets, providing insight into how they were made in order to emphasise the talent and hard work involved from the production cast and crew. Value is thus shifted from representations of the fictional world (in ‘J’ stage) to the production resources themselves (in ‘K’ stage). The climax of the Studio Tour, the Hogwarts Castle bigature, leaves such a lasting impression because it represents a unification of two distinct forces – film text and film production – within one space. Hogwarts Castle embodies the craftsmanship of the crew members, the lasting legacy of the films’ visual universe, and the behemoth that is the *Harry Potter* franchise and its presence in global cultural consciousness.

The Studio Tour, then, combines its display of production resources with a reworking of the film texts, just as it combines its pedagogic aspirations with possibilities for entertainment. The educational nature of the Tour is established through its museum structure, utilising features such as plaques and cordoned-off exhibits to evoke a sense of prestige and cultural legitimacy. The fully-formed sets and props reinforce the notion that the *Potter* films are valuable cultural artefacts worthy of preservation; they also imbue the Studio Tour site with a sense of ‘authentic’ heritage, obscuring the fact that the exhibits have been removed from their original filming locations. The entertainment-led and interactive aspects of the Tour, meanwhile, offer ways of engaging with the film texts and the fictional world of *Harry Potter* that are rooted in spectacle and immersion. These two different functions serve to establish cultural and historical value for the franchise while simultaneously attempting to secure its longevity for the future. It can be said, then, that the Studio Tour does in part live up to its aspirations to “foster the film culture in the UK, particularly among the younger generations of filmgoers”, as Warner Bros. stated in their planning permission document.⁴⁹⁹ The Tour presents itself as a prestigious and culturally legitimate experience that ostensibly contrasts with more ‘low-brow’ entertainment such as theme parks: Adam Dawtry notes that Daniel Dark, senior vice president and managing director at Leavesden, claimed the Studio Tour’s “purpose is not to create illusions but to strip them away and reveal the skill behind

⁴⁹⁹ Warner Bros. Studios Leavesden, "Planning supporting statement," 10.

them”⁵⁰⁰. It is nonetheless the case, however, that the Studio Tour plays with illusions in similar ways to theme parks. As opposed to considering the Tour’s dual functions as operating in diacritic opposition with one another, however, it is more useful to understand them as interwoven elements of the attraction’s identity. The Studio Tour works to secure the legacy of the *Harry Potter* films by encouraging an appreciation of not only the production resources but the visual universe of the film texts. The following section will go on to examine how opportunities for consumerist behaviour are woven into this experience.

Consumerism: “We’ll take the lot!”.....

As this chapter has explored so far, the main body of the Studio Tour experience is dedicated to providing a tourist attraction that combines a display of filmmaking production resources with interactive and educational exhibits. The sale of goods forms another indelible part of the experience, however, although the Tour largely seeks to obscure these commercial opportunities, or else embed them within its structure. As I explored earlier, the Studio Tour co-opts authenticity from its museum structure and its geographical location, but, as the rest of this chapter will demonstrate, consumerism – particularly in the form of themed merchandising and shops that are embedded within the experience – also plays an important role in facilitating the Tour experience.

Jamie Larkin notes that shops have “become increasingly ubiquitous” at museums and similar tourist attractions, claiming that for many sites this has “been spurred largely by economic concerns, as institutions attempt to navigate a volatile funding climate by developing self-generated revenue.”⁵⁰¹ Although many museums rely on merchandising as a commercial strategy to secure financial income from donors or funding bodies⁵⁰², the Studio Tour operates “outside of traditional state funding mechanisms”⁵⁰³ because of its relationship with Warner Bros. As the studio states in their planning permission document for the development of Leavesden, “[The Studio Tour] is an essential element of Warner Bros.’ requirements, given that it is one of a very small number of film companies that own and

⁵⁰⁰ Adam Dawtrey, "Warners schools visitors on Hogwarts sets."

⁵⁰¹ Jamie Larkin, "'All Museums Will Become Department Stores': The Development and Implications of Retailing at Museums and Heritage Sites," *Archaeology International* 19 (2016), 109.

⁵⁰² Stefan Toepler, et al., "Museums, Merchandising, and Nonprofit Commercialization," ResearchGate (2002).PDF. Accessed on September 25, 2018. 4.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/319968491_MUSEUMS_MERCHANDISING_AND_NONPROFIT_COMMERCIALIZATION

⁵⁰³ Larkin, "'All Museums Will Become Department Stores,'" 114.

operate its own studios.”⁵⁰⁴ The opportunities for consumption that the Studio Tour provides are particularly significant to consider, then, because the attraction is one segment of the wider, globally successful *Harry Potter* franchise; and, indeed, the franchise is owned and promoted by a media conglomerate that strategically and aggressively monetises its products transmedially across global markets. Although the drive for profit is one way of understanding the prevalence of merchandising at the Studio Tour, I will also explore how merchandising is often woven into the fabric of the Tour, with commercial locations “marketed as attractions in their own right”⁵⁰⁵. As a result, it can be argued that shopping opportunities contribute as much to the identity of the Studio Tour as the rest of its activities, and are consequently as important to consider⁵⁰⁶. The two key examples that this chapter will examine are the post-attraction gift shop – the quintessential museum merchandising location – and the ‘Railway Shop’ situated mid-way through the Tour at the set of Platform 9 ¾, which utilises theming to significant effect.

The attraction’s largest retail outlet, a large shop at the end of the Tour, requires visitors to pass through it upon exiting, akin to the post-ride shop at a theme park. This shop displays a wide range of purchaseable items – from mugs, t-shirts, sweets and keyrings to jewellery, replicas, wands, and broomsticks. A significant section is dedicated to expensive jewellery and replica artefacts from the films, such as Slytherin’s locket or a Time-Turner necklace. These items are often displayed in glass boxes, and, in addition to being laid on small cushions or velvet lining, are accompanied by miscellaneous trinkets – such as magnifying glasses, pocket watches and old books – which are decorative and are often dusty, golden, and slightly rusted. These artificially aged trinkets are arguably designed to further instil the merchandise with a sense of historical value by association. Glass boxes are commonly used in museums and heritage sites to preserve items, but also to communicate their historical and cultural value⁵⁰⁷. In the Studio Tour shop, the use of glass boxes to display merchandise is significant in part because it suggests that those replicas possess value and prestige. This is made possible by the proximity of the merchandise to the Studio Tour environment: if the Studio Tour is imbued with prestige through its presentation of ‘authentic’ filmmaking resources, this value is then transferred onto the products on sale in the shop – because, crucially, these products appear identical in appearance and presentation

⁵⁰⁴ Warner Bros. Studios Leavesden, "Planning supporting statement," 13.

⁵⁰⁵ Larkin, "'All Museums Will Become Department Stores,'" 109.

⁵⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 110.

⁵⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 115.

to those props on display in the attraction proper. There is clearly a connection that the shop seeks to forge here between the ‘authentic’ sets and props in the tour and the merchandise available in the shop. In order to possess an artefact that resembles something from the world of *Harry Potter*, consumption is required; that is, the bridge between fiction and reality that the shop embodies is underpinned by the act of consumption.

Purchasing these replicas also functions as a means for visitors to retain a physical reminder of the Studio Tour experience⁵⁰⁸. Scholarship in material cultural studies has addressed the role of souvenirs in communicating identity and forming “part of [tourists’] constructions of self, part of their own individual projects of self-creation”⁵⁰⁹. Souvenirs from the Tour are particularly significant because they can be perceived to originate at the site of the films’ production, marking them with an authenticity tied up in geographical specificity and proximity to production resources. If, as Amy Gazin-Schwartz says, “for tourists, the shop provides not education but an experience that links sightseeing, and also the ... sites being seen, to their own world, a world that is in many ways constructed by commerce and consumerism”⁵¹⁰, then this reinforces the notion that the replicas on sale at the Studio Tour are designed, through the act of consumption, to bridge a gap between reality and the fictional world of the *Harry Potter* films.

Consumption is clearly a significant feature in the Studio Tour, then, and it manifests in ways that offer interesting parallels and contrasts to the ‘Wizarding World’ theme parks. As Chapter 2 explored, the theme parks seek to reconstruct locations from the *Potter* films and present them as real and physically inhabitable spaces, offering minutely detailed, immersive environments that appear to be authentic replicas of their filmic counterparts. Consumerism is a vital aspect of the ‘Wizarding World’: the theme parks recreate magical shopping locations Diagon Alley and Hogsmeade, and each shop in the ‘Wizarding World’ offers intensely themed merchandise; Madame Malkins’ Robes for All Occasions sells predominantly apparel, for instance. The Studio Tour’s approach to merchandising has arguably come increasingly to mirror the ‘Wizarding World’ parks in terms of theming its retail locations: in March 2015, a recreated set of Platform 9 ¾ was opened to the public, also featuring a ‘Railway Shop’ selling themed merchandise revolving around the Hogwarts

⁵⁰⁸Clavé, *Global Theme Park Industry*, 383.

⁵⁰⁹Nigel Morgan, et al., "On Souvenirs and Metonymy: Narratives of Memory, Metaphor and Materiality," *Tourist Studies* 5, no. 1 (2005): 34.

⁵¹⁰Amy Gazin-Schwartz, "Mementos of the Past: Material Culture of Tourism at Stonehenge and Avebury," in Yorke Rowan and Uzi Baram, eds., *Marketing Heritage: Archaeology and the Consumption of the Past* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), 100.

Express. The shop also features exclusive items which are not available in any other stores worldwide. These are themed with the ‘Hogwarts Railways’ insignia; examples include apparel, stationery, games, toys, jewellery, train models, and keyrings. Access to the specific exclusive items is therefore dependent on geographical location (the ability to travel to Watford, UK), and financial constraints (paying the Studio Tour’s entrance fee).

The exclusivity of the ‘Railway Shop’ arguably adds a sense of prestige to the items on sale and contributes to the shaping of the Studio Tour’s identity. The offer of exclusive *Harry Potter* merchandise reinforces the significance of the Tour: as the only site in which to purchase particular items, it is not only those products that are special and exclusive, but the location itself. The ‘Railway Shop’ also represents an exclusive opportunity for visitors to engage with the *Potter* world by purchasing a one-off product. If consumer goods “fulfil the dual function of satisfying socially defined needs and ‘materializing’ cultural distinctions”⁵¹¹, these exclusive souvenirs act as markers of self-identity, or membership to an ‘inside club’, for those who purchase them and impresses upon visitors the significance of the Tour as a site that enables unprecedented access to the franchise and its fictional world. The exclusivity of the ‘Railway Shop’ is also significant because it chimes with similar strategies developing throughout the wider *Potter* franchise since the end of the books and films. Pottermore 2.0 (see Chapter 1), for instance, operates as an exclusive hub of *Potter* content and news because of its association with J.K. Rowling. The stage-play *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* also plays heavily on the concept of exclusivity – its marketing instructs audiences to “Keep the Secrets” and sanctifies the site of the theatrical production as the ideal means of accessing the *Potter* sequel. Exclusivity in *Cursed Child* will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 5, but it bears mentioning that the Studio Tour and *Cursed Child* here employ the notion of exclusivity to a similar purpose: to emphasise the importance of physical sites in perpetuating the legacy of the *Harry Potter* franchise. In terms of inciting consumption, exclusive merchandise is a similar feature amongst other *Potter* shops, including at Platform 9 ¾ in King’s Cross station and the ‘Wizarding World’ parks as well.

The exclusive items at the Tour are, for the most part, emblazoned with a ‘Hogwarts Railways’ insignia. This draws parallels with the *Harry Potter* shop at King’s Cross station in London, which features products bearing a ‘Platform 9 ¾’ logo. Unlike Platform 9 ¾, however, ‘Hogwarts Railways’ is not part of the pre-existing fabric of the magical universe,

⁵¹¹Morgan, et al., “On Souvenirs and Metonymy,” 33-4.

and is instead a newly-constructed brand for the Studio Tour and a new generation of products. Indeed, the presence of the Railway Shop complicates the Tour's ostensible function as a display of production resources because the shop was not a part of the original Platform 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ set. As a result, its presence in the Studio Tour highlights the artifice involved in the attraction's dislocation and rearrangement of sets from the locations in which they were originally built and used. It thus reveals a disparity between the reality of the Tour and the fantasy of the fictional universe: the 'Railway Shop' does not exist on the platform in which Harry and his friends boarded the Hogwarts Express in any of the films, but the Tour makes changes to the Platform 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ set to superimpose the shop onto it. Consequently, the shop can be said to "suffer in relation to the cachet of the 'authentic' objects" alongside it⁵¹². Conversely, however, although the presence of the 'authentic' Hogwarts Express draws attention to the 'Railway Shop' as an inauthentic commercial location, the shop's Platform 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ theming also works to soften the impact of its insertion into the museum environment. This theming strategy works to naturalise the act of consumption⁵¹³, a strategy frequently used in theme parks. (See Chapter 2.)

The Hogwarts Express, in the *Potter* texts, is a train that travels between King's Cross, a Muggle location, and Hogwarts, a magical one, and thus represents the bridging of two separate worlds. As I explored earlier, the interweaving of wizard and Muggle spaces is a key motif within the *Harry Potter* texts, and it works to similar effect in the Studio Tour. 12 Grimmauld Place, a safehouse for Harry and his allies, exists on a perfectly ordinary London street, but becomes visible through the magical enchantment of a Secret-Keeper. The Knight Bus transports witches and wizards to any location throughout Britain at illogical speeds, but navigates existing motorways and roads. In the *Half-Blood Prince* film, Harry reads a newspaper (with moving pictures) at a train station cafe; when a train has hurtled through the station, Dumbledore appears on the opposite platform. The Hogwarts Express, then, literally travels from one station to another as a site of transition between real and magical worlds; but, figuratively, the train also acts as a motif for bridging even broader ideas. When Harry is subjected to the killing spell in *Deathly Hallows*, he meets Dumbledore in a spectral version of Platform 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ and is faced with the decision whether to "board a train" – to cross between life and death⁵¹⁴. Voldemort is, in this dream-sequence, depicted as a deformed baby huddled

⁵¹²Larkin, "All Museums Will Become Department Stores," 110.

⁵¹³Clavé, *Global Theme Park Industry*, 34.

⁵¹⁴J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (London: Bloomsbury, 2007), 578.

on the platform, someone who is neither alive nor dead. Platform 9 ¾ therefore provides a transition between worlds, or brings conventionally separate worlds closer together.

Platform 9 ¾ and the Hogwarts Express have been appropriated in numerous ways by Warner Bros. for merchandising and revenue purposes. In addition to the ‘Railway Shop’ at the Studio Tour, a ‘Platform 9 ¾’ shop opened at King’s Cross station in London in 2015, as I mentioned earlier; plans for it had been incorporated into the multi-million-pound renovation of the station which concluded that same year⁵¹⁵. The King’s Cross shop features a wide range of products, many emblazoned with a ‘Platform 9 ¾’ logo, in addition to souvenirs such as jewellery, mugs, apparel, books, and keyrings. King’s Cross station also features a ‘Platform 9 ¾’ sign next to the shop, complete with half a trolley emerging from the wall. This area has been monetised by the shop: tourists are organised into a queue, and their photograph taken by an employee – with visitors encouraged to purchase the photograph at the shop next door. The ‘Wizards World’ theme parks in Florida, too, monetise King’s Cross: as Chapter 2 discussed, visitors can travel on a replica of Hogwarts Express between Hogsmeade and Diagon Alley, turning the journey into a ride. To perform this journey, visitors are required to purchase a ‘Wizards World’-specific ticket that is more expensive than a regular ticket.

The train, then, has been stretched beyond merely a textual symbol and translated into a successful licensing tool. Why is the Hogwarts Express – and King’s Cross, and Platform 9 ¾ – such a fertile site for consumer activity across the *Harry Potter* franchise? Arguably, it is the station’s enduring thematic significance as a site of transition that holds the key to understanding this phenomenon. As the previous section asserted, the Studio Tour and the Hogwarts Castle bigature bridge the art of filmmaking and the fictional world of the *Potter* films, offering exclusive insight into both. The Hogwarts Express similarly emphasises the proximity between the magical and real worlds. Unlike the ‘Wizards World’ theme parks, which seek to erase the lines between the real and fictional, the Studio Tour acknowledges and incorporates both ‘worlds’ into its structure, emphasising the idea that the two are not so far apart after all. The Platform 9 ¾ set is ideal for expressing this notion, and the ‘Railway Shop’ provides an opportunity to take home exclusive souvenirs that facilitate a proximity

⁵¹⁵ Gwyn Topham, "Five-year £500m redevelopment of King's Cross station almost complete," *The Guardian*, March 14, 2012. Accessed September 25, 2018. <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2012/mar/14/five-year-redevelopment-kings-cross-station>

with the fictional universe, bridging that same gap between the real and the fictional – and, crucially, this is effected through the act of consumption.

As this chapter has shown, merchandising efforts form a crucial part of the Studio Tour experience, in large part because of the opportunities to make money from the phenomenally successful *Harry Potter* franchise. The shop at the end of the attraction offers a holistic range of merchandise, most notably its authentic replicas that project legitimacy and value due to their visual proximity to the sets and props seen within the Studio Tour. On the other hand, the ‘Railway Shop’ themes its merchandise around its location within the Platform 9 ¾ set in the Studio Tour, which serves to naturalise the act of consumption⁵¹⁶. Some of the merchandise at the ‘Railway Shop’ is exclusive, which not only reflects a key theme in the original *Harry Potter* texts (see Chapter 5) but a recurring strategy in post-*Potter* products such as Pottermore and *Cursed Child*. Within the *Potter* texts, the Hogwarts Express (and Platform 9 ¾) is important because it bridges two worlds – the real and the fictional. Within the Studio Tour, the ‘Railway Shop’ operates on a similar level. Taking home a souvenir facilitates a proximity with the fictional universe, with the act of consumption enabling the visitor to re-enact their own kind of magical transformative experience that Harry Potter himself has in the wizarding world.

Conclusion.....

This chapter has sought to evaluate the strategies employed by the Studio Tour in securing the longevity of the *Harry Potter* films. The Tour is a paratext that, like the ‘Wizarding World’ theme parks in Chapter 2, is transparently dedicated to supporting the *Potter* films in particular, and to promoting them as valuable cultural artefacts. This is due in large part to Warner Bros.’ involvement with the project; the Studio Tour formed an “essential” part of Warner Bros.’ plans to develop Leavesden⁵¹⁷, arguably because the Tour monetises the site and ensures financial viability for Warner Bros.’ efforts in leading the UK film industry.

As I have shown, the Studio Tour co-opts a sense of authenticity from the history of the Leavesden site next door. For this reason it can be understood as a local film tourism site, but, crucially, the Tour is nonetheless an inorganic purpose-built environment that is

⁵¹⁶Clavé, *Global Theme Park Industry*, 34.

⁵¹⁷ Warner Bros. Studios Leavesden, "Planning supporting statement," 13.

simultaneously geographically specific and ageographical. On the one hand, it is framed by its context within the history of Leavesden, but, on the other, the Tour reflects very little on the realities of film production at the studio or indeed in Britain as a whole. Instead, its museum structure and its interactive environments seek to produce an entirely separate world governed by an internal logic dictated by Warner Bros. This is achieved firstly by encouraging an engagement with the visual universe of the *Harry Potter* films through its fully-formed sets and interactive activities (in ‘J’ hangar), and then moving on to deconstruct those sets (in ‘K’ hangar) to foster an appreciation of the artistry and value of the production resources that enabled the filmic universe to exist.

The Studio Tour is also characterised by a duality between education and entertainment. As I have argued, however, in the Tour, education and entertainment work in tandem to promote the cultural and commercial value of *Harry Potter*. This chapter has attempted to demonstrate that the Studio Tour is defined by various dualities and apparent contradictions: between production resources and discrete film texts, education and entertainment, and fiction and reality. The Studio Tour, and various elements within it – such as the Hogwarts Castle bigature and the retail locations – act as the bridge between these conventionally disparate forces. The final section of this chapter discussed how consumerism manifests in the Studio Tour, returning to concepts of theming that I first discussed in Chapter 2, and tying in opportunities for consumerism with themes that already exist in the *Potter* texts – in this case, exclusivity, which returns again in Chapter 5, and the recurring notion of duality between two worlds.

Chapter Four

Fantastic Beasts: A Corporate Beast?

Fantastic Beasts is the first blockbuster film set in the *Harry Potter* universe following the end of the eight Warner Bros. productions in 2011. It is also the first film that departs from the traditional *Potter* story arc: not only does it feature new characters and settings, but, unlike its film predecessors, which were adaptations of best-selling books, it is an original story. (As this chapter will demonstrate, *Fantastic Beasts* takes its name from a preceding book, and in some ways it mirrors the style of that book, but it is not a straightforward adaptation in the same sense as the *Potter* films.) This departure from the phenomenally successful *Harry Potter* series indicates what this chapter will argue is a turning-point in the direction of the ‘Wizarding World’ franchise: *Fantastic Beasts* is most overtly a world-building initiative, and the film acts as a point of transition from a franchise revolving around *Harry Potter* towards a more open-universe, expandable “Wizarding World”.

Both the production context in which *Fantastic Beasts* emerged and the qualities of the film text reflect the film’s position on the precipice of a new strategy for Warner Bros. and J.K. Rowling. In particular, the industrial context for the film is – despite only a five-year gap between *Deathly Hallows Part 2* and *Fantastic Beasts* – significantly different to that of the *Potter* films. *Harry Potter* dominated box offices worldwide from 2001-11, forming the vanguard of a wider change in the entertainment industry towards an intensified focus on high-budget, low-risk franchise serial blockbusters. Production costs rose much higher than in any previous decades of Hollywood, but the financial rewards were potentially much greater⁵¹⁸. With its regular release schedules and phenomenally successful books, *Harry Potter* was a perfect vehicle for this strategy. *Fantastic Beasts*, however, was released in a different climate, in which the most successful franchising models – from Marvel and Lucasfilm in particular – followed intensely transmedial world-building strategies and created detailed worlds featuring new characters and settings.

Because *Fantastic Beasts* is a successor to *Harry Potter* (despite being a prequel), the film cannot be understood without considering its complex relationship to its predecessor. As this chapter will demonstrate, *Fantastic Beasts* has been produced in order to diversify the

⁵¹⁸ Balio, *Hollywood in the New Millennium*, 25.

‘Wizards World’ and provide a springboard for further world-building, but in achieving this it is nonetheless reliant on *Potter* for its identity. As a film text, it seeks to branch out from its roots in the *Harry Potter* universe, while repurposing familiar lore and tropes from the phenomenally successful series. Additionally, the film engages with its direct source text – the *Fantastic Beast and Where to Find Them* book published in 2001 by Rowling for the Comic Relief charity – in ways that similarly reflect its nature as a more volatile franchising text. Although the film of the same name, produced 15 years later, invents its own plot, story and setting, this chapter will examine how *Fantastic Beasts*’ past – as a fictional guidebook and as a real published book – complicates its textual present.

In mapping *Fantastic Beasts*’ relationship with both *Harry Potter* and the Hollywood environment of the late 2010s, this chapter will be in large part preoccupied with understanding what *Fantastic Beasts* is, why Warner Bros. and J.K. Rowling sought to produce it, and how this reflects the contemporary media environment in which it was produced. The chapter will begin with a consideration of the production context of *Fantastic Beasts*, tracing its history from charity book to blockbuster film, with particular reference to the industrial context in which the film emerged. This will include an examination of Rowling’s evolving role within the franchise, with special emphasis on her role as screenwriter and active franchising engineer in *Fantastic Beasts*. Next, I will analyse the film text itself, unpicking firstly its unconventional relationship to traditional forms of adaptation, and secondly its key narrative, setting and character choices, considering how these elements seek to echo – or, conversely, diverge from – the *Harry Potter* franchise. As Clare Parody notes, franchise fiction tends to be “a balance of familiarity and novelty”⁵¹⁹, which this chapter argues is crucial for understanding the production of *Fantastic Beasts*, where the ghost of *Harry Potter* is always present even as the franchise attempts to expand in new directions. Although the film develops its own original story, the book of *Fantastic Beasts* is, this chapter argues, eminently suited to franchise adaptation because its history as a guidebook embodies the principles of franchise storytelling. A vestige of this format is retained in the film version, stamping the film text with an imprint of its function as a franchising tool. Finally, the chapter will close on some analysis of the film’s reception, using box office statistics and critics’ reviews in order to consider how the film has been framed since its release.

⁵¹⁹ Parody, “Franchising/Adaptation,” 211.

From guidebook to tentpole.....

Fantastic Beasts has undergone a transformative textual journey since its inception in 2001. It began as a book written by Rowling and published for charity, which existed in relative obscurity until Warner Bros., who owned the rights to adapt the book, produced a film of the same name in 2016. Although the conditions in which the book and film were produced are quite different, they nonetheless bear some similarities, as this section will demonstrate. For instance, both the books and the films are preoccupied with commercial concerns, although, interestingly, they both try to obscure these concerns through world-building elements. Also, Rowling remains a creative figure for both the *Fantastic Beasts* book and film, albeit in a more overtly promotional and collaborative role for the 2016 film than she ever did for the 2001 book. As this section will explore, her brand name provides legitimacy and marketability to the new franchise, but this transfiguration of her authorship arguably leaves that authority more susceptible to challenge.

In 2001, J.K. Rowling published two small volumes of writing and pledged that all profits from their sales would be donated to the UK-based charitable organisation Comic Relief⁵²⁰. The two books, *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* and *Quidditch Through the Ages*, originated as textual artefacts in the wizarding universe of the *Harry Potter* books: they are school textbooks, mentioned in passing, that Harry and his friends use in their first year at Hogwarts. To this end, both published texts contain features that are designed to superficially resemble magical books. For instance, *Fantastic Beasts* is attributed to an author named Newt Scamander, costs “14 Sickles and three Knuts”, features a blurb and foreword from Albus Dumbledore, and is published by Obscurus Books⁵²¹. Furthermore, the pages inside the books are inscribed with annotations and graffiti ostensibly by Harry, Ron and Hermione. Elizabeth Teare reads these ‘magical’ alterations to traditional publishing markers as “gently satiric” of the contemporary publishing industry and the commodification of book culture⁵²². Although this reading has credence – the design of the books enables the wizarding world to impinge upon traditional publishing conventions and playfully subvert them, making the banal magical – there is nonetheless a distinct commerciality to *Fantastic Beasts* and *Quidditch through the Ages*, which arguably these magical features serve to

⁵²⁰ "The history of Comic Relief," *Comic Relief*, accessed September 25, 2018.

<https://www.comicrelief.com/about-comic-relief/history>

⁵²¹ J.K. Rowling, *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* (London: Bloomsbury, 2001)

⁵²² Elizabeth Teare, “Harry Potter and the Technology of Magic,” in *The Ivory Tower and Harry Potter: Perspectives on a Literary Phenomenon*, ed. Lana A. Whited (University of Missouri Press: Missouri, 2002), 342.

obscure. The books' status as mass-produced consumer products is most obviously made manifest in their design. Flourish & Blotts, the shop in which Harry buys textbooks such as *Fantastic Beasts*, is said in *Philosopher's Stone* to contain "books as large as paving stones bound in leather; books the size of postage stamps in covers of silk; books full of peculiar symbols"⁵²³. Unlike these, the published versions of *Fantastic Beasts* and *Quidditch Through the Ages* are small, thin tomes that look more like they would come free with a copy of the newspaper than be found on the shelves in Flourish & Blotts. (See Appendix 1, Figure 9.) Also, despite playful features such as Newt Scamander's attribution as the author and the price in wizarding currency, the books nonetheless conform to publishing standards: Rowling's name also sits on the cover; the book contains common paratextual features such as ISBN numbers and barcodes; it is published "in association with Bloomsbury"; and the actual price is listed alongside the Sickles and Knuts. (See Appendix 1, Figure 10.)

Largely, the appeal of these books is generated by their supposedly magical features, which enable the books to transcend their otherwise basic presentation by making material minute aspects of the wizarding world. Crucially, however, the immersive potential of this materiality is made possible through the act of consumption; of purchasing the books. The books' commercial underpinnings are obscured by their association with the act of charitable donation, but it is nonetheless the case that the *Fantastic Beasts* book is preoccupied with consumer culture: it is why so many of the magical features are concerned with subverting publishing industry conventions. This echoes discussions in Chapters 2 and 3 where I explored how the *Potter* texts interact with consumer-capitalist culture in complicated and occasionally inconsistent ways. This engagement with consumerism is important to note here because, as this chapter will demonstrate, *Fantastic Beasts* retains an uneasy relationship with commerciality throughout its history – especially when it seeks to obscure the influence of corporate and commercial forces driving it – and this relationship becomes even more significant as the charitable book is co-opted as a franchising tool.

The positioning of *Fantastic Beasts* and *Quidditch Through the Ages* as charitable objects also enhances Rowling's status as a benevolent philanthropist. As Chapter 1 of this thesis explores, in the early years of *Harry Potter*, the narrative surrounding Rowling's life claimed that the author succeeded despite adversity, transforming herself from poverty-

⁵²³J.K. Rowling, *Philosopher's Stone*, 62.

stricken to financially successful through her own talent and hard work⁵²⁴. Furthermore, her celebrity brand was framed by the pervasive cultural belief that the books had produced a generation of child readers⁵²⁵ and her founding of anti-orphanage charity Lumos. The charity publications *Fantastic Beasts* and *Quidditch Through the Ages* circulated within this cultural milieu and contributed to a growing sense of Rowling's authorial persona as the saviour of children. These books, however, are also notable for being the first examples of Rowling's willingness to expand the *Harry Potter* universe through supplementary spin-off material. Viewed retrospectively, the charity books can be seen as the beginning stages of a developing strategy within the *Harry Potter* franchise towards transmedia world-building. Later developments in this arena are much more marked, such as J.K. Rowling's prolific use of Twitter to add extratextual *Potter* information, or her publication of 'History of Magic in North America' on Pottermore (see Chapter 1 and later in this chapter), but arguably this strategy is built upon the foundations first established by the two spin-off charity books. *Fantastic Beasts* and *Quidditch through the Ages* demonstrate the value of the wizarding world as a mineable resource for new media and products, and they position Rowling as an author in sole control of publishing new information within the series, a trend which continues to this day through her involvement with *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*, Pottermore, and the *Fantastic Beasts* film series.

Although the charity books contributed little to *Harry Potter* lore for over a decade following their publication, *Fantastic Beasts* was thrust into the spotlight in September 2013. Two years after the release of *Deathly Hallows Part 2*, Warner Bros. announced that *Fantastic Beasts* would be a "spin-off" blockbuster film with J.K. Rowling acting as screenwriter⁵²⁶. Rowling promoted the film in the same statement; she was quoted as saying:

"Although it will be set in the worldwide community of witches and wizards where I was so happy for 17 years, 'Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them' is neither a prequel nor a sequel to the Harry Potter series, but an extension of the wizarding world."⁵²⁷

From the outset, then, *Fantastic Beasts* was explicitly situated as a world-building text and simultaneously distanced from *Harry Potter* through its definition as an "extension of the

⁵²⁴Reynolds, "\$100,000 Success Story for Penniless Mother."

⁵²⁵Smith, "Potter's magic spell turns boys into bookworms."

⁵²⁶Michael Rosser, "Warner Bros, JK Rowling team for Harry Potter spin-off series," *Screen International*, September 12, 2013. Accessed September 25,

2018. ProQuest. <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1440852212/CF13255D5A994DC5PQ/2>

⁵²⁷ Ibid.

wizarding world”⁵²⁸. Rowling also positions herself centrally within the *Fantastic Beasts* development narrative:

"It all started when Warner Bros. came to me with the suggestion of turning 'Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them' into a film. I thought it was a fun idea, but the idea of seeing Newt Scamander, the supposed author of 'Fantastic Beasts,' realized by another writer was difficult.

Having lived for so long in my fictional universe, I feel very protective of it and I already knew a lot about Newt. ...

As I considered Warners' proposal, an idea took shape that I couldn't dislodge. That is how I ended up pitching my own idea for a film to Warner Bros.”⁵²⁹

This quotation is revealing in terms of understanding how she and Warner Bros. seek to reinforce Rowling's perceived authority over the *Harry Potter* textual universe and perpetuate that authority into the next generation of *Potter*-themed content. Agency is ascribed to Rowling, who supposedly pitches her own idea and whose ingenuity and imagination, it is implied, persuades the company to create another global blockbuster franchise. (As commentators such as Ben Fritz have noted, Warner Bros. had in fact been keen to develop new content in the *Potter* world since the end of the films in 2011⁵³⁰.) Through this statement, Warner Bros. is relegated to the role of facilitator of Rowling's vision, with the further implication that she is capable of tempering and ameliorating the corporate ambitions of the studio (“Warner Bros. came to me with the suggestion of turning [Fantastic Beasts] into a film”). Simultaneously, Rowling acknowledges that she feels “protective” of what she claims is *her* fictional universe, blurring the lines between the books and films and emphasising her claim to sole creative authority.

It is interesting, then, that the statement also concedes that the project is a collaborative effort. Rowling also says:

"I particularly want to thank Kevin Tsujihara of Warner Bros. for his support in this project, which would not have happened without him. I always said that I would only revisit the wizarding world if I had an idea that I was really excited about and this is it.”⁵³¹

⁵²⁸ Ibid.

⁵²⁹ Ibid.

⁵³⁰ Ben Fritz, "J.K. Rowling to Write New Potter-Inspired Movie," *Wall Street Journal*, September 12, 2013. Accessed October 7, 2018. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/jk-rowling-to-write-new-potter-inspired-movie-1378993264>

⁵³¹ Michael Rosser, "Warner Bros, JK Rowling team for Harry Potter spin-off series.”

A further quotation from Tsujihara in the same statement emphasises Rowling's centrality and significance, but simultaneously positions Warner Bros. as a corporate *partner* in this endeavour:

"We are incredibly honored that Jo has chosen to partner with Warner Bros. on this exciting new exploration of the world of wizardry which has been tremendously successful across all of our businesses.

She is an extraordinary writer, who ignited a reading revolution around the world, which then became an unprecedented film phenomenon. We know that audiences will be as excited as we are to see what her brilliant and boundless imagination conjures up for us."⁵³²

Here, Rowling has "chosen" to partner with Warner Bros., despite the fact that the studio owned the rights to adapt the *Fantastic Beasts* book, and the quotation pays careful homage to myths surrounding Rowling's biography in the form of a *Potter*-inspired "reading revolution" and the author's "brilliant and boundless imagination". This is subsequently linked to Warner Bros.' "film phenomenon": the statement is careful to emphasise Rowling's responsibility for the franchise's success, while also signalling Warner Bros.' involvement therein ("... has been tremendously successful across all of our businesses"⁵³³). The partnership between J.K. Rowling and Warner Bros. is long in the making by this point, of course; it was founded when the film rights were sold to Warner Bros. in 1999, and the film studio has a long history of co-opting Rowling to attach prestige and authenticity to the *Potter* films. Here, though, the connection between the two brands is more explicit, which marks a turning-point in the development of the "Wizarding World" franchise. Rowling is positioned centrally because of her authorial history with *Harry Potter* and her screenwriter role for *Fantastic Beasts*; but, as this chapter will explore, this emphasis on her authorial presence is arguably also required in order to shore up a less stable text possessing less cultural value.

Ben Fritz, writing for the *Wall Street Journal*, speculates that it was important for Kevin Tsujihara to increase friendly relations with Rowling following the end of the *Potter* films, with pressure to broker a deal for *Fantastic Beasts* in order to develop more heavyweight franchising properties⁵³⁴. Tsujihara took over Warner Bros. in 2012 after previous CEO Alan Horn departed for Disney; until that point, Horn had held a privileged

⁵³²Ibid.

⁵³³Ibid.

⁵³⁴Fritz, "J.K. Rowling to Write New Potter-Inspired Movie."

relationship with Rowling and had helmed the *Harry Potter* film franchise from its inception. In the early 2000s, Warner Bros., under Horn, had committed to a model of franchising which prioritised big-budget tentpoles that could easily spawn sequels. Faced with declining cinema audience numbers, Hollywood had become more risk-averse, pinning more money on fewer productions. These productions – blockbuster event movies – would commonly feature “high concept” plotlines following established, easily communicable trajectories⁵³⁵. As Tino Balio notes, Hollywood had followed a similar franchising model for decades, but the early 2000s was marked by an “intensity of implementation” never before seen in the film industry⁵³⁶. Warner Bros. led this development with serial productions *Harry Potter*, *Lord of the Rings*, and Christopher Nolan’s *Batman*; Alan Horn himself claimed that he wanted to turn the studio into a “franchise factory”⁵³⁷. Blockbuster franchises from other leading studios also succeeded during this period in Hollywood history – notably *Star Wars* from Lucasfilm/Twentieth Century Fox and *Pirates of the Caribbean* (2001—) from Disney – but it was Warner Bros. who emerged as the frontrunner in terms of cultural, commercial and critical success.

In the second decade of the twenty-first century, however, Warner Bros.’ long success –sustained partly by *Harry Potter*, which, with its eight-film scope, outlasted most other series of its type– began to wane, while other studios, particularly Disney, continued to flourish. Disney intensified its integrated approach to franchise filmmaking most notably through acquisitions of rival companies such as Lucasfilm, Pixar and Marvel. This strategy enabled Disney to acquire a back-catalogue of critically acclaimed movies and, perhaps most importantly, valuable intellectual property for potential future development. High-budget franchise production remained pivotal in industry strategy between 2011-17, but became increasingly grouped around superhero films, shared universes and expandable world-building initiatives in order to produce synergy between films, characters and other licensed properties controlled by film studios and their larger conglomerates. This is best demonstrated by Marvel’s releases, such as *The Avengers* (Joss Whedon, 2012), which have come to dominate the global box office, as well as new productions in the *Star Wars* franchise, including not only a new trilogy but new spin-off films such as *Rogue One* (Gareth Edwards, 2016) and *Solo* (Ron Howard, 2018).

⁵³⁵Wyatt, *High Concept*, 22.

⁵³⁶Balio, *Hollywood in the New Millennium*, 25.

⁵³⁷*Ibid.*, 41.

Warner Bros. remains an industry heavy-weight, but has struggled to retain its supremacy in the latest era of blockbuster franchising. Despite its extensive back-catalogue of licenses in the DC Universe, which forms the most obvious competition with Disney's Marvel films, the studio has been unable to consistently produce financially successful franchise productions at the highest level since Alan Horn's departure in 2012. Franchise instalments *The Avengers* and *The Force Awakens* – distributed by Disney's Buena Vista label – overtook *Harry Potter* in the global box office, leaving Warner Bros. without similar tentpole franchises that could compete at the very highest end of the box office⁵³⁸. Horn's departure for Disney in 2012 therefore marks a watershed moment in the two studios' fortunes, a factor that has arguably shaped the future of the *Harry Potter* franchise. Kevin Tsujihara's desire to kick-start a new franchise in the 'wizarding world' can therefore be read as an attempt to develop a world-building spin-off property to rival its contemporaries. One key difference here is that in the early 2000s, Warner Bros. remained ahead of the curve and *Harry Potter* (among other key productions) established a franchising model that was quickly adopted by other studios; whereas in the era of *Fantastic Beasts*, Warner Bros. was attempting to keep up with and mimic trends established by those studios.

Following the initial announcement of the *Fantastic Beasts* film, more news followed in the months after: that the original story would follow fictional author Newt Scamander in 1920s New York and feature an all-new cast⁵³⁹, with David Yates and other key crew members from *Harry Potter* returning to produce the film⁵⁴⁰. By March 2014, *Fantastic Beasts* had been announced as a projected trilogy⁵⁴¹. In October 2016, a month before the first film's release, Warner Bros. and Rowling announced a further expansion of the slate to five films⁵⁴², confirming an every-other-year cinematic exhibition strategy in which the films would be released between 2016 and 2024 – echoing similar release patterns by Disney's Marvel Cinematic Universe and *Star Wars*. Much of the promotion for the film drew parallels

⁵³⁸"All Time Box Office: Worldwide Grosses," *Box Office Mojo*, accessed September 25, 2018. <https://www.boxofficemojo.com/alltime/world/>

⁵³⁹Laura Prudom, "First Look at Harry Potter Prequel 'Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them'," *Variety*, November 4, 2015. Accessed September 25, 2018. <https://variety.com/2015/film/news/fantastic-beasts-where-to-find-them-photos-harry-potter-prequel-pictures-1201633419/>

⁵⁴⁰Justin Kroll, "Harry Potter Director to Return for 'Fantastic Beasts' Spinoff," *Variety*, August 21, 2014. Accessed September 25, 2018. <https://variety.com/2014/film/news/harry-potter-director-to-return-for-fantastic-beasts-spinoff-exclusive-1201286193/>

⁵⁴¹Maane Khatchatourian, "J.K. Rowling's 'Harry Potter' Spinoff 'Fantastic Beasts' Will Be Trilogy," *Variety*, March 29, 2014. Accessed September 25, 2018. <https://variety.com/2014/film/news/j-k-rowlings-harry-potter-spinoff-fantastic-beasts-will-be-trilogy-1201150069/>

⁵⁴²Maane Khatchatourian and Dave McNary, "'Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them' to Be Five-Film Franchise," *Variety*, October 13, 2016. Accessed September 25, 2018. <https://variety.com/2016/film/news/fantastic-beasts-and-where-to-find-them-five-movies-1201888226/>

with the *Potter* franchise, emphasising the similarity in the creative team and the shooting locations⁵⁴³, or interviews with actors discussing their excitement at working on a *Potter*-themed project⁵⁴⁴, while nonetheless emphasising the notable differences between *Fantastic Beasts* and its predecessor, namely its new characters and setting. The most consistent theme threading through most *Fantastic Beasts* promotion was Rowling's role as screenwriter, which was repeatedly emphasised in order to correlate the production with the original *Harry Potter* saga and its highly respected author⁵⁴⁵.

One piece of promotion is particularly significant, however, because it was spearheaded by Rowling and created some negative publicity. In March 2016, Rowling published four pieces of writing under the title 'History of Magic in North America' (hereafter 'HOMINA') on her website Pottermore (see Chapter 1). Split into four segments, each piece described different periods of American wizarding history, from the fourteenth century to the early twentieth century (the setting of *Fantastic Beasts*)⁵⁴⁶. Chapter 1 of this thesis discussed how these pieces of writing not only perform a world-building function but a cross-promotional one. The writing's relationship with the *Fantastic Beasts* production remains implicit in order to retain its value as a world-building exercise; never mentioning the upcoming films, the pieces are nonetheless filled with "drillable media" such as minute details on wandmakers, governments and cultural developments⁵⁴⁷. One of the key functions of 'HOMINA', therefore, is to provide the *Fantastic Beasts* franchise with cultural background, or at least a semblance of it, that evokes the depth of world-building associated with its predecessor – in order to consolidate the fledgling franchise as a viable and substantial extension to the wizarding world.

Some of the content of 'HOMINA', however, caused controversy amongst members of Native American communities for its portrayal of their heritage. In describing the early centuries of American wizardry, Rowling was seen by some commentators to appropriate

⁵⁴³ Leo Barraclough, "J.K. Rowling's 'Fantastic Beasts' to Shoot at U.K.'s Leavesden Studios," *Variety*, July 3, 2014. Accessed September 25, 2018. <https://variety.com/2014/film/global/j-k-rowlings-fantastic-beasts-to-shoot-at-u-k-s-leavesden-studios-1201257882/>

⁵⁴⁴ Pottermore Correspondent, "The *Fantastic Beasts* interviews: Harry Potter superfan Ezra Miller," *Pottermore*, November 8th, 2016. Accessed September 25, 2018. <https://www.pottermore.com/news/fantastic-beasts-interview-series-ezra-miller>

⁵⁴⁵ Kroll, "Harry Potter Director to Return for 'Fantastic Beasts' Spinoff,"

⁵⁴⁵ Khatchaturian, " 'Fantastic Beasts' Will Be Trilogy."

⁵⁴⁶ J.K. Rowling, "History of Magic in North America," *Pottermore*.

⁵⁴⁷ Henry Jenkins, "Seven Principles of Transmedia Storytelling."

Native American traditions “that come from a particular context, place, understanding, and truth”, rewriting those traditions as fictional or magical constructs⁵⁴⁸:

“In my wizarding world, there were no skin-walkers. The legend was created by No-Majes to demonise wizards. (@JKRowling, 7:00AM, March 8, 2016.)

Furthermore, other descriptions of Native American wizards, in which they were classified as lacking wands but “particularly gifted in animal and plant magic”⁵⁴⁹, were seen to pander to stereotypes of Native Americans as unsophisticated, mystical and primitive⁵⁵⁰. These criticisms were compounded further when, two months later, Rowling published the history of the American wizarding school, Ilvermorny: it revolved around a young Irish woman who travelled to the United States in the 1700s, befriended British settlers, encountered magical animals, and founded a school⁵⁵¹. Paula Young Lee remarked that, by replicating the idea of settlers coming to America to civilise the indigenous land, “[t]he Ilvermorny origin story perpetuates colonialist perspectives, appropriates and erases Native American culture”⁵⁵². Yet more commentators in the popular press took issue with the lifting of Native American traditions – such as beasts like the Pukwudgie, which Young Lee argues is rewritten as a servant figure – while sidelining Native American characters⁵⁵³.

Rowling therefore received considerable backlash from the mainstream press⁵⁵⁴, scholars⁵⁵⁵, and vocal members of Native American communities⁵⁵⁶, who interpreted ‘HOMINA’ as appropriating already marginalised Native American cultures and accused Rowling of seeking to “commodify” those cultures for promotion for the *Fantastic Beasts*

⁵⁴⁸ Adrienne Keene, "Magic in North America Part 1: Ugh.," *Native Appropriations*, March 18, 2016. Accessed September 25, 2018. <http://nativeappropriations.com/2016/03/magic-in-north-america-part-1-ugh.html>

⁵⁴⁹ J.K. Rowling, “History of Magic in North America.”

⁵⁵⁰ Katharine Trendacosta, "J.K. Rowling's History of Magic in North America Was a Travesty From Start to Finish," *Gizmodo*, March 11, 2016. Accessed September 25, 2018. <https://io9.gizmodo.com/j-k-rowlings-history-of-magic-in-north-america-was-a-t-1764311530>

⁵⁵¹ J.K. Rowling, “Ilvermorny School of Witchcraft and Wizardry,” *Pottermore*, accessed September 25, 2018. <https://www.pottermore.com/writing-by-jk-rowling/ilvermorny>

⁵⁵² Paula Young Lee, “Pottermore problems: Scholars and writers call foul on J.K. Rowling’s North American magic,” *Salon*, July 1, 2016. Accessed September 25, 2018. http://www.salon.com/2016/07/01/pottermore_problems_scholars_and_writers_call_foul_on_j_k_rowling_s_north_american_magic/

⁵⁵³ Sepsey, "We're Still Here."

⁵⁵⁴ Helena Horton, "JK Rowling faces Twitter backlash as critics call her new writing 'racist'," *The Telegraph*, March 9, 2016. Accessed September 25, 2018. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/celebritynews/12188892/jk-rowling-twitter-backlash-cultural-appropriation-harry-potter-pottermore.html>

Alison Flood, "JK Rowling under fire for writing about 'Native American wizards'," *The Guardian*, March 9, 2016. Accessed September 25, 2018. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/mar/09/jk-rowling-under-fire-for-appropriating-navajo-tradition-history-of-magic-in-north-america-pottermore>

⁵⁵⁵ Keene, "Magic in North America Part 1: Ugh."

⁵⁵⁶ Sepsey, "We're Still Here."

blockbuster franchise⁵⁵⁷. The controversy is particularly noteworthy because it arguably demonstrates the fragility of Rowling's textual authority during this period of transition in the 'Wizarding World' franchise. The timing and content of the writing betrays a clear commercial function, and, in this sense, 'HOMINA' has something in common with the original *Fantastic Beasts* book: they are both world-building products which are nonetheless shaped by commercial forces. It is 'HOMINA', however, that much more overtly embodies and exposes the commercial aims of the franchise; Rowling here can be seen to produce writing in service to the film franchise, which presents a marked departure to her past authorial role which was far more defined by her association with *Potter* books. This blurring of the lines between creativity and corporate promotion, then, is a key theme which echoes throughout *Fantastic Beasts*, contextually and textually.

Crucially, the 'History of Magic in North America' controversy presented a challenge to Rowling's authorship function in the post-*Harry Potter* era, at a time when a solid authorial presence was important for laying the foundations for the *Fantastic Beasts* franchise. Attempts to shore up and perpetuate Rowling's authority are most obvious in her designation as screenwriter for the film series. As this chapter has explored so far, Rowling is central to the franchising endeavour of *Fantastic Beasts* in terms of her willingness to participate in promotional activity; and as screenwriter, she can also be positioned as a key *creative* figure. Significantly, however, screenwriting is not the same as novel-writing, and there is a stark contrast between common popular (mis)conceptions surrounding the two professions. As Bridget Conor observes, screenwriting has historically been an undervalued activity: firstly, the creative authority of screenwriting is frequently undermined due to its positioning as a collaborative art and as a supplement to the wider endeavour of filmmaking; and secondly, through those same associations with filmmaking, screenwriting is frequently considered a more shamelessly commercial art form, with a script existing only as part of a wider finished product⁵⁵⁸. Academic literature on screenwriting has also suffered from these misconceptions and has neglected to undertake much significant analysis into the industrial and creative impact of the screenwriter. As Simone Murray states, scholarly work in film, literary and adaptation studies alike has "systematically marginalised" the role of the screenwriter within the film industry⁵⁵⁹.

⁵⁵⁷ Keene, "Magic in North America Part 1: Ugh."

⁵⁵⁸ Bridget Conor, *Screenwriting: Creative Labor and Professional Practice* (London: Routledge, 2014), 1.

⁵⁵⁹ Murray, *The Contemporary Adaptation Industry*, 132.

For the most part, Rowling has avoided the screenwriter stigma largely because of her pre-established credentials as an author. Instead, her screenwriting role is frequently positioned as a marker of authenticity and legitimacy for the new *Fantastic Beasts* franchise. Annual reports from Warner Bros., for instance, repeatedly emphasise their partnership with Rowling in the production of *Fantastic Beasts*⁵⁶⁰, and trade press sources such as *Variety* commonly mention that the film is written by Rowling⁵⁶¹. The oft-repeated phrase “written by Rowling” throughout media reports serves to ally the act of writing a script with writing a novel, conflating the two acts as one creative activity. It helps, of course, that Rowling wrote the original *Fantastic Beasts* book in 2001, and although that publication had no substantial narrative content, a link can nonetheless be forged between the two products in which Rowling is the unifying component. Furthermore, the *Fantastic Beasts* screenplay was published in conjunction with the film. Usually, film scripts have little to no commercial value and remain unpublished: mainstream publication of a screenplay has become more frequent, but is still a rare activity⁵⁶². Aside from the inevitable profit-led motivations associated with publishing new books from Rowling, the decision to publish the screenplay demonstrates Warner Bros.’ attempts to weave a thread between her role for *Fantastic Beasts* and for the *Harry Potter* books.

Nonetheless, Rowling’s authorial status, and her relationship with the *Fantastic Beasts* text, has evolved between the publication of the book in 2001 and the release of the film in 2016. When the *Fantastic Beasts* book was first published, Rowling was known only as the author of the *Harry Potter* books, which were then adapted into blockbuster films by Warner Bros. As I note in Chapter 1, Rowling’s authorial role has transformed since the end of the books and films: despite her announcement that she would not write another book about Harry, she has nonetheless sought to retain control over substantial new ‘Wizarding World’ content by branching out into writing in different forms, such as plays, websites, and films. Crucially, although Rowling occupies a central position within every endeavour, much of the new content in ‘J.K. Rowling’s Wizarding World’ is fundamentally collaborative in

⁵⁶⁰“2015 Annual Report to Shareholders,” *Time Warner*, 13; 24.PDF; “2016 Annual Report to Shareholders,” *Time Warner*, 25.PDF. Accessed September 25, 2018. <http://ir.timewarner.com/phoenix.zhtml?c=70972&p=irol-reportsannual>

⁵⁶¹ Dave McNary, “‘Fantastic Beasts’ Tops \$500 Million at Worldwide Box Office,” *Variety*, November 30, 2016. Accessed September 25, 2018. <https://variety.com/2016/film/news/fantastic-beasts-worldwide-box-office-1201930219/>; Ramin Setoodeh, “Why Eddie Redmayne Isn’t Worried That ‘Fantastic Beasts’ Expanded to Five Films,” *Variety*, November 17, 2016. Accessed September 25, 2018. <https://variety.com/2016/film/news/fantastic-beasts-secrets-eddie-redmayne-jk-rowling-sequels-1201920864/>

⁵⁶² Murray, *The Contemporary Adaptation Industry*, 152.

nature: Pottermore features contributions of new writing from Rowling; *Cursed Child* is created by multiple authors (see Chapter 5); and, of significance for this chapter, the *Fantastic Beasts* series is, like all blockbuster franchises, a multifaceted enterprise with creative and commercial input from a large number of people, but with Rowling's screenwriting role made prominent. Clare Parody's observation that "[w]here franchise production is diasporic and development un-coordinated, canonicity, continuity, and authority become problematic concepts, constantly re-negotiated" aptly sums up Rowling's increasingly oblique role in the face of a rapidly expanding post-*Potter* franchise.⁵⁶³ Repeated emphasis on Rowling's centrality in promotion for *Fantastic Beasts* seeks to obscure the nature of any such "problematic concepts", instead attempting to consolidate the familiar idea of Rowling as sole authority.

Rowling's role has evolved, then, from the one she adopted throughout the *Harry Potter* films. Although *Fantastic Beasts* is a collective project, by writing the script she nonetheless holds more responsibility for its genesis and growth than she ever did with Warner Bros.' *Potter* films. Previously it was Rowling's work being adapted, whereas with *Fantastic Beasts*, she is the adapter of her own work – and she is even attempting to engineer the genesis of an entirely new franchise. This provides a means of understanding some of the debates surrounding *Fantastic Beasts*, especially in terms of the negative reaction to 'History of Magic in North America'. Superficially, the development of Rowling's role from novelist to scriptwriter seems natural, and indeed the two roles are frequently conflated in popular media. The intricacies of Rowling's involvement in the franchise have nonetheless changed, however. *Fantastic Beasts* was the most substantial world-building attempt in the post-*Potter* years from 2011-17; but despite its five-film slate and typical blockbuster budget for production and marketing, it nonetheless started from a more precarious position than the *Potter* films ever did, lacking a substantial pre-existing product with cultural capital to exploit. Rowling's involvement in a text that is much more high-risk is a crucial attempt to position the films as viable extensions, but it also leaves her authorial status subject to potential disruption, as indicated by some of the negative responses to 'HOMINA'.

The production context of *Fantastic Beasts* therefore paints a picture of a film with a fragile textual history and correspondingly fragile notions of authorship attached to it. *Fantastic Beasts* relies on its association with two brand names – *Harry Potter* and J.K.

⁵⁶³ Parody, "Franchising/Adaptation," 212.

Rowling – to establish its textual authority as the foundation of a new five-film “Wizarding World” franchise. Its history as a charitable publication by Rowling, and an object owned by Harry in the world of the *Potter* books, provides a clear link through which to authenticate the franchise as Rowling’s own work and as a successor to *Harry Potter*. The following section will undertake a textual analysis of the film in order to understand how *Fantastic Beasts*’ relationship with its predecessor has shaped the text, and how far it acts as a product of the transmedia Hollywood environment in which it was made: that is, how the balance between familiarity and novelty forms the backbone of *Fantastic Beasts*’ attempts to present a viable extension to the wizarding world⁵⁶⁴.

***A balance of familiarity and novelty*.....**

As this chapter has demonstrated so far, *Fantastic Beasts* has developed from a little-known charitable book into the foundation of a five-film series whose primary purpose was to help transition the *Harry Potter* franchise into ‘J.K. Rowling’s Wizarding World’, an expanded universe with the potential for unlimited texts across a multitude of times and settings. The *Potter* franchise from its inception in 1997 until 2011 was built on a series of film and book releases featuring recurring places, characters and motifs. *Fantastic Beasts*, however, is the first text to decisively step away from modern-day Hogwarts, and it is worth considering how it seeks to reinvent the wizarding world in this new stage of franchise expansion. In particular, this section will seek to evaluate the relationship that *Fantastic Beasts* shares with *Harry Potter*, and how the 2016 film text interacts with its phenomenally successful predecessor. In some senses, *Fantastic Beasts* builds a straightforward relationship with *Potter*, in which its themes (civil war, political repression) and the overarching plot (Grindelwald threatening the wizarding world) co-opt a familiar formula and act as a kind of homage to its predecessor. This does not necessarily manifest consistently, however; *Fantastic Beasts* partly relies on the cultural cache and fictional fabric of *Harry Potter* for its success, but its function as a world-building spin-off is by necessity different from its predecessors, and reflects a more contemporary mode of storytelling. It is this tension that the rest of the chapter will explore, firstly by understanding *Fantastic Beasts*’ role as an adaptation and secondly by analysing some of the film’s key textual features, including its narrative, setting and characters.

⁵⁶⁴Parody, “Franchising/Adaptation,” 211.

Some elements of the 2001 *Fantastic Beasts* book and its 2016 film counterpart are the same: their titles, for example, and they both share the presence of a character named Newt Scamander, and Rowling as an associated creative figure. In comparison with *Harry Potter*, however, the *Fantastic Beasts* film is a considerably less typical adaptation. The *Potter* films largely followed the overarching plot of Rowling's books, featuring a similar range of characters and – with the exception of splitting *Deathly Hallows* into two – a similar release pattern. *Fantastic Beasts*, meanwhile, has its roots in a fictional encyclopedia, which had no narrative, setting or characters (apart from the implied presence of author Newt Scamander). Adaptation studies scholarship has historically argued against using 'fidelity' to a source text as a measure by which to understand the impact and character of an adaptation, largely because the industrial, creative, commercial and cultural contexts in which an adaptation is produced – not to mention the media into which the adaptation is translated – will by necessity differ from the source text⁵⁶⁵. Some recent work in adaptation studies has particular merit in understanding franchise adaptations in the contemporary media environment, in which texts are rebooted, serialised and reconfigured as part of world-building franchising endeavours. Robert Stam, for instance, suggests that it is more useful to understand adaptation as an "ongoing whirl of intertextual reference and transformation, of texts generating other texts in an endless process of recycling, transformation and transmutation, with no clear point of origin."⁵⁶⁶ These discussions occurring within adaptation studies provoke a re-thinking, firstly, of how audiences interact with media texts, but, most importantly for the present work, they also necessitate a reconsideration of how texts interact with each other within a given media environment, and the production contexts that drive franchising efforts. Simone Murray labels this approach "a sociology of adaptation"⁵⁶⁷, a methodology that I argue is crucial for understanding the development of *Fantastic Beasts*.

Although adaptations, re-workings, reboots and other forms of recycled media commonly engage with their source material in complex ways, then, the production history of *Fantastic Beasts* is a particularly noteworthy example of the complexities of adaptation in the post-millennial media environment. Its status as an adaptation is significant for Warner Bros., because it enables the company to position the film series as an adaptation of Rowling's work, thereby suggesting *Fantastic Beasts* as a natural successor to the immensely culturally and commercially successful *Potter* franchise.

⁵⁶⁵ Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, 7.

⁵⁶⁶ Robert Stam, *Film Theory: An Introduction* (Malden: Blackwell, 2000), 66.

⁵⁶⁷ Murray, *The Adaptation Industry*, 4.

The book's status as a fictional encyclopedia or guidebook also provides a kind of blank canvas on which narrative, setting and characters can be imprinted, but the downside is that the films are based on a precarious text with little cultural impact. Bringing in Rowling to write the script can therefore be read as an attempt to offset this precarity. Her involvement not only emphasises the connection between the *Fantastic Beasts* book and the subsequent film, but also, as I discussed earlier, contributes to Warner Bros.' strategy to establish the *Fantastic Beasts* franchise as popular and legitimate. Interestingly, it is arguable that key features of the film text of *Fantastic Beasts* also reflect this desire. Because the *Fantastic Beasts* book lacks setting, character or narrative, these features within the film are important to consider because they have been selected for particular reasons: particularly, to establish the legitimacy of *Fantastic Beasts* as a worthy successor to the *Harry Potter* franchise, while balancing new world-building elements characteristic of the most successful spin-off films between 2011-17, such as Marvel's *The Avengers* and Disney-Lucasfilm's *Star Wars* series. As Clare Parody states:

“Adaptation is fundamentally sympathetic to the aims and protocols of franchise storytelling. It is an efficient way of getting maximum use out of a fictional creation ... its pleasures of re-visioning, re-versioning, and revisiting, meanwhile, resonate strongly with the balance of familiarity and novelty so crucial to the appeal of franchise fiction.”⁵⁶⁸

The rest of this section will therefore evaluate how significant aspects of setting, character and narrative combine elements of the familiar and the novel, with particular attention paid to the ways in which *Fantastic Beasts* seeks to expand into new territories while it simultaneously draws on the iconic status and cultural currency of the *Harry Potter* series. I will also discuss how and why extratextual material is employed to reflect and support the messages inherent in the text. This section will close with a consideration of how the textual history of *Fantastic Beasts* – as a guidebook to magical creatures – is reflected in the form of the 2016 film, and how this is emblematic of its status as a franchise adaptation in the contemporary film industry.

Firstly, then, in terms of setting, *Fantastic Beasts* is set in 1920s New York, a curious choice because it is a departure from existing *Harry Potter* lore not only in chronological era but in geographical location. The *Fantastic Beasts* book, including “About the Author” section, makes no reference to locations that Newt Scamander visited⁵⁶⁹, which likely

⁵⁶⁸ Parody, “Franchising/Adaptation,” 211.

⁵⁶⁹ Rowling, *Fantastic Beasts*, vi.

provided a measure of freedom in terms of developing the film 15 years later. The bustling metropolis of New York is arguably a counterintuitive place for a “magizoologist” (a conservationist of magical animals) to visit, however, bereft as it is of wildlife in comparison to other natural landscapes found around the globe. Although little information was given about Newt’s own travels in the original book, it does provide information about the habitats of certain animals, which ostensibly offers obvious locations in which the film could be set. The decision to use New York as a setting for *Fantastic Beasts* is thus worth considering precisely because it is unexpected. In terms of minimising risk for the success of the burgeoning film franchise, New York makes practical sense: not only is America the biggest market for blockbusters globally⁵⁷⁰, but Americans also comprise a significant cross-section of *Harry Potter*’s existing fan base. In addition, 1920s New York – with its flappers, jazz, modern art and the speakeasy – is an iconic historical moment familiar not only to Americans but audiences around the world. A pre-established cultural familiarity provides a secure point from which to launch a new franchise, while offering the potential for intricate cinematography, set and costume design. (*Fantastic Beasts* won two Oscars – the first film set in the wizarding world to do so – for set design and costume design.⁵⁷¹) Arguably, then, the choice to set *Fantastic Beasts* in New York is a risk-averse strategy that uses its first post-*Potter* film as a springboard into cultures that are different to 1990s Britain – but, crucially, not *that* different.

The balance between innovation and risk management is also maintained through the characters in *Fantastic Beasts*. Newt Scamander is ostensibly the figurehead of the film franchise, the magizoologist whose adventures will be recorded into the encyclopedic guidebook *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*. Newt is a key example of blending novelty and familiarity: aside from having his name emblazoned on the Comic Relief publication, he is already part of the fabric of the wizarding world due to his brief inclusion in the *Harry Potter* books. *Fantastic Beasts* here draws on existing characters as the backbone of new world-building elements, a classic strategy in other contemporary media franchises – such as *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story*, which tells the story of how the Death Star plans were acquired, an event crucial to the plot of the original *Star Wars* film, *A New Hope*. Newt

⁵⁷⁰“China to Overtake U.S. as World’s Biggest Movie Market? Not So Fast,” *Wall Street Journal*, July 19, 2016. Accessed September 25, 2018. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/china-to-overtake-u-s-as-worlds-biggest-movie-market-not-so-fast-1468919892>

⁵⁷¹ Ramin Setoodeh, “‘Fantastic Beasts’ Becomes First ‘Harry Potter’ Movie to Win an Oscar,” *Variety*, February 26, 2017. Accessed September 26, 2018. <https://variety.com/2017/film/news/fantastic-beast-first-harry-potter-oscar-1201997179/>

Scamander is a very minor character in *Harry Potter*, however, and his prior connection to the *Potter* franchise is not necessarily popular knowledge outside the ranks of dedicated fans. A more widely recognisable attribute of Newt's, on the other hand, is his British nationality, which thematically links the fictional cultures of *Harry Potter* with those of *Fantastic Beasts*. Through Newt, *Fantastic Beasts* is able to reference pre-existing magical miscellanea from previous *Potter* films, such as Hogwarts and Albus Dumbledore. Newt is also obviously confused by American magical customs throughout the film, including the requirement for a wand permit and the lack of communication between non-magical people ("No-Majs") and wizards. His gradual adjustment and learning process arguably echoes the audience's own journey of discovery: Newt appears out of his comfort zone in America, and in this sense he acts a proxy for the audience, facilitating a smoother introduction into the American wizarding culture.

Newt is only one character in an ensemble cast, however, and Jacob Kowalski – an American No-Maj – offers a counterpoint. He operates as another means through which audiences can experience the new magical culture of North America: coming from a position of ignorance of witchcraft and wizardry, Jacob's growing awe and delight can be read as a template for the ideal journey of the less-invested audience member. The two female leads, Queenie and Tina Goldstein, are two other new characters, but they also retain a connection with *Harry Potter* through their surname, shared by Ravenclaw Anthony Goldstein, a minor character in Harry's year at Hogwarts. (Over a year before the release of the film, Rowling stated in a tweet that Anthony is a "distant" relative of Queenie and Tina⁵⁷².) As with Newt Scamander, however, these are references that *Potter* fans will appreciate, but which casual audiences may not recognise. This is a common feature of spin-off productions, where intense fandom is rewarded and encouraged by littering 'Easter eggs', or minor background information, throughout the text. Crucially, in terms of constructing a transmedia franchise, these types of information do not detract from the experience of a casual or new consumer⁵⁷³.

Grindelwald, on the other hand, remained an absent threat throughout a large part of the first *Fantastic Beasts* film, appearing only in the finale. Like Newt Scamander, Grindelwald is a character referenced in the *Potter* novels who makes his first appearance in *Fantastic Beasts*; as an adolescent, he was friends with Albus Dumbledore and was the first

⁵⁷² J.K. Rowling, Twitter post, Aug 15, 2015, 10:55am, https://twitter.com/jk_rowling/status/632611629843263488

⁵⁷³ Jenkins, "Searching for the Origami Unicorn," 405.

to attempt to collect the Deathly Hallows. Exploring the backstory of a minor character from the *Potter* books enables *Fantastic Beasts* to explore territory for which there is already a pre-established curiosity amongst *Potter* fans. In fact, while the *Fantastic Beasts* film cannot be said to adapt the book of the same name in any substantial fashion (except perhaps in its form of a guidebook, which will be discussed later), it does nonetheless interact with, rework and adapt existing lore from the *Potter* books in interesting ways. This is one key component of the *Fantastic Beasts* strategy: to fill the content vacuum left by the *Fantastic Beast* book with carefully placed characters, settings and narratives that expand the fictional universe to new times and places, but which are underpinned by existing lore from the original series.

Grindelwald is a key part of this strategy, but Albus Dumbledore is even more significant. Textually, Dumbledore is only mentioned once, when Grindelwald-as-Graves asks Newt, “What makes Albus Dumbledore so fond of you?” Dumbledore does not appear in the film, nor does the script suggest that he would feature in future productions, but subsequent extratextual promotion confirmed his appearance in the sequels⁵⁷⁴. The inclusion of a younger Dumbledore is the most overt example of *Fantastic Beasts*’ attempts to draw on existing intellectual property from the *Potter* series to bolster its own cultural value. It is interesting to note, however, that little of this is reflected in the *Fantastic Beasts* text, whereas extratextual promotion has been vital in disseminating information about the Grindelwald-Dumbledore story arc. Historically, there is precedent in the *Potter* franchise for this, especially in terms of developing Dumbledore’s character: Rowling, after the publication of all the books, announced in a 2008 Q&A that Albus Dumbledore was gay, and that this provided the motivation for his destructive relationship with Grindelwald in their younger years⁵⁷⁵. Dumbledore’s sexuality has never been confirmed textually, and Rowling has since continued to speak solely extratextually about the topic in service of *Fantastic Beasts* promotion, such as in her announcement that Dumbledore “may be gay” in later films⁵⁷⁶.

Although *Fantastic Beasts* includes some narrative foreshadowing, largely through a newspaper montage and a brief duel in a darkened fortress, Grindelwald and Dumbledore’s significance was largely established by promotion in trade and popular press (and

⁵⁷⁴ Justin Kroll, "Jude Law to Play Young Dumbledore in 'Fantastic Beasts' Sequel," *Variety*, April 12, 2017. Accessed September 26, 2018. <https://variety.com/2017/film/news/jude-law-dumbledore-fantastic-beasts-sequel-1202029157/>

⁵⁷⁵ David Smith, "Dumbledore was gay, JK tells amazed fans."

⁵⁷⁶ Ramin Setoodeh, "Dumbledore Could Be Openly Gay in 'Fantastic Beasts' Sequel, J.K. Rowling Says," *Variety*, November 10, 2016. Accessed September 26, 2018. <https://variety.com/2016/film/news/fantastic-beasts-dumbledore-gay-jk-rowling-harry-potter-1201915037/>

Pottermore)⁵⁷⁷. The momentum of *Fantastic Beasts* – and arguably J.K. Rowling’s Wizarding World as a whole – is therefore partly sustained by the generation of extratextual material, with carefully managed promotion serving to support and legitimise *Fantastic Beasts* as a newer text. In this case, as with Rowling’s tweet regarding Queenie and Tina Goldstein’s distant relative, promotional information regarding Grindelwald and Dumbledore serves to ground the franchise in characters and plot developments that are loosely connected to events from the *Potter* series. As Parody notes, it is common for franchise adaptations to rely on a range of paratextual information⁵⁷⁸ – “an ongoing whirl of intertextual references”, to return to Stam⁵⁷⁹ – in producing meaning and supporting its central text, especially for serial blockbusters. Arguably *Fantastic Beasts* takes this to such excess because of its precarious status as an original story and, at a projected five films, its role in supporting a burgeoning long-form plot.

The narrative of *Fantastic Beasts* follows a similar strategy, and is particularly interesting because it operates on several layers to suit different levels of audience investment. Superficially, the film’s main narrative arc is put into motion through the accidental opening of Newt’s magical briefcase. The briefcase, like the Weasleys’ tent in *Goblet of Fire*, is bigger on the inside: it contains several colossal biodomes filled with a variety of magical animals. These animals escape when the briefcase is opened, and much of the film follows Newt as he attempts to recover the creatures. Meanwhile, he becomes embroiled in the politically-charged atmosphere of New York, in which wizards are being increasingly persecuted by No-Majs – a situation worsened by the appearance of a mysterious, destructive magical force that lays waste to swathes of New York. The plot is fairly straightforward, although promotion by Rowling and Warner Bros. attempted to inject more meaning by claiming an environmental message⁵⁸⁰, or by positioning it as a morality

⁵⁷⁷ The Pottermore News Team, "Dumbledore and Newt will team up against Grindelwald in the new *Fantastic Beasts* film," *Pottermore*, July 3, 2017. Accessed September 26, 2018. <https://www.pottermore.com/news/dumbledore-and-newt-will-team-up-against-grindelwald-in-the-next-fantastic-beasts-film>

Stewart Clarke, "Second 'Fantastic Beasts' Film Starts Shooting as New Plot Details Emerge," *Variety*, July 3, 2017. Accessed September 26, 2018. <https://variety.com/2017/film/news/fantastic-beasts-jk-rowling-johnny-depp-cast-shooting-1202486294/>

⁵⁷⁸ Parody, "Franchising/Adaptation," 211.

⁵⁷⁹ Stam, *Film Theory: An Introduction*, 66.

⁵⁸⁰ Casey Cipriani, "'Fantastic Beasts And Where To Find Them' Sends A Powerful Message About Saving The Environment," *Bustle*, November 18, 2016. Accessed September 26, 2018. <https://www.bustle.com/articles/195737-fantastic-beasts-and-where-to-find-them-sends-a-powerful-message-about-saving-the-environment>

tale warning against the dangers of intolerance⁵⁸¹. Its attempt to mimic other successful superhero blockbuster spin-offs is especially visible in the final act, which culminates in an effects-heavy scene of city-wide destruction and the establishment of Grindelwald as the main villain of the overarching plot.

The twist at the close of *Fantastic Beasts*, in which Grindelwald is revealed to have been posing as a high-ranking wizard in the American government, cements the character as the key motivator for a wider narrative, and the wizarding war he is fuelling indicates a much more epic scope for the franchise as a whole. The unambitious main plot of the film – in which Newt attempts to catch mischievous animals – can be read as a placeholder, while the underlying Grindelwald narrative ensures that the film series is grounded in wizarding lore that has been hinted at since the first *Potter* book, in which Harry saw a Chocolate Frog card describing Albus Dumbledore and learnt that he defeated a wizard named Grindelwald in 1945. The attempt at a sprawling epic narrative also echoes other contemporary franchises such as *The Avengers* and *Star Wars*, which promise a sequence of ambitious event movies. Unlike those examples of franchise storytelling, *Fantastic Beasts* arguably attempts to appear more organised through a combination of unified promotional material, teasers and official statements. Comic book adaptations such as *Spider-Man* and *Batman* in particular are routinely subject to reboots that offer differing and sometimes contradictory storylines⁵⁸², while *Star Wars* has existed for so long that its colossal Extended Universe is replete with divergent information and disputes about canonical material. (After acquiring Lucasfilm in 2012, Disney laid the groundwork for more secure franchise management by effectively removing the *Star Wars* Extended Universe from “canon”⁵⁸³). *Fantastic Beasts*, on the other hand, owes its origins to *Harry Potter*, a historically much less volatile text, which explains the careful use of extratextual material to establish particular meanings and build hype in structured ways.

If *Harry Potter* can therefore be said to be a reasonably ‘reliable’ franchise text because of its historically stable authorship and discrete storyline, the form of *Fantastic*

⁵⁸¹ Helen Jackson, "'Fantastic Beasts' Producer Spells Out J.K. Rowling Story at U.K. Premiere: 'It's About Tolerance and Intolerance'," *Variety*, November 16, 2016. Accessed September 26, 2018. <https://variety.com/2016/scene/news/fantastic-beasts-premiere-j-k-rowling-eddie-redmayne-1201919511/>

⁵⁸² Eckart Voigts, et al., "Introduction: Adaptation, Transmedia Storytelling and Participatory Culture," *Adaptation* 6, no. 2 (2013): 139.

⁵⁸³ "The Legendary Star Wars Expanded Universe Turns a New Page," *StarWars.com*, April 25, 2014. Accessed September 26, 2018. <https://www.starwars.com/news/the-legendary-star-wars-expanded-universe-turns-a-new-page>

Beasts is interesting because it exposes a volatility inherent within the 2016 film that was missing from *Harry Potter*. Although there were some changes made between the *Potter* books and the films, the Warner Bros. productions are largely considered faithful adaptations in the sense that they follow the same overall plot, structure and development. This – in combination with other factors such as the casting of well-regarded British actors, big budgets, and a crew that largely remained the same, especially in the latter half of the movies’ production – contributes to the lasting sense of the *Potter* films as being well-made and reasonably prestigious. *Fantastic Beasts* attempts to tell a similarly clearly-defined story, in the vein of *Harry Potter*, by using many similar iconographic elements – achieved through synergy in its art department and other key crew teams – and thematic elements, such as the value of unlikely heroism and the contested boundaries between magic and reality. Despite this deliberate adherence to qualities from the *Potter* films, there is arguably something more vulnerable about *Fantastic Beasts* than its predecessors, however. The film tries to achieve several goals at once: to appease fans of the original series, to attract new audiences, and to pay homage to *Harry Potter*, all while simultaneously introducing not only a new wizarding culture but new characters, animals and concepts. *Fantastic Beasts*, then, attempts to be a quintessential franchise film, filled with world-building components that serve as different potential spin-off points that expand the *Potter* universe into a more open-world text.

Unlike *Harry Potter*, then, whose serialised format cultivated a coherent and overarching story, the *Fantastic Beasts* film can be read as a text reminiscent of a tour through a number of disconnected scenes, settings and moments. This tour-like structure is particularly interesting because of *Fantastic Beasts*’ own history. The charitable book *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* – published in 2001 – is a kind of guidebook to magical creatures, but the film, too, arguably incorporates elements of that guidebook structure into its form. The 2016 *Fantastic Beasts* film provides brief snapshots into the habits and habitats of various magical animals, like its book source, but also into other world-building elements, such as the wizarding world of 1920s New York, including all the enchantment and the socio-political tension that characterises it; the Second Saemers and their hatred of magic; hints regarding the backstory of Grindelwald and Dumbledore; and Newt’s own personal past, particularly in terms of Leta Lestrange. The opening segment of the film embodies this concept: newspaper articles flash across the screen in a whirlwind of information that provides brief glimpses into the turbulent politics of the wizarding 1920s.

The descriptions and sketches within the 2001 *Fantastic Beasts* book initially offered the promise of an open, potentially endlessly explorable world beyond the pages of *Harry Potter*; the 2016 film is intelligently made in that it not only visually recreates the animals from that book, but it also seeks to capitalise upon and realise the deeper world-building potential inherent within its source. *Fantastic Beasts* is therefore an eminently suitable book for a contemporary franchise film adaptation, not only because it is a text devoid of narrative, character and setting – and therefore a blank slate from which Warner Bros. could build new components – but because that same textual vacuity is well-suited to the shifting strategies of contemporary franchising. Although superficially the *Fantastic Beasts* film seems worlds away from its original material, the 2016 film arguably inherits the guidebook form in its jumble of snapshots of wizarding life in America, and it is partly this that makes the film resonate differently from *Harry Potter*. *Fantastic Beasts* is a film designed according to franchising principles that rely on more diffuse settings, characters and continuities that spread across films and other media in order to sustain a wider transmedia textual milieu. *Harry Potter*'s production context was significantly different, of course: it was not only produced in a different cultural moment but was also based on a series of children's books with a more stable text and authorship.

The final section of this chapter will explore some of the reviews and box office figures of *Fantastic Beasts* to examine how the film was framed following its release.

***Evaluating the success of Fantastic Beasts*.....**

The previous sections highlighted how *Fantastic Beasts* developed from its roots in the *Harry Potter* series to a spin-off blockbuster franchise, examining its production history and textual features in order to understand how *Fantastic Beasts* operates as a new-yet-familiar text that expands the wizarding world to new settings and timelines. It is important, therefore, to evaluate the success of these aims. The rest of this chapter will examine how *Fantastic Beasts* was received, using two methods of analysis: box office figures and reviews in the trade and popular press. These methods offer insight into broad financial trends and how the film was interpreted by journalists and industry experts in the weeks following its release. Although any original audience data collection is beyond the scope of the present work, cinematic release figures and reviews from leading journalist sources are nonetheless useful interpretive tools: box office figures provide comparable national and international statistics, while

research suggests that film reviews can both influence and predict box office performance, especially in terms of negative response⁵⁸⁴. In terms of *Fantastic Beasts*, then, the following analysis will seek to draw conclusions regarding the impact of the film as a franchising text in contemporary Hollywood.

In the weeks preceding the release of *Fantastic Beasts*, economic forecasts for the film's performance were cautiously optimistic, with estimates that it would make \$200m globally in its opening weekend. This total was met: around \$220m was taken by end of play on Sunday⁵⁸⁵. This is a particularly noteworthy number because these totals do not include China or Japan, the second and third largest box offices globally in terms of cinema audiences. Regardless, the global takings in *Fantastic Beasts*' opening weekend ensured that the film immediately regrouped the cost of production⁵⁸⁶. Importantly, the film continued to dominate the global box office in the following weeks, with its total passing \$500m by the end of November⁵⁸⁷. Brooks Barnes, reporting for the *New York Times*, identified the necessity for *Fantastic Beasts* to hold its own against rival titles such as *Moana* (Ron Clements and John Musker, 2016), the animated Disney release, and *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story*, in order to enhance its long-term exhibition prospects⁵⁸⁸.

The film was particularly popular in the United Kingdom. Its \$19m takings in the opening weekend amounted to a more successful opening weekend than all previous *Harry Potter* films apart from *Deathly Hallows Parts 1 and 2*⁵⁸⁹. *Fantastic Beasts* became the highest-grossing film of the year⁵⁹⁰ for several days in December, but its run was dislodged after only a few days by *Rogue One*⁵⁹¹. *Fantastic Beasts* nonetheless performed well in the

⁵⁸⁴ Suman Basuroy, et al., "How Critical Are Critical Reviews? The Box Office Effects of Film Critics, Star Power, and Budgets," *Journal of Marketing* 67 (October 2003), 103.

⁵⁸⁵ "Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them: Opening Weekend Total Gross," *Box Office Mojo*. Accessed October 7, 2018. <https://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=weekend&id=fantasticbeasts.htm>

⁵⁸⁶ Brent Lang, "Foreign Box Office: 'Fantastic Beasts' Soars With \$132 Million," *Variety*, November 27, 2016. Accessed September 26, 2018. <https://variety.com/2016/film/box-office/fantastic-beasts-box-office-1201927411/>

⁵⁸⁷ Dave McNary, "'Fantastic Beasts' Tops \$500 Million at Worldwide Box Office," *Variety*, November 30, 2016. Accessed September 26, 2018. <https://variety.com/2016/film/news/fantastic-beasts-worldwide-box-office-1201930219/>

⁵⁸⁸ Brooks Barnes, "'Fantastic Beasts' Is a Hit for Warner Bros.," *New York Times*, November 20, 2016. Accessed September 26, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/21/business/fantastic-beasts-is-a-hit-and-critics-darling-for-warner-bros.html>

⁵⁸⁹ Seth Kelley, "'Fantastic Beasts' Tops \$50 Million in Three Days at International Box Office," *Variety*, November 19, 2016. Accessed September 26, 2018. <https://variety.com/2016/film/box-office/fantastic-beasts-international-box-office-in-three-days-1201922980/>

⁵⁹⁰ Charles Gant, "Rogue One storms past Fantastic Beasts into 2016 top spot at UK box office," *The Guardian*, January 7, 2017. Accessed September 26, 2018. <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2017/jan/04/rogue-one-fantastic-beasts-2016-uk-box-office>

⁵⁹¹ Ibid.

country of *Harry Potter*'s origin, eventually taking \$68m in the UK, a colossal figure proportional to box office size – the total was *Fantastic Beasts*' third-largest globally, behind only the United States and China.⁵⁹² *Rogue One* also out-performed *Fantastic Beasts* in the United States, but by a more considerable margin: where *Fantastic Beasts* accumulated \$234m in total, *Rogue One* more than doubled that success with a \$532m run⁵⁹³. *Rogue One*'s dominance was far from unanimous in all markets, however: some countries which saw high attendance for *Fantastic Beasts*, such as Russia, South Korea, China and Japan, were decidedly lukewarm on the *Star Wars* film⁵⁹⁴.

The financial forecasts and reviews for *Fantastic Beasts* were predictably dogged by comparisons to *Harry Potter*. This was compounded by the fact that in almost all markets, *Fantastic Beasts* was not as financially successful as the last *Potter* production, *Deathly Hallows Part 2*. In the United States, *Fantastic Beasts*' opening weekend took less than even the least-successful *Potter* film there, *Order of the Phoenix*⁵⁹⁵, and it was completely out-played by *Deathly Hallows Part 2*, which took \$169m – more than double – in its 2011 opening weekend⁵⁹⁶. Some critics have also unfavourably compared *Fantastic Beasts*' opening to similar spin-off productions from recent years; Anthony D'Alessandro in *Deadline* cites the US opening weekends of *Suicide Squad* (David Ayer, 2016) at \$133m and *Doctor Strange* (Scott Derrickson, 2016) at \$85m as evidence of their comparative strength as franchising properties⁵⁹⁷.

I would argue that it is erroneous to compare *Fantastic Beasts* with *Deathly Hallows Part 2*, however, because many of the conditions for the later film were vastly different to *Harry Potter*. As Barnes notes in the *New York Times*, it was a risk for Warner Bros. to produce an original story (and the basis for a potential five-film franchise) based on new

⁵⁹² Dave McNary, "'Fantastic Beasts' Hits \$800 Million at Worldwide Box Office," *Variety*, January 13, 2017. Accessed September 26, 2018. <https://variety.com/2017/film/box-office/fantastic-beasts-worldwide-box-office-2-1201960085/>

⁵⁹³ "Rogue One: A Star Wars Story Domestic Gross," *Box Office Mojo*, accessed September 26, 2018. <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=starwars2016.htm>

⁵⁹⁴ "Rogue One: A Star Wars Story Worldwide Gross," *Box Office Mojo*, accessed September 26, 2018. <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=intl&id=starwars2016.htm>

⁵⁹⁵ Barnes, "Fantastic Beasts Is a Hit."

⁵⁹⁶ Seth Kelley, "Box Office: 'Fantastic Beasts' Levitates to No. 1 With \$29.7 Million on Friday," *Variety*, November 19, 2016. Accessed September 26, 2018. <https://variety.com/2016/film/box-office/box-office-fantastic-beasts-edge-of-seventeen-bleed-for-this-1201922902/>

⁵⁹⁷ Anthony D'Alessandro, "'Fantastic Beasts' Gobbles Up Teen Girl, Vinny Paz & 'Billy Lynn'... But Is 'Potter' Spinoff Big Enough For A New Franchise?" *Deadline*, November 20, 2016. Accessed September 26, 2018. <https://deadline.com/2016/11/fantastic-beasts-and-where-to-find-them-weekend-box-office-doctor-strange-bleed-for-this-1201856955/>

timelines, settings and characters with little pre-existing cultural currency⁵⁹⁸. As Anthony D'Alessandro concedes in *Deadline*, the *Fantastic Beasts* film is primarily “operating off the gas of the *Potter* movies and Rowling’s brand name”⁵⁹⁹. Forecasts from the studio therefore anticipated lower takings than for *Harry Potter*, the latter of which had benefited from a phenomenally successful book series and over a decade of multi-million-dollar marketing and merchandising⁶⁰⁰. D'Alessandro posits that a further reason for *Fantastic Beasts*’ weaker financial takings was because the film’s marketing materials did not emphasise its connections to *Harry Potter* “enough”⁶⁰¹. He suggests that the film’s shift in tone towards the adult market and its lack of reference to existing characters and settings in its posters and trailers led to miscommunication of the film’s intentions to audiences. Although promotion for *Fantastic Beasts* was by no means empty of reference to *Harry Potter* – J.K. Rowling was placed centrally in all marketing for the film, for instance, and this chapter has demonstrated how key the *Potter* films were in framing *Fantastic Beasts* – D'Alessandro does make an important point. The leading *Fantastic Beasts* poster used only the recently-introduced phrase “J.K. Rowling’s Wizarding World” to signify its *Potter* connections, a phrase which makes no statement about how the film operates in relation to its *Harry Potter* predecessors – whether it is a prequel or sequel or remake, or whether it features existing characters and settings⁶⁰².

Arguably the most useful way to consider *Fantastic Beasts*, then, is as a potential springboard for its own franchise that nonetheless engages with *Harry Potter* in sometimes inconsistent ways. As this chapter has noted, the split narrative of the film – in which Newt chases his escaped creatures within a superficial plot, while a darker and more ‘epic’ wizarding war unravels underneath – demonstrates the world-building function of the first film, as a means through which to build the foundations of the franchise. The box office admissions for *Fantastic Beasts*, although not record-breaking, are solid enough to provide financial security and increase the likelihood of production for the next four films. This sentiment is echoed in a statement by Sue Kroll, the president of marketing and distribution for Warner Bros., who claimed that surpassing \$800m is an “extraordinary milestone”⁶⁰³,

⁵⁹⁸ Barnes, “Fantastic Beasts is a Hit.”

⁵⁹⁹ D'Alessandro, “Fantastic Beasts Gobbles Up Teen Girl.”

⁶⁰⁰ Dave McNary, “Box Office: ‘Fantastic Beasts’ Roaring to \$75 Million Opening Weekend in U.S.,” *Variety*, November 18, 2016. Accessed September 26, 2018. <https://variety.com/2016/film/news/box-office-fantastic-beasts-1201921970/>

⁶⁰¹ Barnes, “Fantastic Beasts is a Hit.”

⁶⁰² D'Alessandro, “Fantastic Beasts Gobbles Up Teen Girl.”

⁶⁰³ McNary, “Fantastic Beasts Hits \$800 Million.”

ensuring that the franchise is “set up beautifully for a long run”.⁶⁰⁴ Adding to this favourable outlook, *Fantastic Beasts* opened to largely positive reviews from film critics and audiences, with a 76% fresh rating from Rotten Tomatoes⁶⁰⁵. Critical acclaim is something that other financially successful blockbusters such as *Suicide Squad* and *Doctor Strange* lack, despite their stronger opening weekends, and *Fantastic Beasts*’ moderate success in this regard is a vital part of understanding the impact of the first film. Because of its function as a foundation for the potential five-film franchise, commercial profits are not necessarily enough to secure the longevity of the *Fantastic Beasts* project: critical popularity is equally important here.

Reviews, then, offer another important way of interpreting the impact of *Fantastic Beasts*. Critical commentators often interpreted themes of intolerance, populism, repression and political unease within *Fantastic Beasts* – and these discussions were often fuelled by statements from Rowling and crew members which alluded to a deeper meaning for the film. A *New York Times* review by Logan Hill in particular constructs a greater allegorical message surrounding the film through use of quotations from director David Yates, designer Stuart Craig, and producer David Heyman. The review quotes Yates, for instance, who frames the film politically by referring to Grindelwald as a villain seeking to win “hearts and minds”, stating that he is “more lethal” than the “angry brute” Voldemort⁶⁰⁶. Heyman’s statement, meanwhile, steps back from claiming overt political messages: “I don’t think we set out to make a political film with a capital P. This is an entertainment with themes that resonate across time.” These quotations attempt to position *Fantastic Beasts* as a film with a social message. Reviews such as those in the *New York Times* help to amplify this message and establish the potential significance of *Fantastic Beasts* as a valuable artistic and socially relevant work, as opposed to simply a franchising vehicle. Simultaneously, the emphasis on “entertainment” and its lack of politics “with a capital P” signals the broad appeal of the film for all markets, including families and children.

Although there is general critical consensus that *Fantastic Beasts* explores a more overtly ‘dark’ world – Manohla Dargis in the *New York Times* claims that it “plays peekaboo with the abyss”⁶⁰⁷ – opinions differ on how far its messages depart from the original *Potter*

⁶⁰⁴Barnes, “Fantastic Beasts is a Hit.”

⁶⁰⁵ McNary, “Fantastic Beasts Hits \$800 Million.”

⁶⁰⁶Logan Hill, “In ‘Fantastic Beasts,’ Rowling Cloaks Politics in a Tale of Magic,” *New York Times*, November 2, 2016. Accessed September 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/06/movies/fantastic-beasts-and-where-to-find-them-preview.html>

⁶⁰⁷ Manohla Dargis, “Review: ‘Fantastic Beasts’ Unleashes J.K. Rowling’s Magic on Old New York,” *New York Times*, November 17, 2016. Accessed September 26,

films. Some saw the film's portrayal of civil war as an extension of themes first explored in *Harry Potter*, while others lauded *Fantastic Beasts*' more refreshing and timely exploration of political persecution⁶⁰⁸. Catherine Shoard, writing for *The Guardian*, goes further, explicitly asserting that *Fantastic Beasts* acts as a vehicle for Rowling's own political views⁶⁰⁹. She reads the characters Henry Shaw Sr. and Henry Shaw Jr., father-and-son business magnates whose ruthless political ambitions threaten the harmony of the wizarding world, as a thinly-veiled attack on Donald Trump from Rowling⁶¹⁰. Indeed, in many reviews within popular and trade press, Rowling is positioned as the key creative figure in the development of *Fantastic Beasts*. The aforementioned *New York Times* article by Logan Hill utilises quotations by Yates, Craig and Heyman, but the spectre of Rowling is always present: Heyman, for instance, discusses "themes of Jo's" in the film, while Yates notes the impact of unfolding political events on her scriptwriting style⁶¹¹. This is a common feature of many statements from cast and crew from *Fantastic Beasts*, and these have been used as the backbone for the ways in which reviewers understand the film. In these statements, cast and crew continue to defer to Rowling as an authority. It is remarkable for a director or producer to defer to the creative authority of a screenwriter in promotional situations, but in this instance it is arguably an extension of what began in *Harry Potter*, and signals the desire to position Rowling as the creative heart of the franchise.

While some critics inevitably sought to evaluate the success of the plot, notably there was also attention paid to *Fantastic Beasts* as a franchising endeavour, with some reviews exploring the film as an attempted revival and extension of the successful *Potter* franchise. Justin Chang's review from the *Los Angeles Times* praises the film's themes, noting its dystopian vision of a deteriorating society – "you know, a fantasy" – and brands it a balance of "high-spirited whimsy and darkly brooding atmosphere in the usual Rowling tradition."⁶¹² Simultaneously, however, Chang expresses concern regarding the film's

2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/18/movies/fantastic-beasts-and-where-to-find-them-review-eddie-redmayne-j-k-rowling.html>

⁶⁰⁸ Wendy Ide, "Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them review – a winning spell," *The Guardian*, November 20, 2016. Accessed September 26, 2018. <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2016/nov/20/fantastic-beasts-and-where-to-find-them-review>

⁶⁰⁹ Catherine Shoard, "Why Fantastic Beasts is a trump card for progressive youth," *The Guardian*, November 16, 2016. Accessed September 26, 2018. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/nov/16/fantastic-beasts-jk-rowling-us-elections-progressive-youth>

⁶¹⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹¹ Hill, "Rowling Cloaks Politics in a Tale of Magic."

⁶¹² Justin Chang, "'Harry Potter' prequel 'Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them' casts a faltering spell," *Los Angeles Times*, November 17, 2016. Accessed October 7, 2018. <http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/movies/la-et-mn-fantastic-beasts-review-20161114-story.html>

transparent franchising motives, claiming “it’s also not hard to feel a twinge of skepticism, a nagging suspicion that this busy, proficient, uninspired movie is soliciting not our sense of wonderment so much as our brand loyalty.”⁶¹³ This echoes concerns from other commentators, such as Dargis in the *New York Times*, who observes that the superficial plot of shepherding Newt’s escaped animals feels at times like a merchandising “catalogue”⁶¹⁴. Drawing comparisons to other franchising vehicles from the Marvel Cinematic Universe (“MCU”), the *Los Angeles Times* review ultimately concludes that the film offers plenty of drama and superficial interest, but that, in terms of its foundations as a franchise, *Fantastic Beasts* is a corporate beast: “it both benefits and suffers from the relentless commercial logic that has, for the moment, placed a bit of a stranglehold on its own considerable magic.”⁶¹⁵

The *Los Angeles Times* is not the only publication to discuss *Fantastic Beasts* in relation to the MCU, a parallel which, as this chapter has suggested, is important to draw considering Marvel’s dominance over long-form franchising in the contemporary media environment. Ben Child in *The Guardian*, however, takes a more positive view of *Fantastic Beasts*. Child claims that the heroes on display in *Fantastic Beasts* present a “rather more attainable vision of heroism ... Out go musclebound alpha males, impossibly attractive Nietzschean supermen” in favour of “a gentler, less ostentatious form of valor”⁶¹⁶. This contrast with the Marvel archetype serves *Fantastic Beasts* well, Child argues, not only because it offers heroes with which audiences can identify, but because it offers differentiation in the market, an alternative to the hegemony of the Marvel Cinematic Universe, and a powerful template to keep Warner Bros. a key player in the film industry⁶¹⁷. As Child claims in another review for *The Guardian*, “These movies are generally seen as being part of the trend towards “cinematic universe” world-building, but they fit the mould of what we’ll call the Hollywood “super spinoff” just as well ... they take supporting characters – in the case of *Star Wars* and *Fantastic Beasts*, barely mentioned figures from in-canon history – and place them front and centre.”⁶¹⁸ Here, *Fantastic Beasts* can be seen to

⁶¹³ Ibid.

⁶¹⁴ Dargis, “*Fantastic Beasts* Unleashes Rowling’s Magic.”

⁶¹⁵ Chang, “‘Harry Potter’ prequel casts a faltering spell.”

⁶¹⁶ Child, “Is *Fantastic Beasts* the antidote to our alpha-male superhero addiction?” *The Guardian*, November 17, 2016. Accessed September 26, 2018. <https://www.theguardian.com/film/filmblog/2016/nov/17/fantastic-beasts-marvel-superheroes-alpha-males>

⁶¹⁷ Ibid.

⁶¹⁸ Ben Child, “Twist in the tale: super spin-offs start to replace film remakes and sequels,” *The Guardian*, October 20, 2016. Accessed September 26, 2018. <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2016/oct/20/super-spinoffs-replacing-remakes-fantastic-beasts>

adopt a familiar transmedia world-building strategy that echoes the form, style and release pattern of the most successful Hollywood studios.

The reception of *Fantastic Beasts*, then, has been by no means straightforward. Critical reviews have ranged from the wildly positive to the cautiously cynical, and even box office numbers can be interpreted in a number of ways. Although hitting \$800m at the global box office has been heralded by Warner Bros. as a positive result, *Fantastic Beasts* has nonetheless been dogged by pessimistic evaluations of its success⁶¹⁹. This is due in part to the inherited success of *Harry Potter*, and in particular *Deathly Hallows Part 2*. With these comparisons inevitably being made between the two franchises, *Fantastic Beasts* appears to have underperformed in comparison to its predecessors⁶²⁰. A number of factors make this comparison unhelpful in understanding the actual impact of *Fantastic Beasts*, however: namely, because *Fantastic Beasts* is the first post-*Potter* wizarding world film after a five-year gap; because *Fantastic Beasts* is the first film in a series, while *Harry Potter* (and particularly *Deathly Hallows Part 2*) had eight films in which to build momentum; and because the *Potter* films were based on phenomenally successful novels and possessed immense cultural currency, whereas *Fantastic Beasts* attempts to build from the ground up. Although a gap of five years is no colossal stretch of time, it is also the case that the Hollywood media environment was somewhat different in 2011 than 2016, with the MCU and *Star Wars* in the ascendancy in the latter period.

Conclusion.....

Fantastic Beasts, alongside the West End stage play *Cursed Child*, was the first substantial new world-building text in ‘J.K. Rowling’s Wizarding World’ following the release of *Deathly Hallows Part 2* in 2011. As a result, the film is important to consider as a point of transition and for its pioneering role in expanding the franchise’s intellectual property into new timelines, locations, characters, and plotlines. This chapter has sought to explore *Fantastic Beasts* through three strands: its production context, its textual motifs, and its reception context. As I have argued, it is impossible to detach *Fantastic Beasts* from its roots in the *Harry Potter* franchise; simultaneously, however, the film was made according to different brand strategies and is a product of a different industrial environment from its

⁶¹⁹ D’Alessandro, “Fantastic Beasts Gobbls Up Teen Girl.”

⁶²⁰ D’Alessandro, “Fantastic Beasts Gobbls Up Teen Girl.”

predecessors. These dual factors have indelibly shaped the film that was produced, as well as how it was promoted and received.

The first section of this chapter explored the production contexts of *Fantastic Beasts*: its textual development from a static encyclopedia, written as supplementary material and sold for charity in the early 2000s, to its incarnation as the foundation of a five-film franchise in 2016. J.K. Rowling was a central figure throughout this transition, but her role developed from a traditional author figure towards a transmedial brand guardian participating in franchising endeavours alongside Warner Bros.. Rowling's involvement arguably attempts to ascribe legitimacy to a fledgling franchising effort possessing little pre-existing cultural capital, but, as the controversy around 'The History of Magic in North America' demonstrates, this leaves her authority susceptible to challenge. The subsequent section of this chapter explored the key features of *Fantastic Beasts* as a film text: notably, the way it negotiates its flexible status as an adaptation, and the ways in which its narrative, characters and settings reflect a dual desire to pay homage to *Harry Potter* while establishing *Fantastic Beasts* as a spin-off world-building franchise that can compete with similar franchises from Marvel and *Star Wars*. The final section examined how *Fantastic Beasts* has been received, firstly in terms of cinematic audiences and secondly by reviewers. This section found that the cultural impact of *Fantastic Beasts* is largely inseparable from its relationship to *Harry Potter*, and dogged by comparisons to its predecessors, which is exacerbated by Rowling's continuing perceived involvement with the project.

Overall, the *Fantastic Beasts* film is perhaps best understood through the lens of the guidebook from which it originated. Narratives and settings that serve Warner Bros.' purposes have been grafted onto a series of pre-existing concepts from the "Wizarding World". In this way, *Fantastic Beasts* is a paratext that resembles a guidebook to the details of Rowling's fictional universe: the film facilitates a traversal of scattered plot points, world-building artefacts and character arcs that are introduced but remain unexplored within the first volume of the five-film series. As a tour through "J.K. Rowling's Wizarding World", then, *Fantastic Beasts* is a more obviously contemporary franchise film, and is immediately and more obviously structured by a need to create and sustain ongoing world-building elements than was ever the case for *Harry Potter*.

Chapter Five

“I am the new past ... I am the new future”: Staging sequels, and *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*

Plays and musicals have a long shared history with Hollywood: like novels and autobiographies, theatre provides a rich picking ground of material ripe for adaptation onto the screen. There has always been a considerable flow of content between the two mediums, but recent decades have been characterised by a particular influx of high-budget stage productions based on successful blockbusters. For instance, in the new millennium London’s West End has seen the development of a significant number of theatrical versions of Hollywood films: *School of Rock*, *Legally Blonde: The Musical*, *Mean Girls*, *Spamalot*, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, *Shrek: The Musical*, and *Sister Act*, to name but a few. It is important to bear in mind that many of these productions – such as the aforementioned *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, or *Matilda* – are based not only on a film but on preceding novels, and indeed in some cases possess a long theatrical history of their own. What the proliferation of these productions demonstrates, however, is an ongoing trend towards translating films, literature and other media into big-budget theatrical performances over recent decades.

Disney films are arguably the most influential and profitable example of this. The Disney Theatrical Group is the live show, stageplay and musical production arm of The Walt Disney Company; the studio’s expansion into stage productions began in the late 1980s when Disney partnered with Feld Entertainment to produce *Walt Disney’s World on Ice*⁶²¹ (later *Disney on Ice*⁶²²), a touring ice-skating production featuring Disney-branded characters. Disney Theatrical Productions became a fully-functioning arm in the early 1990s, however, with the stage production of *Beauty and the Beast* (1994-2007) which premiered on Broadway⁶²³ and ran for 13 years⁶²⁴. It also transferred to London’s West End (1997-9)⁶²⁵,

⁶²¹ "Disney Ice Extravaganza Opens," *Los Angeles Times*, July 1, 1988. Accessed September 27, 2018. http://articles.latimes.com/1988-07-01/entertainment/ca-6453_1_walt-disney

⁶²² "Disney on Ice," Feld Entertainment, accessed September 27, 2018.

<https://www.feldentertainment.com/Shows/DisneyOnIce/>

⁶²³ Dan Dietz, *The Complete Book of 1990s Broadway Musicals* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 155.

winning Best New Musical at the 1998 Olivier Awards⁶²⁶. The musical has since been successful in tours and regional productions throughout the Americas, Europe and Asia. Other famous Disney films later translated to the stage include *Aladdin*, *Tarzan*, *Mary Poppins* and *The Little Mermaid*⁶²⁷, with *Frozen* the newest hit in 2017⁶²⁸. Perhaps Disney's biggest success story, however, is *The Lion King*: the musical opened on Broadway in 1997 and the West End in 1999. The production is still running in 2017, and is the best-selling musical in history⁶²⁹.

Disney has become a significant player in mainstream musical theatre arguably because its brand has the global popularity and financial backing to produce high-profile and spectacle-heavy adaptations of its successful films. Although Thomas Schumacher, president of Disney Theatrical Productions, claims that the box office turnover of the stage productions arm – rumoured to be around \$600million⁶³⁰ – is relatively insignificant in comparison to Disney's other ventures such as theme parks and television, the value of theatrical adaptations is clearly understood within the company's strategy. Schumacher recounts, in an interview in *Variety*, that he was shown a rough-cut of the *Frozen* film and was able to start working on the stage adaptation before the film's official release⁶³¹. Theatre therefore performs a role within Disney's wider strategy of synergy: plays and musicals provide a means of recycling branded characters, setting and storylines through other forms of media.

Disney Theatrical Productions emerged as part of a broader trend within mainstream theatre. Since the 1980s, commercial theatre districts in the western world – such as London's West End and New York's Broadway – have increasingly come to adopt particular strategies that prioritise high-budget productions, technological innovation and spectacle. This trend began with Andrew Lloyd Webber's production of the musical *Cats* (1981-2002), which originated in the West End and transferred to Broadway in 1982, continuing its run for 21

⁶²⁴ Julie Grossman, *Literature, Film, and Their Hideous Progeny: Adaptation and Elastica* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 127.

⁶²⁵ "Disney's Beauty and the Beast," *Theatre Crafts*, accessed September 27, 2018. <http://www.theatrecrafts.com/pages/home/shows/beauty-and-the-beast/>

⁶²⁶ "Olivier Winners 1998," *Official London Theatre*, accessed September 27, 2018. <https://officiallondontheatre.com/olivier-awards/winners/olivier-winners-1998/>

⁶²⁷ Julie Grossman, *Literature, Film, and Their Hideous Progeny*, 127.

⁶²⁸ "Frozen: The Broadway Musical," *FrozentheMusical.com*, accessed September 27, 2018. <https://frozenthemusical.com/>

⁶²⁹ "Worldwide," *LionKing.com*, accessed September 27, 2018. <https://www.lionking.com/worldwide/united-states>

⁶³⁰ Gordon Cox, "Disney Theatrical Productions Boast Nearly Unparalleled Global Reach," *Variety*, November 22, 2016. Accessed September 27, 2018. <https://variety.com/2016/legit/news/disney-theatrical-productions-the-lion-king-aladdin-frozen-1201923888/>

⁶³¹ *Ibid.*

years⁶³². Spurred on by this success, other productions from Lloyd-Webber soon followed, including *Phantom of the Opera*, *Miss Saigon* and *Les Miserables*. These “mega-musicals” have since attained unprecedented popular acclaim, with over 40 million people seeing *Les Miserables* in the West End by 1996⁶³³. According to Paul Allain and Jen Harvie, these productions have made large sums of money: *Phantom of the Opera* recorded a \$2.8 billion profit by 1999, for instance, and spawned a subsequent successful film adaptation⁶³⁴.

Although mega-musicals have offered attractive theatrical experiences for large numbers of people, some critics have concerns about the extent to which these styles of production have come to dominate the mainstream theatrical landscape. Mega-musicals are often attached to super-producers such as Lloyd-Webber, Sonia Friedman Productions or Disney Theatrical Productions, whose financial backing and industrial influence can secure top-level facilities and marketing through the value of their brand name. These productions, according to Allain and Harvie, tend to feature similar themes (such as love, loss, and triumph against adversity), catchy songs, technology-led spectacle, and impressive set-pieces, at the expense of diverse socio-political messages or formal experimentation⁶³⁵. The debates surrounding the value of mega-musicals echo similar debates also taking place in Hollywood, in which mega-blockbusters from studios such as Marvel and Disney are seen by some critics to sanitise and standardise mainstream filmmaking by valuing risk-averse, pre-established templates over creativity and artistic experimentation. The similarity between the top tiers of Hollywood film production and mainstream commercial theatre arguably offers one explanation as to why the two industries are seeing increased co-operation between media brands.

The stage production *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* can be understood to some extent within this broader context of interaction between mainstream theatre and Hollywood. *Cursed Child* is produced by Sonia Friedman Productions, the company responsible for other mega-productions such as *The Book of Mormon* and *Dreamgirls*. The play, created by acclaimed playwright Jack Thorne, director John Tiffany and author J.K. Rowling, was announced in June 2015⁶³⁶, and debuted in London's Palace Theatre in the West End in May

⁶³² Paul Allain and Jen Harvie, *Routledge Companion to Theatre and Performance* (London: Routledge, 2005), 206.

⁶³³ *Ibid.*, 207.

⁶³⁴ *Ibid.*, 206.

⁶³⁵ *Ibid.*, 207.

⁶³⁶ Elizabeth Paton, “JK Rowling reveals Harry Potter stage play to open in London,” *Financial Times*, June 25, 2016. Accessed October 5, 2018. <https://www.ft.com/content/84ffa53a-1bda-11e5-a130-2e7db721f996>

2016 to predominantly rave reviews from theatre critics⁶³⁷. *Cursed Child* transferred to New York's Broadway the following year. The story is split into two full-length plays, and follows several established characters – including Harry, Ron, Hermione, Ginny, and Draco – plus new characters Albus Severus Potter and Scorpius Malfoy, who enter their first year at Hogwarts when the play begins. The plot revolves around a scheme by the play's villain, Delphi, who manipulates Albus and Scorpius into time-travelling back to Harry's fourth year at Hogwarts in an attempt to prevent the death of Cedric Diggory. This act creates a series of disastrous unforeseen consequences, resulting in the creation of a dystopian alternate reality in which Voldemort rules the wizarding world ('V-World').

As this chapter will demonstrate, *Cursed Child* employs some of the same key strategies as other mega-productions, including elaborate set-pieces, technological innovation and an emphasis on live spectacle. Crucially, as a theatrical production attached to pre-existing franchising material, the play can also be read in line with similar efforts toward transmedia synergy commonly seen from the Disney Company. The play differs from its Disney counterparts, however, in a number of key ways. Significantly, Disney's theatre shows – and indeed most stageshows based on films – tend to function as a reasonably straightforward adaptation of the original film's storyline, albeit with extra songs or theatrical conventions. *Cursed Child*, on the other hand, is not a straight adaptation of *Harry Potter*: it is a sequel that extends the narrative, beginning 19 years after Harry's school years.

Although plays and musicals frequently play a supporting role in transmedia franchising, it is unusual for an entirely new text to debut as a stage production. *Cursed Child*, unlike most franchise-led theatre productions, is therefore a significant franchising world-building text in its own right; and, as this chapter will explore, the play seeks to produce its own coherent narrative and visual universe that extends from, reworks, and responds to its origins in *Harry Potter* in a number of complex ways. The form of the text as a stageplay also by necessity affects the type of story that has been created, and how that story is told. This chapter will explore these issues, firstly by looking at some of the industrial

⁶³⁷ Susannah Clapp, "Harry Potter and the Cursed Child review – the spell-binding is utterly theatrical," *The Guardian*, July 21, 2016. Accessed September 27, 2018. <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2016/jul/31/harry-potter-and-the-cursed-child-review-palace-theatre>; Ben Brantley, "Review: 'Harry Potter and the Cursed Child' Casts a Spell Onstage," *New York Times*, July 25, 2016. Accessed September 27, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/26/theater/review-harry-potter-and-the-cursed-child-casts-a-spell-onstage.html>

Mark Shenton, "Harry Potter and the Cursed Child review at the Palace Theatre, London – 'entirely distinctive'," *The Stage*, July 26, 2016. Accessed September 27, 2018. <https://www.thestage.co.uk/reviews/2016/harry-potter-cursed-child-review-palace-theatre-london/>

and franchising context of the play – the role of the script, Rowling’s increasingly diffused authorship, and the #KeepTheSecrets campaign – in order to understand how the play is framed and constructed as an exclusive product. The chapter will then turn to an analysis of some of the play’s significant textual features – particularly its staging design, themes, and iconography –in order to consider how the play depicts the wizarding world, and how far the play acts as a transition between the past and future of the *Harry Potter* franchise. Much like my discussion of *Fantastic Beasts* in Chapter 4, I argue here that *Cursed Child* is a paratext that attempts to bridge the gap between two eras: the foundations set by the *Harry Potter* franchise and the series of next-generation content that looks to diversify the Wizarding World into new forms and media.

***Exclusivity and belonging*.....**

As I will explore later in this chapter, the decision to produce *Cursed Child* as a stageplay has shaped the type of story it tells; to begin, however, it is important to explore how its form also frames how it operates as a franchising product. Most significantly, compared to the global reach of the *Harry Potter* books and films, the live production is relatively inaccessible and is marked by a number of exclusionary factors. The play is geographically specific, for instance: when it opened in 2016, the only way to see it was to travel to London. In addition, access to the production is limited by audience capacity – as of 2017, it has generated incredibly high demand and is consistently sold out over a year in advance, with only a limited number of tickets available online. *Cursed Child* is also exclusive in terms of its pricing strategy; at time of writing, the cheapest tickets for the London production start at £40 per person, but a vast proportion cost between £140-290 per person. Many commercial theatrical productions in the West End impose similar restrictions on accessibility, particularly in terms of geographical specificity and affordability. I argue, though, that *Cursed Child* is a particularly extreme example of this: the play is double the price of other West End productions because it is separated into two parts. This heightened sense of exclusivity is also noteworthy because it is a clear departure from the accessibility of *Potter* texts historically: the books and films, which traditionally defined *Harry Potter*, were relatively affordable products released simultaneously around the world. (In fact, global audience participation has been a particularly defining feature of the *Harry Potter* phenomenon, as evidenced by the book release parties and midnight film screenings that accompanied the release of each new

text in the *Potter* saga, not to mention the multiplicity of fan conventions and online fan communities around the world.) If previous *Harry Potter* texts have been defined by their global audiences, then, *Cursed Child* is designed to tap into a markedly different impulse: it is a defiantly exclusive venture.

It is worth reiterating at this point that the play's exclusivity is especially significant because *Cursed Child* is a new text that extends the narrative of *Harry Potter* and features valuable branded characters with global familiarity. Unlike West End adaptations of popular films – such as *The Lion King*, or *Legally Blonde: The Musical*, for instance – which adapt a familiar story, the play instead has significant world-building potential and thus serves as a cornerstone of post-*Potter* franchise expansion. The fact that the play is marked by particular and heightened factors of exclusivity, then, is integral to understanding its identity, and the next stages of the franchise's expansion.

The publication of the first *Cursed Child* script-book, the 'Rehearsal Edition', occurred on July 31st 2016⁶³⁸, with a final 'Definitive Edition' following in 2017. The release of the script-book arguably attempted to mediate and mitigate the play's inherent exclusivity; because of *Cursed Child*'s inaccessibility, the script serves as the primary mode of engagement for the vast majority of audiences. Technically, the script renders the play's plot fully accessible to global markets, but it is nonetheless a problematic text. This is because, firstly, its script form is a significant departure from the medium in which the story was designed to be experienced: most obviously, the script lacks a number of key features inherent within the performed version, including actors, staging and the influence of the theatre environment. (The staging in particular is a key facet of *Cursed Child* which has been unanimously praised by critics⁶³⁹, and the role of production techniques in rendering the magical world theatrically is something this chapter will return to later.) Secondly, the script contains all the dialogue from the play, and some stage directions, but does not convey other basic performance conventions such as body language and intonation.

Despite the fact that the script is unable to communicate key theatrical features, its publication nonetheless makes sense in the context of the *Harry Potter* franchise. In addition

⁶³⁸“Exciting publishing programme from J.K. Rowling’s Wizarding World,” *Pottermore*.

⁶³⁹ Henry Hitchings, "Harry Potter and the Cursed Child review: A magical experience," *Evening Standard*, August 12, 2016. Accessed September 27, 2018. <https://www.standard.co.uk/go/london/theatre/harry-potter-and-the-cursed-child-review-a-magical-experience-a3304191.html>
Ann Treneman, "Theatre: Harry Potter and the Cursed Child: Parts One and Two at the Palace Theatre, W1," *The Times*, July 6, 2016. Accessed September 27, 2018. <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/astounding-wizardry-of-harry-potters-new-chapter-will-leave-you-spellbound-cl226kl2b>

to offering the play's plot and characterisation for global consumption, the release of the script follows in the written tradition of *Harry Potter* first established by the books. As with the original release of the novels, bookshops both in the UK and abroad hosted release parties for *Cursed Child* at midnight on July 31st 2016, with promotional materials provided by publisher Little, Brown in facilitating these events⁶⁴⁰. The organisation of these parties constructs a parallel between *Cursed Child* and its predecessors, with the publisher and bookstores arguably seeking to generate interest in the script as a successor to the *Potter* books. To this end, the official marketing of the script often publicised it as "the eighth story"⁶⁴¹, drawing explicitly on its relationship with the *Potter* saga, with coverage in popular media following suit: sources such as the BBC⁶⁴² and the Washington Post⁶⁴³ labelled it "the eighth book". This correlation with Rowling's novels was likely designed to maximise sales and lend the play legitimacy (which, because of its shared authorship, was an important factor, something which will be discussed in more detail later), but this consequently produced some confusion regarding the identity of the script. Despite the fact that Rowling tweeted that the script was "#NotANovel" (@JKRowling, 1:19AM, February 11, 2016), the point was nonetheless missed by some fans according to a number of reviews posted on online retailer Amazon's website⁶⁴⁴.

If the script attempts to counteract issues of exclusivity surrounding the production, the play's marketing is significant because, conversely, it highlights some of the exclusionary factors at work in *Cursed Child*. Since the play's opening in May 2016, the #KeeptheSecrets

⁶⁴⁰ Pottermore Correspondent, "Midnight at Waterstones Piccadilly: the eighth Harry Potter story hits shelves," *Pottermore*, July 31, 2016. Accessed September 27, 2018. <https://www.pottermore.com/news/report-from-waterstones-piccadilly-cursed-child-book-launch>

⁶⁴¹ Pottermore Team, "New details on Cursed Child, the 'eighth Harry Potter story'," *Pottermore*, October 23, 2015. Accessed September 27, 2018. <https://www.pottermore.com/news/cursed-child-eighth-harry-potter-story> "Harry Potter and the Cursed Child - Parts One and Two (Special Rehearsal Edition)," *Little, Brown*, accessed September 27, 2018. https://www.littlebrown.co.uk/books/detail_page?isbn=9780751565355

⁶⁴² "Harry Potter and the Cursed Child to be eighth book," *BBC*, February 10, 2016. Accessed September 27, 2018. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-35539552>

⁶⁴³ Jessica Contrera, "The new Harry Potter book is here, and if you wanted it to be like the old ones, well..." *Washington Post*, July 31, 2016. Accessed September 27, 2018. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/arts-and-entertainment/wp/2016/07/31/the-new-harry-potter-book-is-here-and-if-you-wanted-it-to-be-like-the-old-ones-well/>

⁶⁴⁴ Alice Vincent, "'Rowling, you owe your fans a BOOK!': Harry Potter fans outraged that Cursed Child script is, in fact, a script," *The Telegraph*, August 4, 2016. Accessed September 27, 2018. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/theatre/what-to-see/rowling-you-owe-your-fans-a-book-harry-potter-fans-outraged-that/>

Clarisse Loughrey, "Harry Potter and the Cursed Child: Fans rage against script format despite warnings from JK Rowling," *The Independent*, August 3, 2016. Accessed September 27, 2018. <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/news/harry-potter-and-the-cursed-child-fans-are-raging-its-a-script-a-not-a-book-despite-jk-rowlings-a7170551.html>

hashtag has been employed by creative executives such as Rowling to encourage audiences to refrain from discussing the play's plot and production values in public spaces:

“So, reaction to first preview was... wonderful. Feedback is fans really do want to #KeepTheSecrets for each other's sake. #DontBeWormtail” (@JKRowling, 12:29 AM, June 8, 2016.)

The phrase also acts as a slogan of sorts, featuring on promotional material and production ephemera, including on tickets for the play and free badges offered in the play's interval. (See Appendix 1, Figure 11.) The phrase has its origins in the *Harry Potter* series: it refers to a hidden location that can only be accessed by a designated “Secret-Keeper”. Sirius Black was the Secret-Keeper for the location of Harry's parents when they were hiding from Voldemort, and Harry subsequently becomes Secret-Keeper for Sirius's family home, 12 Grimmauld Place. The act of staying silent about the production is therefore allied with familiar characters from *Harry Potter* in order to present the concept of exclusivity as noble and appealing. On the other hand, those who chose to divulge information were explicitly associated with villainous character Wormtail by Rowling on Twitter with her hashtag “#DontBeWormtail”⁶⁴⁵, which arguably functions as an attempt to control fan activity through shaming. The act of keeping secrets – of separating insiders from outsiders – is a theme that already has roots in *Harry Potter*, then, which helps to explain how exclusivity manifests so explicitly within *Cursed Child*'s marketing and is consequently normalised.

The ostensible aim of #KeepTheSecrets is to prevent the ‘spoiling’ of key aspects of the production for audiences who have yet to see the play, then, but the campaign also arises directly as a result of the exclusionary nature of *Cursed Child* as a stageplay. It exemplifies the problems inherent in using a live show as a world-building franchise initiative: not everyone is able to experience the story, despite its global demand. Furthermore, the slogan contributes to the exclusivity of the play by marking out fans who have seen the play as part of an exclusive group who know “secrets” that other fans do not. Although the exclusivity of *Cursed Child* inevitably affects global engagement with the play, it does nonetheless serve a purpose in terms of driving demand for the product and framing interpretation, however. Unlike the *Potter* books and films, or other next-generation texts like *Fantastic Beasts*, which are globally accessible and characterised by intense widespread fan engagement, *Cursed Child*'s value is to some extent *bound up* in its exclusivity. The high ticket prices may inhibit some audiences from ever engaging with the text, but they contribute to notions surrounding

⁶⁴⁵ J.K. Rowling, Twitter post, Jun 8, 2016, 12:29AM.
https://twitter.com/jk_rowling/status/740445565826281472

the quality and prestige of the production. Similarly, the location of the play –the West End, a specific area of the UK but one which is widely considered the centre of prestigious theatrical production – constructs *Cursed Child* as a valuable and prestigious event. The play is not necessarily a text that facilitates continual and recurring engagement in the same way that the *Potter* books and films do; instead, as a high-budget West End experience in the vein of mega-musicals like *Cats*, *Les Miserables* and *The Lion King*, it offers intense live spectacle as a special event. #KeeptheSecrets serves a similar function within this context: the slogan emphasises the importance of seeing the play live.

Exclusivity and belonging are therefore defining factors of *Cursed Child*, but this is doubly significant because they mirror similar themes in *Harry Potter*. As I explored earlier, ‘Secret-Keepers’ embody one way in which exclusivity is presented as a noble position in *Harry Potter*, but the wizarding world plays with numerous other similar ideas. For instance, the very concept of magic in the *Harry Potter* universe is rooted in intrinsic ability: one is either born with magical powers or is not. Some people have ‘pure’ blood, and some do not. Some people have money and social status, and some do not. Some people are brave, some are clever, some are kind, and some are cunning. Some magical beings are granted full autonomy (humans), and some are not (house elves, goblins). Some people are good (Gryffindors), and some are not (Slytherins). That is not to say that the *Potter* texts uncomplicatedly support notions of exclusivity or belonging: the books and films characterise Voldemort as the villain because he believes that non-magical people are inferior, and characters such as Snape and Wormtail complicate binary notions of good versus evil. The texts also offer particularly inclusive messages that operate alongside this: Harry’s kindness towards Dobby and the elf’s subsequent freedom encourages the rejection of prejudice, for instance. Nonetheless, *Harry Potter* depicts a world characterised by and preoccupied with dichotomies between social groups. It is thus a core underpinning theme of the wizarding world that some people are perceived as better than, or different to, others.

Cursed Child similarly constructs hierarchies and dichotomies between those who are able to access the production and those who are not. The “#KeeptheSecrets” campaign is founded upon the premise of segregating those who have seen the play from those who have not. However, there are various mediating factors which attempt to offset the play’s exclusivity, such as the publication of the script-book and the Friday Forty which offers cheaper tickets each week. Like those in *Harry Potter*, then, the values that *Cursed Child* projects are not uniform and entirely consistent, and there is an interesting duality in its

contradictions. The tension in *Cursed Child* between inclusivity and exclusivity is especially significant, though, because of its corollary in *Harry Potter*, and it arguably manifests so distinctly because of this link.

One last consequence worth mentioning in regards to ‘#KeepTheSecrets’, and the exclusivity of the play as a whole, is the consequent silencing of fan discourse and limitation of fan engagement with the play. Although there are spaces in which fan discussion can take place – behind hashtags on social media sites such as Twitter and Tumblr, for instance – these are largely separate from mainstream spaces of discourse. This issue is compounded by the fact that *Cursed Child* has been received negatively by some subsets of fans, especially regarding ‘queerbaiting’ in the play, which Judith Fathallah has defined as “a strategy by which writers and networks attempt to gain the attention of queer viewers via hints, jokes, gestures, and symbolism suggesting a queer relationship between two characters, and then emphatically denying and laughing off the possibility”⁶⁴⁶. Although coverage of queerbaiting in *Cursed Child* in mainstream news outlets and the trade press does exist, these have been limited in number⁶⁴⁷. This is in part because of the encouraged secrecy surrounding the production and in part, arguably, because of the exclusionary nature of *Cursed Child* – reinforced by the #KeeptheSecrets campaign, which prevented reviewers from discussing the play as well as fans⁶⁴⁸. For comparison, the controversy caused by Rowling’s ‘A History of Magic in North America’ writing on Pottermore, which she wrote as promotion for *Fantastic Beasts*, led to considerable backlash in fan communities, when Rowling was accused of mishandling her representation of minority groups (in this case, Native Americans). This fan backlash was then reported on in a variety of media publications. (See Chapter 4.) Despite similar fan backlash regarding the representation of LGBT lifestyles – another minority group – in *Cursed Child*, there has been comparatively little discussion in the mainstream media.

This is not the first time that attempts to silence fan discourse have occurred in the history of *Harry Potter*: in the early 2000s, Warner Bros. drew criticism in both mainstream

⁶⁴⁶ Judith Fathallah, "Moriarty's ghost: or the queer disruption of the BBC's Sherlock," *Television & New Media* 16, no. 5 (2015): 491.

⁶⁴⁷ Aja Romano, "The Harry Potter universe still can't translate its gay subtext to text. It's a problem," *Vox*, September 4, 2016. <https://www.vox.com/2016/9/4/12534818/harry-potter-cursed-child-rowling-queerbaiting>

⁶⁴⁸ Clapp, "The spell-binding is utterly theatrical.;" Theo Bosanquet, "Review: Harry Potter and the Cursed Child Works Serious Magic on the West End Stage," *Time*, July 25, 2016. Accessed September 27,

2018. <http://time.com/4422192/harry-potter-cursed-child-play-review/>

Jack Shepherd, "Harry Potter and the Cursed Child, review: A magical experience tailor made for the stage,"

The Independent, July 26, 2016. Accessed September 27, 2018. <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/tv/reviews/harry-potter-and-the-cursed-child-review-palace-theatre-a-magical-experience-tailor-made-for-the-a7155381.html>

media and fan communities for sending cease-and-desist letters to fan websites⁶⁴⁹. J.K. Rowling was also publicly embroiled in a legal battle against the creator of the ‘Harry Potter Lexicon’, an online encyclopedia dedicated to the franchise, a move which has since been read as an attempt to remove any barriers to Pottermore’s supremacy as an online encyclopedia⁶⁵⁰. The silencing of fan discourse in the case of ‘#KeepTheSecrets’, however, differs from these examples because it has no basis in legal proceedings: it is instead a marketing approach that encourages particular interpretations of a text and attempts to implicitly police fan response. In fact, although the *Harry Potter* franchise has a history of problematic responses to fandom, 2011-17 saw an increasing strategy towards more implicit fan control. This is most obviously manifest in the development of Pottermore: as Chapter 1 argues, Pottermore’s original iteration (2011-2015) featured minor concessions to fan engagement, including moderated message boards and a ‘common room’, but the present incarnation of Pottermore (2015—) offers no means for fans to interact with each other or with the website. ‘#KeeptheSecrets’ can be viewed as a similar approach to fan management that implicitly controls and minimises fan participation. This is arguably a strategy with increasing significance for ‘J.K. Rowling’s Wizarding World’ as it enters a phase of precarity, in which new texts with little pre-existing cultural value attempt to expand the wizarding world beyond its existing boundaries. An increasing engagement with exclusivity – and its counterpoint, belonging – as a textual motif and as a franchising strategy can be understood along similar lines: as a means of controlling how new texts, products and experiences are produced, disseminated and received.

The following section will explore Rowling’s shifting authorial relationship with the *Harry Potter* franchise through the lens of her involvement with *Cursed Child*, before moving on to an analysis of the themes of the play in order to evaluate its role as a franchising tool.

***Rowling’s diluted authorship*.....**

Before moving on to a discussion of how *Cursed Child* operates textually, it is important to consider Rowling’s relationship with the play because it has implications for the cultural

⁶⁴⁹ Stephanie Grunier, "Warner Bros. claims Harry Potter sites," *ZDNet*, December 21, 2000. Accessed September 27, 2018. <https://www.zdnet.com/article/warner-bros-claims-harry-potter-sites/>

⁶⁵⁰Crace, "Harry Potter: the last battle."

context in which the play emerged. As I mentioned in the previous section, the publication of the script-book was allied with the written tradition of *Harry Potter* in order to capitalise upon the immense success of the book series and frame the play as their natural successor. This was aided in part by the association of Rowling with the script: she is credited with the play's 'original story', and her name is first and largest on the published editions. (See Appendix 1, Figure 12.) Rowling's brand name is also utilised heavily in related promotion for the play. In the 'Cursed Child' tab on Pottermore 2.0, for instance, content often features the play's three chief creative figures – Rowling, Jack Thorne and John Tiffany – talking together about the project, but Thorne and Tiffany frequently return to Rowling's influence on the play and on their lives⁶⁵¹. Thorne, in an interview with Pottermore entitled "*Cursed Child* creatives on collaborating with J.K. Rowling", discusses Rowling's "generosity in the way she listened to what was inside our heads, and then fed into that with her brilliant mind"⁶⁵². Another page on Pottermore, this time featuring a promotional video ("J.K. Rowling takes us into the rehearsal room"), also positions Rowling as a key creative figure, firstly in the title of the page and secondly in the way the camera literally follows her into the rehearsal room and keeps her within the frame, facing the camera, for almost the entire duration of the video⁶⁵³. Official marketing for the play, then, is carefully managed in order to preserve Rowling's aura of authority, in much the same way that other recent *Potter* products – such as *Fantastic Beasts* and Pottermore – shore up her authority by emphasising her centrality to their development.

As I have established in this thesis, the spectre of Rowling's authorship is invoked so frequently and with such precision within new *Potter* paratexts arguably because it is more precarious in the initial post-*Potter* stages of the wizarding world franchise than in previous years. Crucially, Rowling's authorship is transparently collaborative in *Cursed Child*, and, interestingly, although the play's marketing often serves to reinforce her authorial role, there is also evidence of increasing acknowledgement of other creative figures within the authorship process. Pottermore's aforementioned interview with Rowling, Thorne and Tiffany claims that "[t]he three of them set the plot that day in J.K. Rowling's writing room. They strung together the narrative then and there in notebooks and then Jack and John flew

⁶⁵¹ "Harry Potter and the Cursed Child," *Pottermore*, accessed September 27, 2018.

<https://www.pottermore.com/cursed-child>

⁶⁵² The Pottermore Correspondent, "Cursed Child creatives on collaborating with J.K. Rowling."

⁶⁵³ "J.K. Rowling takes us into the Cursed Child rehearsal room," *Pottermore*, April 22, 2016. Accessed September 27, 2018. <https://www.pottermore.com/news/jk-rowling-takes-us-inside-cursed-child-rehearsals>

back to London to get started.”⁶⁵⁴ This statement acknowledges Rowling’s role in the origin story of *Cursed Child*, but it also places considerable emphasis on Thorne and Tiffany’s contributions, explicitly pointing to the further work they undertook in the creation of the play beyond their group meeting. This concession to an increasingly collaborative mode of authorship continues later in the interview, where Rowling is said to have “entrusted” the play to Thorne and Tiffany⁶⁵⁵, an interesting word choice because it implies a bequeathing or reduction of responsibility on her behalf. The aforementioned promotional video also acknowledges Thorne and Tiffany’s roles: although Rowling is constantly present, Thorne and Tiffany discuss their respective writing and directing processes alongside her in the frame.⁶⁵⁶

Rowling has clearly remained involved in the future of the wizarding world, then, although her authorial role post-*Potter* has taken an arguably atypical path: following the culmination of the *Potter* books and films, she has explicitly refused to publish further (printed) stories featuring Harry Potter⁶⁵⁷. Instead, she has become involved in the creation of new wizarding world content throughout diverse media, expanding her authorship from traditional print publishing into films, plays, and websites. Notably, these forms are characterised by a more collaborative approach to authorship, which has resulted in the acknowledgement of additional creative partners such as directors, film crews, playwrights, producers, and digital content managers in order to deliver these transmedia products. This increased collaboration nonetheless produces a tension, however, between the inevitable dilution of Rowling’s authorship and the continuing reliance of the franchise upon the perceived stability of her author function.

As Chapter 1 discussed, the trademark “J.K. Rowling’s Wizarding World” came into common use in 2015 to encompass next-generation *Potter* texts such as *Pottermore*, *Fantastic Beasts* and *Cursed Child*. The trademark effectively united post-*Potter* texts under Rowling’s brand name, extending her corporate control over the franchise at the same time as her role as a creative force was being diluted. *Cursed Child* is a particularly neat example of this dilution because it is so unclear what Rowling’s creative contribution to the play truly was: although textual analysis of the play’s content to discern her influence is certainly possible, there is no

⁶⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁷ Benedicte Page, “No more Harry Potter, JK Rowling ‘promises’ Daniel Radcliffe,” *The Guardian*, November 17, 2010. Accessed September 27, 2018. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2010/nov/17/harry-potter-jk-rowling-radcliffe>

hard evidence to support such speculation, and the marketing and surrounding ephemera for the play offer no definitive answers. The play therefore exemplifies a new, different stage of authorship in which Rowling's creative authority is potentially disrupted at the same time that other author figures are introduced and she transfigures into a brand management role. Although *Fantastic Beasts* also saw Rowling engaging in creative collaboration on film, this phenomenon is more marked in *Cursed Child* partly because *Fantastic Beasts* director David Yates – and other film creatives such as Steve Kloves and Stuart Craig – has a long-standing relationship with Rowling characterised by a public deference to her authority, and partly because Rowling's role as screenwriter for *Fantastic Beasts* is more easily defined than her contributions for *Cursed Child*. (See Chapter 4 for further discussion about this.) An interesting tension is therefore produced within *Cursed Child* precisely because it attempts to reconcile two seemingly conflicting concepts: the ongoing importance of Rowling's authorship and the validity of creative contributions from other potential author figures. More so than ever before, then, *Cursed Child* marks a shift in J.K. Rowling's authorial status.

Rowling's fractured authorship also offers a useful parallel for understanding how *Cursed Child* interacts with the wider *Harry Potter* franchise: just as tensions manifest as a result of her dual roles as author and brand manager, the play has an uneasy, sometimes inconsistent relationship with other products and texts within J.K. Rowling's Wizarding World. In some senses, *Cursed Child* is very much characterised by a close engagement with the original *Harry Potter* series. For instance, it revisits scenes from the original novels; the play features pre-existing characters and explores similar themes, such as love, war and loss; and it is structured around time travel, a narrative device first introduced in *Prisoner of Azkaban*. Simultaneously, however, *Cursed Child* creates a unique visual universe and structuring iconography which clearly departs from recognisable imagery from the *Potter* books and films, and the play's staging and production design creates a sense of magic that, as this chapter will argue, derives from particularly theatrical techniques. As a stagemovie sequel, *Cursed Child* exists in a separate context from *Harry Potter*, but nonetheless interacts with and reworks the stories in significant ways. Consequently the following section of this chapter will explore how far the play relies on *Potter* for its identity and the kind of story it tells as a result.

Past, present, future.....

The most obvious way that *Cursed Child* interacts with *Harry Potter* is in its role as a sequel. Although it extends the story of Harry and his friends into the next generation, the play's narrative is contingent upon revisiting events from the original books and films. In particular, as this section will demonstrate, *Cursed Child* is preoccupied with exploring and in some cases preserving the past. Most notably, Albus and Scorpius take several trips back in time to the Triwizard Tournament in *Goblet of Fire*, attempting to save Cedric Diggory's life by preventing him from winning the tournament. The climax of the play also sees another return to an event from the original series: the death of Harry's parents. Further, a main theme of *Cursed Child* revolves around Harry's ability, or inability, to confront the effects of the wizarding war in his youth, and the subsequent effect on his relationship with his son. In the final scene of the play, Harry tells Albus, "[i]t wasn't enough to be physically rid of [Voldemort] - I had to be mentally rid of him"⁶⁵⁸. (In a scene with Draco, Harry also says, "We've been so busy trying to rewrite our own pasts, we've blighted their present."⁶⁵⁹) Finally, Delphi, the main villain of the play, is revealed to be Voldemort's daughter, whose plans involve changing the past in order to create a fascistic universe ruled over by her father.

Cursed Child, then, revolves around revisiting the original *Potter* texts – and, crucially, reconfiguring them. Through the time travel narrative device, the play inserts Albus and Scorpius (and later, Harry, Ron, Hermione, Ginny and Draco) into familiar scenes from *Goblet of Fire*, but these scenes expand the original story by offering previously unexplored perspectives. In returning to the first task of the Triwizard Tournament, Albus and Scorpius participate as members of the watching crowd; later, Scorpius returns again to the same task, with the perspective shifted so he is watching his own self. (This is reminiscent of Hermione's own moment of self-recognition when she travels back in time in *Prisoner of Azkaban*.) When Delphi coerces Albus and Scorpius into returning to the tournament's third task, they meet Cedric Diggory in the maze: the pair watch as Cedric goes on to complete the task, resigning Cedric to death as they decide not to interfere in the flow of time. The emotional impact of this moment is partly generated by Albus and Scorpius's presence in an already familiar scene, placing the events of *Goblet of Fire* within a new context and offering new ways of understanding them. Finally, in the climax of the play, the protagonists travel

⁶⁵⁸ J.K. Rowling, John Tiffany and Jack Thorne, *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child Parts One and Two* (London: Little, Brown, 2016), 326.

⁶⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 279.

back to the night Harry's parents died; having defeated Delphi, they watch Voldemort murder James and Lily Potter because they – like Albus and Scorpius with Cedric in the maze – decide not to risk changing the past. The murder itself is never depicted on stage: the characters face out into the audience and the lines “Then we'll all witness it” (Hermione), “We'll all watch” (Ron)⁶⁶⁰, invites the audience into the act of reimagining the narrative.

In this way, *Cursed Child* inserts itself into the previously established narrative of *Harry Potter* and affects textual readings of the original series. The two stories share much more than a merely intertextual relationship: characters from *Cursed Child* literally intrude on the narrative of *Harry Potter*. Crucially, however, the play also emphasises the importance of *preserving* the narrative of those original texts and the inherent foolishness of using time travel to effect change. Delphi is characterised as the villain in part because she wishes to change the established version of events; Albus and Scorpius, too, come to regret meddling with the narrative of *Harry Potter* when they accidentally create ‘V-World’. *Cursed Child*'s time travel device offers the potential for a radical reconfiguring of *Harry Potter*, but this potential is never realised: travelling through time to the Triwizard Tournament adds extra interpretive possibilities to events in *Harry Potter* canon, but the resolution of the play comes from restoring the world, unaltered, to its original state. The revolutionary potential of time travel, then, is instead used to uphold and strengthen the perceived value of *Harry Potter*.

In the *Prisoner of Azkaban* film, Harry and Hermione travel back in time in an attempt to save Sirius Black and Buckbeak the hippogriff. The rightness of this act was signalled in the text through implicit endorsement from Dumbledore in his assertion that “three turns should do it, I think.” In *Cursed Child*, Albus and Scorpius attempt to right a similar wrong – the death of an innocent – but instead face disastrous consequences, and time travel is reframed as a “reckless” act in the play⁶⁶¹. Although there are a number of differences in the details of the time travel between *Prisoner of Azkaban* and *Cursed Child* – notably, Albus and Scorpius attempt to go back several decades as opposed to hours – which help to explain why time travel in *Cursed Child* has negative consequences, it is nonetheless the case that time travel serves an entirely different purpose in *Cursed Child* than in *Prisoner of Azkaban*: namely, to preserve the sanctity of the existing *Harry Potter* narrative. Indeed, this development is most evident through the figure of Professor McGonagall. In *Prisoner of Azkaban*, she gives Hermione a Time-Turner to attend lessons; in *Cursed Child*, however, she

⁶⁶⁰Ibid., 316-7.

⁶⁶¹Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne, *Cursed Child*, 215.

vehemently chastises Albus and Scorpius for using one⁶⁶². Although Albus and Scorpius are duly reprimanded for creating ‘V-World’, the message at the heart of *Cursed Child* is that going back in time *at all* is a straightforwardly terrible idea because it will counteract the flow of events that already exist. (Harry says to Cedric’s father in Act One, “Amos, playing with time? You know we can’t do that.”⁶⁶³) The world that led to the events of *Cursed Child* is therefore privileged as the default which should be reverted to, revered, and preserved.

Cursed Child is a paratext that is irrevocably linked with *Harry Potter*, but even though it employs a plot device that enables the play to engage with and rework the themes of its predecessor, it is instead significant for its decision to assert the original texts’ intrinsic value. Time-turning also enables another notable engagement with *Harry Potter*: the recycling of characters who died in the original series. The most significant example of this is Snape: in ‘V-World’, Snape survived the Battle of Hogwarts and is able to help Scorpius reverse time. Where Snape’s perspective had previously only been seen through the memories he gave to Harry in *Deathly Hallows*, *Cursed Child*’s resurrection of Snape facilitates an extension to his story. Dumbledore can be read similarly: like Snape, he also appears in *Cursed Child*, albeit in the form of his portrait. The portrait helps to provide closure to Harry, offering him a means to work through the traumas of his past and his deeply-held childhood resentment. Like Snape, Dumbledore’s life was previously framed in *Deathly Hallows* through subjective incomplete snapshots such as the rumours circulating about him and his family because of Rita Skeeter’s book.

Crucially, the revival of key characters from the original series also contributes to a cultivation of nostalgia for the *Potter* texts. As this chapter demonstrates, the play can be understood through the interplay of two differing, occasionally clashing functions: the act of reworking *Harry Potter* and the act of supporting *Harry Potter*, or a forging ahead into the future and a preservation of the past. Nostalgia is key in effecting the latter, and the play’s dedication to returning to familiar events, and exploring issues from the *Potter* texts, encourages a return to and remembrance of the original series. Dumbledore, for instance, offers closure to Harry through an extension of his storyline, but it is partly achieved through a rehashing of some of his own advice from the original novels: that “love blinds”, “to suffer is as human as to breathe”, and “those we love never truly leave us”⁶⁶⁴. The rest of the play is

⁶⁶²Ibid., 213-6.

⁶⁶³Ibid., 37.

⁶⁶⁴Ibid., 274-6.

also structured around similar opportunities for nostalgia. Before going back in time, Albus and Scorpius gaze at Hogwarts and discuss their feelings about the school. The characters stand centre-stage and look out into the audience space; consequently, Hogwarts is never physically depicted, and instead the audience is invited to imagine their own vision of the castle. (This is also prescient of the moment at the end of the play where the characters stare into the audience while James and Lily Potter are killed.) *Cursed Child* is littered with references to *Harry Potter* lore: from Polyjuice Potion transformation, to love potions, to Patronuses, to sweets such as Jelly Slugs and Pepper Imps. The play's return to the world of *Harry Potter*, then, fulfils a dual function: it encourages further engagement with and reworking of the story, while evoking nostalgia as a means to preserve the original series' textual value.

Cursed Child's close relationship with *Harry Potter* evokes nostalgia, but it also serves a practical franchising purpose. In addition to recurring characters, the play features recurring locations such as Hogwarts, Godric's Hollow and the Ministry of Magic – in part arguably because they are already familiar to audiences. Similarly, positioning the main villain as the daughter of Voldemort is a useful plot device because the motivations of such a character are easy to communicate, having been previously established in *Harry Potter*. More than familiarity, however, it is the already proven *success* of these concepts from the *Potter* series that matters here: *Cursed Child* relies on its predecessor in part because it offers an already proven formula. The play's status as a sequel is another example of this: while *Fantastic Beasts* branches out into new times and places, *Cursed Child* remains curiously close to home, featuring only a small number of new characters and locations, and rehashing familiar plotlines. *Cursed Child* can thus be read as a conservative approach to franchising in some senses, despite the fact that this assessment is complicated by its nature as a stageplay. *Cursed Child* is in some senses a quintessential world-building artefact, especially in the way it returns to its preceding texts and explores them. The act of filling in the textual gaps is a common franchising phenomenon in the contemporary Hollywood environment, as evidenced by the proliferation of spin-off movies such as *Rogue One*, *Solo*, and *Bladerunner 2049* (Denis Villeneuve, 2017). *Cursed Child*, however, is a somewhat more unusual and exclusionary form of transmedia world-building than similar filmic initiatives.

Indeed, although *Cursed Child* relies on *Harry Potter* in part for the sake of nostalgia and brand familiarity, the extent to which it draws upon some minutiae from the *Potter* franchise arguably also contributes to its exclusivity. The scenes from the Triwizard

Tournament that *Cursed Child* revisits are small segments from *Goblet of Fire*, one book in a seven-book series (or one film in an eight-film series). With the *Goblet of Fire* book released 16 years (and the film 11 years) before the play opened in 2016, full comprehension of the plot depends in part on an in-depth knowledge of the original series that may exclude casual audience members. The play also features very minor characters from *Harry Potter*, such as Amos Diggory, and the plot hinges on familiarity with minor events, such as the prophecy told about Harry's birth ("born to those who have thrice defied him, born as the seventh month dies..."⁶⁶⁵). For this reason, *Cursed Child* is inherently weighted towards *Potter* fans. The play does attempt to mitigate this exclusionary effect, partly through plot exposition – Albus asks Scorpius to remind him how the Triwizard Tournament works, for instance – and through foreshadowing, such as when Hermione Granger teaches students the function of a Patronus. The programme available for purchase at the theatre also features a four-page segment that offers an outline of all seven *Potter* books, which provides audiences with a memory aid. Some aspects of the play are universally accessible, such as the familial connection between Delphi and Voldemort, but the play is also characterised by a particular form of exclusivity, rewarding those with a more in-depth knowledge of the franchise.

Interestingly, *Cursed Child* explicitly signifies an awareness of its role as a next-generation wizarding world text by making reference to creatures seen in the *Fantastic Beasts* film. Hermione, for instance, claims that "there are mountain trolls riding riding graphorns through Hungary"⁶⁶⁶, and "Tincture of Demiguise"⁶⁶⁷ is a potions ingredient that Albus and Scorpius use to write on the blanket in Godric's Hollow, a significant part of the plot resolution. The inclusion of such creatures in *Cursed Child* arguably indicates a collaboration between the two franchise texts and a wider transmedia world-building strategy that incorporates not only *Harry Potter* but next-generation texts such as *Fantastic Beasts*. Indeed, this chapter will now go on to examine some of the play's themes and staging to explore how, despite its preoccupation with revisiting *Harry Potter*, *Cursed Child* also attempts to depart from the wizarding world that preceded it.

⁶⁶⁵Ibid., 269.

⁶⁶⁶Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne, *Cursed Child*, 31-2.

⁶⁶⁷Ibid., 284.

Themes, staging, and creative design.....

The upcoming section will examine how *Cursed Child* offers a unique, coherent iteration of the Wizarding World universe that is mediated by its form as a play. I will first explore some of its thematic concerns, before moving on to a discussion of some of its staging. For this, I will rely on personal observations made as a result of visits to the play in between June and November 2017, as well as references to the script-book for dialogue.

In terms of its themes, *Cursed Child* has some aspects in common with its predecessor: friendship and love play a continuing role, with Delphi defeated by her underestimation of the group's combined strength in a Godric's Hollow wandfight. In contrast, however, while *Harry Potter* depicts the outbreak of war, *Cursed Child* is preoccupied with the consequences of that war and the ripples of trauma it creates. As this chapter has already explored, the play is concerned with time and with revisiting the past, but, particularly, with reconciling the past with the present. In the play's staging, a large clock embodies this theme: it hangs suspended over the back of the stage, presiding over the production. The adult Harry is in some senses a vastly different character to the one we see in *Deathly Hallows*; if the book's epilogue ends with the words "All was well,"⁶⁶⁸ the play definitively asserts otherwise. *Cursed Child* depicts a man who has indeed been "physically rid" of Voldemort, but who, it becomes starkly apparent, is not "mentally rid of him"⁶⁶⁹. For the first time in 20 years, Harry's scar hurts, he begins to dream of Voldemort again, and he rapidly descends into an irrational frenzy in which he keeps his son hostage at Hogwarts with the Marauders' Map and becomes convinced that Scorpius Malfoy is the son of Voldemort.

Indeed, Harry's unresolved trauma – the past that will not stay buried – is intensely bound up in his relationship with Albus. His son's struggle arises from the difficulty of living under the cloud of his father's reputation, the 'war hero' Harry Potter, which is an obvious example of how the past protrudes into Harry's, and Albus's, present. More significantly, however, *Cursed Child* forges an intrinsic link between Albus's and Harry's childhoods through a series of dream sequences: one dream sees Harry – as a child in Privet Drive – tormented by visions of Voldemort; he is pulled into darkness, only to be replaced with Albus. This fairly overt metaphor demonstrates Harry's inability to deal with the traumas of his past and how this impacts on his adult life. (Trauma in *Cursed Child* is frequently

⁶⁶⁸ Rowling, *Deathly Hallows*, 607.

⁶⁶⁹ Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne, *Cursed Child*, 326.

manifested as literal baggage: suitcases are a key component of the play's staging, and on multiple occasions they double as graves. The dual function of suitcases as signifiers of trauma and death represent two interlocking key motifs of the play.) Similarly, by the end of *Cursed Child*, the resolution of Harry's anxiety about being a father to Albus helps him to come to terms with his own past, particularly his upbringing and his parents' death. (He says to Ginny, "It was only when I thought something had happened to Albus that I understood what my parents were able to do for me. A spell that could repel death.Love."⁶⁷⁰) Albus and Harry witness together the murder of Harry's parents, offering a working-through of the past in which they both participate.

The relationship between parents – and particularly fathers – and children is at the heart of *Cursed Child*, and this intergenerational focus (and conflict) unites the play's central theme: the interplay between the past and the future. Aside from Harry and Albus's issues, Amos Diggory's trauma over losing his son, Cedric, is the catalyst for the narrative of the play. (To Harry, he says: "I'm not interested in a memorial – not any more. ... I am here to ask you – beg you – to help me get him back."⁶⁷¹) Scorpius's life is marred by the infamy of his two potential father figures, Draco and Voldemort. Furthermore, after Delphi's defeat at the end of the play, she claims "I only wanted to know my father," to which Harry responds, "You'll always be an orphan. That never leaves you."⁶⁷² Delphi's desire to change time can be understood as an attempt to unite past and future – she declares "I am the new past ... I am the new future" when kidnapping Albus and Scorpius⁶⁷³ – but her own resolution with her father is denied arguably because she tries to *change* the past as opposed to *accepting* it. *Cursed Child* is thematically structured around the blurred boundaries between the past and the future, and the echoing of trauma across generations, but offers resolution in the act of accepting the past. (This can be also read as an allegory for how the play frames the original *Potter* texts, too: reasserting the ongoing value of those texts facilitates a moving beyond *Harry Potter*.)

Accepting the past, then, in order to move into the future, is a crucial theme in *Cursed Child*. Some of the play's staging and production decisions can be read similarly: as an homage to *Harry Potter* and simultaneously a conscious departure from established imagery. In the costume design, for instance, the play retains familiar concepts such as Hogwarts

⁶⁷⁰Ibid., 296-7.

⁶⁷¹Ibid., 36.

⁶⁷²Ibid., 313.

⁶⁷³Ibid., 237.

school robes, ties, and house banners, but these are realised with new visual iconography. These have been largely simplified, especially the house banners, which depict a stylised letter in the traditional house colours. (See Appendix 1, Figure 13.) The Dark Mark is also visually reimagined in the play in a series of harsh lines, in opposition to the sinuous snake symbolism familiar from the films. These changes to visually recognisable icons from the films represent a clear attempt to create a distinct brand image for *Cursed Child*, which is compounded by corresponding merchandise sold at the Palace Theatre. Simultaneously, however, they also represent small details which contribute to a unified visual world created by the play. The remainder of this chapter will discuss some of the play's significant staging decisions with reference to published critical reviews in order to assess the impact of the theatrical nature of *Cursed Child* and how it presents the fictional world of *Harry Potter*.

Firstly, one particularly interesting example of *Cursed Child*'s drive towards the construction of a unique visual world arises from the creative decision to cast a black actress as Hermione Granger, something which departs from the films – in which Hermione was portrayed by Emma Watson, a white actress – and arguably the books too, because although the books do not outright claim Hermione's whiteness, they do not claim her blackness either. The casting decision is interesting because it consequently departs from the ethnic representation established by the original texts. Commentary from creative executives associated with the play has remained unclear regarding the motivations for casting black actresses as Hermione, although Rowling has implied that the decision was entirely merit-based⁶⁷⁴. Another black actress was cast in the play's second casting call (and all understudy actresses are also black), however, so it is may be the case that, despite these claims, in this iteration of the wizarding world Hermione Granger is intentionally represented as a black woman. As a strategic decision, this subverts traditional perceptions of characters previously established by *Harry Potter*, again reworking and reconfiguring elements of the original texts.

The stage design and production value of *Cursed Child* are yet other significant contributors to the identity of the play, in particular the theatrical effects used to replicate magic. Many of the effects in *Cursed Child* are achieved through traditional sleight-of-hand techniques and illusions reminiscent of Victorian stage magic. Victorian illusions largely

⁶⁷⁴ Rebecca Ratcliffe, "JK Rowling tells of anger at attacks on casting of black Hermione," *The Guardian*, June 5, 2016. Accessed September 27, 2018. <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2016/jun/05/harry-potter-jk-rowling-black-hermione>

revolved around misdirection and the spectacular reveal, realised through sleight-of-hand, hidden mechanisms, quick-changes, smoke, deceptive lighting, and optical projection⁶⁷⁵. *Cursed Child* is shot through with examples of stage magic achieved through similar effects. Albus and Scorpius, for instance, visit St. Oswald's Home for Old Witches and Wizards in a particularly effects-heavy scene in which the geriatric in-patients wreak havoc on themselves, their carers, and the environment. One person pulls several metres of string out of their mouth, while another opens a book that catches fire, another drops the trousers of a carer, and yet another manoeuvres their own head around their body. In other scenes, characters are disarmed of their wands, with the wand disappearing from one hand and reappearing in another character's. Albus uses his wand to set fire to his Hogsmeade permission slip. The first trick in the whole production, in fact, comes when the cast runs at the barrier between Platforms 9 and 10: the act of crossing from Muggle to magical world is physically realised when, mid-leap, all school-age characters' clothing instantly changes from jeans and t-shirts to Hogwarts robes.

Contrasting use of light and darkness is another frequently recurring illusion used to achieve 'magical' effects. In one scene, Scorpius, Albus and Delphi drink Polyjuice Potion, transforming themselves into Harry, Ron and Hermione on-stage, achieved through strategic use of trapdoors and darkness. In a later scene, a centaur appears on stage, careful lighting rendering only the horse-like back legs visible. Similarly, in a duel between Harry and Draco, hidden figures submerged in darkness lift, flip and propel the actors around the stage to imitate the effects of spells cast by the actors. Another particularly noteworthy trick occurs when Harry, Ron and Hermione are sucked into the Ministry of Magic through a phonebox, with a combination of trapdoors, light manipulation, misdirection, and body-switching used to produce the effect⁶⁷⁶. Interestingly, because this trick – and others similar to it – requires so many different features in synchronicity, there is an increased likelihood of error. Indeed, what is interesting about *Cursed Child* is that despite the spectacular nature of some of the effects, they are also in some cases precarious and, because they rely on human judgement or the cooperation of multiple techniques simultaneously, occasionally prone to error. As Dominic Cavendish says in *The Telegraph*'s review of the play:

“The aesthetic is finely judged so that it's perfectly possible to detect the lightning-fast use of trap doors or sense the stage-hands lurking in the dark spots of Christine

⁶⁷⁵Michael Mangan, *Performing Dark Arts: A Cultural History of Conjuring* (Bristol, Intellect: 2007)

⁶⁷⁶Ann Heilmann, "Doing It With Mirrors: Neo-Victorian Metatextual Magic in *Affinity*, *The Prestige* and *The Illusionist*," *Neo-Victorian Studies* 2, no. 2 (Winter 2009/2010), 19.

Jones' gothic set, and yet let your imagination surrender to the invitation to be wowed, as in the books. This is a production that thrills at the aura of possibility lurking in the Victorian splendour of the theatre itself, a bygone age of smoke and mirrors."⁶⁷⁷

It is "perfectly possible" to see through some of the effects, and understand how they are achieved, in part because they are so simple. The mechanics of some of the levitation tricks, for instance, are easily recognisable: cables are visible when Delphi soars into the air or levitates a bench over Harry. Although some of the effects are arguably designed to evoke awe because of their sophistication and seamlessness, then, this is not always the case. As the *Telegraph* review states, it is not necessarily useful to understand these kinds of tricks as imperfections; instead, it can be argued that part of the enjoyment of *Cursed Child* comes from the suspension of disbelief required. As Susannah Clapp says in *The Guardian*'s review:

"You can see how some of the magic works, and see that some of it might fail. The show is more fragile, more human, because it is not dependent on mechanical special effects. It requires cooperation, even faith, from the audience."⁶⁷⁸

It is not necessarily that these effects need to be completely polished and seamless, then; indeed, their very fragility and capacity for error emphasises that these effects are real and being created in the moment, making the audience complicit in the production of 'magic'. Indeed, *Cursed Child* in some cases intentionally reveals its production secrets: in the aforementioned duelling scene between Harry and Draco, Harry casts a spell to obscure Draco's vision and black-clad hands emphatically spring out into the light, fingers wiggling while covering the actor's eyes. Here, the play can be seen to follow the classic three acts of Victorian stage magic: the 'pledge', where darkness is used to misdirect the audience and draw attention away from hidden people on the stage; followed by the 'turn', or the trick where unseen people manipulate the actors' bodies around the space; and thirdly, the 'prestige', whereby the movement of the actors' hands reveals the illusion⁶⁷⁹. This trick recurs again within *Cursed Child*, when Hagrid reverently holds a blanket in the shape of a baby Harry, only to toss the cloth formlessly over his shoulder as he exits.

⁶⁷⁷ Dominic Cavendish, "Harry Potter and the Cursed Child is a magical show with a strong emotional core - review," *The Telegraph*, July 20, 2016. Accessed September 27, 2018. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/theatre/what-to-see/harry-potter-and-the-cursed-child-is-pure-magic---review/>

⁶⁷⁸ Clapp, "The spell-binding is utterly theatrical."

⁶⁷⁹ Heilmann, "Doing It With Mirrors," 20.

Reviews of *Cursed Child* often primarily emphasise the elements of “old school stagecraft” in the play⁶⁸⁰. Although traditional illusions and sleight-of-hand play an important role, technology is also a key part of achieving much of the ‘magic’, however. For instance, one of the most spectacle-oriented effects comes from the scene in which Delphi’s living quarters are revealed to have invisible writing and drawings scribbled on the walls. Ultraviolet light is projected throughout the entire theatre space, including in the audience areas, to expose similar scribbles defacing the walls of the theatre itself. In the late Victorian era, rivalries grew between magicians who chose to employ advancements in contemporary machinery in their performances and those who remained dedicated to skills-based sleight-of-hand tricks⁶⁸¹. Over a century later, *Cursed Child* represents the unification of these two approaches, where technological innovation and traditional stage magic are often combined to create effects. For instance, in one scene a Dementor – an actor in flowing, ethereal fabric and wearing elongated limbs – is swept around the theatre and into the audience space through hoists and cables. (Ron and Hermione are later winched into the air by attaching themselves to the Dementors feasting on their souls.) Technology is also key in generating the time-turning effects: when the Time-Turner is activated, the entire stage appears to ripple and contort as a signifier of the disruption of time. This effect, which has its roots in optical projection first popularised in the Victorian era, is rendered even more spectacular through more recent technology. In using technological innovation in order to facilitate traditional stage techniques, the production design of *Cursed Child* engages with the past in a way that is framed by the present.

Several commentators, including in *The Times*⁶⁸², *The Guardian*⁶⁸³ and *The Independent*⁶⁸⁴, have commented upon the perceived realness and spectacle of the effects because of their proximity, placing *Cursed Child* in stark contrast to the *Potter* books and films because of the different ways each medium produces ‘magic’. The books demand imaginative investment in creating the wizarding world, while the films achieve this through computer-generated effects, but some critics have argued that *Cursed Child* supersedes both of these because of the particular nature and proximity of the production’s stage magic. *The Times*, for instance, claims that the evocation of magic “live in front of you” makes it “so much better than any film could be” and indeed that “It’s one thing to read about an

⁶⁸⁰ Bosanquet, “Harry Potter and the Cursed Child Works Serious Magic.”

⁶⁸¹ Mangan, *Dark Arts*, 104-5.

⁶⁸² Treneman, “Harry Potter and the Cursed Child at the Palace Theatre.”

⁶⁸³ Clapp, “The spell-binding is utterly theatrical.”

⁶⁸⁴ Shepherd, “A magical experience tailor made for the stage.”

invisibility cloak, it's another to see it (or not)".⁶⁸⁵ Similarly, a review in *The Stage* comments that the production "earns its place on the stage, feeling distinct from both the books and the screen adaptations."⁶⁸⁶ A common theme amongst reviews of the play lingers on the importance of the live experience, with the audience's physical proximity to theatrical techniques equated to proximity with the fictional world. The production values of *Cursed Child* are therefore a significant aspect of how the play creates its own visual universe, constructing a narrative and setting that is not only different to what came before but is eminently suited to the stage and theatrical conventions. Crucially, *Cursed Child*'s depiction of 'magic' stems from the possibilities of the play's form (and a particular type of play, too, one with a high budget and access to technological innovation). Jack Shepherd in *The Independent* observes that "It's quite apparent [*Cursed Child*] isn't written to be either a book or a tie-in film; it's a spectacle for the theatre", asking "Would *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* work on paper?"⁶⁸⁷ The exploitation of the play's form makes effects-heavy spectacle possible, but it is worth noting that these production techniques cannot be rendered in the script-book, the primary text with which global audiences are able to engage.

Indeed, the quality of the stagecraft is a significant aspect of the overwhelmingly positive reception to the play from theatre critics, with reviewers' quibbles only relating to occasional issues of plot or characterisation. The production values of *Cursed Child* have been framed by some commentators, in fact, as revolutionary for theatre – with a connection forged between the way in which *Harry Potter* revolutionised children's reading and the way in which *Cursed Child* is anticipated to change theatre. "Twenty years ago," *Variety*'s Matt Trueman says, "*Harry Potter* turned a generation onto reading. "The Cursed Child" could do the same for theatre."⁶⁸⁸ *Time* echoes this, predicting that the same generation that grew up reading *Harry Potter* would turn out for *Cursed Child*: "*Cursed Child* will perform this same service for theatre, as *Potter*-mad millennials pack the stalls."⁶⁸⁹ Sonia Friedman – of Sonia Friedman Productions, the production company behind the play – has spoken in similar terms, claiming that 50% of all visitors to *Cursed Child* are visiting the West End for the first

⁶⁸⁵Treneman, "Harry Potter and the Cursed Child at the Palace Theatre."

⁶⁸⁶Shenton, "Harry Potter and the Cursed Child - 'entirely distinctive'."

⁶⁸⁷Shepherd, "A magical experience tailor made for the stage."

⁶⁸⁸Mark Trueman, "West End Review: 'Harry Potter and the Cursed Child'," July 25, 2016. Accessed October 5, 2018. <https://variety.com/2016/legit/reviews/harry-potter-and-the-cursed-child-review-play-london-1201822087/>

⁶⁸⁹Bosanquet, "Harry Potter and the Cursed Child Works Serious Magic."

time⁶⁹⁰. In this way, the play is framed as pushing the boundaries of theatre and is positioned as a culturally transformative product.

Crucially, although *Cursed Child* is being framed as a kind of successor to the *Potter* books, it arguably functions just as much like a cinematic blockbuster. Reviews of the play allude to this, labelling the play “event theatre” and frequently returning to the sense of palpable audience anticipation and reactions – “gasps” – during the performance⁶⁹¹. The play is split into two full-length shows, which not only creates an all-day experience that is more ‘epic’ in scope, but is reminiscent of Warner Bros.’ *Deathly Hallows*, which was split into two films. Sonia Friedman has fed this perception of *Cursed Child* as event theatre (which she claims she is “no stranger to”, having produced *Hamlet* featuring Benedict Cumberbatch⁶⁹²) when she said: “Imagine Star Wars was opening in one cinema in one city and that was the only place you could see it. That’s sort of what’s happening with this.”⁶⁹³ This comment demonstrates the creative executives’ awareness of the exclusivity of *Cursed Child* and frames it as a positive side-effect while simultaneously drawing on *Harry Potter*’s heritage as an ‘event’ product, be it in book form (which generated midnight release parties) or film form (with immensely popular premieres and midnight releases). The emphasis on production techniques within critics’ reviews solidifies the live show as the primary, preferred means of accessing the story, contributing to values of exclusivity and prestige surrounding the production.

As Theo Bosanquet notes in *Time*⁶⁹⁴, then, *Cursed Child* is uniquely designed for the stage, and its particular use of theatrical stage magic is a crucial aspect in understanding its evocation of wonder. To end, I would argue that the reason why this use of stage magic has been so widely popularly received stems from the commonalities between the techniques used and the particular narrative, style and setting of the *Potter* texts. The world of *Harry Potter* borrows from traditional ideas of magic: most obviously in its aesthetic of magic wands, black hats and robes, cauldrons, potions, and flying broomsticks, but also by adopting stereotypes such as magical transformation into animals (either intentionally, as in the case of Animagi, or without consent, as when Draco is turned into a ferret). Importantly, though, *Harry Potter* offers a *reworking* of such stereotypes and historical perceptions of

⁶⁹⁰Cavendish, "A magical show with a strong emotional core."

⁶⁹¹Ibid.

⁶⁹²Ibid.

⁶⁹³Ibid.

⁶⁹⁴Bosanquet, "Harry Potter and the Cursed Child Works Serious Magic."

magic, and usually in a gently satirical manner. The traditional showman’s incantation “abracadabra” is reconfigured as the killing spell “Avada Kedavra”. Witches and wizards fly on broomsticks, but primarily in order to play a magical sport as opposed to travelling. Sparks and bangs exploding from a magic wand are considered the mark of an “inexperienced” wizard. *Harry Potter* engages deeply with popular conceptions of magic that originate in Victorian-era stage illusions and beyond, essentially reworking these notions and resituating them in a modern context. Indeed, *Harry Potter* more widely can be understood as a text that melds the old and the new together, eroding the distance between the two: the magical space of Hogwarts – where students write with quills and no technology functions – embodies a nostalgic desire for the past, while, outside its walls, modern communities continue life as usual. The wizarding world and the real world are depicted as no more than a brick wall away from each other (as in Diagon Alley, a medieval-esque cobbled street that simultaneously functions as a commercial high street), epitomising this intrinsic connection between the past, present, and future. If *Harry Potter* plays with historical concepts of magic within its very narrative and setting, and juxtaposes these ideas with modernity, these themes find resonance in the production values of *Cursed Child*: in the collaboration between technology and traditional stage illusions. The production design in *Cursed Child* is therefore significant in part because of its continuing engagement with and support for the central themes of *Harry Potter*, despite its ground-breaking move to the stage.

Conclusion.....

As this chapter has demonstrated, *Cursed Child* is significant because it interacts with and reworks some of the key structuring concerns of *Harry Potter* while simultaneously bearing hallmarks of its function within a wider transmedia environment. Like *Fantastic Beasts*, the play represents one of the first transmedia texts that attempts to significantly expand the wizarding world first established in *Potter*; like *Fantastic Beasts*, *Cursed Child* in part relies on the brand and the themes of its predecessor in framing it as a viable franchising extension; and like *Fantastic Beasts*, the way in which the play engages with *Harry Potter* is substantial but occasionally inconsistent or contradictory. Unlike *Fantastic Beasts*, however, *Cursed Child* is unprecedented in its form as a play, and its identity is particularly shaped by that form. The play responds to its predecessor in complex ways: the narrative of *Cursed Child*

seeks to venerate the original series, but the play's production decisions – staging, casting and iconography – offer a new but equally coherent visual universe.

The production is marked by exclusivity – heightened by the #KeeptheSecrets campaign, limited ticket availability and exorbitant prices – and so echoes some of the key themes of *Harry Potter*. I argue that *Cursed Child* is so important, however, because notions of exclusivity are more clearly manifest here than in any other text in *Harry Potter* canon, to the extent that it defines how it works as a franchising tool, and, indeed, as a text. The play's narrative can be understood as an exploration of what happens when exclusivity, belonging, and dichotomies between social groups are pushed to a radical dystopian end-point: that is, a world ruled by Voldemort and the Augurey where Mudbloods are kept in the dungeons and wizards are “blowing up bridges to see how many Muggles they can kill”⁶⁹⁵. *Cursed Child*, then, holds up a mirror to the themes first established in *Harry Potter* and intensifies them, but what makes the play so interesting is that, despite its assurance that ‘V-World’ is a “horrific” world⁶⁹⁶, it does not wholly condemn such notions of exclusivity.

Ultimately, this chapter has argued that *Cursed Child* can be understood as a site of interaction between the past and the future. On the one hand, the play argues that the past must be understood and preserved: opportunities for nostalgia are foregrounded by revisiting events from *Harry Potter*, and the play's resolution comes from reasserting the ‘rightness’ of the world as depicted in those texts. On the other, *Cursed Child* is also preoccupied with confronting the past and ultimately moving on from it: Harry comes to terms with his past and the losses he faced – Cedric, Dumbledore, and the Fallen Fifty – as signified by the final scene of the play, which takes place in a graveyard. (“I had to be mentally rid of him... It's a lot to learn for a 40-year-old old man.”⁶⁹⁷) This tension is echoed in the production context surrounding the play, in which the centrality of *Harry Potter* is highlighted by the publication of the script-book and Rowling's continued association with the play, while the casting of a black Hermione, the production design, and the collaborative nature of the play's authorship demonstrate a conflicting desire to create a new iteration of the *Harry Potter* world, one which pays homage to its past but expands the universe in new directions. If *Harry Potter* is a franchise in transition, then *Cursed Child* is the ultimate transitional text.

⁶⁹⁵Rowling, Tiffany and Thorne, *Cursed Child*, 184.

⁶⁹⁶Ibid., 215.

⁶⁹⁷Ibid., 326.

Conclusion

The first episode of *Game of Thrones*, a television show produced by HBO, aired in April 2011. Adapted from the *A Song of Ice and Fire* series of novels by George R.R. Martin, the television-based franchise offers interesting parallels to *Harry Potter*. Both series of novels – each seven books long, if Martin’s work is completed – have spawned successful media adaptations with huge budgets: Rowling’s on film, with *Deathly Hallows: Part 2* costing \$250million⁶⁹⁸, and Martin’s on the small screen, with episodes for season 8 reportedly costing up to \$15million apiece⁶⁹⁹. Both series of novels have been said to revolutionise the publishing industry: Rowling’s for inspiring a generation of children to read⁷⁰⁰, and Martin’s for heralding a turn in fantasy fiction towards gritty realism. Both series have been incredibly financially and culturally successful, smashing sales and viewing figures for novels and adaptations alike⁷⁰¹. Both adaptations have been popularly framed as ‘quality’ entertainment: decisions to hire art-house directors such as Alfonso Cuarón, or to use extra post-production time for *Half-Blood Prince*, resulted in *Harry Potter* films that were arguably “better” than they needed to be⁷⁰², while *Game of Thrones*’ deal with television network HBO associated the production with quality and prestige⁷⁰³. Both series are helmed by famous author figures who retained involvement in adaptations of their work beyond what might be considered industry standard: Rowling, as this thesis has demonstrated, transitioned into a role akin to a brand guardian, collaborating creatively while remaining a cultural figurehead for the franchise; Martin, on the other hand, has been tied to the HBO show as a writer-producer. Both series have intense fandom associated with them, and, interestingly, both Martin and Rowling are also not afraid to employ fan management strategies: Martin has notoriously said

⁶⁹⁸ Brent Lang, “‘Harry Potter’ Looks to Shatter Box Office Record With \$150M+ Debut,” *The Wrap*, July 14, 2011. Accessed September 27, 2018. <https://www.thewrap.com/harry-potter-looks-shatter-box-office-record-150m-plus-debut-29122/>

⁶⁹⁹ Maureen Ryan, et al., “TV Series Budgets Hit the Breaking Point as Costs Skyrocket in Peak TV Era,” *Variety*, September 26, 2017. Accessed September 27, 2018. <https://variety.com/2017/tv/news/tv-series-budgets-costs-rising-peak-tv-1202570158/>

⁷⁰⁰ Smith, “Potter’s magic spell turns boys into bookworms.”

⁷⁰¹ Joe Otterson, “‘Game of Thrones’ Season 7 Finale Draws Record 16.5 Million Viewers,” *Variety*, August 28, 2017. Accessed September 27, 2018. <https://variety.com/2017/tv/ratings/game-of-thrones-season-7-finale-ratings-2-1202540601/>

⁷⁰² Russell, “Authorship, Commerce, and Harry Potter,” 405.

⁷⁰³ Tobias Steiner, “Steering the Author Discourse: The Construction of Authorship in Quality TV, and the Case of *Game of Thrones*,” *International Journal of TV Serial Narratives* 1, no. 2 (Winter 2015): 182.

he does not approve of fanfiction of his work⁷⁰⁴, while Rowling has taken a more subtle approach by using tools such as Pottermore and Twitter to favour particular textual interpretations and dismiss others. Finally, both series have generated an enormous amount of official paratexts, ranging from merchandise to tourist attractions.

The *Harry Potter* and *Game of Thrones* franchises bear a number of similarities, and arguably their success is in part due to the media environment in which they emerged, where a logic of franchising prioritised fantasy serial stories with the potential for commercial synergy and licensing opportunities while targeting what might be considered “niche groups”⁷⁰⁵. Interestingly, the premiere of *Game of Thrones* in 2011 was also the year that heralded the end of the *Potter* films, and *Game of Thrones* can arguably be understood as a cultural successor to *Harry Potter*. In some ways, however, the two franchises have followed different trajectories. Most notably, Rowling completed the *Potter* books before the film adaptations were finished, whereas the HBO television adaptation of *Game of Thrones* has, in an almost unprecedented turn, overtaken the narrative of Martin’s novels, thereby complicating notions of what constitutes an original – or dominant – text within the adaptation process. Because Rowling was able to publish the *Harry Potter* books ahead of the films, her authorship did not face the particular challenges that Martin did in regards to sharing textual authority over the outcome of the narrative.

That is not to say that creative authority is not shared at all in Rowling’s case, however; merely that it has taken a different form. Although Rowling’s authorship – and authority – remained almost unassailable throughout the *Harry Potter* arc (1997-2011), developments since the end of the books and films (2011-17) have seen increased collaborative authorship for new texts and products in the wizarding world. To this end, in the post-*Potter* era Rowling was involved with the *Fantastic Beasts* film series as screenwriter, and she collaborated with John Tiffany and Jack Thorne for an ‘original story’ credit on *Cursed Child*, with the other two creatives taking on additional roles as director and playwright respectively. Although Martin and Rowling’s authorship bear some striking similarities, then, the scope of Rowling’s authority from 2011-17 was more stable and extensive because of the conditions in which the *Harry Potter* franchise developed. This enabled Rowling to maintain a consistent veneer of authorship despite an increasing shift

⁷⁰⁴ George R.R. Martin, "Someone Is Angry On the Internet," *Not A Blog*, May 7, 2010. Accessed September 27, 2018. <https://grmm.livejournal.com/151914.html>

⁷⁰⁵ Johnson, *Media Franchising*, p. 6

towards more collaborative modes of creative production within in the ‘Wizarding World’ franchise.

One of the key aims of this thesis has therefore been to trace how Rowling’s authorship has changed in response to the end of the *Harry Potter* films, and how those changes have affected the trajectory of the *Potter* franchise and the kinds of (para)texts it has produced. As I have explored – notably in Chapters 1, 4, and 5, but it has been a recurring theme throughout this work – Rowling has continued to be involved with *Harry Potter* throughout its development, but from 2011-17 this was in a more shared capacity. In many cases, it is difficult to assess the nature and extent of her collaborative authorship: for instance, Rowling’s credit for the ‘original story’ of *Cursed Child* is vague enough to leave her role open to interpretation. Regardless of the true extent of her involvement in various projects, however, this thesis has demonstrated that Rowling remains upheld in promotional materials as a figure of creative authority. This occurs most frequently for new texts *Fantastic Beasts* and *Cursed Child*, but her authority is even drawn upon for the most film-oriented paratexts such as the ‘Wizarding World’ theme parks: Universal Studios released a statement saying she had “taste-tested” food to be served in their Hollywood attraction, for instance, as I noted in Chapter 2⁷⁰⁶. This thesis has argued that the attribution of Rowling’s author-brand to various *Harry Potter*-related projects is designed to imbue these paratexts with prestige and authenticity, and that these values were particularly vital to the franchise between 2011-17 in order to mitigate the effect of losing the regular release schedule of *Harry Potter* texts that had previously sustained it.

Furthermore, I have explored how the ongoing attachment of Rowling’s author-brand to new *Potter* texts arguably served to disguise the gradual erosion of her sole creative authority. By 2017, it is useful to understand Rowling’s position as one of a brand guardian whose supposed creative authority is attributed to new *Harry Potter* projects to safeguard their success. Negotiating Rowling’s status as a visible author figure has therefore been particularly important in this work in order to not only understand her own role but to interrogate other commercial and creative decisions which might be obscured by her position as a figurehead of the *Harry Potter* franchise. J.K. Rowling has continued to act as a kind of creative anchor, with the extent of her influence arguably unique within the media industries throughout this time. Her role, however, became more ceremonial than actual, as her creative

⁷⁰⁶ Baltin, et al., “J.K. Rowling Had Food Samples Flown to Scotland.”

responsibilities grew slimmer and more collaborative in nature. In the aftermath of the *Harry Potter* texts, the franchise became increasingly supported by a series of paratexts that supply ongoing meaning and value; Rowling serves a similar function by providing those paratexts with a veneer of stability, authenticity, and quality.

This thesis, then, has explored five paratexts of the *Harry Potter* franchise generated between 2011-17. These paratexts served a number of functions that reflected their origins in the post-*Potter* environment, chief among them to a) sustain the wizarding world as a valuable intellectual property, and b) to extend that world as transmedia franchising tools capable of generating new narratives, settings and characters through variety of media and cultural forms. The remainder of this conclusion will draw together some of the key issues discussed within this thesis, evaluating how the paratexts in this study served to either sustain the *Potter* brand or expand and alter it. I will also comment on how these paratexts – Pottermore, the ‘Wizarding World’ theme parks, the Studio Tour, *Fantastic Beasts*, and *Cursed Child* – reveal or intensify themes and issues from the *Potter* texts, and what a study of these paratexts can tell us about how media franchising works, particularly in the case of *Harry Potter* as – between 2011-17 – a franchise in transition.

As I stated in my introduction, the *Deathly Hallows Part 2* film premiere in 2011 can be read as a crucial turning-point in the franchise’s history; until that moment, the *Potter* franchise – and its astronomical success – had been defined by the release schedule of the books and films, the core *Harry Potter* texts around which the franchise neatly revolved. In the absence of this release schedule, from 2011-17 the paratexts I have explored in this thesis reveal that the *Harry Potter* franchise – which, by 2017, could more accurately be termed the ‘Wizarding World’ – was attempting to adapt to, and thrive in, a changing media environment. This media environment was an intensified version of that which existed during production of the *Potter* films, operating according to principles of synergy, spin-offs, total merchandising and transmedia world-building – but largely dominated by Disney and its substudios Marvel and Lucasfilm. Some of the most profitable franchises between 2011-17, such as *The Avengers* and *Star Wars*, were set in shared worlds with easily marketable characters that could be exploited across multiple media forms and recycled in accordance with shifting franchising strategies.

Pottermore is a paratext that most explicitly reflects the journey the *Harry Potter* franchise has undergone since the end of the books and films. In 2011, the website debuted as

a visual, virtual adaptation of the *Potter* books. Rowling's authorship was paramount here; progressing through the *Harry Potter* narrative through sequences of chapters unlocked new content from the author. Pottermore's early years sought to privilege the *Potter* books specifically: textually, in the sense that it offered the means to revisit the novels in a new way, and commercially, in the sense that it operated as the exclusive home of the *Harry Potter* e-books. Pottermore was initially designed to reinforce the ongoing value and relevance of the books in the post-*Potter* era, and its makeover in 2015 as a content repository for cross-franchise materials signified, as I noted in Chapter 1, an effort to unite all *Harry Potter* content under one roof. This strategy positioned the *Harry Potter* books as one property in a milieu of texts, products and experiences within the 'Wizarding World' brand – over which Rowling is nonetheless perceived to preside.

That is not to say that, by 2017, *Potter* paratexts no longer sought to reinforce or sustain the books or films as specific properties, however; simply that the franchise offers an increasing number of texts, products and experiences that operate as different "thresholds" into the world of *Harry Potter*⁷⁰⁷. The 'Wizarding World' theme parks and the Studio Tour both reinforce the films' iconographic representation of the *Harry Potter* fictional universe: they replicate scenes from the films specifically, sell merchandise that corresponds to visual designs from the films, and co-opt the films' cast and crew to create and authenticate the experience. Both attractions opened in 2011, at the peak of the films' popularity as *Deathly Hallows Part 2* was released, and can therefore be read as tools designed to sustain ongoing popular interest in the film properties after the series had ended. As Chapter 2 notes, one of the ways the 'Wizarding World' theme parks achieve this is by transforming film sets into inhabitable, physically accessible locations that offer potential for immersion into the fictional universe. The Studio Tour, meanwhile, displays props and sets used in the film productions in a museum-like environment that purports to offer insight into the process of filmmaking on *Harry Potter*; this perception is magnified, as I discuss in Chapter 3, because of the Studio Tour's situation adjacent to Leavesden Studios. Although the Studio Tour and the 'Wizarding World' parks offer different means through which to engage with the world of *Harry Potter* in some senses, nonetheless they are united in their purpose to facilitate engagement with the *Potter* films.

⁷⁰⁷Genette, et al., *Introduction to the Paratext*, 261.

Another similarity between the Tour and the theme parks is in their preoccupation with consumerism: opportunities for commercial consumption are indelibly embedded in both environments. The case of the ‘Wizarding World’ parks is perhaps most overt: as I note in Chapter 2, by reproducing Hogsmeade and Diagon Alley, the attraction replicates film sets that revolve around shopping. The theme parks thus incentivise the act of consumption within the very fabric of the experience. The Studio Tour, on the other hand, like many museums, offers a shop at the exit of the attraction, but the arguably most significant commercial location is the Railway Shop, which is inserted into the Platform 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ set. Its presence within a film set that otherwise seeks to represent itself as authentic belies the nature of the attraction as beholden to wider franchising strategies. Crucially, however, this thesis has argued that consumerism is so thoroughly embedded in these paratexts in part because they embody and magnify a theme that is already present within *Harry Potter*. The books and films are filled with scenes of Harry and his friends buying sweets and wands; Harry is given expensive broomsticks that others lust over; and Fred and George Weasley give up schooling to become retail entrepreneurs and owners of Weasley’s Wizard Wheezes. Rowling invented an extensive list of products and brands which litter the *Harry Potter* texts, and rites of passage often involve going to retail environments such as Diagon Alley or Hogsmeade. Just as the act of buying products is fetishised within the novels and films, the act is translated into the world of the theme parks and the Studio Tour: consumers are given the opportunity to buy broomsticks, wands and sweets, essentially buying a sense of membership into the wizarding world. As paratexts, then, the Studio Tour and the ‘Wizarding World’ parks not only reveal the preoccupation with consumerism as a structuring theme, they also intensify and naturalise the act of commercial consumption by embedding it into the experience.

Consumerism is not the only theme that paratexts of *Harry Potter* reflect and magnify, however. The *Potter* books and films in some senses present an idealised fantasy of Britishness, for instance; salient examples include a glamorisation of boarding school life, or the quintessentially British cobbled streets of Diagon Alley and Hogsmeade, or the suburban lifestyle of the Dursleys. The depiction of British culture from the books and films is taken to an extreme point within the ‘Wizarding World’ theme parks, where the village of Hogsmeade is replicated as designed in *Prisoner of Azkaban*, featuring snow-capped roofs and chimneys. The fantasy of Britishness that *Harry Potter* offers is just that – a fantasy – and the ‘Wizarding World’ parks explore and exploit that fantasy. Elsewhere, *Cursed Child* explores the notion of exclusivity, another theme with its roots in the *Potter* texts: for instance, its

form as a play is inherently exclusive, in terms of ticket prices, geographical location, and the availability of tickets. The play's marketing is also structured around including some and excluding others, in which the '#KeeptheSecrets' campaign segregates those who have been to see the production and those who have not. The decision to produce a *Harry Potter* play as a sequel caused contention in fan communities, but Chapter 5 argued that it makes sense from a textual and franchising perspective because it implicitly interacts with and exploits existing themes within *Harry Potter*. Exclusivity – and belonging – is made manifest within the distinctions between Mudbloods and purebloods, between magical people and Muggles, between rich and poor, between humans and other magical creatures, and the different houses that segregate students by character traits.

Interestingly, this concept of exclusivity and hierarchy can also be at odds with other values within the *Harry Potter* texts. While Muggles might be represented – judging by the depiction of suburban life in Privet Drive – as imaginatively stagnant, it is also the case that Voldemort is portrayed as the villain because he believes in a natural hierarchy in which Muggles are inferior. Similar contradictions can be seen in other themes: as I noted above, modern consumer-capitalist principles are threaded throughout the series, but the antiquated culture of the wizarding world remains to some extent charmingly separate from the Muggle world. No technology works at Hogwarts, for instance, and the books feature humorous scenes in which the Weasleys travel via London Underground or use the telephone, which contrasts with Fred and George's thorough understanding of entrepreneurship and business. Furthermore, Harry inherits enormous wealth as a birthright while other families such as the Weasleys struggle with just enough to get by, but Harry also often chooses to give away his money, and rejects the hand of the rich Draco Malfoy. Although the *Harry Potter* narrative in many cases eschews the importance of wealth and material goods, then, it is nonetheless inconsistent and complicated in its rendering of those values.

Another significant example of thematic tension within *Harry Potter* is in the duality between the magical and real worlds. I tie this in Chapter 3 to the motif of the Hogwarts Express and Platform 9 ¾, concepts which embody the idea of travelling between two conventionally separate worlds. Sites such as the 'Wizarding World' parks and the Studio Tour embody this complex dynamic between magical and real – between fictional and real – by offering film sets whose scale and detail encourage immersion into the fictional environment, but which are nonetheless driven by commercial and franchising motivations such as generating revenue and maintaining a culturally valued brand. Tensions exist in the

Harry Potter texts between occasionally clashing values, then, and I have argued throughout this thesis that paratexts are so significant because they embody, reflect and magnify these tensions. If one role of the *Harry Potter* paratexts in the preceding chapters is to comment upon and reveal values at the heart of the core texts, then a study of paratexts is useful as a means of furthering our understanding of how the meanings and values of media texts are circulated.

Looking at how paratexts comment on textual meanings and values is only one aim of this thesis, however. The other core aim has been to understand how paratexts contribute to franchising strategies, and to examine how paratexts operate as important factors in the contemporary media environment that shed light on commercial and creative processes. This thesis has followed Jonathan Gray's call for an "off-screen studies"⁷⁰⁸, using a study of five paratexts to elucidate how they have impacted the development of the *Harry Potter* franchise from 2011-17. I have already mentioned the role of the 'Wizarding World' theme parks and the Studio Tour in *sustaining* the brand as it entered a period of flux post-*Potter*. The second key function of paratexts I examined in this study is to *expand* the wizarding world into new territories, providing new mines of intellectual property, licensing, and media content. *Fantastic Beasts*, for example, began as a 2001 charity publication that, as the first blockbuster in a five-film series, forms the cornerstone of future content in the *Harry Potter* universe. Chapter 4 explored how *Fantastic Beasts* functions as a world-building endeavour, expanding the world of *Harry Potter* into new time periods and settings. Simultaneously, the film is indebted to *Harry Potter*, which manifests, for example, in its recycling of characters such as Dumbledore, Grindelwald, and Newt Scamander. *Fantastic Beasts*, however, was produced in a media environment quite different to the one *Harry Potter* dominated in the first decade of the new millennium, and I argued that the guidebook format of the book version of *Fantastic Beasts* provided an ideal vehicle for kick-starting a spin-off franchise that was intended to compete with the likes of Marvel's superheroes and Lucasfilm's *Star Wars* series.

Cursed Child bears similar hallmarks of its production context in the post-*Potter* environment. The stage production is a sequel to *Harry Potter*, but it is almost unprecedented to introduce a franchising sequel as a live stageplay. I argued in Chapter 5 that this decision made sense not only because of the play's affinity with exclusivity, but also because the

⁷⁰⁸ Gray, *Show Sold Separately*, 14.

play's script-book offers parallels with *Harry Potter*'s history as a written product, and is another form through which Rowling can retain creative involvement. Indeed, the stage production has been heralded as doing for theatre what *Harry Potter* did for literature⁷⁰⁹: drawing audiences in huge numbers and experimenting with the theatrical medium, which further aligns the play with the *Potter* series. Nonetheless, the play diverges both textually and contextually from its predecessor, through, for instance, the casting of black actresses to portray Hermione Granger. Much like the other paratexts I study in this thesis, *Cursed Child* is rife with contradictions and tensions between disparate values. In fact, I argued that it is possible to read some of the play's conflicting themes as reflective of its status as a transmedia franchising text: in exploring how one might heal the wounds between past and present, *Cursed Child* functions as a site in which the franchise's past – *Harry Potter* – can be reconciled with its present – its new generation of media texts.

Overall, then, this thesis has combined textual analysis with empirical research to provide a study that engages with media paratexts in order to understand how they have affected the development of a particular franchise. Record-breaking and culturally resonant franchises such as *Star Wars*, *Lord of the Rings*, *The Avengers*, and *Harry Potter* change, challenge and transform the media industries, continuing to offer new templates of success and to break new ground. As this thesis has demonstrated, however, the central media text is not the sole site of meaning, and indeed the ways in which paratexts are created and circulated is a crucial aspect of understanding contemporary franchising. This work has charted the development of the *Harry Potter* franchise into what might more accurately be termed the 'Wizarding World' franchise, a media force that draws on its history as a book and film adaptation – including the residual authority of J.K. Rowling – but is not wholly beholden to it, as the franchise expands into new forms, textual terrains, authors, and intellectual property.

***Limitations and avenues of further research*.....**

This thesis has sought to provide an in-depth analysis of several key paratexts of the *Harry Potter* franchise. Although, as I have emphasised throughout, an examination of paratexts is

⁷⁰⁹ Mark Lawson, "Harry Potter and the Cursed Child: 'It's extraordinary the story still isn't out'," *The Guardian*, July 21, 2016. Accessed September 27, 2018. <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2016/jul/21/harry-potter-and-the-cursed-child-west-end-palace-theatre>

useful in understanding media texts and the environments in which they circulate, there are nonetheless inevitably going to be limitations to this kind of study. For instance, the case study structure I have used in this thesis offers an opportunity to examine in detail key paratexts as individual products, texts, or experiences, using qualitative methods such as textual analysis and empirical research to observe and interpret the role of media paratexts and, in some cases, to measure changes across time. Although case studies are useful for performing a close reading of a particular subject, it can be difficult to confidently apply subsequent insights to other phenomena, however. This is not to say that case studies cannot indicate wider themes and issues – as I note in Chapter 4, some of the textual themes of *Fantastic Beasts* can be read as a response to the media environment it emerged in, in which transmedia shared-world franchises were dominant – but case studies can nonetheless be less suited to evaluating broader cultural trends.

In addition, this thesis's focus on paratexts on *Harry Potter* from 2011-17 is useful for drawing conclusions about how the franchise works within a specific timeframe, but by definition this means that other periods of time have been given less attention. Because the timeframe I examine here is very close to the time in which I write this work – 2018 – a relative lack of secondary academic sources and critical commentary surrounding these paratexts has been a significant factor I have had to navigate. This has also been the case with gaining access to primary sources: due to the contemporary nature of *Harry Potter*, there have been few archival resources to draw upon, which I have attempted to mitigate by drawing on data from online news and media databases. In reflecting on my position as a researcher, the contemporary nature of these paratexts also makes it more difficult to retain a critical distance in analysing them, because they are ongoing cultural forms that continue to develop and shape the industries they operate within. (*Cursed Child* is a prime example here: although I have focused my analysis on the London production, the play continues to be exported to other cities around the world, including New York, Los Angeles, Melbourne, and Berlin.)

This thesis's focus on official paratexts of *Harry Potter* leaves room for further research that continues to prioritise phenomena that takes place outside of the text, but which uses different methodological frameworks. As I noted in the introduction chapter, I have excluded an in-depth consideration of audiences, and hence audience-based methodologies, from this study largely in order to focus on the role of officially-sanctioned and officially-created paratexts within their industrial and production contexts. This means there are

opportunities to further build on current understanding of the reception context of particular paratexts – as Abby Waysdorf and Stein Reijnders do in their article on fandom at the ‘Wizarding World’ theme parks, for instance⁷¹⁰ – and explore how fans engage with those paratexts. There is also room to consider ‘unofficial’ paratexts, fan-generated paratexts such as fanfiction and other creative works that circulate alongside and in-between official paratexts. (In the case of the *Potter* franchise, the fan-made production-turned-viral-hit ‘A Very Potter Musical’ would be a fruitful angle of study here.) Conducting interviews with personnel involved with media franchises such as *Harry Potter* would also be a useful supplement to empirically-based research, in order to gain further insight into how paratexts function within media production processes.

In focusing entirely on paratexts of one franchise – *Harry Potter* – this thesis is by necessity limited in scope and in its ability to make judgements about broader trends. However, its specificity also aims to address a gap in existing scholarship; although monographs and edited collections have been written about a number of successful franchises such as *Lord of the Rings* and *Star Wars*, very little exists of long-form analysis of *Harry Potter*’s franchising motivations. In examining five paratexts from 2011-17, this thesis offers a contribution in this direction, but there is much more that could be said – particularly in terms of Rowling’s evolving authorship, a topic which could fill a book in itself, or work that focuses on the conditions of the *Potter* texts’ production. Indeed, there are of course a great number of other paratexts that this work did not have space to address, such as the pop-up gallery exhibitions by MinaLima, the illustrated editions of the *Potter* books, the annual ‘Harry Potter Book Night’ coordinated by Bloomsbury, or the annual ‘Celebration of Harry Potter’ events held at the ‘Wizarding World’ parks in Orlando, Florida. Greater examination of these paratexts would offer a more holistic insight into how *Harry Potter* is produced, circulated and received as a brand and cultural phenomenon.

As this thesis has demonstrated, the *Harry Potter* franchise became, between 2011-17, increasingly transmedial in terms of the types of new texts, products and experiences produced to supplement, extend and rework the franchise after the books and films were released. As a result of the variety of cultural forms through which *Harry Potter* has been dispersed, this work has needed to be innately interdisciplinary. I would argue, in fact, that an interdisciplinary approach is vital in understanding not only the *Harry Potter* franchise but

⁷¹⁰Waysdorf and Reijnders, "Immersion, authenticity and the theme park."

the direction of franchising more generally. Paratexts are, according to Jonathan Gray, exactly those things which are outside the text, and as such a level of flexibility is important when working within “off-screen studies”⁷¹¹ and studying a media environment that proliferates diverse cultural and media forms ranging from theme parks and tours, to websites, games and conventions. From 2011-17, the *Harry Potter* franchise underwent a clear strategic change: from initial reliance on paratexts that would sustain the value of the *Potter* books and films – such as Pottermore, the theme parks, and the Studio Tour – towards increased transmedia world-building, where later texts such as *Fantastic Beasts* and *Cursed Child* formed the foundations of a potentially endlessly exploitable ‘wizarding world’ across diverse texts and timelines. This ongoing generation of different paratexts has transformed the *Harry Potter* franchise from an adaptation-based phenomenon revolving around a set of static texts into a commercial force capable of adapting to changes in the contemporary media environment.

⁷¹¹ Gray, *Show Sold Separately*, 14.

Appendix I

Figure 1.



Figure 2.

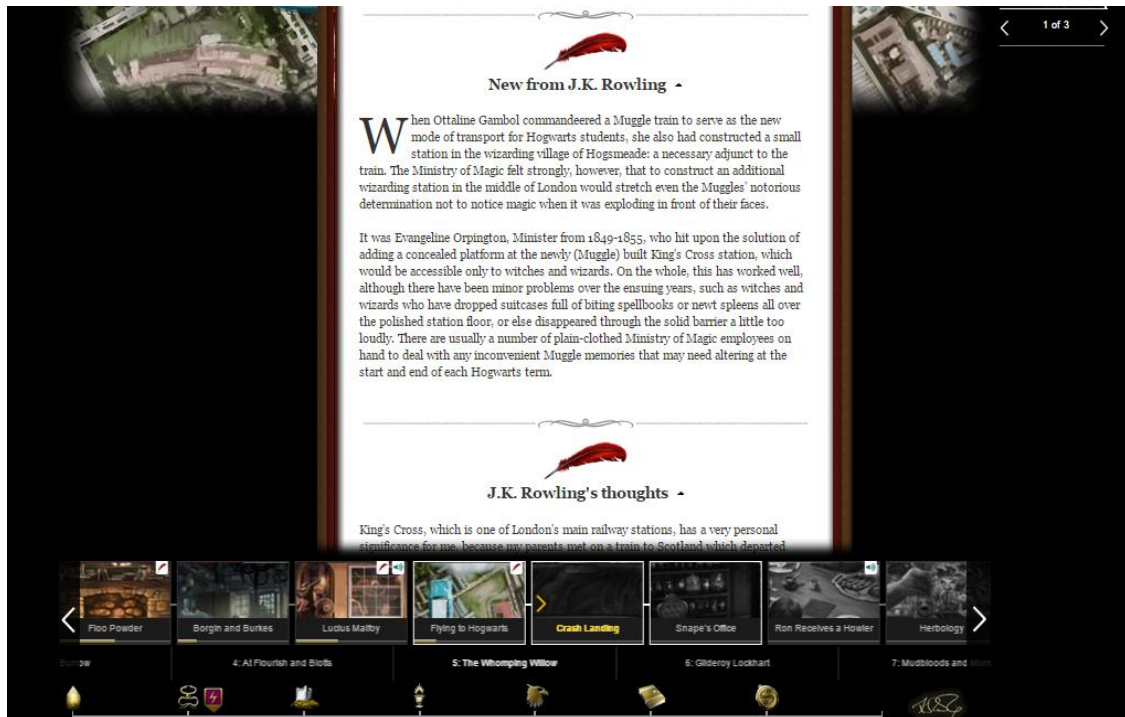


Figure 3.

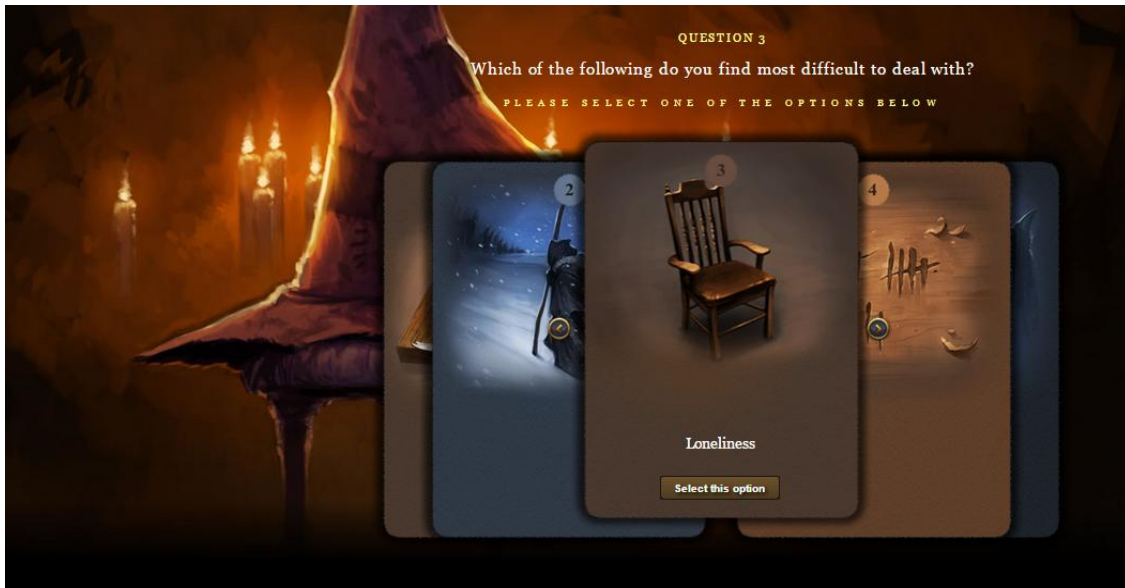


Figure 4.

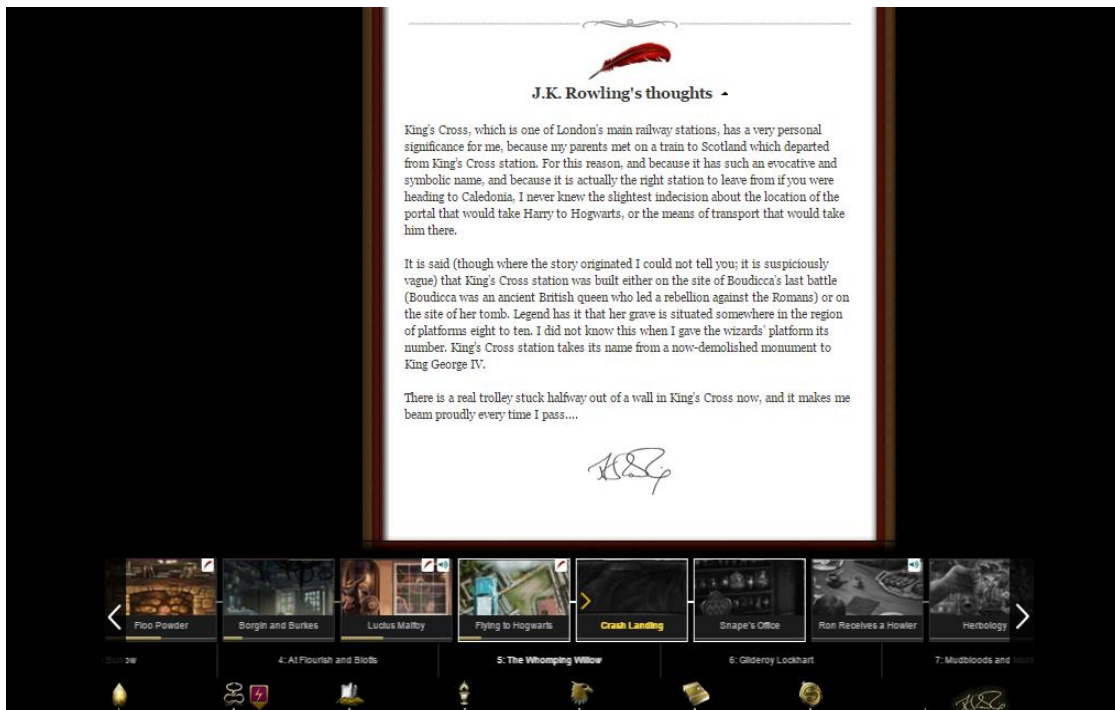


Figure 5.

Some of Celestina's best-known songs include You Charmed the Heart Right Out of Me and A Cauldron Full of Hot, Strong Love. Her fans are usually older people who love her grandstanding style and powerful voice. The late 20th-century album You Stole My Cauldron but You Can't Have My Heart was a massive global hit.

Celestina's personal life has provided much fodder for the gossip columns of the Daily Prophet. An early marriage to a backing dancer lasted only a year; Celestina then married her manager, with whom she had a son, only to leave him for the composer Irving Warble ten years later.

Listen to Celestina Warbeck's performance of the title track from her global hit album *You Stole My Cauldron But You Can't Have My Heart*.

00:00 | 02:39

You Stole My Cauldron But You Can't Have My Heart, as performed daily in *The Wizarding World of Harry Potter – Diagon Alley* at Universal Orlando Resort.

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J.K. Rowling's thoughts

Harry's Escape | The Weasleys' | De-gnoming the Garden | Floo Powder | **Borgin and Burkes** | Lucius Malfoy | Flying to Hogwarts | Crash Land

1: Worming | 3: The Burrow | 4: All Flourish and Blotts | 5: The Whomping Willow | 6: Glimmery Locomotive

Figure 6.

The exclusive home of the Harry Potter eBooks

Shop here for the Harry Potter eBooks and digital audio books, by J.K. Rowling. Download to all leading eReaders, tablets, smartphones and MP3 players.

Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets
Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban
Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire
Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince
Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows

Figure 7.



Figure 8.

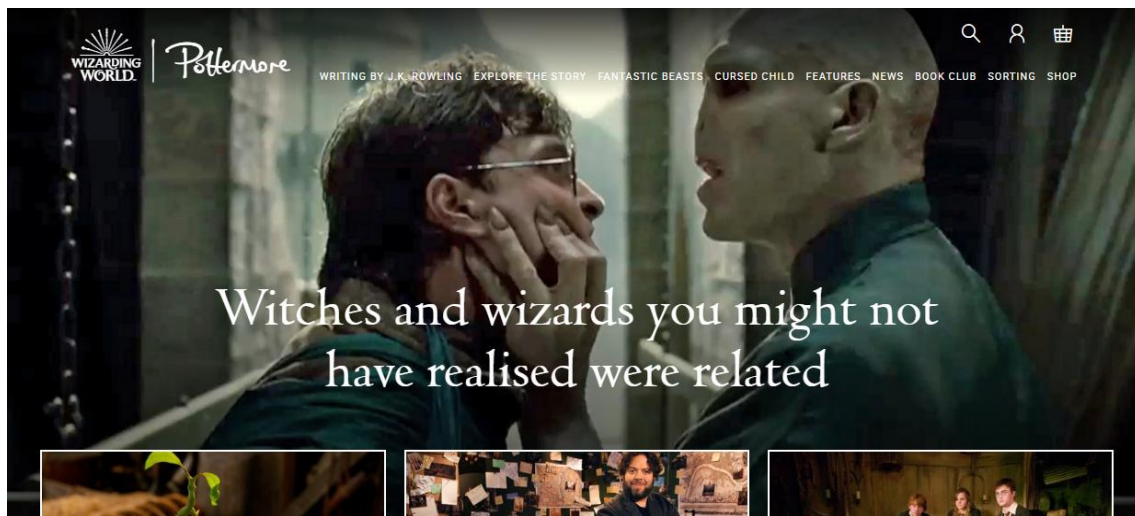


Figure 9.

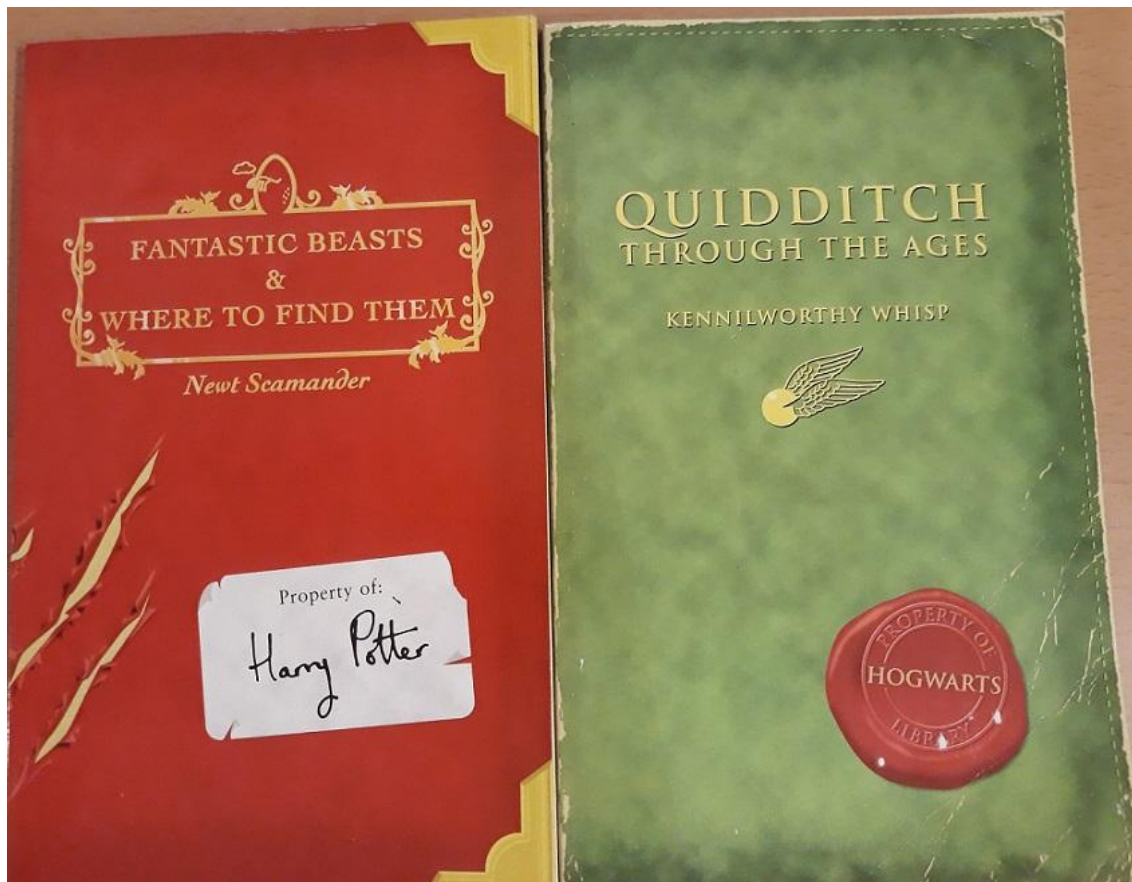


Figure 10.

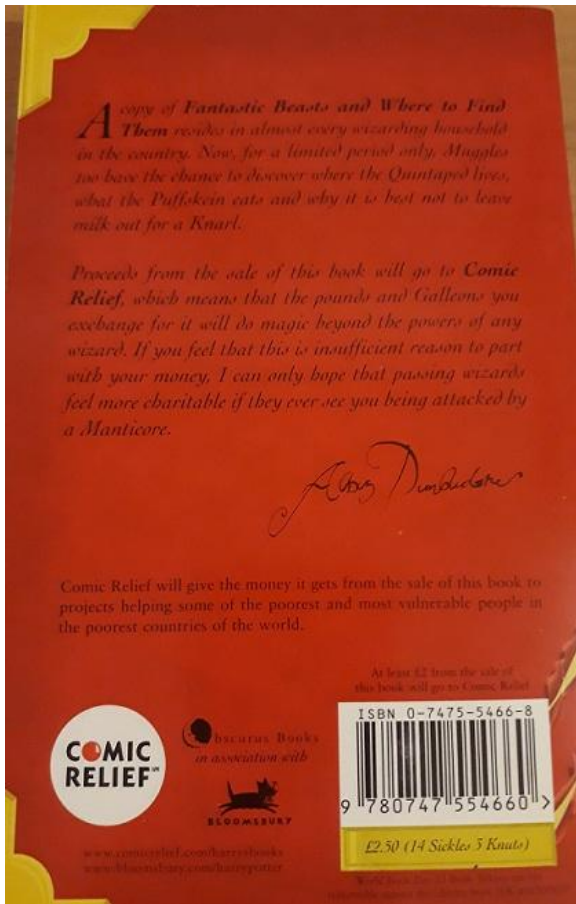


Figure 11.



Figure 12.

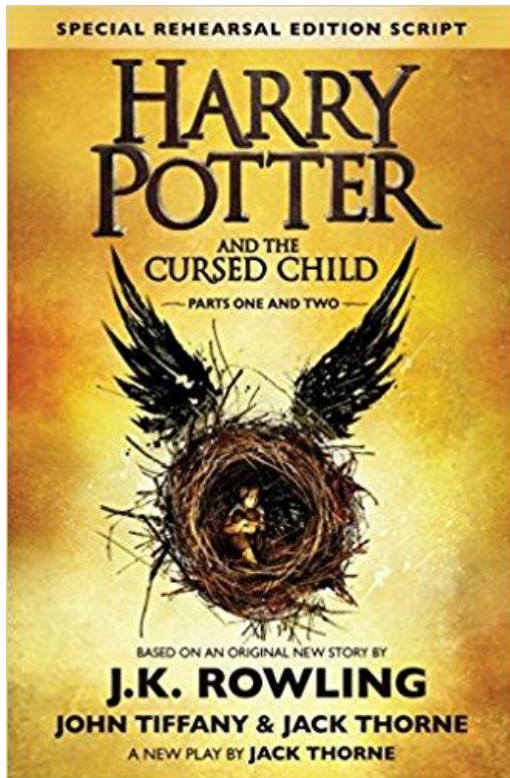


Figure 13.



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