Many people marveled when the Harry Potter novels swept the world. Some wondered what unique secret kept children and adults turning pages, sharing their excitement and feelings, and talking with others about characters and themes. This recognizable reaction is often associated with popular television shows or even family stories. Individuals feel an inner need to repeat, to retell, to hover over details and bring the tale to a familiar yet exciting conclusion. It is not magic, unless one is referring to the magical power of myth.

Myths from ancient and global civilizations may not seem to have a direct link to the Potter stories, but the connections are there. Rowling herself said:

I've taken horrible liberties with folklore and mythology, but I'm quite unashamed about that, because British folklore and British mythology is a totally bastard mythology. You know, we've been invaded by people, we've appropriated their gods, we've taken their mythical creatures, and we've soldered them all together to make, what I would say, is one of the richest folklores in the world, because it's so varied. So I feel no compunction about borrowing from that freely, but adding a few things of my own. (“Living with Harry”)

Her locations, creatures, humans and objects all owe their pedigree to recycled symbols and tropes with just enough tweaking to make them seem new to modern audiences.

Legends from various corners and countries of the world are described here as Rowling adjusted them to bring them into Harry’s world, and as the creative team behind the films
realized them on screen. These elements help us individually and collectively understand our world. That carries over as the translations to epic films unfold. Harry Potter stories, like the myths from which they draw many memorable elements, speak to people of all ages and cultures. When these stories morph from page to screen, filmmakers give sacred attention to remaining true to the mythology that binds these stories to audiences. This chapter examines the roles author, screenwriter, directors, producers, and actors had in a collaborative process that bridged centuries, cultures and symbols from the oral tradition to the written word to the big screen.

**Why Mythology Still Resonates**

Joseph Campbell said, “Myths are clues to the spiritual potentialities of the human life” (5). Myths can teach lessons, inspire us, and provide cautionary tales. Schorer stated, “Myths are the instruments by which we continually struggle to make our experiences intelligible to ourselves. A myth is a large controlling image that gives philosophical meaning to the facts of ordinary life” (360). When Campbell discussed where young people growing up today get their myths, he pointed to examples like graffiti as signs that youth are left to create their own myths in a secularized, machine-driven society (9). They seek what Campbell calls “the wisdom of life,” rather than merely information, as they look for ways to make sense out of their world (11). Rituals, clothing, and other components of a greater societal mythology assist in our search for belonging and meaning. Myths also speak to humans’ desire to consider possibilities and potential experiences not yet lived.

Modern popular culture, especially science fiction and fantasy genres, has seen a number of memorable mythologies. One enduring mythology is *Star Trek*. The mythical components that keep the series alive and beloved by its ardent fan base were analyzed. NASA’s *mythos* of the
space race was bound by the reality or logos in the 1960s, while the parallel Star Trek mythos of fictional stories did not have that limitation (Kappell 5). The tales touched people on an emotional level, and have endured longer and in greater degree than actual space explorations. Rowling, like Gene Roddenberry, C. S. Lewis and others, incorporated fantasy elements into a realistic setting to create a larger world. Kapell discussed Roddenberry’s development of “a kind of contemporary mythological system,” with structural elements of the society from which it originates along with the core beliefs and values of the mythmaker himself (1). Like Roddenberry, Rowling’s creations “latched on to a mythic zeitgeist and quickly grew beyond itself” (Kappell 14).

Others examined fantasy and science fiction in modern media as mythology for the new millennium. Perlich sees myths as windows to our potential, as well as guides to explain our typical actions and reinforce “our learned patterns of expected behavior” that persist over time if they appeal to both collectivity and individuality (16-17). Popular monomyths include Firefly, Star Wars, and Buffy the Vampire Slayer (Perlich and Whitt 5). Marek discussed the concept of “a new class of mythology that has arisen in modern society” that may “influence, support, reinforce, or challenge” aspects of existing society (102). Images, archetypes, characters and situations are clues to myths that are the foundation of modern stories. Emily Dial-Driver wrote about use of existing known symbols and themes as is (for familiarity) and in different ways (for interest and variety) (226). A story such as this “can be read as a glorious fantasy or it can be read as a comment on the powerlessness of a child, of children in society. You don’t have to choose—you can read it on many levels” (Brown 136). Many see Rowling’s novels as fantasy myth for modern times, though not all agree with this view. Zipes agreed that the novels were influenced by “mystery novels, adventure films, TV sitcoms, and fiction series” but he saw the
series as formulaic, stating that, “If you’ve read one, you’ve read them all,” and using adjectives such as “tedious” and “grating” to describe the books (177). However, that repetitive pattern can be seen as reworking of mythic structure, with the use of familiar motifs as deeper symbols and elements that echo within the human experience.

Myths can become cultural narratives. Pilkington said *Star Trek* “provided (and provides) a chosen family for its audience, a dream machine and a home, a haven from the alienation of daily life and a hope for the future of humans and humanness” (60). Life and death are generally important cornerstones in myths, regardless of time period or culture. Speculation about which characters would live or die in the final book was rampant among Potter fans. Deaths of beloved characters, such as Dobby and Sirius, stirred huge reactions. Voldemort’s resurrection and search for immortality were touchstones that linked these modern novels to ancient stories from literature and religion. Jung described these features as archetypes, familiar symbols that seem familiar because they are part of the human collective unconscious (30). Mythic elements timelessly appeal to our humanity. Harry and his colleagues have a place within that tradition.

**Mythic Elements and Archetypes in the Potter Series & Films**

Mythic themes and archetypes are present in the Potter series (Mills 7-8; Ramaswamy 127-221). *Sorcerer’s Stone* introduces us to the hero, known as The Boy Who Lived and later, The Chosen One. Harry is the child, an innocent and orphan; many tales have a child brought up by individuals who do not love him or her. Vernon is a shadow father, Aunt Petunia is a terrible mother (as is Aunt Marge), and Dudley and friends are bullies. Professor McGonegal serves as nurturing mother figure, wise woman, and unmarried maiden. Dumbledore, as wise old man and mentor, always knows what is best.

Rowling’s characters fit other archetypes. The Weasleys fill the role of surrogate family;
Mrs. Weasley is the good mother and Mr. Weasley is the stern but loving father figure. We meet the tricksters, Fred and George, and Ron who will become the loyal companion. Ginny Weasley evolves from a damsel in distress in Chamber of Secrets to a shield maiden in Order of the Phoenix. In Diagon Alley and on the Hogwarts Express, Draco Malfoy is set as a rival and bully, along with Crabbe and Goyle. Hermione is a blend of wise woman, loyal companion, and shield maiden who assists in the quest and battles. Neville Longbottom and Luna Lovegood are scapegoats. Most Hogwarts students are either on the side of good or evil, shown through the characteristics of the four houses and the sorting. Adult characters fit within established categories also. Professor Lupin is a shapeshifter and scapegoat, as is Sirius. They serve as father figures and mentors to Harry. Tonks is another shield maiden, ready to fight not only dark magic but society for her love for Lupin. Rita Skeeter is a gossip, tainting the truth. Cho Chang is the temptress, even traitor. Lily is cast as holy mother who saved Harry by her love. Mrs. Black is another terrible mother, as are childless surrogates Bellatrix Lestrange and Dolores Umbridge. Peter Pettigrew is the ultimate traitor; his actions resulted in the death of Harry’s parents and the return of Voldemort.

Magical places are symbolic too. Number 4 Privet Drive is a wasteland for Harry, while the Burrow and Hogwarts are safe havens. Number 12 Grimmauld Place served as both in different books/films. Harry’s journeys take him to underground places, dark or dismal: the trap door in Sorcerer’s Stone; the basilisk home in Chamber of Secrets; the tunnels, Shrieking Shack and Forbidden Forest in Prisoner of Azkaban; the graveyard in Goblet of Fire; the Department of Magical Mysteries in Order of the Phoenix; the cave in Half-Blood Prince and the vaults at Gringotts and cells at Malfoy Manor in Deathly Hallows. There are tangential nods to ascent and descent and light and dark. Voldemort’s Dark Mark lights the sky. Dumbledore dies falling from
the height of the Astronomy Tower, and all the students raise their lighted wands in a salute, which dissipates the Dark Mark. Fred and George exit Hogwarts in a spray of fireworks; Harry’s wand chooses him at Ollivander’s with a burst of light. As in many myths, light and dark, sanctuary and danger, upper and lower locations provide additional meaning.

Along with character and place, additional mythic elements emerge. Metals have special meaning or powers. Objects made with goblin’s silver, such as Godric Gryffindor’s sword, are indestructible and absorb the powers of any target. The Winged Key in Sorcerer’s Stone is made of plain silver. In wizarding money, galleons (made of gold) have the most worth, followed by sickles (silver) and knuts (bronze). Leprechaun gold appears the same as regular gold, but vanishes after time. Some of the horcruxes are made all or partially of gold, including Helga Hufflepuff's cup, Salazar Slytherin's locket, and Marvolo Gaunt’s ring. The colors of these metals are also part of the house colors for Gryffindor (gold) and Slytherin (silver). Green is generally the color of life and earth, and red is the color of blood and death, but Rowling reversed these. Green is associated with Voldemort; the killing curse that gave Harry his scar and the liquid that hid the locket Horcrux are green. Red is associated with Dumbledore; Fawkes is red, as is the fire that frees Dumbledore and Harry from the Inferi.

Doniger (26) and Granger (257) are among authors who have written about symbolic meanings behind and within the Potter series. It seems plausible that Rowling, a great reader and classically educated, intentionally included mythic symbols, themes, and archetypes. These elements transcend the stories and may be partly responsible for the overwhelming popularity of the series.

Globalizing the Wizarding World Through Myth
Mythology as a storytelling form crosses time periods, cultures and geography. From Norway to Eastern Europe and back to Greek and Roman times, Rowling populates her novels with an array of characters and creatures that span ancient and modern times and places. She created her own versions of these, changing them to fit her vision. Filmmakers changed these further as they realized them on the screen.

The series provides a global tour of legends with references from Great Britain and beyond. Carol Rose includes background for some of Rowling’s beings. Centaurs are familiar from Greek mythology, but few readers recognized giant spider Aragog (Chamber of Secrets 270) as a nod to a creature from Japanese folklore (Rose 344). Rowling played with diverse versions of dragons from around the world (Rose 103-107) when she described the Chinese Fireball, Hungarian Horntail, Swedish Shortnout, and Common Welsh Green in Goblet of Fire (326), Norbert the baby Norwegian Ridgeback in Sorcerer’s Stone (235), and the Peruvian Vipertooth in Fantastic Beasts and Magical Creatures. Variations of the basilisk have been part of stories from Roman times through Chaucer and Shakespeare (Rose 41). Elves, imps, fairies, pixies, ogres, leprechauns, boggarts, banshees, and trolls reside in Scottish, Welsh, Gaelic, French tales and those from other times and places.

Werewolves are familiar from European folktales. Versions of the legend can also be found in ancient Greek and Roman times (Rose 391), as well as tales from Norway and Denmark (Baring-Gould 108-110) and Slavic stories (Pilkington and Pilkington 313). Rowling presents two versions: Remus Lupin’s angst-filled werewolf, and Fenrir Greyback, known for his savage killing of children (Half-Blood Prince, 393). The name Fenrir connects the character to a specific werewolf from Norse mythology, offspring of Loki and a giantess, who eventually kills Odin (Lindow 111-114). While Lupin’s werewolf is a haunted creature, worried about inflicting harm
on others (*Prisoner of Azkaban*, 352-353), Greyback takes pleasure in his condition and tries to infect as many individuals as possible. He was the source of Lupin’s bite and evolved to attack even when the moon was not full (*Half-Blood Prince* 334-335). Slavic tales describe men-wolves who carry out vicious actions under spells, including one who kills his own daughters and infant grandsons (Pilkington and Pilkington 307-309) and one who kills his faithless wife and her child by her second husband (316). Rowling connected references from different cultural legends when bringing her version of these characters to the wizarding world.

Another example of Rowling’s nod to global mythology is the veela (her spelling). First introduced in *Goblet of Fire* as the Bulgarian National Team Mascot at the Quidditch World Cup, the lovely female beings perform a dance that almost hypnotizes Harry, Ron and most other males into behaving in potentially life-threatening ways (102). Vila exist in many legends. Thomas Keightley described them as “mountain nymphs, young and beautiful, clad in white with long flying hair” (492). To compare a beautiful woman to a Vila was the highest praise (Keightley 494), similar to Rowling’s description of Fleur Delacour’s stunning and unusual appearance (*Goblet of Fire* 253). Nancy Arrowsmith describes the Vily of Yugoslavia as wood spirits. Those near the Hungarian border have slightly darker complexions, and die if they lose a single hair; those near the coast have iron teeth, goat’s feet, and wear gold caps (261). According to Ace and Olga Pilkington’s translations of Slavic folktales, vila can take non-human forms, such as a horse (250), are healers (245; 270); and can accomplish great feats (233). Rusalki are similar beings; always female, they are supernatural creatures associated with moisture and water, as well as woods (Arrowsmith 223, 259; Keightley 491; Pilkington and Pilkington 421-422). Rowling includes bits from the different legends, and tweaks them for her own devices. Despite the legends’ descriptions that these creatures inhabit water environments, Fleur cannot
manage to rescue her sister Gabrielle underwater during the second task of the Triwizard Tournament because of the grindylows (*Goblet of Fire* 504). Again, Rowling is both aware and selective in what and how she references folklore.

Rowling looks backwards to ancient mythology and more recent events. Gellert Grindelwald, the most terrible Dark Wizard before Voldemort, stole the Elder Wand from Gregorovitch, and began his conquest of Europe, till he was stopped by Dumbledore and imprisoned in Nurmengard. His motto for his terrible deeds was, “For the Greater Good.” With these references, she evokes the trope of the corruptible nature of power. By *Deathly Hallows*, it is clear that Dumbledore himself was seduced by Grindelwald’s quest for power. Along with plot points related to pureblood, Rowling ensures that readers recognize World War II evils and events.

Despite Rowling’s variations on symbols, there is a thread that connects them across cultures and centuries. Whether Jung’s concept of a collective unconscious, or anthropologists’ belief that all humans started from one place and migrated, there appears to be no geographic or historical period to limit Rowling’s references. Harry’s world is familiar to all.

**Narrative vs. Film: The Adaptation Process**

Producers David Heyman and Lionel Wigram, along with Stuart Craig, production designer, and screenwriters Steve Kloves and Michael Goldenberg, stayed true to important features when adapting the story (McCabe 17-19). All discussed the critical interplay of books and film process. Bringing characters to life that were not only drawn with great detail but also “lived” in the collective conscious of millions of readers made key features incredibly important (McCabe 35-41). As filmmakers considered adaptation, they collaborated with the author to ensure authenticity (McCabe 28).
Filmmakers began their process by examining past iterations of the most well known (and some not so well known) features in the Harry Potter stories. The Hero’s Journey has been a successful storytelling device and filmmaking framework (Vogler 8), along with the use of myths (Voytilla 260). When the Potter film team began the arduous adaptation process, they recognized that each book had a journey as its structure, along with its particular mythic elements. Those first outlines and decisions regarding plot and characters provided significant allusions to mythic elements that would be continued in all eight films.

Other films and television shows built an overall mythology, including original ones that did not spring from novels, such as Lost, and Firefly. C. Scott Littleton wrote about Star Trek, but his words could easily be applied to the Potter novels and films:

It should be emphasized, of course, that the remarkable television and film series in question is a conscious literary creation, and that the presence of these themes in the delineation of its plots is not altogether fortuitous. The makers of Star Trek—Gene Roddenberry, D. C. Fontana, Gene L. Coon, Marc Daniels, et al.—are all thoroughly literate people who seem to have drawn intentionally on a wide variety of myths and legends, classical and otherwise, in the preparation of various episodes. Indeed, what emerges is a secularized mythology of the future that fuses the more or less rational attitudes and beliefs of the culture that spawned it with themes and motifs that pervade mankind’s oldest and most sacred narratives. (46)

Years later, Harry’s fully realized mythology produced Potterheads, rabid intelligent fans similar to Trekkies. It may rival comparable material for staying power.

When an expansive mythology is brought to the big screen, one person’s vision is often the driving force. Recently, Peter Jackson controlled the vision and adaptation of Tolkien’s Lord
of the Rings stories. The Harry Potter films had the benefit and challenge of a living author, and a book series that was not yet completed when the first films were made. Like Gene Roddenberry, Rowling watched closely and advised the filmmakers. She gave them much creative control, but maintained her own influence also, and they deferred to her on several occasions. For example, plans to omit Kreacher, the Black family house elf, from Order of the Phoenix were changed because Rowling let the producers know that the character would fill a critical role in the final book (McCabe 153). From all reports, the collaboration was a genial partnership.

The Potter films followed in a tradition that has seen vastly popular novels translated to the screen. The filmmakers’ tasks are daunting; aspects that make such novels popular can present challenges for the adaptation. The audience has a third person limited point of view. Readers are Harry; they see the world through Harry’s eyes, and make sense of it (sometimes incorrectly) through Harry’s thoughts (Vogler 30). Although devices like the Pensieve, invisibility cloak, and Marauders’ Map allow Rowling to provide details that Harry would not normally know, readers are primarily on Harry’s journey with him, as him (Bransford). Filmmakers had to decide whether or not to maintain the limits of this narrative convention. The novels are incredibly long: Rowling created and populated a vast parallel world with people and creatures that resonate due in part to recognition of mythology and archetypes. The filmmakers needed to include some, but not all, lest each movie be fourteen hours long!

Screenplays were written early in the adaptation process. Steve Kloves wrote seven of the eight screenplays (Michael Goldenberg wrote Order of the Phoenix). Kloves recognized the mythic structure, and included enough details from each point in the hero’s journey to ensure that the audience of fans as well as newbies would understand segments and feel the emotional pull of each. He and Rowling had a very close relationship throughout the ten years of making the
films. She knew the stories had to be cut, and said, “I’d rather have had him wielding the scalpel than anyone else [emphasis in original]” (“When Steve Met Jo” 37).

Not everyone agrees. Some feel that paring down the stories to a manageable film running time eliminated many of the special symbols and details that added to the mythology. Chris Columbus has been criticized for an overly literal interpretation, putting the story on screen as if his only goal was the plot. Phillip Nel said, “The challenge for a filmmaker is to condense the source texts in a way that retains the central experience or meanings of the original” (“Bewitched”). This struggle became more difficult as the series progressed. *Sorcerer’s Stone* was 309 pages, *Order of the Phoenix* is 870 pages, and *Deathly Hallows* is 759. It is almost impossible to adapt the books and maintain the rich mythology. As Nel puts it, “The film does no violence to readers' imagined versions of characters and events, but it does not offer its own creative vision. In watching *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, you get the sense that its makers have tried to film a novel instead of make a movie” (“Lost in Translation?” 290).

Another point is special effects. Major technological innovations are available, and the different directors of the Potter films demonstrate their individual vision through their use of these. Columbus set the stage for the remaining films, so future directors had to live with some of his choices. Nel compares the first two movies to “historical re-enactments” meant to impress the audience with flying broomsticks, moving staircases, trolls and Fluffy (“Lost in Translation?” 280). Computer generated images (CGI) and stunt personnel made things like the flying Ford Anglia and the House Ghosts too easy and too much fun to omit. The line between what could be done and what should be done became blurred. Some critics argued that prolonging some scenes to show off the special effects and eliminating other quieter, character-driven scenes was done to pander to audiences used to superhero and alien movies. The series is based in a magical world,
and the elements of fantasy were necessary and justified. Rowling was a collaborator from the planning stages until the last day of shooting. Alfonso Cuarón said, “I would be in constant touch with her . . . We would start designing something visually about a character and she would have an amazing argument for why it could or could not be done. She was so available to discuss possibilities and changes” (McCabe 99). Some fans will say it is the small, quiet details, like *The Daily Prophet*, Marauders’ Map, and Umbridge’s office that made more of an impact than the dragon battles and basilisk. These small pieces made the mythology real.

The ways that collaboration shaped adaptation is evident in Bob McCabe’s comprehensive treatment of the ten-year process. An example is the filming of the two werewolves. Rowling told Cuarón that Lupin was a "damaged person, literally and metaphorically . . . His being a werewolf is really a metaphor for people's reactions to illness and disability." (Fraser 40). This impacted all aspects of the adaptation. Cuarón asked David Thewlis (Lupin) and Daniel Radcliffe (Harry) to build on the tragedy of the situation, a dynamic of a child spending time with a favorite uncle who has a terrible disease (McCabe 110). Lupin’s transformation is less about hair and teeth, and more of an eviscerated look, more starving dog than wolf (McCabe 469-471). Designers noted that this also minimized the scare factor, knowing that the audience included many children. The focus of Fenrir Greyback’s appearance was his brutality; any sexual overtones from the novels (*Deathly Hallows* 463) were diminished, although he is seen devouring Lavender Brown, an event that did not occur in the book.

The visual settings are also crucial components. Many of the sets and costumes used in the films are now housed in the studios at Leavesdon outside London. Like a pilgrimage to a sacred shrine, Potter fans flock to the studio tour. Early on, they sit outside the doors, much as the first years do upon their arrival. When the doors are opened, the emotions are palpable. More
than one person has posted online that they felt like they had come home. Similar reactions can be seen at The Wizarding World theme park, where walking the streets of Hogsmeade and ordering a Butterbeer can seem like a spiritual event. This is evidence that Chris Columbus, David Heyman, and the talented set and costume people achieved their goal. Everyone can have an individual picture of Rowling’s world and people in his or her imagination, but the accepted collective societal vision of many, especially those for whom the movies (and not the books) are the primary source of series enjoyment, is the one Warner Brothers concocted.

Finally, the casting of actors as characters was essential to the visual story. Harry Potter stories differ from some other fantasies in which the characters are the embodiment of good or evil. In most myths, the reader or viewer can trust his or her feelings about the characters. Gandalf is good, so is Sam, and Saruman is bad. However, many of the characters in the Potter books, even Voldemort, have a combination of positive and negative traits, or came to their present state after a series of stark events that caused changes. Voldemort is still pure evil, but the sad tale of Marope’s love for the Muggle Tom Riddle and her treatment at the hands of her father Malvolo brings insight into his evolution into the Dark Lord. Dumbledore is wise and good, but in Rita Skeeter’s tell-all book, Harry learns that in his youth, Dumbledore was on a path to power not unlike that of Voldemort. James Potter was a good man, but he could also be a cruel bully.

The most conflicted character is Snape. Trying to fit Snape into a single archetype is not really possible. The debates over whether Snape was good or evil raged throughout the ten-year publishing saga. The casting of Alan Rickman as the Potions Master compounded this. The veteran actor often stole any scene he inhabited, with looks and line deliveries that were magnetic. Rowling’s character coupled with Rickman’s performance made Snape a fan favorite.
Rowling wondered whether this is because of her character or Alan Rickman in the film adaptations (“Edinburgh Book Festival”). To help Rickman realize his early role, Rowling shared some information regarding the character arc over the seven books (Ellwood). This helped him to realize the nuances in the part. The adaptation of his feelings for Lily Evans in the final film brought many to tears.

Similar casting choices are credited with the successful adaptation of the films. Maggie Smith as Professor McGonagal, Kenneth Branagh as Gildroy Lockhart, Emma Thompson as Professor Trelawney, and Gary Oldman as Sirius Black are actors who helped make the transformation believable. Tom Felton as Draco, Jason Isaac as Lucius Malfoy and Helena Bonham Carter were villainous with every movement and line of dialogue. Online fan fiction and discussions, as well as cosplay, surprisingly focus more on the supposedly “evil” characters. Dumbledore is an oft-discussed component. Richard Harris passed away after the second film, and Alfonso Cuarón selected Michael Gambon as his replacement. For many, he never captured the humor and complexity of the headmaster as written in the books.

Daniel Radcliffe was discovered and cast near the end of the pre-production period. Besides Emma Watson and Rupert Grint, James and Oliver Phelps as the Weasley twins, Matthew Lewis as Neville and Evanna Lynch as Luna brought beloved characters to life in ways that kept and embellished the archetypes. No matter what criticism Chris Columbus is given, he must be credited for turning several fairly inexperienced children into a troupe of actors that carried eight movies over ten years. The Potter novels differ from some other franchises in that the audience’s age changes along with the actors/characters. One of the closest things to this is Star Trek. William Shatner and Leonard Nimoy are among the few that understand what it is like to inhabit a character over time and stay true to both the original role and the evolution.
The Harry Potter film adaptations connect to the book series. Whether or not they carry out the mythology, ignore it and focus on plot, or enhance the books are matters that have been discussed and argued by fans and scholars. Henry Jenkins said:

Basically, an adaptation takes the same story from one medium and retells it in another. . . . Adaptations may be highly literal or deeply transformative. Any adaptation represents an interpretation of the work in question and not simply a reproduction, so all adaptations to some degree add to the range of meanings attached to a story. . . . To translate *Harry Potter* from a book to a movie series means thinking through much more deeply what Hogwarts looks like and thus the art director/production designer has significantly expanded and extended the story in the process. It might be better to think of adaptation and extension as part of a continuum in which both poles are only theoretical possibilities and most of the action takes place somewhere in the middle.

Mireia Aragay writes that the real aim of adaptation is:

> to trade upon the memory of the novel, a memory that can derive from actual reading, or, as is more likely with a classic of literature, a generally circulated cultural memory. The adaptation consumes this memory, aiming to efface it with the presence of its own images. The successful adaptation is the one that is able to replace the memory of the novel. (13)

Each of the four directors—Chris Columbus, Alfonso Cuarón, Mike Newell and David Yates—brought different styles to the films. Most fans of the books feel that the films did not harm the mythology, with some being better than others in evoking the desired emotions in audiences. Rowling and Kloves seem to be the basis for that result.
Summary

Millions of people have enjoyed the Harry Potter films and have never read the books. Those who have seem to prefer the novels, but give a generally positive review to the movies as alternate ways to spend time in Rowling’s world. It is difficult to know how many of those take time to think deeply about the reasons these stories and films became such instant classics. The stories seem to reverberate through repeated viewings and readings. Mention of mythology, Campbell, Freud, or the Greeks may elicit laughter or bewilderment in some fan circles. Yet Joanne Rowling was wise enough to carefully weave stories in ways she knew would make them unforgettable. As she said in a 2000 interview, “I'm one of the very few who has ever found a practical application for their classics degree” (“Interview with Shelagh Rogers”). Harry’s struggle on the page has all the elements of ancient stories, along with the relevance of modern life. Warner Brothers, knowingly or unknowingly, entrusted the film adaptation to individuals who stayed faithful to the critical mythic components. The resulting productions should maintain a place among films like The Wizard of Oz, Peter Jackson’s Tolkien adaptations, and other classic film representations of beloved stories about “friends” from the pages of cherished books.

Works Cited


Arrowsmith, Nancy. Field Guide to the Little People: A Curious Journey Into the Hidden Realm of Elves, Faeries, Hobgoblins & Other Not-So-Mythical Creatures. Woodbury, MN:


Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets. Dir. Chris Columbus. Warner Brothers Entertainment, 2002. DVD.


Perlich, John. “‘I’ve Got a Bad Feeling About This…’: Lucas Gets Lost on the Path of Mythos.” 


