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Queerbaiting Tactics in the Wizarding World of Harry Potter

Master's thesis in English Literature with Teacher Education

Supervisor: Eli Løfaldli

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ABSTRACT

This thesis conducts a close comparative reading of books and films set in the *Wizarding World* of J. K. Rowling, in order to investigate whether or not queerbaiting tactics are used, and if so how. The term queerbaiting tactics can be used as an umbrella term for queercoding, queerbaiting, and queercatching. These are different practices of enticing and luring an audience with the promise of queer content without truly following through with that queer representation. Rowling has been accused of queerbaiting after retroactively announcing that Dumbledore was gay in a Q&A with fans several months after the release of the last *Harry Potter* book. Still, queerbaiting tactics have been in the film adaptations and the new *Fantastic Beasts* franchise. Thus, this thesis shows how different queerbaiting tactics are used in several texts in books, film adaptations and films associated with the Harry Potter universe.

KEYWORDS

Queercoding, queerbaiting, queercatching, queer studies, Harry Potter, J.K. Rowling, Fantastic Beasts, Dumbledore, Grindelwald, TV studies, Film studies, Adaptation studies, representation, queer, lesbian, bisexual, homosexual, gay, LGBTQ

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This thesis was written in an unusual time. As of turning in this paper my fellow students and I have been social distancing and not returning to campus for over eighty days due to COVID-19. Particularly in this time Dumbledore's quote of "we are only as strong as we are united, as weak as we are divided" (*Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, chapter 37) comes to mind. Though it has been difficult to continue writing this thesis at this time, I have managed it only due to the support of the following people:

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INTRODUCTION

J.K. Rowling's seven-volume *Harry Potter* series is undoubtedly one of the most beloved children's book series of all time. The eight-part movie adaptation of the series and the still developing prequel series *Fantastic Beasts* have continued to keep the world entertained and enchanted by Rowling's *Wizarding World* for over two decades. The one character, aside from Harry himself, that has been essential to the success of the book series is Professor Albus Wulfric Percival Brian Dumbledore. The wise old headmaster of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry functions initially as a paternal guide for both Harry Potter and the reader by consoling and preparing Harry for his fight against the Dark Lord. Even after his tragic death in the sixth book of the series, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, Dumbledore's importance and presence continues to grow, especially when both Harry and the reader realize how little they knew of headmaster's past. Not until the last book of the series is his past explored through the journalistic discoveries of Rita Skeeter, the gossipy and unreliable headline-chaser, who, despite her faulty methods, seems to get some details right. Skeeter reveals that Albus Dumbledore knew Gellert Grindelwald, the Hitleresque wizard, and that they were very close friends. So close in fact that ambiguous language might suggest that they were in a relationship. Even though the headmaster may not be the main character of the book series, he is a guiding parental character in *Harry Potter* and has also become a cultural icon of kindness and wisdom.

Little more was divulged about Dumbledore's past in the initial book series, until after the last book, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, was published. In a Q&A session with fans of the series, Rowling announced to the world that she had "always thought of Dumbledore as gay" (Rowling at Carnegie Hall). Since this was never explicitly revealed in the books, it came as a surprise to many readers and sparked an intense debate through opinion pieces in newspapers, religious establishments and of course in fan forums online. The opinions varied from excitement about more of queer characters in children's literature, to indifference – since it did not really affect the story, or to anger at Rowling for making this children's book series no longer family friendly. The latter group focuses on two main arguments: firstly, that sexuality should not be discussed in general in children's literature and secondly, that by announcing this, some would say Rowling was making Dumbledore a sinful character by being gay. On the other side of the spectrum, supporters for more queer representation in media rejoiced in the initial announcement. However, in recent years this group has also started to criticize the statement, since it did not have an effect on the story and because it was only revealed after the last book had been published. (Ting)

One reason for the delayed reaction to the announcement, is that much has happened in Rowling's *Wizarding World* and the society at large since the initial statement in 2007. Firstly, much more material has been added to this world including eight blockbuster film adaptations of the book series, and the addition of a prequel series called *Fantastic Beasts*, which includes a younger Dumbledore and his potential love interest Grindelwald. This adds more material for fans and scholars to analyze, but there is still no confirmed queer representation to be found in the new films. This has led to a growing suspicion that Dumbledore was not truly gay (Ting), which Daniel Radcliffe himself brought up in his interview with Rowling (*HarryPotterAdmirer* 29:01). Secondly, queer representation both in literature and on screen has increased over the last couple of years – which has resulted in a polarized audience who use the internet to voice their opinions. While more liberal people seek more queer representation also in media, those with conservative beliefs are against this.

There seems to be an unspoken consensus that children are more susceptible to the influence of literature than adults. Peter Hollindale argues that what and who is represented in media is so important to people due to the fact that everyone is influenced by what they see – especially children (Hunt 20). Because the *Harry Potter* series is one of the most successful children's book series in the world, it has enormous power to define how children view certain topics, including members of the LGBTQ+ community. This minority of people is still being marginalized, discriminated against, imprisoned, and/or even killed in some places of the world. The term 'representation' signaling the depiction of "less stereotypical and more realistic characters on the page as well as on screen" showing people "that not all females and males are alike, adhering to comparatively fixed gender role, but are (or at least should be) free to choose how to live their life" (Hecke 197) is therefore key in queer studies. It is important for the media to tackle tropes, stereotypes, prejudice, fear and hate that they themselves have helped to produce or reproduce. Marnie Pratt explains that for a queer audience queer representation is "closely linked with the ability to exist at all" especially when having an invisible identity in a very visual culture (Pratt 138-139). Media producers are however still motivated by profits and therefore want to appeal to both the queer consumers and more conservative consumers. Thus, the media industry must try to have a broad appeal in their productions in order to cater to all groups, resulting in the use of *queerbaiting tactics*.

KEY CONCEPTS

The history of queerbaiting tactics is crucial in understanding how potential queer relationships are handled by the media creators and promoters within literature, film, and television series. While feminist literature (i.e. May Louisa Alcott and Emily Brontë) was held back by social constraints and publishers to write "conventional girl's stories" which "concluded in marriage" (Grasso 184) in order to signal to audiences that the protagonists were morally good, legal restrictions were needed to keep the newly established film industry in Hollywood from approaching such issues. Since it was thought that film "may be used for evil" (Jowett 68), Hollywood made its own laws regarding morality in film before the Government could make them. These included that "the sympathy of the audience shall never be thrown to the side of crime, wrongdoing, evil or sin" (Vaughn 2). This meant that queer characters were "required to be framed in a negative way" (Hulan 19). This resulted in harmful tropes being established like the *'Bury Your Gays'* trope in which "a narrative work (novels especially), featured a same-gender romantic couple, one of the lovers must die or otherwise be destroyed by the end of the story" (17). At the time, this trope was a way for queer writers and/or queer-friendly writers to represent queerness in their story, however it is still used today when it is no longer career-ending or against the law. Since Hollywood today is still regarded as the main media producer in the world and thus has a big influence on the global market, the consequences of the Hayes Code are felt in all media productions seeking to appeal to the global market – including the books and films set in Rowling's *Wizarding World*.

The key concepts within queerbaiting tactics are *queercoding*, *queerbaiting* and *queercatching*. Queercoding can be explained as the creation of a character who is coded to be queer, typically by being given particular attributes which can be associated with queerness. However, they will not be explicitly queer in the text itself (Greenhill 111-112). The characters are coded queer through "words, forms, behaviors, signifiers of some kind" (Radner and Lanser 3) while also protecting the creators, including "wardrobe and make-up people, editors, composers and actors" (Greenhill 112) from the consequences of openly expressing particular messages which can only be decoded by members of an audience who are "living in two cultures" and may "recognize a double message" (Radner and Lanser 3). Under the Hayes Code, this was exemplified in *The Maltese Falcon* (1941) where the villain of the story, Joel Cairo who was openly gay in the original book, had to be queercoded in order to comply with the Hayes Code (Benshoff 30-31), by being given a feminine voice and mannerisms, his business card being perfumed, and the actor "interacting with his walking stick and other phallic objects in the film" (Hulan 19). This further played into *'the Sissy Villain'*-trope of evil and immoral characters being coded queer (Martinez). Although the

characteristics (feminine voice and movement in men) being shown in queercoding are not inherently bad, they are portrayed as such since they are linked so closely to villainy and disgust (Ellis). However, this was an easy way to invert and contrast with the hypermasculine hero, while also complying with the Hayes code. The language of cinema was created during this era, and has endured to this day (see Martinez, "Fabulously Fiendish: Disney Villains and Queer-Coding"), and while it was created in a time where queer representation was censored, its negative impact on queer stereotypes make it a double-edged sword.

Queerbaiting evolved from queercoding after the Hayes Code was abolished in the late 1960s, and can be defined as a strategy in 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" (Fathallah 2). It occurs "in a time and place where queer representation is possible yet constantly denied" (Nordin 63). Additionally, it has been "linked to marketing campaigns or press interviews where the people behind the scenes will be coy or vague when asked about the subtext" in a novel, film or tv show (Ellis).

Judith Fathallah, one of the first to academically write about queerbaiting, uses BBC's *Sherlock* (2010-) the tv adaptation of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's detective stories, to show how queerbaiting is used. Through humor and subtext, *Sherlock* opens and gestures towards queer possibilities between Sherlock Holmes and his flatmate Dr. John Watson, however they are then abruptly laughed off in order to return to the characters straight, proper masculinity (Fathallah 495). Though the actors, Cumberbatch and Freeman, call the relationship a "bromance" (Sheehan 1), Masad argues that the term itself is queerbaiting since it uses "'a dynamic that employs romantic tropes, all the while not actually fulfilling them" (Masad). Paired with Watson then marrying a woman later in the series, queer supportive audiences are repeatedly "disappointed as the performance of queerness is only used as 'bait' for them, while genuinely queer characters are not included" (Hecke 196). Considering the trend to move towards more diverse representation in media, the next step would be representation of *actual* queerness: openly proud queer characters, healthy relationships in all its forms and abandoning reproducing (binary) gender stereotypes (Hecke 197). Instead, it is moving from having subtextual representation in the text itself, but without clear confirmation by its creators – to creators claiming that their product will have queer representation, but then not following through in the text itself.

Queercatching is the newest form of queerbaiting tactics and has almost exclusively been discussed online (i.e. on YouTube and Twitter) and has not yet been considered in academic discourse. However, it has been defined as "explicitly talking in the promotion of a

film or TV show about a queer character, but not following through in the piece itself, in any meaningful way. Also putting little to no indication of a character's sexuality into a piece of work, and then retroactively telling the audience that they were LGBTQ+ all along" (Ellis). Thus, it is the reverse of queerbaiting. This can either manifest itself through characters initially be thought of as a member of the queer community, but then moving away from the idea as the production of the film went on (i.e. Lou and Debbi in *Oceans 8*, Sarah Edwards, *BuzzFeedNews*), or scenes confirming the queer sexual orientation of a character being removed from the final cut of the film because "it distracted from the scene's vital exposition" (i.e. Valkyrie, Tessa Thompson, *Rolling Stone*). Interviews like these are being done for promotional purposes and "only reaches small pockets, like LGBT news media" while not "reach[ing] conservative audiences", thus getting "the best of both worlds" (Ellis). Another iteration of queercatching is hinting at that maybe in the future there might be an opportunity for "organic, meaningful" representation of queer characters in big film franchises such as the *Marvel Cinematic Universe* or Disney films (Kevin Feige, *Slash*), but as of writing this paper not following through. Still, representation of LGBTQ+ characters is scarce in mainstream media.

As this this thesis will consider film adaptations of novels, some key concepts within the field of adaptation as defined by Julie Sanders as the "highly specific process involving transition from one genre to another" (Sanders 24), are helpful. During this process, Richard J. Hand argues, that "Five Creative Strategies of Adaptation" are used when converting a story from one medium to another called: omission, addition, marginalization, expansion, and alterations (Hand 17). In *omission*, textual or narrative material found in the source text is removed in the adaptation (ibid). Due to the medium of film and its time limitations, it cannot include the types of detailed description or plot that is presented in a novel (Hand and Prussell 8). In the strategy *addition*, narratives or textual material not found in the source text is added to the adaptation (Hand 17). Though less common than omission, addition is still used because of the generic expectations and the limits of each medium (Hand and Prussell 8). *Marginalization* addresses the times in which thematic issues are given less time in the adaptation, compared to *expansion* where a smaller thematic issue in the novel is more significant in the movie adaptation (Hand 17, Hand and Prussell 9). In the strategy *alteration*, textual style, themes, narrative events, and details are modified, but also includes the process in which geographical, historical settings or characters are radically changed (Hand 17, Hand and Prussell 9). Being able to investigate the uses of these strategies is one of the main advantages of looking at adaptations. When adapting a source text from one medium to another, changes are inevitable (Rosenstone 1). In order to fit the new medium, this process

of change leads to a more sharply tailored material, which lays bare exactly what the filmmakers want to represent (Hand 17). This is helpful in regard to determining queerbaiting tactics.

What sets adaptations apart from other texts is that the way that they are experienced and understood depends on its audiences' familiarity with the original text (59). Linda Hutcheon points out that "adaptation *as adaptation* involves, for its knowing audience, an interpretive doubling, a conceptual flipping back and forth between the work we know and the work we are experiencing (Hutcheon 139). This is especially significant when considering subtextual hints, as used in queerbaiting tactics, that may only be activated by an audience 'flipping back and forth' but remain unnoticeable to an unknowing audience who only have accessed the adaptation and not the original text. Thomas Leitch argues that this means that a knowing audience is invited by an adaptation to "test their assumptions, not only about familiar texts but about the ideas of themselves, others, and the world those texts project against the new ideas fostered by the adaptation and the new reading strategies it encourages" (Leitch 116). Of course, different audiences will react differently when experiencing a text. An audience who has had access to promotional material or interviews will have additional information to 'flip back and forth' from, crating even newer perspectives as Leitch presents. Particularly the audience with this additional information, Alves argues, are often disappointed with adaptations, because they built up their expectations in the anticipation of the adaptation and thus are frustrated when they find "that only the name remains and that it bears little resemblance to anything that was expected" (Alves 19). Forging a relationship with an audience who already has a strong affection to the source material is an uphill battle.

This thesis focuses on whether queerbaiting tactics as outlined above are used the books and films in Rowling's *Wizarding World*, and if so how. The method used to investigate whether it is used in the Harry Potter Universe is primarily based around close reading and adaptation theory as discussed above.

THESIS OUTLINE

In Chapter 1, queerbaiting tactics will be investigated in the portrayal of the relationship between Dumbledore and Grindelwald in the *Harry Potter* book series. Most of the chapter is devoted to an in-depth analysis of its depiction in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, but some further relevant examples from other books in the series are included in the conclusion of the chapter.

In Chapter 2, the films set in Rowling's *Wizarding World* are analyzed, with reference to concepts from adaptation theory, as outlined above such as Richard H. Hands "Five Creative Strategies of Adaptation", Linda Hutcheon's concept of 'flipping back and forth', and Thomas Leitch's theory surrounding different types of audiences. Furthermore, the chapter examines the marginalization of the Dumbledore/Grindelwald relationship in the two-part film adaptation of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, before discussing the still developing *Fantastic Beasts*-franchise. In the first film, *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*, the depiction of Grindelwald, disguised as Mr. Graves, and his manipulation of the character Credence is analyzed through the lens of queerbaiting. The discussion of the second film, *Fantastic Beast: The Crimes of Grindelwald*, focuses on how the film depicts the relationship of Grindelwald and Dumbledore, while also considering whether it does in fact try to re-closet Dumbledore.

CHAPTER 1: THE HARRY POTTER BOOK SERIES

To determine whether or not queerbaiting is used in the *Harry Potter* books, the different facets of Dumbledore's sexuality will need to be examined. Dumbledore can be described as eccentric and feminine in his appearance, which could arguably be seen to comply with appearance-based stereotypes surrounding queer culture. This is shown by him tucking his beard into his belt, wearing half-moon spectacles and wearing purple robes and high-heeled boots. However, sexuality cannot be determined based on one's appearance. In addition, wizard-fashion is quite different from muggle fashion – making our stereotypes surrounding clothing void. The main way to analyze someone's sexuality is of course to look at their relationships. It is important to point out that it is never confirmed in the books that Dumbledore had ever been in a romantic or sexual relationship with anyone. In fact, he seems, like many of the other teachers at Hogwarts, to live in celibacy. It is never referred to a girlfriend, boyfriend, or any other sort of romantic involvement. The only clue that is given is the already mentioned interview with Rowling in which she says there is a romantic dimension to the so called 'friendship' between Dumbledore and the character Grindelwald. Therefore, the next section is divided into two parts: the first is dedicated to the relationship between Dumbledore and Grindelwald, and the second part focuses on other ambiguous moments that have subtextual hints of Dumbledore's sexuality – both homosexual and heterosexual in nature.

DUMBLEDORE AND GRINDELWALD

Rowling stated that Dumbledore was gay in 2007, and further discussed this in an interview with Daniel Radcliff on a bonus track on the DVD release of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows part 2* in 2011, where they delved into the relationship between Dumbledore and Grindelwald:

Don't you think that it was perfect that Dumbledore who was always the great champion of love "love, Harry, love will save us", his one greatest experience of love was utterly tragic. It was with someone who was dangerous and demonic. And created absolute havoc in the world and created havoc for him – that's my idea for Dumbledore's tragic backstory. Now, I liked leaving it open so that perhaps a more worldly reader would see that there was – that that may have been in that relationship and perhaps a nine-year old would think he made a great friend and he trusted him. (HarryPotterAdmirer 30:43-31:20)

This tragic back story of Dumbledore is not told chronologically but is rather revealed piece by piece after his death through stories told by his friends, and finally discussed by Dumbledore himself towards the end of the book. By telling the story in this way, Rowling tampers not only with Harry's memory of Dumbledore, but also with that of the reader. The sense of who Dumbledore is has been created and confirmed by the six previous books. However, when new information about him surfaces post-mortem, both Harry's and the reader's memory of the headmaster is challenged and are both forced to revise it.

The first realization of how little was known about Dumbledore's background is in chapter "In Memoriam" in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, when key events of his life are summarized in obituaries written by two very different people: the first by Elphias Doge, former schoolmate and friend to Dumbledore, and the second by the sleazy journalist Rita Skeeter. These narrate two completely different stories of who Dumbledore was, which emphasizes not only how little was known about the headmaster of Hogwarts, but also how wide the range views of him were. Doge, who himself believes to have been quite close to Dumbledore, writes his *In Memoriam*-piece by focusing two subjects; how well he knew the mysterious great wizard, and the big events of the Dumbledore's life which were already known to the Wizarding Community. When arriving at his famous battle with Grindelwald, Doge simply refers to defeating the dark wizard as one of the many things that Dumbledore has done to improve the Wizarding World. Considering how close Grindelwald and Dumbledore were before their battle, it is rather suspicious that Doge leaves this out when writing:

(...) no wizarding duel ever matched that between Dumbledore and Grindelwald in 1945. Those who witnessed it have written of the terror and the awe they felt as they watched these two extraordinary wizards do battle. Dumbledore's triumph, and its consequences for the wizarding world, are considered a turning point in magical history to match the introduction of the International Statute of Secrecy or the downfall of He Who Must Not Be Named. (*Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* 24)

This is the only mention of Grindelwald that Doge makes. Rita Skeeter on the other hand tells a very different story, which is especially interesting since much of what she discloses has up until this point been unknown to the Wizarding community. However, Skeeter is known for publishing more gossip than fact. She was introduced to readers in the fourth *Harry Potter* book *The Goblet of Fire*, and always portrayed as cut-throat and always looking for a new scoop – in short, an unreliable source of information. Skeeter's depiction of the famous battle is quite different after being asked in an interview about it:

I'm afraid those who go dewy-eyed over Dumbledore's spectacular victory must brace themselves for a bombshell – or perhaps a Dungbomb. Very dirty business

indeed. All I'll say is, don't be so sure that there really was the spectacular duel of legend. After they've read my book, people may be forced to conclude that Grindelwald simply conjured a white handkerchief from the end of his wand and came quietly! (*Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* 28)

This is quite a different story than the one told by Doge and the rest of the Wizarding world. Exactly what happened during the battle seems to be unknown. While some celebrate it as the greatest battle in wizarding history, others question if a *true* battle happened at all. This key event in Dumbledore's story is shrouded in a blanket of secrecy. The details of confrontation are never further explained in the books – creating a gap. As Wolfgang Iser puts it, when the gap in the text itself is greater, then the reader is more involved in the sensemaking process (105). It is both up to Harry and the reader to make up their own idea as to what truly happened and how Dumbledore and Grindelwald are connected. Though the details of their battle are uncertain, the main story is still clear in both Doge's and Skeeter's reporting: Grindelwald is the villain and Dumbledore the hero of the story – though this easy and black and white story is beginning to show its cracks.

The connection between Dumbledore and Grindelwald is further explored in chapter 18, "The Life and Lies of Albus Dumbledore" in a bigger extract from Skeeter's book with the same name, which reveals that Dumbledore and Grindelwald used to be friends – not archenemies. About halfway through *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, Harry finally gets his hands on an actual issue of Rita Skeeter's book *The Life and Lies of Albus Dumbledore*. Harry discovers a photograph of Dumbledore and "his handsome companion" (*Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* 288), together as young men "roaring with laughter at some long forgotten joke" (ibid). Though Potter has seen this photograph before, he has never seen the caption: "Albus Dumbledore, shortly after his mother's death, with his friend Gellert Grindelwald" (ibid). There are two revelations in this one sentence. Firstly, it suggests a more complex Dumbledore family history than has previously been portrayed. Secondly, it reveals that Grindelwald was not an unknown villain that Dumbledore had to beat, but that the two of them were close friends. This is also the first of seven times in this chapter of the book in which Skeeter refers to their relationship as a 'friendship'.

Skeeter describes that when the two boys met, Albus Dumbledore had just gone through many traumatic experiences: losing his mother under mysterious circumstances, his father still being imprisoned at Azkaban, giving up on his dream to travel the world with Doge and becoming the sole provider of his family at 17 years old. At this dark time in his life he met another troubled but charming young man: Gellert Grindelwald. The young wizard had come to Godric's Hollow, the town in which both the Dumbledores and Bathilda Bagshot, Grindelwald's great-aunt, lived, after he had been expelled from his school at 16 years old for

doing "twisted experiments" with the Dark Arts. With Grindelwald already attending a school with a high tolerance for the Dark Arts, this implies that he already was too radical for the radicals of magic. Bathilda describes his arrival in her interview with Skeeter as follows:

'He seemed a charming boy to me,' babbles Bathilda, 'whatever he became later. Naturally, I introduced him to poor Albus, who was missing the company of lads his own age. The boys took to each other at once.'

They certainly did. Bathilda shows me a letter, kept by her, that Albus Dumbledore sent Gellert Grindelwald in the dead of night.

'Yes, even after they'd spent all day in discussion – both such brilliant young boys, they got on like a cauldron on fire – I'd sometimes hear an owl tapping at Gellert's bedroom window, delivering a letter from Albus.' An idea would have struck him, and he had to let Gellert know immediately!' (Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows 291)

Such descriptions, along with the existence of the photograph of the two, serve as clear indications that the two boys had a very close connection. Although Bathilda portrays their relationship as purely platonic, there are subtextual hints at a possible romantic dimension as well, such as in the phrase 'took to each other at once' and in the description of the tapping on the bedroom windows, which are both usually associated with romantic rather than platonic relationships. "Getting on like a cauldron on fire" is the first of several times where fire imagery is used to describe the relationship. "The word cauldron in the sample simile undoubtedly speaks for brewing and making potions which is another component of an average wizard's daily life. Hence, by comparing two best friends with a cauldron on fire the author makes her point clear that they are inseparable and perfectly completing each other" (Tamazyan 50). In addition, the use of fire is seldom used in a friendship setting, but rather in a romantic one like when Romeo describes love as "a fire sparkling in a lover's eyes" (Shakespeare 1.1.182). Hints, it is important to recognize that they are precisely that – subtextual hints rather than absolute 'proof'. An alternative interpretation of the enthusiasm shown by the two boys is clearly that they were so engaged with ideas on how to gain world dominance that they had to constantly share their thoughts with each other. Put together with the insistent use of the word 'friendship', any romantic dimension remains subtextual.

After two months of getting to know each other, Dumbledore and Grindelwald parted "never to see each other again until they met for their legendary battle" (*Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* 292). In the interview with Bagshot, the cause for Grindelwald's departure is explained thus:

'It was poor little Ariana dying, I think, that did it,' says Bathilda. 'It came as an awful shock. Gellert was there in the house when it happened, and he came back to my house all of a dither, told me he wanted to go home the next day. Terribly

distressed, you know. So I arranged a Portkey and that was the last I saw of him.

(...) A shame Gellert could not have stayed for the funeral ... he would have been a comfort to Albus, at least ... (*Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* 292)

Exactly how Ariana died is not explained until later in the *The Deathly Hallows*, but it is also described here that her brothers, Aberforth and Albus, got into a fight at her funeral, resulting in Albus' broken nose. Albus kept his nose crooked even though he could fix it with magic, because he felt responsible for their sister's death. Bérubé argues that Dumbledore's feelings for Grindelwald are intertwined with the loss of Ariana. He writes: "Indeed, the first desire cannot be disentangled from the second, because the disabled Ariana is the reason for the decline of the Dumbledore family" (Bérubé 35). That is why his family's tragic story is detrimental in the understanding of his relationship with Grindelwald. In addition, revelations such as the family history, which was unknown to Harry, also sow seeds of doubt about whether it ever was possible to truly know who the headmaster was. Skeeter herself is left confused and when speculating on the inevitable battle between Dumbledore and Grindelwald in 1945, she asks rhetorically: "Was it lingering affection for the man or fear of exposure as his once best friend that caused Dumbledore to hesitate? Was it only reluctantly that Dumbledore set out to capture the man he was once so delighted he had met?" (*Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* 293). Murray declares this moment "as far as implying Dumbledore's homosexuality, the most explicitly Rowling writes" (Murray). Neither Skeeter nor Rowling choose to go further in their queer implication to the Dumbledore and Grindelwald relationship, and it is thus left subtextual.

The confusion and anger of questioning this parental character is also reflected in Harry Potter's response: "He had trusted Dumbledore, believed him the embodiment of goodness and wisdom. All was ashes: how much more could he lose?" (*Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* 293). The memory of Dumbledore is even more disrupted. The process of deciding which information to trust and which not to is not only difficult for Harry, but for the reader as well. It is not made easier by the fact that it was written by Skeeter, who is generally untrustworthy and has strong bias towards Dumbledore – making him out to be more flawed than he truly was. Nevertheless, the information given cannot be completely dismissed, since Skeeter has used *Veritaserum* (truth elixir) on Bagshot – making at least her quotes and version of the events seem more reliable. In short, after reading this chapter from *The Life and Lies of Albus Dumbledore*, the reader is left with even more questions than answers about Dumbledore's past and relationship with Geller Grindelwald. "Beyond the slightly suggestive remarks readers cannot know the extent of Dumbledore's first (and perhaps only) love" (Pugh 119). There is no way to know if there was a romantic dimension to the tragic relationship of Grindelwald and Dumbledore.

Towards the end of the last book in chapter 35 "King's Cross", Harry is brought to a limbo-like place after being killed which is represented to him as King's Cross Station. Here, he meets Dumbledore again, and can finally hear his version of events directly from the source itself. First, the headmaster explains their quest for the Deathly Hallows: the Stone of Resurrection, the Elder Wand or Deathstick and the Cloak of Invisibility, who together could conquer death: "It was the thing, above all, that drew us together," he said quietly. "Two clever, arrogant boys with a shared obsession." (*Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* 572). Dumbledore portrays the two of them as two geniuses working together, joined by a shared longing after power and eternal life, and admits that he himself was "gifted, I was brilliant. I wanted to escape. I wanted to shine. I wanted glory" (573), however, Dumbledore felt trapped by his obligation to his family. Therefore, this was the opportune time for Grindelwald to arrive at Godric's Hollow. Bérubé argues that Dumbledore's sexual attraction to Grindelwald is connected to his "desire to distinguish himself from his suddenly disreputable family, and most of all from his disabled sister" (Bérubé 35) Again it is highlighted how intertwined Dumbledores feelings towards Grindelwald are closely intertwined with Ariana and the yearning for recognition of his brilliancy. Ambition was their shared trait and together they could have changed the world: "Grindelwald. You cannot imagine how his ideas caught me, Harry, inflamed me. Muggles forced into subservience. We wizards triumphant. Grindelwald and I, the glorious young leaders of the revolution." (*Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* 573). Dumbledore was undoubtedly seduced by Grindelwald and his ideas. "Did I know, in my hearts of hearts what Gellert Grindelwald was? I think I did, but I closed my eyes. If the plans we were making came to fruition, all my dreams would come true!" (573-574).

There are two ways of interpreting Dumbledore's statements. On the one hand it is a story of two young men who obsess over their field of study – the Hallows. It reveals how important their cause was to them while also showing how all-consuming that work was. In addition, it shows how Grindelwald pushed Dumbledore to his limits – constantly making him give up on things, cross lines and allowing more horrors to happen – all for "the greater good". It tells a story of how a well-intentioned revolution can turn to a dystopian hell. "The future glory which Albus Dumbledore wants to get is presented by Gellert Grindelwald's ideas" (Trisnawijaya 140). It is an intellectual and political fight, centered around the question of how much one can compromise before losing oneself completely.

On the other hand, as Irwin points out, the above quoted lines of Dumbledore also can be understood "in a new light" after Rowling's outing of the headmaster (Irwin 142). If Grindelwald knew of Dumbledore's affection towards him, it is not unreasonable to think that the evil wizard used this to manipulate him and that Dumbledore's feelings towards

Grindelwald may have made him blind to his true nature. Rowling herself suggest that this revelation creates a greater understanding of Dumbledore, saying "To an extent, do we say it excuses Dumbledore a little more because falling in love can blind us to an extend? But he met someone as brilliant as he was, and... was very drawn to this brilliant person, and horribly, terribly let down by him" (Rowling at Carnegie Hall).

In addition, fire imagery is used again with him being "inflamed" by Grindelwald's ideas further highlighting how great Dumbledores affection is towards the man. It is possible yet again to read the text against the grain in order to uncover a romantic dimension to the relationship, which Rowling talks about. On the other hand, Rowling keeps referring back to the Hollows, their shared obsession, right after using language which might be suggestive of a romantic dimension. Right after Dumbledore's "I closed my eyes", we are again faced with what he claims was "at the heart of our schemes, the Deathly Hallows!" (574), which again underscores the intellectual aspect of their relationship. This creates a way to easily dismiss the romantic dimension to those who wish it and stating that the Hallows was their true focus, and not the romantic one.

Dumbledore and Grindelwald's time did come to an end after what Dumbledore describes as: "two months of insanity, of cruel dreams, and neglect of the only two members of my family left to me" (*Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* 574). Though the time Dumbledore and Grindelwald spent together is short, and little of it is disclosed in the books, the magnitude of the relationship is clear. "For Rowling, the danger of infatuation is a failure to recognize responsibility to others and evidence that one has lost one's "moral center" and, consequently, become blind to others' needs" (Westman 196-197). It was this neglect of Albus' own family that brought their relationship to an end: Dumbledore and Grindelwald wanted to travel the world with the unstable Ariana in tow in order to find the Deathly Hallows, but Aberforth stood up to them and called it insanity:

The argument became a fight. Grindelwald lost control. That which I had always sensed in him, though I pretended not to, now sprang into terrible being. And Ariana ... after all my mother's care and caution ... lay dead upon the floor.' Dumbledore gave a little gasp, and began to cry in earnest. (*Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* 574)

Dumbledore and Grindelwald's blind and senseless search for power was so destructive and all-consuming that it led to the death of Ariana. Pugh points out that "beyond the ways in which Ariana's death renders homosexual desire complicit with mortality, [their] relationship must fail within the narrative logic of the series" (124). Had Grindelwald and Dumbledore been allowed to continue their relationship and live happily ever after, Rowling would been

forced to "depict homosexuality rather than treating it merely as a ghostly presence" (ibid). As a result, Ariana's death also leads to the death of any sort of relationship with Grindelwald and further plays into the '*Bury Your Gays*'-trope.

Grindelwald fled and who exactly killed Ariana remained unknown. It was the fear of that knowledge, that perhaps Dumbledore himself had cast the spell that kill her, which kept him from intervening in Grindelwald's rise to power: "I think he knew it, I think he knew what frightened me. I delayed meeting him until, finally, it would have been too shameful to resist any longer. People were dying and he seemed unstoppable, and I had to do what I could." (*Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* 575). Significantly, Dumbledore never says that it was love that prevented him from intervening sooner, but rather a fear of knowledge, an urge to help people and stop the killings of innocents and trying to resist the hunger for power.

The last time Grindelwald is mentioned in the conversation between Harry and Dumbledore is when they discuss whether Grindelwald might have changed his views at the end of his life:

Grindelwald tried to stop Voldemort going after the wand. He lied, you know, pretended he had never had it." Dumbledore nodded, looking down at his lap, tears still glittering on the crooked nose. "They say he showed remorse in later years, alone in his cell at Nurmengard. I hope that is true. I would like to think that he did feel the horror and shame of what he had done. Perhaps that lie to Voldemort was his attempt to make amends ... to prevent Voldemort from taking the Hallow ..." "...or maybe from breaking into your tomb?" suggested Harry, and Dumbledore dabbed his eyes. (*Harry Potter and the Deathly Hollows* 576)

Dumbledore is still hurt by how the friendship with Grindelwald evolved, but there is this hint of redemption. Did he really show remorse? His actions do seem to suggest so, by attempting to stop Voldemort from obtaining the Elder Wand and disrupting Dumbledore's grave since he was buried with it. Still it is hard to say what specifically he would feel remorse for: starting the great war in the wizarding world or what he did to Dumbledore personally. Harry seems to suggest it might have been personal, but again this is only suggested and Dumbledore answers with ambiguous silence.

In fact, 'ambiguous silence' are key words in summarizing the relationship between Dumbledore and Grindelwald. There is an undeniable potential for double meanings and a romantic reading of their relationship, but this is never fully confirmed or resolved. It can just as easily be explained away like Rowling herself does when stating that to a child this would be seen as a friendship and not a romantic involvement (*HarryPotterAdmirer* 31:19). Especially in the last conversation Harry has with Dumbledore, it would not have been out of place for him to explain that it was his love for Grindelwald that stopped him from seeing who

he was or preventing him from gaining power. However, this is either not the case or left unsaid. Either way, her form of queer representation lives in an ambiguous place which makes it unclear if it was intentional at all. Tison Pugh and David L. Wallace go as far as claiming that if Rowling intended for Dumbledore to be gay, then readers must recognize that "it was J.K. Rowling who put Dumbledore in the closet, and she now receives credit for taking him out of it" (Pugh and Wallace 191). While Rowling claims to represent queerness in her books, she falls short, and does not challenge homophobia but rather maintains heteronormativity.

ROWLINGIAN AMBIGUITY

There are some other instances where the question of Dumbledore's sexuality can be said to be activated in the *Harry Potter* novels. Dumbledore's relationship with Elphias Doge is an example of this: in his obituary, Doge wrote that Dumbledore and he had a "mutual attraction [which] undoubtedly was due to the fact that we both felt ourselves to be outsider" (*Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* 21). Though this could hint at a romantic dimension to this relationship as well, it can also just as easily be tossed aside when Doge continues by referencing his dragon pox and how Albus was bullied due to his father being in Azkaban. Pugh also points out that "their contemporaries, however, are dismissive of their friendship" (119) and that instead was rather one-sided admiration from Doge. Similarly, this is shown in the book at Fleur and Bill Weasley's wedding, where Doge meets the Weasley's great-aunt Muriel, and they begin to discuss Dumbledore and Skeeter's book. Here, she also let slip that everyone knew "how [Doge] worshipped Dumbledore" (*Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* 128), which is also written ambiguously that it might be both open for a queer reading or not. In a later conversation with Harry, Aberforth also denounces Doge's admiration towards Albus: "Though the sun shone out of my brother's every orifice, he did" (*Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* 563). Pugh argues that "this line, with typical Rowlingian ambiguity, hints at an anal attraction while refusing to state it" (119). Though this arguably is taking it a bit far for a children's book, Rowling has included other anally fixated jokes such as the overdone Uranus-joke (*Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* 701, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* 178)

Another, more sinister, hint implying that Dumbledore may have been gay is offered by Rita Skeeter when she refers to the headmaster's "unhealthy interest in Potter" and that he had an "unnatural interest" in him (*Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* 29). Here Skeeter is making "an implication which recalls a dangerous and incredibly damaging history of association of pedophilia with homosexuality" (Murray). If Rowling is trying to support the gay community by portraying Dumbledore as gay – why include this accusation from Skeeter,

which is so harmful to that community, but not going all the way and accuse of him being gay? That would be a sensational story for a journalist to run with, which makes it hard to understand why it is not further developed. Skeeter does however continue with the pedophile-angel: "I devote an entire chapter to the whole Potter-Dumbledore relationship. It's been called unhealthy, even sinister.... Dumbledore took an unnatural interest in Potter from the word go.... It's certainly an open secret that Potter had a most troubled adolescence" (ibid).

Interestingly, Skeeter employs the lexicon of queer theory here when referring to Harry's "open secret". Eve Sedgwick describes the open secret as "a very particular secret, a homosexual secret" (164). Carolyn Dean further fleshes out the term by writing that "the open secret was (and still is) a means of regulation via its repressive ('don't tell') and its productive features (a secret endlessly spoken and stages and thus itself knowledge-generating) but was also a form of sadistic entrapment" (161). Harry's open secret of his troubled adolescence also signals to readers aware of this term, that he too is gay. However, there are even fewer textual evidence of this, especially when considering Cho Chang and Ginny Weasley who are the only persons Harry gets into a romantic relationship with. Skeeter's knowledge of the queer lexicon and the fact that she does not use it when writing about Dumbledore does make it seem unlikely the wizarding world generally know yet never speak of Albus Dumbledore's sexuality.

It is also relevant in this context that there are several occurrences in the Harry Potter books, in which Albus Dumbledore behaves in heteronormative ways. For instance, in the very first book of the series *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* after receiving a compliment from Professor McGonagall, Dumbledore responds with "It's lucky it's dark. I haven't blushed so much since Madam Pomfrey told me she liked my new earmuffs." (*Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* 14). Though the comment is short, it does hint at a heterosexual attraction since blushing after receiving a compliment often happens in literature when receiving it from one's crush. Another instance is in the fourth book of the series, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, in which Dumbledore dances with Pomona Sprout, the female professor of Herbology, at the Yule Ball (*Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* 369). This is a short and insignificant glimpse at Dumbledore's life; however, it does indicate to readers a heterosexual orientation. With these two instances combined, and in addition with the overall ambiguity in Rowling's writing of Dumbledore's sexuality, there is no explicit evidence to be found. And those moments that can be read as romantic are according to Murray, crafted with "with microaggressions, archaic associations, or complete erasure" (Murray). Thus, the *Harry Potter*-book series falls under the queercatching category, since it does not follow through on

the claim that Dumbledore is gay in any meaningful way, even though there is subtext that can be interpreted in that way. This is further strengthened by Rowling retroactively telling her readership that he was a part of the LGBTQ+ community all along.

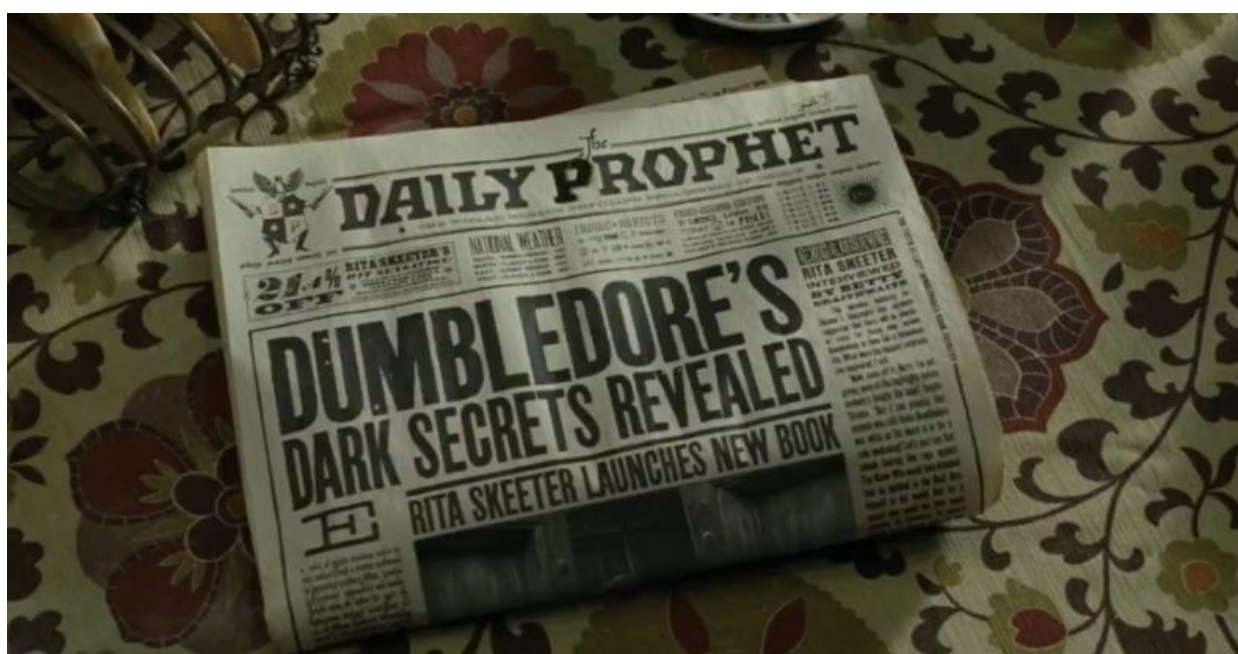
CHAPTER 2: THE WIZARDING WORLD FILMS

The previous chapter dealt with how the books represent Dumbledore's sexuality and his relationship with Grindelwald. These were written before Rowling stated that Dumbledore was gay, while the adaptation of the most important book regarding the sexuality of Dumbledore, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, was divided into two parts and released in 2010 and 2011 respectively – several years after Rowling's revelation in 2007. Rowling had remarked that "If I'd known it [announcing that Dumbledore was gay] would make you so happy, I would have announced it years ago" (Rowling at Carnegie Hall), thus signaling that she regretted not highlighting this sooner. It also suggests that this aspect of Dumbledore would be represented – if not further explored in the movie adaptations of the *Harry Potter* book series. When it was revealed that there also would be a five-movie prequel series exploring the years leading up to the legendary battle between Grindelwald and Dumbledore, it was also implied that there would be further exploration of their relationship. As will be discussed, these expectations were not met. The aim of this chapter is to investigate what happened with the subtext concerning Dumbledore's sexuality as described in the previous chapter as it was adapted for the screen, and also how prequel films such as *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* and *Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald* portray Dumbledore and Grindelwald as characters and the relationship between them.

HARRY POTTER AND THE DEATHLY HALLOWS PART 1

Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 1 was released in 2010, directed by David Yates, and was the first of two cinematic parts based on J.K Rowling's 2007 novel of the same name. The story itself is very similar to the original text, though through the process of adaptation, it of course has undergone some changes, including the marginalization or even omission of most of the subtext between Dumbledore (younger: Toby Regbo, older: Michael Gambon) and Grindelwald (younger: Jamie Campbell Bower, older: Michael Byrne), as will be discussed below.

The first significant change in the film adaptation, regarding the subtextual hints of Dumbledore's sexuality, is in the adaptation of the "In Memoriam" article written by Elphias Doge (David Ryall) and the article by Rita Skeeter (Miranda Richardson). The debate is in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 1* shown in the form of newspaper headlines, but its contents is never discussed. The camera hovers over Doge's name and the shot mainly functions as a way to introduce Doge's character, who Harry (Daniel Radcliffe) meets later in the film. A viewer with the knowledge of how the articles discuss the different sides of Dumbledore, the hero and/or the secret keeper, would know the significance of this issue of the *Daily Prophet*, however due to the clear headline "Dumbledore's Dark Secrets Revealed" viewers who do not 'flip back and forth' are able to pick up on the uncertainty towards



Screenshot 1: *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows part 1*, 26:14

Dumbledore's character which is growing in Harry. Nevertheless, the ambiguity which prevalent in the subtext of Doge's "mutual attraction" (*Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* 21), and Skeeter's doubting of a battle between Grindelwald and Dumbledore ever happening is omitted. The effect of this is that the film already signals to viewers in the know that the topic of the relationship between the two wizards has been marginalized. In addition, the alteration of showing the headlines instead of portraying Harry reading the paper or discussing it later in the film, strengthens this.

When Doge later appears in the film at the wedding held at the Weasley's home, his conversation with Harry and Aunt Muriel (Matyelok Gibbs) is also altered to shy away from the subtext of the books. Firstly, Muriel's "funny rumor" about Dumbledore is omitted. In fact, the conversation between the three character does not delve into the trustworthiness of

Dumbledore, the contents of Skeeter's upcoming book or Skeeter's character directly, but rather focuses on Bathilda Bagshot. Interestingly, the reason for Bathilda spilling all of the Dumbledores secrets has been altered, as well. She is no longer excused due to her dementia or old age, as is described in the book, but instead her interview is considered "a monstrous betrayal" by Doge (*Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows pt.1* 34:10). The effect is that her interview with Skeeter seems even more unreliable to the viewers.

Skeeter's *The Life and Lies of Albus Dumbledore* makes an appearance in the film, however its contents is not discussed beyond identifying who Grindelwald is and that he knew Dumbledore. Naturally, when adapting this scene, the characters could not simply read aloud several pages of Rita Skeeter's book, yet the plotline of Harry



Screenshot 3: *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows part 1*, 1:30:02

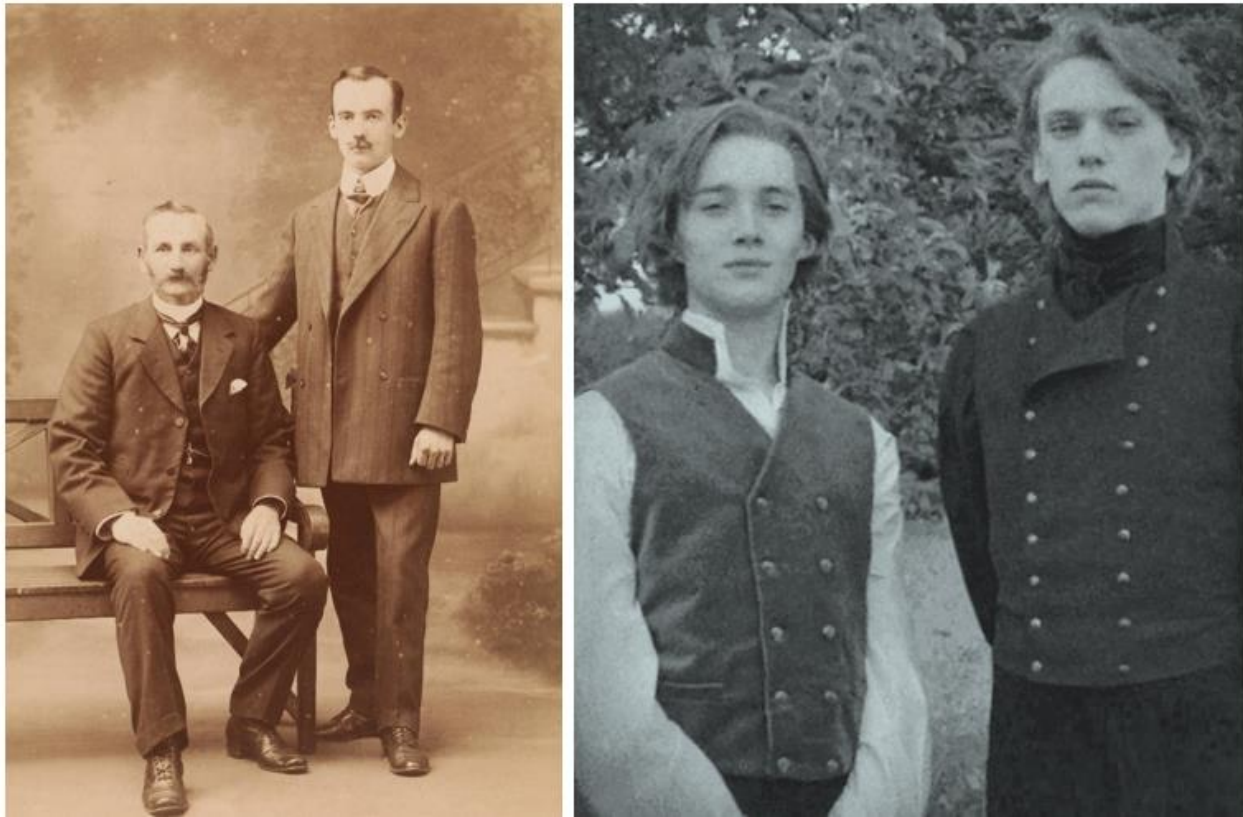
learning more about Dumbledore's past seems to have been marginalized. Hermine (Emma Watson) hands Harry the book after having read it whilst on guard duty. She reveals to him, while handing him the book, that it is Gellert Grindelwald who is in the photograph they found earlier in the film at Bagshot's home. In a close-up, Harry quickly flips through a couple of pages showing enchanted moving pictures of Dumbledore and Grindelwald. They are referred to as "best friends" in the book, however the shot only lasts a couple of seconds (*Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows pt.1* 1:34:28) and could only be read when pausing the film. Harry's reaction to this revelation is nonexistent as he changes the topic to his broken wand instead. A viewer who does not have the context of the books would probably not understand the relevance or the significance of showing the two wizards together. While a book reader would either get excited because they have the ability to 'flip back and forth' and understand how



Screenshot 2: *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows part 1*, 1:34:24

big the revelation of the two wizards knowing each other truly is, or get frustrated by the adaptation for marginalizing this plotline.

When pausing the film to examine some interesting details are found, by audiences with a special interest in this plotline. Firstly, there have been changes made to the picture of Grindelwald and Dumbledore. Contrary to the books where the two boys are described as laughing, this photo shows a more somber pair, with Grindelwald holding his hands behind his back and both looking emotionless into the camera. Though this does mimic the style of photography from the late 1890s when this picture would have been taken, this alteration downplays any form of chemistry between the two characters which is highlighted in the

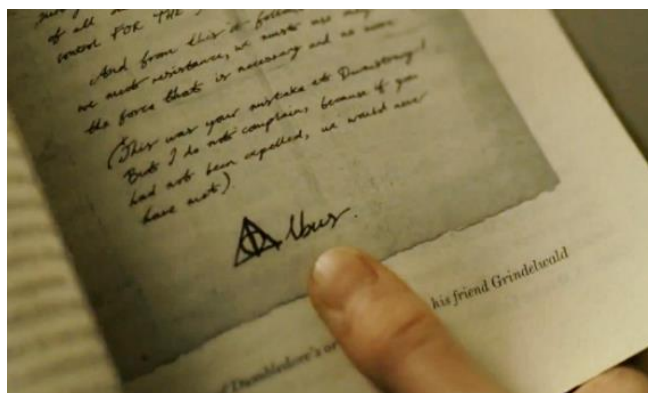


Picture 1: "No title (Two men), cabinet print" (1890s), Eden Photo Studios, Melbourne
Screenshot 4: *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows part 1*, 1:34:24

books. The description of the photo is also altered from "Albus Dumbledore, shortly after his mother's death, with his friend Gellert Grindelwald" (*Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* 288) to "For the greater good! Dark days: Albus Dumbledore and Gellert Grindelwald" (*Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows pt.1* 1:34:24). The first description, from the book, informs its reader much more about Dumbledore's backstory: his mother's death and his friendship with Grindelwald. The second description, from the film, chooses to focus more on simply informing who the picture is of, while using more ambiguous language. The significance of "the greater good" is also only accessible to those viewers who have knowledge of the books,

or the *Fantastic Beasts* films which were released later. The thematic implication to this change is that the film again creates a less complex image of the relationship between Dumbledore and Grindelwald, since it marginalizes the chemistry between the two by mimicking the photography style of the 1890s and minimizes the use of the word "friendship".

However, declaration of their friendship is present when Harry quickly flips past the picture of Dumbledore and Grindelwald together, until he finds a picture of Grindelwald alone holding his wand with the description: "Gellert Grindelwald: Dumbledore's BEST frie...[nd]", (*Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows pt.1* 1:34:28). This page has even less screen time than the former, thus resulting in even



Screenshot 5: *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows part 1*, 1:43:59

fewer viewers being able to pick up on this description and its implications. Rather than commenting on the fact that Dumbledore became friends with the most evil wizard before Voldemort, Harry's only remark is that "he's the thief I saw at Gregorovitch's Wand Shop. Speaking of which, where is my wand? Where is my wand Hermione?" (*Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows pt.1* 1:34:32). Quickly, the plot moves on to the fact that Harry's wand, unbeknownst to him, had been broken during a previous fight. Dumbledore's letter exchange with Grindelwald are included in the film adaptation, however, only to show the special symbol the headmaster used in his signature. Its contents are not discussed on screen and are thus omitted. The plotline of Dumbledore's past has been marginalized in this film adaptation because it is nonessential to the scene in the film. Rita's book functions as a way for Harry to piece together information that will lead him to the Elder Wand, which also serves as a good transition to the revelation that Harry's own wand has been broken. It is uncinematic to delve into Dumbledore's past at this moment in the film, however the result is that Dumbledore loses his complexity in the film. Natália Alves argues that "this could be interpreted as a choice to focus on Harry and the development of his "journey" in the film in detriment of Dumbledore's development" (Alves 29). It also erases the ambiguity found in his relationship with Grindelwald in the book series.

The last appearance of Grindelwald in the film series is when Voldemort tracks him down in order to get the Elder Wand. The book describes how Grindelwald lied to Voldemort, perhaps as Harry suggests in order to prevent Voldemort from destroying Dumbledore's grave (*Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* 576). The encounter ends with Voldemort killing

Grindelwald for lying to him and in order to get command of the wand. In the film, however, Grindelwald mocks Voldemort for not knowing where the wand is, before revealing that "The Elder Wand lies with him of course. Buried within the earth. It is he who possesses it, even in death. Your old friend and mine ... Dumbledore" (*Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows pt.2* 1:59:50). Voldemort immediately leaves Grindelwald and, contrary to the wandmaker Gregorovitch who he killed as soon as he got the information he needed, he does not kill Grindelwald. The two alterations to the adaptation; Grindelwald not protecting Dumbledore's grave, and Voldemort sparing Grindelwald's life, have thematic consequences. The first again marginalizes the plotline of Dumbledore and Grindelwald's relationship. Any ambiguity which the books had which made it possible to see some sort of subtext is omitted. Now, Grindelwald is simply the evil wizard before Voldemort who of course lets his peer, Voldemort, know where the Elder Wand is. Consequentially, this could also be the reason for Voldemort not killing Grindelwald since he does cooperate. In short, there is a significant difference in how the two scenes play out in the book versus the film adaptation.

After watching the first part of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* different types of audiences are left with different impressions of the relationship between Dumbledore and Grindelwald. Both of the characters complexity from the books, has been sacrificed in the film adaptation in order to expand of Harry and his journey instead. Viewers only familiar with the film have seen so little of Grindelwald in the movie, that they might not even remember him as a character. Others who are familiar with the source text on the other hand do realize that much of this plotline has been cut. Instead, mentions of Grindelwald and showing Rita Skeeter's *The Life and Lies of Albus Dumbledore* serve more as Easter eggs for viewers in the know. Adaptations, especially transmedial adaptations, due to its process of adapting to change, it is interesting that this plotline in particular which could be great for representing a queer relationship on screen has been cut. Part 1 and Part 2 of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* were filmed simultaneously, therefore further analysis of queer aspects will be done after considering the scenes in the second part.

HARRY POTTER AND THE DEATHLY HALLOWS PART 2

Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 2 was released in 2011, directed by David Yates, and is the continuation of the two cinematic parts based on J.K Rowling's 2007 novel of the same name. In this final installment of the *Harry Potter* film series, the focus is on the action-packet Battle of Hogwarts and not as much character development as in the first part. However, there are still some scenes of interest which consider the relationship between

Grindelwald and Dumbledore. Again, much from the original subtext between Grindelwald and Dumbledore has been omitted, thus marginalizing the Grindelwald/Dumbledore plotline.

When Harry and his crew meet Aberforth before the Battle of Hogwarts, he taunts Harry with the impossible task that he was given by Albus: "Nice job? Easy?" (*Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows pt.2* 28:31). Harry counters with continuing to ask for help with destroying the Horcruxes and getting into Hogwarts, however Aberforth continues: "Which job my brother has given you... no it's a suicide mission. Do yourself a favor, boy. Go home! Live a little longer" (*Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows pt.2* 28:38). Aberforth continues to speak ill of his brother while trying to understand why Harry would continue Albus's quest of destroying the Horcruxes. Harry answers: "I am not interested in what happened between you and your brother" (*Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows pt.2* 29:33), and with that the opportunity to learn about the past of the Dumbledore family vanishes. Again, as Alves pointed out, Harry's "journey" is chosen over further character development of Dumbledore. Hermione attempts one more time to get Aberforth to open up about the past by asking him about the photo of Ariana and the rumor she heard that the sister died very young. Aberforth answers: "My brother sacrificed many things, Mr. Potter. On his journey to find power. Including Ariana. And she was devoted to him. He gave her everything, but time" (*Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows pt.2* 30:40). While Aberforth speaks the shot lingers on Harry's face, seemingly implying that he regrets not asking more about his headmaster's past. However, after shutting Aberforth down so harshly, the opportunity to do so has passed. This further marginalizes the Grindelwald/Dumbledore storyline and simplifies Dumbledores character.

The last opportunity the film gets to dive into the relationship between Dumbledore and Grindelwald is when Harry meets Dumbledore again at the limbo-like King's Cross, but there is no mention of either Grindelwald, nor Ariana or any other member of the Dumbledore family. The film sticks to its choice to focus on Harry and his journey rather than the deep and complex story of Dumbledore's past – including Grindelwald. Ruth Suehle agrees that the loss of this scene simplifies Dumbledore's character and writes in her review that:

Dumbledore's in-limbo confessions of his story with Grindelwald and the search for the Hallows are deep insight into this character that were eliminated but I think keeping them could have added to the film, particularly after Dumbledore's image becomes colored in both directions by his brother Aberford's comments and Snape's memories in the Pensieve. (Suehle)

Naturally, some of the reason for this is that a film adaptation, which has less time to spend on its characters, cannot include such a complex storyline. However, it would have created

more depth to both Harry and Dumbledore. Yet this last choice of not including Dumbledore's relationship with Grindelwald in this scene is not really a choice in the adaptation process any longer, but more a consequence of the earlier choices of not including this plotline. Expanding on Dumbledore's background here would have made it hard to follow for audiences with only the film as reference and taken away from Harry's close encounter with death.

In both of the *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* films, very little of the background of Grindelwald himself or his relationship to Dumbledore is shared. In fact, his name is never mentioned in *Part 2*. All viewers get to know is that he was the original evil wizard before Voldemort and that he had a summer friendship with Dumbledore (if the viewer pauses and pays attention to the text below the picture of Grindelwald and Dumbledore) – with no knowledge of how that friendship ended. In the film Grindelwald only functions as a device for the viewer to track where the Elder Wand is and for Voldemort to attain it. Therefore, it is safe to say that there is no queerbaiting to be found in the Harry Potter films. All textual ambiguity that made it possible to believe in a gay relationship between Dumbledore and Grindelwald has been removed. This is regardless if the viewer is a part of the audience who has the ability to 'flip back and forth' or if they are just a casual movie goer. Speculation into why this was done is just that – speculation and will therefore be kept short. Perhaps it was cut for time or in order to simplify the already complicated story? Or more sinisterly, it was cut in order to be more family friendly and to appeal to markets, such as China or even the conservatives in the western world, where homosexuality or any other form of queerness is condemned. Regardless, it is interesting that when the time came to make a prequel movie-series to the *Harry Potter* films, it was decided to focus on Grindelwald, a character that had arguably been marginalized in the movie adaptations. Nevertheless, he is the only character who has appeared in both the *Harry Potter* films series and the *Fantastic Beasts* series.

FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM

Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them (2016) is the first film of the spin-off prequel to the *Harry Potter* films and was directed by David Yates and produced and written by Rowling in her screenwriting debut. The series is inspired by her 2001 book of the same name. The story is set in 1926 New York where a British magizoologist Newt Scamander (Eddie Redmayne) who both explores the wizarding world in America, but also the different kinds of magical animals found in this world. Though he is the protagonist of this story, the more interesting characters, in this context, are those of Auror Percival Graves (Colin Farrell) who is secretly Grindelwald (Johnny Depp) in disguise, and Credence Barebone (Ezra Miller). Credence has been raised by an abusive adoptive mother which has suppressed his magical abilities

resulting in him becoming an obscurus, which is created when a child has experienced physical or emotional abuse which results in this "unstable uncontrollable dark force that busts out and attacks, and then vanishes" (*Fantastic Beasts* 1:04:37). The film ends with Credence seemingly being killed after Graves/Grindelwald admits that he was trying to use the Obscurial in order to announce to the world the existence of wizards and witches in order to create a world where they could live freely. Mr. Graves' hidden identity is revealed and the evil wizard is taken into custody. Naturally, a closer look at Graves/Grindelwald is necessary since he is the other half of the Dumbledore/Grindelwald pairing and essential in understanding the type of relationship the two had. Due to the subtextual hints between him and Credence, in addition to the queer coding found in both characters, their scenes in this film will be more closely investigated.

According to Jazaro-Álvarez, the depiction of Grindelwald "follows Hollywood's tradition of queer-coded villains" (183). Furthermore, he writes that Grindelwald is a "represented predatory queer whose evil discourse is introduced via a queer subtext" (ibid). This aspect is particularly present in his interaction with Credence. The two are first seen interacting when they meet in a dark alleyway with their heads suspiciously close together creating a heart-shaped silhouette. Graves/Grindelwald also calls Credence "a special young man" (*Fantastic*



Screenshot 6: *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*, 32:39

Beasts 32:43). He is trying to persuade Credence into telling him who might be the Obscurial and constantly cuts Credence off when he expresses doubts or would like more information. Graves/Grindelwald continues by promising Credence a glorious future which stands in stark contrast to the troubled home he is from: "I saw you beside me in New York. You're the one who gains this child's trust. You are the key. I saw this. You want to join the wizarding world. I want those things to Credence. I want them for you. So, find the child. Find the child and

we will all be free" (*Fantastic Beasts* 33:31). There is no doubt that manipulation is at play here. Graves/Grindelwald is trying to persuade Credence to do his bidding by telling him how important he is, how he is "special" and "the key" to Grave/Grindelwald's problems. When coupled with the dark alley playing into the trope of both shady dealings happening in such places, but also being the perfect hiding spot for lovers, there are subtextual hints at play here. Additionally, Graves/Grindelwald is also using his sexual dominance as an added layer in his manipulation of Credence.

They part ways but meet again later in the film in another alleyway. Graves/Grindelwald is this time more persistent and showering Credence with physical affection. He caresses Credence's hands, whispers in his ear, holds his face in his palms, embraces him and looks him in the eyes. Graves/Grindelwald also gives Credence a gift: a necklace with a familiar symbol: that at the Deathly Hallows – which was key in Grindelwald's relationship with Dumbledore. Graves/Grindelwald explains: "I want you to have this Credence. I would trust very few with it. Very Few. [Grindelwald puts the necklace around Credence's neck and then holds his face in his palms] But you... you're different [Grindelwald smirks]" (*Fantastic Beasts* 1:15:38). The subtext is prevalent. Firstly, the excessive touching



Screenshot 7: *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*, 1:14:13-1:15:42

between the two characters is uncommon between two cisgendered heterosexual men in film. "Bromance" is also not an applicable term for their relationship here since it implies a more even power dynamic. Credence in this scene is clearly submissive, barely talking and physically making himself smaller. Graves/Grindelwald on the other hand is unmistakably in power here, helped by casting Colin Farrell in the role, an actor who usually plays detectives

in crime dramas (*True Detective* 2015) or leading man in action films (*Total Recall* 2012, *Dead Man Down* 2013). Another example of the subtextual queer teasing is the fact that Grindelwald/Graves gifts Credence a necklace, a common trope between boy and girl in romantic comedies. This is heightened by the history the necklace has in Grindelwald's relationship with Dumbledore – though this added layer is only available to viewers who are able to 'flip back and forth' between these films and the *Harry Potter* books. However, the repeated touching, the way Grindelwald smirks and how he calls Credence "different" all send out hints to any audience members able to pick up on queer subtext.

Grindelwald ends his meeting with Credence by breathing heavily into his ear while whispering: "The child is dying Credence. Time is running out" (*Fantastic Beasts* 1:16:03) before sliding out of frame with the camera focusing on Credence lingering longingly after his touch before realizing he is gone. Jarazo-Álvarez argues that Grindelwald here "automatically becomes a sexual deviant or queer who uses his erotic capital to manipulate the closeted young boy. Using intimate close-ups and a subjective point of view, the camera overtly legitimizes this discourse" (Jarazo-Álvarez186). Clearly Graves/Grindelwald is successful in his attempt to seduce Credence to do his bidding. In this scene in particular, the queer undertones are tethering the line between subtextual and explicit. If genders were switched and Credence would have been female, there would be no doubt that Graves/Grindelwald here was showing sexual predatory behavior. Another point to consider is again the casting of Colin Farrell in the role of Mr. Graves. While being familiar to general audiences as a strong male lead or authoritative figure, as mentioned, he actor has also played sexually ambiguous or bisexual characters before like Bobby in *A Home at the End of the World* (2004) and Alexander the Great in *Alexander* (2004). In addition, he was also "voted onto a list of sex symbols for gay men, clocking in at number 66" (McGoldrick). Fans of Farrell would pick up on the sexual tension between him and Credence easily, especially when considering the actors' cinematic background.

Grindelwald falls into the role of the sexual deviant because his affection is damaging and ultimately manipulative in nature. Queerness in this film is likened to a disease which spreads throughout not only Credence and others vulnerable to Graves/Grindelwald's charm, but also into the government of which he is a representative as a high-ranking member of the MACUSA (Magical Congress of the United States of America). Jarazo-Álvarez points out that this mirrors what was warned against during the era of McCarthyism, where so-called "sexual perverts" were presented as a threat to Americans, "to national security, espionage, and the spread of Communism" (Bloodsworth-Lugo and Lugo-Lugo, 475). Though this 'disease' of queerness from the days of McCarthyism was common in the 1950s, similarities

can be found in this film, set during the late 1920s, with it spreading throughout the government. Graves/Grindelwald is the queercoded tall, dark, and handsome villain "a tie and tailored tight-fitting suit, accentuating his erotic capital" (Jarazo-Álvarez 186). Coupled with Colin Farrell's casting and his appeal to both heteronormative and queer audiences, and his traditional movie star look, heightens the argument that Farrell's casting was no accident. Though the character is evil, manipulative, and destructive, he is also a queer sex symbol. Significantly, it is this erotic and sexual capital that he uses in order to not only control Credence, but also to fool his co-workers and bosses at the MACUSA. As Jarazo-Álvarez argues: "He is represented as a predatory queer whose evil discourse is introduced via a queer subtext" (Jarazo-Álvarez 183). Graves/Grindelwald shows his deviancy *through* his intimate interaction with other men. Though queerness is represented here, it is done so in order to highlight the fact that he is evil, which in turn serves to accentuate and play into the stereotype of *'the Sissy Villain'*.

Graves/Grindelwald's manipulation of Credence turns to abuse when they both try to find Credence's sister who Graves/Grindelwald believes to be the Obscurial. She escaped after witnessing Credence murder their adoptive mother in his Obscurial form, though it is not revealed until later that Credence, not his sister, is the Obscurial. Credence calls Graves/Grindelwald to him, using his Deathly Hallows necklace. After trying to interrogate Credence with repeated variations of the question "Where is your sister Credence?" (*Fantastic Beasts* 1:33:39), caressing his face while only getting sobs and cries for help in response from Credence, the wizard finally loses his patience and slaps Credence (*Fantastic Beasts* 1:33:57). This interaction is similar to the "after a good slap, she calms down" trope (Lenahan 193), used in the depiction of abusive relationships between spouses or boyfriend/girlfriend portrayed in tv shows or movies. Thus, this slap itself is sending out signals that their relationship has a romantic, though destructive dimension. After this physical abuse, Credence takes Graves/Grindelwald to a place where his sister might be, which only results in the abuse becoming physical rather than emotional. Again Graves/Grindelwald asks where exactly the sister is, but Credence does not know. Graves/Grindelwald responds:



Screenshot 8: *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*, 1:33:57

GRAVES/GRINDELWALD: You're a squib, Credence. I could smell it off you the minute I met you.

CREDENCE: What?

GRAVES/GRINDELWALD: You have magical ancestry but no power.

CREDENCE: But you said you could teach me –

GRAVES/GRINDELWALD: You are unteachable. Your mother is dead. That's your reward. I'm done with you.

(*Fantastic Beasts* 1:34:20)

Finally, Credence has had enough. He rebels against Graves/Grindelwald and turns into the Obscurial to wreak havoc on New York City. Being called a squib, his dream of joining the wizarding world crushed, and his hero being revealed to not really be there for him after all, leaves Credence hopeless and there is no longer a reason for him to keep his dark side at bay. "I trusted you. That you were my friend. That you were different", says Credence (*Fantastic Beasts* 1:36:22). Graves/Grindelwald, like with Dumbledore, tries to persuade Credence to forgive him, run away with him and to "think of what we could achieve together" (*Fantastic Beasts* 1:38:28), but Credence rejects him and is almost killed by the rest of the MACUSA. The abusive relationship seemingly comes to an end. In these last moments of the film, the term 'friendship' is used again to describe a relationship with a queer subtext, and an abusive one at that. This mirrors the description of the dynamic between Grindelwald and Dumbledore in the *Harry Potter* books. The term 'romantic friendship' is also used to describe a very close relationship between people of the same sex during a period in history when homosexuality did not yet exist as a social category (Faderman 16). Though the term, coined by feminist historian Lillian Faderman, was used to describe lesbian relationships, it is now also being used to describe any queer relationship. By using 'friendship' here, the film is signaling to an audience with the knowledge of this historically significant term that the two wizards are indeed queer. However, the majority of audience members will not notice the implication of the use of this term, thus still preserving a heteronormative façade. Alternatively, the use of 'friendship' may also try to verbally downplay the subtextual hints found in the queercoding and subtext of the relationship between Graves/Grindelwald and Credence.

Concealment is a key term being used in this first film of the *Fantastic Beasts* franchise. Before Grindelwald is arrested and taken away, he criticizes the International Statue of Wizarding Secrecy: "A law that demands that we conceal our true nature ... May I ask you, madam, who is this law protecting? Us or them?" (*Fantastic Beasts* 1:48:01). There are similarities between calling for the end of wizard concealment and the end of concealment of queerness. It evokes the ideas of being 'out and proud': the Stonewall riots from 1969 in

which LGBTQ+ members demanded to no longer be harassed and "activists fought for open spaces where people could be open about their sexuality without fear of being arrested" (Barker and Scheele 51); the ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power) movement who demanded authorities to no longer try to conceal the AIDS pandemic, but rather work towards ending it (53); and it suggests that the Wizarding community should be coming out of its closet. Concerningly, it is not the hero but rather the villain of the story who "advocates for values associated with gay rights" (Murray). Credence had to conceal his magic which resulted in him becoming an Obscurial, which teaches the viewers that closeting or hiding apart of one's self can have detrimental consequences. Though this message is queer-positive, it is still coming from the villains of this story which therefore risks inverting the message. In addition, by explaining Credence's Obscurial and queerness as being a result of something like abuse, it also plays into the longstanding a dated assumption about what "makes" a person gay (see e.g. Cart and Jenkins, 2015 or Crips et al. 2018). A person is not "made" gay, especially not through trauma or absent parents. Jarazo-Álvarez states: "The representation of queerly-coded characters in the Harry Potter franchise – Grindelwald and Credence – is, however, more problematic. Talented but also racist Gellert Grindelwald is central to an understanding of Albus Dumbledore's outing as homosexual" (185). Thus, Grindelwald and Credence must be kept in mind when analyzing the second film of the series *Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald*.

In *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*, queer subtextual hints are much more prevalent than in earlier films set in Rowling's *Wizarding World*. Though the Credence/Grindelwald relationship to some parts of the audience, especially LGBTQ+ members or allies, is tethering on explicit representation, it is still being hidden behind language, expectations to male relationships in film, and casting choices. Grindelwald is also established as a manipulative queercoded villain who is not afraid to abuse people, who he deems less worthy than him, both mentally and physically. At the same time, he is also championing queer rights, which also stigmatizes these ideas due to them being proclaimed by a villain. Therefore, even though *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* is portraying more queer subtext than films before, it is still not considered meaningful queer representation since it is also hiding it enough for other parts of the audience not to notice, while also stigmatizing gay rights. Thus, this film is not only using tactics to appeal to LGBTQ+ members, but also actively harming the core values of this community.

FANTASTIC BEASTS: THE CRIMES OF GRINDELWALD

The second film of the *Fantastic Beasts* series was again directed by David Yates and written by J. K. Rowling and released in 2018. The ensemble cast from the previous film returns, with the addition of Jude Law as Dumbledore. The plot follows Newt Scamander and Albus Dumbledore as they try to prevent Gellert Grindelwald from recruiting people to his cause, thus engendering further division in the wizarding world. It is revealed that Credence survived, and Dumbledore sends Newt to Paris in order to locate him. Another plotline resolves around Credence's heritage. He has come to Paris in order to look for his birthmother, who he unfortunately does not find. The wizarding world speculates that he might be the lost brother of Leta Lestrange, who has recently gotten engaged to Newt's brother, though Grindelwald reveals in the last minutes of the film that Credence's true name is Aurelius Dumbledore implying that he is most likely Albus' brother. *Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald* is the lowest-grossing *Wizarding World* installment to-date and had a mixed critical response with a 36% from critics and a 54% audience score (*Rotten Tomatoes*).

This was the first movie to be able to dive further into the backstory behind Dumbledore and Grindelwald since the publication of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* book, which was highlighted in the trailers. Movie-goers who had only seen the *Harry Potter* films, knew very little of this story since it was barely portrayed in the film adaptation, but book-readers were excited especially those who looked forward to Rowling finally truly being able to showcase a queer relationship in her *Wizarding World*. Newspapers were even filling moviegoers in on what their backstory was in the *Harry Potter* books and editing collages of the two of them together (*WhatCulture*). In the trailers the queer subtext was clear. In the first teaser, Dumbledore says to Newt: "I can't move against Grindelwald. It has to be you" (Official Teaser Trailer). Those in the know would assume that the reason for Dumbledore not being able to move against him would be because of their past relationship – romantic or not. In the second trailer, first shown at a multi-genre entertainment and comic book convention for fans, Comic-Con, the line is uttered again, but shown with Dumbledore looking into the



Screenshot 9: Official Teaser Trailer

Mirror of Erised (desire spelled backwards) and seeing Grindelwald as his greatest desire. The word 'desire' itself is heavy with subtext due to its link to "sexual urge or appetite" (*Merriam-Webster.com*). All this plays further into that the fans' expectations of representation. In the final trailer there is also a moment shown when the younger versions of Grindelwald and Dumbledore press their hands against each other. Teasers and trailers are a film's first audiovisual presentation to its consumers and function like gateways by establishing important "meanings and frames" for the film (or trailers) to come" (Gray 18). Therefore, when the film spends so much time on the relationship between Gellert Grindelwald and Albus Dumbledore, it is implied that the film itself too will be centered around this issue. The portrayal of the two of them is only missing a kiss in order to be outright explicit. Thus, this can be considered queercatching, since it is "talking in the promotion of a film or TV show about a queer character", but as will be discussed below, not following through in the piece itself (Ellis).

When Rowling in 2016 was asked explicitly if younger Dumbledore would be openly gay and how his romantic relationship with Grindelwald would be explored, she answered:

"Well, I can't tell you everything I would like to say because this is obviously a five-part story, so there's lots to unpack in that relationship. I will say that you will see Dumbledore as a younger man, and quite a troubled man because he wasn't always the sage. He was always very clever, but we'll see what I think was the formative period of his life. As far as his sexuality is concerned, watch the space." (Rowling, Screencrush)

A suspiciously ambiguous answer, which however is not uncommon in film promotion. By telling her readers and viewers to "watch the space" she does hint at there being some form of representation. After this interview, the door was still open for Dumbledore and Grindelwald to explore their relationship in this second installment of the film. This also falls under queercatching. However, in 2018 when the release of this film was getting closer, director David Yates replied, "not explicitly", when asked if the film makes it clear that Dumbledore is gay (David Yates, *Entertainment Weekly*). He continued: "But I think all the fans are aware of that. He had a very intense relationship with Grindelwald when they were young men. They fell in love with each other's ideas, and ideology and each other" (ibid). Initial response to this comment would be for fans to give up hope of true representation, however by explicitly stating that the wizards were in love, the director continues to grab the attention of supporters of queer representation, but still not committing to following through in the text itself. This does not mean that their relationship never will be addressed in future films, however, hinting at it was used as promotion, and thus queercatching tactics are used.

Albus Dumbledore is introduced in the film at the 18-minute mark when he convinces Newt Scamander to travel to France in order to find Credence. The first striking difference with this adaptation of the character is not only his youth, but his costume. Both in earlier films and the books, Dumbledore was portrayed as an eccentric man with flamboyant robes (*Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* 246), but although the film is set in the late roaring 1920s which is known for its more loose and experimental clothing, Dumbledore is shown in a brown tweed 3-piece suit. Seemingly in contrast to previous representations of Dumbledore, the choice of costume in this film is actually "coding him as a heterosexual leading man to the masses", as argued by Harrington, while trailers and queer subtext is "simultaneously sending out signals of his homosexuality to the community that's interested" (Harrington).



Bookcover 1 Dumbledore on the original backcover of the 1st edition of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, 1997

Screenshot 10, Michael Gambon as Dumbledore in *Harry Potter* film adaptations

Screenshot 11, Jude Law as Dumbledore in *Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald*

The makeover of Dumbledore is re-closeting him both to himself, but also to audiences who had been led to expect an out and proud representation of the character. As argued earlier, since the *Harry Potter* books and films set in the *Wizarding World* never bring up the issue of queer people, there is no way of knowing how tolerant their society is towards this issue. Being openly gay in the non-wizarding world could have been dangerous, therefore an argument could be made that this would apply to the wizarding world as well and that Dumbledore is trying to 'pass' as a heterosexual man. On the other hand, discriminatory behavior towards people based on race, gender and magical ability is an important discussion in Rowling's world, though discrimination towards members of the queer community is not. This could only mean two things: either the world is so inclusive that members of the queer community are never identified through their gender identity or sexual preference, or everyone in this world are cisgendered heterosexuals. Either way, the altered appearance of

Albus Dumbledore already foreshadows the lack of long-awaited representation which seemed promised.

As framed by the trailers to this movie, the premise of the story is that Newt must go to find Credence and fight against Grindelwald because Albus cannot "move against Grindelwald" (*Fantastic Beasts: Crimes of Grindelwald* 20:40). Though this phrasing is rather cryptic, it does suggest an emotional reason for Dumbledore not interfering. The phrase is repeated later in the film when the Ministry of Magic interrupts Dumbledore's lesson at Hogwarts in order to convince him to fight Grindelwald. The future headmaster claims that they "want the same thing – the defeat of Grindelwald." (*Fantastic Beasts: Crimes of Grindelwald* 1:02:01) but, the ministry thinks he is not doing enough, considering that Dumbledore is "the only wizard who is his equal" (*Fantastic Beasts: Crimes of Grindelwald* 1:04:03). However, Albus claims that he cannot fight Grindelwald. While a Ministry member casts a spell showing a moving image of the two as younger men, he reveals that the ministry knows that the two "were as close as brothers" (*Fantastic Beasts: Crimes of Grindelwald* 1:04:51). Dumbledore responds that they "were closer than brothers" (*Fantastic Beasts: Crimes of Grindelwald* 1:04:52). The line implies that the closeness between the two, which was potentially romantic, is what stops Dumbledore from fighting the evil wizard. Additionally, it also suggests that he is unsure if he is emotionally able to kill Grindelwald or that the pain of doing so would be too much to bear. As explained by Alaina Leary: "The audience can guess those truths might relate to his sexuality and his relationship with Grindelwald, but we're left hanging without any verbal payoff" (Leary).

On the other hand, the visuals confirm that there is more than just an emotional barrier that prevents Dumbledore from acting. In a blood oath ceremony, which involves handholding with sexual subtext, in the form of young Albus' facial expression and the fact that this is Dumbledore's greatest desire, the two of them make a vial containing what is



Screenshot 12: *Fantastic Beasts: Crimes of Grindelwald*, 1:04:49



Screenshot 13: *Fantastic Beasts: Crimes of Grindelwald*, 1:14:27-1:14:46

later revealed to be the magical and physical manifestation of a blood pact. The first part of Dumbledore's vision seems to confirm the suspicion that he was afraid of meeting Grindelwald due to the strong emotions involved or, him revealing which one of them was Ariana's murderer (as discussed in the analysis of the *Harry Potter* book series). However, the revelation of the blood pact being involved questions those assumptions or erases them entirely. The blood pact is the physical manifestation of them having "swore not to fight each other" (*Fantastic Beasts: Crimes of Grindelwald* 2:02:22). The emotional barrier between Grindelwald and Dumbledore has been replaced with this physical and magical barrier. Whether the pact was made out of love, friendship, or as a simple insurance policy is a question that is left up to the audience to answer. The use of melancholic film score, Albus' facial expression and the interlocking of fingers between the two men are sending out signals to queer supporting audiences that there is a romantic dimension to their relationship. But now it may also be seen to be tied to the making of the pact itself, thus opening up for a reading that is not sexual or romantic in nature. Such ambiguous use of film techniques and tropes can be seen as queerbaiting:

(...) a blood pact oath between the characters that is used to rob Gellert and Albus's relationship of emotional weight. Turning their relationship from an emotional hurdle to clear into the issue of a mere physical MacGuffin to be acquired, a puzzle to be solved in the next movie, takes their feelings for one another off the table. It's as though the movie is saying to audiences: Don't worry, it's not that Dumbledore can't kill Grindelwald because he loves him as "more than a brother"—whatever that means—it's just because of magic. And in the world of Harry Potter, magic is a problem to be solved. (Delia Harrington, Den of Geek)

Though the romantic dimension is not entirely erased as Harrington suggests, it is certainly removed from center stage. There was already a reason for Dumbledore to not move against Grindelwald – the emotional barriers and trauma from their early relationship, but now a MacGuffin, an object or device which is necessary for the plot or motivation, but insignificant or even irrelevant in itself (Magill 1473), is introduced instead in order to minimize the feelings involved for Dumbledore. The death of his sister and how "regret is [his] constant companion" (*Fantastic Beasts: Crimes of Grindelwald* 1:11:33) is discussed in his conversation with Leta Lestrange, which makes it unreasonable to suggest that the plotline of Grindelwald knowing who killed Dumbledore's sister, which is so closely tied to Dumbledore's feelings towards Grindelwald, was simply omitted from the film due to time issues. Therefore, the blood pact instead seems to only be included in the film in order to easily explain away the romantic tension between the two characters, while still playing into the queer romance in the subtext. With Dumbledore being gay, according to Rowling, this is a textbook example of

queercatching: the plotline is used for promotional purposes by appealing to those who are interested in seeing LGBTQ+ representation, but there is little to no meaningful representation in the film itself. With queerbaiting tactics also being used in this film in the subtext of the Mirror of Erised-scene, the film is also not closing the door entirely on future meaningful representation, thus still marketing the future three films of the franchise to its LGBTQ+ supporting audiences.

Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 1 and *Part 2* omitted and marginalized the relationship between Grindelwald and Dumbledore. *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* leaned into the queer villain trope while it also stigmatized gay rights by making Grindelwald the champion of them. *Fantastic Beasts: Crimes of Grindelwald* re-closeted Dumbledore, both in appearance and by creating the blood pact, but still managed to promote the film through subtextual hints and ambiguity in the use of the Mirror of Erised. The four films show how different forms of queerbaiting can be. While the *Harry Potter* films do not use queercoding, queerbaiting or queercatching, it does erase the ambiguity found in the books making even a queer reading impossible and representation non-existent. The first *Fantastic Beast* film uses queercoding when portraying Graves/Grindelwald but is also guilty off queerbaiting by not fully committing to the Credence/Grindelwald relationship but signaling to audiences in the know that there is potential for representation here. In the second *Fantastic Beasts* film, queercatching is used in the trailers for the film by building up expectations for a portrayal of Dumbledore and Grindelwald's relationship, but not following through in the film itself and using queerbaiting tactics in the subtext of the film. Though only time will tell if future films in the five-part series will deliver on the promised representation, it is safe to say that there is disappointingly little to be found the ten films that have been released so far in *the Wizarding World of Harry Potter*.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this thesis suggest the *Wizarding World*-franchise uses queerbaiting tactics. While J.K. Rowling has announced that Dumbledore is indeed gay, there is no clear confirmation of this in any of the texts discussed in this thesis. Though there are suggestions, these are only either subtextual or ambiguous. These suggestions are read differently by each individual reader and audience member, depending on their background. Members in the LGBTQ+ community or supporters of queer representation in media can recognize the tactics used to appeal to their interests, but a heteronormative audience with more conservative beliefs would miss this subtext. As a result, the franchise falls short in portraying true representation. In fact, it uses all three of the queerbaiting tactics discussed in the introduction.

Queercoding is used in the Graves/Grindelwald character in *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find them* by making use of 'the Sissy Villain'-trope. Queerbaiting is employed as well in the same film in the Grindelwald/Credence relationship by visually signaling that the two are romantically involved, but never truly committing to a romantic depiction of the relationship. Additionally, it is used extensively in *Fantastic Beasts: Crimes of Grindelwald*, by hinting at a relationship between Grindelwald and Dumbledore through ambiguous language and visual suggestions, especially in the Mirror of Erised-scene. Queercatching is also used in the promotion of *Fantastic Beasts: Crimes of Grindelwald*, by implying that the film will be focusing on this relationship, while it in fact turns out to be a minor storyline in the movie. The most blatant use of such tactics however is the announcement of Dumbledore's sexuality itself only being done retroactively and with no explicit mention in the text itself. Interestingly, no queerbaiting tactics are used in the film adaptation of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, since the plotline of any form of relationship between Dumbledore and Grindelwald has been largely marginalized or even omitted entirely.

It is important to understand that some of these texts were being produced in a time where queer representation was much sparser than today and trying to portray a member of the LGBTQ+ community in any form of media production could mean the end of the franchise. For instance, two months before *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* was published in June 1997, Ellen DeGeneres had come out as gay in the now famous "The Puppy Episode" in her sitcom *Ellen* in April 1997 resulting in it being cancelled the following year after much criticism (OWN). Rowling's last book came out in July 2007, the same year domestic partnerships between same-sex couples was legalized in the US, though it was not until 2014 that it became legal in the UK. Rowling's decision to disclose to her fans that she had always

thought of Dumbledore as gay *was* a big gesture at the time. However, the fact that over a decade later there is still no explicit confirmation in any of the texts themselves is problematic and thus reflects badly on the original declaration of Dumbledore's sexuality.

Additionally, the faith of Dumbledore himself is reminiscent of the '*Bury Your Gays*'-trope. The only opportunity he had at a relationship, that we know of, was with an evil wizard. It ended badly even before it truly began. Dumbledore even had to battle him and apprehend him in order to save the wizarding world. Though he found happiness in being a teacher and later the headmaster of Hogwarts, he still lived in celibacy, was murdered, and died alone. Like in the '*Bury Your Gays*'-trope, Dumbledore is seemingly punished for being in a gay relationship, which is reminiscent of how queer relationships were handled under the Hayes Code.

There is still much left to research and discover in the realm of queerbaiting in Rowling's *Wizarding World*. As of writing, only two of the five *Fantastic Beasts*-films have been released and therefore there is still a chance for Dumbledore to explicitly be portrayed as an openly out and proud gay character. Queerbaiting tactics have been evolving over several decades and are still prevalent today in many popular franchises other than in Rowling's universe, such as Disney and Marvel films. Though representation of LGBTQ+ members in media is at an all-time high in TV shows and smaller films, unfortunately big blockbuster franchises who produce family friendly films, are less inclusive. Only time will tell what the next iteration of queerbaiting will be: a new evolution of the term, or true representation of the LGBTQ+ community. As Albus Wulfric Percival Brian Dumbledore himself said: "we must all face the choice between what is right and what is easy" (*Harry Potter and The Goblet of Fire* 2005).

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APPENDIX: THESIS RELEVANCE

In my master's thesis, I have conducted a close reading and viewing of different books and film in J.K. Rowling's *The Wizarding World* – which contains some of the most popular texts in the children- and young adult fiction world. I have particularly focused on LGBTQ+ issues as they are portrayed in these texts. In addition, I have also obtained the skills necessary, such as researching, writing and rewriting, to write this thesis. These skills will also be of use in the ESL classroom. In fact, all of the above-mentioned aspects of my master's thesis are highly relevant for my future career as a teacher in the Norwegian Educational System.

Reading fiction is a cornerstone in the ESL classroom and is not going away anytime soon. The new curriculum that will start to be implemented in August 2020, especially focuses on core skills, including reading, which is notably challenging in a secondary language. One of the competence aims for 10th Grade, and many other grades, specifically is that the students should know how to "read, discuss, and reflect on literature in English, including Young Adult Fiction" (Utdanningsdirektoratet, Læreplan i engelsk 8), which naturally include the *Harry Potter*-books. Since these books are such a huge hit in the YA market and in the fantasy genre in general, it will be crucial in my future career as a teacher. Film has also for a long time had a natural place in education, especially language teaching since it allows students to see "language in use" and gaining oral input of the target language (Harmer 343).

The themes in *the Wizarding World*, including my chosen field of representation of the LGBTQ+ community, is particularly relevant in regard to one of the six main values in the Norwegian Primary Education "Identity and Cultural Diversity" (Utdanningsdirektoratet, Overordnet del, 4-5). It stresses the importance of students "getting an insight into how we live together with different perspectives, attitudes and outlooks on life (...) A good society is built upon an inclusive and diverse community" (ibid). Using the films and books in this universe, it is not only possible to discuss LGBTQ+ issues, but also racial, gender and other forms of discrimination. Using characters and plotlines to talk about such issues is much easier and give us the ability to dive much deeper than discussing them in a more general sense, since using books rather than real life creates a comfortable distance to difficult subjects. In addition, the importance of representation cannot be underestimated, as discussed in my thesis.

In short, I am quite confident that my thesis could not be more relevant regarding my future career. It has been a joy to write and I hope my future as a teacher will be just as magical.

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