

Literature-to-Film Adaptation: Success Factors — Taking Harry Potter as an Example

Lai Wei¹

¹(Department of English, University of Southampton, UK)

ABSTRACT : *This study examines criteria for evaluating successful literary adaptations through a case study of the 2001 film Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone. Building on Linda Hutcheon's theoretical framework, this paper challenges "fidelity" as the sole evaluative criterion and proposes multidimensional assessment of adaptation success. Using triangulation methodology combining textual comparison, secondary data analysis (box office, book sales, audience feedback), and literary criticism, the research evaluates the adaptation across five dimensions: commercial value, source fidelity, creative interpretation, audience reception, and literary integrity. Findings reveal the film grossed over \$1 billion globally, stimulated book sales, and spawned a transmedia franchise. Though omitting details like Peeves, it preserved core themes of courage, friendship, and coming-of-age. Director Chris Columbus crafted distinctive cinematic experiences through visual design and scoring, albeit conservatively. The study examines J.K. Rowling's role: while retaining partial authority (insisting on all-British cast), final decisions remained with producers, reflecting negotiated authorial identity. It introduces "intergenerational sustainability," arguing successful adaptations serve contemporary audiences while sustaining cultural transmission and fan communities. The research concludes fidelity is not the core criterion; successful adaptations balance respecting source material with creative vitality, meeting diverse audience needs and enhancing cultural impact. Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone provide important theoretical and empirical reference for understanding literary adaptation.*

KEYWORDS - literary adaptation; fidelity; adaptation theory; Linda Hutcheon; transmedia narrative.

I. INTRODUCTION

The stage play “Harry Potter and the Cursed Child” has been performed across Asia, Europe, and the Americas. Its global popularity has once again brought attention to the Harry Potter novels, which have been translated into 80 languages, highlighting the immense commercial value of the franchise. However, an interesting paradox emerges when examining the box office performance of the Harry Potter film series: with the exception of the first and final films, most entries failed to replicate their box-office success, showing a gradual decline in revenue over time. Despite this downward trend, the film series was still completed in full, reaching the end of the book series. This outcome appears inconsistent with the commercial expectation that sequels should generate increasing profits, and it has, to some extent, diminished confidence in adapting literary works for the screen. In the film version of Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone, film viewers even thinking that Hollywood treating JK Rowling's debut novel with a reverence that wasn't even accorded to The Bible. However, in a film that is devoid of violence in the imaginations of the audience [1], this strange contradiction arising from fidelity seems to contradict Hutcheon's argument that adaptations should be sufficiently creative without focusing on fidelity to

its original resources [2], even though most of the reviews are positive due to the high degree of fidelity of the film.

Adapting literary works into films has become one of the most prevalent practices in contemporary cultural production, raising enduring questions about what constitutes a “successful” adaptation. Linda Hutcheon provides a key framework: she defines adaptation as ‘repetition without replication,’ a reinterpretation that inevitably alters meaning as a story moves between media. At the same time, scholarly exploration of alternative evaluative standards remains at an early stage. This raises a key question: for a film adapted from a novel, how should its success be defined? Potential criteria include fidelity to the source text, the creativity of the adaptation, audience and critical reception, commercial performance, and literary integrity—namely, the impact on the original author and text. Possible criteria include fidelity (the closeness of the film to its source), creativity (the adapter's new contributions), acceptance (critic and audience reactions), commercial value, and literary integrity (the impact on the source text and its author), among others. To make these issues more concrete, we use J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (1997) and its 2001 film adaptation directed by Chris Columbus as a case study. Theoretically, it extends Linda Hutcheon's notion of adaptation as “repetition without replication” by demonstrating that fidelity is not the primary determinant of success. It proposes a multidimensional evaluative framework that integrates creativity, reception, commercial value, literary integrity, and introduces a new criterion—intergenerational sustainability. Methodologically, the paper combines textual analysis with empirical data, offering a triangulated model that bridges literary criticism and cultural industry analysis. Empirically, by reassessing *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* through this integrated lens, the paper offers a new understanding of what constitutes a successful literary adaptation in contemporary culture.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Linda Hutcheon's Theory of Adaptation

Linda Hutcheon argues that adaptation should not be judged solely in terms of fidelity to the original text but should be regarded as an independent act of creation. Every film adaptation must inevitably differ from its novel, so differences should be expected. Instead of asking whether the film is “as good as” or more faithful than the book, Hutcheon proposes that adaptations should be evaluated based on how effectively they function within its own medium and cultural context. She proposes measuring success in terms of “popularity, persistence, and the diversity and extent of dissemination”. In other words, a successful adaptation is one that resonates broadly with audiences and remains part of cultural discourse, regardless of strict textual fidelity. Hutcheon further notes that by explicitly linking a work to a known source, an adaptation “openly announces its overt relationship to another work”. This transparency sets up expectations of familiarity for the audience. Yet even so, she emphasizes that the appeal of adaptation lies partly in its deviations: the pleasure comes from “both the comfort of ritual and recognition and the sense of surprise” when a familiar story is presented in a new form. This insight underscores that successful adaptations often balance the old with the new – they retain enough of the original to please existing fans, while adding something creative or different to engage audiences. Moreover, precisely because the extensibility of the original work is one of the criteria for evaluating adaptations, even if there are significant differences, as long as the adaptation is publicly acknowledged, contains creative interpretations, and maintains a continuous intertextual relationship with the original work, it is still considered an ‘adaptation.’ Even though adaptations can take many different forms, if they are extended, deliberate, and announced revisitations, they can still be considered adaptations or even parodies. Therefore, while adaptations should acknowledge their reliance on the source text, this relationship should not suppress enthusiasm for secondary creation; rather, it should establish flexible boundaries instead of imposing rigid, quantifiable standards.

2.2 The Fidelity Debate

Since there is no fixed threshold for difference, Hutcheon clearly asserts that fidelity is not the defining boundary of adaptation. She emphasizes the dual nature of adaptation as ‘retelling plus difference’ and its independent value. Fidelity—understood as faithful adherence to the source text—has long dominated adaptation criticism, yet it remains a highly contested evaluative standard. As early as 1961 George Bluestone argued that

film necessarily changes things and that fidelity is a “fruitless” criterion, since “an adaptation can never be faithful to its source” [3]. Over the years, reviewers and students habitually default to comparing “how does the film compare with the book,” often concluding “the book is source” [Recent scholarship, however, has repositioned fidelity as only one dimension among many: as Rodrigo and Runyan observe, students commonly view fidelity as the primary measure of success, but absolute fidelity is not only difficult, it’s unwise or unproductive. The very concept of adaptation itself inevitably leads people to compare it with the original work when it is conveyed, while a novel contains a series of linguistic signals that can generate a multitude of possible interpretations, including interpretations of the narrative itself. Literary texts are not closed structures, but open structures that can be reworked in infinite contexts. Despite academic skepticism, fidelity still matters to viewers. As Christine Geraghty famously puts it, “faithfulness matters if it matters to the viewer”. In practice, audiences and critics do use fidelity as one of their “entryways” to evaluation, judging whether beloved characters and key plot elements survive the transfer to film. This case study will therefore consider fidelity (what was kept, what omitted or changed) while acknowledging it is not the sole yardstick, and I will provide some examples below.

2.3 Reception and Audience

Success can also be evaluated by reception. This includes both critical reception (professional reviews, scholarly commentary) from audience reception (fans, general viewers). Amateur reviewers, particularly those who have read the original text, often prioritize fidelity and personal enjoyment as their primary evaluative criteria. Online commentators often discuss how well characters, plot or “spirit” of the book are captured, they will attempt to analyze whether the differences between the screenplay and the original work are reasonable, whether the characters are appropriate representations of their literary counterparts, and even underlying reasons why the actual plot of the film *The Stone* does not begin until page 55 of the screenplay. However, treating fidelity as the only legitimate standard neglects the fact that adaptations may serve different audiences: faithful reading in a film might please readers of the book but also might bore viewers who lack the book’s background. Thus, a film might succeed with audiences by being entertaining and accessible, even if some ardent fans grumble about cuts. Furthermore, an adaptation that spawn’s fandom, memes, or long-term fandom can be considered successful by Hutcheon’s measure of persistence and dissemination. For *Harry Potter*, the film’s release turned the series into a multimedia franchise: fan conventions, theme parks, spin-off books and games followed, indicating wide cultural penetration which means an adaptation “works” when it strengthens the overall story-world and galvanizes the fan community.

2.4 Literary Integrity and Authorship

A further dimension is literary integrity: how does the adaptation influence the meaning or value of the original novel? Purists often worry that a film might distort the author’s intent or dilute complex themes. Hutcheon has set no limits on creativity, combining Cartmell and Whelehan’s suggestion in the introduction that it is crucial to distinguish between literature and film literature, they argue that film adaptation should be freed from dependency on literature so that adapted works are not dismissed as mere flattery, derivative products, or inherently inferior to literary texts [4]. Preconceived assumptions can lead to logical inconsistencies. Films are not directly adapted from original works but are created by writing a screenplay based on the original work and then turning it into a film. This subtle but significant logical problem not only undermines a fair assessment of the relationship between the two forms of adaptation and the original work but also leads most readers to create a contradiction: adaptation infringes on the independence of the original work which means literary integrity seems meaningful only in the context of adaptation, where it can be used for comparative analysis and to determine its value to the original work. The most tangible results are whether the film has boosted sales of the original work, how high the box office takings are, and what the author of the original work thinks of it. This study will therefore examine her role as a bridge between the novel and its film adaptations. For instance, Rowling insisted on an all-British cast and approved key casting choices such as Daniel Radcliffe as Harry; yet screenwriter Steve Kloves and director Chris Columbus made necessary omissions and changes—such as excluding the character Peeves or

condensing narrative arcs—to meet cinematic constraints. These choices illustrate the compromises between authorial vision, production needs and media constraints, consider whether such compromises enhanced or undermined the honoring the voices and intentions of Rowling's text.

III. CASE STUDY: HARRY POTTER AND THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE (NOVEL VS. FILM)

3.1 Commercial Value

By any financial metric, *Philosopher's Stone* was an extraordinary success. With a production budget of approximately \$125 million, the film generated over \$1 billion in global box-office revenue. In the domestic markets of the United Kingdom and the United States combined, it grossed more than \$700 million, ranking among the highest-grossing films of 2001–2002. It set box-office records for a re-release nearly two decades later. The franchise aspect amplified revenue: the film's success paved the way for sequels and merchandise. Toys, video games, theme park rides, and licensed products (wands, robes, etc.) multiplied the commercial impact.

For Warner Bros., the adaptation of Rowling's novel turned a comparatively modest literary brand into a cash cow. It demonstrated that a faithful adaptation of a popular novel could yield blockbuster profits. Industry analysts note that following *Harry Potter*, Hollywood pursued many similar adaptations (from *Twilight* to *The Hunger Games*), seeing a proven formula. The *Potter* films essentially redefined franchise filmmaking for young audiences.

On the publishing side, as we saw, each film release consistently drove renewed sales of the novels, creating a synergistic cycle in which books and films reinforced each other. This synergy benefited all stakeholders: readers sold, viewers watched, and studio profits soared. Thus, by commercial criteria, the film adaptation was not only successful, but exceptionally so. Only when such adaptations achieve box office success, inspire further adaptations across other genres, and simultaneously boost the sales and influence of the original works can we commercially define this form of adaptation as successful.

3.2 Fidelity to the Source

The 2001 film *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* were widely praised for visually realizing Rowling's magical world, yet it also introduced a number of changes from the novel, yet it also made numerous changes from the novel. Many of the book's key characters and iconic moments were preserved in some form: the central trio (Harry, Ron, Hermione), Hogwarts, the Dursleys, the Sorting Hat, Quidditch, Hagrid, and the climactic confrontation with Professor Quirrell and Voldemort are all present. Fans will recognize nearly every major plot point of the novel, which demonstrates an intent toward fidelity. Steve Kloves's screenplay captures the broad narrative structure: Harry's discovery of magic, his first year at school, and the race to stop the theft of the *Philosopher's Stone*.

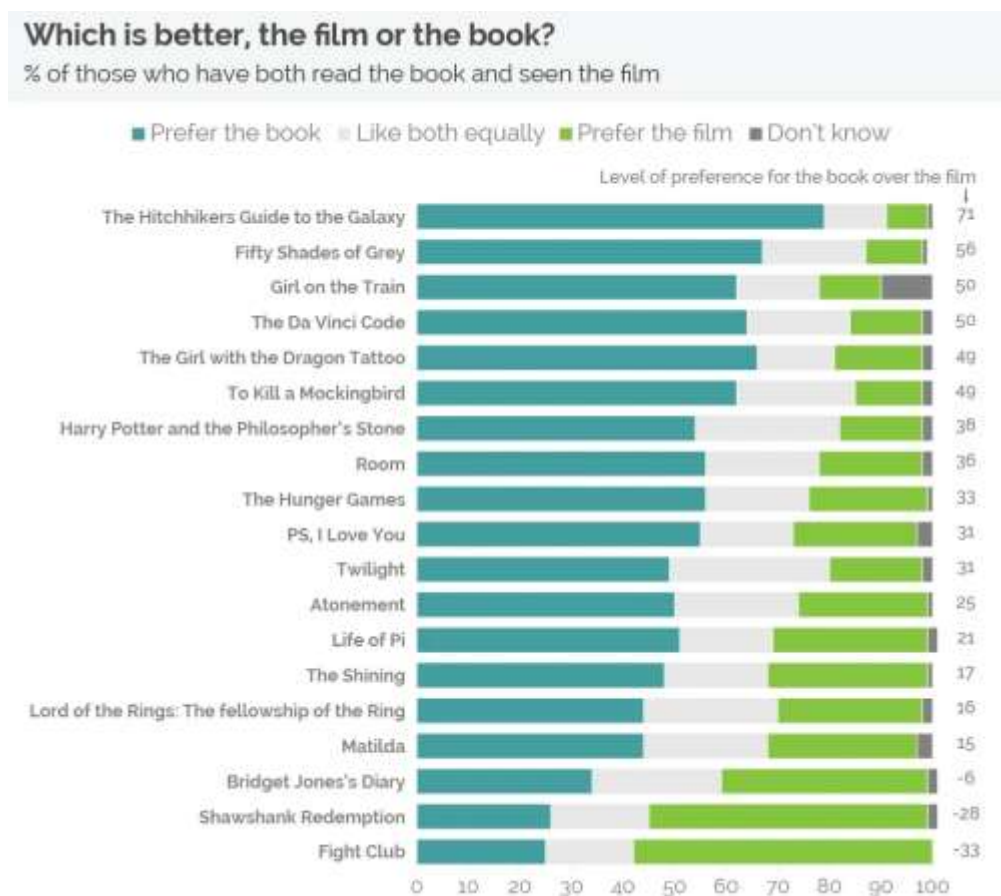


Figure 1. The praise rate of the original work and its film adaptation



Figure 2. Harry Potter screenshots.

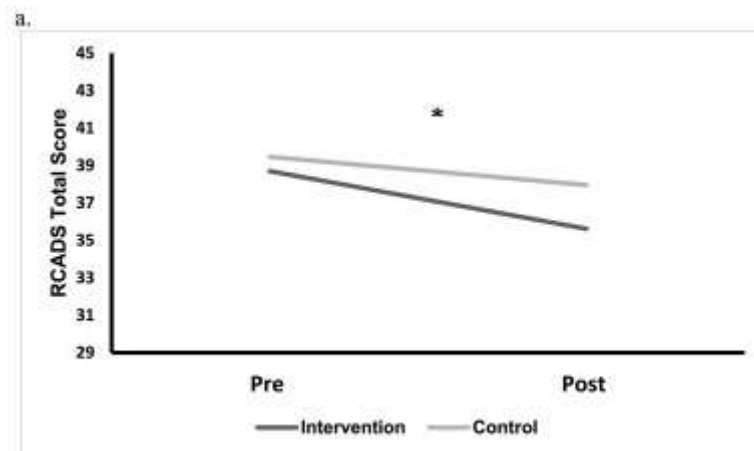


Figure 3. The impact of suicide rates.

The question, then, is whether fidelity should be the measure of success. By Hutcheon's lights, not necessarily. What is significant is that the film preserves the "spirit" of the original story—themes of bravery, friendship and the struggle against Voldemort are clearly preserved. The *Philosopher's Stone* film largely maintains the novel's essential tone and atmosphere of child-friendly fantasy; Columbus's sincere and wholesome directorial style aligns closely with the book's early innocence and optimism. Remarkably, a Canadian study (Fig. 3) found that *Harry Potter* reduced the suicide rate among adolescents (both male and female) in a way that no one had ever imagined[5]. If we consider teaching methods that incorporate *Harry Potter* as a form of adaptation, and view students as an audience, the value of adaptation is not fixed but often determined by audience feedback. In this case, the reduction of suicide rates becomes a measurable positive outcome. When readers engage with a text—especially a lengthy novel—they often arrive at a shared emotional or thematic experience, which in the case of *The Philosopher's Stone* can be described as its "spirit." Fidelity, therefore, should not be limited to the literal reproduction of details; rather, it functions as the underlying logic that responds to and preserves this core experiential essence.

However, *Doctor Who*, which has been adapted since 1963 and is often celebrated as one of the most successful adaptations, is completely different from *The Philosopher's Stone* in terms of subject matter. However, the success of both reveals a fundamental connection between adaptations and their original works within the larger framework of cultural commodities, production, and consumption. To understand the work of adaptation, one must first recognize the nature of the intellectual and creative labor required by both the producers and consumers in the circulation of textual commodities. For this reason, adaptation must consider the diversity of attitudes and practices among consumers, audiences, and subordinate social groups. This diversity of reception becomes especially visible when examining changes made in film adaptations. In *The Philosopher's Stone*, several scenes and subplots from the novel are omitted or condensed. For instance, the film excludes Harry's family Christmas trip, Mrs. Weasley's gum-boiled homework story, or the subplot of Hagrid's attempted task to get Harry a birthday present. The quidditch match is shortened (we see less gameplay), and Hermione's teacher-fanged closet is removed entirely. In the film's climax, details differ in the book: Quirrell speaks to Harry through his turban and uses the Mirror of Erised; in the film, Quirrell whispers and the mirror scene is abbreviated. Some dialogue and relationships are simplified in the film; when Harry touches Professor Quirrell's face, the professor's body reacts with pain, revealing Lord Voldemort's face at the back of his head. In the original novel, however, Harry gradually comes to realize that Professor Quirrell is Lord Voldemort through the professor's mannerisms, the repulsive odor emanating from him, and the pain he feels when Quirrell touches Harry's forehead. These alterations reflect the inherent constraints of cinematic adaptation. Differences in media format, time limitations, and the need to align with future sequels necessitate compromises that prevent visual storytelling from fully mirroring the descriptive richness of the novel. According to a survey report on various film adaptations of original

works, 79% of audiences felt that the films were not as good as the original works (Fig.1). While this data is shocking, it also suggests that films, as a form of art, are aimed at a vast audience of ordinary viewers rather than scholars like Hutcheon, who dismiss fidelity as a critical standard. Attempting to “educate” viewers to adopt more scholarly perspectives on adaptation is unrealistic. Under such helpless circumstances, meaning is constructed through the interaction between the audience and the adaptation. Viewers often invoke fidelity not as an absolute standard of artistic judgment but as a way to assess whether the film’s visual representation aligns with their imagined interpretation of the text.

In summary, the film adaptation of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* can be regarded as moderately successful: it follows the book’s outline and preserves its mood, but it necessarily condenses and changes much. From the standpoint of fidelity critics, such omissions and modifications may be seen as shortcomings, but from Hutcheon’s perspective, the film’s success should also be assessed by how well it stands on its own terms as a movie. When considered in these terms, the changes made in the adaptation appear largely justified, even if some are viewed with disappointment by long-time fans.

3.3 Creative Interpretation

A successful adaptation must also demonstrate creative interpretation. In this regard, *The Philosopher’s Stone* exhibits a distinct directorial and screenwriting style that reflects Chris Columbus’s evident affection for the source material. The film’s visual design (set, costume, cinematography) and musical score (John Williams’s majestic theme) give the story a grand cinematic feel that the text could only hint at. From a filmic perspective, the film uses sweeping shots of Hogwarts, dramatic close-ups of the actors, and expertly timed surprises (In the film, the toilet was almost completely destroyed by the troll, but the trio worked together to subdue the creature and rescue Hermione (Fig.2), symbolizing the beginning of their friendship.) to play to an audience’s emotions. They have been widely praised by both audiences and critics; for instance, Columbus’s portrayal of the Mirror of Erised sequence is often noted for its visually haunting atmosphere, something that only film, rather than text, can fully achieve.

The adapters also made creative choices in characterization and tone. The film adopts a broadly “family-friendly” aesthetic, consciously avoiding psychological darkness or graphic violence that, although only lightly present in the novel, could have been visually intensified in a cinematic medium. For example, Voldemort’s aftermath on Quirrell’s body is briefly shown, but more subtly than it might be in a horror film because he was possessed by a fragment of Voldemort’s soul, while Voldemort used Quirrell’s body to carry out his plans. In addition, some scenes add emotional context: Hagrid’s line “She’ll be famous – there’s a lot to tell... right? about your parents” (as Harry wakes in the hospital after Voldemort’s attack) is movingly handled. The performances of the three child actors further contribute to this tonal approach; their sincerity and relatability anchor the magical elements in authentic human feeling. Such creative touches build empathy and engagement among the audience, contributing to the film’s success as a film.

On the other hand, some critics and fans felt that the film’s creativity was overly restrained. Columbus’s direction is often described as respectful—sometimes excessively so—toward the source material. For instance, the film’s pace is sometimes leisurely, and the humor is safe (several jokes from the book do not land on screen). In contrast, Peter Jackson’s *The Lord of the Rings*, released in the same year, takes notable creative liberties by condensing and altering scenes for dramatic effect, for instance Bilbo’s book reading becomes a chase scene, Saruman kills an orc. By contrast, *Stone* mostly preserves Rowling’s dialogue and imagery without much subversion or reinterpretation. Some might see this as a missed creative opportunity; others see it as admirable loyalty.

Cartmell and Whelehan contend that in *Stone* “the urge to include ‘everything’ in the film compromises the processes of adaptation”. They argue that Columbus and Kloves prioritized comprehensiveness over cinematic innovation, investing effort in retaining detail rather than reimagining the material for the screen. For example, the book’s iconic scene of the mirror is underplayed in the film; instead, in the film he omitted the scene where Harry sees only his parents among his entire family in the mirror and also cut Ron’s vision. The book further depicts Dumbledore’s guidance to Harry, marking another stage in his growth by directly highlighting his

loneliness and yearning for familial affection, a concise expression well-suited to the screen. By streamlining such scenes, the film sacrifices some of the novel's emotional richness. However, from a different angle this could be seen positively: With the constraints of a two-hour runtime, the filmmakers had to make deliberate choices, emphasizing core narrative and emotional arcs—Harry's isolation, the formation of friendships, and the confrontation with Voldemort—while omitting secondary subplots such as Peeves or Mrs. Figg. In this sense, the film's creativity lies not only in what it depicts but also in what it strategically excludes and accentuates. The enlarged role of Ron in helping Harry at critical moments (on the broom and with the troll) highlights the theme of friendship. Similarly, Professor Snape's suspicious behavior is heightened through visual techniques such as stern facial expressions and dramatic lighting, deliberately misleading the audience in accordance with cinematic conventions. The divergence between the book and the film also reflects differing audience expectations across media. The difference lies in the fact that when reading, readers are willing to spend more time immersing themselves in the details and the characters' inner lives. They expect to understand the characters' inner worlds, the dynamics of their relationships, intricate foreshadowing, and symbolic meanings through the text, perceiving this as a deeper portrayal of character and friendship. Book enthusiasts typically hope for 'the more detail, the better.' In contrast, film necessitates interpretive condensation to preserve narrative momentum. Ultimately, these creative decisions serve the film's internal narrative logic, rather than signaling a lack of fidelity.

In summary, the film adopts a creatively restrained yet effective approach. It trades some potential artistic flair for faithfulness and clarity. No single work can be liked by everyone, this is all about the right balance: the movie introduced them gently to a complex world. Critically, however, the adaptation is generally seen as competently crafted, and not as a 'botched' reinterpretation. Its success lies in the way its visual style and tonal choices enhance, rather than overshadow, the narrative's core emotional and thematic appeal.

3.4 Literary Integrity and Authorial Control

Turning to the dimension of integrity and authorship: how did Rowling and other custodians of the Potter brand view the adaptation? Rowling's stance can be described as cautiously supportive. Although she initially held limited direct authority over the first film—given that the production company possessed greater decision-making power—she quickly asserted her creative preferences. For example, she insisted that the cast be entirely British or Irish, excluding Hollywood stars, to preserve the Britishness of her world. She approved Chris Columbus as director after seeing his approach and approved Daniel Radcliffe as Harry after a screen test. These interventions indicate that, while not exerting full creative control, Rowling nonetheless sought to safeguard narrative integrity, particularly with respect to tone, cultural identity, and character portrayal.

Rowling also secured a contract that granted her a degree of approval over key aspects of the adaptation. In later films she was credited as executive producer, a rare privilege for a book author. This often signifies creative input. She reportedly advocated for specific narrative elements to be retained, such as the subtle ambiguity of certain story endings. However, the ultimate control lay with the filmmakers. In interviews, Chris Columbus acknowledged that Rowling was "very much involved" in the 1990s when the first film was made, but not omniscient. Bill Nighy (who plays Dumbledore in *The Deathly Hallows*) once said that the phrase "JK Rowling made me say this" should be noticed by any actor, implying Rowling's on-set suggestions were taken seriously.

Nevertheless, Rowling did not have veto power over every detail. The omission of characters like Peeves or the simplification of Quirrell/Voldemort's backstory were production choices, not mandated by the author. Some devoted fans have speculated that Rowling insisted on cutting her favorite pet, the scene with Mrs. Norris (Finch's cat), but no credible documentation supports such claims. On the contrary, she accepted most changes as necessary cinematic condensation. For example, the board game version of the script shows Rowling offered feedback, but largely Columbus and Kloves made editorial decisions based on film logic.

Thus, there existed modest but meaningful tensions in authorship: Rowling, as author-producer, held certain moral rights (especially in Europe, as one legal analysis explains), but she also sold adaptation rights and could not block a change unless explicitly contracted. In the case of Harry Potter, the commercial stakes were exceptionally high: Warner Bros. had made substantial financial investments and sought to ensure mass appeal. Consequently, the producers were under pressure to create a film that was engaging, emotionally accessible, and

suitable for children and family-oriented audiences. This required condensing or simplifying Rowling's original text. Any deep textual complexity or darker elements (later, in future films) had to be postponed or softened to maintain the franchise's PG rating. These are examples of commercial pressure shaping adaptation content. For example, Rowling has since said she didn't mind the film trimming some "boring" bits like the Sorting Hat's song, but she did object when the House cup point revisions (a key suspense moment) were cut from *Chamber of Secrets*, from my perspective, this is largely because the plot's progression has rendered the points less significant.

However, from a theoretical perspective, the dynamics of power and authorship reveal that adaptation inherently redistributes creative authority. A film adaptation is the product of multiple contributors: the original author, the screenwriter, the director, the actors, the production designers, etc. The final film is far from a "pure" manifestation of Rowling's mind. Hutcheon and other theorists would argue this is intrinsic to adaptation: once a text is sold, it becomes a cultural commodity with multiple stakeholders. Therefore, the success of *The Philosopher's Stone* film cannot be attributed solely to Rowling; rather, it reflects the collaborative efforts of Columbus, Kloves, the cast, and the production team, who collectively created a version that resonated with global audiences. The tensions between author and producer – including who gets credit – are embodied in how Rowling is listed in the credits ("Based on the novel by J.K. Rowling") and that she later became executive producer on the series. These crediting practices illustrate a mediated balance between artistic origin and collaborative authorship.

3.5 Adaptation should always be Beneficial to the Source

Having evaluated *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* using multiple criteria, a broader question arises: does adaptation generally benefit the original work? The Potter case suggests a nuanced answer. On the plus side, the film undoubtedly brought new readers to the book and expanded its cultural influence. As Nielsen data demonstrates, the release of the film coincided with a significant increase in book purchases, suggesting that viewers who might never have encountered the text were motivated to seek it out after seeing the adaptation. This reflects a form of synergy in which the adaptation and sources amplify each other's success. Moreover, the films ensured that the first book's story reached global audiences in a memorable way, arguably cementing Rowling's status as a major cultural figure. The franchise's longevity – books, films, merchandise, theme parks – all revolve around that source material, now accessible to people who prefer movies over reading. From a commercial and cultural perspective, adaptation in this case appears to have substantially benefited the original brand.

However, there are also potential drawbacks. An influential or heavy-handed adaptation may overshadow the original text or "lock in" a fixed interpretation of it. For younger fans who first encountered Harry as played by Daniel Radcliffe may imagine Harry always with that face and manner. This can color their reading of the novel (for better or worse). While this alignment can enhance accessibility, it may also narrow imaginative freedom. Some literary purists fear that when a book is made into a big film franchise, the literary qualities – the prose, subtext, and reader imagination – are devalued. Certain metaphors and internal reflections, which rely on language and subjective interpretation, cannot be fully conveyed through dialogue or visual representation alone [8].

From the author's perspective, adaptation can be a double-edged sword. Rowling has expressed appreciation for the films, but she has also commented that no film could capture all the meaning of her books. By selling adaptation rights, she gave up some control. In general, authors sacrifice absolute control when they sell their stories, but they gain exposure and often larger audiences. Legally, as discussed earlier, in Europe authors have moral rights to protect the integrity of their work, but in practice these are rarely invoked in commercial film adaptations. Even with Rowling's involvement, many changes happened. Consequently, whether adaptation benefits the source material depends largely on perspective. From a commercial standpoint, the answer is affirmative; from an artistic standpoint, it is more debatable. Adaptations can revitalize literary works, introducing them to new generations of readers and audiences. By a similar token, some argue adaptation can be educational, bringing literature to life for reluctant readers or non-readers. Yet Hutcheon's stance would likely emphasize that an adaptation is another work, part of a creative conversation [2]. If the adaptation is not libelous or vulgarizing, it serves to keep the story in circulation. For *Harry Potter*, the films arguably reinforced the series'

legacy. Yet, one could imagine a scenario where a poorly executed film would have discouraged parents from buying books for their children [9]. Fortunately, because the Harry Potter films were generally well-received and competently produced, any such negative impact appears minimally.

In summary, adaptation is generally beneficial to a popular source, at least commercially and in terms of cultural prominence, as Potter illustrates. However, this is not guaranteed in all cases, especially if the adaptation is mismanaged. When adaptation is poorly executed or mismanaged, it may fail to benefit, or may even harm, the reputation of the original work. This is to ensure that the original work retains its essential exemplary nature, not to establish a hierarchy, but to preserve its uniqueness [10]. The success of *Philosopher's Stone* was not a reason to think every book adaptation will similarly enhancing the original work's influence; each case depends on execution. The broader implication is that success should be measured on multiple axes. A film may achieve significant box-office returns and renew interest in the novel, even when it diverges from the source text. Conversely, a film might be critically lauded for artistic daring but flops commercially, achieving the opposite. Thus, defining "success" in adaptation requires balancing literary fidelity with audience engagement and financial viability.

IV. Conclusion

In this case study of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, we have seen that no single standard suffices to judge an adaptation's success. In terms of fidelity, the film was only partially faithful to J.K. Rowling's novel: numerous narrative details were omitted or altered, yet the central plot, characters, and thematic core were preserved. On creativity, the adaptation added cinematic spectacle and emotional emphasis in ways that generally served the story, even if some felt it lacked bold style. Critically and commercially, the film was a triumph: well-received reviews and an unprecedented box-office haul (now exceeding \$1 billion) testify to its cultural impact. Importantly, adaptation also enhanced the life of novels, driving up book sales and cultural visibility. Tensions between author and producers – seen in casting demands and contractual controls – remained moderate; Rowling retained a degree of influence over the adaptation process while ultimately allowing filmmakers the professional autonomy required to translate the story to screen.

Applying Hutcheon's framework, we note that success in adaptation is not one-dimensional. Hutcheon herself urged looking beyond fidelity to factors like popularity and dissemination. By that measure, *Philosopher's Stone* was highly successful: it reached a global audience, endured in popular memory, and spawned a lucrative transmedia franchise. From the perspective of literary integrity, the adaptation was respectful enough to please most stakeholders, though inevitably it reinterpreted aspects of the source text. For audiences and critics, it largely met expectations and even exceeded them in sparking enthusiasm. Financially, it achieved blockbuster status.

The broader implication is that the evaluation of adaptation should be based on multiple standards considered in combination. Fidelity alone cannot capture adaptation's value. A film may be considered "successful" for its ability to generate significant box-office revenue and cultivate a dedicated fan base, even if scholars dispute what has been lost from the original text. Conversely, an adaptation that is a cineaste favorite, but a box-office bomb may be "successful" in artistic but not cultural terms. Ultimately, a successful adaptation is one that balances respect for its source material with creative innovation, satisfies audiences—including established readers—and ideally expands the cultural presence of the narrative. *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (film) largely achieve this balance, serving as a paradigm of how literary adaptation can succeed on its own terms. But crucially, it also highlights the nuanced role of authorship and control: adaptation brings benefits to the source (popularity, profit) but also redefines the source by transforming it. No adaptation is entirely neutral; As Hutcheon emphasizes, no adaptation is entirely neutral; it is simultaneously a new creation and a rearticulation of the old.

REFERENCES

- [1] Nel P. Bewitched, bothered, and bored: Harry potter, the movie. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 46(2), 2000, 172-175.
- [2] H.Linda. *A Theory of Adaptation*. (Routledge; 2006) 46–48.

- [3] G.Bluestone. *Novels into Film*. (Johns Hopkins University Press; 2003) 5-6.
- [4] D.Cartmell, I.Whelehan. *Adaptations: From Text to Screen, Screen to Text*. (Routledge; 1999) 1-5.
- [5] S. Lang, The Principles of the Gothic Revival in England. *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 25(4), 1996, 240–267.
- [6] M. Smith. (2016, 10). *The book is almost always better than the film*. YouGov.
- [7] Columbus, C. (Director). (2001). *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* [Film]. Warner Bros.
- [8] Z. Jingyue, On Symbolism and Metaphor in Haruki Murakami's Kino, *International Journal of Arts and Social Science*, 10(8), 2025, 28-30.
- [9] K. Elliott, *Rethinking the Novel/Film Debate* (Cambridge University Press, 2003) 148-152.
- [10] E. Dinga, On the Canon in Literature. *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 10(8), 2025, 240–3.