



TRANSLATABILITY OF HOGWARTS' WIZARDRY ON THE STAGE:

AN ANALYSIS OF

HARRY POTTER AND THE CURSED CHILD

Velmani.N

Associate Professor

V.V.Vanniaperumal College for Women

Virudhunagar

E-mail: velmanichandrasekar@gmail.com



ABSTRACT

Literate audience enjoys reading novels and at the same time are enamoured of its audio visual counterpart on the screen and on the stage. Novelization of films is the latest trend that is gaining grounds. Recently dramatization of novels and films has brought a new dimension to the live performance and makes the audience enthralled and enticed by its magical realism. Of late, based on the eighth story in the Potter series that made J.K.Rowling's name and fortune, directed by tricks director John Tiffany and illusionist Jamie Harrison, the first Potter play *Harry Potter and The Cursed Child* is a thrilling theatrical spectacle. The story of the play begins where the last book, *The Deadly Hallows* ends, the story shifts 19 years on from the defeat of Voldemort, Rowling showed Harry and his wife Ginny Wearley waving their youngest son Albus off at King's Cross Station for his first term at Hogwarts and introduced Scorpius Malfoy, the son of Potter's arch enemy and former bully-boy rival. *The Cursed Child* concerns itself with a very topical dilemma the limits and dangers of righteous retaliation. The tale involves not only forces between good and evil but also there is post-Freudian guilt-the adult Harry's angst at his past actions and Albus' need to prevail over his father. The play assures a familiar but delightful message: Love is the best we can manage; Perfection is impossible in this messy world.

Keywords: Novelization of films, Dramatization of novels, Magical realism, Harry Potter and The Cursed Child.

INTRODUCTION

Literate audience enjoys reading novels and at the same time enamoured of its audio visual counterpart on the screen and on the stage. Novelization of films is the latest trend that is gaining grounds. Recently dramatization of novels and films has brought a new dimension to the live performance and makes the audience enthralled and enticed by its magical realism. As children, the first playwright we read was William Shakespeare, but as it was taught as a text book, it took some of the joy of reading plays. But with playwrights such as George Bernard Shaw, Bertolt Brecht and absurdist playwright Herold Pinter, plays assumed an entertaining reception. Of late, based on the eighth story in the Potter series that made J.K.Rowling's name and fortune, directed by tricks director John Tiffany and illusionist Jamie Harrison, the first Potter plays *Harry Potter and The Cursed Child* is a thrilling theatrical spectacle.

Johanne Kathleen Rowling has become a global phenomenal success with the publication of Harry Potter series, beginning with *Harry Potter and The Philosopher's Stone* (1997) to the last of the series *Harry Potter and The Deadly Hollows* (2007). Translated into over sixty four languages, available in more than 200

countries, Rowling's series achieved classic status. The book chronicles the life of Harry Potter, a young wizard and his motley band of cohorts at the Hogwarts school of witchcraft and wizardry. J.K.Rowling had recorded a whooping sale of 108 million copies of printed books and made a fortune of one billion Euros by selling the filmright of first four books to Warner Brothers. The print media and the magnitude of the film making process-backdrops, costumes, casting and other areas match each other in the harvest of astounding one billion dollars. Rowling herself had a peculiar demand to the Warner Brothers that the film be strictly British, including the top cast and crew. She had revealed her expectation of the adaptation process by succinctly explaining

I know the movies cannot be the books.... because I know what's coming and it is impossible to fully dramatise on screen what I'm going to write. But I just ask you to be true to the characters, that's all I care about. (Potter 26)

Now, the play *Harry Potter and The Cursed Child* directed by John Tiffany, is

premiered in London's West End at Palace Theatre in June 2016. On this Rowling says,

The story only exists because the right group of people came together with a brilliant idea about how to represent Harry Potter on stage. I'm confident that when audiences see *Harry Potter and The Cursed Child*, they will understand why we choose to tell this story in this way. (WWW. J.K.Rowling.Com)

The play is a grand success, perhaps attracted first time readers of plays. In this light, a theatre hub metropolis asks publishers and playwrights if plays are as widely read as novels. Krishna Gowday of the popular Bookworm store on M.G.Road says

Plays in book formats are a huge hit, when the plays are about to be enacted in the city. Though *Harry Potter and The Cursed Child* is a rehearsal copy, we have sold more than 1000 copies the last fortnight, I think *Harry Potter* will sell, be it novels, movies or plays (*The Hindu* 21)

This is the coordinating success of magical realism of *Harry Potter Series*, in print, on screen and on the stage.

STORY OF THE PLAY

The story of the play begins where the last book, *The Deadly Hallows* ends and the story shifts nineteen years on from the defeat of Voldemort, Rowling showed Harry and his wife Ginny Weasley waving their youngest son Albus off at King's Cross Station for his first term at Hogwarts and introduced Scorpius Malfoy, the son of Potter's arch enemy and former bully-boy rival. In the fourth book *The Goblet of Fire*, Cedric Diggory was killed during the Triwizard Tournament and Harry escaped. Now, in the play *Harry Potter and The Cursed Child* the story starts with Harry (now 37), accompanied by Ron and Hermione, his childhood friends, watch as their offspring set off from King's Cross for a new term at Hogwarts. Harry Potter is introduced as an overworked employee of the ministry of magic and father of three schoolage children.

The Cursed Child concerns itself with a very topical dilemma about the limits and dangers of righteous retaliation. The tale involves not only forces between good and evil. But looks at challenges faced by a new generation of wizards and their elders and forebears. There is the quest motif, the idea of time travel which has been a standard part of sci-fi with alternate realities and flashbacks figuring in. The two lads are united by standard

issues - tean gaucheness and filial hang-ups. There is a second generation of new characters the troubled Albus is resentful of his father's celebrity and his own contrasting timidity. He struggles to make sense of himself and brushes off attempts by Jamie Parker's careworn Harry to get along better. Similarly Scorpius is the unexpectedly delightful son of the decidedly undelightful Draco Malfoy. He is equally unsure of himself – entertainingly terrible with girls and worried there might be some truth to the rumours that his dad may not be Draco after all. Albus Dumbledore himself appears in a painting that speaks to us, as paintings do in Potter world. The life of Harry Potter, marked by violence, danger and grief seemed to have settled down and now he is a middle aged wizarding bureaucrat sending his second child- Albus Severus (the 'cursed' child) off to Hogwarts for the first time.

The first half of the story develops the bromance of Albus and Scorpius and Albus' determination to try to prove himself by using an illegal 'time-turner' to change the outcome of the fateful Triwizard Tournament that resulted in the death of dishy Cedric Diggory. The second half deals with the knotty ramification of the pair's meddling.

MAGICAL REALISM IN THE PLAY

In *Harry Potter Series*, besides the descriptive passages imbued with the magical element, Rowling uses objects that are magical with uncanny skills. In the portrayal of the magical wands, the broomsticks, the wizards, witches, magical creatures, there exists the transformed versions of our own world. They live very much all over London but they are imperceptible. The magical sites Dragon Alley, Platform 9¾, Hogwarts and Hogsmeade do not appear on Muggle radar. The main entry point to Hogwarts is platform nine and three quarters at King's Cross Railway Station through which the wizards enter the world of Muggles. On the way to the school of enchantments, the pupils need no flying carpets or magical lamps, they simply board the Hogwarts Express, a steam train of long-gone times. The magic Rowling depicts positively is aligned with some kind of morality and true will and the magicians are depicted with human qualities. In Rowling's world, the interpretation of the two worlds-the magical and the real-suggests the way in which we live with the life of imagination and daily life moving in and out of consciousness.

MAGICAL ATMOSPHERE

In the play, the same magical atmosphere is created. Right onstage, we are shown some books that fly from a bookshelf and speak to us; a dexterous use of fireplaces as pieces of the wizarding transportation network; and an amusing wand fight in which a pair of wizards fling curses at one another; some creepy dementors that waft out over the audience.

The stage designer Christine Jones has created magic out of the simplest ingredients. The set is dominated by Victorian gothic arches, more reminiscent of St. Pancras than King's cross and by the brilliant use of staircases and portable stairways. An exciting escape on top of a moving train is evoked through a line of luggage and the estrangement of Albus and timeless transcendentalism bring in new meanings.

ENTHRALLING STAGECRAFT

There is thrilling and minute nature of the stagecraft- momentary changes in the blink of an eye-the Hogwarts pupils stimulate the famous leap-of-faith charge from 'muggle' Kings cross on to magical platform 9¾ changing from everyday gear into school uniforms. The aesthetic is perfectly possible to detect the lightning-fast use of trap doors or feel the stagehands lurking in the dark spots of

Christine Jones' Gothic set. There is a thrill of possibility lurking in the Victorian splendour of the theatre itself, a bygone age of smoke and mirrors. The tightly drilled ensemble, sometimes whirling in eerie synchronized motion, capes a-flapping like bat wings, music pounding lends the right cohesive feel.

The play heavily relies on knowledge of the fourth book *The Goblet of Fire* in which Cedric Diggory was killed during the Triwizard Tournament and Harry escaped. The story revolves around Albus, an isolated, unpopular kid living under the shadow of a famous dad, Harry Potter and Scorpius Malfoy an innocent dupe, the real child of the dark wizard Lord Voldemort, not the son of Harry Potter's arch enemy, Draco. Underlying all that, we are shown a world in which good and evil are locked in perpetual combat. There is a mix of white magic and Christian theology that makes Harry say at one point "A child died to save the world". (*Harry Potter and The Cursed Child* 65)

MESSAGE FROM THE PLAY

There is post-Freudian guilt-the adult Harry's angst at his past actions and Albus' need to prevail over his father. Anthony Boyle as a wonderfully quirky

Scorpius and Sam Clemmett as the Oedipal Albus carry the bulk of the story and even hint at something stronger than friendship, probably bromance. The play concerns itself with the anxiety of having an illustrious forebear and the dangers of trying to go back over old ground. It persuasively argues the value of healing deep-rooted psychological damage. The boy who lived is now a man with a keen sense of survivor's guilt. But now he has the benefit of devoted friends, even his arch bully Draco becomes an ally. The play assures a familiar but delightful message: Love is the best we can manage; Perfection is impossible in this messy world.

CONCLUSION

Right from the beginning, Rowling generated enormously enriched reading. The play *Harry Potter and The Cursed Child* based on the novels of Rowling offer crucial insight into the study of postcolonial literature. A play on the novel is not just an accurate transfer of one language to another. The transformation and translatability into visual media-the playwrights' linguistic inventions are testament to the remarkable aesthetic autonomy. The show's instigator and co-producer Sonia Friedman comments on the magical show:

British theatre hasn't known anything like it for decades and I haven't seen anything directly incomparable in all my reviewing days. Tremors of excitement at the premiere of *Harry Potter and The Cursed Child*, the first Potter play... are being felt across the world (*The Hindu* June 9, 2016 – 22)

The same vibration reverberates on the stage also.

REFERENCES

1. Sarah Lyall. "Wizardry Comes to the Stage" – *Newyork Times News Service The Hindu* June 9, 2016. Print.
2. Rowling, J.K. *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*. London: Bloomsbury, 2016. Print.
3. Rowling, J.K. Mugglenet. www.mugglenet.com web.03 Feb 2013.
4. [www. J.K. Rowling.com](http://www.J.K.Rowling.com).