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# Adaptation and transgression in *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* by J. K. Rowling

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**Adaptation and Transgression in**  
***Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them***  
**by J.K Rowling.**

Mémoire

Sous la direction de Madame la Professeure Hélène Machinal

Master 1 Recherche mention Arts,  
Lettres et Civilisations

2019



**“Jacob Kowalski:** Newt, I don’t think I’m dreaming.

**Newt Scamander:** What gave it away?

**Jacob Kowalski:** I ain’t got the brains to make this up”.

*Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*

## **Table of Contents**

Introduction.....	1
I) Spatial and temporal dichotomy : 1926 → 2016.....	4
1. 1. The context and its codes.....	4
I. 1. a) A national development which New York benefits from.....	4
I. 1. b) Creation of the movie sets: a process of construction and transgression.....	7
I. 1. c) Immigration and the audience .....	14
2. The 2016 reception of a 1926 set work .....	17
I. 2. a) Universal patterns easing reception, projection and understanding.....	17
I. 2. b) Towards a new audience or an extension of Harry Potter's ?.....	20
I. 2. c) Authenticity and reception.....	24
3. Between Fiction and Reality .....	27
I. 3. a) Fantastic versus Reality.....	28
I. 3. b) The Epic feeling*.....	31
I. 3. c) The studios: .....	33
II) Cinematographic aesthetic serving Historical authenticity.....	38
1. Costumes and Framing .....	38
II. 1. a) Costumes' symbolism .....	38
II. 1. c) Transgression in genders .....	49
2. Segregation .....	51
II. 2. a) Ethnic and genders division.....	52
II. 2. b) Beliefs .....	54
II. 2. c) Regimentation and shame of belongings.....	57
3. Society's pyramidal organization .....	60
II. 3. a) Authoritative figures.....	60
II. 3. b) Outlaws and corruption .....	62
II. 3. c) Newt Scamander: from outlaw to a successful leader?.....	63
III) Development of identity.....	67
1. Monomyth's dynamic.....	67
III. 1. a) Adventure and Departure of the Hero.....	67
III. 1. b) Initiation and return.....	69
III. 1. c) Modern conception of the hero. ....	71
2. Discrimination “for the greater good”?.....	73
III. 2. a) Discrimination anchored in the Harry Potter saga.....	73
III. 2. b) Sociological reading of discrimination and rejection.....	77
3. Viewership's identification process .....	79
III. 3. a) Young viewership.....	79
III. 3. b) Adult viewership.....	82
III. 3. c) Identification and continuation.....	84
Conclusion.....	87
Illustration Index.....	91
Glossary.....	93
Bibliography.....	99
Corpus.....	99
Fictional Works .....	99
Critical Works .....	100
Filmography.....	102
Websites.....	103

## Introduction

*Fantastic Beasts and Where To Find Them*<sup>1\*</sup> is the new filmic adventure proposed by Joanne Kathleen Rowling, the famous author of the *Harry Potter* heptalogy<sup>2</sup>. Presented as the prequel of the latter, *Fantastic Beasts* is first and foremost synonym of change. This is the first time J.K Rowling co-produced and scripted one of her works. By its nature, this work condemns the almost sacred *Harry Potter* saga to the status of sequel. For the first time in the author's career, it is the cinematographic medium that has been turned into a written work. The movie, released on the 18<sup>th</sup> of November 2016, was adapted into a screenplay<sup>3\*\*</sup> published on the 19<sup>th</sup> of November 2016. The audience targeted are not children. Never before was the audience invited to discover the wizarding world in the city of New York in 1926.

*Fantastic Beasts* is a pioneering work. Nonetheless, as it is a tremendously contemporaneous *oeuvre*, we shall keep in mind that comparisons and borrowings from the *Harry Potter* saga are necessary in our study to understand the nature and aims of this work. The screenplay – stage directions and transcriptions of the spoken dialogue of the movie, will also be considered in this analysis when referring to some movie scenes for convenience.

The following study will focus on the notions of adaptation and transgression in the *Fantastic Beasts* movie. Adaptation is to be understood as any alterations made so as “to fit different conditions or uses”<sup>4</sup>. In the context of our study, “adaptation as product” is also a “re-mediation(s)”, a “translation(s) in the form of intersemiotic transposition(s) from one sign system [...] to another...”<sup>5</sup>: a transposition from movie to screenplay, images to words, from the Roaring Twenties' sign system to that of the 2010s. Adaptation also has to be considered

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1 *Fantastic Beasts and Where To Find Them*. Directed by David Yates. Produced by David Heyman, J.K Rowling, written by J.K Rowling, Warner Bros. Pictures, Heyday Films, 2016.

\* From now on, we will refer to the movie as “*Fantastic Beasts*”.

2 Rowling, J.K. *Harry Potter* novels, Bloomsbury Publishing :

*The Philosopher's Stone* - 1997

*The Chamber of Secrets* - 1998

*The Prisoner of Azkaban* - 1999

*The Goblet of Fire* - 2000

*The Order of the Phoenix* - 2003

*The Half-Blood Prince* - 2005

*The Deathly Hallows* - 2007

3 Rowling, J.K. *Fantastic Beasts and Where To Find Them, The Original Screenplay*. Little Brown, 2016.

\*\* From now on we will refer to this work as “*Screenplay*”.

4 *Cambridge International Dictionary Of English*. Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 14.

5 Hutcheon, Linda. *A Theory of Adaptation*. New York: Routledge, 2006, p. 16.

as a “process of appropriation, of taking possession of another's story, and filtering it, in a sense, through one's sensibility, interests and talents”<sup>6</sup>. It is an appropriation, an extension of the *Harry Potter* world. It involves the audience, as the viewers will filter the story through their own sensibility and interests and will therefore propose their own adaptation of *Fantastic Beasts*. Transgression is thus ensued, and will be read as any breakage of “a law or moral rule”<sup>7</sup> and by extension, of any cinematographic or social limit presented in the movie. Adaptation and transgression will be scrutinized from a cinematographic but also from a sociological perspective. Cinematographic because of the format of the work, sociological because it involves three dichotomic groups: fantastic beasts, “mundane humans”<sup>8</sup> and the audience. These two points of view allow us to grasp and understand the work in its entirety. Adaptation is relevant because of the atypical transfer of the movie into a screenplay, but also because of the need to recreate 1920s New York in the Leavesden studios. Adaptation because the common thread of the plot is British main character Newt Scamander immigrating to the United States. Adaptation because through identification, the audience accustoms to American mores and is receptive to the movie. Transgression then, because adaptation is made of variations<sup>9</sup> which induce different degrees of transgression.

The common denominator of our first part will be the reception of a movie set in 1926 for a 2016 audience. We will consider the spatial and temporal dichotomy this movie induces. Contextualization is here crucial to understand the cultural and sociological dichotomy existing between the storyline and the audience. As we will get to know how New York operated in the 1920s tackling the context and its codes, we will focus on the development of the city, the question of the creation of the sets (a process hinging on both adaptation and transgression) before examining the status of the audience. Secondly, the reception of the work will be scrutinized while we concentrate on the universal patterns which render reception easier and question the audience's status: is it only an expansion of the *Harry Potter* viewers? We will also investigate the place left to imagination in an already constructed world.

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6 *Ibid.* p. 18.

7 *Cambridge International Dictionary Of English. Op. Cit. p. 1550.*

8 Quotations marks are used because this term only exists in fictional works.

9 Hutcheon, Linda. *Op. Cit.*

Finally, we will focus on the notions of fiction and reality: is the work fantastic as its title claims and if it is, how is the relationship with reality developed? Is it epic? What is the involvement of the studios in the definition of the genre of the movie?

The second part of our study will be dedicated to the cinematographic aesthetic in its relation to historical authenticity. The costumes and framing are highly symbolic, but do they enclose characters into clichés or allow a modern and liberating image of genders? Then, segregation will be the core of our analysis: how is ethnic and gender segregation pictured? What do the religious beliefs present in the movie arouse? How is the topic of discrimination rendered from a historical point of view and how does it convey and portray the shame of belonging? The last subpart dealing with cinematographic aesthetics and history will be an internal study of both the wizarding society and the muggle one, with their pyramidal organizations, focusing on the figures in power, the outlaws, corruption and the fall and rise of Newt Scamander.

The last part of our analysis will challenge the treatment of the development of identity in the movie. First, we will examine the status of the hero in relation to Joseph Campbell's work on the monomyth: the departure of the hero, his initiation and return and how the movie impairs the organization of the monomyth. Going back to the origins of *Fantastic Beasts*, we will seek to understand how this prequel developed and how discrimination is treated in relation to identity from a sociological point of view. Finally, we will focus on the process of identification the audience undergoes and question the possibility for such a process to be addressed as a continuum.

On the whole, this analysis tackles three main questions. First, we will seek to understand how a relationship can be built between a prequel and a modern audience. Secondly, we will question the reliability of *Fantastic Beasts* from a historical point of view but also examine the innovations that can be proposed when transgressing history and adapting to modernity. Finally, the core of this analysis is mainly to study and discover the specificities of this contemporary work: is it only an extension of the Harry Potter saga? What does it have to offer? And prominently, can *Fantastic Beasts* be considered, by its nature, independent from the *Harry Potter* saga?



## **I) Spatial and temporal dichotomy : 1926 → 2016**

Surprisingly enough, the prequel of *Harry Potter* is not set at Hogwarts nor in Scotland<sup>10</sup>. In *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*, JK Rowling and the director David Yates bring the audience to the other side of the Atlantic, in the city of New York in 1926. Therefore, the audience has to get acquainted with a new space and a new temporal scope.

First, a contextualization of the work is necessary to grasp the codes and the mores of the era so as to better understand the cultural and temporal gap the audience is facing and how it influences the reception of the movie. The context and the notion of reception are intrinsic to the notions of space and time, on which we will lastly focus to question the genre of the film, hinging between fiction and reality.

### **1. 1. The context and its codes**

In the 1920s, the city of New York went through an absolute reshaping and its population dramatically expanded due to immigration<sup>11</sup>. The atmosphere of the era and the city of New York have been recreated on sets, in the studios. The spectators can relate to characters and mimic their immigration process so as to immerse themselves in the movie.

#### **I. 1. a) A national development which New York benefits from**

*Fantastic Beasts and Where To Find Them* is situated in the city of New York in the year 1926. The Roaring Twenties opened the postwar peaceful era, witnessed the expansion of American culture and society and ended in the Great Depression of 1929. On the political stage, the Republicans ruled this era with Harding elected in 1920, who died in 1923 and was replaced by Coolidge from 1924 to 1928<sup>12</sup>. The keyword at the root of all the changes during the twenties is economy. It was a period of great economic increase: the war economy being reconverted into industry allowed better wages and produced inflation. This industrial innovation is partly due to assembly-line methods, first developed by Henry Ford in 1913.

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10 JK Rowling. "Hogwarts". *Pottermore*, 2016, <https://www.pottermore.com/explore-the-story/hogwarts>. "Sprawling Scottish castle and celebrated School of Witchcraft and Wizardry", main place of action of the *Harry Potter* saga.

11 Ridout, Lucie. "Les années 20". *L'histoire de l'Amérique en couleur*, season 1, episode 1, Arrow International Media for France 5, 4 Feb. 2018.

12 *Ibid.*

American industry gradually offered its workers innovative rights such as sickness and unemployment insurance, recognized unions and allowed the workers to take an active role by giving them the right to own shares in the factory<sup>13</sup>.

The Roaring Twenties are also known as the businessmen era, portrayed in Sinclair Lewis' novel *Babbitt*<sup>14</sup> in 1922. In daily life, a Babbitt came to depict a conformist business man, often at the head of political parties or charity associations, and who helped cultural life by financing it through clubs. In the film, this is portrayed through the Shaw family, involved in politics in a somehow segregationist way. Culture and rights in the twenties were partly contrived by monopolies and society was still divided. This economic development did not benefit everybody since in 1930, one third of the population was living in poverty<sup>15</sup>. This aspect is portrayed through the character of Jacob Kowalski<sup>16</sup>, employed in Moreton Dale Canning Factory by means of subsistence. The 1928 pact between Kellogg and Briand put an official end to the war, which, in the movie, signed Jacob's return from France, where he was engaged in the American Expeditionary Force, staying in a peace keeping effort, returning only in 1924.

Change is also attested by women's emancipation. Women were granted the right to vote in 1920<sup>17</sup>. New York was ahead of its time, granting women the right to vote in 1917. A radical change of mind and attitude soon became the emblem of women's emancipation through the development of the Flapper style. Women wore bobbed short hair and make up, smoked, openly talked about sexuality, and birth control became ideologically acceptable. The character of Tina Goldstein<sup>18</sup> is the very ideological example of this state of mind. Access to employment and the general urbanization of the country triggered the creation of suburbs to house the working class, such as The Queens in New York; a type of accommodation the characters of Tina and Jacob benefit from. A better economic situation and a population eager

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13 Gervais, Pierre. *Les Etats-Unis de 1860 à nos jours*. 4<sup>th</sup> edition, Hachette supérieur, 2017, p. 59.

14 Sinclair, Lewis. *Babbitt*. Hachette, Brace & Co., 1992.

15 Gervais, Pierre. *Op. Cit.* p. 62.

16 J.K Rowling. "Jacob Kowalski". *Pottermore*, 2016, <https://www.pottermore.com/short-text/who-is-jacob-kowalski>. In the film *Fantastic Beasts and Where To Find Them* "Jacob Kowalski is an earnest, No-Maj New Yorker who returns home from fighting in the Great War to become a baker. Upon his homecoming to the Big Apple in 1926, Jacob gets mixed up in the adventures of Newt Scamander".

17 "1920 Woman suffrage amendment ratified". *History*, 2010, <http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/woman-suffrage-amendment-ratified>. On the eighteenth of August 1920, the State of Tennessee adopts the nineteenth amendment of the Constitution and being the thirty sixteenth State to do so, therefore gives women's the right to vote in all the country.

18 J.K Rowling. "Tina Goldstein". *Pottermore*, 2016, <https://www.pottermore.com/explore-the-story/tina-goldstein>. Porpentina Goldstein is a witch working at the Magical Congress of the United States in the film *Fantastic Beasts and Where To Find Them*.

to work led to reshape the whole country and New York is no exception. Increase in wages allows the premises of consumption society, backed by national ads, so that in 1929, two out of three houses earned more than one thousand and fifty hundreds dollars a month and almost each family had a car. New York is slowly turning into a globalized city and becomes a symbol of industrialization and economic success<sup>19</sup>.

In 1925 New York city rebelled against the Butler Act, adopted in Tennessee, which forbids the teaching of Darwinism in public schools<sup>20</sup>, an ideology which developed around the Bible Belt (usually, the majority of religious states, in the United States South and South-East)<sup>21</sup>. The American Civil Liberties Union of New York called for some teachers who could challenge Creationism and recruited John Scopes, who was later arrested, then released on a technicality. Through this act, New York proved ideologically innovative. A parallel to this event can be seen in the portrayal of the character of Newt Scamander<sup>22</sup>'s job to promote the interest and history of the fantastic beasts he takes care of, and which is opposed to the New Salem Philanthropic Society, fighting against magic, and strangely resembling the Ku Klux Klan, a symbol of conservatism and creationist values. The Ku Klux Klan founded in 1865, advocates White supremacy, Protestantism, and an idealized colonial past and fights against egalitarianism and modernism in the 1910s. This organization is part of a long tradition of racial prejudice in the United States, and the Roaring Twenties are no exception. In 1921, the National Quota Act strongly limited immigration by numerically quantifying it. In 1924, the Johnson-Reed Act limited immigration on national origins basis<sup>23</sup>.

During the twenties, in a country led by racism, New York also played an important role in the development of African-American culture and in the emancipation and recognition of African-American populations. During the twenties, the Harlem district developed as an Africano-American neighbourhood (around thirty percent of its population was black in 1920 and it rises up to seventy percent in 1930<sup>24</sup>). African-American primitivist art was promoted

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19 Gervais, Pierre. *Op. Cit.* p. 59.

20 "ACLU History: The Scopes 'Monkey Trial'". *American Civil Liberties Union*, 2017, <https://www.aclu.org/other/aclu-history-scopes-monkey-trial>.

21 Rosenberg, Matt. "The Bible Belt in the United States : The Bible Belt Extends Throughout the American South (And Perhaps Beyond?)". *ThoughtCo*, 12 Jan. 2018, <https://www.thoughtco.com/the-bible-belt-1434529>.

22 J.K Rowling. "Newt Scamander". *Pottermore*, 2016, <https://www.pottermore.com/explore-the-story/newt-scamander>. British Magizoologist, main character of the film *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*.

23 *Sweatshop Workers*. 10 Nov. 2019, Tenement Museum guided tour, New York.

24 "Black Capital: Harlem in the 1920s". *The New York State Museum*, 2018, <http://www.nysm.nysed.gov/exhibitions/ongoing/black-capital-harlem-1920s-0>.

through Jazz (to which we listen to while entering the Blind Pig bar in the movie<sup>25</sup>). The film proves magical New York to be innovative since Seraphina Picquery, an African-American woman, rules the Magical Congress of the United States.

New York in the 1920s is shaped by dichotomies: poverty, successful businessmen, poor suburbs, skyscrapers, isolationism, and monopolies. All those features are captured through cinematographic devices in *Fantastic Beasts*. For example the first glimpse of the city consists in a wide shot of the Statue of Liberty, gradually covered up by a steam-ship, the *Fort Elizabeth*, tracking in the frame<sup>26</sup>. The pan shot reveals the grandeur and attractiveness of the city. The brownstones, automobiles, dense crowds and aerial transit representative of New York as described above are captured in the first five minutes of the movie. A panning long shot to the left emphasizes the verticality and height of the buildings, and tilt shots insist on the density of the crowd -the camera is almost trampled- and on the complexity of the city, showing the elevated train -hidden behind its huge iron structure.

### **I. 1. b) Creation of the movie sets: a process of construction and transgression**

It took over sixteen weeks<sup>27</sup> for the creative team to build eight acres<sup>28</sup> of sets in Leavesden studios in London, for twenty weeks of accurate shooting<sup>29</sup>. The design of the tenements is inspired from the old industrial Triangle Below Canal Street zone (Tribeca) in lower Manhattan : buildings had ledges, cast iron fittings and classical columns and every set was moveable<sup>30</sup>.

In terms of adaptation, no details were spared: artistic director Stuart Craig even respected New York bricks' size of the time<sup>31</sup>: they are smaller than those used in the United Kingdom so as to plunge the audience into a complete immersive magical New York. Craig declares “Ultimately, movies are theatrical experiences”<sup>32</sup>. Thus, unsurprisingly, the sets' realism also came from accentuation and exaggeration of what could have been observed in

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25 *Screenplay*. p. 190. “A glamorous JAZZ SINGER croons on a stage...”.

26 *Fantastic Beasts*. Time 0:01:40 - 0:01:47.

27 Salisbury, Mark. *The Case of Beasts: Explore the Film Wizardry of Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*. Harper Design, an Imprint of Harper Collins Publishers, 2016, p. 43.

28 *Ibid*. p. 41.

29 *Ibid*. p. 43

30 *Ibid*. p.42.

31 *Ibid*.

32 *Ibid*.

New York in those years: overcrowded streets, smoke coming out of the gutters and many vehicles polluting the sets. The New York skyline and canyons were created by visual effects showing the Met Life Tower, Times Square and Old Madison Gardens which no longer exist today<sup>33</sup>. The sets created are therefore strongly dependent to visual effects.

The architecture of the city in Leavesden matches the 1920s New York: a symbol of the modern world, full of skyscrapers and advertisements promoting consumption. On the whole, magic is weaved through signs, street furnitures and minute details created by the graphic team Miraphora Mina and Eduardo Lima (known as a team under the name MinaLima) to name only a few. A real balance is thus reached, for example, as far as the vehicles are concerned. Real Ford Model Ts were “sourced, painted and fixed into working condition” for the movie requirement, their license plates are congruent to those of to the era but names on commercial vehicles are fictional<sup>34</sup>.

An example of authenticity and transgression may be the reconstruction of the Woolworth building, opened in 1913, which, in the film, hosts the Macusa. The Neogothic sixty story office building was the highest in the world in 1926. The building came up as an obvious part of the set to J.K Rowling and David Heyman, as Stuart Craig puts it “...Gothic decoration [...] has become synonymous with the magical world.”<sup>35</sup>, and it is true if we rely on the Harry Potter saga universe. The Woolworth building is first presented through a tracking shot going from its entrance up to its highest story, in broad daylight -allowed thanks to the set being recreated outside. The Macusa headquarters' facade and ground floor were produced on set almost at real scale: a cast-iron structure covered in imitation granite constitutes the ground floor, and the main entrance is richly adorned with mouldings and carvings. Replicas of double swing doors are ornamented by a stone owl<sup>36</sup>, a signature symbol of wizardry in the collective psyche.

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33 *Ibid.* p. 43.

34 Salisbury, Mark. *Op. Cit.* p. 53.

35 *Ibid.* p. 81.

36 Edelbaum, Susannah. “ Production Designer Stuart Craig on *Fantastic Beasts* and How They Came to Be”. *Motion Picture Association of America*, 18 Nov. 2016, <https://www.mpa.org/2016/11/production-designer-stuart-craig-fantastic-beasts-and-how-they-came-be>.



Illustration 1: Cumond, Coline. Details of the Woolworth building entrance. New York, Nov. 2018.



Illustration 2: © JKR/Pottermore Ltd. ™ Warner Bros. "MACUSA's concealed entrance".  
*Pottermore*,  
<https://www.pottermore.com/image/macusas-concealed-entrance>.



Illustration 3: Coline Cumond.  
Entrance to the Woolworth building,  
New York, Nov. 2018.

If the exterior part of the building has been faithfully studied, the interior design was a whole transgressive and creative work. To muggles<sup>37</sup> (non wizards), the ground floor opens on fictive lawyers' offices and accounting firms, a device aiming at protecting the wizards' anonymity. But magic is also hidden in the architecture of the building, only visible to wizards: no stories are to be found, and the gigantic space is illuminated by thousands of windows which remind us of a cathedral, a religious dimension exemplifying the importance of such a place. Stuart Craig makes no secret of the fact that the skylight and modern white and black marble walls of the building are inspired from a medieval Sienna cathedral<sup>38</sup>. Five bronze witch statues protected under a gold canopy welcome the visitors entering the hall. Architecture also portrays social conditions: the offices are hidden below six stories, and the tougher the work conditions are, the lower underground the workers get. Unsurprisingly, the laid off Auror<sup>39</sup> Tina is to be found at one of these levels, now doing menial work at the wand permit office. The building also typifies the emergence of art deco<sup>40</sup>: disparate materials, ironwork spiral patterns, monumentalism, overuse of gold, and mixing curves and straight lines. The creation of the Macusa headquarters shows how the sets are grounded in faithful adaptation and real History, but also innovatively crossing borders.

A building worth studying is the Tenement Museum<sup>41</sup> located on 97<sup>th</sup> Orchard Street on the Lower East Side of New York, the fictional address of Jacob. The Museum revives immigrants' rooms from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, allowing people to better understand the hardship and living conditions of the time. It is said that the tenements welcomed more than 15,000 sweatshop workers and immigrants from more than twenty nationalities, which also shows how the national identity of the city was shaped through the years<sup>42</sup>. Craig, the artistic director, voluntarily copied one of the tenement apartments of this museum, since it matched the shabbiness and poverty of Jacob's life. We are introduced to Jacob's room as “A tiny, dirty room, the furnishings sparse and shabby”<sup>43</sup> which was the case for many immigrants chasing the American Dream in the 1920s. Minute details also reflect economic expansion and the opportunities it offered back in time. Looking at Jacob's

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37 “Muggle”. Cambridge Dictionary, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/fr/dictionnaire/anglais/muggle>.

38 Ellwood, Gregory. “Fantastic Beasts' took a little magical thinking to design”. *Los Angeles Time*, 5 Jan. 2017, <http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/envelope/la-en-mn-0105-crafts-beasts-20161228-story.html>.

39 “Auror”. *Harry Potter Wiki*, <https://harrypotter.fandom.com/wiki/Auror>. An Auror is a member of the Minister of Magic who has to ensure legal certainty and fight against black magic.

40 Jürgen Sembach, Klaus. *Art Nouveau*. Taschen, 2016.

41 “Tenement Museum New York City – NYC Museum”. *Tenement Museum*, 2018, <http://www.tenement.org/>.

42 “About The Tenement Museum”. *Tenement Museum*, 2018, <http://www.tenement.org/about.html>.

43 *Screenplay*. p. 51.

belongings, we can see he reads *Make Good In Business* by W. Linden, and *Success in the Urban Jungle*. Freshly home from the expeditionary forces, Jacob catches up, as he wants to settle his own business opening a bakery. This part of the set was created to reach maximum authenticity.



Illustration 5: From Salisbury, *Op. Cit.*, p. 26.



Illustration 4: From Salisbury, *Op. Cit.*, p. 26.



Illustration 6: Jacob's apartment. Screenshot from the movie, 00:18:35.



Tina and Queenie's room mirrors New York twentieth century residential housing for the middle class. It is part of a five story brownstone house - which allowed a low rent - located on the Upper East Side of Manhattan. The industrial revolution and the post-war development are key elements in the shaping of New York brownstones and Victorian style as the shipping of tiles and stones as well as prefabricated elements considerably enriched New York architecture. If the Goldsteins seem to be living modestly, the humble tenement spirit of the building is opposed to an impression of grandeur entering the Goldsteins room: bold patterns, contrast between colors and materials, wooden and symmetrical doors, marble fireplace, noble wood furnishings, and floral patterned wallpapers of Victorian inspiration. A balance is reached between modesty and a loaded decoration, reflecting the tastes of an older generation, the apartment being an inheritance of Tina and Queenie's parents.



*Illustration 7: From Salisbury, Op. Cit. p. 35.*

Magic is evoked in the apartment in every room, through details which go from magazines to foodstuffs. The packaging is directly inspired from the 1920s and Art Deco typography but looking closer, the instant hot cocoa beverage gets ready “with a wave of the wand” and the salt comes from “Neptune Depths”. Household care pictures women's emancipation -at least in the magical world : the laundry hangs by itself in front of the fire, and food can be summoned magically, to save time.



*Illustration 8: From Salisbury, Op. Cit., page 34.*

The creation of the sets is mainly based on data collection and empirical work and in the end, the sets match a certain degree of realism creating an impression of authenticity and faithful adaptation regarding the decoration, architecture and minute details; a state reached by the graphic team's work of composition through both creation and transgression, but always contained within the main historical tendencies of the era.

### I. 1. c) Immigration and the audience

If the booming society and architectural evolution of New York are rendered through the creation of the sets, the very synopsis of the film offers both a faithful and transgressive portrayal of immigration to the United States in the 1920s. Newt Scamander, a British maziologist, is travelling to New York in 1926. For a year, he has travelled the world to meet and protect fantastic beasts which if facing extinction or endangered will be sheltered in his magical suitcase transformed into a gigantic game reserve<sup>44</sup>. New York is his last stopover before the -fictional- publication of his guide entitled *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*<sup>45</sup> aiming at magical animal welfare and recognition as non-dangerous species in 1927. Putting magic aside, immigration was another sensitive issue in 1926. From 1890 to 1930, the United States faced a new wave of immigration, of so called “new” immigrants, mainly coming from eastern and southern Europe. In an already racist atmosphere, those younger immigrants were perceived as belonging to other “races”, regarding their religions, languages and customs<sup>46</sup>. New York is portrayed through Scamander's British prism, which offers a transgressive point of view as projection from the viewers first happens through this character. In a sense, the audience also immigrates to the United States.

A second element easing the projection and “immigration” of the audience into the story is the character of Jacob Kowalski. Jacob also belongs to this third wave of immigrants, as he arrived in New York as a child with his Polish family at the beginning of the twentieth century. This character being a non-mag<sup>47</sup>, the audience identifies easily with him, since they both enter and discover the magical world at the same time. He also allows a more accurate description of immigration in the 1920s. Jacob is portrayed as a typical immigrant from Northern Europe, facing difficulties to integrate. His project of setting up a bakery is refused because of his lack of money: in the 1920s, the roaring industrial production of goods which better suited the needs of the consumption society superseded traditional craftsmanship. This highlights America's ambiguous growth in the 1920s: a mechanization endlessly progressing and benefiting businessmen but operated by factory workers, a job towards four fifths of the immigrants turned -as Jacob, which was low paid and unqualified<sup>48</sup>.

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44 Salisbury. *Op. Cit.* p. 14.

45 Rowling J.K. *Fantastic Beasts and Where To Find Them, Newt Scamander*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2001.

46 Mauk, David and John Oakland. *American Civilization An Introduction*. Routledge, 2005, pp. 57-58.

47 “Muggles”. *Pottermore*, 2016, <https://www.pottermore.com/collection/muggles>. American term for muggle. “Muggles are non-magical people...”.

48 Mauk, David and John Oakland. *Op. Cit.* p.58.

This phenomenon is worth studying in sociological terms, to better understand the process of transgression and adaptation both Newt, Jacob and the audience go through while travelling the story. We will retain three major themes from *Sociologie de l'Intégration*<sup>49</sup> by sociologist Mohand Kellil when dealing with integration: “(re)socialisation”, “interaction” and “identity”. Considering Newt Scamander and Jacob Kowalski, they go through a “secondary socialisation phenomenon”<sup>50</sup>, given that they have already been socialised in Britain and in the United States but have to start all over again arriving in a new country (for Jacob, coming back to the United States), and therefore, we should consider this “re-socialisation”<sup>51</sup>. Quoting M. Cherkaoui in *Sociologie de l'Education*, Kellil says that “through interaction, socialisation can be conceived as an adaptive process”<sup>52</sup>. This dimension is illustrated in the film by the first words Newt exchanges with the customs officer arriving in New York, or by the endeavor Jacob undertakes by going to the bank, to apply for a loan. Also, when Jacob and Newt meet, Jacob talks to him, since “talking to strangers was a tip often given to immigrants to assimilate”<sup>53</sup>. Kellil goes further saying that throughout the city, by working or by being exposed to media, re-socialisation is external and supervised by the country of arrival, which defines the immigrant's identity. The process of adaptation for immigrants is also achieved through their own “cultural identity”, which through “interaction” and “intercultural communication” allows to reach understanding with “alterity”<sup>54</sup>. This is the case when Newt first encounters Tina, and is confronted with language barriers:

“Can you please tell me you took care of the No-Maj?  
 -The what?  
 -The No-Maj! The no-magic – the non-wizard!  
 -Oh sorry, we call them muggles.”<sup>55</sup>.

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49 Khellil, Mohand. *Sociologie de l'intégration*. Presses Universitaires de France, 1997.

50 *Ibid.* p. 25. “La socialisation secondaire consiste en tout processus postérieur qui permet d'incorporer un individu déjà socialisé dans des nouveaux secteurs du monde objectif de la société”. (our translation)

51 *Ibid.* p. 30. “...un individu abandonne tout ou partie de ses habitudes, de sa culture pour épouser d'autres moeurs. [...] cet individu se conformera en fait à des moeurs dominantes dans la société dans laquelle il vit, alors on entre-verrait la nécessaire adaptation pour une re-socialisation réussie...”. (our translation)

52 *Ibid.* p. 35. “Ainsi, le paradigme de l'interaction permet de 'concevoir la socialisation comme processus adaptatif”. (our translation)

53 *Hard Times*. Terms quoted from a guided tour. 10 Nov. 2019, Tenement Museum, New York.

54 Khellil, Mohand. *Op. Cit.* p. 29. “...l'individu peut refuser d'endosser une identité et s'en attribuer une, particulière. [...] Dans ce conditions, l'identité culturelle, qui est alors en relation étroite avec l'altérité, participe de la communication interculturelle en tant que phénomène d'interaction”. (our translation)

55 *Screenplay*. p. 33.

Tina then asks Newt what he knows about the American wizarding world. He resorts to his already acquired knowledge:

“I know you have rather backwards laws about relations with non-magic people. That you're not meant to befriend them, that you can't marry them, which seems mildly absurd to me.”<sup>56</sup>

This enables him to better understand the American society way of thinking. It is interesting to state that Newt's and the audience's process of socialisation in New York city take two different paths here. Newt, whom we happen to know has travelled to many countries, is undergoing a constant re-socialisation process and each time, he is given an identity in opposition to the inhabitants of the country he is in - considered as an outsider. His own identity is also perceived through alterity: acting as a magizoologist for fantastic beasts' welfare, he will always be considered as “other”. This merges with what Kellil calls “social virtual identity (attributed by the others)” and “real social identity”<sup>57</sup> (in this case, the identity Newt attributes to himself). In view of transportation enhancements (steam-ship, train) during the era, immigration to the United States was cheaper, which enhanced foreigners' motivation to take root in the country offering employment through industry in big cities. The status of these newcomers considered as “others” because of their cultural and ethnic differences questions the legacy of their status. Referring to Kellil, “a foreigner is culturally and ethnically different whereas an immigrant is socially distant”<sup>58</sup>. Jacob might be considered more like an immigrant than a foreigner considering the time he has been living in the United States and the customs he ought to know better than the audience or Newt. The audience is not actually concerned by this sociological phenomenon as it is not engaged in a re-socialisation process but the viewers temporarily and fictively leave their culture to acculturate to New York's values during the movie time, which leads us to the frontier between fiction and reality.

As we have seen, the historical context and its codes highly propel the movie. If there is a process of recreation in the studios, the wish for authenticity always comes first so as to ease the audience's projection. The analysis of Jacob's and Newt's integration as immigrants to

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<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 64-65.

<sup>57</sup> Goffman I. *Stigmate*, Les Editions de Minuit, 1975, p. 57. qtd. in Khellil, Mohand. *Op. Cit.* p. 29. “...les identités sociales virtuelles “celles qui sont attribuées”; les identités sociales réelles (les identités pour Soi)”. (our translation)

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.* p. 47. “...l'extranéité de l'Autre souligne l'écart ethnique ou culturel qui nous sépare de lui tandis que son statut d'immigré mesure la distance sociale qui le place dans des positions inférieures...”. (our translation)

may seem unnecessary considering the fact they are fictional characters, but this study is relevant if we consider them as a prism for the audience to enter the story. Therefore, if the audience does engage by projection, what about its reception ?

## **2. The 2016 reception of a 1926 set work**

Reception is present not only by the wish for authenticity in the sets but also by universal patterns punctuating the movie. If authenticity is advocated so strongly, we can wonder what place is left to imagination in the reception process if everything is already stated and settled. Reception of the movie is also linked to the *Harry Potter* saga and franchise. Is *Fantastic Beasts* only an extension of this universe or can it hold by itself ?

### **I. 2. a) Universal patterns easing reception, projection and understanding**

For the audience to respond and be receptive to *Fantastic Beasts and Where To Find Them*, J.K Rowling used timeless themes as she did when writing and creating the world of *Harry Potter*. We can note that projection from the audience onto the characters is induced by full figure and close shots, urging human interactions and emotions. Reception is mainly present through atmospheres, hints left by the words spoken out by the characters and cinematographic devices.

Attraction to the “other” -character or atmosphere, and in this case to magic, is possible only with some degree of already acquired knowledge of what is presented. In the movie, magic is mundane for the characters but conceived as abnormal by the audience. This is true even for the part of the audience who is already well-versed in J.K Rowling's wizarding world. However, if a gap exists, the audience is attracted to the magical world by themes that have already been encountered in daily life such as friendship, integration and rejection, war, and a life regimented by politics to name only a few. The reception of the work is possible thanks to those universal tokens. The film is built like a social comedy presenting many facets carried by human beings that catches the attention of the viewers.

As we have seen, integration is a main topic in the film especially through the examples of Jacob and Newt. Integration and social rejection, in the light of Mohand's explanations, are pictured as important social features for personal and public welfare. These themes are understood by the viewers since they are presented through situations one can

encounter every day: travelling, going to the bank, building a personal project... Life pending on acceptance or rejection of our endeavors by others. Following Linda Hutcheon's words about reception, stars having common points with the characters they incarnate “conditions the work's meaning and impact”<sup>59</sup>. This is the case for Dan Fogler who stars as Jacob Kowalski: he was born and raised in New York, his great-great-grandfather was a baker and he has Eastern European origins<sup>60</sup>. Hutcheon's statement quoting writer Malcolm Bradbury may help define the reception of the film as an adaptation from a different historical era with different ethos: “even without any temporal updating or any alterations to national or cultural setting, it can take very little time for context to change how a story is received”<sup>61</sup>. Knowing Fogler's relatives' history sets his character in historical authenticity: the Fogler family fled pogroms in Russia -persecutions which happened from the 1820s to the 1920s, and Jacob's character is the third generation of Kowalskis to live in New York. His grandparents fled segregation from Poland, and even if the temporal framework covers a long period, connections can be made.

But if context there is, viewing the film in the 2010s, the audience will build parallels with the anti-Semitic acts and immigration waves still going on all over the world. Regarding the character of Tina, she is the very symbol of women's emancipation in the 1920s and is also resolutely modern: this will talk to contemporary viewers since parallels can be drawn with the Feminist and women's liberation movements that have been ongoing during the last decade. Therefore, we can say that today's context, along with its historical heritage, does change and enlarge the audience range the film may impact as well as the reception scale. If “many adapters deal with the reality of reception by updating the time of the story in an attempt to find contemporary resonance for their audiences”<sup>62</sup>, the contemporary resonance is here self-induced in the themes treated.

Two main themes are worth being developed at this point: war and politics.

War is the central core of *Fantastic Beasts*. A war between wizards and muggles is on the brink of exploding, a theme deeply rooted in history. The audience happens to know that Jacob has been enrolled in the first World war right from the beginning when he addresses Bingley, the bank manager Jacob offers his project to: “[...] I only got back in '24. From

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59 Hutcheon, Linda. *Op. Cit.* p.143.

60 Pfefferman, Naomi. “Channeling the spirit of Brooklyn and bootlegging into ‘Beasts’”, *Jewish Journal*, Tribe Media Corp, 21 Dec. 2016, [http://jewishjournal.com/current\\_edition/213241/](http://jewishjournal.com/current_edition/213241/).

61 Hutcheon, Linda. *Op. Cit.* p. 142.

62 *Ibid.*

Europe sir. Yeah – I was part of the Expeditionary Forces there –”<sup>63</sup>. This statement reinforces the degree of historical authenticity the film credits the character of Jacob with. This historical event is enlarged or disrupted -depending on the point of view, when Jacob and Newt share their past.

“Jacob: [...] Stayed in the army too long apparently ...

Newt: What, you fought in the war?

Jacob: Of course I fought in the war, everyone fought in the war  
– you didn't fight in the war?

Newt: I worked mostly with dragons, Ukrainian Ironbellies – Eastern Front.”<sup>64</sup>.

A wizard-muggle shared past is here induced through the war. The audience can project their own knowledge of World War One on its counterpart in the wizarding world history. Reception of the magical world happens through the use of worldwide historical patterns known by the majority of viewers. It is highlighted by Jacob's repetitions, marking the importance of this major conflict of the twentieth century.

If war is central to the story, it is strongly linked with politics. The Statute of Secrecy prevents wizards from revealing their true identity to muggles to ensure public welfare. It is greatly threatened by the beasts escaped from Newt's suitcase, and which are gradually seizing the city of New York. At the head of Macusa, Seraphina Picquery tries to contain a civil war between those who think magical and no-maj cooperation is possible and those who fear persecution from muggles and prefer to stay in hiding. Her muggle equivalent can be found in the Shaw family. A parallel is drawn between those two entities in their magnificence and authoritative figures, but despite these attributes, they are definitely different. The Shaws are the successful image of the American Dreamers: their masculine empire is led by pride and ambition, but marred by Langdon's need for attention and lack of political ambition. The audience is free to recognize the features of politics in the Shaw family as it is known in the real world. But it seems that politics in the wizarding world shares features with the real world, as the Shaw family may also be considered as a typical patriarchal system, devoid of women's intervention in success.

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63 *Screenplay*. p. 19.

64 *Ibid.* pp. 122-123.



On the whole, reception is built upon events and portraits talking to a vast part of the audience, as they can draw parallels with common historical events or daily life. War and politics are presented as authentic but can be conceived as pretexts for the audience to enter the fictive world and be receptive to their wizarding parallels.

### **I. 2. b) Towards a new audience or an extension of *Harry Potter's* ?**

The grounds for reception by the audience settled, we can wonder if *Fantastic Beasts* is not just a mere pretext for the wizarding world franchise to extend. First, the wizarding world of *Fantastic Beasts* hinges on different supports given that it takes its roots in a fictional schoolbook mentioned in *Harry Potter and The Philosopher's Stone*<sup>65</sup>, turned into a dictionary companion book<sup>66</sup>, extended into a film<sup>67</sup>, and finally into an original screenplay<sup>68</sup>. The *Harry Potter* saga proved the wizarding world to be highly transmedial by developing on books, movies and merchandising. The universal themes dealt with in the seven volumes of *Harry Potter* seem to have finally led the audience to be receptive to the wizarding world as it is now a twenty five billion dollar franchise, all products together<sup>69</sup>. A shift of era and hero seems light to justify that *Fantastic Beasts* may not just be an extension of the *Harry Potter* universe and to justify its place as a transmedial movie, extending the universe. In 2011, J.K. Rowling launched Pottermore<sup>70</sup>, a website she writes for, making it the most complete and authentic online encyclopedia concerning the wizarding universe since about 2015. This proves the new saga is slowly turning into a franchise, as five films have been announced<sup>71</sup>.

Many hints and elements are to be traced back to the *Harry Potter* saga, which may be regarded as essential since the film is presented as a prequel but it also gives substance and legitimacy to the film on its own. Therefore, the two works are transfictional: they share the same author, and *Fantastic Beasts* extends the plot by alluding to some characters already mentioned in the *Harry Potter* saga<sup>72</sup>. The already acquired audience is more likely to project

65 Rowling, J.K. *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*. New York, Arthur A. Levine Books, 1998, p. 67.

66 Rowling J.K. *Fantastic Beasts and Where To Find Them. Newt Scamander. Op. Cit.*

67 *Fantastic Beasts*.

68 *Screenplay*.

69 Wells, Nick and Mark Farey. "Harry Potter and the \$25 billion franchise". *Consumer News and Business Channel*, 13 Oct 2016, <https://www.cnbc.com/2016/10/13/harry-potter-and-the-25-billion-franchise.html>.

70 J.K Rowling, *Pottermore*, 2011, <https://www.pottermore.com/>.

71 @jk\_rowling "Five. Not seven. Not three. Five (Got a feeling this is going to be the new 'not a prequel')". Twitter, 13 Oct 2016, 2 pm, [https://twitter.com/jk\\_rowling/status/786672876904706048](https://twitter.com/jk_rowling/status/786672876904706048).

72 Letourneux, Matthieu. *Fictions à la chaîne : littératures sérielles et culture médiatique*. Éditions du Seuil, 2017, pp. 289-290. "Pour Richard Saint-Gelais, il y a transfictionnalité quand 'deux textes, du même auteur ou non, se rapportent conjointement à une même fiction, que ce soit par reprise des personnages,

itself in this already known universe and only secondly to perceived *Fantastic Beasts* as an extension of the young wizard world. The net of elements interweaving the two universes works both ways: the already acquired audience might follow the new saga but the new audience might want to know more and plunge into the *Harry Potter* universe; both can be done without an important loss of meaning or understanding. The network is even broader, as the film proposes an analysis and description of fantastic beasts the readers and audience discovered in *Harry Potter*, as well as many features already present in the sequel.

We find many examples of intertextuality with *Harry Potter*. The newspapers' front pages presented in the opening of the movie, designed by Miraphora Mina and Eduardo Lima, have been mentioned in *Harry Potter*. Taking a look at the worldwide wizarding news, we can see that Gellert Grindelwald is on the run and, as it has been revealed in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*<sup>73</sup> by Dumbledore himself, Grindelwald is known as a dark wizard. Other newspapers are to be seen on screen such as *The Daily Prophet*<sup>74</sup>, and looking closer at the print version by MinaLima, it reveals that Albus Dumbledore is a new columnist for the newspaper<sup>75</sup>. This appearance, apart from supporting the attention paid to minute detailed elements in the film, gives new information about Dumbledore's past. Before becoming the headmaster of Hogwarts in the 1970s, Dumbledore was teaching transfiguration at the school. Hogwarts school is divided into four houses, each having particular colors and values. When Newt opens his case at the customs, a yellow and dark grey scarf is folded in it, and the already acquired audience will note that Newt belongs to Hufflepuff house. In keeping with the franchise theme, replicas of these scarves are sold online by a company holding the rights under the Warner Bros licence<sup>76</sup> which proposes a large range of collectibles both from *Harry Potter* and *Fantastic Beasts*, once again enlarging the franchise worth.

Another example of intertextuality is that Percival Graves and Credence Barebone are connected through a necklace figuring a cloak, a wand and a stone; a symbol known as the Deathly Hallows. In *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, potential readers have learned

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prolongement d'une intrigue préalable ou partage d'un univers fictionnel”.

73 Rowling, J.K. *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*. New York, Arthur A. Levine Books, 2007, p. 717

“Well, Grindelwald fled, as anyone but I could have predicted. He vanished, with his plans for seizing power, and his schemes for Muggle torture [...]”

74 *Fantastic Beasts*. Time 0:00:54.

75 Miraphora, Mina and Eduardo Lima. “The Daily Prophet™ - 'Hogwarts School Increases Security’”. *MinaLima Store*, 2018, <https://store.minalima.com/shop/fantastic-beasts/limited-edition-prints/wizarding-newspapers/the-daily-prophet-hogwarts-school-increases-security/>.

76 “Newt Scamander Scarf - Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them”. *CineReplicas*, 2016, <https://cinereplicas.com/products/fantastic-beasts-and-where-to-find-them-newt-scamander-scarf>.

that Dumbledore's sister may be affiliated to an obscurial (a young wizard prevented from doing magic, who with time is possessed and gradually taken over by a dark magic entity -an obscurus; sometimes resulting in the wizard's death)<sup>77</sup> and hidden her life long. This is an element which shows how the wizarding society, both American and British, are ashamed regarding the disabilities of some of its people. One last magic ability both present in *Harry Potter* and *Fantastic Beasts* is legilimency -the ability to read other's minds. Tina's sister Queenie is a gifted legilimens<sup>78</sup>. In *Harry Potter*, it is the potions teacher Severus Snape who teaches Harry to protect his mind from Voldemort's legilimency. All these features and abilities put together, we now see how the *Fantastic Beasts* universe is strongly built upon the *Harry Potter* universe. The latter having been created prior to the former shows how difficult it is not to consider *Fantastic Beasts* as a mere copycat, as a pretext for money making, extending an already substantial franchise.

What can partly emancipate *Fantastic Beasts* from *Harry Potter* are the beasts themselves. They are presented in the books' sequel but created and animated in the prequel. The beasts have been digitally created by special effects directors Pablo Grillo, Tim Burke and Christian Manz, who first studied the descriptions made by J.K Rowling in the book and script. Authenticity was at stake, and what was new with those beasts is that unlike the *Harry Potter* films, the few beasts depicted were not as central as in *Fantastic Beasts*. As special effects supervisor Pablo Grillo explains: "Part of the challenge was to create animals you believe could exist in the animal kingdom, that have a very natural feeling [and] don't feel too designed..."<sup>79</sup>. Credibility was the key, for the audience to "engage with them"<sup>80</sup> and believe them able to exist.

Among those creatures is the bowtruckle Pickett. It is mentioned in *Harry Potter and The Order of the Phoenix* as "[...] tiny pixieish creatures made of wood, each with knobby brown arms and legs, two twig like fingers at the end of each hand, and a funny, flat, barklike face in which a pair of beetle-brown eyes glittered."<sup>81</sup>. It has been modelled from natural small branches and twigs to really integrate its environment, and discretely accompany Newt

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77 *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows. Op. Cit.* p. 156.

"Had Dumbledore's sister suffered the same fate in reverse: imprisoned for her lack of magic?"

78 *Screenplay.* p. 81.

79 Salisbury, Mark. *Op. Cit.* p. 144.

80 Samuels, Gabriel. "How the Fantastic Beasts were brought to life: An interview with visual effects supervisor Pablo Grillo". *The Independent*, 24 March 2017, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/how-the-fantastic-beasts-were-brought-to-life-pablo-grillo-interview-a7645766.html>.

81 Rowling, J.K. *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix.* Arthur A. Levine Book, 2003, p. 258.

wherever he wanders in New York, hidden in his coat pocket<sup>82</sup>. The demiguise is another creature mentioned in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*: “I mean to say, it is not a traveling cloak [...] woven from Demiguise hair, which will hide one initially but fade with the years until it turns opaque.”<sup>83</sup>. The special effects team respected the demiguise features of being invisible and managing prescience but went further, making itameleon-like<sup>84</sup>.

The last creature having the most dramatic potential is the niffler. Readers have been introduced to it in *Harry Potter and The Goblet of Fire* as: “[...] fluffy black creatures with long snouts. Their front paws were curiously flat, like spades, and they were blinking up at the class, looking politely puzzled at all the attention.”<sup>85</sup>. It is the very symbol of interaction as it is the first creature the audience meet in the bank scene, and the first beast to wreak havoc in New York. Cinematic devices embrace and enhance the niffler nature: its moves are followed by frantic tilt shots and dolly tracks on the ground, showing the rodent nature of the creature<sup>86</sup>. The niffler gets a lot of the audience attention, and this proves once again that reception is possible only with some degree of already acquired knowledge: the creature somehow resemble a platypus.

If *Fantastic Beasts* emancipates itself it might be through the very innovative creation of magical beasts, which broaden the scale of the actors' actions, since puppeteers<sup>87</sup> allowed more spontaneity and reality than three dimensional drawings. The creatures' physical authenticity is a must-have for the audience to receive the film and project on it, as the beasts are the root of the film and allow it to stand on its own. But, even the film peculiarities such as Newt Scamander's notebook<sup>88</sup> or the beasts<sup>89</sup> themselves definitely bring down what could have made the film stand on its own on a legitimate ground and not as a by-product as they have been made collectible and part of J.K Rowling's wizarding world trademark.

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82 *Screenplay*. p. 84.

83 Rowling J.K. *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*. *Op. Cit.* pp. 410-411.

84 *Fantastic Beasts*. Time 0:23:59 – 0:24:28.

85 Rowling J.K., *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*. New York, Arthur A. Levine Books, 2000, pp. 542-543.

86 *Fantastic Beasts*. Time 0:08:30-0:08:50.

87 Salisbury, Mark. *Op. Cit.* p. 147.

88 "Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them: Newt Scamander Hardcover Ruled Journal". *Insight Editions*, 2016, <https://insighteditions.com/product/fantastic-beasts-and-where-to-find-them-newt-scamander-hardcover-ruled-journal/>.

89 "Pop! Movies: Fantastic Beasts And Where To Find Them – Niffler". *Funko*, 2018, <https://www.funko.com/products/all/all/product/pop-movies-fantastic-beasts-and-where-to-find-them-niffler>.

## I. 2. c) Authenticity and reception.

The roots of *Fantastic Beasts* undoubtedly lie in the *Harry Potter* universe as proved by the elements, characters and magic abilities studied above. Therefore, the *Harry Potter* and *Fantastic Beasts* universes are transfictional if we follow Richard Saint-Gelais' definition<sup>90</sup>: “By transfictionnalité I mean the phenomenon by which at least two texts ... conjointly relate to a same fiction, might it be by the resumption of protagonists, by the extension of a preliminary storyline or by the partition of a same fictional universe”. The notion of “texts” also covering “cinema, television or written sources”<sup>91</sup>, transfictionality and transmediality share a liminal space in the relation of those two universes. A strong relation of imitation and transformation is induced and we could even consider *Fantastic Beasts* as a “cycle” of the *Harry Potter* universe, as it “deepen and stretches a unique storyline”<sup>92</sup>. Transfictionality and transmediality bring into question the authenticity and credibility of *Fantastic Beasts* in regards to the preconstructed world it hinges on but also questions the place left to the audience's imagination to appropriate the universe.

Three case studies are possible regarding the audience relationship to the works and their reception, taking into account the collective idea that “adaptation” is considered “...as minor and subsidiary and certainly never as good as the “original”<sup>93</sup>.

One of these cases has already been questioned by Hutcheon: “What does this mean when these fans see one particular adaptation on screen that comes from the director's imagination rather their own ?”<sup>94</sup>. The audience who read the script before seeing the film had already created their own version of the fictional world portrayed through the words and is given one particular version in the film. It can impair the personal process of creation, as Hutcheon puts it talking about the *Harry Potter* adaptation: “Now that I know what [...] a game of Quidditch (can) look like (from the movies), I suspect I will never be able to recapture my first imagined

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90 Saint-Gelais, Richard. *Fictions transfuges: la transfictionnalité et ses enjeux*. Editions Du Seuil, 2011, p.7. “Par 'transfictionnalité', j'entends le phénomène par lequel au moins deux textes, du même auteur ou non, se rapportent conjointement à une même fiction, que ce soit par reprise de personnages, prolongement d'une intrigue ou partage d'univers fictionnel”.

91 *Ibid.* “En donnant ici à 'texte' une acception large qui couvre aussi le cinéma, la télévision, la bande dessinée...”. (our translation)

92 *Ibid.* p. 27. “On sait cependant que [...] cette pulsion de récit [...] peut trouver à s'assouvir [...] sous deux formes générales, l'une qui opère par approfondissement et étirement d'une intrigue unique ('cycle' dans la terminologie de Besson...)”. (our translation)

93 Hutcheon, Linda. *Op. Cit.* p. XII.

94 *Ibid.* p. 29.

versions again”<sup>95</sup>. Therefore, the film alters and disrupts the audience's creation process from the books. The same goes for the already acquired readers common to the bestiary-dictionary-like book<sup>96</sup> who had to create their own version of the beasts from their description. In both cases, the credibility of the adaptation of the script elements into the film depends on an individual opinion, whether the imagined versions of the creatures, characters and sets are more or less alike the ones imposed by the film. Following Hutcheon's words, the film can be conceived as a “palimpsest made for permanent change”<sup>97</sup>, imposing itself to the readers' imagination. Readers might find their own imagined version of the fictional world more authentic, and unconsciously, only consider the film as another adaptation of the script. For the part of the audience who was first immersed in an already created fictional world through the film and have no personal version of the story, they could undertake a process of re-creation of the *Fantastic Beasts* universe by reading the screenplay even if this would greatly alter the imaginative and creative process. It is an individual endeavor, and each reader would imagine what is written from his or her own background knowledge, or in Hutcheon's words: “seen from its *process of reception*, adaptation is a form of intertextuality: we experience adaptations (*as adaptations*) as palimpsests through our memory of other works that resonate through repetition with variation”<sup>98</sup>. The degree of credibility and reliability given to the film would be biased as it would be taken as the absolute reference being the first proposition of the fictional world seen, and the screenplay would be perceived as a written copycat of the visual version of the story.

It is true that director David Yates had to adapt J.K Rowling's script and, hand in hand with the designers and the creative team, they interpreted and gave life to the universe, which meets Hutcheon's definition of adaptation as a “creative *and* interpretive act of appropriation”<sup>99</sup>. However, the screenplay has been written as the film shooting was ongoing and is not what the actors or director had in hand. It deprives the readership from many details and stage directions. The fact that the screenplay was published after the film came out gives more importance to the visual version of the universe but it also begs the question of the place left to the audience. If the *Harry Potter* film adaptations always came after the publication of their respective books, why is it not the case for *Fantastic Beasts*? The readers are here

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95 *Ibid.* p. 29.

96 Rowling J.K. *Fantastic Beasts and Where To Find Them, Newt Scamander. Op. Cit.*

97 Hutcheon, Linda. *Op. Cit.* p. 29.

98 *Ibid.* p. 8.

99 *Ibid.*

symbolically deprived of the right to imagine and create their own version of the universe based upon the descriptions of the author. Might it be to prove the expansion of the universe through cinematographic means still possible, the screenplay appears as a by-product of inferior importance.

Leaving aside the assumption that adaptations are granted inferior to their prior work, we should consider both film and screenplay individually, even if the original script written by J.K Rowling seems to be at the root of both works. Multimediality widens the audience's reception by allowing its members to spot differences and similarities, to develop their critical minds and therefore, to get a more accurate vision of how they personally imagine the *Fantastic Beasts* universe. By engaging in different “modes” -being “told” the story, reading the screenplay or being “shown” the story by watching the film, the audience participants resort to their “memory” and memories<sup>100</sup>. Consulting various works previously encountered to understand the content of the story by their own means, viewers can propose potential and personal versions of Newt, Tina, or New York in 1926, according to their respective repertoire<sup>101</sup>. The screenplay is there granted an exclusive relationship to the readers, who actualize it whenever the words are read, leaving room for imagination. Thus, the movie appear as a medium proposing visual possibilities.

Still, if *Fantastic Beasts* is a medium proposing possibilities, it grounds its fictional universe in a pre-established fictive world regarding the sets and imagination is once again left aside. Plus, according to Pablo Grillo, the beasts needed to appear authentic for the audience to apprehend them as potentially existing, but it might on the contrary, discredit the realistic illusion created. Sarah Hatchuel proposes that a film meant to be realistic will be discredited by the very means used to portray it as real: “It is through processes meant to create credibility and verisimilitude that the work of art sometimes points out its nature of filmic illusion”<sup>102</sup>. So what if re-created authenticity may, on the contrary discredit the realistic illusion created regarding the beasts as well as the sets picturing New York in 1926? The film should be apprehended as adding to J.K Rowling's written work (the screenplay), for

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100Hutcheon, Linda. *Op. Cit.* p. 22. “As audience members, we need memory in order to experience difference as well as similarity”.

101Heidenreich, Rosmarin. “La problématique du lecteur et de la réception”, *Cahiers de recherche sociologique*, no. 12, 1989, pp. 77-89. *Erudit*, <https://www.erudit.org/fr/revues/crs/1989-n12-crs1516226/1002059ar.pdf>

102Hatchuel, Sarah. “The Aesthetic of Epic in Kenneth Branagh's Hamlet”. *Screening Text, Critical Perspectives on Film Adaptation*, Mc Farland & Co Inc, 2013, p. 8.

example, when the audience is invited inside the magical case of Newt through the gaze of Jacob: “The perimeter of the leather case is dimly visible, but the place has swollen to the size of a small aircraft hangar. It contains what appears to be a safari park in miniature. Each of Newt's creatures has its own perfect, magically realised, habitat”<sup>103</sup>.

The extended long shots<sup>104</sup> add to the notion of space rendered in the screenplay by movement descriptions such as: “they enter”, “they emerge into”, they move towards”<sup>105</sup>, which can but partially be done through imagination. In that sense, cinematic devices add to the author's words and to the fictional world.

The filmic version of *Fantastic Beasts and Where To Find Them* offers consistency to the world imagined by J.K Rowling and has already been appropriated by the audience through written media. But to apprehend this world through an objective prism, it seems that both film and script have to be taken together so as to consider their qualities and limits, and through this liminal apprehension of the fictive world, the audience could find its place. Being passive spectators but also active readers, the members of the audience would oscillate between fiction and reality, reaching a sort of balance, depending on the degree of reliability and space they chose to leave to each of these genres and their personal conception of the universe they are offered. The universal patterns of social integration, politics and emancipation as well as the elements that can be traced back to the *Harry Potter* saga and give some legitimacy to the film's reception of a 1926 set work. Imagination supplements the story when set free in another media such as the screenplay, and several readings and versions of the story will appear depending on their interpretation by the audience.

### 3. Between Fiction and Reality

More than just having to immerse themselves into a 1926 set work, the audience is also asked to switch between fiction and reality. In the following development, we will try to shed light on the extents and limits of those genres, by studying the epic features of the movie and the process of recreation that occurred in the Leavesden studios.

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103Screenplay. p. 100.

104*Fantastic Beasts*. Time 0:41:20-0:43:19.

105Screenplay. p. 105.



### I. 3. a) Fantastic versus Reality

If the audience's reading of the film takes various forms, it may be because *Fantastic Beasts* is a work of fiction presenting its fictive reality as real, which puts members of the audience on different levels depending on their personal apprehensions of the universe.

Right from its title, the film appeals to the fantastic genre. To Nathalie Prince, the fantastic genre could be defined as “events disrupting a mimetic reality and triggering emotions - worrying, terror, so that the readers feel threatened”<sup>106</sup>. Considering that the sets and beasts were created to convey a feeling of realism, it is interesting to conceive this idea in accordance with the fantastic genre. Nathalie Prince quoting Dennis Mellier tells us about “monstration texts”<sup>107</sup>, which depict beasts or creatures emphasizing gruesome details. The supernatural is presented as rational, the characters or readers' logic is stupefied, and they have no choice but to accept a “reality of the unreal”<sup>108</sup>. Cinema being a demonstrative art, it can be affiliated to monstration texts, and camera movements help to emphasize - by showing, some of the story features such as macabre elements (the Swooping Evil feeding on human brains<sup>109</sup>). The beasts and atmosphere are so realistic that Jacob goes through a “subjectivity crisis”<sup>110</sup> before submitting to the idea of a “reality of the unreal”, considering the wizarding world as managed by rules he does not understand but which are real, saying:

“Jacob: Newt . . . I don't think I'm dreaming.

Newt: What gave it away?

Jacob: I ain't got the brains to make this up.”<sup>111</sup>

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106 Prince, Nathalie. *La littérature fantastique*. Armand Colin, 2015, p. 37. “Le fantastique littérature de la peur ; entendons une littérature qui fait surgir dans le réel mimétique un élément de perturbation [...] pour que ce scandale suscite et provoque un sentiment de terreur ou d'inquiétude”. (our translation)

107 Denis Mellier, *La littérature fantastique*, Ed. Du Seuil, 2000, p. 5 qtd. in *Ibid.* p. 19. “...des 'textes de la monstration' – le terme est emprunté à Denis Mellier – textes qui persistent à 'montrer de manière excessive et hyperréaliste des créatures surnaturelles’”. (our translation)

108 *Ibid.* p. 19. “Dans de tels *textes de la monstration*, les témoins et le lecteur, et leur raison comme sidérée, passive et consternée, se soumettent à l'évidence d'une réalité de l'irréel”. (our translation)

109 *Fantastic Beasts*. Time 1:10:34-1:10:45.

110 Prince, Nathalie. *Op. Cit.* p. 15. “Si le moment de basculement fantastique des textes s'effectue à l'apparition textuelle du surnaturel, il s'accompagne d'une crise de la subjectivité qui tout à la fois est crise de la représentation et crise de la raison”. (our translation)

111 *Screenplay*. p. 109.

For the crucial scene where Jacob acknowledges the wizarding world to be real for example<sup>112</sup>, the camera follows the characters' pace; close-up shots on Jacob emphasize the importance of the words spoken and smooth transitions in the edition process make the scene stable so that the audience is conditioned to enter this world. If the beasts and sets' realism managed to convert Jacob, the supernatural made evident can also highlight the doubtful and grotesque features of the creatures and the audience might not be as receptive and convinced as Jacob. If we adapt Nathalie Prince's definition of the fantastic to the film, the switch to the fantastic happens when the supernatural is seen, which triggers a “subjectivity crisis” - here in the viewers. The recognition of the fantastic lies in the audience's acceptance of the supernatural, and their potential submission to a “reality of the unreal”. If the creation of the sets, creatures and characters aimed at conveying a faithful degree of realism, it at least distances the film from the marvelous genre, as the sets point to a past historical reality (New York in the 1920s), the characters easily identifiable with (the audience discovering the wizarding world through the gaze of Jacob), and the hesitation between the natural atmosphere and settings remains. In *Fantastic Beasts*, the evil figure of the obscurus, conceived as internal to the world and not coming from outside, might make the audience uneasy. This enlarges the definition of the fantastic, because if disruption is still present, the degree of threat and terror is highly variable depending on each viewer. A liminal space between the fantastic and fantasy is reached through the beasts themselves: if they trigger no fear, the supernatural appears as naturally governing the characters, creatures and events of the story. Therefore, the “supernatural is naturalized, both unknown creatures and events are accepted in the fictional world as well as by the spectators without being called into question”<sup>113</sup>.

“Fantasy demands for a higher degree of credulity on the part of the audience” than the fantastic<sup>114</sup>. There is no hesitation concerning the reliability of the beasts and of magic in the movie and the spectators may suspend their disbelief. Fantasy relying on magic, the film undoubtedly belongs to this genre, since the story is based upon a certain “magical internal coherence”<sup>115</sup>. Indeed the use of magic gives sense to the story as a whole, being at its core,

112 *Fantastic Beasts*. Time 0:41:09-0:41:15.

113 Besson, Anne. *La Fantasy*, Klincksieck, 2007, p. 17. “Un 'surnaturel naturalisé' [...] l'existence ou l'apparition de créatures ou d'événements inconnus de notre cadre cognitif s'y voient acceptés par le lecteur/spectateur au même titre qu'elles le sont au sein du monde fictionnel, sans prêter à la remise en question ou même à l'interrogation”. (our translation)

114 *Ibid.* p. 22. “... la fantasy demande une 'crédulité' supérieure, condition d'efficacité de l'évasion qu'elle dispense...”. (our translation)

115 *Ibid.* p. 167. “La fantasy aurait ceci de particulier dans ce cadre qu'elle se livre de manière assez

asking for the “naturalization” and recognition of magic as mundane. Magic could also be conceived as a *mise en abyme* of the film's genres: the possibility of magic used openly in the muggle world asks the spectators to wonder how they would react if this was true. Thus once again the limits between the fantastic, fiction, and reality are questioned. The fact that *Fantastic Beasts* is a prequel is not surprising as Anne Besson says: “... the prequel...is a general tendency of this genre [Fantasy]”<sup>116</sup>. The prequel format presents the film as a “refusal to go further”<sup>117</sup>, as a refusal to extend the temporality of the *Harry Potter* saga by bringing the viewers back in time. Conceiving the two works together highlights the fantasy's feature of the “ageless struggle”<sup>118</sup>, in this case, impossible peace between muggles and wizards. The most striking element incorporating *Fantastic Beasts* into the fantasy genre might stand in the character of Newt Scamander. He is the emblem of the “man enrolled in the world as if by magic”, the emblem of “the man's relationship with nature before the separation from which we are the victims today”, and is the central character highlighting the “sublimated wonders of nature”<sup>119</sup>, by both acting for its preservation and by recognizing that man should owe nature more than he does.

Considering the notions of fiction and reality, J.K Rowling's previous fictional works with the *Harry Potter* saga have been said to “contaminate the real world”<sup>120</sup>. That is, the readers are allowed to enter and take part in the wizarding world described in the books. It is possible since the books and films are grounded in real settings such as King's Cross station, the Millennium Bridge in London, or the Jacobite Steam train crossing the Glenfinnan viaduct in Scotland. The same goes for *Fantastic Beasts* as it is based on the city of New York (see I. 1. b) and I. 3. c)). Fiction also contaminates reality thanks to the high degree of authenticity of the studios, where authentic costumes and props are displayed and some of the settings recreated<sup>121</sup>. However, this contamination of reality by fiction is opened to criticism, since it

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systematique à une rationalisation au moins esquissée de ses procédures magiques : doté de cohérence interne, le monde construit par sa pulsion cosmogonique intègre l'explication ou la mise en scène de sa logique pré-rationnelle”. (our translation)

116 *Ibid.* p. 160. “... le préquel [...] constitue une tendance généralisé du genre”. (our translation)

117 *Ibid.* “... refus d'aller plus loin”. (our translation)

118 *Ibid.* p. 158. “...lutte immémoriale, ou la répétition des exploits d'ancêtres”. (our translation)

119 *Ibid.* p. 155. “... les splendeurs de la nature préservée mais surtout” [...] “du rapport de l'homme à celle-ci, fantasmé sur le mode d'une union d'avant la séparation dont nous serions aujourd'hui les victimes; c'est donc de sacré qu'il est question, sous une forme fondamentale: l'inscription de l'homme dans le monde comme par enchantement”. (our translation)

120 Chaillan, Marianne. *Harry Potter à l'École de la Philosophie*. Ellipses, 2015, p. 110. (our translation)

“L'incroyable succès de la saga *Harry Potter*, que nous rappelions en introduction, a eu pour effet une contagion de l'univers de la fiction dans le monde réel.”

121 Warner Bros. Studio Tour Hollywood, “*The Wizarding World: Harry Potter & Fantastic Beasts Exhibit*”, 2018, <https://www.wbstudiotour.com/wizarding-world>.

contributes to the extension of J.K Rowling franchise, and may be conceived as a means to make money, more than a liminal space between fiction and reality. Fictive reality and fiction are juxtaposed in this work as shown by the narrative scheme of the movie starting in the muggle world, presenting disruptions and denouement, and ending in the muggle world once again. Following Marianne Chaillan's words, we could say that neither fiction nor reality are annihilated by one another, and therefore, “those two worlds do not belong to separate realities! They co-exist.”<sup>122</sup>.

If *Fantastic Beasts* could be considered as a fictional work which “processes meant to create credibility and verisimilitude ... points out its nature of filmic illusion”<sup>123</sup>, it is on the whole to be conceived as a fantastic media appealing to imagination and unrestrained credulity from its audience, but also appealing to accept magic in mundane places.

### **I. 3. b) The Epic feeling<sup>124\*</sup>**

*Fantastic Beasts* oscillates between fantastic and fantasy but could also be considered as epic, as defined by Sarah Hatchuel, is epic: “a story of a vast historical sweep, full of extraordinary and/or legendary events in which the hero fights against huge, contrary forces, and eventually comes out winning”<sup>125</sup>. Newt Scamander wise and somehow outcast perceptions concerning the harmless status of the fantastic beasts and his strategic foresight in finding the truth about the real identity of Gellert Grindelwald<sup>126</sup> give him the status of hero. The camera dolly shot following Newt's path looking at Graves turning into Grindelwald supports this. Thus, Newt's behavior enables the course of the story and of the wizarding history to change, which matches Hatchuel's remarks: “the hero actions' always seem to be able to modify the course of history”<sup>127</sup>. Another feature of the epic dimension that can be found in the film is its “dynamism and expansion”<sup>128</sup>. Dynamism first, through the film cinematic, which presents the audience with vast sweeping camera movements, tilts up and tilts down (as when Jacob enters Newt's case<sup>129</sup>), and through the characters' gestures when

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122 Chaillan, Marianne. *Op. Cit.* p. 115. “...ces deux mondes ne sont pas dans deux réalités différentes ! Ils coexistent”. (our translation)

123 Hatchuel, Sarah. *Op. Cit.* p. 85.

124 *Ibid.* pp. 77-85.

\* Hatchuel's expression.

125 *Ibid.* pp. 77.

126 *Fantastic Beasts*. Time 1:44:52-1:45:29.

127 Hatchuel, Sarah. *Op. Cit.* p. 77.

128 *Ibid.* p. 78.

129 *Fantastic Beasts*. Time 00:35:15 – 00- 35:38

fighting for example<sup>130</sup>. Dynamism and expansion meet in the relation to time expressed in the film through "flashbacks", "slow motion", and "ellipsis"<sup>131</sup>. The audience members are thus brought to follow a diegetic time path different from the one they evolve in while watching the film: going from emotion triggered through the evocation of the past<sup>132</sup>, through contemplation in slow motion<sup>133</sup>, to compression of time in ellipsis<sup>134</sup>. All those cinematographic processes interweave so as to construct the whole plot timeline. Cross cuttings enable the viewers to follow simultaneous actions taking place at the same time. For example, the scene when Newt and Tina are captured in the Macusa and Queenie and Jacob arrive to rescue them<sup>135</sup> is cross cut through the symbol of the door, which conveys an image of continuity if not simultaneity in movement (Newt and Tina run while Queenie and Jacob are seen walking). The epic dimension is enhanced by cinematographic devices, especially when dealing with the hero's sufferings, picturing him "isolated in vast sets or infinite landscape [...] through the use of backwards movements of the camera"<sup>136</sup> so as to emphasize a feeling of loneliness. This is what happens when the audience first meet Newt Scamander, sitting alone on the boat deck bench, as the camera moves downwards and forwards<sup>137</sup> to focus on him. The vastness of the set has been presented just before, when the boat gradually fills up the screen. Loneliness is also conveyed when Newt is presented ready to fight, alone on a skyscraper roof, as the camera moves towards him<sup>138</sup>, from a large angle view. Other epic themes are dealt with throughout the film such as the threat of "war" between muggles and wizards demanding a strict discipline to hide any trace of magic from mundane people. As for the hierarchy theme, it can be noticed in the Macusa social organization, between the Aurors and subordinated positions<sup>139</sup>. "Violence"<sup>140</sup> is not left apart and is expressed and enhanced by computer-generated images, the absence of fixedness in shots and magnitude in the actors' gestures (facts illustrated by the fight scene against the Obscurial in the subway<sup>141</sup>).

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130 *Fantastic Beasts*. Time 1:09:30-1:10:45.

131 Hatchuel, Sarah. *Op. Cit.* pp. 78.

132 *Fantastic Beasts*. Time 1:07:39-1:07:27.

133 *Fantastic Beasts*. Time 0:48:32-0:48:45.

134 *Fantastic Beasts*. Time 1:06:56-1:54:20.

135 *Fantastic Beasts*. Time 1:10:18-1:10:31.

136 Hatchuel, Sarah. *Op. Cit.* pp. 79, 80.

137 *Fantastic Beasts*. Time 0:02:06-0:02:15.

138 *Fantastic Beasts*. Time 1:33:05-1:33:10.

139 Hatchuel, Sarah. *Op. Cit.* pp. 42, 43.

140 *Ibid.* p. 78.

141 *Fantastic Beasts*. Time 1:42:10-1:42:39.

On the whole, *Fantastic Beasts* does appeal to the epic feeling as defined by Hatchuel. Cinematographic devices enhance themes such as war, violence, and loneliness so as to trigger feelings and emotions in the audience, but also add to the definition of the epic and heroic status of Newt Scamander. *Fantastic Beasts* is resolutely an epic movie as “So much as epic theatre is designed to the audience's reason, epic movies are meant to create emotions”<sup>142</sup>. The epic feeling also appeals to the audience's reason. Constantly travelling between computer-generated images, scale models prop, outside landscapes and inside buildings, the audience might also doubt the epic dimension of the facts and actions conveyed through the film.

### **I. 3. c) The studios:**

Filming in studios allows for a better control of the “stylistic expression”<sup>143</sup> meant to be conveyed. The extreme degree of authenticity the creative team managed to construct may unsettle the audience as regards the film's genres. Members of the audience can either accept or reject the reality proposed. But skepticism has been considered by the creative team, who, by collecting historical data and getting inspiration from actual buildings, strengthened the reality of this illusive world.

The film was shot in the same studios where the Harry Potter films were produced, in Leavesden, London. Given that few of New York's buildings dating from the 1920s survived until now, filming in the studios has been an evidence for the creative team and the directors. Cinematic props of the buildings shot in the film are either reproductions or inspired constructions of real buildings that production designer Stuart Craig went to visit<sup>144</sup>, so as to grasp a complete and more accurate vision of the 1920s urban atmosphere. This is the case for the Steen National Bank, created in real scale and magnified thanks to computer-generated images. The exterior is inspired from the New York County National Bank dating from 1907 with its stone facade<sup>145</sup>, as well from the Tweed Courthouse of Manhattan, which the entrance flight of steps replica served for many scenes in the film<sup>146</sup>.

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142 Hatchuel, Sarah. *Op. Cit.* p. 77.

143 *Ibid.* p. 81.

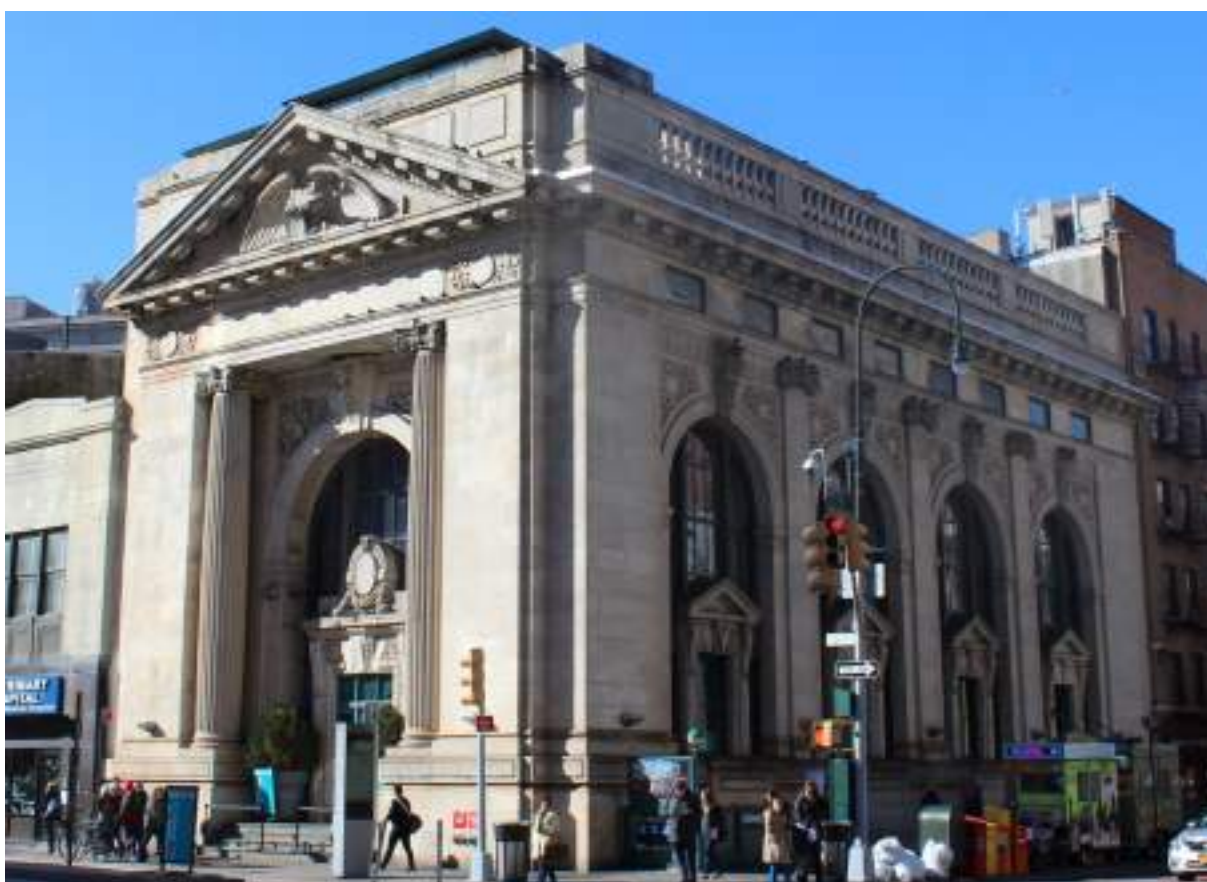
144 Salisbury, Mark. *Op. Cit.* p. 41.

145 Rowling, JK. “The New York that shaped Fantatsic Beasts”. *Pottermore*,  
<https://www.pottermore.com/features/the-New-York-that-shaped-fantastic-beasts>.

146 Salisbury, Mark. *Op. Cit.* p. 40.



*Illustration 9: Steen National Bank concept art.*  
[https://harrypotter.fandom.com/wiki/Steen\\_National\\_Bank?file=Steen\\_National\\_Bank\\_concept\\_art.png](https://harrypotter.fandom.com/wiki/Steen_National_Bank?file=Steen_National_Bank_concept_art.png).



*Illustration 10: Coline Cumond. New York County National Bank, New York, Nov. 2018.*

The Blind Pig Bar is also highly authentic and is based on the 124 Old Rabbit Club, on McDougal street in New York.<sup>147</sup> During the 1920s, the emblematic speakeasies of this era were nicknamed “blind pigs”<sup>148</sup>. Its underground location echoes its illegal dimension while the low ceiling and the dripping walls with stained joints enhance the uncanny atmosphere. According to Stuart Craig, the walls covered in glazed tiles add to the vaulted atmosphere, like in the New York subway<sup>149</sup>. The path to enter the Blind Pig Bar is also inspired from reality: back in the days, people needed a password to enter the place<sup>150</sup>. In the wizarding world, a magical poster is affixed to the bar door. The pictured woman, life-like, checks the identity of the newcomer, and admission is granted if the visitor is recognized as a wizard.



*Illustration 11: Entrance to the Blind Pig Bar. Screenshot from the movie, 01:14:23.*



*Illustration 12: Concealed entrance to the Blind Pig Bar. Screenshot from the movie, 01:14:25.*

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147 Rowling, J.K. “The New York that shaped Fantastic Beasts”, *Pottermore*, 2016.

<https://www.pottermore.com/features/the-New-York-that-shaped-fantastic-beasts>.

148 S. Jan and Ceyana A. “Prohibition and the Speakeasies”. *History of the Roaring Twenties*, 10 June 2010,

<http://theroaringtwentieshistory.blogspot.com/2010/06/prohibition-and-speakeasies.html>.

149 Rowling, JK. “Step inside a 1920s New York City speakeasy”. *Pottermore*,

<https://www.pottermore.com/news/step-inside-fantastic-beasts-1920s-New-York-speakeasy-blind-pig>.

150 S. Jan and Ceyana A. *Op. Cit.* <http://theroaringtwentieshistory.blogspot.com/2010/06/prohibition-and-speakeasies.html>.





Illustration 13: Coline Cumond. Entrance to the 124 Old Rabbit Club, New York, 2018.

If shooting a film in studios allows a better “creative largesse”<sup>151</sup>, the audience is immersed in a world whose main features have been reconstructed. Craig declares – talking about the set: “It was very, very versatile and needed to be to sustain a whole movie”<sup>152</sup>. This proves the set, and by extension the studio, to be at the core of the movie, not only in a materialistic manner, but as a space where reality and imagination can properly mix. *Fantastic Beasts* corresponds to the main narrative scheme of classical Hollywood movies”<sup>153</sup> such as the centralization on a character's mind, actions and nature from which the plot is developed, as well as massive catastrophes affecting the story<sup>154</sup>. The notions of adaptation and transgression of reality both depend on the conventions and expectations imposed on the audience by the studio but also on the advantages filming in studio grant the creative team in (re)constructing the world they imagine. The spatial and temporal dichotomy - the reception in the 2010s of a 1926 set work – is reduced by means of universal patterns punctuating the film such as politics, war, emancipation and social integration but also thanks to motifs originating from the *Harry Potter* saga. The multimediality of *Fantastic Beasts* eases its reception by the audience, leaving room for imagination even if a fantastic fictive world featuring an epic narrative is already imposed by the film.

151 Salisbury, Mark. *Op. Cit.* p. 41.

152 *Ibid.*

153 Bordwell, David, and Kristin Thompson. *Film Art: an Introduction*. McGraw-Hill, 2013, p. 98.

154 *Ibid.*

Adaptation and transgression are present on the social scale but also on the cinematographic and historical ones. The narrative is propelled by the adaptation of characters to new places asking them to somehow suspend their disbelief by transgressing the reality they take for granted. Plus, the recreation of the city in which muggles and wizards cohabit asked for a high degree of authenticity and historical adaption for the audience to picture it as potentially existing but it also required transgression, for the mundane to be contaminated by the fantastic and magic features, on which the film sequel is grounded.

## **II) Cinematographic aesthetics serving historical authenticity.**

Adaptation and transgression are not only to be seen in the sets but also in the framing and the props, serving the historical authenticity of the film. First, the costumes add to the aesthetic of the movie and grant specific features to the protagonists -both reducing and empowering the characters when studied together with framing methods. Framing is crucial when focusing on one of the most important historical notion of the time: segregation. But is this depiction really accurate? Finally, one last example of historical authenticity pictured in the movie can be found in the organization of the society, in its mundane as well as in its magical form.

### **1. Costumes and Framing**

Costumes add to the aesthetic and historical authenticity of the movie but are also significant because they assign specific features to the characters, a process reinforced by choices made when it comes to the framing of the protagonists.

#### **II. 1. a) Costumes' symbolism**

“-- NEWT SCAMANDER, weatherbeaten, wiry, wearing an old blue overcoat. Besides him rests a battered brown leather case.”<sup>155</sup>. This is how Newt Scamander is first introduced to the readers in the script. This description highlights the care given in the film to costumes and accessories. From the start, the old coat and the battered suitcase present Newt as a traveller if not as an adventurer, a fact evidenced by his “very tattered British passport”<sup>156</sup>. Newt's costume is important in the *mise-en-scène* since the color blue helps distinguish the main character from the neutral brownish background he is standing in and differentiates him from the travellers on the boat wearing diverse tones of brown, grey and beige<sup>157</sup>, the standard fashion colors of the time<sup>158</sup>. The main piece of his outfit is made of wool, besides his waistcoat is a mix of orange wool and linen, and he wears brown leather shoes. All these materials are comfortable materials allowing Newt to travel and work at his ease<sup>159</sup>. The costume was custom-made by costume designer Coleen Atwood for the actor Eddie Redmayne to fully immerse himself in his character while running, walking and crouching.

<sup>155</sup> *Screenplay*. p. 2.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid*. p. 4.

<sup>157</sup> *Fantastic Beasts*. Time 00:01:50-00:02:07.

<sup>158</sup> De Buzzaccarini, Vittoria. *Men's Coats*. Zanfi Editori, 1994, p. 49.

<sup>159</sup> Salisbury, Mark. *Op. Cit.* p. 18.



*Illustration 14: Newt Scamander,  
<http://www.stickpng.com/fr/img/films/eddie-redmayne/eddie-redmayne-dans-le-role-de-newt-scamander>.*

Newt's petrol blue coat also serves the historical authenticity of the film. It borrows the sleeves reverses, the collar lapels joining in a wide point and its one button stitching from the London's aristocratic city jacket of the 1920s<sup>160</sup> and its knee length and wool material from Prince George V who popularized the skirted English coat<sup>161</sup>. The costume designer Coleen Atwood gave more skirt to the coats and cloaks of the characters so that they catch the air and give more fluidity to their movements and counterbalance the heavy materials of the era<sup>162</sup>. The color blue, when applied to suits, was considered suiting all occasions for men of this era in London<sup>163</sup>, and thus, by extension, we could say that Newt's blue coat is made to suit him in all his travels, any time of the year. More than just having graphic qualities, Newt's outfit propels the narrative from the start, symbolically presenting him as a traveller, a “field worker”, but also as an elegant European, and this, even before the audience is properly acquainted with his British magizoologist status.

The same goes for Jacob's costume. He is “wearing an ill-fitting suit and carrying a battered brown leather case”<sup>164</sup>. Here, the ill-fitting costume stands for Jacob's struggle to reinsert himself in American society, trying to adapt to the economic standards after a long time spent abroad. The grayish tones of his costume contrast with Newt's blue coat and show that Jacob belongs to the city. He is presented as struggling to get his things together, which makes him unattractive compared to the self-made men of the 1920s. The fact that Jacob has so little money that his tuxedo is second hand (his jacket and waistcoat do not suit his corpulence whereas his trousers are baggy) shows the standardization of fashion during the 1920s. Given that custom-made goods were more expensive, standardization made fashion more affordable but this led to an ongoing problem of adjustment in sizing<sup>165</sup>. The character of Jacob could also be an example of the soldiers coming back from war and asking for ready-made “civilian clothing”<sup>166</sup> so as to assimilate in American society again.

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160 *Ibid.* p. 51.

161 *Ibid.*

162 Miller, Julie. “The Magical Costume Clues You Missed in *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*.” *HWD*, Vanity Fair, 16 February 2017, [www.vanityfair.com/hollywood/2017/02/fantastic-beasts-and-where-to-find-them-costumes](http://www.vanityfair.com/hollywood/2017/02/fantastic-beasts-and-where-to-find-them-costumes).

163 De Buzzaccarini, Vittoria. *Op. Cit.* p. 52.

164 *Screenplay*. p. 11.

165 De Buzzaccarini, Vittoria. *Op. Cit.* p. 47.

166 *Ibid.* p. 48.



*Illustration 15: Jacob Kowalski, <http://www.stickpng.com/img/at-the-movies/fantastic-beasts/jacob-kowalski>.*

His poverty is also emphasized by the fact he owns no coat to fight the cold in New York, in winter<sup>167</sup>. Jacob is a dual character in the sense that he both stands for the poor immigrant dressed in grey overalls while working in the factory, but also for the man motivated to take over in business, following the trend of the dinner jacket even if his jacket does not lay gracefully<sup>168</sup>. The battered leather case serves as a pattern punctuating the narrative, connecting Jacob and Newt before they actually meet. The leather case pattern is also

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167 Salisbury, Mark. *Op. Cit.* p. 24.

168 De Buzzaccarini, Vittoria. *Op. Cit.* pp. 48-49.

mentioned at the end of the script: “He [Jacob] carries a battered leather case.”<sup>169</sup>. In the *mise-en-scène*, the leather case is used as a transitional object from Newt to Jacob before they make their farewells. It is also in a way a common prop analogically linking reality and magic if we respectively look at Jacob and Newt.

Two other costumes serving the historical authenticity of the movie are the “stunning flapper party dresses”<sup>170</sup> worn by Queenie and Tina when entering the Blind Pig bar<sup>171</sup>.



*Illustration 16: Queenie's and Tina's dresses,*  
<https://www.warnerbros.com/news/articles/2016/12/08/jk-rowlings-wizarding-world-exhibit-opens/>.

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169 *Screenplay*. p. 148.

170 *Screenplay*. p. 189.

171 *Fantastic Beasts*. Time: 01:14:25 – 01:14:42.

The way the two sisters are changing clothes before entering the speakeasy might stand for the sudden and ongoing emancipation of women of this time. With a flick of their wands, their day wear transforms from head to toe into flapper dancing dresses. The computer-generated images add sense to the scene here, in allowing the female protagonists to change into clothes which reflect their own personality at will. The long shot gradually closing up towards Tina and Queenie as well as the omnipresent motif of the bricks visually shrinking the space and the staging of the actresses in a stairwell leading below ground level give the scene an oppressive if not claustrophobic atmosphere while also presenting the scene as intimate. Intimacy is reinforced in the scene by the actresses looking straight up at Jacob and Newt, and in a way at the viewers through perceptual subjectivity. The historically authentic dresses being presented through the means of computer-generated images make the costumes play an important part in bringing together realism in their conception and transgression in their sudden apparition. Tina's straight black voile, mid-length dress ending in a slight drape, embroidered with grayish pearls around the collar and beads and sequin motifs on the main part with the low V shaped neckline is typical of the eveningwear of the 1920s<sup>172</sup>. The only fanciful transgression might be lattice crossings adorning the neckline which can also be seen on Queenie's dress. On the whole, this dress suits Tina's personality through its dark color and simple shape, given that Tina is discreet and gracefully brings together masculine and feminine styles.



*Illustration 17: KATHERINE WATERSTON as Tina and ALISON SUDOL as Queenie in Warner Bros. Pictures', <https://www.warnerbros.com/movies/fantastic-beasts-and-where-find-them/#gallery>.*

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172 Fiell, Charlotte, and Emmanuelle Dirix. *Fashion Sourcebook 1920s*. Fiell, 2012, pp. 343, 404, 425, 445.



Queenie's dress is way more eccentric. It is pale pink and seems to be made of an underneath crepe dancing gown with a silk trimmed neckline and topped with a voile embroidered with shiny beads. The tulle frill short sleeves and the pleating and drape of the skirt give the dress an angelic aspect which corresponds to Queenie's kind and caring disposition. The same goes for her other outfits, delicacy and cliché femininity are rendered through lace, velvet, satin and pink color.



*Illustration 18: ALISON SUDOL as Queenie in Warner Bros. Pictures', <https://www.warnerbros.com/movies/fantastic-beasts-and-where-find-them/#gallery>.*



*Illustration 19: ALISON SUDOL as Queenie in Warner Bros. Pictures', <https://www.warnerbros.com/movies/fantastic-beasts-and-where-find-them/#gallery>.*

Tina is often presented through medium shots which emphasize her part in action sequences. She is first introduced through shoulder shots which affirm her discreet and pragmatic disposition with the support of her grey trench coat from which she can lift the collar to hide when investigating.



*Illustration 20: Porpentina Goldstein, <http://www.stickpng.com/img/at-the-movies/fantastic-beasts/porpentina-goldstein>.*

The same goes for Credence Barebone, who “appears nervous and troubled”<sup>173</sup>, standing “with his head bowed, embarrassed, nervous”<sup>174</sup> because he “doesn't like crowds”<sup>175</sup>. His status as an outcast is emphasized by his costume: a worn-out black corduroy suit jacket mismatched with a woolen brown waistcoat, striped and too short trousers and a rigid homburg ornamented by a tone-on-tone band. Credence appears as “sealed” in his costume, which adds to his withdrawn attitude. A clear play on heights in picturing this character can be noticed such as with the traveling forward or downward shots<sup>176</sup>, which propel the narrative as it recalls the scene presenting him as an Obscurus at the end of the movie. Credence is mainly presented through profile shots, which imply that viewers have to focus on his stooped shoulders, a trait which exemplifies restrained behavior. This filmic specificity encloses the character in his awkwardness and leaves little room to evolution, focusing through close shots on his internal emotions and psychology.



*Illustration 21: EZRA MILLER as Credence Barebone in Warner Bros. Pictures', <https://www.warnerbros.com/movies/fantastic-beasts-and-where-find-them/#gallery>.*

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173 *Screenplay*.p. 13.

174 *Ibid.* p. 87.

175 *Ibid.* p. 69.

176 *Fantastic Beasts*. Time 00:30:51-00:31:30; 1:11:46-1:13:20.

The relationship between Credence and Percival Graves is finely defined through filming specifics. While Credence is pictured in a position of inferiority, Graves's character is given more scale, being pictured as an authoritative figure, as we can see in these specific passages:

“The Woolworth building looms ahead. CREDENCE glances towards it with a hint of longing. [...] CREDENCE spots him [...] moves across the street towards GRAVES, barely looking where's going...”<sup>177</sup>.

“CREDENCE stands, head bowed, at the end of a dimly lit alleyway. GRAVES joins him, moving in very close...”<sup>178</sup>,

“GRAVES Apparates in the alleyway. [...] his tone and tone and manner urgent, forceful”.



*Illustration 22: COLIN FARRELL as Graves in Warner Bros. Pictures, <https://www.warnerbros.com/movies/fantastic-beasts-and-where-find-them/#gallery>.*

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177 *Screenplay*. pp. 86, 87.

178 *Ibid.* p. 87.

Those passages shape the character of Graves and assert him as a figure of power therefore highlighting Credence's outcast and restrained attitude. While Credence wears an ill-fitting and over-worn tuxedo, Graves wears a well-fitted long coat lined in cashmere which matches his scarf and appears very elegant. The shoulder-pieces add to his stoic stature when pictured “watching CREDENCE intently”<sup>179</sup> and the split armholes give width to the character's “urgent and forceful manner”<sup>180</sup>. These features are emphasized through low angle shots, highlighting Graves' manly and confident gait. More than portraying Graves as forceful and Credence as powerless, those scenes also question the characters' behavior and the induced hierarchy therefore created.

On the whole costumes and cinematography, when woven together, leave little room for the characters to emancipate from what they represent. If the costumes are historically authentic, the filming specifics chosen to present each character leave no room for emancipation or transgression of their role, forbidding any evolution in the characters.



*Illustration 23: DAN FOGLER as Jacob, KATHERINE WATERSTON as Tina, ALISON SUDOL as Queenie and EDDIE REDMAYNE as Newt in Warner Bros. Pictures' fantasy adventure "FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM," a Warner Bros. Pictures release.*  
<https://www.warnerbros.com/movies/fantastic-beasts-and-where-find-them/#gallery>.

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179 *Ibid.* p. 86.

180 *Ibid.* p. 180.

## II. 1. c) Gender Transgression

Through costumes and framing, femininity is associated with Queenie, propriety with Credence, eagerness for social insertion with Jacob and charisma and power with Graves. Nevertheless, Newt and Tina - though characterized by their respective foreignness and pragmatism, offer a transgressive vision of femininity and masculinity. Along with other characters, their “transgressivity” might be considered as “fake” or “forced” in the sense that, each character being associated with specific values, giving outstanding roles to some protagonists may just fill up the gap regarding the emptiness or impossible evolution of others. If the “clichés” embodied by the characters belong to the internal cycle of the story, the apparition of transgressive femininity and masculinity seem to better serve the historicity of the movie.

Transgression is mainly presented in the movie through the portraits of women. Even if not explicitly said, women are not only working to have an occupation but for a living. Between 1920 and 1930 the percentage of “employed married women” enrolled in labor force expanded from 23 to 29%.<sup>181</sup>. If women managed to take over the labor scene, no drastic change occurred and by the end of the decade, “It was a difficult distinction, acknowledging women in their traditional domestic role, but simultaneously crediting them with more extensive capabilities”<sup>182</sup>. This ambiguous status is pictured as we enter the Goldsteins' apartment: Tina is coming back from work while Queenie is taking care of the house, doing the laundry and cooking. Tina thus corresponds to “...that upper-middle-class minority of women who entered business and the profession”<sup>183</sup>, but who were still conscripted to the lower scales of the professional world being “typists, clerks, or salespersons”<sup>184</sup>. She becomes the “magical” equivalent of a typist, huddling in the underground of the Macusa, pushing paperwork at the wand permit office, as a metaphor for her inferior position. Her former position as an auror thus illustrates the rise and fall of women empowerment pictured in the ephemeral emancipation of the new generation of feminists that succeeded its Victorian counterpart<sup>185</sup>, as women were gradually associated to household one more time. As for Queenie, she incarnates a flapper, inbetween those two generations of feminists, behaving

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181 Filene, Peter G. *Him/Her/Self Sex Roles in Modern America*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986, p. 237.

182 *Ibid.* p. 127.

183 *Ibid.* p. 121.

184 *Ibid.*

185 *Ibid.* p. 129. “As the decade turned, people were talking about a drift back to home”.

with grace and “sentimentality”<sup>186</sup>; traits of character that were asked of women during the Victorian era even if she also illustrates the “sexual revolution”<sup>187</sup> and liberation of women going on in the twenties. She is the one initiating the kiss in the farewell scenes<sup>188</sup>. The Goldstein sisters depict the ambiguous evolution of feminism and of the notion of femininity going on in the twenties; Tina by rebelling “against ladyhood in the name of economic independence”<sup>189</sup> and Queenie by both managing her femininity and desires along with house chores and her career. By doing so, Queenie acknowledges her need for a masculine counterpart, which is rendered in the 1920s’ spirit: women would need “support from their male counterparts before they could succeed in transforming the roles of sexes”<sup>190</sup>. The status and empowerment of women in the 1920s being ambiguous, the Goldstein sisters illustrate the transgressive features each generation of feminists reproached one another.

Men as well as women witnessed changes in their status during the Roaring Twenties. Jacob and Newt have both fought in the war and the soldiers coming home had to acknowledge the downfall of the “glorious ideals”<sup>191</sup> they had been promised. Masculinity thus had to be redefined and men had to (re)construct their identity. Work came as an ideal that would be a way to prove their value<sup>192</sup>. Business was roaring but as exemplified by the character of Jacob, most employees worked for “someone else’s business”<sup>193</sup> and if men were still given their breadwinners status, few were independent. Jacob’s readings (*Make Good In Business* by W. Linden, and *Success in the Urban Jungle*) testify to the struggle work represented for men, and are somehow reminiscent of the advisory books of Horacio Alger on how to succeed in the business sphere<sup>194</sup>. If women of the new generation had lost their cooperative spirit, they join men in their individualistic way of life. Even if Jacob somehow helps the redefinition of masculinity, he is still the figure of the man coming back from the war and trying to fit into society. Transgression in reshaping masculinity comes from the character of Newt. He is not working to prove his value to the world or doing it just for a living but because he enjoys it. The scene<sup>195</sup> where he feeds the occamys might seem trivial

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186 *Ibid.* p. 132.

187 *Ibid.* p. 131.

188 *Fantastic Beast*. Time 1:52:41-1:53:03.

189 Filene, Peter G. *Op. cit.*, p. 132.

190 *Ibid.* p. 135.

191 *Ibid.* p. 138. “That tone typified the war stories of the twenties: saddened and cynical, tales of poor little tragedies rather than glorious ideals...”.

192 *Ibid.* p. 138.

193 *Ibid.* p. 140.

194 *Ibid.* p. 141.

195 *Fantastic Beasts*. Time 0:40:15-0:40:20.

and comic but is relevant to Newt's sensibility. He lets his feelings out when it was highly discouraged to mingle work and emotions<sup>196</sup>. By working in the open, on his own and in his own business, Newt stands out when men were usually working “not in the open air ... but inside the walls of someone else's factory... among hundreds or even thousands of other employees”<sup>197</sup>.

On the whole, might it be through the use of specific costumes or framing devices, the aesthetic of the movie serves its historical authenticity. Costumes support the characters' traits highlighted by specific framings. If certain framing motifs and outfits seem to enclose the characters into clichés presenting them as unable to evolve, this might be to better express the difficult situation men and women were facing in the 1920s and the impact the delimitation of masculinity and femininity had on the definition of their identity and to better picture that manhood, womanhood, feminism and masculinity were in the 1920s still trying to be defined on an ambiguous history of delimitation of genres. By injecting some transgressive features into the characters which points out to their moral and normalized counterparts, the creators thus reinforce the historical authenticity of the movie. An atmosphere of sexual segregation might be perceived in the movie because of this lack of sexual and gender delimitations. But more than just picturing sexual segregation, *Fantastic Beasts* pictures a segregative and segregated society.

## 2. Segregation

If sex roles are sometimes pictured as ambiguous and transgressive, the majority of figures in power in *Fantastic Beasts* are men. Women are delegated to lower ranks and sexual segregation is therefore tangible. Yet, harmony seems to run the magical world, with Seraphina Picquery at the head of the Macusa but the movie features a number of instances of segregation: might it be from the ethnic prism or the social one through the questions of beliefs and the notion of belonging. These divisions could be explained by the “growing sense of social disorientation”<sup>198</sup> that occurred during the 1920s, as a way for citizens to protect their individuality and identity.

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196 Filene, Peter G. *Op. Cit.* p. 141. “No worker should ever get the notion that work is play, that he should do a thing only when he likes it, or that he should waste time analyzing his emotions at all.”

197 *Ibid.* p. 140.

198 Palmer, Niall A. *The Twenties in America: Politics and History*. Edinburgh University Press, 2006, p. 10.



## **II. 2. a) Ethnic and gender division**

The most striking example of ethnic segregation present in the film is the underrepresentation of black people, given that New York held the “country's most famous black community”<sup>199</sup> in the ghetto of Harlem. The casting mimics the “de facto segregation (racial segregation through informal means)”<sup>200</sup> that occurred in the North of the country. It goes even further, denying the “protest movements” for “integration”<sup>201</sup> that resulted in the 1920s from the lack of freedom and recognition granted to black people. Indeed, if the New Salem Philanthropic Society can mirror the fear of communism going on in the country and the protests and unions it generated, nothing is echoing black people's disappointment at the time. Neither is the mixing of “white youths [...] with black”<sup>202</sup> pictured. Seraphina Picquery, the President of the Macusa, is the only instance of a feminine African-American powerful figure in the film.

The only scene where black people and non-caucasian populations are represented is during the international meeting at the Pentagram Office<sup>203</sup>. But still, it does not faithfully represent the multiculturalism of New York. Historically speaking, this scene could be perceived as an echo to the “League of Nations Preparatory Commission” that was first held in 1926 in Geneva<sup>204</sup>. Here, the situation is quite the same: a war between muggles and wizards has already been waged and is threatening to burst again which asks for a peace effort from both the magic and muggle communities. If crucial in the unfolding of the plot as it tells us about the Statute of Secrecy being at its higher emergency level, this scene also sends us back to segregation in the wizarding world: “In 1790, the fifteenth President of MACUSA, Emily Rappaport, instituted a law designed to create total segregation of the wizarding and No-Maj communities”<sup>205</sup>. The protagonists framed in the center of the room symbolically represent a segregated microcosm. Surrounded by wizards from all over the world, the scene opens and closes on a low angle shot, first of Tina alone, then of Tina, Jacob and Newt. A sense of imprisonment is thus palpable through the framing. Tina enters the room in a long, low angle shot with deep depth of field, a frame followed by high and low angle shots of the

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199 Mauk, David, and John Oakland. *Op. Cit.* p. 95.

200 *Ibid.*

201 *Ibid.*

202 Palmer, Niall A. *Op. Cit.* p. 4.

203 *Fantastic Beast*. Time 0:57:39 - 01:00:55.

204 Palmer, Niall A. *Op. Cit.* p. 146.

205 J.K. Rowling. "Rappaports' Law". *Pottermore*, 2016, <https://www.pottermore.com/writing-by-jk-rowling/rappaports-law-en>.

protagonists. Punctuated by tilt shots and close-ups on the characters' faces, the feeling of uncertainty and judgment of the other is increased.

Genders are also set apart. If during this scene, men and women wizard representatives seem to be equally represented, it is not the case in the global unfolding of the narrative. As stated before, Tina and Queenie carry some transgressive values which point to women's emancipation, but Seraphina Picquary appears to be the only woman in political power in the wizarding New York, and the only African-American main protagonist of the movie. From the no-maj side of society, the Shaw family is the politically powerful and influential entity, with no feminine figure at its head.

On the one hand, the film shadows the demands of 1920s' youth who “were the first to push against the barrier of gender, class and race discrimination...”<sup>206</sup>. But by relegating women characters to subordinate roles, it accurately pictures the “relative dormancy of the women's movement between the late 1920s”<sup>207</sup> even though “the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA)” was passed in 1923 “to remove the remain ambiguous inequalities between men and women”<sup>208</sup>. This “relative dormancy” is pictured when we take a closer look at the Macusa President's Aurors in the final scene<sup>209</sup>. Through its framing, this scene proves that the magical world provides more integration and opportunities for women. The long low angle shot picturing the Macusa President standing at the head of her delegates emphasizes her power and aura. The fact that women and men are there, sharing the same position might be a way to denounce the underrepresentation of women in the fictive “real” world but thus, it also calls to consider the salient discrimination between genders but also between muggles and wizards.

*Fantastic Beasts* proposes an unequal reading of genres and ethnic discrimination. Liberty has been taken regarding the ethnic authenticity of the city as black people are underrepresented. Nonetheless, picturing women as Aurors – which is considered as a high-rank position, though numerically inferior, illustrates the binary evolution of womanhood in the 1920s, torn between equality and protectionism.

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206 Palmer, Niall A. *Op. Cit.* p. 4.

207 Mauk, David and John Oakland. *Op. Cit.* . p. 81.

208 *Ibid.* pp. 80-81.

209 *Fantastic Beasts*. Time 01:43:41 - 01:44:27.

## II. 2. b) Beliefs

“Strong ethnic identities” within “tight-knit communities”<sup>210</sup> were created by the waves of immigrants coming from other continents during the twentieth century. Therefore, confronted with the Christian majority, the coexistence of religions resulted in discrimination. Hand in hand with the rise of the Ku Klux Klan (see I. 1. a) ), and the initiation of the Communist regime in Russia, “there was a lot of paranoia in the United States. Not just towards Communists, but all sorts of non-white, non-male, non-Christian entities”<sup>211</sup>. If State and Church had been separated since the 1791 first Amendment of the Bill of Rights<sup>212</sup>, in 1926, Christianity was still dominating the country's politics<sup>213</sup>. In this atmosphere of suspicion, immigrants were thus considered as spreading anti-capitalistic values and a “witch-hunt” originating from “The Justice Department”<sup>214</sup> was conducted in 1920.

In *Fantastic Beasts*, the New Salem Philanthropist Society testifies to the fact that in 1926, suspicion was still on the mind of the citizens. Run by Marylou Barebone, the foundation aims at “saving the American public from the threat of witchcraft”<sup>215</sup>. Echoing the raids conducted by Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer in 1920<sup>216</sup>, this organization grounds the movie in more historical authenticity. If Barebone's noble stated determination is to “fight together for the sake of our children – for the sake of tomorrow!”<sup>217</sup>, her beliefs are more on the side of ostracism. Taking a closer look at the leaflets the children from the foundation are bid to distribute in exchange for meals, the religious basis of the New Salem Philanthropic Society is not to be doubted. A direct allusion to the Bible is made “The eyes of the blind shall be opened.” (Isaiah 35:5<sup>218</sup>) refers to the blindness of the citizens regarding wizards, compared to “sinners”.

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210 Mauk, David and John Oakland. *Op. Cit.* p. 332.

211 Mark Salisbury. *Op. Cit.* p. 103.

212 Mauk, David and John Oakland. *Op. Cit.* p. 339. “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof”.

213 “Timeline: Faith in America”. *God in America*, 2010, <http://www.pbs.org/godinamerica/timeline>.

214 Niall A. Palmer. *Op. Cit.* p.14.

215 J.K Rowling. “What is the Second Salem Church”. *Pottermore*, 2016, <https://www.pottermore.com/short-text/what-is-the-second-salem-church>.

216 Palmer, Niall A. *Op. Cit.* p.13.

217 *Screenplay.* p. 13.

218 *The Holy Bible: Revised Standard Version A.D. 1952.* Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1952, p. 744.

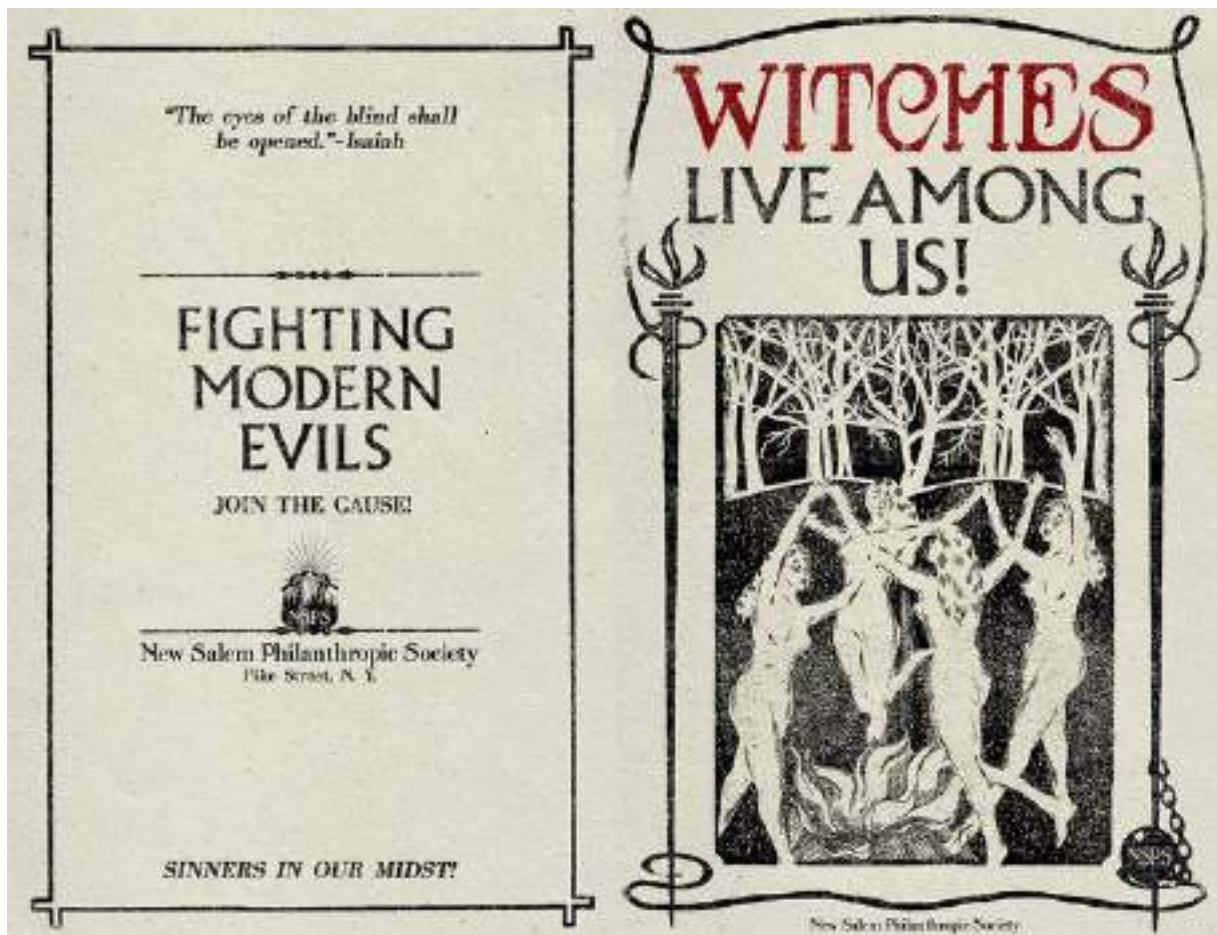


Illustration 24: Cover of additional leaflet from Mark Salisbury. *Op. Cit.* p. 100. Designed by MinaLima.

The New Salem Philanthropist Society's beliefs go against the era's spirit if we follow Palmer's words: "The impatience of the younger generation with the morals and beliefs of the older was palpable throughout the decade"<sup>219</sup>. Barebone is at odds with the equality and freedom the younger generations were asking for, but her propaganda-like motivations echo the patriotism and conservatism of the time.

The New Salem Philanthropist Society also represents the founding values of the United States such as the Puritan's "self-reliance, individualism, independence [...] anti-statism (distrust of government), populism (grass-root activism), [...] destiny and respect for the law"<sup>220</sup>. But the United States also developed "utopianism, liberty, egalitarianism, freedom, opportunity" and "democracy"<sup>221</sup>; thus this institution offers a very backward portrait of the United States. By instilling her beliefs in poor children, Mary Lou Barebone asks them to

<sup>219</sup> Palmer, Niall A. *Op. Cit.* p. 4.

<sup>220</sup> Mauk, David and John Oakland. *Op. Cit.* p. 12.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*

follow her conceptions and is thus “intolerant towards dissenters”<sup>222</sup> as Puritans were. She also favors hard work, commitment and discipline in organizing meetings to entrap new followers to embrace her beliefs and this could be considered as her “material success in life”, given that the “Puritan (Protestant) work ethic is a conditioning factor in a general American ambition to succeed materially in life”<sup>223</sup>. Her hatred of the wizarding community seems to echo the enforcement of extreme Puritan traditions in response to “the influence of Roman Catholic immigration” on American society, such as the “Woman's Christian Temperance Union (1874)” which “tried to stop the use of alcohol and campaigned to maintain the Puritan sabbath”<sup>224</sup>. The only innovative aspect of the New Salem Philanthropist Society would be the fact that children can religiously (or at least socially) identify with it, which mirrors the influence of churches on education that developed during the nineteenth century, giving a “more liberal spirit” to religion, by allowing freedom of worship to younger generations<sup>225</sup>. The Salem Society can also be affiliated with the “influential inner-city missions” that flourished on the east coast and sought to “address new problems (poverty and unemployment)” to a “wealthier and bigger population”<sup>226</sup>. This is the case when Mary Lou tries to serve the common good by warning the population about the existence of wizards and getting the support of the Shaw family<sup>227</sup>.

The New Salem Philanthropic Society is the most talking example of religious discrimination in *Fantastic Beasts*. But more than just standing for a segregative religious association, it has been designed to portray a whole chapter of the history of American beliefs. It is socially archaic for the 1920s as it carries the Puritans' values of the past national history and can be associated with the religious innovations that punctuated the nineteenth century. New Salem Philanthropist Society is historically accurate in picturing religious intolerance towards Communism that flourished in the 1920s. And finally, it is a revealing example of the cyclic nature of history as the values it conveys can be associated with what will become McCarthyism in the 1950s.

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222 *Ibid.* p. 57.

223 *Ibid.* p. 328.

224 *Ibid.* p. 331.

225 *Ibid.* p. 221. “...a more liberal spirit developed during the nineteenth century. Churches became involved in education and created schools and colleges with religious identifications.”

226 *Ibid.* p. 221. “Influential inner-city missions were formed on the east coast that addressed new problems (poverty and unemployment) of a wealthier and bigger population.”

227 *Fantastic Beasts*. Time 00:25:29 – 00:26:04.

## II. 2. c) Regimentation and shame of belonging

*Fantastic Beasts* portrays a segregated society on the ethnic and gender levels but also on the religious one. The Salem Philanthropic Society is an entity dividing the population by social discrimination but it also triggers the question of the notion of belonging. Indeed, by wanting to exterminate the wizarding world, the division between the muggle and the magic world is scaled up, and the two parties have to be strictly regimented to protect a peaceful cohabitation.

The New Salem Philanthropist Society runs one part of the muggle society through hatred. It greatly echoes the Salem trials of 1692 through the media used to recruit followers. The pamphlets are relevant to the historical grounding of this society as it warns the readers of the cyclical nature of History. Alluding to past national history and calling to “save America”, Marylou Barebone is somehow calling for muggle corporatism, a feature of McCarthyism in the 1950s.

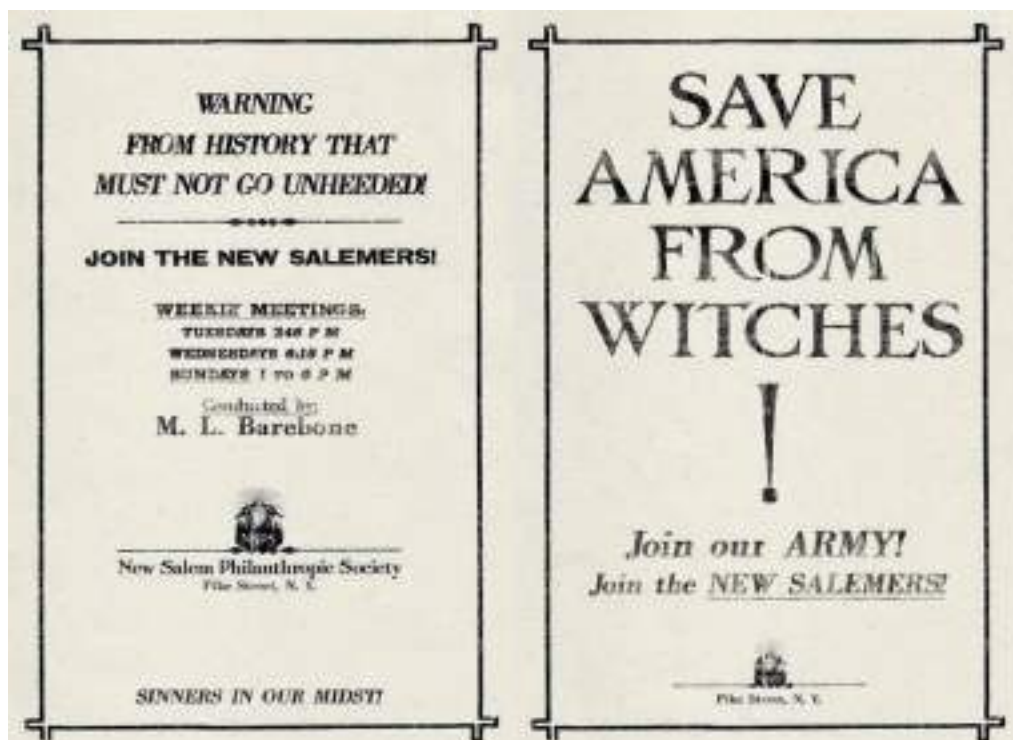


Illustration 25: Inside of additional leaflet from Mark Salisbury. *Op. Cit.* p. 100. Designed by Minalima.

Regarding the notion of gender allegiance, it offers a conservative conception of women by only referring in the pamphlets to “witches” when alluding to the threat wizardry represents. On the cover of the leaflet of *The Case of the Beasts* (See illustration 24), only women are pictured dancing in a circle around a fire. It is at odds with the modernity of the New Salem Philanthropist Society as its leadership is granted to a woman. Even though the society is led by a woman who mainly accuses the wizarding feminine entities to be the crux of the wizarding threat, the patriotic tone of the pamphlets (“Join our Army!”; “Save America”) might be understood as addressed to masculine entities. Indeed, a parallel can be made between the imperative language used in the pamphlets and the 1917 I Want You poster<sup>228</sup> by James Montgomery Flagg, used to recruit American soldiers during the World wars.



*Illustration 26: Coline Cumond. Reproduction of James Montgomery's poster, Arlington Cemetry Welcome Center, Washington, April 2019.*

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228 “I Want You’ Poster”, *The National Museum of American History*, 2015, <https://amhistory.si.edu/militaryhistory/collection/object.asp?ID=548>.

The division between muggles and wizards is thus made sharp and triggers the question of belonging. If the patriotism of muggle citizens is flattered when addressed by the New Salem Philanthropist Society, wizards are confined to hiding and cannot live freely. The daily acts of wizards are strongly regimented through the Statute of Secrecy which aims at “concealing societies, controlling magical beasts, beings and spirits, and making sure wizards don’t blow everyone’s cover”<sup>229</sup>. A dichotomy regarding freedom of life is palpable. Even though the wizarding community is somehow disparaged, the final reconstruction scene of the city by the Aurors<sup>230</sup>, shows wizards as superior in the sense they can manipulate the memories of the muggles. Might it be to keep up with the statute of secrecy and therefore, to selfishly protect the wizarding community, this is done wisely and respectfully whereas in the muggle community, misunderstanding leads to hatred. The Shaw family – apart from Langdon, deny the existence of magic and draw a line between their influential position and the New Salem Philanthropist Society that they do not want to serve. Langdon's perverse interest in magic is only a tool to reacquire some self-esteem from his family. If he managed to prove magic exists, this would give him credibility on the public stage. Langdon is thus a character searching to belong somewhere. The same scheme can be seen in the wizarding world with Credence helping Graves so as to enter the magic community. But this relationship only shows that even in the wizarding world, hierarchical discrimination exists:

“Graves: You're a Squib Credence. [...]”  
You have magical ancestry but no power. [...]  
You're unteachable. [...]  
I'm done with you. [...]”<sup>231</sup>

Wizards and muggles are the two major membership designations. The dichotomy between the two groups is made sharp by the misunderstanding and fear the muggles sense towards the wizards which force them to hide to survive. In both communities, hierarchical discrimination complexifies even more the sense and shame of belonging and the main forms of regimentation in power (the Shaw family, the Salem Society and the Macusa) strengthen that sense of belonging to preserve their own pride.

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229 J.K Rowling. “How do wizards keep themselves so secret from Muggles?”, *Pottermore*, 2016, <https://www.pottermore.com/features/how-do-wizards-keep-themselves-so-secret-from-muggles>.

230 *Fantastic Beasts*. Time 01:48:19 – 01:49:50.

231 *Screenplay*. pp. 228, 229.



*Fantastic Beasts* introduces its audience to highly discriminative and discriminated societies. From the ethnic prism first, by representing the city of New York as mainly caucasian which is not historically correct and thus highly transgressive. For their part, genders are accurately portrayed in their ambiguity regarding equality. Seraphina Picquery standing for the feminine and African-American figure in power translates the progressive emancipation black people and women experienced during the 1920s. On the other hand, by only picturing men as members of the Shaw family, the movie points out to the political patriarchy still considered as the norm during this era. Through the Salem Society, the audience is exposed to a whole chapter of the American history of discrimination on the grounds of worship and beliefs. Hierarchical discrimination, both in the wizarding and in the muggle communities, brings the audience to question the sense(s) - if not the shame(s) – of belonging.

### **3. Society's pyramidal organization**

Social discrimination on the grounds of origins, gender, beliefs or feelings of belonging is only a facet of the wizarding and muggle societies' pyramidal organization. Regimented at the top by authoritative figures, outlaws are still battling among the people and in between stands Newt, an ambiguous leader.

#### **II. 3. a) Authoritative figures**

The pyramidal organization of the wizarding society is centered around the Macusa. At its head is the President Seraphina Picquery, who is in charge of the Aurors and directors of various departments. Percival Graves, director of Magical Security and Auror, works hand in hand with supervisors such as Abernathy, who is in control of subordinates, for instance, the Goldstein sisters. This hierarchical organization can be witnessed in one of the opening scenes when we enter the Macusa<sup>232</sup>. Picquery is having a meeting with Graves and some Aurors – who stand at a respectful distance from her, which from a *mise en scène* point of view, gives more poise to her character. A parallel can be seen: Picquery, lightly leaning on the table and the gradual close-up shot focusing on her face give weight to her words. Graves' inferiority is emphasized by a profile waist shot asking the audience to focus on his position – inelegantly leaning on the table, almost slumped, whereas Picquery takes all the left part of

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<sup>232</sup> *Fantastic Beasts*. Time 00:14:59-00:18:09.

the screen, standing up. The shot-reverse-shot scheme allowing proximity between the two important figures of Picquery (presented in shoulder shot) and Graves (pictured in waist shot) is broken by the wide high angle shot of Tina and Newt, which puts them down as they interrupt Tina's direct superiors. Words have as much relevance as the framing regarding the hierarchy. Tina is addressed by Picquery as "Goldstein" and "Get out" when she greets Picquery with "Ma'am President", as per convenience. Then, the camera brings the audience into the basement with an upside-down shot. Tina is once again addressed by Abernathy as "Goldstein" but Graves greets the supervisor as "Abernathy" and uses the familiar form with Tina. It is hard to know if it is a form of disrespect for his female employees or a sort of paternalism as, contrary to Picquery, he is ready to give Tina a last chance.

In the muggle community, such an organization exists and is pictured partly by the Shaw empire. The Shaw family's political clout stands first thanks to Henry Shaw Senior, a newspaper magnate and also thanks to Henry Shaw Junior, senator of New York. It is a two entity enterprise as Henry Shaw's career has been launched and is promoted by his father's newspapers which sales thanks to the senator's charisma. In the city hall gala dinner scene<sup>233</sup>, the grandeur of the space echoes the influence of the family. The stilted atmosphere shows that the lowest part of the population is evicted from Shaw's aura. Nonetheless, his speech about despicable saloons and private parlors is an allusion to prohibition and grounds the movie in historical authenticity. The meticulous patriotic decoration of the place represents the senator's values. But all this is brought down by the obscurus, which sheds light on the last member of the family: Langdon. Langdon Shaw stands as the family wastrel and is in opposition with his relatives' mores as he believes in magic. By killing the senator and causing mayhem in the city hall, the obscurus appears as a powerful figure if not as an authoritative one. For once, the superiority of wizards over muggles is badly used, and shredding the senator's poster signed with "Shaw America's Future", the obscurus might represent revenge, and rebellion from the neglected part of the population impacted by prohibition and facing difficulties in climbing the social ladder as successful businessmen of the era did. The wizard as well as the muggle community is strongly led by authoritative figures, which trigger a rigid social hierarchy. This hierarchy is shown in the movie by framing choices and discourses. Yet, if many characters indulge in and accept their position, rejection of such a social scheme appears.

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<sup>233</sup> *Fantastic Beasts*. Time 00:54:54 00:57:28.

### **II. 3. b) Outlaws and corruption**

Rejection of the system and corruption are present in every representation of power. Langdon is the corrupted figure of the Shaw family because he accepts the existence of magic. In the wizarding world, the character of Graves who in the end proves to be Gellert Grindelwald shows the limits of the system and the limits of power in the hands of authoritative figures. As an obscurus, Credence is the corrupted figure of the Salem Society, being the very incarnation of what his adoptive mother fights against. Still, the lowest parts of the population prove to have some outlaws and suffer from corruption too.

This is the case in *Fantastic Beasts* with the Blind Pig speakeasy. The “manufacture, sale or transportation of intoxicating liquors” was outlawed “on January 16 1920” by “the Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States”<sup>234</sup>. Even if prohibition was inexistent among the 1920s wizard community<sup>235</sup>, the Blind Pig was a place for illegal gambling and trading. The speakeasy is run by the goblin Gnarlak, a gangster and former informer of Tina. This is a reminder of actual American history as “Prohibition agents [...] were bribed or blackmailed to such an extent that some towns and cities came under the de facto control of criminal gangs”<sup>236</sup>. By denouncing Newt to the Macusa, Gnarlak proves to be corrupted and that he belongs to the down-and-outs of magical New York. The population frequenting the speakeasy is mainly coming from the bottom of the social ladder - as it was the case in the 1920s<sup>237</sup>, maybe because this part of society was the less protected in those hard times with a muggle wizard war underlying and a maximum level of threat exposure. When Tina introduces the audience to the fact that she has “arrested half the people” present in the pub, this shows that working in the upper reaches of the Macusa she did what the authority wanted her to do but this does not prevent her from mingling with the people and in that sense, she is a character bridging social categories, even if corrupted in her way. The “crusade for temperance”<sup>238</sup> - as led by senator Shaw in the movie, presented “prohibition as

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234 Palmer, Niall A. *Op. Cit.*, p. 7.

235 J.K Rowling. “Pottermore’s guide to the twenties: crime and punishment”, *Pottermore*, 2016, <https://www.pottermore.com/features/pottermore-guide-to-the-twenties-crime-and-punishment>.

“No-Majs could, anyway; as we have recently learned, MACUSA did not apply the ban on alcohol to American witches and wizards”.

236 Palmer Niall A. *Op. Cit.*, p. 142.

237 *Ibid.* p. 8. “Immigrants’ as well as ‘labour leaders’ were opposed to Prohibition, “regarding it as a middle-class obsession which ignored the fact that, for the vast majority of factory workers in overcrowded inner cities, the relaxed environment of saloon bars and the soothing effects of alcohol were the only real sources of comfort available.”

238 *Ibid.*

an ill-advised effort to impose Anglo-Saxon, mid-western Puritanism upon the multi-ethnic urban centres of the Northeast.”<sup>239</sup>. In the magical world, its equivalent is to be found in the prohibited trading of magical beasts<sup>240</sup>. Plus, the multi-ethnic wizarding population does meet in the speakeasy: goblins, elves, giants, wizards... as they are not allowed to live freely in broad daylight. American wizards are eager to approach the balance wizards in the United Kingdom have reached with the muggles. In the end, if the outlaws of the wizarding universe meet at the Blind Pig and stand for the lowest part of the social pyramid, the fact that they are somehow rebelling against backlogged laws echoes the balance reached when “the wealthy elites and labouring classes [...] in their distaste for 'legislated morality’” (and) joined a “common cause in the undermining of an unpopular law [prohibition]...”<sup>241</sup>

Both communities presented in *Fantastic Beasts* are pictured as pyramidally organized. A sharp gap divides the outcasts, the outlaws and the elites, which in some cases leads to rebellion if not corruption. The evolution of Newt is interesting in the sense that he starts as an outlaw to gradually become a charismatic leader and prove the innovative legislatures of Great Britain not as dangerous as the wizarding America had thought.

### **II. 3. c) Newt Scamander: from outlaw to a successful leader?**

Newt Scamander claims to be in New York to buy an Appaloosa Puffskein as a birthday present but is officially there to set free a Thunderbird he saved from Egyptian magical wildlife smugglers. Whether we consider the unofficial or the official motif, as we just saw, trading and import of magical creatures in the wizarding New York in 1926 were prohibited and Newt appears as an outlaw. He soon happens to become the leader of the group looking to re-establish normalcy in New York by looking for the creatures. The pivotal moment in the evolution of Newt's status happens when a certain level of intimacy is induced between the protagonists of Newt, Tina, Queenie and Jacob, all gathered in the Goldstein's residence.

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239 *Ibid.* p. 10.

240 J.K Rowling. “The differences we’ve discovered between British and North American wizards”, Pottermore, 2016, <https://www.pottermore.com/features/differences-between-north-american-and-british-wizards>. “Pre 1920s, ghosts, poltergeists and fantastic creatures were considered more of a threat by the American wizard government, as they could expose magic to the wider world.

241 Palmer, Niall A. *Op. Cit.* p. 142.

“TINA: Mr Scamander has lost something, I'm going to help him find it.”<sup>242</sup>

“NEWT: ... And besides, you and I will need to be up early tomorrow morning to find my Niffler, so—”<sup>243</sup>

Through those simple words, *Fantastic Beasts* grounds itself in the scheme of the monomyth<sup>244</sup>. These words prove that Newt acknowledges his leader status but this will also propel him to become the plot's leader. Those words are his last before he invites Jacob to his magical game reserve. “The herald or the announcer of the adventure, therefore, is [...] a ... mysterious figure—the unknown.”<sup>245</sup>. Indeed, Jacob will plunge into the unknown – the magical world, through the barely acquainted and thus mysterious figure of Newt who by setting some magical creatures on the loose “catches” Jacob's “wandering eyes” and “lures” him “away from the frequented path of man”<sup>246</sup>. By introducing a mysterious herald, a hero from daily life “casually strolling”<sup>247</sup> at the bank to a “zone unknown” where he will encounter “fluid and polymorphous beings, [...] superhuman deeds, and impossible delight”<sup>248</sup>, *Fantastic Beasts* adds to its genre affiliation the notion of monomyth. Newt stands out as a polymorphous protagonist. He first appears to be the hero of the plot – he is introduced to the audience as standing aside in the introductory scenes, but is then brought down to the Macusa as an outlaw. When the audience figures he might be the leader, things reverse to grant him the status of spokesman of the story.

What is more, Newt could also be considered as the omniscient figure of the movie. After the “call to adventure”<sup>249</sup> happened, the first thing he gets on with is to heal Jacob. Newt's status is clearly defined if we literally follow Campbell's words:

“The doctor is the modern master of the mythological realm, the knower of all the secrets ways and words of potency. His role is precisely that of the Wise Old Man of the myths and fairy tales whose words assist the hero through the trials and terrors of the weird adventure. He is the one who ... applies healing balm to the

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242 *Screenplay*. p. 80.

243 *Ibid.* pp. 91-92.

244 James Joyce qtd. in Campbell, Joseph, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Pantheon Books, 1949, p. 30.

Definition of the monomyth: “A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man.”

245 *Ibid.* p. 53.

246 *Ibid.* p. 58.

247 *Ibid.*

248 *Ibid.*

249 *Ibid.*

almost fatal wounds, and finally dismisses the conqueror, back into the world of normal life, following the great adventure into the enchanted night.”<sup>250</sup>

By healing Jacob's wound (he has been bitten by a Murtlap<sup>251</sup>), Newt definitely appears as a protective figure, but also as an omniscient one from Jacob's perspective because Newt is the one who will find an answer to all his questions. Regarding the cyclicity of the movie, Newt will bring Jacob back to the normal world while he will continue his journey in the magical one.

If at first, Newt seems to belong to the higher spheres of society thanks to his heroic status, he will quickly be brought down to be considered an outlaw to later return to the status of herald. He is an ever-evolving character who goes against society's pyramidal organization of the wizarding world but also of the muggle one by disturbing its order. If Newt is not the hero of the movie, he is still of great importance as it is through his character that *Fantastic Beasts* reveals its affiliation with the monomyth and through him also that the audience discovers the truly heroic figure of the movie that is Jacob.

In this development focusing on cinematic aesthetics and historical authenticity, we have seen that framing choices play a great part in defining the characters along with the costumes. Hand in hand they serve the historical authenticity of the movie by emphasizing features of the protagonists so that they appear as belonging to 1926 New York, and by sometimes enclosing them into clichés but only to better picture the difficult evolution of genres in the 1920s.

Focusing on the representational potential of the movie, *Fantastic Beasts* appears as authentic in its portrait of social discrimination on the grounds of gender, beliefs and sense of belonging. On the contrary, it offers a biased and transgressive picture of the ethnic multiculturalism of the city of New York in the 1920s.

The movie's depiction of the wizarding and muggle societies emphasizes their pyramidal organization. The authoritative figures live in the higher spheres and do not acknowledge or accept the outlaws and outcasts this organization produced, but this characterization is close to what America believed in during the prohibition era with

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250 *Ibid.* pp. 9-10.

251 *Screenplay. Op. Cit.* p. 52. “The Murtlap lunges forwards, biting Jacob on the neck, sending him crashing through furniture and tumbling to the ground.”

successful businessmen opposed to the working classes. In the middle is the ever-changing character of Newt, who assimilates both to the highest spheres and the outlaws. This character cannot be classified but helps to define the real hero of the story and helps the audience to acknowledge the monomyth features of the movie along with its cinematographic aesthetic devices and historical dimension. Thus, Newt's character will enable us to move on to the question of identity development depicted in the movie.

### **III) Development of identity.**

*Fantastic Beasts'* storyline is constructed in such a way that viewers can grasp the unfolding of the plot in its entirety by witnessing the development of character traits in the protagonists. Those personality traits give agency to the characters. This agency propels the plot on both a social and a cinematographic level. Another significant aspect not to be neglected is the identification process the audience goes through as regards the plot and the characters. The notion of identity is therefore central to the story, but we will see that it can take the form of various misleading instances; from its involvement in the definition of the hero through the scheme of the monomyth, to its impact on the audience.

#### **1. Monomyth dynamic**

As we have seen, society's pyramidal organization leads to a strict classification regarding the customs of the characters but can still be challenged when dealing with identity. For example, Newt's hero-like features fall down when scrutinized: he turns out to be the herald of the story, leaving the status of hero to Jacob. We will first question the notion of identity in its relation to the departure of the hero, then in its relation to initiation and return of the hero, and we will finally focus on the modern reading of the hero that is proposed by *Fantastic Beasts* and thus question its degree of reliability regarding the monomyth.

#### **III. 1. a) Adventure and Departure of the Hero**

Defining a hero is too wide of an endeavor for such a small work, so we will only propose a reading of some facets of Joseph Campbell's definition of the hero in *The Hero with A Thousand Faces* and their counterparts present in the movie. First, the structure defining a hero's path ("separation–initiation–return", the "nuclear unit of the monomyth"<sup>252</sup>) is mirrored in the character of Jacob who goes back to the muggle world after his encounter with the magical one. Through his secondary status, Jacob is also "unrecognized" and "suffers from a symbolical deficiency"<sup>253</sup> that is his lack of a lucrative job in an era of productivity, metaphorically showing that his (re)integration in society is not happening. But, back in the muggle world, he now has the (physical) key to success from the magical world (he can offer

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252 Campbell, Joseph. *Op. Cit.* p. 30.

253 *Ibid.* p. 37.



silver occamy eggshells as collateral to open his bakery<sup>254</sup>). In that sense, he does not achieve a “macrocosmic triumph” nor does he “bring[s] back from his adventures the means for the regeneration of his society as a whole”<sup>255</sup>, but, we can argue he does so on a microcosmic level: being a character evolving in the mundane but also in the magical world, Jacob embodies inbetweenness. He is able to regenerate his own social order by starting over. The story corresponds to the monomyth's dynamic by showing through the character of Jacob some of the features of the hero. Plus, Newt is presented as “the supernatural helper” of “masculine...form”, corresponding to the figure of the “wizard [...] who appears, to supply the amulets and advice that the hero will require”<sup>256</sup>. In physically refusing the call of adventure (Jacob slams Newt in the face with his suitcase)<sup>257</sup>, he shows his fear of the unknown<sup>258</sup> but also that he is way too absorbed in his daily life<sup>259</sup>, or in his own words “dying – in that canning factory... It just crushes the life outta you”<sup>260</sup>. Finally, Jacob answers the call of adventure shot by the herald Newt and thus faces “the first encounter of” his “hero-journey with a protective figure”<sup>261</sup>, as Newt urges himself to heal Jacob, first by trying to oblivate him and then by physically giving him medicine. The dangers the hero has to overcome by crossing the first threshold are embodied by instances of magic and fantastic beasts: the magic contaminating the mundane at the bank and in the encounter with the murlap for example. For her part, Queenie stands for the image of the Goddess, the “incarnation of the promise of perfection [...] young and beautiful”<sup>262</sup>: “Blonde QUEENIE, the most beautiful girl ever to don witches' robes is standing... JACOB is thunderstruck”.<sup>263</sup> She is also the one who will facilitate Jacob's assimilation to the wizarding world<sup>264</sup> by introducing him to new instances of

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254 *Screenplay*. p. 273. “Newt (V.O.) Dear Mr Kowalski ... Please take these Occamy eggshells as collateral for your bakery”.

255 Campbell, Joseph. *Op. Cit.* p. 28.

256 *Ibid.* p. 72.

257 *Screenplay*. p. 29. “Jacob takes the opportunity, seizes his case, and swings it violently at Newt, who is knocked to the ground”.

258 Campbell, Joseph. *Op. Cit.* pp. 77-78. “...the hero goes forward in his adventure until he comes to the “threshold guardian” at the entrance of the zone of magnifies power. [...] Beyond them is darkness, the unknown, and danger...”.

259 *Ibid.* p. 59. ““Often in actual life, and not infrequently in the myths and popular tales, we encounter the dull case of the call unanswered; for it is always possible to turn the ear to other interests. [...] Walled in boredom, hard work, or “culture”, the subject loses the power of significant affirmative action...”.

260 *Screenplay*. p. 122.

261 Campbell, Joseph. *Op. Cit.* p. 69.

262 *Ibid.* p. 111.

263 *Screenplay*. p. 79.

264 Campbell, Joseph. *Op. Cit.* p. 116. “Woman, in the picture language of mythology, represents the totality of what can be known. The hero is the one who comes to know. [...] she can always promise more than he is yet capable of comprehending. [...] Woman is the guide to the sublime acme of sensuous adventure. By deficient eyes she is reduced to inferior states, by the evil eye of ignorance she is spellbound to banality and ugliness .

magic (cooking, obliviation, disappearance, oclumency). Together, they stand for the “knower and the known”<sup>265</sup>. Within this assimilation into a mythological path, Jacob's identity evolves as he undergoes a “secondary socialization”. His “already formed self” and his “already internalized world”<sup>266</sup> are shattered by their magical counterparts. His “social anomie”<sup>267</sup> which makes of him an “outsider”<sup>268</sup>, does not destroy him. On the contrary, this helps Jacob surpass himself and acknowledge his heroic status but this also triggers uncertainties and questions regarding the identity of the other characters.

### **III. 1. b) Initiation and return.**

If the audience is brought from one world to another, this is done very subtly. This is to illustrate their unicity and the assimilation of magic into the mundane, especially through the character of Jacob<sup>269</sup>. What is at first scary becomes acceptable and even attractive<sup>270</sup>. Every character in its individuality will add to the hero's adventure into the magic world by initiating him to the unknown. Newt is the one who will help Jacob reveal his potential, standing for the herald and helper but also representing the first hurdle Jacob will have to overcome to cross the threshold of adventure. Then he faces a series of tests: acceptance of magical beasts, acceptance of the threat they represent and he wins his right to engage in Newt's quest by recognizing their potential. The Macusa is the most considerable threat Jacob has to face given that it is the institution that can consign him back into the human world and compromise the success of his endeavor. Helpers will assist Jacob for him not to be sent back into the mundane world: Queenie the goddess will reveal his value to him (“QUEENIE: Of

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But she is redeemed by the eyes of understanding . The hero who can take her as she is, without undue commotion but with the kindness and assurance she requires, is potentially the king, the incarnate god, of her own created world.”

265 *Ibid.*

266 P. Berger & T. Luckmann. *La construction de la réalité*, Méridiens-Klincksieck, 1994, p. 185. qtd. in Khellil, Mohand. *Op. Cit.* p. 31. (our translation)

“Chaque fois que l'on parlera de socialisation secondaire, cela supposera toujours un processus antérieur de socialisation primaire. Dans ces conditions, on aura à *traiter avec un Moi déjà formé et un monde déjà intériorisé.*”

267 R.-M. Merton. “Structure sociale et anomie”, in *Psychologie sociale*, Dunod, P; 393-421. qtd. in *Ibid* p. 41.

“La déviance viendrait alors de l'inadéquation entre les buts proposés et les moyens offerts pour y parvenir. [...] Cette déviance par rapport aux normes est appelée 'anomie sociale' par R. K. Merton”. (our translation)

268 *Ibid.* p. 42. “Mais l'individu qui est ainsi étiqueté comme étranger [outsider] peut voir les choses autrement”.

269 Campbell, Joseph. *Op. Cit.* p. 217. “The two worlds, the divine and the human, [...] are actually one. [...] The values and distinctions that in normal life seem important disappear with the terrifying assimilation of the self into what formerly was only otherness. [...] But the hero-soul goes boldly in– and discovers the hags converted into goddesses and the dragons into the watchdogs of the gods”.

270 See I. 3. a).

course not – you're one of us now!”<sup>271</sup>) and Tina, even if reluctantly, will allow him to discover the perks and threats of the wizarding world. By fighting Gnarlak<sup>272</sup> (even if only resorting to physical strength and not to his spirituality), engaging in the chase with the beasts by sometimes risking his life (selflessly), Jacob show his worth to the magical world and thus gains his reward: “an expansion of consciousness and therewith of being (illumination, transfiguration, freedom)”<sup>273</sup>. Illumination by his acknowledgement of the existence of magic. Transfiguration as he becomes involved in the chase to “restore” order between the two “world(s)”. Freedom as he ends up being a “master of the two worlds”<sup>274</sup> and finds the key (“elixir”) to propel his life in the human sphere.

If we witness variations regarding the “shadow presence that guards the passage”, the “unfamiliar yet strangely intimate forces” of the “tests” and “helpers”<sup>275</sup> usually encountered in instances of monomyth, *Fantastic Beasts'* storyline does belong to it by its unfolding and the identities granted to the characters. Thus, if at first a linear reading of the story as pertaining to the monomyth seems to deny its mythical dimension (“Wherever the poetry of myth is interpreted as biography, history of science, it is killed”<sup>276</sup>), its “permanently human meaning” allows it to evolve without losing its mythical dimension. The social rise and recognition of one's value and the figment of peaceful cohabitation regardless of differences are read from a modern prism but are anchored in their former correlates, “illuminating hints from the inspired past”<sup>277</sup>.

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271 *Screenplay*. p. 167.

272 *Ibid.* p. 200. “Jacob punches Gnarlak straight in the face, knocking him backwards..”.

273 Campbell, Joseph. *Op. Cit.* p. 246.

274 *Ibid.* p. 229.

275 *Ibid.* pp. 245-246.

276 *Ibid.* p. 249.

277 *Ibid.*

### III. 1. c) Modern conception of the hero.

Still, the ending of the story questions the status of the hero and its belonging to the monomyth.

“The final work is that of the return. If the powers have blessed the hero, he now sets forth under their protection (emissary); if not, he flees and is pursued (transformation flight, obstacle flight). At the return threshold the transcendental powers must remain behind; the hero re-emerges from the kingdom of dread (return, resurrection). The boon that he brings restores the world (elixir)”<sup>278</sup>.

Jacob's eagerness to return to the mundane world is denied. He is obliterated -only partially, and still remembers his adventure, as for him no bad memories were to be erased. “The first problem of the returning of the hero” is successfully achieved as Jacob “accept as real... the... banalities ... of life”<sup>279</sup> going back to work at the canning factory, before starting his own business. Therefore, he stands for an emissary in the sense that his return has been supervised by wizards and he is now the one injecting magic into the mundane by shaping his pastries as creatures he encountered in the wizarding world<sup>280</sup>. Jacob thus “comes back [...] made great” and literally “filled with creative power...”<sup>281</sup>. This scene where Newt provides him with a worthy collateral<sup>282</sup> may seem trivial but is highly significant as a turning point. “And in so far as the hero's act coincides with that for which his society itself is ready, he seems to ride on the great rhythm of the historical process.”<sup>283</sup>: if the muggle society is definitely not ready to acknowledge the existence of wizards and to live by their side, the injection of some fantasy is acceptable. Nonetheless, the hero is pictured as startled when he sees Queenie entering the bakery<sup>284</sup> as if wizardry was pursuing him, which puts the veracity of his adventure into doubt. But this only stands for the “baffling inconsistency” needed for the return of the hero to be successful<sup>285</sup>. This scene also concludes the movie in highlighting its circularity: Jacob departed from the muggle world to enter the wizarding one and now that he is back, he creates

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278 *Ibid.* p. 246.

279 *Ibid.* p 218.

280 Screenplay. p. 281. “Close on the pastries and breads on the counter [...] we recognise the Demiguise, Niffler and Erumpent among them. Jacob, serving, is very happy...”.

281 Campbell, Joseph. *Op. Cit.* p. 36.

282 *Fantastic Beasts*. Time 01:54:11 – 01:54:54.

283 Campbell, Joseph. *Op. Cit.* p. 72.

284 *Screenplay*. p. 282 “Jacob looks up and is thunderstruck all over again: it's Queenie... Jacob, quizzical...”.

285 Campbell, Joseph. *Op. Cit.* p. 217. “There must always remain, however, from the standpoint of normal waking consciousness, a certain baffling inconsistency between the wisdom brought forth from the deep, and the prudence usually found effective in the light world”.

fictional magical creatures which contaminate the muggle world.

It is also important to take into account the limits of our study. If we follow Campbell's words on modern works and the monomyth, all we said collapses. Modern works cannot really be related to monomyths given that religion is not as central as it was<sup>286</sup> and that man and thus hero gradually evolved from a sociable being serving his society to a selfish individual<sup>287</sup>. But, by proposing to focus on normality and the evolution of characters in New York's daily life, *Fantastic Beasts* still belongs to the modern conception of the monomyth. Jacob is a modern hero who "...through every detail and act of" his "secular life" allows "the vitalizing image of the universal god-man who is actually immanent and effective in all of us" to be "made known to consciousness"<sup>288</sup>. The protagonists do live in the macrocosm of New York and are brought to acknowledge their place in the whole world by recognizing the war which is about to be waged between muggles and wizards. But they also evolve in the microcosm of the magic world and in an even smaller sphere that is Newt's suitcase. Thus an interesting continuous shift occurs. Progressing from macrocosm (society) to microcosm (individuality) *Fantastic Beasts* oscillates between past and modernity. To Campbell, the "modern hero [...] must not, wait for his community to cast off its slough of pride, fear, rationalized avarice, and sanctified misunderstanding. [...] It is not society that is to guide and save the creative hero, but precisely the reverse"<sup>289</sup>. Another dichotomy between past and present times is that the hero does not seem to have a predetermined fate anymore. Thus, the modern hero has to act "not in the bright moments of his tribe's great victories, but in the silences of his personal despair"<sup>290</sup>.

It is specifically because the narrative follows Jacob's mundane existence (he is found in a moment of despair regarding his assimilation into society) and proposes a modern reading of the status of hero by showing that society can be changed thanks to the deeds of a specific person (even if helped by others, Jacob is the one who punctuates the mundane with magic) that *Fantastic Beasts* can still be considered as following the monomyth dynamics.

*Fantastic Beasts'* storyline aligns with monomyth dynamics by presenting the audience with some of its patterns: the herald calling the hero to enter a new world, the denial

286 *Ibid.* p. 387. "...there is no such society any more as the gods once supported. The social unit is not a carrier of religious content, but an economic-political organization".

287 *Ibid.* p. 388. "Then all meaning was in the group, in the great anonymous forms, none in the self-expressive individual; today no meaning is in the group—none in the world: all is in the individual".

288 *Ibid.* p. 389.

289 *Ibid.* p. 391.

290 *Ibid.*

of the call, the answer to the call, the crossing of the first threshold but also the encounter with the Goddess. The monomyth steps – adventure, departure, initiation, are treated from a modern prism as they are devoid of religious calls and undertaken from an individual point of view. If at first the confrontation of *Fantastic Beasts* to the monomyth does not seem to shed light on anything new, but rather confirm the universal and almost mundane development of the story, by confronting these two works, we elucidated the true identity of the hero in *Fantastic Beasts* and also managed to assimilate identity features to other characters that we would not have suspected. *Fantastic Beasts* is thus a work oscillating between past and modernity, transgressing codes and adapting new features in its definition of the identity of the hero and in its relation to monomyth.

## **2. Discrimination “for the greater good”?<sup>291</sup>**

The core reason for the creation of *Fantastic Beasts* is to be found in the *Harry Potter* saga. We can learn that muggles should be overruled by wizards ‘for the Greater Good’, an idea developed by Albus Dumbledore and Gellert Grindelwald. Thus, this prequel is based on a social relation of rejection and submission between wizards and muggles. We will define identity as the fact of being determined by specific features taking into account the notion of “affinity”<sup>292</sup>. Alterity in the sense of otherness is here interesting when considering wizards and muggles as respectfully belonging to a homogeneous social group. So how does identity develop in this context and what are the consequences for the reception of the work?

### **III. 2. a) Discrimination anchored in the *Harry Potter* saga.**

The fact that a muggle-born is the actual hero of the story is highly at odds with the narrative that motivated the creation of *Fantastic Beasts*, as we can see in a letter Dumbledore to Grindelwald in *Harry Potter and The Deathly Hallows*<sup>293</sup>:

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291 Rowling, J.K. *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*. *Op. Cit.* p. 359. “For the Greater Good became Grindelwald’s slogan, his justification for all the atrocities he committed...” p. 360.

292 “Identity”. *Lexico powered by Oxford*, <https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/identity>.

293 *Ibid.* p. 357.

Gellert — Your point about Wizard dominance being FOR THE MUGGLES' OWN GOOD— this, I think, is the crucial point. Yes, we have been given power and yes, that power gives us the right to rule, but it also gives us responsibilities over the ruled. We must stress this point, it will be the foundation stone upon which we build. Where we are opposed, as we surely will be, this must be the basis of all our counterarguments. We seize control FOR THE GREATER GOOD. And from this it follows that where we meet resistance, we must use only the force that is necessary and no more. (This was your mistake at Durmstrang! But I do not complain, because if you had not been expelled, we would never have met.)        Albus

Gellert Grindelwald is known for “his desire to create a global order that would dominate Muggles”<sup>294</sup>. To do so, he goes on the hunt for the Deathly Hallows<sup>295</sup>. Even if Grindelwald story is going to be developed in the second opus of *Fantastic Beasts, The Crimes of Grindelwald*<sup>296</sup>, the first opus of the series clearly sets the scene for discrimination between muggles and wizards based on blood-status. If one can witness the rejection of muggles by the wizards and vice-versa, the non-majs' are constantly unconsciously over-controlled by the wizards and force is used not only when it is absolutely necessary but on a daily basis. It seems legitimate to grant more individuality to the main characters -mainly wizards- but, in a lot of scenes, muggles are represented as a mass, in high-angle shots which emphasizes the negation of individual identity. On the other hand, wizards, even if the scene features several characters, are often presented in medium or long shots which calls for the recognition of their distinct oneness<sup>297</sup> as we can see in one of the opening scenes.

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294 Rowling, J.K. “Who is Gellert Grindelwald ?”. Pottermore, 2016. <https://www.pottermore.com/short-text/who-is-gellert-grindelwald>.

295 Rowling, J.K. *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows. Op. Cit.* p. 499. “And Grindelwald used the Elder Wand to become powerful. And at the height of his power, when Dumbledore knew he was the only one who could stop him, he dueled Grindelwald and beat him, and he took the Elder Wand”.

296 *Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald*. Directed by David Yates, Produced by David Heyman, J.K. Rowling, written by J.K. Rowling, Warner Bros. Pictures, Heyday Films, 2018.

297 *Fantastic Beasts*. Time 00:04:52 – 00:04:59.



Illustration 27: Jaap Buitendijk. "Extras on the set of 'Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them'. Pottermore, 2016, <https://www.pottermore.com/news/the-secret-life-of-movie-extras>.

The social chasm is also enhanced by the terminology used to call people without magical powers. The British call them “muggles”, which is a caring appellation according to Rowling when interviewed online:

“I was looking for a word that suggested both foolishness and loveability. The word “mug” came to mind, for somebody gullible, and then I softened it”<sup>298</sup>.

The American resort to a less benevolent term: “No-Majs”. From a linguistic point of view, the American terminology induces that there is a deprivation in quantity -or in this case, a negation of ability. Being an abbreviation for “Non-Magic People”, as 'non' does not stand by itself, the negation is more on the side of description when paired with “magic” but still induces some degree of destitution.

The very format of *Fantastic Beasts* induces that depending on where the movie is seen, its content will transfer on different cultural or historic patterns of the country. The same applies from a cinematographic point of view as when the readers resort to their personal repertoire. Thus, we could infer that in Germany, Grindelwald could be associated with the past historic figure of Hitler, with which the *Harry Potter* saga has links, according to Rowling:

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<sup>298</sup> Mugglenet, “J.K. Rowling World Book Day Chat” from 2004. *Mugglenet*, 2016. <http://www.mugglenet.com/2004/03/j-k-rowling-world-book-day-chat/>.



“I think most of us if you were asked to name a very evil regime we would think Nazi Germany. There were parallels in the ideology. I wanted Harry to leave our world and find exactly the same problems in the wizarding world. So you have the intent to impose a hierarchy, you have bigotry, and this notion of purity, which is this great fallacy, but it crops up all over the world”<sup>299</sup>.

The fact that such an imaginative world is “based on reality” can be put into question. One can argue that “an imaginative world has no direct relations to the real world »<sup>300</sup>. But, on the other hand, from an anthropological point of view, this world would not have been created without “specific categories structuring the universe of creation”, that is culture and history<sup>301</sup>. Thus, the powerful “symbols” (hegemony, social submission, rejection of otherness) evoked in the movie are here to be universally read but also to be interpreted from a national level. This process can be affiliated to what Silbermann refers to as “the transformation of a specific world of symbols to another world of symbols”<sup>302</sup>. Some scenes and images of *Fantastic Beasts* will be interpreted in a similar way by every member of the audience in the context of the unfolding of the plot. Nonetheless, seen by audiences from different countries and social backgrounds, those scenes and images will recall different sociological, personal and historical events depending on the past history of each audience and each member of the audience. Hence, *Fantastic Beasts* aligns with this “specific world of symbols” (the messages conveyed by the symbols tackled in the plot unfolding) being transformed to “another world of symbols” (that is, the socio-cultural interpretations given to these symbols) by the audience members. The aim is not only to tackle symbols that can be universally understood but also to leave space for national and personal interpretations.

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299 Edward T. J. K. Rowling at Carnegie Hall. *The Leaky Cauldron*, 2007. <http://www.the-leaky-cauldron.org/2007/10/20/j-k-rowling-at-carnegie-hall-reveals-dumbledore-is-gay-neville-marries-hannah-abbott-and-scores-more/>.

300 Lucien Goldmann. « Le structuralisme génétique en sociologie de la littérature ». *Littérature Et Société. Problèmes De Méthodologie En Sociologie De La Littérature. Colloque Organisé Conjointement Par L'Institut De Sociologie De L'Université Libre De Bruxelles Et L'École Pratique Des Hautes Études (6e Section) De Paris Du 21*. Éditions De L'Institut De Sociologie, Université Libre De Bruxelles, 1967, p. 203. «...l'univers littéraire ou artistique est un univers imaginaire qui, comme tel, n'a pas de relations directes avec le monde réel ambiant ».

301 *Op. Cit.* “Pour être cependant médiatisée, cette relation n'existe pas moins, et cela sur deux plans, d'une part, celui des conditions dans lesquelles s'élaborent les catégories qui structurent cet univers et d'autre part celui du problème ... de la fonction anthropologique de la création imaginaire”. (our translation)

302 Alphonse Silbermann. “Le phénomène d'aliénation des films par synchronisation”. *Littérature et Société. Op. Cit.* p. 99. “L'affirmation que le langage du film – en tant que langage des images – est un langage international ne peut pas cacher le fait que ces images provenant de différentes sociétés naissent et se font percevoir devant un fond (*background*) socio-culturel qui est à chaque fois différent. Ce fait nous renvoie au processus de synchronisation qui ne doit pas seulement éliminer les difficultés de langue mais qui doit aussi transformer un milieu de symboles spécifiques en un autre milieu de symboles ». (our translation)

### **III. 2. b) Sociological reading of discrimination and rejection.**

Let us reconsider the image of the hero we mentioned earlier, from Goldman's sociological point of view : “in his actions when facing problems, man tends to adopt a certain behavior so as to trigger a significant answer that would change the world he evolves in”. Thus, every man constituting a society would tend to behave that way, and “cultural creation is to be considered as a privileged behavior as it is a means for humans to reach the final purpose they are aiming at”<sup>303</sup>. This is the case for Jacob who is trying to change the world he evolves so as to establish respect and coherence between wizards and muggles. But “problems” can also trigger hatred and discrimination when represented by otherness. Muggles are a problem to wizards and vice versa so that the actions undertaken to face the problem and ensure the security of each group can take the form of segregation, rejection and ultimately submission.

We already stated that where muggles are represented as a mass, wizards are granted individuality. Despite this individuality, the social wizarding group has a lot of common traits, the main one being the fear of muggles. In the wizarding world, this fear rallied a lot of participants to its cause under the chairmanship of Grindelwald and this is how submission and rejection of the muggles started but also how the wizarding group stood out: «But, if a social group stands out, the individual differences will fade out whereas the common traits will strengthen»<sup>304</sup>. Grindelwald's idea of greater good can be considered as a legitimate « world vision » from a social prism: he wants to reorganize society and human interactions between muggles and wizards<sup>305</sup> so as to grant “absolute power” to himself on an “individual

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303 Lucien Goldmann.*Op. Cit.* p. 198. “Chaque fois qu'un homme agit, il se trouve en face d'une situation qui constitue pour lui une tâche ou un problème à résoudre et il essaye de transformer le monde par son comportement de manière à obtenir une réponse significative au problème posé. [...] c'est dire que tous les hommes tendent à faire de leur pensée, de leur affectivité et de leur comportement une structure significative et cohérente. Dans cette perspective, la création culturelle [...] constitue un comportement privilégié ... dans la mesure où elle s'approche d'une fin *vers laquelle tendent tous les membres d'un certain groupe social* ». (our translation)

304 *Ibid.* pp. 198-199. “L'appartenance d'un individu à tout groupe social à des répercussions sur sa pensée, son affectivité et son comportement; et dans la mesure même où, dans chaque société globale, tout individu appartient à un nombre plus ou moins grand de groupes sociaux, sa pensée, son affectivité, son comportement, constituent dans leur ensemble un mélange plus ou moins dépourvu de cohérence. C'est pourquoi il serait extrêmement difficile d'étudier une conscience individuelle, précisément à cause de son caractère unique et particulièrement complexe. Si cependant, nous passons de l'individu à l'ensemble de groupe, et si ce groupe est suffisamment nombreux les différences individuelles dues au fait que chaque individu appartient à divers autres groupes sociaux vont s'annuler (ces groupes étant différents d'individu à individu), alors que les éléments qui dans la conscience des individus étudiés, proviennent de l'appartenance à un seul groupe, auront au contraire tendance à se renforcer et à devenir visibles.” (our translation)

305 *Ibid.* p. 199. “...les groupes sociaux privilégiés, dont la conscience, l'affectivité et le comportement sont orientés vers une réorganisation globale de toutes les relations humaines [...] Cette vision ... implique dans

level” but also for the wizards to “survive and develop in the most accurate and effective way, to serve their immanent tendencies”<sup>306</sup>. The reading of “immanent tendencies” of the wizarding society is biased as Grindelwald understands it as absolute power granted to the wizards, absolute control over the muggles so as to reach submission through rejection. Nevertheless, we should state that such a development hinges on “exogenous phenomena” as the wizards have been persecuted by muggles but also on “endogenous phenomena”<sup>307</sup> as wizard society modified and evolved by hiding. This point proves that on the whole from a large historic prism there is no “greater good” as rejection is perpetrated by both sides and submission (indirect when forcing the wizards into hiding, and imposed by force by the wizards on the muggles) is adopted by both party as this ambivalent situation is pictured in *Fantastic Beasts*.

One last sociological consideration is relevant to our study, Goffman's idea of “stigma” when talking about society. “On one part, the stigma considers that the difference is known and visible; we will talk about discredited individual. On the other hand, this difference might not be known or visible for others; we will talk about 'discreditable' individual”<sup>308</sup>. In *Fantastic Beasts*, individuals are discreditable because when magic is not used, there is no way to differentiate wizards from muggles. Thus, discrimination is not based on physical criteria, but on fear.

From a sociological point of view in *Fantastic Beasts*, discrimination and submission happen because of a natural human reaction that is to act for the survival of the social group by reaching coherence when facing a problem. Here, the difficulty lies in the fact that problems are embodied by humans. Thus, survival and development of each specific group are achieved at the expense of the other.

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ce type de conscience collective la possibilité ... d'un idéal de l'homme et cela nous amène à les distinguer du type de conscience collective que nous avons appelée idéologique, en la désignant par le terme de *vision du monde*.” (our translation)

306 *Ibid.* p. 201. “...tout comportement humain tend...à la signification et à la rationalité. [...] cette réponse tend ... à permettre soit à l'organisme individuel soit au groupe de survivre et de se développer de la manière la plus efficace et la plus conforme à ses tendances immanentes”. (our translation)

307 *Ibid.* p. 202. “...avant que cet équilibre optimal soit atteint, deux sortes de phénomènes, les uns exogènes, interventions de l'extérieur [...] les autres endogènes [...] créent une situation nouvelle et par cela même une nouvelle rationalité”. (our translation)

308. Goffman E. *Op. Cit.* p. 57. qtd. in Khellil. *Op. Cit.* p., 47. “Le stigmaté recèle deux réalités : d'une part, le stigmaté considère que sa différence est connue et visible; on parle alors d'individu discrédité; d'autre part, il pense que cette différence n'est pas connue ni visible des autres et l'on considère qu'on a affaire à l'individu 'discreditable'”. (our translation)

Being both a work responding to the “tendencies and aspirations of a specific collective consciousness”, *Fantastic Beats* is a social work but also a very individual one as the “real world” never had to deal with wizards. Thus, “the coherence is never reached” which gives the work its “individual character”<sup>309</sup>. In relation to identity, adopting a sociological reading of discrimination and rejection proved helpful in distinguishing dichotomies between social groups, that is, denial or granting of individual identity depending on the level of power of the characters. But, in the end, as submission appears to happen on both sides, development of identity and gaining of power are not inhibited. Discrimination and submission are shown from a sociological prism at different levels: etymological, cultural and historical. Therefore, rejection and submission play a great part in the development (or denial?) of identities both in the wizarding and in the muggle world.

### 3. Viewership's identification process

The audience watching *Fantastic Beats* might be heterogeneous but we should not forget that it falls within the continuity of the *Harry Potter* saga. If the books are categorized as children's literature, the movies from the saga aim at a wider audience given than even the first movie is rated not to be watched without parental guidance. But is it the case for *Fantastic Beats*?

#### III. 3. a) Young viewership.

It is interesting to note that *Fantastic Beats* aims at an older teenage audience (children are not targeted as the movie is rated PG 13) in the full process of identity development. Even though talking about children and youth literature, Prince's arguments on identification to a character can be applied to our study. With the *Harry Potter* saga, young readers might read the books over and over so as to find “stability” and “reassuring landmarks”<sup>310</sup>. With *Fantastic Beats*, the written medium being scripts, the readership will not find the stories fully developed and will have to resort to their imagination to complete

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309 *Ibid.* p. 204. “l'œuvre correspond aux aspirations et aux tendances de la conscience collective et en ce sens elle est éminemment sociale; mais elle réalise aussi sur le plan imaginaire une cohérence jamais ou rarement atteinte dans la réalité, et en ce sens elle est l'œuvre d'une individualité exceptionnelle et a un caractère hautement individuel ».

310 Prince, Nathalie. *La Littérature De Jeunesse*. Armand Colin, 2010, p. 183. “Relire à l'infini le même type d'histoire, avec des personnages récurrents, a quelque chose de rassurant, de confortable, qui assure à des personnes en devenir une étonnante stabilité. Ainsi du fonctionnement, par exemple [...] des Harry Potter ». (our translation)

and create parts of the fictive world. Thus, the “delight of the non-story” is impaired and no “restful feeling”<sup>311</sup> is to be delivered. But, as *Fantastic Beasts* is enshrined in a highly technological decade, the young audience might find its stability in the cinematic form of the saga, following the recurring character of Newt Scamander.

Being a fantastic work, the supernatural is exposed as an “individual experience”, where the protagonist(s) are “affected by a profound loneliness on the social, psychological or emotional scale” leading to a “unique relationship to the phenomenon” but also to a distancing from the “ordinary, social world”<sup>312</sup>. Our views coincide with Prince's statements on the protagonists' confidence being shaken when dealing with the supernatural leading to a “collapse of the” fictional “world” that can be compared to his “psyche thrown into crisis”<sup>313</sup>. For example, if the supernatural is accepted by the protagonists all along the storyline, the death of senator Shaw resulting from an obscurus's attack is beyond their understanding<sup>314</sup> and triggers panic and rejection of the truth. A parallel can be drawn between this situation and that of teenagers acknowledging the difficulties they will have to deal with while growing up. The landmarks they know will collapse which triggers rejection of changes, denial, and sometimes the creation of a parallel imaginative world. The unknown generates fear and rejection of reality.

Another interesting parallel is the one between Prince's words and psychoanalyst Erik Erikson when dealing with teenage development:

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311 Umberto Eco, “Le Mythe de Superman”, in *De Superman au Surhomme*, Grasset, 1993, p. 158 qtd. in *Ibid.* p.184. “D'emblée, l'ouvrage s'inscrit dans un processus familier avec son lecteur qui le reconnaît comme tel. L'adolescent ou le préadolescent aiment retrouver des situations, des repères, des éléments fixes sur lesquels ils focalisent leur attention, ce qu'Umberto Eco [...] nomme 'le plaisir de la non-histoire' qui assure un 'sentiment d'apaisement' ». (our translation)

312 Prince, Nathalie. *La Littérature Fantastique. Op. Cit.* p. 77. “Dans les contes merveilleux, le surnaturel peut être une production sociale ou collective : tout le monde le voit, le connaît, le sait. Dans le fantastique, il s'agit d'une expérience singulière, personnelle voire propre. Le personnage est affecté d'une grande solitude ou d'un grand isolement, social, psychique, affectif et se dispose dans une relation triangulaire (lecteur/personnage/phénomène) : sa relation au phénomène l'exclut en quelque sorte de la société, des autres, et l'éloigne de ceux-ci. Le monde social, ordinaire, est de cette manière replacé par la relation univoque qu'il entretient avec le phénomène.” (our translation)

313 *Ibid.* p. 81. “Il s'agit plutôt de la confrontation de l'incrédulité d'un personnage, de sa culture, de sa psyché, avec un phénomène si étrange que cette incrédulité, ce psychisme, cette culture, sont ébranlés. On assiste pas tant à la désintégration du monde, de l'ordre naturel des choses, qu'à l'ébranlement d'un personnage, à la mise en crise de son esprit”. (our translation)

314 *Screenplay*, p. 147. “Newt is absorbed in the image of Senator Shaw's body floating around the room. Newt: Merlin's beard! [...] No creature did this... don't you pretend! You must know what that was, look at the marks... [...] That was an Obscurus. *Mass consternation, muttering, exclamations.* Graves looks alert. Madam Picquery: You go too far, Mr Scamander. There is no Obscurial in America...”.

“Erikson coined the phrase identity crisis to describe the temporary instability and confusion adolescents experience as they struggle with alternatives and choices. To cope with the uncertainties of this stage, adolescents may overidentify with heroes and mentors [...], excluding others on the basis of real or imagined differences. According to Erikson, successful resolution of this crisis depends on one's progress through previous developmental stages, centering on fundamental issues of trust, autonomy, and initiative”<sup>315</sup>.

The figure of the hero dealing with fantastic and supernatural phenomena or an adolescent struggling with his future, loneliness, exclusion, univocal relationships, and imagination are at stake. We already focused on Newt's specificities and loneliness, features which complete our study<sup>316</sup>. Identification or “overidentification” is eased in *Fantastic Beasts* not by the “vacuity”<sup>317</sup> of our main protagonist as proposed by Prince, but by the varied range of highly developed and unique personalities of all the protagonists. The fact that the movie presents its audience with characters who have found themselves and have strong opinions and viewpoints might motivate the young viewers to overcome the confusion they face. Plus, the diversity of identities portrayed in the movie highlights the importance of the uniqueness of the self and shows that living together does not annihilate singularity; crucial topics for an audience constructing themselves. We should also note that the “resolution” of “identity crisis” is achieved when one has found a way to reach “autonomy”, “trust” in others and to engage in “initiative[s]” to propel his future – or in other words, is resolved when reaching a stable identity construction from teenagehood to adulthood, can be compared to the struggles the protagonist has to face in Campbell's monomyth to fully reach his heroic stature. In that way, every young reader can be compared to the hero of his own monomyth.

“[The character] being like any reader, one will grant him enough rationality not to directly reject his testimony”<sup>318</sup>. Once again, we have to go against Prince's words: in our study, it is not through anonymity or “vacuity” that the characters trigger a desire for identification. On the contrary, thanks to the variety of personalities presented in the movie, each “testimony” - or each character, will echo some of the members of the audience's

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315 "Identity/Identity Formation". *Psychology Encyclopedia*, 2019, <https://psychology.jrank.org/pages/322/Identity-Identity-Formation.html>.

316 See I. 3. b).

317 Prince, Nathalie. *Op. Cit.* p. 79. “Cette vacuité, cette blancheur, permet une d’identification aisée avec n’importe quel lecteur.”. (our translation)

318 *Ibid.* “Étant comme le lecteur, n’importe quel quidam, on lui [le personnage] prête une rationalité satisfaisante, de telle sorte que son témoignage ne pourra pas être d’emblée rejeté”. (our translation)

character traits on an individual level and therefore, the veracity and credibility of the protagonists' words and endeavors will be considered as “rational enough” to be trusted and to be considered as a model. In that case, (over)identification has a positive impact on the development of the young viewers because even if taking the shape of a univocal relationship, it helps them find stability.

### **III. 3. b) Adult viewership**

But what if *Fantastic Beasts* targeted not only young viewers but also the *Harry Potter* fans who grew up but still want to believe in magic? The opposition between “Muggles” and “Wizards” can be perceived as an allegory of the “distinction between adults and children”<sup>319</sup> where the audience growing up fantasizes about receiving their Hogwarts letter and identifies to the wizards rejecting the boring adult figure of the muggles. The “reassuring landmarks” young readers and viewers seek while overidentifying to a hero has here a different meaning: the adult public would be looking for a reality loophole to escape the daily routine even if in this case, adult life requirements are acknowledged and accepted.

For Prince, “identification has to be immediate”, and this process “is fully achieved when the character grows up in the story, following its readership's age, what happens in the *Harry Potter* series”<sup>320</sup>. Logically, we expect the characters also grow up following their viewership's age. If the members of the audience who first saw *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*<sup>321</sup> in theatres in 2001 were around 11 as is the little wizard in the movie, the viewers would, by the time *Fantastic Beasts* was released in 2016, be in their mid or late-twenties which coincides with Newt Scamander's age, as he is supposed to be 29 in 1926<sup>322</sup>. If the *Harry Potter* saga proves to be the representation of the trend launched in the 1970s to “produced movies for young people that adults, too, could enjoy”<sup>323</sup>, *Fantastic Beasts* seems

319 Prince, Nathalie. *La Littérature De Jeunesse*, Armand Colin, 2010. p.129 “...il y a les Moldus ET les Sorciers dans Harry Potter... Cet antagonisme cache un jeu d'identifications et de différences fondé sur la distinction adulte et enfant, avec cette simple idée que pour que l'enfant esthétiquement et littérairement se perçoive comme un enfant, il faut qu'il pense qu'il est un non-Adulte”. (our translation)

320 *Ibid.* p. 96. “L'identification avec le personnage doit être immédiate: [...] le texte adressé à un adolescent met en scène un adolescent. Cette identification trouve son accomplissement quand le personnage vieillit au sein même de l'oeuvre, en suivant l'âge de ses lecteurs, ce qui se passe notamment à la lecture des cycles ou des séries, tels que *Harry Potter* et ses hypostases”. (our translation)

321 *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*. Directed by Chris Columbus, based on the eponymous book by J.K Rowling. Heyday Films, 2001.

322 Rowling, J.K. “Newt Scamander”, *Pottermore*, 2019, “Birthday 1897”.

<https://www.pottermore.com/explore-the-story/newt-scamander>.

323 Chelebourg, Christian. *Les Fictions De Jeunesse*. Presses Universitaires De France, 2013, p. 31. “C'est dans

to be a movie made for an older audience audience but it can also be enjoyed by children and young viewers. Mainly, *Fantastic Beasts* distances itself from the classic process of adaptation of turning a book into a movie, and offers a modern definition of adaptation by only proposing a script to its readers, granting a huge place to imagination. The script being the perfect transcription of what is said during the movie, the emphasis is put on the messages the characters convey by words; and stage directions help the readers to correctly interpret the protagonists' actions and feelings, offering the readers the chance to become omniscient (if not Legilimens) by almost reading the characters' mind. *Fantastic Beasts* is a “cinematographic work that followed-[s] its viewership”<sup>324</sup> as *Harry Potter* did, but proves modern through the medium it gifts its followers with. By proposing such a “mediatic transfer” (movie to script), the movie “empower[s]” its “characters” by the proposed reading put on screen and the multiplicity of readings of the script, and thus offers the viewers an “expanding proximity” with the protagonists which encourages the viewership in its “self reconfiguration”<sup>325</sup>. Self-reconfiguration can be understood as the adult counterpart to identity crisis when a reconnection with the childhood world is needed so as to move forward. This is the case for the viewers who consider *Fantastic Beasts* and its characters as a way to reconnect with the wizarding world they entered as children through *Harry Potter* and that followed them in their personal development. The identification process can even go further as the franchise expands, proposing more and more mediatic transfers. It is now possible for the adult audience to turn into Newt, Tina, Queenie or any character of the movie for a day thanks to the costumes available on the web<sup>326</sup>. If costumes, for the *Harry Potter* saga, were first developed as Hogwarts robes for children, *Fantastic Beasts* choses to directly attract an older public. A liminal space is reached where any member of the audience can more than just identify, become one of the characters and blur the frontiers installed by the movie and the script to live the story.

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les années 1970 [...] que les *majors* ont commencé à concevoir des productions pour les jeunes... La recette du succès est alors de faire des films pour les jeunes que les adultes *aussi* peuvent apprécier”. (our translation)

324 *Ibid.* “On comprend l’efficacité de ce support [le cinéma] pour les fictions de jeunesse. En ce domaine, d’ailleurs, c’est plutôt le cinéma qui a suivi son public et non l’inverse”. (our translation)

325 *Ibid.* p. 117. “« L’autonomisation des personnages, la vie propre qu’ils acquièrent au fil des réécritures comme au gré des transferts médiatiques, la proximité grandissante que leur offrent des supports toujours plus immersifs, les rend d’autant plus efficaces en matière de refiguration du soi”. (our translation)

326 “Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them | Accessories and Gifts”, *CostumeBox*.

<https://www.costumebox.com.au/theme-costumes/fantastic-beasts-costumes-and-accessories.html>.



Such an (over)identification can jeopardize the notion of identity by erasing the audience's proper uniqueness: the fans transfer a fictional character's identity on themselves in the social world. Identification should serve the audience by proposing social examples, models and protagonists who through their unique developed personality would touch the audience's emotions on a personal level so that the uniqueness of the viewers is respected. If overidentification is a natural process for young people constructing themselves as it allows them to escape reality, a gradual withdrawal usually appears which allows the development of oneness, with values borrowed to heroes. Their heroes helped them forge themselves but should be recognized as external to their real life. Identification or transfer of identity represent much for humans in construction but also for adults. A retrospective analysis of their childhood heroes might help adults, who now have the necessary hindsight to distance themselves from their heroes, to understand what such a saga, such a character, such a thematic brought to them.

### **III. 3. c) Identification and continuation**

Studying the adult viewership shades light on the two sagas' relation. *Fantastic Beasts* is undoubtedly a ramification of *Harry Potter*, but it also helps to define what has become of the identification process and to identify the demands such an identification and projection trigger.

“They [the characters] become fellow travellers for their fans; models who left their guardian attribute to strangely be present in daily life. The suspension of disbelief is favoured: a kind of equality is established between the consumer and the cultural industry's products. Fictional universes see their semantic and psychological impact enrich as the synopsis they contain become more and more complex. The more they proliferate and diversify, the more their unity is made clear, and the more their availability and relevance emerge in respect of the public projection”<sup>327</sup>.

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327 *Ibid.* pp. 117-118. “Ils [les personnages] deviennent pour leurs fans de véritables compagnons de route, des modèles non plus tutélaires, mais étrangement présents dans le quotidien. La suspension de l’incrédulité, notamment, s’en trouve favorisée ; une sorte de plain-pied s’instaure entre le consommateur et les produits de l’industrie culturelle. Les univers fictionnels gagnent, par ailleurs, en richesse sémantique comme en impact psychologique à mesure qu’ils voient se complexifier les scénarios qu’ils accueillent. Plus ils prolifèrent, plus ils se diversifient, et plus leur unité se dégage en fait : plus se manifestent leur disponibilité et leur pertinence en matière de projection du public ». (our translation)

For the audience who grew up with, found values, landmarks and stability in the *Harry Potter* saga, the young wizard (and his world) might have represented a guardian model. This massive enthusiasm and dedication to the wizarding world demanded the creation and increase of related ancillary merchandise<sup>328</sup> through which the *Harry Potter* franchise invites their fans to identify to, transfer onto and immerse in the wizarding world. The fictional world thus contaminates the social one and the guardian model gradually impregnates the daily life of the fans, might it be through trivial merchandising (clothing, accessories, collectibles, kitchenware and so on that can be found on websites as Cinereplica<sup>329</sup>).

On an immaterial level too the franchise left its marks. Fans will remember the intelligence of Hermione Granger, the boldness of Gryffindor house or the wisdom of Ravenclaw. In 2002, the word “muggle” entered the Oxford Dictionary<sup>330</sup>, referring to “A person who is not conversant with a particular activity or skill”, originating “from mug+ -le; used in the Harry Potter books by J. K. Rowling to mean ‘a person without magical powers’”<sup>331</sup>. As we questioned the terminology of that word in III. 2. a), it is interesting to note that the identification process triggering a demand for merchandising, also led to a contamination of the social world in daily language. Followed the word “quidditch”, which appears as a “mass noun” and a “trademark in UK”<sup>332</sup>. Chelebourg's words about “fictional universes” seeing their “semantic impact enriched” is thus verified. The process of identification through immersion and projection has also been backed up by technology, since the website Pottermore allows its users to be sorted in one of the Hogwarts houses, to pick their wand and discover their patronus. Recently, the users have been allowed to be sorted in one of the Ilvermorny's houses, the American school of witchcraft and wizardry discovered in *Fantastic Beasts*. This medium enlarges the “psychological impact” of the wizarding world hand in hand with the sophistication of its scenario thanks to the development of that prequel.

The fact that the cinematographic form of *Fantastic Beasts* prevails on the written one in terms of identification and projection of the audience proves the pertinence of that prequel evolving in an era led by technology, which aligns with Chelebourg's words about

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328 See I. 2. c) and I. 3. a).

329 “Cinereplicas UK”, *Cinereplica*, <https://cinereplicas.co.uk/>.

330 Thelwell, Emma. “The next Harry Potter words to join the dictionary?”, *BBC News*, 13<sup>th</sup> April 2017, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-39586989>.

331 “Muggle”, *Lexico powered by Oxford*, <https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/muggle>.

332 “Quidditch”, *Lexico powered by Oxford*, <https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/quidditch>.

movies and audience projection. Identification in relation to this prequel works in a circular way: identification leads to a demand for merchandising which enlarges the fictional world and allows the fans to immerse themselves in the wizarding world at a higher degree, what might reinforce the feeling of identification. Contrary to its sequel, *Fantastic Beasts* does not aim at a young audience but targets adults who wish to reconnect with the world of the hero they might have identified to as kids. Identification to a character will thus take a different form and meaning, depending on the needs and maturity level of the viewers, but there is a certain continuation when considered along with merchandising and projection.

Development of identity in *Fantastic Beasts* is to be considered from the internal level of the story but also from an external prism so as to be grasped completely. From an internal point of view, the development of the storyline steps can be compared to the monomyth organization developed by Campbell. This offers a modern reading of the monomyth: if the mythical dimension is overshadowed, the themes of personal rise and recognition as well as the exposition of a potential peaceful cohabitation despite differences are eternal topics that can be found in myths, which also corresponds to the *bildungsroman* dynamics. If it was not the central subject of our study, it would be highly interesting to take the reverse course and investigate on the allegorical figures of the beasts themselves to reveal the mythical meaning of the movie. Studying the monomyth also helped us to define a hero and unveil some clichés. Still inside the story, and from an intermedial point of view, the notion of discrimination and submission originating from *Harry Potter* and which motivated the creation of *Fantastic Beasts* underlines the negation of individual identity for the muggles. The chasm is based on the powerful (wizards) opposed to the powerless (muggles), which can be read as an allegory of the higher class and the working poor in the social world. Identity is there defined at the expenses of the definition of alterity. Finally, from an external prism, the notion of identification is expanded when considered along with audience. The process of identification is common to an audience in personal construction. But with *Fantastic Beasts*, children are not targeted. Adults also identify to characters, even if with different expectations, might it be a reconnection to childhood and the values that forged their identity. If we associate identification and the nature of *Fantastic Beasts*, a strong relationship emerges between identity, transfer, projection, and merchandising.

## **Conclusion.**

*Fantastic Beast and Where To Find Them* is a pioneering work. Its major power has been to be able to deconstruct the assumptions we had at the beginning of this study, for example its legitimacy regarding its reliability when considered as a by-product of the *Harry Potter* saga. It proved its legitimacy by the relationship developed with the audience. Its prequel nature, even if aiming at the *Harry Potter* already acquired audience who grew up, distances the movie from the heptalogy. Proposing the audience to follow the path of a British character arriving in the United States, projection is eased as no national knowledge is needed to enter the story. Through the no-maj figure of Jacob, the viewers undergo a secondary socialisation phenomenon getting accustomed to the American wizarding world. The universality of themes such as integration, adaptation, war and politics are easily transferable from the fictional world into the social one, and find resonance on an individual level depending on where, when and who is watching the movie. The audience is granted its own place in this already established fictional world when considering both the movie and the script together as an opportunity to supplement the storyline with their imagination. Passivity while watching the movie is counterbalanced by the active act of reading.

*Fantastic Beasts* also proves to be a powerful work in its historic reliability and by the innovative views proposed when transgressing the 1920s mores. First, the costumes' symbolism and framing devices specific to each protagonist help to develop their personality . It also encloses them into clichés, leaving little room for evolution – a limit that can be read as an allegory of the difficulties to define manhood and womanhood in constant evolution in the 1920s. Thus, transgression in genders comes to counterbalance this limit and allows modernity to penetrate the movie, bridging the 1920s and the 2010s, for example by granting Tina an independent spirit and an emotional character to Newt. By portraying a segregative and segregated society, *Fantastic Beasts* aligns with the mores of the era. Women are pictured as inferior to men in their roles and potentialities. Ethnic segregation is almost denied in the movie because of the underrepresentation of black and non-caucasian people, maybe a way to condemn racism. But we can doubt that ignoring diversity – that was one of the strength of New York, will leave past segregation in oblivion. In its depiction of the religious beliefs and sense of belonging triggering racial segregation, the movie proves historically accurate. From

a anthropological perspective, through the figures in power, the outlaws and corruption, the audience is allowed to better understand the pyramidal organisation of New York in the 1920s. By offering the transgressive image of Newt's fall and rise, managing to leave his outlaw status to open the eye of the wizarding world regarding fantastic beasts, the movie accurately pictures the famous image of the American self made man.

Adaptation is thus striking in its reliability regarding history. Transgression is involved in the process of recreation of a 1920s society to highlight the limits, dangers and drawbacks of the Roaring Twenties. Historic adaptation hand in hand with transgression helps to determine the genre of the movie. If, from its title, this work claims to only belong to the fantastic, the audience is constantly brought from fiction to reality as the movie is a fictional construction that wishes to be conceived as real. This is made possible as the movie is grounded in a real city, which most of its 1926 places can still be visited today. Thus, this work allows a new reading of New York. If ever visiting the city, the members of the audience are now granted the power to inject magic in the buildings taken as reference when creating the movie - the mundane - by imagining again their fictional architectural counterparts presented in the movie. That is what we intended to do in this study when juxtaposing pictures of the fictional buildings - from the sets - and pictures of their real counterparts taken in New York in November 2018, as an initiatory journey into the American wizarding world.

Finally, broadening our viewpoint on adaptation and transgression, we discover that *Fantastic Beasts* submits a highly modern definition of identity development and definition of the hero. The identity development patterns are easily juxtaposed to the monomyth construction, and if this comparative work seems to only propose to read correlations between the movie and the monomyth, it helps us get a clearer definition of the hero by discovering that Jacob is the true heroic figure of the movie. By extension, this proves *Fantastic Beasts* to be innovative in the place it grants to the audience regarding identification and projection as the hero of a highly magical story is a no-maj'. Identity development within the story questions the evolution of wizards and muggles existence in a highly discriminating context; a situation that can be transferred onto the socio-economical development of the real world. Identity development also has to deal with the identification process underwent by the audience. If the fantastic genre helps young viewers to escape from the reality they fear by identification to a wizard who has the magical power to overcome any difficulty he might face, the movie does not neglect the older member of the audience. *Fantastic Beasts*, even if a

prequel, offers the possibility of a continuity in the process of identification. Might it attract the audience who grew up identificating to *Harry Potter* and who is already common to the magical world, the movie stands by itself in the sense that it offers the adults viewers the possibility to reconnect to the world that fascinated them as children without disrupting the identification process by featuring older characters.

This analysis did not intend to revolutionize the reading and understanding of fictional works. Nonetheless, by studying the highly contemporaneous movie of *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* in the light of the notions of adaptation and transgression, we proposed an innovative reading of J.K Rowling work. The nature of *Fantastic Beasts* is now clearer. This work “deploys the full possibilities of the [cinematographic] media” by “fully expressing its visual potentialities” using generated computer images not as a way to impress, but as a means to better serve the “fictional immersion of the viewership” intended<sup>333</sup>. Targeting an older audience, their “audiovisual maturity” is called for the movie “illusory character”<sup>334</sup> to be recognized. On the other hand, its fantastic nature and allegiance to fantasy counterbalance this phenomenon by asking for a strong credulity from its viewers. Thus, the identity of *Fantastic Beasts* – considered as movie and as screenplay, with regards to the place it leaves its audience to identify to and appropriate the work, advocates a “victory of imagination on imitation”<sup>335</sup> as the magical New York is a proposition. Each viewer is left free to reinterpret the images and scenes presented to him thanks to his imagination, that is to “deform the images provided by perception”, to “be freed from the primary images, to change images”<sup>336</sup>. Generated computer images help the viewers to perceive the “analogy between the non-real and the real” thus making collapse the “filmic referentiality”<sup>337</sup>. “The truth thus

333 Chelebourg, Christian. *Op. Cit.* p. 31. « [...] Dans cette logique, tout ce qui hyperbolise la représentation, comme les trucages et les effets spéciaux, se trouve privilégié. Il ne s'agit pas seulement d'un impératif commercial, mais du déploiement des possibilités du média, de l'expression pleine et entière des potentialités visuelles qu'il est capable de mettre au service de l'immersion fictionnelle des spectateurs ». (our translation)

334 *Ibid.* p. 33. “Le film à grand spectacle est jouissance d'un média envisagé en pleine conscience de ses artifices par des spectateurs qui, à force de pratique, ont atteint une maturité audiovisuelle suffisante pour apprécier les tours du magicien. En dépit des attaques dont il fait l'objet, ce type de film est moins le symptôme d'une naïveté du jeune public que le révélateur de la bonne connaissance et de la totale acceptation par ses consommateurs du caractère illusoire du septième art”. (our translation)

335 *Ibid.* p. 33. “Ils [les films] s'affichent comme une victoire de l'imagination sur l'imitation et se regardent comme une évasion poétique ». (our translation)

336 Gaston Bachelard, *L'Air et les Songes. Essai sur l'imagination et le mouvement*, José Corti, 1943, p.7. qtd. in *Ibid.* “On veut toujours, écrivait Bachelard, que l'imagination soit la faculté de *former* des images. Or elle est plutôt la faculté de *déformer* les images fournies par la perception, elle est surtout la faculté de nous libérer des images premières, de *changer* les images.”

337 *Ibid.* p. 35. « ...à mesure qu'elle [l'incrustation numérique] établit l'analogie de l'irréel au réel, elle induit en

displaced, the image is not based on anything external to the movie, the image has only meaning thanks to the imaginary she carries”<sup>338</sup>.

What *Fantastic Beasts* might intend to do might be to relieve the audience from the ordinary, by inviting them to enter the extensive imaginary world carried in nothing but its images. *Fantastic Beasts* then appears as a means, which by its filmic nature, helps the fans to disconnect from the ordinary world and stimulates their imagination so as to once again, enter the wizarding world, and, once again, be transcended by the magic it has to offer. We thus come to the initial meaning delivered in the epigraph of our study, and shall end as we begun:

**Jacob Kowalski:** Newt, I don't think I'm dreaming.

**Newt Scamander:** What gave it away?

**Jacob Kowalski:** I ain't got the brains to make this up”.

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retour une déréalisation de toute la référentialité filmique ». (our translation)

338 Ibid. “Une fois la vérité ainsi détrônée, l'efficacité de l'image ne repose plus sur rien d'extérieur au film, elle n'a plus de sens qu'au regard de l'imaginaire qu'elle véhicule ». (our translation)

## **Illustration Index**

Illustration 1: Cumond, Coline. Details of the Woolworth building entrance. New York, Nov. 2018.....	9
Illustration 2: © JKR/Pottermore Ltd. ™ Warner Bros. "MACUSA's concealed entrance". Pottermore, <a href="https://www.pottermore.com/image/macusas-concealed-entrance">https://www.pottermore.com/image/macusas-concealed-entrance</a> .....	9
Illustration 3: Coline Cumond. Entrance to the Woolworth building, New York, Nov. 2018. . .	9
Illustration 4: From Salisbury, Op. Cit. , p. 26. ....	11
Illustration 5: From Salisbury, Op. Cit., p. 26. ....	11
Illustration 6: Jacob's apartment. Screenshot from the movie, 00:18:35. ....	11
Illustration 7: From Salisbury, Op. Cit. p. 35. ....	12
Illustration 8: From Salisbury, Op. Cit., page 34.....	13
Illustration 9: Steen National Bank concept art. <a href="https://harrypotter.fandom.com/wiki/Steen_National_Bank?file=Steen_National_Bank_concept_art.png">https://harrypotter.fandom.com/wiki/Steen_National_Bank?file=Steen_National_Bank_concept_art.png</a> . ....	34
Illustration 10: Coline Cumond. New York County National Bank, New York, Nov. 2018. ....	34
Illustration 11: Entrance to the Blind Pig Bar. Screenshot from the movie, 01:14:23. ....	35
Illustration 12: Concealed entrance to the Blind Pig Bar. Screenshot from the movie, 01:14:25. ....	35
Illustration 13: Coline Cumond. Entrance to the 124 Old Rabbit Club, New York, 2018. ....	36
Illustration 14: Newt Scamander, <a href="http://www.stickpng.com/fr/img/films/eddie-redmayne/eddie-redmayne-dans-le-role-de-newt-scamander">http://www.stickpng.com/fr/img/films/eddie-redmayne/eddie-redmayne-dans-le-role-de-newt-scamander</a> . ....	39
Illustration 15: Jacob Kowalski, <a href="http://www.stickpng.com/img/at-the-movies/fantastic-beasts/jacob-kowalski">http://www.stickpng.com/img/at-the-movies/fantastic-beasts/jacob-kowalski</a> .....	41
Illustration 16: Queenie and Tina dresses, <a href="https://www.warnerbros.com/news/articles/2016/12/08/jk-rowlings-wizarding-world-exhibit-opens/">https://www.warnerbros.com/news/articles/2016/12/08/jk-rowlings-wizarding-world-exhibit-opens/</a> . ....	42
Illustration 17: KATHERINE WATERSTON as Tina and ALISON SUDOL as Queenie in Warner Bros. Pictures', <a href="https://www.warnerbros.com/movies/fantastic-beasts-and-where-find-them/#gallery">https://www.warnerbros.com/movies/fantastic-beasts-and-where-find-them/#gallery</a> . ....	43
Illustration 18: : ALISON SUDOL as Queenie in Warner Bros. Pictures', <a href="https://www.warnerbros.com/movies/fantastic-beasts-and-where-find-them/#gallery">https://www.warnerbros.com/movies/fantastic-beasts-and-where-find-them/#gallery</a> . ....	44
Illustration 19: ALISON SUDOL as Queenie in Warner Bros. Pictures', <a href="https://www.warnerbros.com/movies/fantastic-beasts-and-where-find-them/#gallery">https://www.warnerbros.com/movies/fantastic-beasts-and-where-find-them/#gallery</a> . ....	44
Illustration 20: Porpentina Goldstein, <a href="http://www.stickpng.com/img/at-the-movies/fantastic-beasts/porpentina-goldstein">http://www.stickpng.com/img/at-the-movies/fantastic-beasts/porpentina-goldstein</a> . ....	45
Illustration 21: EZRA MILLER as Credence Barebone in Warner Bros. Pictures', <a href="https://www.warnerbros.com/movies/fantastic-beasts-and-where-find-them/#gallery">https://www.warnerbros.com/movies/fantastic-beasts-and-where-find-them/#gallery</a> . ....	46
Illustration 22: COLIN FARRELL as Graves in Warner Bros. Pictures', <a href="https://www.warnerbros.com/movies/fantastic-beasts-and-where-find-them/#gallery">https://www.warnerbros.com/movies/fantastic-beasts-and-where-find-them/#gallery</a> .....	47
Illustration 23: DAN FOGLER as Jacob, KATHERINE WATERSTON as Tina, ALISON SUDOL as Queenie and EDDIE REDMAYNE as Newt in Warner Bros. Pictures' fantasy adventure "FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM," a Warner Bros. Pictures release. <a href="https://www.warnerbros.com/movies/fantastic-beasts-and-where-find-them/#gallery">https://www.warnerbros.com/movies/fantastic-beasts-and-where-find-them/#gallery</a> . ....	48
Illustration 24: Cover of additional leaflet from Mark Salisbury. Op. Cit. p. 100. Designed by MinaLima. ....	55



Illustration 25: Inside of additional leaflet from Mark Salisbury. Op. Cit. p. 100. Designed by Minalima. ....	57
Illustration 26: Coline Cumond. Reproduction of James Montgomery's poster, Arlington Cemetry Welcome Center, Washington, April 2019. ....	58
Illustration 27: Jaap Buitendijk. "Extras on the set of 'Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them". Pottermore, 2016, <a href="https://www.pottermore.com/news/the-secret-life-of-movie-extras">https://www.pottermore.com/news/the-secret-life-of-movie-extras</a> . ....	75

## Glossary

All the following descriptions and definitions have been taken from the online encyclopedia Harry Potter Fandom, <https://harrypotter.fandom.com/>.

**Abernathy** : Abernathy was an American wizard, employee for the Magical Congress of the United States of America and eventual follower and acolyte of Gellert Grindelwald.

**Appaloosa Puffskeins** were a breed of **Puffskein** (a small beast covered in soft fur and spherical in shape) illegally bred by only one breeder in the world, working in New York until 1925.

**Aurors** are the Wizarding World's best defence against the practitioners of the Dark Arts.

**The Blind Pig** was a wizarding speakeasy and jazz club that operated during the 1920s in New York. Located at 124 Macdougall Street, its entrance was magically disguised by an enchanted advertisement.

The **Bowtruckle** is a hand-sized, insect-eating tree dweller with long sharp fingers (two on each hand), brown eyes, and a general appearance of a flat-faced stick figure made of bark and twigs, which serves well as camouflage in its natural habitat.

**Credence Barebone** (allegedly born Aurelius Dumbledore; c. 1901[1]) was an American wizard who lived during the 20th century. He was adopted by Mary Lou Barebone, the leader of a No-Maj anti-witchcraft group called the New Salem Philanthropic Society. Due to the repression of his magic, Credence developed a dark parasitic force known as an Obscurus and became an Obscurial. While most Obscurials die before their tenth birthday, Credence lived into adulthood, which was previously unheard of in the wizarding world, and a testament of his incredible power.

The **Daily Prophet** is a wizarding newspaper based in London, England. It is the primary source of news for British and Irish wizards.

The **Deathly Hallows** are three highly powerful magical objects supposedly created by Death and given to each of three brothers in the Peverell family. They consisted of the Elder Wand, an immensely powerful wand that was considered unbeatable; the Resurrection Stone, a stone which could summon the spirits of the dead, and the Cloak of Invisibility, which, as its name suggests, renders the user completely invisible.

The **Demiguise** is a peaceful, herbivorous creature that can make itself invisible and tell the future which makes it very hard to catch. It resembles a cross between a sloth and an ape with large, black eyes and long, silky hair.

**Apparition** is a wizarding transportation. It is essentially the magical action of travelling by having the user focus on a desired location in their mind. After the user is properly focused they then disappear from the current location and instantly reappear at the desired location.

**Albus Percival Wulfric Brian Dumbledore** was an English half-blood wizard, who was the Defence Against the Dark Arts Professor, later the Transfiguration Professor, and later Headmaster of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry.

The **Erumpent** resembled a rhinoceros with a roundish body. It was a powerful creature, with a thick hide capable of repelling most curses and charms, a single long horn, and a thick tail.

**Gellert Grindelwald** was a pure or half-blood wizard who is considered to be one of the most powerful and dangerous Dark Wizards of all time.

**Gnarlak** was an American goblin gangster. He ran The Blind Pig, a magical speakeasy located at 124 Macdougall Street in New York in the 1920s, which Newt Scamander visited when he was searching for information.

**Gryffindor** is one of the four Houses of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry and was founded by Godric Gryffindor. Godric instructed the Sorting Hat to choose students possessing characteristics he most valued, such as courage, chivalry, and determination, to be sorted into his house.

**Harry James Potter** was an English half-blood wizard, one of the most famous wizards of modern times, known as the “Boy Who Lived” after he defeated Lord Voldemort as a baby.

**Henry Shaw Junior** was an American No-Maj who served as a United States senator from New York during the 1920s. He was the son of newspaper magnate Henry Shaw Senior.

**Henry Shaw Senior** was an American No-Maj newspaper magnate and founder of Shaw News. He was the father of Henry Shaw Junior, a US Senator during the 1920s, and Langdon Shaw.

**Hermione Jean Granger** was an English Muggle-born witch. Hermione possessed a brilliant academic mind and proved to be a gifted student in almost every subject that she studied.

**Hogwarts** School of Witchcraft and Wizardry is the British wizarding school, located in the Scottish Highlands.

**Hufflepuff** is one of the four Houses of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. It is the most inclusive among the four houses; valuing hard work, dedication, patience, loyalty, and fair play rather than a particular aptitude in its members.

**Ivermornny** School of Witchcraft and Wizardry is the American wizarding school, located on Mount Greylock in modern-day Massachusetts.

The **International Statute of Wizarding Secrecy** is a law to safeguard the wizarding community from Muggles and hide its presence from the world at large.

**Jacob Kowalski** was a Polish-born American No-Maj, who lived at 435 Rivington Street New York during the 1920s. Jacob fought in the First World War. Returning home to the United States he found work in a cannery, but dreamt of becoming a baker. On 5 December 1926, he went to Steen National Bank to apply for a loan but was turned down. While at the bank he met Newt Scamander, a British wizard who stopped in New York City on his travels to find and document magical beasts. Through Newt he was exposed to the magical world, but had his memories wiped as was required by wizarding law.

**Langdon Shaw** was an American No-Maj who lived in the early 20th century. He was the younger son of newspaper magnate Henry Shaw Senior.

**Legilimency** is the act of magically navigating through the many layers of a person's mind and correctly interpreting one's findings. A person who practises this art is known as a **Legilimens**.

The **Magical Congress of the United States of America** (shortened **MACUSA**), is the magical body in charge of governing the wizarding community of the United States of America. It is led by the President of the Magical Congress of the United States of America.

**Mary Lou Barebone** was an American No-Maj who lived in the 20th century. She was the leader of the New Salem Philanthropic Society, also known as the Second Salemers, an extremist group whose goal was to expose and eradicate witchcraft in the United States. She had three adopted children: Chastity, Modesty, and Credence.

A **Magizoologist** is a wizard or witch who studies magical creatures. In certain cases, a magizoologist's obligations may not be limited to merely observing and taking care of such entities as he or she may even be immersed in sanctioned breeding and even actively tracking and rescuing them from less-principled parties.

**Non-magic people**, commonly known as **Muggles** in Great Britain, **No-Maj(e)s** in the United States, are people who are born to two non-magical parents and are incapable of performing magic. Muggles are not to be confused with Squibs, who also lack magic but are born to at least one magical parent.

The **Murtlap** is a marine beast resembling a rat with a growth on its back resembling a sea anemone, found on the coastal areas of Britain.

The **New Salem Philanthropic Society (NSPS)**, also known as the Second Salemers, was a fanatical American No-Maj group which sought to expose and destroy wizardkind.

**Newton Artemis Fido "Newt" Scamander** was an English wizard, famed Magizoologist and the author of *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*.

A **Niffler** is a magical beast with a long snout and a coat of black, fluffy fur. They are attracted to shiny things, which make them wonderful for locating treasure

The Memory Charm (**Obliviate**), also known as the Forgetfulness Charm, is a charm that can be used to erase specific memories from an individual's mind.

An **Obscurial** is a young wizard or witch who developed a dark parasitical magical force, known as an **Obscurus**, as a result of their magic being suppressed through psychological or physical abuse.

The **Occamy** is a winged, serpentine magical beast native to the Far East and India.

**Occlumency** is the act of magically closing one's mind against Legilimency. It can prevent a Legilimens from accessing one's thoughts and feelings, or influencing them. A person who practises this art is known as an Occlumens.

The **Patronus** Charm (*Expecto Patronum*) is the most famous and one of the most powerful defensive charms known to wizardkind. It is a spell that evokes a partially-tangible positive energy force known as a Patronus or spirit guardian.

The **Pentagram Office** is an auditorium situated on the highest floor of the Magical Congress of the United States of America headquarters in the Woolworth Building in New York.

**Percival Graves** was an American wizard, Auror, Director of Magical Security and head of MACUSA's Department of Magical Law Enforcement.

**Queenie Goldstein** was a half-blood American witch and the younger sister of Tina Goldstein. After graduating from Ilvermorny, Queenie acquired a desk job in the Wand Permit Office, within the Magical Congress of the United States of America. She was also an extremely accomplished Legilimens, someone with the ability to extract feelings and memories from another's mind.

**Quidditch** is a wizarding sport played on broomsticks. It is the most popular game and most well-known game among wizards and witches, and, according to Rubeus Hagrid, the equivalent to Muggles' passion for football (Soccer).

**Ravenclaw** is one of the four Houses of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Its founder was the medieval witch Rowena Ravenclaw. Members of this house are characterised by their wit, learning, and wisdom.

**Seraphina Picquery** was an American witch. She served as the President of the Magical Congress of the United States of America from 1920 to 1928, proving herself to be a strong and capable leader. During her tenure as President, Gellert Grindelwald tried to incite a war between the magical and non-magical communities. He attempted this by attempting to expose the Wizarding World. Also in 1927, Madam Picquery made the thunderbird a protected species and later extended the law to include all North American beasts. She ended her term as President in 1928.

**Severus Snape** was an English half-blood wizard serving as Potions Master (1981-1996), Defence Against the Dark Arts professor (1996-1997), and Headmaster (1997-1998) of the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry as well as a member of the Order of the Phoenix and a Death Eater.

The **Steen National Bank** was an American No-Maj financial institution established in March 1848. On 6 December 1926, Mary Lou Barebone held a New Salem Philanthropic Society rally on the front steps of the bank. Both Newton Scamander and Jacob Kowalski went into the bank.

The **Thunderbird** is a large, avian creature native to North America, and most commonly found in Arizona in the southwestern United States. A close relative of the Phoenix, the Thunderbird can create storms as it flies and is highly sensitive to danger.

**Porpentina Esther "Tina" Goldstein** was an American half-blood witch. After graduating from Ilvermorny, she became an Auror for the Magical Congress of the United States of America.

**Voldemort** was an English half-blood wizard considered to have been the most powerful and dangerous Dark Wizard of all time.

A **wand** is a quasi-sentient magical instrument through which a witch or wizard channels her or his magical powers to centralise the effects for more complex results.

The **wizarding world** is the society in which wizards and witches live and interact separate from the Muggle (non-wizarding) society. **Wizarding World** is an American-British media franchise centring around the shared fictional universe of the films created by Warner Bros. in connection to the novels of J. K. Rowling. Beginning in 2001 they have created nine films, with up to four more on the way. Wizarding World includes both the Harry Potter film series and the new Fantastic Beasts film series.

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