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Harry Potter

An Interdisciplinary Workshop on a Multidimensional Transmedia Phenomenon

15–17 September 2022

Affolternstrasse 56, 8050 Zurich

AFL-E-003

Description

Harry Potter has, over the years, expanded into a global transmedia phenomenon which encompasses films, video games, pen and paper role playing games (RPG), theme parks, cookery and craft books, a new form of sport and countless hypertextual engagements with the texts. Their impact can be traced on a large spectrum ranging from personal (autobiographic) narratives to wider contemporary discourses on power abuse and transphobia.

The workshop will approach this multidimensional phenomenon in a likewise interdisciplinary, multi-methodological fashion which will help participants involved to explore, test, and broaden their respective theoretical and methodological repertoires (and hopefully have fun in the process). This workshop will have a strong focus on participatory culture and is decidedly experimental. It will deal with some neglected areas, such as ethical, new-materialist and material-aesthetic engagements with the Harry Potter series and some of its human and also non-human agents.

The number of participants is very limited due to the interactive format and therefore we ask for a short written application.

Please write an email to natalie.borsy@uzh.ch with the following information:

- Name, subject combination, current study status (BA/MA, current study semester)
- Do you intend to participate in the entire workshop? YES/Duration of participation
- Short explanation why you want to participate (2-3 sentences)



Application deadline: 07.09.2022

The workshop will be in English only and it will be free of charge. This workshop is not part of the regular curriculum and thus participating students will receive no ECTS points.

Programme

Thursday, 15 September

13:00 Introduction

Panel 1: Fan Works and Fans at Work

13:30 – Sujie Jin (University of Zurich)

14:30 *Rewriting Harry Potter – Expanding the Wizarding World in Cyberspace*

Fan works related to the *Harry Potter* series have been produced by fans around the world and made available in cyberspace. I will briefly introduce fanfiction/slash fanfic as well as relevant videos and comics created by English- and Chinese-speaking fans. Then, we will discuss them as a participatory fan practice and as an integral part of consumers' reception of *Harry Potter*. We will also encourage critical reflection on fan production and questions of appropriation and ownership in popular culture by sharing personal involvement in similar online activities.

14:45 – Fabienne Silberstein-Bamford (University of Zurich)

15:45 *Fan Activism – Intersections Between Politics and Popular Culture*

The *Harry Potter* franchise has not only inspired a generation to read, create, and grow into themselves, but also served as a pertinent metaphor for real world social injustices. In this deep-dive into activist movements within the *Harry Potter* fandom, we will discuss how, why, and in what ways entertainment culture and civic engagement are entangled, from traditional fundraisers, to transformative fan practices, to resistance towards the text itself.

16:00 – Keynote 1: Dr Jennifer Duggan (University of South-Eastern Norway)

18:00 *Exploring Queer/Trans Harry Potter Fan Works*

The first portion of this session will be a traditional academic paper discussing fans' queer and trans identity-building practices and queer/trans play through/within *Harry Potter* fan works. The second portion of this session will be a "fan works workshop." This will allow participants to engage in numerous transformative activities, which may include puppets, drama, singing, interpretive dance, writing, and/or drawing. (Warning: The workshop may be inappropriate for those who dislike buffoonery and ribaldry. Participation comes with the risk of having a great deal of fun.)

18:00 Apéro riche (and maybe some more singing and dancing)

Friday, 16 September

09:00 – Keynote 2: Dr Hannah McGregor (Simon Fraser University, Canada)

10:30 *Killing the Joys of Harry Potter*



Panel 2: Facing the Problematic in Harry Potter

10:40 – Nurit Blatman (University of Zurich)

11:40 *Harry Potter and the Question of Antisemitism*

Books and films shape us and our view of the world. When antisemitic tropes appear in popular media, they run the risk of confirming and reinforcing old prejudices. What does this mean for the depiction of the Goblins in the Harry Potter franchise? Gringotts Wizarding Bank is run by hook-nosed, greedy goblin bankers that might bear resemblance to historical antisemitic propaganda caricatures. Together we will examine the question of whether this portrayal of the Goblins should be classified as antisemitic – and if so, what should we do next? Should Harry Potter be “cancelled”? Should J.K. Rowling herself? How do we deal with problematic, antisemitic or racist images in popular literature and media?

Lunch Break

13:00 – Jenny Ammann (University of Zurich)

15:00 *Dumbledore in Court*

Can you keep a person alive long enough to lead them like a pig for slaughter when the time comes, as Snape accuses Dumbledore of? Can Albus Dumbledore be accused of being unethical or immoral in doing exactly that with Harry Potter? We want to pursue these questions with a close-reading of the original text in the workshop part “Dumbledore in Court” and try to find answers together.

15:10 – Jialu Zhu (University of Zurich)

17:10 *Revisualizing Harry Potter Through the Lens of Video Essays*

This session explores the Harry Potter universe through video essays. Different from the film adaptations of Harry Potter that focus more on the story, our visualizations combine academic research, creative editing, as well as aesthetics. We will use existing audio-visual materials to produce videos that represent your perception of the world of magic, its aura, philosophy, and even theoretical implications.

Panel 3: Mattering of Harry Potter Part I – Material-Aesthetic Engagements

17:45 – Natalie Borsy (University of Zurich)

open end *The Butterbeer Lab – Commensal Explorations of Harry Potter Recipes*

Fictional cookbooks seem to offer the impossible, namely opening a culinary gateway through which part of the fictive world can be materialized and thus become real. One of the most popular drinks mentioned in the Harry Potter series is butterbeer and in this session we will reconstruct our sensory memories of and associations with the beverage before turning to the Harry Potter text, then to the recipes and finally to different versions of butterbeer. Ingredients for the drinks will be provided but participants are invited to contribute to the evening with Harry Potter themed food.

This session will take place in the “Backstube” (Limmattalstrasse 220, 8049 Zurich)



Saturday, 17 September

Panel 3: Mattering of Harry Potter Part II – New Materialisms

9:00 – Lena Brun (University of Zurich)

10:00 *Herbology and Herbariums – Scientific Narrations of Harry Potter’s Magical Plants*

Inspired by the Herbology classes in the Harry Potter books and movies, herbariums and scientific illustrations develop a study of magical and medicinal plants, how to treat them, and how they can be useful to witches and wizards. In this talk we examine methods of narrating plants and ask whether the magical plants must be seen as acting subjects rather than passive object.

10:00 – Materializing and Crafting Session

11:00 A crafting interlude where everyone can join in on materializing the origamis of *Fantastic Beasts*, modelling Mandrakes, or even crochet and knit while deconstructing coffee and Gipfeli.

11:00 – Kathrin Jakob (University of Zurich)

12:10 *Enchanting books – A Material-Aesthetic Approach to Harry Potter Editions*

How does a book’s format, the thickness of its pages or its smell influence the reading experience? Does the typeface affect the interpretation of a text? What associations do dog-ears or stains evoke? In this workshop, we will examine the physical properties of various (personal) editions of the Harry Potter books and discuss the potential of a material-aesthetic approach.

Lunch Break

13:00 – Quidditch Session

17:00 Panel discussion and training session with the Turicum Thunderbirds (Zurich Quidditch Team, <https://www.turicum-thunderbirds.ch/>). The training is designed as an introduction on beginners’ level, therefore there are no physical requirements, and full-contact elements will be excluded. Everybody is welcome to join and experience real-life Quidditch! (Bring sportswear!)

17:10 – Final Comments

17:50