Reconfiguring the Reader: Convergence and Participation in Modern Young Adult Fantasy Fiction

by

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Abstract

This thesis explores digital-age literary and reading practices as they were influenced by participatory culture at the turn of the century. Participatory culture is analysed here through the work of Henry Jenkins, Hans Heino Ewers, Margaret Mackey and Katy Varnelis and is recognised as one in which individuals are socially connected to each other in an environment that offers support for creating and sharing interpretations and original works. It has relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic participation, and fosters the sense of community growing around people's common interests and ideologies, as expressed through performative manifestations such as gaming and fandom.

Because juvenile fantasy fiction generally, and J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series (1997-2007) specifically, were at the centre of significant developments in response to participatory culture, Rowling's books are used as a case study on the basis of which changing practices of reading, writing and interpretation of story, principally by children and young people, are mapped and appraised. One aim of this thesis is to evaluate how far participatory culture has affected what it means to be a reader of a text that exists in multiple formats: how each version of the text constructs and addresses its readers/viewers/players/co-creators, and the dynamics and interdependence between the different versions. A second but related aim is to test the claims of new media theorists, including Janet Murray, Pierre Lévy and Marie-Laure Ryan, among others, to establish how far texts, readers and the processes of reading have in fact changed. Specifically, it looks at how far the promises of reader participation and co-creation have been fulfilled, especially within the genre of children's literature.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my children,
Jack and Ruby,
With immense love and gratitude for allowing mummy to achieve this goal!

And also, to my parents,
Godfrey and Helen,
Without whom I would never have had the courage to dream so big and the strength to achieve those dreams.

Acknowledgements

Contents

Chapter 1: Participatory Culture: The Production, Distribution and Interpretation of Story in the Digital Age

This thesis explores digital-age literary and reading practices as they were influenced by participatory culture at the turn of this century. During this time, changing business and communication models influenced the way in which cultural industries operated. The spheres of public and private, production and distribution, ownership and access had to be reconsidered and were characterised by convergence culture. Convergence culture developed an environment that is based on active participation and offers support for creating and sharing interpretations and original works. It has relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic participation, and fosters the sense of community growing around people's common interests and ideologies. It is also a product of the relationship between communication technologies, the cultural communities that grow around them and the activities they support.

Participatory culture led to, and was influenced by, new phenomena such as convergence and transmedia, by studies of the relationships between texts and media, and by new terminology. Terms such as 'remediation', 'distributed narrative', 'ubiquitous narrative', 'network culture' and 'social semiotics' were coined to describe what was happening to narrative. As stories responded to changes in the cultural and political economy of the time and travelled across media platforms, they also quickly gathered large audiences and were re-framed as media franchises. They became the products of global conglomerates that have emerged, at least in part, as the unofficial regulators of the network culture of apparent access and openness introduced by computer technology and the Internet.

Although single-medium adaptations have always enjoyed popularity in the history of media's development, by the turn of the century, audiences were required to go beyond engagement

with single media platforms. The visual/aural dimension that television offered, film's representation of spectacle, the ergodicity of digital games and the hypermedia of Internet sites, require readers to engage with the shift from mono or singular modal systems of communication to the multi-modal methods of reading, writing and interpretation that came about with transmedia narratives as they spread across various media platforms.[1]

Convergence and the Analysis of Participatory Culture in Context

Henry Jenkins is a central figure in the debate on participatory culture, convergence and transmedia. Since 1992 he has published eleven books and numerous articles on new media and popular culture, including *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture* (2002), *Rethinking Media Change: The Aesthetics of Transition* (2003), *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (2006) and *Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture* (2013). He maintains that the shifting media landscape at the turn of the century demonstrates the emergence of a cultural context that supports widespread participation in the production and distribution of transmedia products. In this context, media systems consisting both of communication technologies and the social, cultural and political practices that shape and surround them, are constantly adapting to accommodate the needs of society, whilst in turn being formed by them. Jenkins differentiates between interactive and participatory forms of engagement (interactivity being a property of the technological framework of media and participation the property of culture). His research shows convergence

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[1] Ergodic narrative, a term coined by Espen Aarseth in his book *Cybertext: Perspectives on Ergodic Literature* (Maryland: John Hopkins University Press: 1997), refers to texts that require a nontrivial effort from readers in the process of interpretation. The term 'nontrivial effort' indicates that readers are given more agency within the narrative and therefore they take control over their reading path. The extent to which this happens in various texts is described further in Aarseth's book. Hypermedia is an extension of hypertext where texts are extended through links that can be clicked on via links. In hypermedia texts this is extended by allowing the reader to click on images, sounds, movies and graphics in order to create a nonlinear narrative (Ted Nelson 1965).

influencing and drawing upon both aspects of engagement, making it a crucial background against which to gain a deeper insight into the participatory culture at the turn of the Twenty-first century.

Change, in this area, has been rapid and Jenkins documented much of it in *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*, where he identifies convergence culture as the force that was then defining the future of media and communication landscapes and practices. His definition of convergence as a creative and economic process is central to the shift being studied throughout this thesis, because it highlights the context in which the literary landscape changed in the mid-1990s to generate the political, economic and aesthetic pressures to which story production was then responding. First and foremost, Jenkins identifies transmedia as one of the predominant characteristics of the time. In an earlier article entitled 'Convergence? I Diverge.' (2001), he maintains that:

> Media convergence is an ongoing *process*, occurring at various intersections of media technologies, industries, content and audiences; it's not an end state. There will never be one black box controlling all media. Rather, thanks to the proliferation of channels and the increasingly ubiquitous nature of computing and communications, we are entering an era where media will be everywhere, and we will use all kinds of media in relation to one another. We will develop new skills for managing information, new structures for transmitting information across channels, and new creative genres that exploit the potentials of those emerging information structures.[2]

Convergence is often misunderstood as a single, end product, but Jenkins makes it very clear that the term refers to at least five processes which he lists as:

- technological convergence (the transformation of words, images and sounds into digital information)

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[2] Henry Jenkins, 'Convergence? I Diverge.' in *Technology Review* (June 2001).
<http://www.technologyreview.com/article/401042/convergence-i-diverge/> [accessed 31/07/2013].

- economic convergence (the horizontal integration of the entertainment industry resulting in transmedia brands such as *Pokémon*, *Harry Potter*, *Tomb Raider*, *Star Wars*)

- social and organic convergence (consumers' multitasking strategies to navigate the new media landscape)

- cultural convergence (new forms of creativity at the intersections of various media technologies, industries and consumers)

- global convergence (cultural hybridity that emerges from global circulation of media products)

Spanning a range of different media and environments, convergence is simultaneously 'a top-down corporate-driven process and a bottom-up consumer-driven process'.[3] Media companies are learning how to accelerate the flow of media content across delivery channels to expand revenue opportunities, broaden markets and reinforce viewer commitments. Consumers are learning how to use these different media technologies to bring the flow of media more fully under their control and to interact with other users. They demand to participate more fully in their culture, to control the flow of media in their lives and to talk back to mass market content.

At the start of convergence culture in the mid-1990s, the shift seemed to be the creation of a subversive culture that sought to co-opt mainstream media, channeling power to grassroots users.[4] Drawing on large-scale information gathering and processing activities that emerged at the time, convergence developed as part of strategies of collective intelligence in the form of, for example, the sharing of knowledge and information in public spheres. In his 1997 book,

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[3] Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), p. 18.
[4] Paul Booth, *Digital Fandom: New Media Studies* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc., 2010), pp. 1-11.

Collective Intelligence: Mankind's Emerging World in Cyberspace, Pierre Lévy describes the speculation surrounding the emergence of the Internet at that time and envisages cyberspace as a space of knowledge that contrasts the industrialised space of capitalism. He shares the utopian view of the Internet as a response to the dominant capitalist ideology that was prevalent at the turn of the century in the belief that it would open up a space where information is free and participants engage in ongoing conversations for the pleasure of having their efforts recognised by others.

Whilst Lévy acknowledges the new types of allegiances that started to form as older forms of community began to break down and cyberspace rendered geopolitical boundaries irrelevant, he fails to cater for the impacts of industrial interest on new media. In fact, the new allegiances based on principles of collective intelligence led to different community structures than those present in mainstream media and culture and contributed to a new sense of community 'defined through voluntary, temporary and tactical affiliations'.[5] These new affiliations are maintained through the principles of collective intelligence, namely the reciprocal production and exchange of knowledge. However, as discussed below in relation to the work of Janet Murray, Geert Lovink and Manuel Castells, the utopian ideal of a digital democracy soon gave way to a less overtly political and ideological discussion of network culture and the negotiation of openness and access that new media platforms such as the Internet created. In future studies, Jenkins maintains, audience research will focus on what consumers do with media content and how they determine what is appropriate for themselves and their families. The gift economy of the Internet will be reevaluated and grassroots users will be far more aware of the issue of

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[5] Henry Jenkins, 'The Cultural Logic of Media Convergence', *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, vol. 7, no. 1 (2004), pp. 33-44 (p. 34).

media ownership and intellectual property and the ways in which they affect cultural contexts of production and distribution.

As the turn of the century saw profit being generated through the creation of transmedia story franchises such as *Harry Potter*, cultural and economic contexts for the production and distribution of story began to be reconfigured. Transmedia, of course, was not a phenomenon exclusive to the turn of the century. Although recent advances in technology changed the parameters of transmedia dramatically in the last fifteen years, media translations of stories began much earlier, even as far back, for example, as the heyday of theatre in the late Nineteenth century, when many books were adapted to the stage. As radio, television, film and computers were invented and became available to mass markets, genres that came into existence contemporaneously with each new medium enjoyed widespread translation. At the same time, texts that pre-dated the new media, such as film in the early 1900s, were brought back to the public's attention. Theatrical and literary classics such as William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* (1597) and *Macbeth* (1623), as well as Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) and Charles Dickens' *Bleak House* (1852-53), were all adapted for the cinema.[6] The inclusive dynamic of media translations implies that a number of genres could function as case studies in the analysis of the contemporary metamorphosis of literature's form, content and style. However, the focus of this study will be the fantasy genre that takes the digital age child/youth as its predominant target reader.[7] This particular case study was chosen because fantasy retellings were, at the time, dominating the contemporary cultural and literary scene

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[6] For more on popular adaptations of canonical texts view: Joe Grixti, 'Pop goes the Canon: Consumer Culture and Artistic Value in Screen Adaptations of Literary Classics' in *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, vol. 12, no. 4 (2009), pp. 447-67.

[7] For a more detailed definition of the digital age child/youth view: Eliza Dresang, *Radical Change: Books for Youth in a Digital Age* (New York: The H. W. Wilson Company, 1999).

and the digital age child, as this thesis will argue, is at the forefront of the transmedia reconfiguring of the reader.

Over the past two hundred years, the development of fantasy literature has been intertwined with the development of new media in Western societies.[8] The print industry, for example, welcomed oral fairy tales into its market as early as the 1800s with Grimm's *German Popular Tales*, among others. Radio embraced its child audience at the very beginning of its existence when the BBC's Children's Hour started broadcasting on 5 December 1922 with the tale of two dwarfs named Spick and Span. Soon after, children's classics such as *Treasure Island* (published 1883, broadcast 1936) and *Alice in Wonderland* (1938) joined Spick and Span on air. As the war broke out in 1939, Children's Hour turned to adapted fantasy stories that provided a sense of continuity in a world of chaos. Stories such as *Kidnapped* (1886, broadcast 1944), *Wind in the Willows* (1908, broadcast 1940) and *The Box of Delights* (1935, broadcast 1943) provided a place of respite away from the realities of war.[9] Cinema welcomed filmic adaptations of children's books at the very beginning of its existence in the early 1900s, as some of the first film makers like Cecil Hepworth and Otis Turner turned to newly published children's fantasy texts, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (Cecil Hepworth and Percy Stow, 1903) and *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (Otis Turner, 1910) for their raw material. Walt Disney's ground-breaking approach to animation also began with a fairy tale: *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (David Hand et al., 1937).

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[8] For a more detailed review view, see John Clute and John Grant, eds., *The Encyclopaedia of Fantasy* (London: Orbit, 1997).

[9] For a brief history see Susanne Greenhalgh, 'Different Worlds? Children's Books and the Media' in Kimberley Reynolds and Nicholas Tucker, eds., *Children's Book Publishing in Britain Since 1945* (Hants: Scolar Press, 1998), pp. 133-54.

Children's television joined radio and film fairly quickly when in 1946 the BBC aired its first children's programme named For the Children/Children's Hour. In its early days the programme aired dramatisations of fantasy classics like *The Railway Children* (published 1906, broadcast 1951, 1957, 1968) and *The Lord of the Rings* (published 1954-55, broadcast 1955-56). In the 1980s technological advances, together with a focus on worldwide sales, led to the dramatisation of 'stories set in fantastic worlds or peopled by strange creatures' such as C. S. Lewis's *The Chronicles of Narnia* (1988) and Alan Garner's *Elidor* (1996).[10] By the late 1980s, talk media had been supplanted, in terms of novelty, by the digital way of moving information and the mass mobilisation of capital markets. The turn of the Twenty-first century saw the introduction of transmedia franchises such as *The Goosebumps Series* (1992-97) and *His Dark Materials* (1995–2000). Clearly, by the end of the Twentieth century, being literate no longer merely required young adult readers to be able to read and write; they also to needed the know-how to use e-mail, Internet chatrooms and the World Wide Web, all of which now competed with the telephone, radio, or TV both for personal contacts and as a way to keep informed of current events. The *Harry Potter* series (1997-2007) was revolutionary in the way it connected millions of people all over the world through its fan sites and social networks that engaged with the world created by J. K. Rowling. It was soon followed by others like Stephenie Meyer's *The Twilight Series* (2005-08) and Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games* (2008-10) in the first decade of the new millennium. Within this media landscape, extensive multiplatform fictional worlds that are able to converge with the real world are highlighted as transmedia storytelling has grown into a powerful way to convey messages and narrative to mass audiences.

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[10] Ibid, p. 147.

Whilst the impact of successful transmedia narrative is hard to deny, the production and design processes are not yet established firmly enough to satisfy a clear understanding of content development and reader processes of interpretation. Spanning multiple media platforms and diverse markets, these new transmedia stories require new aesthetics and narrative techniques, as will be discussed throughout the thesis. Jenkins provides a model for this kind of analysis in his extensive writing about transmedia stories. Using *The Matrix* as what he terms the ideal example, he states that a transmedia story:

> […] unfolds across multiple media platforms with each new text making a distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole. In the ideal form of transmedia storytelling, each medium does what it does best—so that a story might be introduced in a film, expanded through television, novels, and comics; its world might be explored through game play or experienced as an amusement park attraction.[11]

The most successful transmedia stories, according to Jenkins, are therefore those that enable expansion of the storyworld across various modes and media platforms. New media convergence is important because it changes the scale and scope of storyworld creation through the digitalisation of transmedia storytelling that highlights the 'contested nature of new media formations'.[12] Texts are no longer considered to be fixed artefacts, and media products are increasingly attempting to transcend 'traditional specificities'.[13] Jenkins maintains that in this emergent culture, participants need to be literate in digital communication skills: affiliation (formal and informal membership in online communities), expression (producing new creative forms such as fan writing and fan video production), collaborative problem solving (working together in teams to perform tasks and develop new knowledge) and circulation (shaping the

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[11] Jenkins, *Convergence Culture*, pp. 95-96.
[12] Graham Meikle and Sherman Young, *Media Convergence: Networked Digital Media in Everyday Life* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).
[13] Ibid, pp. 111-12.

flow of media through platforms like blogging).[14] These skills, Jenkins argues, allow readers to participate in transmedial narratives in productive ways.[15] He provides an overview of the then-current state of participatory culture founded on Pew Internet & American Life's study of youth, learning and the use of digital media.

According to the data, by 2006, more than half of all teens had created media content, with one-third of them sharing that content in public. It showed teenagers engaging in an extreme form of what is called 'participatory culture'. Whilst highlighting the importance of traditional literacy skills within this culture, Jenkins also maintains that it implies a shift in literacy from one concerned with individual expression to one based on community involvement, requiring skills that are developed through collaboration and networking. These skills consist of:

Play — the capacity to experiment with your surroundings as a form of problem-solving
Performance — the ability to adopt alternative identities for the purpose of improvisation and discovery
Simulation — the ability to interpret and construct dynamic models of real world processes
Appropriation — the ability to meaningfully sample and remix media content
Multitasking — the ability to scan one's environment and shift focus as needed to salient details.
Distributed Cognition — the ability to interact meaningfully with tools that expand mental capacities
Collective Intelligence — the ability to pool knowledge and compare notes with others toward a common goal
Judgment — the ability to evaluate the reliability and credibility of different information sources
Transmedia Navigation — the ability to follow the flow of stories and information across multiple modalities
Networking — the ability to search for, synthesise, and disseminate information
Negotiation — the ability to travel across diverse communities, discerning and respecting multiple perspectives, and grasping and following alternative norms.[16]

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[14] Taken from Henry Jenkins, 'Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century' (2006). <http://henryjenkins.org/2006/10/confronting_the_challenges_of.html> [accessed 20/07/2013].
[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid.

The implications of practices such as collective intelligence, distributed cognition and networking have been studied by a variety of researchers, including Margaret Mackey.[17] For the purposes of this study, Mackey's work complements Jenkins' emphasis on the convergence context at the turn of the century and his insight into reconfigured engagement between readers and story, because of her focus on literacy patterns in children and young adults. Throughout this thesis, I seek to show how each media platform has adapted to the context described by Jenkins, and how readers have been required to use the skills listed above to engage with each media version individually as well as transmedially by adopting new literacy patterns and reading practices. I will draw on Mackey's work in order to establish how literacy patterns are changing amongst youths who engage with the digital landscape and in order to frame their method of engagement with transmedia texts. With this in mind, the *Harry Potter* series was chosen as the case study for this thesis because it is unique in the scope and breadth of its reach and, to date, represents the most fully developed example of convergence culture in relation to fiction. The fact that it was, at least initially, aimed at young readers is also relevant because, arguably, that gave it the potential to shape the expectations of how texts work for a significant proportion of new readers during this period.

Changing Reading Practices at the Turn of the Century

Mackey studies literacy patterns in children and young adults, particularly the way in which the ubiquitous transmedia narratives of the mid-to-late 1990s demand intense engagement and interactive participation from their audiences. She describes how story franchises are

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[17] See particularly Margaret Mackey, *Narrative Pleasures in Young Adult Novels, Films and Video Games* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); *Mapping Recreational Literacies: Contemporary Adults at Play* (New York: Peter Lang Academic Publishers, 2007); and *Literacies across Media: Playing the Text* (London: RoutledgeFalmer, 1999; rev. edn. 2006). See also Pierre Lévy, *Collective Intelligence: Mankind's Emerging World in Cyberspace*, trans. Robert Bononno (New York: Perseus Books, 1997; repr. 1999).

intrinsically designed to maintain long-term, large-scale engagement with audiences that are required to possess both traditional and digital literacy skills and results in a practice of 'playing the text' in order to fully engage with story.[18] Applying the skills outlined by Jenkins above (play, performance and so on), readers do not simply engage with one version of the story, but are able to hunt for information through the whole media landscape. The ability and desire to engage with story in this way is described by Mackey as a form of 'extreme literacy'.[19]

Her term 'extreme literacies' describes a type of engagement that she calls 'suction'. Suction refers to the ability to become and remain successfully literate when engaging with transmedia texts in a participatory context. In her words, therefore:

> Extreme literacies imply obsessive literacies and we see many manifestations of obsessiveness in our contemporary culture. Suction of the giant cross-media stories; exploration of the imagination's nooks and crannies in role-playing games in different media; virtual friendships built around commitment to particular fictions; all such phenomena involve an overwhelming and consuming form of fictional engagement, and lead to new varieties of literate behaviours.[20]

In 'Extreme Literacies and Contemporary Readers' (2002), Mackey describes these new varieties of literate behaviours using the *Harry Potter* series as a case study. She views *Harry Potter* as 'the extreme literacy story of 2001' because Harry is:

> […] the boy who is everything – a saviour of traditional and extended print reading among the young, a frontman for AOL Time Warner as the film's publicity campaign dominates that mega-corporation, a bastion of brand awareness among businessmen awakening to the potential of children's literature – and the focus of intense imaginative engagement among both young readers and young consumers.[21]

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[18] Mackey, *Literacies across Media: Playing the Text*.
[19] Margaret Mackey, 'Extreme Literacies and Contemporary Readers' in *English in Education*, vol. 36, no 2 (2002), pp. 31-39 (p. 35).
[20] Ibid, p. 35.
[21] Ibid, p. 32.

She focuses on two weeks of the *Harry Potter* 'paratext' (referring to advertising material, cinematic trailers, blog posts, fan speculation amongst others); the two weeks between the British film premiere on 4 November and the North American opening on 16 November 2001. Mackey describes how she received and actively gathered information about the *Harry Potter* books, films, games, merchandise and events from multiple media platforms at the same time. What she found was that each platform was feeding into at least some of the others, with all of them contributing to the giant network of information and the global transmedia conversation taking place around Rowling's creation.[22] She was able to garner extra textual information about the characters and the actors playing them; to listen to and read other opinions online; and witness television debates and coverage about the launch in the UK two weeks before the movie came to her home town in Canada. In linking contemporary literacy to the *Harry Potter* series, Mackey thus contributes to the study of cultural and educational expectations that were formed around the story and my work in fact builds on Mackey's observations of what the *Harry Potter* case study can show us about economic and aesthetic changes that took place because of convergence culture, as I go on to study how they affected the development, production and reception of transmedia stories such as the *Harry Potter* series at the turn of the century.[23]

In *Literacies across Media: Playing the Text*, Mackey describes how this shifting media landscape of the mid-to-late 1990s affected reading practices. She comments on the intense level of engagement between texts and readers, noting the strong links in this media context

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[22] Warren Sack describes the prolific web interchanges between thousands of people as 'large-scale conversations'. He describes these exchanges as large because many people participate in them, network-based because they grow around shared interests and public because they are shared online. For more see: *What Does a Very Large-Scale Conversation Look Like?* (2005).
<http://www.electronicbookreview.com/thread/firstperson/scalene> [accessed 01/07/2013].

[23] Mackey studies demonstrations of extreme literacies and the changes that facilitated them in two major publications: *Literacies across Media: Playing the Text* and *Narrative Pleasures in Young Adult Novels, Films and Video Games* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

between suction, saliency and fluency. 'Saliency', she explains, refers to whether the text was of interest to the young readers for whom it was written, while 'fluency' describes how easy they found it to interpret and engage with. According to Mackey's findings, as stories travel across media platforms, their saliency and fluency are subject to a process of media adaptation which is parallel to the process of what Jay Bolter and Richard Grusin term 'remediation': the reworking of old media into new forms that occurs throughout the development of media.[24] Media draw from their counterparts and so too do narratives. Bolter and Grusin claim that:

> Digital visual media can best be understood through the ways in which they honour, rival, and revise linear-perspective painting, photography, film, television, and print. No medium today, and certainly no single media event, seems to do its cultural work in isolation from other media, any more than it works in isolation from other social and economic forces. What is new about new media comes from the particular ways in which they refashion older media and the ways in which older media refashion themselves to answer the challenges of new media.[25]

Just as new media refashion aspects of traditional media, therefore, contemporary texts refashion established texts, and in their transformation highlight new aspects that both Mackey and Murray (below) define as affordances.

More directly relevant to my study than Mackey's focus on empirical audience research is her discussion of these textual affordances as it helps to outline how readers' processes of interpretation and engagement are affected by individual media platforms. Readers, Mackey claims, learn to manipulate different media affordances, what Gunther Kress and Theodor van Leeuwen refer to as 'media modes', in order to participate more fully in transmedia

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[24] Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2000), p. 53.
[25] Ibid, p. 15.

narratives.[26] By 'modes' they mean 'semiotic resources which allow the simultaneous realisation of discourses and types of (inter)action'.[27]

In *Multimodality* (2010), Kress discusses the ways in which different media privilege some modes over others, depending on their affordances. Modes are socially shaped and function as cultural resources. Used as channels of communication or representation they include, but are not exclusive to, writing and images on the page; moving image and sound on the screen; speech; gesture; gaze, and posture in embodied (face-to-face) interaction. All of these means of communication open up possibilities for recognising and analysing the variety of ways in which meaning is created and interpreted through signs (aesthetic coding) and how those meanings and signs are connected in transmedia narratives.

Signs, Kress argues, are motivated conjunctions of form and meaning based on the interest of the sign-maker, using culturally available resources. The production and interpretation of signs, he maintains, is characterised by five main features, namely:

- the emergence of design as the central term in semiotic production and design, according to Kress, is determined by the interest of the initial maker of the sign-complex and the interest and attention of an interpreter
- the intrinsic motivation to interpret signs through social interaction rather than arbitrarily
- the orchestration of meanings which suggest that texts are seen as complexes of signs in terms of arrangements and movement but framed by power

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[26] Gunther Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen, *Multimodal Discourse: The Modes and Media of Contemporary Communication* (London: Arnold, 2001), p. 21.
[27] Ibid.

Overall, as discussed throughout the central chapters of the thesis, the implication of these five features is that 'the current landscape of communication can be characterised by the metaphor of the move from telling the world to showing the world'.[28] The metaphor points to a profound change in the act of reading that can be characterised by the phrases 'reading as interpreting' and 'reading as ordering', or even, as Mackey posits, 'reading as playing'.[29]

An important part of studying transmedia narratives therefore involves examining how translating a story from a single medium into a transmedia chain affects the use of modes and signs establishing how these require that the story's setting, plot and character be further adapted in a manner that can exploit more fully the new artistic and economic affordances of the text.[30] When set alongside Geert Lovink's description of tactical media (2005) and Katy Varnelis' notion of the networked public (2008), discussed in the final section of this chapter, this process of adaptation is crucial to the focus of this thesis as it indicates the cultural resources available at the time and observes how they influenced the creation and development of transmedia narrative. The following chapters will argue that as narratives are presented in the form of transmedia storyworlds, literature is once again availing itself of the emergent technologies to remain relevant, to keep in line with the communication culture of the day.

Transmedia storyworlds offer a wide range of possible reading paths, perhaps an infinite variety, that become available as readers engage with the same story in different media and with varying degrees of participation which determine the level of creative control and

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[28] Gunther Kress, *Literacy in the New Media Age* (Oxford: Routledge, 2003), p. 140.
[29] Ibid, p. 38; Mackey, *Literacies across Media: Playing the Text*, p. 166.
[30] See Andrew Burn and Peter Parker, *Analysing Media Texts* (London: Continuum, 2003).

decision-making awarded to them. Each media version allows the reader entry into the narrative world because each media version is a window onto the world. Whereas in the case of traditional linear narratives the task of the reader is to observe and follow a given order, and within that order to engage in interpretation, the task of readers of transmedia storyworlds is to 'browse around'. Readers establish order through principles of relevance of their own making, and to construct meaning from the proliferation of narrative versions, that in contemporary times, unlike with *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, *The Wizard of Oz* or *The Lord of the Rings*, are all made available on the mainstream market contemporaneously.

Thus, the transmedia storyworld subjects itself, I argue, to the logic of play through a multiplatform but heterogeneous space, where representation is conceived of not as a window on to the world, but rather as 'windowed' itself – with windows that open on to other representations or other media.[31] Within the transmedia storyworld the narrative world is windowed, represented in the different media, inviting readers to become immersed, to engage with it on a number of narrative levels (navigation, interpretation, creation). As these levels intertwine and overlap they offer multiple points of view so that readers become the point of convergence of the narrative world. Because the narrative world coexists on a parallel dimension to the real world, readers makes a conscious choice to engage with the world.

Readers, I argue, choose to participate in play, what Johan Huizinga calls 'an act apart' by entering 'the magic circle' that Huizinga defines as a playground, 'i.e. forbidden spots, isolated, hedged round, hallowed, within which special rules obtain. All are temporary worlds within the ordinary world, dedicated to the performance of an act apart,' a concept to be elaborated

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[31]Bolter and Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media*, pp. 33-34.

on in subsequent chapters.[32] The following chapters analyse how the *Harry Potter* series was formed and shaped by media chains of narrative, with each version in the chain contributing to the creation and maintenance of the storyworld. This process results in the reconfiguration of readers' activities in the Twenty-first century. When they make a conscious choice to participate in the storyworld presented by the transmedia chain, to perform an act apart, the media become, arguably, 'simultaneously technical analogs and social expressions of our identity'.[33] Bolter and Grusin claim that:

> When we look at a traditional photography or a perspective painting, we understand ourselves as the reconstituted station point of the artist or the photographer. When we watch a film or a television broadcast, we become the changing point of view of the camera. When we put on the virtual reality helmet, we are the focus of an elaborate technology for real-time, three-dimensional graphics and motion tracking. This is not to say that our identity is fully determined by media, but rather that we employ media as vehicles for defining both personal and cultural identity.[34]

In the digital era this has important implications as, I argue throughout the central chapters of this thesis, contemporary readers are able to adopt a point of view internal to the visual environment that is malleable. On the other hand, digital transmedia, such as that operative in the transmedia chain, allow readers to be connected to a network of affiliations that are constantly changing. The networked self, unlike the immersed self that shuts itself off from the physical space around it, is able to play many roles at the same time and is made up both of the self that is doing the networking and the various selves propagated in cyberspace.[35] Bolter and Grusin claim that:

> Because there is no single, privileged point of view, the self becomes a series of 'other' points of view – the intersection of all the possible points of view that can be taken in a given space.

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[32] Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture* (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1955; repr. 1992), p. 10.

[33] Bolter and Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media*, p. 232.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Interestingly, Bolter and Grusin claim that many of the enthusiasts for digital media are also enthusiastic about space exploration, which they often associate with a conservative and highly individualistic politics. This could further justify transmedia studies' interest in storyworld space.

> The space of virtual reality – and insofar as virtual reality is a paradigm, the space of contemporary culture – redefines the ego in its traditional sense. On the one hand, there is nothing that drives character or self-definition [...] on the other hand, the virtual self seems to be defined precisely as a series of such empirical accessories that the individual puts on, just as she takes on characteristics in the game of Dungeons and Dragons [...] character is similarly parameterised [...] with its six parameterised degrees of freedom.[36]

The six parameterised degrees here indicated are those allowed within a fully interactive graphic application, where the user can remain in the same place and move the viewing angle up and down, left and right, side to side. Thus, this degree of freedom in interactive graphic applications can be taken as an analogy for the movement allowed in transmedia storyworlds that aim to enhance spatial and emotional immersion to unprecedented levels. Critics like Marcos Novak, Jaron Lanier and Meredith Bricken, reiterate the importance of immersion when they claim that:

> […] instead of asserting its identity over against the world, the virtual self repeatedly denies its own identity, its separateness from others and from the world. It does not learn by scientific study in a subject-object relationship, but by 'immersion,' which produces empathy and identification.[37]

Therefore, throughout this study, I would like to argue that the reading self is immersed in the playground created by the transmedia story and in appropriating the centre point of the world, takes control by interpreting and appropriating the modes and 'signs' of the story whilst managing the elective design and roaming perspectives of the narrative. Readers become travellers into the space created by the transmedia franchise, facilitated by convergence.[38] As they enter the transmedia storyworld, the traditional meaning associated with the term 'reader' becomes inadequate because by becoming immersed in the transmedia storyworld, readers engage with the narrative through a number of positions becoming also spectators, viewers,

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[36] Ibid, pp. 247-48.
[37] Ibid, p. 251.
[38] To read more about the notion of the reader as traveller view: Richard Gerrig, *Experiencing Narrative Worlds: On the Psychological Activities of Reading* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1993).

players, producers, writers and networkers. The playful mode of the transmedia chain functions as a membrane allowing the world it presents to become an enclosed space and readers become travellers into this space defined by the narrative world. As noted by Edward Castronova in *Synthetic Worlds: The Business and Culture of Online Games* (2001) this membrane 'can be considered a shield of sorts, protecting the fantasy world from the outside world', and readers penetrate the shield to participate in the act of play.[39]

Playing across Transmedia Storyworlds and the Notion of Reading as Orchestrating

According to Mackey, digital age readers are savvy at identifying (and ordering into cohesive meaning) what each media platform can offer, both in terms of the information it provides and the opportunity for participation. As they negotiate multiple versions of the story, they are able to sift through and fit together aspects of the storyworld presented through the visual/ aural, the spectacular, the ergodic and the ludic as well as the social, amongst others, as described in the central chapters of this thesis. They do this, Mackey maintains, through practices of cross-media textual processing. Mackey coins the expression 'playing the text' to describe this contemporary reading practice that signals cross-media textual processing and involves pretence and performance through play. The word 'play', Mackey claims, is unique in its ability to describe the way we talk about the arts because it is multimodal:

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[39] Instead of being impenetrable, however, an examination of contemporary virtual worlds reveals that the magic circle is actually quite porous and there appears to be a relationship between virtual worlds and the outside world. Even though virtual worlds display a range of attributes that are unique to their realm, they also exhibit characteristics deriving from the outside world. In *Synthetic Worlds: The Business and Culture of Online Games*, Edward Castronova uses the term 'synthetic world' because a synthetic world 'cannot be sealed completely; people are crossing it all the time in both directions, carrying their behavioural assumptions and attitudes with them' (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005). As this suggests, elements of synthetic worlds are being evaluated in terms of their importance in the outside world. As stated by Castronova, the 'allegedly "virtual" is blending so smoothly into the allegedly "real" as to make the distinction increasingly difficult to see' (148).

> We use it as a verb to talk about music and games: we play the piano or play tag. As a noun, of course, it is a staged drama. But we can also have a play of light (on water, on a screen) or a play on words.[40]

The word also implies a process of make-believe that requires readers/viewers/players to make an imaginative leap into the storyworld. Within this type of storyworld, the future is unknown even though the text is already complete when readers begin to engage with it, because every engagement provides an opportunity for a new performance of interpretation.[41]

Mackey claims that, as we read, we 'not only pretend, but we perform our pretending when we play'.[42] Play is associated with reading as well as make-believe because it allows the storyworld to become separate from reality so that readers' actions take place in a space that is somewhat separate from that of the everyday. These actions, performed within the storyworld, are often shared through network culture and made public so that they function as manifestations of interpretation. Yet, even in silent reading, Mackey finds an element of performance in the interpretation of meaning because the hands, eyes and breath are engaged in finding and maintaining attention. When readers engage with multiplatform stories they are careful to abide by the working conventions of each of the individual media, responding to the requirements of their particular affordances whilst 'orchestrating' (strategically engaging with multiple versions at the same time) their participation in the storyworld. Readers, Mackey claims, balance their focus on the content of the story with an exploration of the ways in which texts work within transmedia chains on both diegetic and extradiegetic levels and reading processes are rendered protean. In the final chapter of *Narrative Pleasures in Young Adult Novels, Films and Video Games* – her Young Adult reader-response study of interpretative practices in book,

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[40] Mackey, *Literacies across Media: Playing the Text*, p. 166.
[41] See Richard Gerrig, *Experiencing Narrative Worlds: On the Psychological Activities of Reading* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1993).
[42] Mackey, *Literacies across Media: Playing the Text*, p. 166.

film and game formats – Mackey observes that, as stories become more distributed and diffuse, complete fictional worlds are only available to those who negotiate multiple media that fit into a textual ecology – story versions that all belong to the same storyworld but are adapted and retold according to the affordances of each medium.[43]

In a bold move, she claims that instead of listing narrative elements in order to understand readers' relationship to and engagement with story, scholars should attend to 'the behaviours and strategies by means of which interpreters make as much narrative sense as suits them from a text or set of texts'.[44] Turning her attention to an empirical study of readers' responses, she concludes that the social element she initially associated with reading and writing became a generative one in the mid-1990s, providing the stage for the *performance* of interpretation. Within the group of participants, performance remains ambiguously situated:

> One can perform a task, so it has a connotation of work. With a slight tweak of meaning, performance is closely associated with *assessment;* one can perform in order to be evaluated. But there is also a connotation of *play-acting*, of producing some kind of pretence. In very real ways, all three aspects of this word played a part in the collaborative production of meaning.[45]

The observation about performance as work, assessment and play-acting serves to position Mackey very closely with critics who were studying changes in the communication landscape at the turn of the millennium, particularly Jenkins, Lévy, Murray, Lovink and Varnelis. Through its focus on group dynamics and the social generative potential that engagement with narrative holds in these cultural contexts, it also lays the ground for a more detailed study of emergent narrative because it plays out within the convergence culture transmedia narrative discussed above and in the concluding chapter of this thesis. At this point, a clearer

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[43]Mackey, *Narrative Pleasures in Young Adult Novels, Films and Video Games*, p. 219.
[44] Ibid, p. 220.
[45] Ibid, p. 236.

understanding of the nature of narrative and the impact of digitalisation on narrative production, distribution, reception and interpretation is needed in order to map out the landscape in which reader participation and reconfiguration occurs.

Digital Age Changes to Narrative

In *Hamlet on the Holodeck: The Future of Narrative in Cyberspace* (1997), Janet Murray became one of the first to speculate, in a sustained way, about the future of narrative after the advent of the computer.[46] The book was a response to the most recent developments in the way new narrative opportunities appear with emerging technologies; for instance, the moving image with the advent of film and television (the effect of which will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 2). Murray anticipated that the computer would lead to the end of storytelling as we know it and questions what it will be like for readers to experience a more intense kind of immersion. In *Hamlet on the Holodeck* she coins the term 'Active Creation of Belief' to contrast with Coleridge's classic term, 'suspension of disbelief' and to repudiate the notion that narrative pleasures are incompatible with interactivity, a notion central to my work. Murray states:

> To my mind, active creation of belief is a function of *immersion* reinforced by *agency*. *Immersion* is derived from consistency and depth and from the establishment of clear boundaries. A fantasy novel series or a detailed television storyworld encourages us to believe in it by being extremely detailed and consistent. When fans are able to explore the world, to ask questions of it, and discover new and consistent facts about it, then their belief increases as a result of their actions and they experience the *active creation of belief*.[47]

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[46] Janet Murray, *Hamlet on the Holodeck: The Future of Narrative in Cyberspace* (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1997).

[47] Retrieved from: <http://inventingthemedium.com/2012/01/30/active-creation-of-belief/#more-377>≥ [accessed 01/07/2013].

Introducing fans as active readers eager to participate in multiple facets of the storyworld, Murray draws attention to the ways in which the computer enhances the opportunity for engagement. The kaleidoscopic power of the computer, she claims, offers us the ability to see multiple patterns in the same elements that 'reflect our turn-of-the-century sensibility' – our desire to act as citizens of a global community and in narrative to 'capture the world as it looks from many perspectives – complex and perhaps ultimately unknowable but still coherent'.[48] For Murray, the increased level of agency that the computer offers means that readers are able to step into storyworlds to an unprecedented degree, experiencing new levels of immersion, altering their vantage point at will and constructing their own worlds, whilst changing the outcomes of quests and adventures.

Clearly optimistic about the potential of digital media, Murray suggests in *Hamlet on the Holodeck* that narratives produced in digital formats would go as far as to allow those who become immersed in them to have the power to transform setting, plot and character. The imaginative artist of cyberspace, Murray maintains, will be a 'procedural author' who defines the rules of action rather than determining behaviour itself. Successful cybernarratives must, therefore, establish their own conventions, rules by which things should happen and structures of participation through which the interactor (the participant responding to the rules set by the procedural author) engages in textual interpretation. (This is a thesis she revises in her later works, as discussed below.)

From a contemporary perspective, and in relation to my work, one may say that Murray's most interesting predictions in *Hamlet on the Holodeck* are, however, those she describes in relation to digital TV. By studying and speculating about the impact of digital TV, Murray is able to

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[48] Murray, *Hamlet on the Holodeck: The Future of Narrative in Cyberspace*, pp. 161-62.

comment on the early stages of what has come to be known as 'social media'. She notes viewers populating hundreds of computer chat rooms and newsgroups, often logging on while watching TV shows in order to share their responses with fellow audience members. In the same year that Rowling's first *Harry Potter* book appeared, Murray predicted that the demand for participatory engagement would increase and, as epitomised in Rowling's series over the next ten years, indeed it did.

In her later work, *Inventing the Medium: Principles of an Interaction Design as a Cultural Practice* (2011), and a 2012 article, entitled 'Transcending Transmedia: Emerging Story Telling Structures for the Emerging Convergence Platforms', Murray revises (based on her experimental work at Georgia Tech), many of the claims made in 1997, adopting the new vocabulary that had, by this point, emerged to describe this booming participatory culture. In *Inventing the Medium*, she claims that good digital design develops through interactive rituals between users and digital artefacts in society, expanding the depth and breadth of symbolic representations whilst broadening the spectrum of shared attention. Of particular relevance to my own work are what Murray calls the three foundational principles of *Inventing the Medium*, together with the four affordances of digital age narrative. In her view, these three principles and four affordances indicate ways in which contemporary transmedia stories will benefit from the immersion phenomenon that she calls the 'collective creation of belief' (referred to above as the active creation of belief, terms that she seems to use interchangeably). She acknowledges the network culture (discussed in further detail below) that grows around transmedia stories and claims that networks, developed through convergence culture, produce more meaningful interactivity and deeper narrative immersion, two central concerns to my study as I analyse how readers engage with story through transmedia landscapes. The three principles she states are:

- All things made with electronic bits and computer code belong to a single new medium, the digital medium, with its own unique affordances.
- Designing any single artefact within this new medium is part of the broader collective effort of making meaning through the invention and refinement of digital media conventions.
- When we expand the meaning-making conventions that make up human culture, we expand our ability to understand the world and to connect with one another.[49]

According to Murray, these, together with the four affordances of digital narrative will make up the designer's palette for representation in any digital format or genre. Murray's affordances emerge from social contexts and are a product of networking rather than rules simply created by a single author/designer. This leads her to re-orientate the role of designers towards those of astute interpreters, questioning the role of readers in interpreting and actively guiding the narrative. The effect of this change is that levels of interaction and immersion are increased by digitality and readers now have creative power over the narratives that they engage with.[50] Her list of affordances acknowledges the input of readers and includes a preliminary claim that everything made of electronic bits is potentially:

- procedural (composed of executable rules)
- participatory (inviting human action and manipulation of the represented world)
- encyclopaedic (containing very high capacity of information in multiple media formats)
- spatial (navigable as an information repository and/or a virtual place)[51.]

These four affordances are relevant to my study of the *Harry Potter* story as a transmedia narrative because they highlight the ways in which stories can travel across various media platforms carrying their audiences with them. They are also applicable to a study of characteristics of fantasy storytelling more generally. The multiple world structure of fantasy

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[49] Retrieved from <http://inventingthemedium.com/three-principles/>[accessed 01/06/2013].
[50] Janet Murray, *Inventing the Medium: Principles of an Interaction Design as a Cultural Practice* (Massachusetts: MIT, 2012), p. 12.
[51] Ibid, p. 12.

stories, together with the plethora of real and magical creatures and the tightly woven action plots, give transmedia producers much to work with in terms of procedural, participatory narrative that needs worlds described in encyclopaedic detail whilst also remaining navigable. Hans Heino Ewers was among the first to discuss transmedia storytelling within the fantasy genre in his 2005 essay entitled 'A Meditation on Children's Literature in an Age of Transmedia'.[52]

Stories, Ewers maintains, are now expected to function across multiple platforms engaging the readers in large-scale conversations with the text. He coins the term 'Multimedia System Offers' (MSO) to describe transmedia narratives, and although it was never adopted by those outside the sphere of children's literature studies, his explanation of what facilitates this dynamic remains helpful in thinking about the relationship between the different versions of the text. His analysis results in an independent variation on the convergence culture discussed by Jenkins, as well as the remediation dynamic as analysed by Bolter and Grusin. Ewers claims that, for a long time, only film and television 'offers' were considered suitable for multiplatform development. It was not until the *Harry Potter* phenomenon in the mid-1990s that it became clear that even a printed book could mobilise a cultural phenomenon.

Ewers describes the ubiquity of the series as comprising a new hypermedia genre aimed at young adults and children, an audience that does not select individual versions to interact with but instead prefers to engage with the whole chain of media versions. In this scenario, the different media versions of the story function as 'reproductions of narratives which are actually neither books, nor radio plays, films nor comics, but trans-media stories which predate all forms

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[52] Hans Heino Ewers, 'A Meditation on Children's Literature in an Age of Multimedia' in Emer O'Sullivan, Kimberley Reynolds and Rolf Romoren, eds., *Children's Literature Global and Local: Social and Aesthetic Perspectives* (Oslo: Novus Press 2005), pp. 255-68.

of media realisation'.[53] Ewer's analysis identifies plot, setting and character as the key components that are adapted according to each media's affordances and in response to the flexibility required by the transmedia project. He states:

> The openness of multimedia system offers entails a remarkable flexibility: since they are subject to permanent updates such offers are not only able to integrate changing environmental conditions but also to react to changing expectations of the audience. They are thus always up to date and stay close to the needs of their spectators, listeners and/or readers. This permanent updating is often based on a direct producer-consumer communication, mostly via the Internet.[54]

Within the chain as explained by Ewers, each version adds elements to the story following the leading medium. The central chapters of my work consider such additions in relation to the fantasy genre, analysing what each medium expands or detracts. My analysis also outlines the different invitations to participation offered to readers within networked culture, starting with Ewers' claim that 'the place and time of the action, social environment, action patterns and characters […] selected style and genre conventions' are central to adaptations across media.[55] Linking Ewers' claim about the importance of setting, plot and character to Murray's four affordances allows me to make a compelling argument in favour of fantasy's boom at the turn of the century.

Throughout this thesis, I will argue that fantasy stories are at the centre of this literary and cultural boom because they can be characterised as always moving towards the unveiling of narrative substratum through worlds described in extensive detail. The key events of a fantasy text are bound to each other, to the narrative world and ideally to the tale's theme. This integration occurs in a way that permits the endless retellings and permutations of the

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[53] Ibid, p. 256.
[54] Ibid, p. 259.
[55] Ibid, p. 257.

narrative's motifs and a sense of ending, typically needed for the procedural, the participatory, the encyclopedic and the spatial to develop in multiple platforms. Fantasy's heuristic structures are open and expansive and its stories feature a panoply of characters, foremost among whom will be easily identifiable heroes.[56] Of interest to my particular study are high fantasy tales. Many high fantasy novels, including *The Lord of the Rings* and the *Harry Potter* series, echo medieval settings and the hero's quest to save a kingdom and often the characters are drawn from myth and legend. The protagonist is engaged in a struggle against external forces of evil and internal temptations of weakness and the destiny of entire civilisations depends on the outcome of this struggle. The struggle is often symbolic of a quest for identity that develops through a series of adventures which end with a message of hope for the hero and his world.[57]

When analysing how the narrative rendition of plot, setting and character is translated across media, I argue that it is essential to consider that all the action in such stories is tightly woven, directed towards the single final purpose – the triumph of good. In the *Harry Potter* series, for example, readers are presented with the magical world of Hogwarts, a wizarding boarding school and its surroundings, and a hero on a quest for knowledge and self-identity. The series develops an intricate underlying battle of good versus evil, as the eponymous protagonist battles to defeat the lord of evil, Voldemort. Each book in the series chronicles a year in Harry's school life at Hogwarts and tells the tale of his growing up. Together with his best friends, Ron and Hermione, in the first novel, *The Philosopher's Stone* (1997), Harry seeks to protect the philosopher's stone and to stop the arch villain from attaining immortality. In *The Chamber of Secrets* (1998), Harry stops a basilisk from attacking students. In *The Prisoner of Azkaban*

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[56] See Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion*, 2nd edn. (London: Routledge, 2003).
[57] For more on the structure of high fantasy narratives see David L. Russell, *Literature for Children: A Short Introduction,* 3rd edn. (New York: Longman, 1997), p. 180.

(1999), he must learn to face death eaters. In *The Goblet of Fire* (2000), Harry must get through the Triwizard Tournament and combat Voldemort at the end. In *The Order of the Phoenix* (2003), he must stop Voldemort from possessing his mind and killing wizards or muggles. In *The Half-Blood Prince* (2005), Harry visits Voldemort's past, learning more about the villain who becomes more dangerous with each new installment of the series, until finally, in *The Deathly Hallows* (2007), Harry knows he must destroy all of the seven horcruxes created by Voldemort in order to restore peace in the world.

The series fits comfortably within the tradition of the high fantasy *Bildungsroman* as well as the school story genre; however, its success has, by far, surpassed that of any of the conventions it draws on. The importance of the *Harry Potter* series as an agent of literary and cultural change, through its presentation of new points of convergence between the reader and the story, will be discussed throughout the central chapters of this thesis as I discuss how readers engage with stories in the various media. Throughout my work, I assume that the *Harry Potter* audience is familiar with the franchise phenomenon that surrounded the publication of the books. Furthermore, whilst there is no 'fixed model reader', the role of the reader varies according to the generative strategies of each text and, I would like to argue, each medium.[58]

If the text in question is, in Umberto Eco's terms, an 'open' work, there are no fixed model readers or 'addressees' and readers are offered maximal interpretative freedom because the author or 'sender' induces a state of pluriprobability, as is the case with transmedia stories. The end of the text is not its final state, since readers are invited to make their own free choices and

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[58] See Umberto Eco, *The Open Work*, trans. Anna Cancogni (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1989 [1962]).

to re-evaluate the entire text from the point of view of their final decision. If, on the other hand, the text in question is a restrictive text, authors offer their addressees continual occasions for forecasting, but at each step they reassert the rights of their own text, saying without ambiguity what has to be taken as 'true' in their fictional world, an issue of creative control that forces a reconsideration of the roles both of reader and author in branded transmedia franchises.

In terms of high fantasy stories, the works are open because they do not imply a fixed model reader but, on the other hand, they seem to be 'closed' because the authors seem to keep a strong hold on what is to be taken as true in their multiple worlds, as discussed in relation to Rowling and the *Harry Potter* series in Chapter 4 and 5 of this thesis. Of course, Eco points out that both of these strategies may fail due, perhaps, to the cultural and psychological background of the addressee and, in fact, texts that aim at a very particular kind of model reader are open to aberrant decoding and are called 'closed' texts. Eco points out that 'an open text cannot be described as a communicative strategy if the role of its addressee (the reader, in the case of verbal texts) has not been envisaged at the moment of its generation qua text'.[59] Likewise, therefore, stories translated and distributed across various media platforms cannot successfully engage readers/viewers/players/participants into their construction of the storyworld unless – as discussed throughout the central chapters of this thesis – they have taken their technological affordances and the readers' agency into account.

As part of their generative strategies, transmedia storytellers often rely on readers' knowledge of other similar genre texts, as well as other media versions of the same story, thus demanding

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[59] Umberto Eco, *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979, repr. 1984), p. 3.

the co-operation of readers. It may be deduced that critical readers will be able to read deeper between the lines because of their previous readings of a similar quest pattern found in many Arthurian stories, myths and legends, as well as classic and modern fantasy stories, and also because of the culture of extreme literacy that prevailed during the publication span of the *Harry Potter* series.

In each rendition of transmedia storyworlds, therefore, the readers/viewers/participants of/in high fantasy stories have many tasks to perform. They must face the world structure and recognise what the text accepts and mentions as actual versus propositional attitudes and, moreover, they must compare the presented world with their own world of reference. Readers must also collaborate in the course of the story by making forecasts about the forthcoming states of affairs, thus applying the processes of meta-reading (a process that can also be applied to interaction with film and game, as discussed in the following chapters). The end of the text not only confirms or contradicts the last forecasts but also strengthens or eliminates readers' expectations of the final state of the story. Ultimately, Eco states:

> *Every* work of art, even though it is produced by following an explicit or implicit poetics of necessity, is effectively open to a virtually unlimited range of possible readings, each of which causes the work to acquire new vitality in terms of one particular taste, or perspective, or personal performance.[60]

Developed as transmedia narratives, quest stories presented in these high fantasy tales therefore offer, on the one hand, variable narrative paths, thus presenting the possibility of interactivity. On the other hand, the fact that the contemporary stories are intertextual and refer back to the modern high fantasy stories, such as *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Chronicles of Narnia,* allows for the possibility of programmability, because the quest patterns presented are

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[60] Ibid, p. 63.

predictable and thus the story routes required by the various modes can be closely programmed based on the original. In addition, the linearity of fantasy stories, which relates to the characters' journeys, is balanced by the hypermedial nature of the discourses, which relate to the spatial configurations and deictic references that alternative universes present in most of these stories. Rich with archetypal symbols and motifs, they facilitate easy translation from one mode to another because they are not transmitted exclusively through language (as discussed further in terms of the visual/aural in Chapter 2, in terms of the ergodic/ludic in Chapter 3 and in terms of the social in Chapter 4). They require a playful reading of the text as the power of language to convey a storyworld is juxtaposed to that of other modes, such as moving images and erogidicity amongst others, rendering the stories multimedial and multimodal. In doing so, they invoke a reconfiguration of the reader that necessitates a reconsideration of the analytic framework that is used to study transmedia stories.

Reconsidering an Analytic Framework for Transmedia Stories

Writing in the same period as Kress and Van Leeuwen, Burn and Parker's *Analysing Media Texts* (2003) uses the *Harry Potter* series as a case study for the practice of transmedia storytelling (although they call it multimodal storytelling) in ways that have helped underpin my own analysis.[61] They comment on the construction of the storyworld, claiming that spatial configuration is expressed in radically different ways in book, film and game. The most obvious difference is that whilst the book relies on language to describe the storyworld, both the film and game use a combination of language and image to construct the setting, which must remain visually and diegetically cohesive throughout the transmedia chain if it is to enable immersion. They highlight the importance of structuring the storyworld effectively, calling this

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[61] Andrew Burn and Peter Parker, *Analysing Media Texts* (London: Continuum, 2003).

structural aspect the organisation of the world. They also, however, place importance on the representational (the way the storyworld is aesthetically rendered) and orientational (the perspectives into the storyworld offered) aspects of the text in various media (discussed below and through the central chapters) but they do not comment on the narrative techniques and aesthetics that enable full media chains to function. My work acknowledges the importance Burn and Parker give to organisational, representational and orientational strategies, while also drawing on Marie-Laure Ryan's work for the analytic framework needed to study transmedia narrative techniques across each platform, as well as the chain as a whole.

Building on Burn and Parker's study, I argue that narrative production across media platforms should account for the particular features of each mode. Drawing on Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001), I analyse how new media facilitate the use of multiple modes in the way they change the potential for representational and communicational action by their users, depending on a single aesthetic code for the representation of all information, irrespective of its initial modal realisation.[62] Additionally, they allow readers to write back to the producers of a text enabling them to enter an entirely new relation with all other media versions within the chain, a dynamic that enhances interactivity throughout the chain. Before analysing different levels of interactivity within the chain, I draw on the work of Marie-Laure Ryan to discuss the ways in which a story remain cohesive throughout the multiplatform chain and how transmediation affects the way in which readers engage with narrative. Ryan, working contemporaneously with Murray and Jenkins at the turn of the millennium, maintained that narratological methods of multimodal story analysis need to be re-evaluated to cater for new media trends, including the characteristics of interactivity and immersion of transmedia narratives.

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[62] Gunther Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen, *Multimodal Discourse: The Modes and Media of Contemporary Communication* (London: Arnold, 2001).

Throughout her body of work, Ryan re-assesses the meaning of narrative and narrative elements, maintaining that readers engage and interpret transmedia narratives through cognitive constructs, a notion explored in further detail below. She also juxtaposes interactivity with immersion to analyse their roles in producing a virtual reality: a navigable world in which users feels completely immersed and over which they have some degree of control. In *Narrative across Media: The Languages of Storytelling* (2004), she identifies narrative constants and calls for the creation of a cross-medialnarratology that examines how 'the medium configures the particular realisation of the narrative'.[63] She considers methods of analysing narrative in various media and proposes that to understand how different media versions of a story relate to each other, the medium's relation to language must be studied. She offers three conceptualisations of this:

- Narrative is an exclusively verbal phenomenon. You cannot speak of narrative outside language-supported media (that is, media that not only include a language track but also rely on language as their principal mode of presentation). This position is incompatible with the study of narrative across media.

- The set of all narratives is a fuzzy set. The fullest implementation of narrativity is in its language-supported forms. The study of narrative across media is only feasible if one can transfer the parameters of verbal narration to other media. This means, generally, finding a communicative structure that involves a narrator, narrative, and narrative message, in addition to sender (author) and receiver (reader, spectator, etc.).

- Narrative is a medium-independent phenomenon, and, though no medium is better suited than language to make explicit the logical structure of narrative, it is possible to study narrative in its non-verbal narration.[64]

Ryan's own work employs the second model. Taking the view that narrative constitutes a fuzzy set, she maintains that, though traditionally it has concerned itself with two kinds of space –

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[63] Marie-Laure Ryan, ed., *Narrative across Media: The Languages of Storytelling* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), p. 23.
[64] Ibid, p. 15.

the space of representation and the space of the real – the relationship between them is imbued by a system of narrative elements that operate in layers and is determined by an aesthetic code. This means that, as signifying systems (as described by Kress and Van Leeuwen and discussed above) become more complex, they also become more important in defining the ways in which readers engage with story, especially in transmedia stories like *Harry Potter*. Ryan's interpretation of this system of elements as a cognitive approach in which narrative meaning is a type of 'cognitive construct or mental image, built by the interpreter in response to the text' is, in fact, useful to my research because it places the reader at the centre of interpretation, a crucial position in an age of networked culture (discussed in a later section of this chapter) and ubiquitous storyworlds.[65] The focus on storyworlds and their design (offering different possibilities of interaction with setting, plot and character) in distinct media versions, in fact, becomes a central concern in my work.

Following Ryan, I maintain that the storyworld is central to transmedia storytelling, as the ability to inspire the mental representation of a world is the primary condition for the text to be considered a narrative.[66] World, Ryan claims, suggests space, but story is a sequence of events that develops in time. Ryan proposes a reconciliation of the two through a definition of storyworlds that hinges on both static and dynamic components. The static component includes all of the details that need to be established before the world is created, such as: a space with well-defined geographical features; a set of natural laws; social rules and values; a folklore; and an inventory of existents (species, objects, characters that inhabit the world). The dynamic component captures the unfolding of the world through physical events that bring changes to

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[65] Ibid, p. 8.
[66] Storyworlds are the focus of Marie-Laure Ryan and Jan-Noel Thon's forthcoming monograph, *Storyworlds across Media: Towards a Media-Conscious Narratology* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014).

the existents and mental events that give signification to the physical ones, such as the emotional reactions of characters.

Various media adaptations of the story will develop the static and dynamic components of the world differently, depending upon the medium's affordances. The storyworld can, however, be altered in four different ways. Firstly, through a process of expansion (secondary characters become heroes in their own stories and the original plot is expanded); secondly, through modification (the background structure of the world is redesigned); thirdly, through transposition (the main story of the original world is transferred to a different temporal and spatial setting), and lastly, through quotation (elements from other storyworlds are imported into the original world in a way that causes incongruence), discussed in further detail in Chapter 4.

Whilst I engage with Ryan's scholarship in order to frame my thinking about the forces at work in creating transmedia story chains, I question and refine her definition of interactivity, showing that neither virtual reality nor real virtuality – the term coined by Manuel Castells to describe the influence of cyberspace on social communication and artistic expression – adequately describes readers' interaction with narrative in the period when the *Harry Potter* books were being published.[67] Only a negotiation of both positions, as discussed below, seems adequate. As I see it, the desire to expand the storyworld is linked to the gratification that readers derive from being immersed in the storyworld where they are awarded various levels of agency.[68]

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[67] Manuel Castells, *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture. Volume 1: The Rise of the Network Society* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996).
[68] See Chris Crawford, *Interactive Storytelling* (New Riders, 2013).

In 'Beyond Myth and Metaphor: The Case of Narrative in Digital Media', Ryan asks what gratification the experiencer would receive from 'full immersion', meaning becoming a character, in a story.[69] In an attempt to reconcile the inherent linearity of narrative structures with the multiple paths made possible by the interactive nature of the digital text and the transmedia narrative, she anticipates that as digital media evolve, different types of interactivity will become possible at the levels of narrative themes and plots.[70] She claims that 'there are plot types and character types that are best for the novel, others are best for oral storytelling, and yet others are best for the stage or cinema', arguing that reader participation in the plot is therefore a compromise between the first-person and the third-person perspectives.[71] This notion is explored throughout the central chapters of this thesis; I also consider Ryan's claim that '[w]e simulate mentally the inner lives of these characters, we transport ourselves in imagination into their mind, but we remain at the same time conscious of being external observers'.[72] How this plays out in the different media versions and how readers' interaction with each version is determined by its affordances and narrative possibilities is a key focus of my research. It will further be juxtaposed with Celia Pearce's notion of play communities and the emergent intersubjective relationships that form between participants and characters in the storyworld.[73] For this purpose, it is worth pausing to take note of Ryan's four binary combinations of Internal/External and Exploratory/Ontological modes of engagement, as they will later help define the immersive potential of each of the media versions. Ryan maintains that 'users' can situate themselves at various distances from the fictional world in the following ways:

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[69] Marie Laure Ryan, 'Beyond Myth and Metaphor: The Case of Narrative in Digital Media' in *Games Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1 (July 2001). <http://www.gamestudies.org/0101/ryan/> [accessed on 31/07/2013].
[70] This is where she draws on Aarseth and his definition of four strategic forms of interactivity based on the binary pairs of internal/external and exploratory/ontological narrative construction (Aarseth 1997). Aarseth's own categories are not relevant to the discussion here, and will, therefore, not be described in detail.
[71] Ryan, 'Beyond Myth and Metaphor: The Case of Narrative in Digital Media'.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Celia Pearce, *Communities of Play: Emergent Cultures in Multiplayer Games and Virtual Worlds* (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2011).

In the *internal* mode, the user projects himself as a member of the fictional world, either by identifying with an avatar, or by apprehending the virtual world from a first person perspective. In the external mode, the reader situates himself outside the virtual world. He either plays the role of a god who controls the fictional world from above, or he conceptualises his activity as navigating a database [...] In the exploratory mode, the user is free to move around the database, but this activity does not make history nor does it alter the plot; the user has no impact on the destiny of the virtual world. In the ontological mode, by contrast, the decisions of the user send the history of the virtual world on different forking paths. These decisions are ontological in the sense that they determine which possible world, and consequently which story will develop from the situation in which the choice presents itself.[74]

These binary combinations highlight the change from analog (internal/external) to digital (exploratory/ontological) which, according to Ryan, allows us to distinguish between external/exploratory worlds in which readers regard the text as a searchable database rather than a fictional world, and the narrative elements of setting, plot and character are de-emphasised in favour of the game of its discovery. With internal/exploratory texts, readers are required to take their virtual bodies into the fictional world, but their role here is limited to actions that have no bearing on the narrative events. As will become clear in the course of this study, these distinctions become even more important when studying transmedial narrative because they allow us to study how storyworlds translate across different media platforms and how the affordances of each platform will determine the type of engagement and immersion that readers/viewers/players can have with each world.

The various types of engagement determine emergent meaning, meaning that comes out of the text, rather than goes into it, meaning, therefore, that is produced dynamically in the interaction between texts and readers. This, Ryan makes clear, is the imagined world and readers' immersion into these imagined worlds is based on a behavior that we learn earlier in life – games of make believe. She questions what these games of make-believe entail and how

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[74] Ryan, 'Beyond Myth and Metaphor: The Case of Narrative in Digital Media'.

engagement with storyworlds, such as that of *Harry Potter*, invites readers to play these games. In engaging with the *Harry Potter* storyworld, I argue, readers engage in an act of imagination, by which depicted objects and their surrounding worlds are made present to the mind and presented visually and aurally in the cinematic version (discussed in Chapter 2), navigable and ergodic in the ludic version (discussed in Chapter 3) and performed as part of the act of interpretation (as discussed in Chapter 4). Throughout my work, I study how make-believe is sustained in the transmedia chain and how readers negotiate Mackey's saliency and fluency in order to remain immersed in the narrative even after repeated exposure through different versions.

The suspension of disbelief is sustained through multiple reading, partly because of readers' emotional involvement in the fate of the hero so that, Ryan states, 'the depth of immersion – what Walton calls the richness of the game of make-believe – depends on the style of representation as well as on the disposition of the reader'.[75] *Harry Potter*'s style of representation draws on various discourses, including those of high fantasy and the school story genre. However, engagement with the storyworld at the height of convergence culture was also determined the play community that grew around the story. The balance between immersivity and interactivity, as they are discussed in the work of Ryan, Crawford, Pearce, Castells and Varnelis, is a central focus of study in this thesis. Each of the central chapters will examine how distinct media contribute to the chain's invitation to play within the storyworld in which audiences are, ideally, immersed on multiple levels that also blend the virtual and the real.

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[75] Marie-Laure Ryan, *Narrative as Virtual Reality: Immersion and Interactivity in Literature and Electronic Media* (Maryland: The John Hopkins University Press, 2001), p. 110.

In his books *The Rise of the Network Society: The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture Vol. 1* (1996), *The Internet Galaxy: Reflections on the Internet, Business and Society* (2001) and *Communication Power* (2009) among others, Castells – a sociologist associated with research on the information society, communication and globalisation – coins the term 'real virtuality' to draw attention to the ways in which convergence culture and new media technologies affect the interaction between readers and stories, while questioning whether full immersion could take place within the everyday world rather than the simulated one.[76] He claims that hypermedia is embedded within readers' response mechanisms as the new information age invites us to network and communicate with each other, through story content, constantly. Network societies, he claims, are based on:

> 'Narrowcasting' – the many-to-many communications of the internet and the flattening of the distinctions between producers and consumers of media content […so that…] the culture of real virtuality is woven from the heterogeneous experiences of the new multimedia environment.[77]

Readers in this age are able to assume or replicate shifts traditionally associated with producers, participating in the processes of collective intelligence as described by Lévy, by using the extreme literacy skills described both by Mackey and Jenkins, and discussed at the start of this chapter. At the turn of the millennium, media content became largely customised, functioning upon demand rather than supply so that, at the time Castells maintains, narrowcasting replaced broadcasting and transmedia culture became global in reach, but also local because it is personalised. Castells coins the term 'glocal' to refer to this content.[78]

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[76] Manuel Castells, *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture: Volume 1: The Rise of the Network Society* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996; repr. 2000), p. 372.

[77] Manuel Castells, 'Epilogue: informationalism and the network society', in P. Himanen, *The Hacker Ethic and the Spirit of the Information Age* (London: Secker & Warburg, 2001), p. 170.

[78] Castells, *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture: Volume 1: The Rise of the Network Society*, p. 341.

The implications of glocalisation will be analysed further in Chapter 4 through the dynamic of fandom, an arena in which fans appropriate/glocalise narrative aspects of the story, making them their own and thus, I argue, changing the parameters of internal/external and exploratory/ontological in ways that further blur the boundaries between distinct media versions and the overall transmedial storyworld. Building on Pearce's research into avatar identity and forms of organisational and sociological play activity in digital and networked environments, I study how the changing literary contexts of engagement at the turn of the century determine the type of interaction offered by transmedia chains, facilitating or hindering emergent media and behaviours that were generated by convergence culture. I explore Ryan's statement regarding emergent narrative and reconfigured models of immersion and interactivity:

> Emergent is the favourite term of contemporary literary theory for a type of meaning that comes out of the text, rather than goes into it, and that is produced dynamically in the interaction between the text and the reader. At the risk of creating an oxymoron, or a mixed metaphor, can a form of textuality cultivated for its emergent quality lure the reader into an immersive experience? Since it is always possible for a certain text to overcome the strictures of its medium, a more proper question to ask is whether interactivity can be a positive factor of immersivity.[79]

These reconfigured models influence and are influenced by digital culture so that for Castells the culture of real virtuality is an extension of consciousness and life itself. In relation to my study, the culture of real virtuality is important for five main reasons: it captures all cultures and is therefore inclusive; it embodies network culture (to be switched on is to be included, to be switched off is to be excluded); it encourages broad participation; it weakens traditional transmissions, and it reconfigures relations of space and time. It also has an effect on self-perception and therefore provides indication of ways in which readers position themselves within storyworlds and within networked story cultures.

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[79] Ibid, p. 258.

In *The Internet Galaxy: Reflections on the Internet, Business, and Society* (2001), Castells considers the social reality of the Internet in terms of user participation as 'an extension of life as it is, in all its dimensions, and with all its modalities'.[80] The increased number of resources available to individuals to participate in various media in the mid-to-late Nineties provide endless opportunities for the exercise of networked individualism, yet he questions whether they facilitate immersion. In describing the promise of immersion offered by virtual reality, Castells claims, 'the construction/reconstruction of the self is tantamount to managing the changing set of flows and codes that people are confronted with in their daily existence'.[81] 'Reality', according to Castells, should be considered/experienced as 'virtual because it is always perceived through symbols that frame practice'.[82] Digital-age material and symbolic frameworks of understanding, Castells implies, are renegotiated through the world of make-believe and the process of play.[83] Whilst the various immersive techniques adopted by transmedia narrative devices are analysed and their promise of increased agency and gratification through creative control and open access studied throughout my work, Castells's and Ryan's claims of emancipated reader participation are discussed and juxtaposed to Pearce's study of play communities in virtual worlds. The prophecy of open access and creative control are questioned, and analysed alongside the role that digital fandoms and networked publics play in this shifting media landscape, to establish how far texts, readers and the processes of reading have, in fact, been reconfigured.

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[80] Manuel Castells, *The Internet Galaxy: Reflections on the Internet, Business, and Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 118.

[81] Manuel Castells, 'The net and the self: working notes for a critical theory of the informational society' in *Critique of Anthropology*, vol. 16, no. 1 (1996), pp. 9-37 (p. 34).

[82] Castells, *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture. Volume 1: The Rise of the Network Society*, p. 372.

[83] Castells, *The Internet Galaxy: Reflections on the Internet, Business, and Society*, p. 54; David Bell, *Cyberculture Theorists: Manuel Castells and Donna Haraway* (Oxford: Routledge, 2007), p. 86.

Networked Publics and the Dynamics of Digital Fandom

In order to understand how interactivity and immersion were perceived at the turn of the century, it is important to establish how the cultural convergence context of the time manipulated the positioning of grassroots audiences (in relation to mainstream corporations) and the ways in which they were able to exert ontological power over the storyworld. As the *Harry Potter* books were published and slowly developed into a transmedia chain in the mid-to-late 1990s, computer networking was established as a central component in communications and media content delivery and this had a significant impact on levels of agency awarded to readers (discussed further in Chapter 4). Kazys Varnelis observes that:

> The Internet is the product of the convergence of communication technologies. It is a network over which a variety of media can flow without regard to their specific qualities. [It] not only facilitates the traditional modes of one-to-one communications (as with telephone and telegraph) or one-to-many communications (as with newspapers and television), it also permits new forms of many-to-many and peer-to-peer communications and sharing.[84]

The new forms of many-to-many and peer-to-peer communications and sharing resulted in the emergence of a collective intelligence and networked culture (as discussed with reference to Lévy and Castells) that had great impact on the way in which transmedia stories developed and the need for stories born in distinct media to be redesigned to sustain transmedia storyworlds through convergence culture. Considered to be a new form of social and cultural logic, networked culture is highly concerned with notions of digital economy, free labour, ubiquitous narrative, tactical media and the power user within the public sphere. Questions remain over how and how far it influences the reconfiguration of the Twenty-first century reader.[85]

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[84] Kazys Varnelis, *Networked Publics* (Massachusetts: MIT, 2008), p. 81.
[85] All of these terms are explored further in the central chapters of this thesis. For further information, see Seth Giddings and Martin Lister, eds., *The New Media and Technocultures Reader* (Oxford: Routledge, 2011).

Throughout this thesis, I argue that as network culture is manifested in the forms of participation in cultural and social processes of production, it attempts to negotiate the early utopian discourse of cyberspace with the conservative backlash that began in the early 1990s and recalibrates the naive promise of autonomous reader control over mainstream story production into one of collaborative interpretation. In the early 1990s, users (and readers) were, for the most part, isolated in the space in front of their screen, processing data and operating within an environment that sought to represent the world through the distinct systems and software provided by computing machines. In the context of reading, likewise, the reader was encouraged to read alone, accessing the storyworld primarily through book and filmic form and engaging in private methods of interpretation.

The digital era that this represented is symbolised by the desktop machine, seen as the universal machine, placed in specific locations, allowing none of the mobility and flexibility of the mobile technology that was to follow. The promise of a future in which the machine would allow participants to enter simulated worlds fully (through embodied immersion) was epitomised by the case of virtual reality, achieved by blending computing technology and artificial intelligence. With the prospect of virtual reality came that of full immersion, as discussed in relation to Murray and Ryan. Whilst, in this sense, full immersion remains an unrealised goal even fifteen years later, it has been partly replaced, I would argue, by the notion of ubiquity; a cultural logic of pervasiveness that is manifested in transmedia storytelling through the phenomenon of the cultural attractor (according to Lévy, when consumption of a story attracts people of similar interests to pool knowledge by tapping into existing cultural resources, it becomes a cultural attractor) and the play community. New models of interactivity and immersion contribute to the dynamic of collective intelligence, and this reconfigures the reader in relation to the storyworld, which becomes a space for emergent play, as discussed

further in Chapter 4. An understanding of the logic behind network culture is necessary to establish its impact on the literary world and the reconfiguring of the reader.

Whilst other ages had their own kinds of networks, Castells maintains that 'ours is the first modern age in which the network is the dominant organisational paradigm, supplanting centralised hierarchies'.[86] As the Internet infiltrated every aspect of social life in the mid-1990s, it substantially adjusted the way in which people communicated and related to one another whilst also reconfiguring the public sphere.[87] The production and sharing of culture was facilitated through the formation of networks that were at the centre of convergence as described by Jenkins. The sharing takes such forms as artistic experience, niche and special interest group development, such as the *Harry Potter* fandom, celebrations of the aesthetics of parody, remix and appropriation among others. It contributes to the way in which the storyworld is expanded, modified, transposed and quoted and also affects readers' ability to move from external/exploratory modes of engagement to internal/ontological ones through a process of play.

Publics, too, according to Daniel Dayan, are different to audiences because rather than simply participating in entertainment for pleasure, they, 'actively direct attention onto messages they value'.[88] Dayan goes on to state: 'A public is not simply a spectator in plural, a sum of spectators, an addition. It is a coherent entity whose nature is collective, an ensemble characterised by shared sociability, shared identity and some sense of that identity'.[89] Participation is therefore qualified, through this lens, as dependent on a discourse of belonging

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[86] Quoted in Varnelis, *Networked Publics*, p. 147.
[87] Bolter and Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media*, pp. 212-20.
[88] Quoted in Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford and Joshua Green, *Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture* (Massachusetts: MIT, 2013), p. 166.
[89] Ibid.

and is not intended to mean necessarily political participation. He claims that those reading, listening, watching and playing do so differently in a world where they are aware of their value as part of a network and the opportunities that are available to them to participate in broader conversations about content as opposed to those who are locked out of 'meaningful participation'.[90] This corroborates Pearce's observations that play communities in virtual worlds allow for individual identity to evolve out of 'an emergent process of social feedback' that is strengthened as participants develop processes of intersubjectivity through their avatars, as discussed in further detail in Chapter 3.[91]

Transmedia narratives may, therefore, be described behaviourally as collaborative, distributed and variable. As readers' engagement with the story becomes cultish in nature, involving their everyday life, as discussed in Chapter 4, the boundaries between fictional and real – and even the categories themselves – need to be reconsidered.[92] Transmedia stories represent, this thesis argues, the processes of storytelling in flux and the period 1995-2010 constitutes an auspicious moment in the development of the trend. Transmedia remains, however, mostly an experiment in new behaviours, new communication patterns and new forms of community that enable emergent patterns of participation in culture and art. The notion of meaningful participation is questioned throughout this thesis as the terms for participation in storyworlds are reassessed together with the opportunities for diversity and democratisation in interpretation. Questions remain as to whether distribution is concerned with reducing audience members into consumers of mass-produced and mass-distributed content, numbers that media companies and brands hope to gather in fast and ruthless manners. Or, alternatively, whether the reconfiguration of

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[90] Ibid, p. 155.
[91] Pearce, *Communities of Play: Emergent Cultures in Multiplayer Games and Virtual Worlds*, p. 139.
[92] As described in Beryl Graham and Sarah Cook, *Rethinking Curation: Art after New Media* (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2010), p. 8.

the reader is not about the capitalist drive to distribute and market story, but rather about the concept of meaningful participation. Jenkins, Ford and Green state:

> This clash between a view which sees networked communication as fundamentally altering the nature of audienceship ("the people formerly known as the audience") and as changing nothing significant about existing structures ("consumptive behaviour by a different name") is one of a series of competing frames (lurking versus legitimate peripheral participation; resistance versus participation; audiences versus publics; participation versus collaboration, hearing versus listening; consumers versus co-creators) which are shaping our understanding of online participation during this transitional moment.[93]

The ways in which readers engaged with the *Harry Potter* series and other fantasy franchises is representative of contradictory pulls between a capitalist culture of participation and a political concept of participation (as will be discussed in Chapter 4). Yet, arguably, the moment remains transitional. Whilst the current cultural scenario places much importance on the commercial multiplatforming of stories adopted during the convergence boom as a response to the needs and desires of their fans, as exemplified by *Pottermore*, this is somewhat in conflict with the fans' own desire to exercise greater power over the decisions which impact the quality of our everyday lives as citizens. As evidenced by the history of fantasy's translation into multiple media, the development of participatory culture evidences differing stances in terms of what is expected both by and of readers.

My work builds on that of Jenkins, Ryan, Varnelis and Pearce in order to question how the networked public functions as an alternative term for the audience/consumer, and the work of art is valued more for the long-term processes of playful engagement and performative participation that it offers publics rather than its material value. The political economy of production and reception shifts from one of consumerism to one of connectedness (and, by implication, greater satisfaction through affective investment into the storyworld), bringing to

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[93] Jenkins, Ford and Green, *Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture*, p. 155.

the fore media's tactical and emergent properties.[94] When mainstream production houses create a cultural attractor, they proceed to make it a 'cultural activator', a storyworld that gives the audience something to do, some meaningful form of participation and the opportunity to mobilise agency within the storyworld.[95]

These artistic participatory spaces, therefore, evoke the ethos of the public sphere, a place of deliberation accessible to all in cultural contexts, which diminished in importance throughout the Twentieth century because of the rise of private ownership of media entities but remains essential to meaningful connection. The political economy at the turn of the millennium, however, encouraged an increased concentration of ownership of mainstream media properties by a select group of multinational conglomerates achieved through acquisition and mergers. This was coupled with common digital operating systems that encourage the distribution of content to be an 'industrial organising principle', as discussed by Simone Murray.[96]

Murray claims that this move towards content streaming (referring to the production of content that travels fluidly across transmedia platforms at the same time, rather than simply the delivery of video and audio content via the Internet) has consequences in the realm of public policy and, I would like to add, in the realm of artistic production and reception. This leads to a determining influence on readers' ability to engage with the storyworld through active participation, negotiation and appropriation, as discussed by Jenkins in his discussion of digital age literacies. Whilst media corporations champion content streaming as an effective way of ensuring successful capital investment in a swiftly changing technological, cultural and political

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[94] See Lévy, *Collective Intelligence: Mankind's Emerging World in Cyberspace*; Geert Lovink, *My First Recession: Critical Internet Culture in Transition* (Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures, 2011)
[95] Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*, p. 97.
[96] Simone Murray, 'Media Convergence's Third Wave Content Streaming' in *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, vol. 9, no. 8 (2003), pp. 8-18. <http://con.sagepub.com/content/9/1/8> [accessed 2/12/2013].

environment, the very fluidity and transferability of that content easily eludes the legal and commercial structures of those same companies blurring the boundaries between mainstreams and grassroots production.

As part of the networked public, this reconfigured structural logic opposes the commodity culture that forced the public sphere to become a 'theatre of consumption under high security and total surveillance' and enables the dynamics of fandom to come into play, mobilising multiple, overlapping networks that all those who are connected, inhabit.[97] Within this environment, and conducive to its success, the Internet is what Varnelis calls, 'a convivial milieu in which various political uses are thriving and new tools for political criticism and commentary are emerging'.[98] In this milieu, readers are invited to become fans, appropriating storyworlds in ways that are performative and reflect personal interpretation. Media do not remain simply channels of communication or commodities but instead become tactical media that contribute to the type of emergent narrative that, through processes of reading as play and performance contribute to transformative transmedia storytelling – aspects which will further be discussed in Chapters 3 and 4 of this thesis. My conclusion discusses how the development of the *Harry Potter* transmedia chain operates through the distinct media within the chain, questioning whether they are independently tactical and emergent or whether it is the chain as a whole that facilitates tactical and emergent engagement with the storyworld. I develop Lovink's discussion of tactical media in relation to the reconfigured position of the reader, whilst discussing whether his notion of tactility, although extremely prevalent to the *Harry Potter* phenomenon as it developed at the turn of the century, was already beginning to give way to more emergent forms of interactivity.

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[97] Katy Varnelis, *Networked Publics* (Massachussetts: MIT, 2008), p. 155.
[98] Ibid, p. 80.

Tactical and Emergent Media: The Changing Contexts for Transmedia Storytelling

Lovink is a central figure in the study of network cultures. Through his work at the Institute of Networked Cultures and the Foundation for the Advancement of Illegal Knowledge, he researched the power of Web 2.0 (used to subvert commercial capitalist structures of production) and published numerous books including *Dark Fiber* (2002), *Uncanny Networks* (2002), *My First Recession* (2003), *The Principle of Notworking* (2005), *Tactical Media, the Second Decade* (2005), and *Zero Comments: Blogging and Critical Internet Culture* (2007). Taken holistically, Lovink's work views network culture as a mixture of the political activity and popular culture that utilises tactical media to achieve its scope. Applied to my study, it is useful to analyse how tactical media fuelled or confounded the myth of *Harry Potter* as a series that would dramatically change literary landscapes and media industries in the way that it negotiates grassroots and mainstream political, economic and social interests, allowing for greater participation in storyworlds that are originally created and designed by mainstream media, but later are appropriated and negotiated through grassroots influence.

Tactical media are, according to Lovink, the *foundation* of network culture. When media use cultural artefacts to emphasise their performative affordances – 'performative' here being used in the sense that Mackey employs – they invite their users to use technology in creative ways, questioning the channels they work with as described by Simone Murray and Varnelis. Like digital fandom, therefore, Lovink's tactical media are characterised by a mobility that enables grassroots users to usurp some of the creative power traditionally associated with mainstream authors and directors, implying new strategies of interactivity. Ultimately, however, whilst new media function tactically within fandom in order to allow for the creation of mutant and hybrid

interpretations (or versions) of the mainstream narrative, they also mobilise emergent qualities that allow readers to affect the transmedial space of the storyworld in ways that change the pre-production, production, circulation and consumption patterns.

As storyworlds are negotiated by corporations and readers, the space of fandom becomes contested as mainstream publishing and production houses resist appropriation beyond what they feel is legitimate reference to characters and worlds of which they own copyright. Whilst mainstream corporations demonstrate a need for strong fan bases for their transmedia products, they also insist on equally strong parameters around fan activities, a tension explored in Chapter 4 of this thesis. This fraught relationship between 'top-down corporate-driven […] and bottom-up consumer-driven' processes affects the level of cultural agency granted to users because fandom, like tactical media, is partly a medium of crisis, criticism and opposition and partly a medium of opportunity, access and creativity.[99]

In 'The ABC of Tactical Media' (1997), Lovink and David Garcia claim that media's ability to assume oppositional positions is both a source of power and a limitation. Through the network cultures they generate, tactical media, like digital fandom, seek to operate outside of the capitalist system, yet they are inextricably linked to issues of media ownership and copyright laws, amongst others. In this way, I argue, in fandom readers'/users' input is neither completely subsumed nor exalted. The storyworld becomes a networked space, a public sphere in which interpretation is playfully negotiated through various modes that lead to what has been termed the cult-ification of narrative.[100] This cult-ification refers to the appropriation of mainstream narrative by grassroots influences that re-interpret and therefore arguably re-create

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[99] Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*, p. 18.
[100] Matt Hills, *Fan Cultures* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 117.

aspects of the source narrative to suit their own ideological and creative agendas as they remain connected with the knowledge community through story.

In an article entitled 'Harry Potter, Inc. Content Recycling for Corporate Synergy' (2002), Simone Murray explains the users' ambiguous position further and applies her theory to the *Harry Potter* series.[101] Explaining how multinational conglomerates produce 'brand cocoons' for their users to inhabit, she claims that 'AOL-TW's […] tactic was to create an all-encompassing environment structured around the immense value of the *Harry Potter* brand – a "brand cocoon" which consumers do not so much enter and exit as choose to exist within'.[102] Yet her analysis remains simplistic in its failure to account for the franchise's appeal to networked agency. By existing within ubiquitous narratives such as *Harry Potter*, fans interact with the mainstream material, using the Internet to build networks over which they can take control. They are also readers who acknowledge themselves as consumers of the story, buying into the world not only on a commercial level but also emotionally and ideologically. Acting as self-pronounced experts on narrative aspects such as setting, plot and character, they use the Internet to exert their creative power over grassroots interpretations of the story, participating in reconfigured strategies of interactivity.

As the following chapters show, reader activities imply a more entropic kind of media landscape, as following convergence culture's development at the turn of the century, interactivity started to revolve more around considerations of space and play, negotiation and metacommunication of ideas and interpretations. In *New Media: Culture and Image* (2009) Fuery states that 'interactivity is sold to us on the ground that it offers lots of choice in what

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[101] Simone Murray, 'Harry Potter, Inc. Content Recycling for Corporate Synergy' in *M/C: A Journal of Media and Culture*, vol. 5, no. 4 (2002). <http://www.media-culture.org.au/mc/0208/recycling.php> [accessed 02/10/2013].
[102] Ibid.

we do, see or use'.[103] She maintains that interactivity must be considered from the two angles of consumerism and creativity claiming that:

> Frameworks of interactivity can be viewed ideationally – as illusion and metaphor – because they are linked to a range of notions within new media that revolve around utopian discourse and a new architectonics of public space. If we can position the new media with all its networked sites, links, nodes, and forms as occupying new places and spaces in society and culture, then we can argue that certain acts and techniques of communication (through art and text) need a framework for operation and coordination. In order to control the foundations and structures of potential new (utopian) public space it is necessary (in non-digital versus digital culture) to connect the space that new media is determined by and the space in which it operates.[104]

Apart from being a digital age skill, interactivity is also a marketable component of new media products. Digital games, for example, are assessed on how much control the player is given within the game world. In new media theory, the focus has been on the liberalism of interactivity – how it can be a freeing technique as overt intervention or inhibition is pushed into the background, so that rather than remaining tactical in scope, new media become emergent, as discussed further below in relation to the production and design of the *Harry Potter* story in the distinct media of film, digital video games and fandom sites.

Each chapter will explore how, in the new media landscape, the focus on interactivity is central to the definition of the liminal spaces between producer/consumer, artist/spectator and the reconfiguration of readers and the process of reading. The question of creative control becomes dominant both to the aesthetics of works that require narrative boundaries established by an author in control to provide gratification and also in terms of access to these works and how far users are able to manipulate them in cultural contexts (Fuery describes these two aspects of interactivity as specific and variable, in turn). Therefore, in addition to the concept of

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[103] Kelli Fuery, *New Media: Culture and Image* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 41.
[104] Ibid.

immersive fallacy, it is useful to think in terms of an interactive fallacy, or one which endorses complete liberalisation and the development of spaces that are totally free of authorial control. New media theories push for increased user agency. However, the result of implementing this strategy may not provide the gratification associated with the move. Fuery maintains, for instance, that until the concept of interactivity is perceived as a process in which audiences participate and perform, it will not, as anticipated, become a liberating mechanism. Rather, it needs to be understood as a practice that is in 'a constant state of becoming' and 'needs people to be always becoming interactive with it'.[105] In order to do this, interactivity demands that we:

> […] divert from traditional and learned methods of communicating and creating different processes and forms of communication. This new network of exchange may no longer adhere to old literary models, bound by spatial and temporal linearity (although there is room to argue that it may still hang on to traces of this), but it does reflect the practice of them. Electronic forms of communication such as text messages and emails rely on an historical sense of being understood, performing to society's literary code and practice.[106]

In this way, interactivity may be viewed as a social practice that situates the possibilities for immersive environments, virtual realities and networked communication alongside interactivity rather than within it. In this context, as Jenkins, Mackey and Ewers also point out in their work on Twenty-first century reading strategies, becoming interactive implies engagement with differing and changing experiences rather than simply a mechanism of controlled response. Ryan claims that, in fact, 'the most prominent concerns of interactive narratology; the structures of choice (textual architecture), the modes of user involvement (types of interactivity), and the combinations of these parameters that preserve the integrity of narrative meaning' are what enable us to discuss emergent narrative.[107] If, she claims, interactivity is the characteristic that makes the greatest difference between old and new media,

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[105] Ibid, p. 43.
[106] Ibid.
[107] Marie-Laure Ryan, *Avatars of Story* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2006), p. 100.

it needs to be negotiated through convergence culture in order to ensure bottom-up input and top-down design in an integrated manner. As Ryan explains, the 'ideal top-down design should disguise itself as an emergent story, giving users both confidence that their efforts will be rewarded by a coherent narrative and the feeling of acting of their own free will, rather than being the puppets of the designer'.[108]

In discussing the specificity of various interactive situations or experiences, Fuery outlines the differences between ideological interactivity, illusory interactivity and resistant interactivity as they inform contemporary cultural awareness of digitality:

> In becoming new media subjects – either as illusory, ideological or resistant digital subjects – we understand digital media through the interactivity that is both inside and outside our temporal and spatial experiences – of engaging with artwork, playing a game, making phone call, accessing the Internet. How we react to the narratives present in digital media and how we participate with a digital community is part of the process of becoming an interactive subject.[109]

Although the proliferation of transmedia narratives has dominated the literary world for over fifteen years at the time of writing, this is still the first sustained study of the ways in which readers' engagement with multiplatform narratives in a networked culture is negotiated through the immersive and interactive affordances of each medium and the chain as a whole. The process of change from traditional media strategies to tactical and emergent ones, as well as that from silent audiences to interactive publics, has yet to be studied in depth. This study begins that work and, in doing so, it also draws on the work of Lévy, who argues that knowledge cultures (such as that generated by the convergence trend of the mid-1990s) will gradually alter the way that commodity cultures and nation states operate, implying that commodities that circulate will become resources for the production of meaning in a system

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[108] Ibid, pp. 99-100.
[109] Fuery, *New Media: Culture and Image*, p. 48.

where peer-to-peer technologies would be deployed in ways that challenge old systems of distribution and ownership.

As Lévy sees it, the new knowledge culture traverses four sources of power: nomadic mobility, control over territory, ownership over commodities and mastery over knowledge so that the future media landscape would be brokered between commercial media and collective intelligence.[110] As this new culture is absorbed within the political economy, it is accompanied by an understanding that all participation in the consumer economy will *not* necessarily constitute co-optation or resistance, but will lead to new kinds of economic and legal relations. This change requires media companies to rethink old assumptions about what it means to consume media: if the work of media consumers was once silent and invisible it is now becoming noisy and public. This is especially true within spheres such as audience measurement (will fans, for example, be the new beneficiaries of audience measurement?), the regulation of media content, the redesigning of the digital economy (so that more and more online content will come with a price tag), the rethinking of media aesthetics, the redefining of intellectual property rights and the re-engagement of citizens. This new knowledge culture is emergent and not simply tactical.

The development of the *Harry Potter* network demonstrates a tactical negotiation between capitalist and grassroots interests in the story, and its growth from a traditional book series to an auspicious, ubiquitous narrative phenomenon is indicative of how pivotal changes in the media landscape of the time were and how they began the work of reconfiguring what it means to be a reader. It also demonstrates the difficulties inherent in adapting transmedia stories for

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[110] Pierre Lévy, *Collective Intelligence: Mankind's Emerging World in Cyberspace*, trans. Robert Bononno (New York: Perseus Books, 1997), p. 28.

purposes that go beyond resistance and subversion to changes that impact production and reception strategies more directly, causing them to be modified in ways that encourage more nomadic, democratic forms of engagement.

As the *Harry Potter* case study demonstrates, the turn of the Twenty-first century was, however, still negotiating the ways in which transmedia could develop, especially in response to the new affordances of the Internet. The Web could contribute to the current medium to medium or small scale adaptation and branding exercises that had the book format at the basis of its development. The case of Rowling and Warner Bros. is revealing, precisely because when the first book in the series was published in 1997, contract and conception were for a standard book trilogy by an unknown author. In the course of two years, the books had entered and shaped the world of transmedia production and distribution. Because the extent and reach of the global craze that followed was unpredictable, both Rowling and Warner Bros. separately and jointly mediated their aesthetic and commercial capital over the next fifteen years, including in relation to the expanding transmedia chain of texts. In the process, they created a production and reception model that certainly, for its time, represented a model that shifted the status of readers into increased levels of play and performance, as highlighted in Chapters 4 and 5 of this thesis.

In *Harry, A History: The True Story of a Boy Wizard, His Fans, and Life Inside the Harry Potter Phenomenon* (2008), high-profile *Harry Potter* fan, Melissa Anelli, documents the growth of the phenomenon. What is most interesting about Anelli's account to the scope of my thesis is her overview of the period 1999-2000, and the ways in which the story's aesthetic and commercial value was negotiated by all the key players involved – Rowling, Scholastic, Warner Bros., and readers themselves. The dynamic that developed between the dominant

players and the newcomers is revelatory in terms of the shift that took place pushing what at the time, were considered to be tactical media (resistance to power hierarchies and creative control) into a more emergent mode (collaboration and convivial sharing of a story space).

Anelli describes how, by 2007, the *Harry Potter* brand had garnered an estimated worth of $15 billion, claiming that it would be feasible to think of the series' prolonged success as the product of institutionalised power structures. This view is corroborated by the fact that, in the early 1990s, other children's series were being marketed to high success such as R. L. Stine's *Goosebumps* series (1992-97). The possibility of becoming a celebrity children's writer had been established and successful cross-platform industry practices had become the focus of media conglomerates. The convergence phenomenon allowed the bridge between mainstream producers and grassroots participants to close and, as Rowling's personal story was released in mainstream media in 1997, together with the press sale for the rights of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* in the US, and the Nestle Smarties book award given to *Philosopher's Stone*, the transmedia chain was set to succeed. The developing network of story platforms was fuelled by commercial elements such as the promotion of the series by small and independent bookstores. The latter began to display the books and to highly recommend them over other fantasy novels such as those written by Lloyd Alexander and Susan Cooper. *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* continued to fuel the success as it hit the top of *The Times*' best-seller list.

Until 1999, *Harry Potter* was mostly produced and circulated by the big media conglomerates and consumed by its readers through the system offered to them by the intertextual commodity within convergence culture. In 2000, however, the dynamic shifted once more. In Anelli's own words, 'the Internet changed *Harry Potter* about as much as the Internet was changing

everything else'.[111] Rowling acknowledged that whilst the books had already developed into a cross-platform success story, at that point because of the convergence culture of that time the name *Harry Potter* became associated with a network community built around collective intelligence of the storyworld as well as the invitation to negotiate, appropriate and expand the storyworld through the dynamics of fandom. The media of interaction became more than simply a tactical one, as defined by Lovink. Rather, it began to function in ways that are more characteristic of public networks with qualities of emergent narratives. Anelli, whose involvement in this shift and development was direct, claims that her book is in fact the 'history of a community, written by an insider […] the personal journey of a group of people who would never otherwise have met'.[112]The reconfigured media landscape was not, however, problem-free.

Rowling's Foreword demonstrates how all the key players had to shift or reconfigure their positions within the expanding network. She remained, she claims, 'as ignorant as possible about the degree of fan activity that was taking place both on the Internet and off it'.[113] Admitting that 2000 was a turning point for the *Harry Potter* phenomenon, Rowling positions herself as a voice exterior to the conversations surrounding her stories. She recognises that she, too, has become player in the brand cocoon or the intertextual commodity. Within this scenario she is contributing and writing within traversals of meaning that are also appropriated by readers in an ongoing process of creation and interpretation. In this space, she has been joined by other writers who negotiate, expand and transpose the storyworld so that participation is in part defined by the design ecology imposed by the author together with mainstream production houses. On the other hand, the nature of that ecology is that it also allows readers and

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[111] Melissa Anelli, *Harry, A History: The True Story of a Boy Wizard, His Fans, and Life Inside the Harry Potter Phenomenon* (New York: Pocket Books, 2008), p. 88.
[112] Ibid, p. xii.
[113] Ibid, p. x.

participants to define their engagement with the storyworld to some extent, as discussed in Chapter 5.

Rowling refers to the emergent qualities of fandom when she states that 'the online *Harry Potter* fandom has become a global phenomenon with its own language and culture, its own wars and festivals, its own celebrities'.[114] She becomes more aware of the readers' interactive subjectivity, introduced by convergence culture, as it altered the ways in which storyworlds are designed, produced, distributed and interpreted but is also aware of aspects and spaces of the networked community over which she has little control. *Harry Potter*'s success, Anelli claims, was generated in spaces beyond corporate strategy and also beyond a resistance to corporate strategy and control. Whilst the latter certainly did have a place in this moment, it did not define it. It was defined, on the other hand, Anelli claims, by intimate personal connections, and so it was ultimately, 'the story of small groups of people acting in ways they shouldn't, doing things they usually wouldn't and making the kind of history that, without Harry, they pretty much couldn't'.[115] At this point, the *Harry Potter* readership reconfigured itself in response to the social, cultural and organic processes of convergence culture (the new forms of creativity enabled by multitasking strategies to navigate and respond to the storyworld through cognitive constructs) and Rowling responded with mixed strategies that demonstrate blurred distinctions between reader emancipation and authorial control within the storyworld. Throughout the development of the chain, Rowling continues to reposition herself in response to the shifting landscape of the *Harry Potter* chain as it manifested itself through a system of traversals, described in further detail below.

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[114] Ibid. p. xii.
[115] Ibid, pp. 18-19.

The Growth and Development of the *Harry Potter* Chain and Traversals

The *Harry Potter* books published after 1999 were influenced by the marketing campaigns surrounding the films and the games and their launches quickly became events that included large financial investment into publicity campaigns, midnight launches and large-scale online activity to keep participants in the storyworld engaged with different platforms over an extended period of time. Once Rowling sold the rights of the books to Warner Bros. in 1999, the shape of the *Harry Potter* transmedia chain of narrative took on the dynamic of the media franchise, balancing aesthetic traversals and commercial considerations.[116] Each media platform that was added to the chain was influenced by the exploitation of new artistic and economic affordances produced at the height of convergence culture, as discussed in Chapter 2 on film, Chapter 3 on digital tie-in games and Chapter 4 on fandom.

The pervasiveness of transmedia narratives at the turn of the century evidences that the younger generations, especially, possess a large array of skills (navigation and negotiation of texts and their meanings, among others) that allow them to interpret meaning across platforms, and generally will consider knowledge of the franchise world inadequate if it is solely based on knowledge of only one version. In this process of navigation and negotiation, readers negotiate transmedia traversals with the same cognitive mind-set that they adopt during metacommunication.[117] For Lemke, transmedia is predominantly about the intertextual networks that cross the boundaries of genres and media. He explains that different story versions are reconciled in strategies of interpretation by encouraging reader identification with

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[116] See Jay Lemke, 'Transmedia Traversals: Marketing Meaning and Identity' in A. Baldry and E. Montagna, eds., *Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Multimodality: Theory and Practice. Proceedings of the Third International Conference on Multimodality* (Campobasso: Palladino, 2009).
<http://www.jaylemke.com/storage/TransmediaTraversals-MarketingMeaning.pdf> [accessed 02/02/2014]
[117] Ibid.

the characters and storyworld, as they have been visually coded by the film, digital game or fandom sites.[118] Lemke gets at some of the mechanics and paradoxes of these intertextual transmedia networks:

> Even casual readers will notice inconsistencies, and no one can very well miss the fact that Harry Potter as described to your imagination by the books, Harry as seen in the book cover art in different editions, Harry as visualised by the computer games, and Harry as portrayed by an actor in the films look different. They act differently; they feel differently to us. Who when is the real Harry for us? How do fans construct a single, or composite, or even multiplex identity for Harry?[119]

The answer goes beyond simple adaptation disputes about fidelity because the different interpretations and versions of the story provide insights into ways in which mainstream stories are negotiated and appropriated, in order to reflect personal ideologies and interpretations. The complexity of transmedia stories lies not only in the signs of the works included in a franchise, but also the complexity of the dispositions of users to interpret and identify with semiotic elements presented by the works. It extends to the complexity of markets which shape dispositions and the public networks within which we communicate. Lemke claims that 'a Harry Potter image, logo, or name can be stamped onto virtually anything today and increase its exchange value – for some market?'.[120] But what market?

Lemke argues that it is not simply a product-centred market, but rather that the market for transmedia narrative stems from the special appeal held by some semiotic elements of this storyworld, including its characters and events, ethos and mythos. For this reason, transmedia chains need to be metacommunicative, meaning that each individual media version is made to signify within the chain. Lemke's analysis points to another key feature of these chains. He

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[118] Ibid, p. 586.
[119] Ibid.
[120] Ibid, p. 584.

observes that signs cannot be replicated from one medium to another, nor a signifier from one modality to another, but nonetheless it is possible to imagine a chain of signification that connects an image of a character in a movie scene to a passage of text describing such a scene, to the visualisation of the character and so on. Ultimate signifieds are not needed to coordinate the various meanings:

> Not only is there no real Harry, but there are also many possible (virtual? Semiotic?) Harrys that can be constructed from the texts. Transmedia signs do not require anchorage in definite objects; they form systems of cross-reference which may be open or closed. Not merely the endless semiosis of Peirce (1998), but semiosis circulating in self-referential loops.[121]

Comparing print passages to filmic passages is a common practice and one that is broadly unproblematic. It is, however, less interesting within the context of my work than what happens within models of intertextuality that take into consideration multiple modalities of the sign as diverse as printed text and interactive video game animation, and the effect on immersion. Like Lemke, I ask what kind of semiotic features can participate in coherent transmedia meaning-effects that allow participants in the chain to transport Harry and his storyworld across media through a process of metacommunicative play. Whilst previous transmedia scholarship has not provided solutions to even simple cases like book-to-film translation (there is no clear success formula for adaptation), it is clear that a study of signs and their transference is not enough, since what clearly comes into play is the interpreter's disposition. What *is* needed is an approach that considers how audience dispositions towards Harry have themselves been shaped by franchised media, acknowledging that the ideal transmedia stories reconfigure participants into transmedia consumers who will construe meaning across these multiple presentations of storyworlds.

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[121] A. Baldry and E. Montagna, eds., *Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Multimodality: Theory and Practice. Proceedings of the Third International Conference on Multimodality* (Campobasso: Palladino, 2009), p. 585.

When the storyworld is expanded, modified, transposed and quoted through film, the narrative space, character and plot are reconfigured so that settings become visible, characters are represented through performances and plots are predominantly characterised by spectacle (dramatic moments embedded in a sequence of fast-paced action) and pathos (the invitation to empathise with characters) keeping the viewers immersed. The modification of story space and time in this manner allows other media such as digital games (discussed in Chapter 3) to adapt the story to their own affordances that, in turn, bring into play different parameters of interactivity and immersion.

Once the storyworld is represented through aesthetic traversals that cater for the affordances of the distinct media whilst also maintaining consistency, it is easier for ancillary products to emerge, allowing the story to become a truly transmedial narrative so that readers are so affectively engaged with the storyworld that they become immersed through different platforms because the space of representation begins to blend with the spaces of their daily lives. When this occurs, readers are more easily able to participate in the interactive processes presented through the design of the storyworld in the various media. They become interactive by engaging with differing and changing experiences that place them in direct public conversation with other like-minded readers, as well as with the producers of mainstream versions themselves, the implications of which are discussed in further detail in Chapter 5 of this thesis.

As the chain grew between 1997 and 2001, especially in the latter year with the release of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* film a few months after the first *Lord of the Rings* film, the creators behind the story quickly realised that twenty-first century literacy skills, as outlined by Jenkins, Ewers and Mackey, meant readers were able to balance focus on story

content with an exploration of the way in which texts work, moving easily across diegetic levels including extradiegetic zones of production that gave them an altered sense of agency. Readers/viewers/players clearly developed new strategies of interpretation that allowed them to enter and engage with the chain at different points in different ways, making as much narrative sense as suited them. This spanned those who simply enjoyed reading the books or watching the films, to others who set up social activist movements based around themes or characters in the books. In this way, the active creation of belief in the storyworld[122] is reinforced by agency, and the individual media versions within the chain become subject to permanent updating based on a direct producer-consumer communication, mostly via the Internet.[123]

If, therefore, following the move towards convergence culture at the turn of the century, immersion must be accompanied by interactivity that allows for extreme literates (participants who desire engagement with stories through multiple platforms) to participate in the pre-production, production, circulation and interpretation of the story, then in forming part of a transmedia chain, film – which in the case of *Harry Potter* was the second platform to join the chain - must balance its immersive qualities with more interactive ones. Audiences are no longer content to relinquish agency in the storyworld, so the filmic storyworld becomes metacommunicative and allows for play through its intertextual dimensions rather than simply intratextual ones (references diegetically embedded in the storyworld).[124] Marsha Kinder goes so far as to claim that for younger generations to whom narrative engagement is synonymous

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[122] See Janet Murray, 'Inventing the Medium' (2012). <http://inventingthemedium.com/2012/01/30/active-creation-of-belief/#more-377> [accessed on 01/07/2013].

[123] See Hans Heino Ewers, 'A Meditation on Children's Literature in an Age of Multimedia' in Emer O'Sullivan, Kimberley Reynolds, and Rolf Romoren, eds., *Children's Literature Global and Local: Social and Aesthetic Responses* (Oslo: Novus, 2004), pp. 255-68.

[124] P. David Marshall, 'The New Intertextual Commodity' in Dan Harries, *The New Media Book* (London: BFI, 2002), pp. 68-81 (p. 68).

with control over the storyworld, cinema is only important insofar as movies make a vital contribution to an ever-expanding supersystem of entertainment, one marked by transmedia intertextuality. She maintains that today's young adult generation comprise consumerist subjects who can 'more readily assimilate and accommodate whatever objects they encounter, including traditional modes of image production like cinema and new technological developments like interactive multimedia'.[125] This means that film is required to become part of what Marshall calls 'the new intertextual commodity', especially within transmedia narrative.[126] He explains:

> […] the intricate cross-linkages of cultural forms, which produce this new intertextual commodity, are the industrial response to the heightened value of both interactivity and play for audiences. Interactivity is simultaneously an industrial strategy of patterning and guiding the audience and its opposite, the risk of entropy where the cultural commodity becomes lost in less patterned interconnections produced not by the industry, but by the audience. Similarly, despite its inherent indeterminacy, play has been increasingly colonised by the culture industries well beyond childhood in recognition of its heightened importance in the formation of the audience's pleasures at the beginning of the new millennium.[127]

Marshall's association of immersion with interactivity and play is interesting in the way that it outlines emergent cultural patterns, highlighting how new media forms are part of an industry's attempt to capture the interactive audience. He observes that in the current media landscape there are two important shifts taking place. On an empirical level, there is more promotional material produced about any given cultural product than previously and furthermore, the promotional material is itself commodified so that the parameters surrounding forms of promotion and the cultural product are blended and hybridised. The promotional material provides a wide range of opportunities for interaction and feeds readers' desire for more and more information about the storyworld.[128]

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[125] Marsha Kinder, *Playing with Power in Movies, Television and Video Games: From Muppet Babies to Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* (Los Angeles: University of California, 1993), p. 4.
[126] Marshall, 'The New Intertextual Commodity', p. 68.
[127] Ibid, p. 69.
[128] Ibid, p. 71.

Marshall goes on to link the intertextual commodity to the resurgence of the play aesthetic, arguing that, particularly in the industries of film and television, the past decade has brought a realisation that play is not limited to childhood. The cybernetic quality of the game (a loop of input and feedback into the storyworld), he states, is the general goal of the cultural industries as they learn to incorporate the play aesthetic into their industrial strategies and although the novel, film and drama have discrete narratives and storylines, play within games, has patterns and permutations that give the player a sense of engagement, agency and transformation. This cybernetic quality is adopted by the strategy of the intertextual commodity that allows the pleasure of play, where there are 'both ritual, patterns and rules, as well as possibilities, potentials and performance [to be translated], into adult entertainment culture'.[129] The cybernetic quality of the game, Marshall argues, is the general goal of the cultural industries as they learn to incorporate the play aesthetic into their industrial strategies. For cultural industries at the turn of the century, therefore, the play aesthetic entails a careful negotiation between containing and servicing the desires of the audience and the audience taking on work that is uncharacteristic of its position in previous times. Such work is the subject of this thesis since it is bound up in and drives the relationship between narrative and participation.

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[129] Ibid, p. 73.

Chapter 2: Cinematic Texts, Intertextual Commodities and Immersion in Transmedia Narrative

When a fantasy text produced in book form is adapted for the movie screen, a number of aesthetic and commercial factors influence the production and design of the film. In order to create an interactive and immersive experience for today's viewers, producers must consider the affordances and restrictions of the film medium together with its function as an intertextual commodity produced and distributed through the dynamics of convergence culture.[1] Whilst narrative consistency with the book version is normally crucial for audience immersion to be sustained throughout the transmedia chain, the material, social and cultural semiotic resources of film must also be considered. As narrative space and time are modified by the director, scriptwriter and the rest of the production team that adapts the story from the formal affordances of the book to those of the film medium, the parameters of cinematic immersion are set in place. In due course, the finished film will take its place in the transmedia chain alongside other versions. This chapter investigates the way in which film adds to or detracts from the immersive experience of transmedia story as distributed according to the aesthetic and commercial considerations of transmedia at the turn of the century. It also explores how film, a medium predominantly defined by the storyteller's control over the setting, plot and characters, is able to negotiate interactivity, understood as a process in which audiences participate and perform – a practice that is in a constant state of becoming and needs people to be always *becoming interactive* with it.

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[1] P. David Marshall, 'The New Intertextual Commodity' in Dan Harries, ed. *The New Media Book* (London: BFI, 2002), pp. 68-81 (p. 68); Marsha Kinder, *Playing with Power in Movies, Television and Video Games: From Muppet Babies to Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* (Los Angeles: University of California, 1993), p. 2.

Good transmedia narrative is able to balance the story's aesthetic considerations (discussed below as believable storyworlds, rounded characters, spectacular dramatic moments), which are important for successful immersion into the storyworld, with the economic production considerations (large scale conversation with narrative and prolonged consumption of the franchise) of interactive transmedia narrative. This is done by adopting a design ecology in which transmedia chains are produced with aesthetic vision rather than the financial restrictions of budget.[2] Christina Dena points to the fact that practitioners and participants in transmedia narrative need more than just knowledge and skills specific to books, films, television and interactive formats, identifying that they must also be able to negotiate mono-medium production cultures and the ways in which they intersect with the actual world of audiences, with ancillary products and networked publics as design ecology takes into consideration the extreme literacy practices and the play aesthetic that developed at the turn of the century.[3]

These extreme literacy practices are performed within textual ecologies where each platform producer considers what the distinct medium contributes to the chain and highlights those aspects. Readers at the centre of this dynamic have many tasks to perform as they respond to characteristics of participatory culture, adopting a sense of engagement, agency and transformation through the navigation, negotiation and appropriation of the storyworld. They interact with the new potential of digital media to change the representational and communicational action of the storyworld, able to access the aesthetic code of the work and write back to its producers through a process of interpretation and ordering of the storyworld.

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[2] Dena, Christina, 'Transmedia Practice: Theorising the Practice of Expressing a Fictional World across Distinct Media and Environments' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Sydney, 2009), p. 28.
[3] Ibid.

Just as the multiple modes of new media construct reading as a process of interpretation and ordering, the multiple story versions in a transmedia chain encourage participants to join the networked public engaging with the story repeatedly, though in different ways. This repetition and expansion of format changes the level and nature of interactivity and immersion. The parameters of interpretation of narrative and the ordering of experience play out differently in chains than they do in individual media/formats as situating the audience/participant in a responsive narrative world is both a need and a challenge. Within convergence culture, digital literacy skills (as described in Chapter 1) and the revived aesthetic of play also imply affiliation with online communities, expression within new creative forms such as fan writing and fan video production, collaborative problem solving in order to perform tasks and develop new knowledge and circulation to shape the flow of media through platforms like podcasting and blogging.[4] These digital literacy practices corroborate the proliferation of a networked public, a play community that forms around storyworlds in convergence culture and demands that each distinct media that joins a transmedia chain cater for the intersubjective relationship that is expected to form between participants and also between participants and characters. Writing on the development of storyworlds in convergent culture, both Celia Pearce and Gloria Davenport maintain that 'storytelling relies on the combined human strengths of memory, imagination, and communication'.[5] They claim that as digital narratives come of age there is an increased desire to emancipate the reader to a more active position that allows real choice and *emergent* interactivity – a type of interactivity in which the user is not restricted to replaying fixed codes or subverting them entirely, but rather participates in a

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[4] See Henry Jenkins, 'Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century' (2006). <http://henryjenkins.org/2006/10/confronting_the_challenges_of.html> [accessed on 20/07/2013].

[5] Celia Pearce, *Communities of Play: Emergent Cultures in Multiplayer Games and Virtual Worlds* (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2011); Gloria Davenport, 'Desire vs. Destiny: the question of payoff in narrative' (29/01/2005). <http://ic.media.mit.edu/people/gid/papers/DesireVsDestiny2005.pdf> [accessed 01/06/2014].

metacommunicative form of play that allows for real meaning to emerge through interpretation and performance, as discussed below.

Davenport, arguing alongside Murray and Ryan, questions whether storyworld designs are informed enough to make a convincing narrative move and change in response to the audience's interactions. She insists that storytelling systems must present stories that generate empathy and promote reflection so that they provide a meaningful surrogate experience that engages the audience in storyworlds that demand their participation over long periods of time. The fantasy film is particularly well placed to sustain this trend because its invitation to the audience is similar to that which is extended through the discourse of metacommunicative play, as discussed below. In *The Fantasy Film* (2010), Katherine A. Fowkes outlines a history of the fantasy film genre as it developed from the 1920s onwards. Working her way up to the contemporary scene, she discusses film development through case studies such as *The Wizard of Oz* and *The Chronicles of Narnia*.[6] Broadly defined by the stories' fundamental break with the sense of reality, termed by Rosemary Jackson as an 'ontological rupture', fantasy features stories that would be impossible in the real world.

Fantasy's ontological rupture must, Fowkes argues, be inherent in the premise (or, I would like to claim, the discourse) of the film and is integral to the story (that is to its design) and its appeal because of its insistence on engaging audiences in imaginative experiences that invite them to temporarily transcend their sense of what is possible inhabiting a position that is inside-outside of the storyworld as in situations of metacommunicative play. This is the gratification that fantasy offers, especially within an immersive environment that is successfully distributed.

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[6] Katherine Fowkes, *The Fantasy Film* (West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell, 2010).

If at the heart of fantasy is its contradiction of reality, then what is most potent about the genre is its ability to express and dramatise the contradiction giving way to multiple opportunities for interpretation. Fowkes maintains:

> By engaging the reader/viewer on both a psychological and a symbolic level, fantasy provides the opportunity to experience ideas outside of the framework of reason and the boundaries of everyday reality [it] excels at encouraging multiple and even contradictory readings.[7]

She claims that this is what binds the genre together on both a thematic and a viewing level. It is also, I argue, what allows the genre to cater for emergent interactivity which is so important in the convergence age. Fantasy stories encourage multiple interpretations of the storyworld and in themselves provide the encyclopaedic, spatial narrative dimensions required for prolonged participation demanded of new media narrative experiences as readers engage with textual ecologies through a process of orchestration of meaning. The fantasy genre thus facilitates a transmedial textual ecology by providing rich aesthetic and symbolic codes that can be adopted by the various media platforms as well as audiences. When audiences/viewers adopt a kind of shared vision, they create a virtual group identity, becoming in Rick Altman's words a 'constelled community'.[8] Accepting the

> Premises of a genre is to agree to play within a special set of rules, and thus to participate in a community precisely not conterminous with society at large…genres do not exist until they become necessary to a lateral communication process, that is until they serve a constelled community. Only when the knowledge that others are viewing similar films similarly becomes a fundamental part of the film-viewing experience does lateral communication exist.[9]

Fantasy films therefore provide a good prototype for the intertextual commodity to develop whilst also highly enhancing the storyworld's immersive potential. Once belief in storyworld

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[7] Ibid, p. 9.
[8] Rick Altman, *Film/Genre* (London: BFI, 1999), pp. 157-62.
[9] Cited in Fowkes, *The Fantasy Film*, p. 6.

is established the filmic medium becomes important as it offers a multimodal rendition of the story's climactic moments through its depiction of spectacle – climactic moments conveyed through fast action and state of the art special effects. Through the embodiment (using diegetic and non-diegetic elements) of spectacle and pathos – the invitation to empathise with the characters – film is a crucial addition to the transmedia chain as it is able to cohere narrative threads and traversals by balancing the macro level of the storyworld with the micro level of character development throughout their journey.

Using its *mise-en-scène* (the design aspect of a film including composition, set, props, sounds, lighting, etc.) through montage and editing,[10] the film medium uses inference techniques (parallel to the literary technique of allusion) to bring the setting and action together through character in ways that affect the immersive internal/external binary, as described by Ryan. This immersive binary is finely developed by Peter Jackson in *The Lord of the Rings* film series (2001-03), which becomes an important case study in analysing what film adds to the transmedia chain and how it does so through spectacle and pathos, all the while negotiating control and agency of the director and the viewer (or more generally the producers and the public).

Good digital design develops, Ryan sustains, through interactive rituals between users and digital artefacts, but central to this debate is Murray's concern that the full aesthetic, interactive potential of digital media has not yet been reached. The potential of participatory, procedural, spatial storyworlds created through digital media is still being formed. This need to satisfy the market's demand for what I term emergent interactivity – providing the reader/viewer with

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[10] David Bordwell, *Poetics of Cinema* (Oxford: Routledge, 2008).

meaningful, unpredicted choices in the storyworld – is a contemporary concern, as convergence culture highlights the power of commercialisation and marketing in story discourse, design, production, distribution. Emergent interactivity is not only negotiated in terms of its design ecology – aesthetic and commercial considerations of storyworld production – but also on those more directly linked to narrative creation that is, the question of author and reader control within the textual ecology and each of the distinct media that form part of the chain.

Levels of Control, Immersion and Interactivity in Transmedia Films

Whilst all storytelling is defined by control, the ways in which that control is integrated into distinct media platforms varies. Responding to an online debate about the powers of transmedia, David Bordwell offers a very different view of stories from Jenkins. In the late 1990s, at the height of convergence culture, Jenkins maintained that all stories can benefit from being developed into transmedia chains. Some stories, Bordwell argues, simply do not have enough depth and breadth to sustain the long-term engagement that transmedia necessarily demands. Moreover, some media platforms, Bordwell insists, are better placed to maintain rigid control over the story rather than the more interactive mediation of story elements proposed by transmedia design.[11] From this perspective, rigid control over the storytelling process seemingly goes against the interactive nature of transmedial storytelling and therefore film must find other ways of accommodating the interactivity demanded by convergence culture.

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[11] David Bordwell, 'Observations on Film Art', *Davidbordwell.net*.
<http://www.davidbordwell.net/blog/2009/08/19/now-leaving-from-platform-1/> [accessed 2/4/2013].

Film is most often the second platform to join the transmedia chain as books are translated to the screen. In this process, immersion takes place when viewers are able to feel suspense, curiosity, surprise and concern for the characters – all narrative features that are brought into play by linearity and particular rendering of storytelling gaps present in both books and films. The rendering of storytelling gaps is somewhat challenged by the transmedia format. Transmedia chains use storytelling gaps in order to release the story on different media platforms, encouraging audiences to engage with the storyworld multiple times. On the one hand, film producers need to adapt the story to the media in which they are being produced. On the other hand, in order to strengthen the relationship between readers and the representation of the storyworld, they must also be consistent with representations across different media versions in the chain.

The filmic screen, like the book, is based on a storytelling method that demands more authorial control than the game and online site. In film, storyworld representation requires the creation of believable settings through the negotiation of diegetic (the implied spatial, temporal and causal system of a character) and non-diegetic (aspects of the storyworld not accessible to the character) elements. Like books, film benefits from the framing technique that clearly demarcates its boundaries and its fixed sequence, determining a specific exposure to the story being told. However, whereas the book uses verbal codes allowing for a discursive narrative, film's narrative style is determined by the visual code. In film, narrative conclusions are drawn for the viewers from an exterior perspective (as opposed to the book's dominant interior perspective) as the techniques of focalisation (point-of-view) and narration are implemented differently as demonstrated through the case studies below. Furthermore, whilst the book allows for a direct relationship between the author and reader that develops over a relatively

longer time-scale, with film there is always a group of people involved in the production and reception of the film.

Thus, it becomes clear that although the brief duration of a film does not allow time for viewers to speculate or question character motives or themes that are developed throughout the book series, it does not necessarily tell a *different* narrative, merely a *modified* one that adds the audiovisual dimension to storyworld representation facilitating the addition of other screen media platforms to the transmedia chain. The audience spends a shorter period of time engaged with film than a reader spends engaged with a book, therefore the film requires a more direct narrative style that, as Bordwell maintains, affects the rendition of plot, character and setting within the film medium but also within the aesthetic traversals of the transmedia chain. Emergent interactivity of the kind described above and cohesive immersive techniques as described by Bordwell must be balanced across the textual ecology in order for the transmedia chain to succeed. A failure to engage with these considerations leads to a rupture in the representation of the storyworld and the intersubjective relationship that is formed with the characters.

When there is a lack of coherence in the representation of the storyworld, or when the technological, economic and social properties of the transmedia chain are not adequately negotiated, the chain is broken. Three examples are worth citing as case studies: *His Dark Materials*, *The Lord of the Rings* and the *Harry Potter* series. *His Dark Materials* demonstrates the failure to translate the setting, plot and character convincingly from book to film and the consequences of this failure on the chain. *The Lord of the Rings* provides a production and distribution model that succeeded both aesthetically, setting the standards of fantasy based transmedia narratives, as well as commercially in its ability to handle the knowledge

community generated by convergence culture at the turn of the century. The *Harry Potter* case study is the best example of a series that was originally conceived as a traditional children's literature trilogy but swiftly responded to the demands of convergence culture becoming the most successful transmedia narrative to date. In each of these cases, the film's contribution to the chain played a critical role in establishing the success or otherwise of the chain.

Textual Ecology, Transmedia Traversals and the Fantasy Film

Films are not often the starting point for the proliferation of cultural productions and structured forms of interactivity but they serve to herald the 'confluence of cultural forms or regenerating a flagging intertextual brand'.[12] The film, Marshall elaborates, operates as 'the promotional engine for the array of products now associated with [popular narratives] and the Web site serves as the anticipatory mainframe for this intertextual matrix'.[13] The brief description of *Harry Potter* marketing and distribution strategies below serves to demonstrate the extent to which the film was obliged to act as an intertextual commodity. The analysis also shows how different production teams working at the same time, such as *The Lord of the Rings*, managed to pitch interactivity as a social practice in which audiences contribute to the storyworld beyond established production mechanisms of controlled response. Whilst, on the other hand, *The Golden Compass* adaptation (Chris Weitz, 2007) and its failure to convince at the box office provides insight into models of convergence that fail to attract a networked audience because they are neither tactical nor emergent.

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[12] Marshall, 'The New Intertextual Commodity', p. 74.
[13] Ibid, p. 76.

At the height of convergence culture in the late 1990s, the blockbuster provided a clear model of the intertextual commodity, primarily because Hollywood continues to produce films that manifest an event-effect, so that the launch of the film becomes an event in itself and is accompanied by the development of Web sites, games, toys and collectibles. It is also accompanied by a proliferation of information about the making of the film through television programmes, commercials, interviews and articles, including the DVD that helps to give an aura of authenticity to the making of the film and also adds to the dialectic of play and performance that convergence culture demands. The discourse, design, production and distribution of the individual media version is immediately and consistently negotiated by the networked public that claims these spaces as interactive ones demanding access to information and the opportunity to participate in the processes of production and reception. Within these spaces (spaces that are at the centre of the design ecology) viewers expect that interpretations can be performed pervasively so that the political economy of production and reception of the film remains a negotiation of both consumerism and connectedness within the transmedia chain.

In order to participate in the transmedia narrative structure of the intertextual commodity, the film therefore expanded outwards through linked cultural forms, engaging viewers interactively rather than simply through immersion. In agreement with Marshall, I argue that play is indeed essential to understanding the media landscape at the turn of the century. This is especially true in relation to his point that:

> The investment in play is a new dialectic for the industry. Play as defined by an industry is patterned for the proliferation of cultural commodities through their interlinkages. Play as defined by the audience or actor is precisely the moment patterns are altered and shifted. The new intertextual commodity identifies the attempt by an industry to provide the rules of the

game, while recognising that the pleasure of the game is that rules are made and remade, transformed and shifted by the players.[14]

The players, those who started out as readers of the *Harry Potter* books and then became viewers of the films quickly learnt to navigate, appropriate and distribute content, very rapidly positioning themselves at the centre of the intertextual story community. They adopted new strategies of engaging with the text, learning to orchestrate meaning across the different platforms, balancing private and public interpretations of the story. However, at the time of writing this thesis (2007-14), Jenkins reports that the vast majority of cultural production by fans is occurring extemporaneously to, not collaboratively with, the 'official' authorship of the narratives. This remains a more tactical kind of involvement, as due to the nature of their sampling and appropriation practices discussed in further detail in Chapter 4, fans' involvement in a chosen textual universe is likely to remain more evident throughout the processes of circulation and consumption, rather than within the originating processes of narrative creation.

Being truly emergent, Ryan claims, is only possible through the development of interactive subjectivity. Interactive subjectivity is made possible through the knowledge cultures that alter the way in which both commodity culture and nation states operate. In the context of film and transmedia chains, the film joins or even propagates the brand cocoon that is developed through complex transmedia systems of representation. As in the process of remediation, illusionistic immersion is not done away with but rather it is included as one elements within a more complex process that negotiates immersion with interactivity through a system of make-believe or play. Engagement with storyworlds through make-believe or play, Salen and Zimmerman

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[14] Ibid, p. 80.

claim, renders metacommunication crucial to the representational capacity of media, especially in the context of narrative, interactivity and immersion.[15]

The following section will develop this discussion and will signpost ways in which the process of adaptation from book to film was also used by Jackson to enhance the story's brand cocoon and compliment the immersive experience of watching the film with the interactive participatory process that grew around its production and distribution. In the next section, Jackson's successful positioning of the films within *The Lord of the Rings* transmedia chain will be juxtaposed to Weitz's failed attempt to do the same with *The Golden Compass*. Whilst the intertextual commodity, knowledge and play community and textual ecology are all of vital importance for the transmedia chain to work effectively, they are secondary to the ability of producers to balance the demands of convergence with the full representational capacity of each medium.

Balancing towards Convergence: Peter Jackson's *The Lord of the Rings*

In *The Lord of the Rings*, director Peter Jackson began a tradition that brought a new discourse and production model of fantasy films into being. The story follows the traditional fantasy quest pattern in which Frodo, the hero, is chosen to go on a journey that will determine the future of good and evil and by implication the future of Middle-Earth. Jackson recognised the epic dimensions of the story and developed them in great detail through the three narrative elements that Ryan classifies as the immersive elements of transmedia storyworlds: setting, plot and character. Jackson also understood that the production culture in which he was

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[15] Katie Salen and Eric Zimmerman, *Rules of Play: Game Design Fundamentals* (Massachusetts: MIT, 2003), p. 372.

operating was changing and felt that due importance had to be given to the participatory dimension of convergence culture.

Throughout the production process, Jackson communicated with fans of the series and collaborated with other platform producers to sustain the community that grew around the films.[16] He became aware that the films he was producing had to satisfy a dual audience. On the one hand, it had to be consistent with Tolkien's books in order to satisfy traditional Tolkien fans' desire for coherence between media platforms. On the other hand, the films had to respond to the demands of the intertextual commodity, offering opportunities for digital age viewers to interact with film as a cultural artefact. In 2000, he made an official announcement stating that the filmic text would adhere more closely to the novels than had originally been planned and that he would communicate details related to scripts, casting, filming and marketing with fans. He collaborated with Harry Knowles from *Ain't-it-Cool-News.com* agreeing to feature in two online interviews with fans in which he discussed details regarding production, acknowledging the web as a communal meeting space and *The Lord of the Rings* fandom as a knowledge community that had to be kept updated if the movies were to be a success.

Jackson declared himself to be an admirer of the novels and expressed his solidarity with fans stating, 'I really made the conscious attempt to make the film that I would like to see because, I mean, I read the book, I was a fan… So I was really making the film for myself'.[17] Jackson,

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[16] Elana Shafrin, 'Lord of the Rings, Star Wars, and Participatory Fandom: Mapping New Congruencies between the Internet and Media Entertainment Culture' in *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, vol. 21, no. 3 (2004), pp. 261-81.

[17] Quoted in S. Collura, 'Lord of the Cinematic Rings—Part Two' in *Cinescape* (2002). <www.cinescape.come/o/Editorial.asp?aff_id=08&this_cat=movies&action=page&obj_id=32054#> [accessed 02/01/2014].

however, clearly intends that his confession – that of making the film for himself – should carry connotations of collective decision-making, rather than arrogant dismissal of fan opinion, as happened initially in *Harry Potter* fandom (as will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 4). His discourse with online fans, whilst viewed as a technologically-inspired antidote to traditional demarcations between the production and consumption of cultural artefacts, may also be viewed as an attempt to balance emergent interactivity with representational immersion in which viewers engaged with the filmic storyworld as a complete creation which they could only witness rather than a navigable world in which viewers feel completely immersed and over which they have some degree of control.

Throughout the design and production of *The Lord of the Rings* films, Jackson manipulates the boundaries between virtual reality and 'real' virtuality by building the relationships between readers/viewers and characters through cognitive constructs of the storyworld. The cognitive constructs that he uses are those that he draws from the fantasy genre in general and the more specific narrative elements found in Tolkien's work, as discussed below. My analysis shows how in his work on *The Lord of the Rings*, Jackson develops both the static and dynamic components of storyworlds (as described by Ryan) using the narrative chain as well as the public network to expand, modify, transpose and quote the storyworld that is presented in Tolkien's books. This is an important move because in this way Jackson sets the design, production and distribution trend for other fantasy transmedia stories to follow, each of which does so with varying success.

Throughout the three *The Lord of the Rings* movies, Jackson develops the relationship between viewers and characters by paying great attention to spatial relationships as the camera captures landscapes (e.g. mountains, forests, vast plains and huge landmarks), placing prominence on

the spectacle of scale at work in the film. In line with Tolkien's storytelling style, he uses film to show the world from above, so that viewers often share an aerial position that frees them from ordinary human limitations, giving them more insight and power than most of the characters inhabiting the world, intertwining the focus on big spectacular scenes with small actions and details that are made to carry substantial narrative weight. This results in a filmic technique that combines spectacle and pathos and enhances the development of the intersubjective flow between viewers and characters. Viewers are invited to survey the storyworld from an omniscient perspective and at the same time to get to know it closely by empathising with the characters that inhabit it.

Before starting to write a fictional narrative, each author must consider the *kind* of narration technique they are going to adopt. A choice between three narrative situations arises and as the story is translated across different media platforms, these narrative situations are adapted in order to increase immersion into the storyworld through greater affinity with the characters.[18] However as Gérard Genette pointed out in *Narrative Discourse Revisited* (1983), narrative analysis is based upon two main concerns, which are the question of the identity of the text's narrator or narrative voice and the question of whose point of view orientates the narrative text. The question of who sees in the text is tackled theoretically by the concept of focalisation, and the latter must, in fact, be kept apart from narration because narrators can also present events from somebody else's point of view. A focaliser is the agent whose point of view orientates the narrative text. A text is anchored on a focaliser's point of view when it presents the focaliser's thoughts, reflections, knowledge and perception as well as cultural and ideological

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[18] The first narrative situation is a first-person narrative, told from the perspective of a narrator who also appears as a character in the story, usually talking about and remembering personal experiences. The second, an authorial narrative, is told by a narrator who tells the story of others and can see what is happening from an outsider's position. This narrator is also called an omniscient narrator and the position of absolute authority allows these narrators complete knowledge about the fictional world and characters. The third, the figural narrative, presents the story as if through the eyes of a character in the story itself.

orientation. While Genette restricts focalisation to focal characters, other narratologists such as Mieke Bal and Rimmon-Kenan propose that focalisers may be external or internal, the former a narrator, the latter a character. The varying narrative techniques are used to consolidate and enhance the relationship between viewers and characters, facilitating the development of intersubjective engagement with the storyworld.

The first *The Lord of the Rings* film, *The Fellowship of the Ring* (2001), begins with an omniscient narrating voice over that brings history, tradition and myth to the forefront, emphasising to the viewer that this is a story embedded in ideological concerns about the age-old battle between good and evil, and that it is also a story about what it means to be human, and what it means to be good. The introductory sequence highlights the horror of evil, juxtaposing scenes of battle to scenes of what happens when good fails through the use of flashbacks and flash-forwards. These, according to David Bordwell in *Narration in the Fiction Film* (1985), are narrative devices that allow film to move beyond a mere presentation of events and characters and able to express thoughts, feelings and motivations as well as the connections between things facilitating cognitive constructs and interpretation.

Through this narrative technique, the characters' understanding of the events becomes the foundation of the narrative, so that they often act as the focalisers of the story for viewers. Thus, getting to know the inner voice of the characters facilitates viewers' immersion into the film, because personal battles are intertwined with the bigger battle for Middle-Earth, the setting of the story. Furthermore, Middle-Earth, because it is set as a distinct world with its own peoples, cultures and internal laws of logic, establishes the moral premises of the story by combining the visual representation with the affective relationship to character. Viewers, like readers, go on a journey through this world, accompanying the characters in such a way that,

Paul Cobley claims, time and space are experienced, not individually, but collectively through the shared subjectivity between characters and viewers.[19] This shared subjectivity is one of the most important elements that film adds to the transmedia narrative.

In presenting the storyworld visually and synchronically allowing the action to develop, the film medium augments readers' experience of the book by rendering the world *kinetic* – that is, the world comes to life through the actions of the characters in real time. Viewers are invited to experience the world and the action at the same time the characters do and, moreover, at the same time as others in the audience do. When the film and its ancillary products are the second platform to join the chain after the book, they provide the first opportunity to experience the storyworld in real time, visually and collectively. Collectively, viewers are invited to speculate about story gaps and to discuss and ponder plot points whilst also mapping out the world in their minds. Their disposition towards the storyworld becomes both interpretative and exploratory and this, one may argue, forms the stepping stone to an exploration of the world that is far more ludic and ontological in digital tie-in games, as discussed in Chapter 3.

The visual representation of the story space through cuing (representational hints embedded in the visual and symbolic code of the film) and mooring (symbolic anchors related to story space) is used extensively by Jackson in *The Lord of the Rings,* contributing to the cognitive mapping out of the world in viewers' minds. Space is associated with story themes and character background and development so that the world is presented as semiotically coded (a factor which facilitates translation of the storyworld to digital games and online sites because semiotic coding allows cognitive understanding, as is discussed in Chapter 1 with reference to Ryan and Lemke). Viewers become accustomed to the aesthetic code through the traversals that form in

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[19] For more on the collective experience of film viewing see Paul Cobley, *Narrative* (London: Routledge, 2001).

transmedia narrative but it is the film that provides the strongest visual symbols of the chain.

For instance, throughout the films the Shire becomes a mooring point, a visual symbol of the values that are being protected. It is emblematic of a simple life embedded in the rural, pastoral world that is close to nature where friends and family indulge in the mundane realities of day-to-day life. As the narrative develops, the information gaps presented at the start of the film are filled in as the Fellowship is formed and the object of the quest becomes clear – the ring must be returned to the fires of Mordor. The scene in which the council unite to decide who will carry it there emphasises that only the hobbits are strong enough to complete this mission. This makes sense because they are from the Shire – the film's mooring point of good.

In order to build suspense and immerse viewers into the narrative, the beginning of the film presents many narrative gaps, such as the flashing eye of Sauron that appears at intervals but is not contextualised until much later, and the adventures of Bilbo that are always referred to but never explained in detail. Gandalf's return to Bag End, and his throwing the ring into the fire to verify its nature, highlights the narrative gaps in the story when, in response to Frodo's question, 'Where are you going?' he replies, 'Questions, questions that need answering'. This invitation to speculate about the questions embedded in the narrative script is precisely, one may argue, the invitation of transmedia narrative itself. As the films are being designed and produced, and even whilst they are being shown on screens around the globe, audiences are invited to question – and to seek the answers to their questions on the other platforms that form part of the chain. Viewers are encouraged to interpret the film's semiotic code, to navigate affiliated websites and to participate in the generation of knowledge that grows around the film. Whilst this also happens in the case of the book, the film's ability to invite top-down inferences is augmented by the synchronous presentation of storyworld and action at the same time, as

well as its dominant exterior perspective, which *opens up* narrative options, rather than closing them down (as the dominant interior perspective of the book does).

For instance, as evil continues to pervade the Shire, viewers are asked to make a number of top-down inferences. Jokingly, Gandalf is labelled a 'Disturber of the Peace' when he arrives at the Shire for Bilbo's birthday, and later he is seen sitting in front of the fire thinking about the ring and whispering 'my precious'; however, viewers are only given an explanation for this much later. His confrontation with Bilbo gives a visual rendition of his great power, as Bilbo shows how far the ring has possessed him when he turns on Gandalf, but again, at this point, it is left to function simply as a cue. Later, shots of the Black Riders approaching the Shire are juxtaposed to scenes of the lives of hobbits such as Merry and Pippin trampling through the Farmer's crops. The context for the epic battle between good and evil is built up gradually throughout the narrative rendition, which is different to that presented in the book (which is dominated by lengthy descriptive passages), reminding viewers of the classic elements of fantasy literature and fantasy film discourse. It allows immersion into the story space more easily, especially when visualised and rendered through spectacle and pathos, as described below in more detail through the *Harry Potter* example.

Jackson's version of *The Lord of the Rings* is, however, not solely important for the visualisation technique that it introduces, as described above, but also for its ability to transform a 1950s 'children's classic' into a successful convergent transmedia narrative. Jackson's ability to harness the power of each media platform available in order to discuss and promote his work, whilst maintaining the epic dimensions of the story in both book and film form, is precisely what Weitz failed to do in *The Golden Compass*– and, perhaps, what the *Harry Potter* team initially managed but later failed to integrate with emergent interactive strategies across the

multiple platforms of the transmedia story, discussed further in Chapter 5. The following section presents a closer analysis of the problems encountered in the translation of Philip Pullman's story to film, and highlights film's prevalent position in transmedia chains as it juxtaposes Weitz's production to Nicholas Hytner's successful production of *His Dark Materials* for the theatre. This will lead to a detailed discussion of the way in which *Harry Potter* producers attempted to operate through a design ecology that orchestrated convergent strategies on all levels which however, this thesis concludes, fails to implement the full aesthetic, interactive potential of digital media through the whole chain in spite of the accumulation of resources to do so.

A Failure to Translate: Chris Weitz's *The Golden Compass*

Whilst the comparison to the likes of Rowling and Tolkien definitely holds, as Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy is now institutionalised children's literature, its development into a successful transmedia chain is less convincing. Although the books have been translated into thirty-six languages and adapted into a radio drama (broadcast on BBC Radio 4 in 2003 and now available on CD and cassette), as well as a theatre production produced by Nicholas Hytner (for London's Royal National Theatre in 2004, with reruns in 2005) and a feature film (*The Golden Compass* produced by New Line Cinema was released in cinemas in 2007) accompanied by a PC Game, the story has arguably failed to affect a successful design ecology. In spite of the numerous fansites and merchandise available, and awards won in 2009, New Line announced its decision not to produce a sequel to *The Golden Compass* and, consequently, no new PC or online games were produced. The play remains a difficult one to reproduce, both because of technical difficulties as well as thematic controversies that have surrounded the book since its publication. Whilst interest in the books continues, the lack of new releases in

any media has inevitably affected the chain's potential to make use of developing technologies that could allow it to create new points of convergence between the reader and the story, to partake in the participatory culture that transmedia depends upon.

The Golden Compass evidences the producers' need/desire to design a narrative that could contribute to the textual ecology of the story written by Pullman, but also to produce a film that cohered with popular fantasy film discourse. For instance, *The Golden Compass*, like *The Lord of the Rings*, begins with an omniscient narrator introducing elements of the story in a voiceover. A female voice accompanied by powerful music that serves to create a dramatic atmosphere spells out all of the big issues to the audience, placing the viewer in a more omniscient position than the spectator in the theatre or the reader still beginning the book as well as the characters within the narrative itself. In *The Lord of the Rings* the aim of the initial sequence, also presented in voiceover, seems to focus on the introduction of the threat to Middle-earth, but it is much longer and offers more detail than *The Golden Compass*. It is particularly more successful in giving viewers a taste of the spectacle that would later be hailed as some of the best in movie history. It offers flashes of the spectacular battle that takes place towards the end of the film, and thus already, in the first few moments, is able to capture the attention of popular fantasy film fans.

The Golden Compass introductory piece, following what seems to have become one of the trademarks of the popular fantasy film, seeks to place the viewer in a position of omniscience to create suspense from the outset. The film text simplifies the story to a single plot line, as the compass becomes central to Lyra's adventures when her best friend is kidnapped and she embarks on a quest to find him. To do this, producers and scriptwriters revised the time and space of the source text. Just as in other reworkings of a source text, many details about the

places and people of the multiple worlds are omitted, the events are presented in a revised order and characters have taken on different roles and appear in different positions. Therefore, the aesthetic and narrative traversals of the story are modified to accommodate the film platform, but in Weitz's version not enough consistency is maintained.

The design ecology of the chain must be strong enough for the textual elements of setting, plot and character to remain easily recognisable to viewers – especially those viewers who are already readers and seek to expand their knowledge of the book by viewing the film. These viewers, approach the film with both diegetic and extra-diegetic knowledge of the storyworld, hoping to add to that knowledge in order to apply it in their own performances of interpretation in other media platforms. The production design behind *The Golden Compass* clearly aims to enhance the story-world presented in the books whilst building up to and ending with what could be interpreted as the battle scene at Bolvanger. Ultimately, however, it fails to do so. Although the sense of threat is introduced from the start and quickly develops into fast action scenes of conflict between the good and evil parties, and in spite of the fact that the complex issues or detailed information which could distract the viewer from this build-up to the most spectacular scenes in the film are omitted (or placed in a temporal position of less consequence), the film fails to convince. What Weitz calls 'the kind of hurling forward motion of the narrative' is taken to extremes, so that the aesthetic traversals required within transmedia narrative fail to play out.[20]

In any other genre, a fast-paced plot would be attractive to children, who often do not have the patience to get an overview of names, places, languages and people before the action begins.

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[20] 'Writer/Director Chris Weitz talks about The Golden Compass'. <www.movies.about.com> [accessed 31/01/09.]

However, fantasy film discourse developed specific narrative techniques to deal with the construction of time, space and narrative situation in film, and although *The Lord of the Rings* and the *Harry Potter* films also revise the time and space of the source text, the narrative world remains accessible and the characters recognisable. In Weitz's production, however, the visual images bombard the viewer, and no space is left for the development of character. The plot is devoid of complication and the characters lack depth. The film medium can, through editing techniques discussed below in relation to the *Harry Potter* films, give the viewer the impression of being everywhere at once, yet in *The Golden Compass* also being nowhere in particular.

The film fails to cohere enough to keep the viewer focused on the important issues at the heart of the story, and it does not allow spectators enough time to develop an affective relationship with Lyra. The only purpose of the temporal construction of the film seems to be to get to the battle. However, in this battle there is little sense of the epic and personal losses at stake. There is no growth in the characters and no sense of the individual at the centre of the spectacle in the filmic rendition of Pullman's story. These characteristics, while absent from the film, are present in the book and *could* have transferred to the film had the textual ecology been given more importance, as it is in *The Lord of the Rings* and the *Harry Potter* chain. A greater sense of convergence between medium and consistency with the source text is, in fact, present in the theatrical production of the story, *His Dark Materials*. A brief comparison with particularly relevant aspects of the 2003 performance is justifiable, therefore, because of the light it sheds on aspects of the filmic version which contributed to the failure of this transmedia chain.

In the theatre rendition of *His Dark Materials*, the first performative version of this story universe, all three aspects of plot, setting and character are handled differently and with more success. Kimberley Reynolds maintains:

> […] much of this success lies in the balance struck in the course of the adaptation process between those elements of Pullman's trilogy that are firmly rooted in literary tradition and a theatrical interpretation that employed many techniques and strategies derived from popular culture and the mass entertainment industries.[21]

Hytner's reputation as one of the UK's finest stage directors contributed to the institutionalisation of the trilogy. The decision to use the Olivier Theatre privileged 'action and spectacle over characterisation, reflection and other more abstract and cerebral qualities in the texts',[22] whilst also foregrounding pathos that allows the audience to build an affective relationship with the characters and promotes the intersubjective flow necessary for digital age interactivity and immersion to take place. Aware that its viewers may be a mixture of Pullman fans and more general theatre-goers, this performative version ensured that Lyra's coming-of-age was well represented through cues throughout the play, especially dealing with her deepening relationship with Will, that it provided enough points of reference to enable the audience to become part of the story universe and that it facilitated immersion through pathos. The scenes held in the Botanic Gardens are of utmost importance in this respect.

The Botanic Garden acts as a kind of non-space, as featuring in both Lyra and Will's world, it is neither there nor here, but to a certain extent everywhere. Wright has Lyra point this out when she says 'Will! It's the Botanic Gardens. We got one in my Oxford too, just the same.

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[21] Reynolds, '*His Dark Materials* in Performance: Finding a Balance between Heritage and Mass Media', p. 186.
[22] Ibid, p. 198.

Exactly the same'.[23] The scenes set in the Garden function as 'mooring points', and, at the same time, dramatic asides. They do not participate in the flow of the plot, but serve as moments that put other events into perspective. Although Lyra and Will speak alternately, neither hearing the words of the other, in the play's story time their words overlap each other presenting the viewer with a shared perspective:

> WILL. I still miss you.
> PANTALAIMON. Say something.
> WILL. I miss Pantalaimon too. Your daemon. Your soul. I miss him as much as I miss you. Because he is you.
> PANTALAIMON. Tell him about the college.
> WILL. I know he's there. I know you're there. Even though you're further away from me than the furthest star… you're here. Right here. On the same bench. In a different world.
> LYRA. I've had a very good year at college. It's like they told me, all those years ago … if I work very hard I can start, just start to do the things that came so naturally to me when I was a kid.
> WILL. 'I spread my wings, and I brush ten million other worlds, and they know nothing of it'. (6)

The scenes set in the Garden at placed at crucial moments in the plot, at the beginning of Act I, at the beginning of Act II and they represent moments of shared focalisation:

> WILL. I wanted to go through after you.
> LYRA. I wanted to stay.
> WILL. But then I remembered what my dad said. There's no elsewhere…
> LYRA. You must be where you are…
> WILL. …and where you are is the place that matters most of all…
> LYRA….'Cause it's the only place where you can make…
> WILL….where you can build…
> LYRA….where you can share…
> WILL….what you've been looking for all along…
> LYRA. The Republic of Heaven. (228)

The play begins to make this possible from the very instance Will is introduced into the plot line, at the beginning of Act II. When Will and Lyra discover each other in Cittagazze, they

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[23] Nicholas Wright, *His Dark Materials* (London: Nick Hern Books, 2003), p. 105. Subsequent page references given in-text.

realise that there are essential differences between them and the worlds they come from. Will finds it hard to believe that Lyra has crossed the Aurora and understand the existence of Pan, and Lyra, likewise, struggles to believe that Will entered Cittagazze through a window in the air. As they come to terms with these differences, the play starts to offer a shared focalisation. They both wonder at the other's attitude to things like fridges, coke and cigarettes, and believing that their backgrounds are intrinsically different, they stop doubting each other and instead begin to find out more about each other. In the play, visuals are used to symbolise the abstract concepts of trust and shared perspective, as before they part briefly for Will to go do his research in the library they exchange their most precious and meaningful possessions:

She gives him the alethiometer in its bag.
LYRA. Take this. Just for today. It's the most precious thing I got. It means that I trust *you*.
He takes it.
WILL. And you take this.
He gives her the writing case. (107)

As the play develops, the viewer learns of many similarities between the two children. Both are running away from someone, Will from the police and Lyra from her parents, and both feel responsible for the death of another person, Will that of the secret agent, and Lyra for Roger's. Both the children have dysfunctional mothers and their fathers have both been involved in the mystery of dust. Most importantly, however, they are both pre-destined children. Will is destined to be the bearer of the knife and Lyra is the child of the witches' prophecy, and the future happiness of the world depends on their success. When Lyra leaves Pan behind in order to cross over to the Land of the Dead with Will, the Boatman highlights their shared predicament when Will, arguing that Lyra should be allowed to take her daemon along as he did not have to leave a part of himself behind, gets told: 'You do, young man. The only difference is that she can see it and talk to it. You will lose something just as precious, and you'll miss it as much as she does' (199). In fact, just a little while later, as the boat pulls up at

the jetty, the two again present a share the same perspective when they talk about the emptiness

their abandoned soul has left behind:

> LYRA. Do you feel it, Will? A big empty space where your daemon was?
> WILL. It's worse than empty. It's like a fist punched through my ribs and pulled something out. (203)

Their complete homogenisation is solidified visually towards the end of the play when they

finally kiss and Serafina acknowledges that 'The Dust pouring down from the stars has found

its living home… and those two young children… no longer children… have made it happen'

(224). The visualisation of the connection of their souls comes when the viewer encounters

Will's daemon for the first time and, unsurprisingly, Kirjava is a cat just like Pan's final form.

This narrative technique serves to highlight the play's pathos as it renders the final separation

of the children even more poignant because it feels like something whole is being split into two

and it is symbolic that the knife shatters as Will, upon closing the window between them for

good, utters her name. The children's self-sacrificial separation puts them in the league of

heroes, ordinary people required to do extraordinary things in the face of adversity. It gives the

performative version the mythic dimensions that underpin the source story in book form

through intertextual references that, albeit unrepresentable on stage, are visualised in

alternative ways, as discussed above.

Attaining convergence between the demands of the theatre space and sufficient consistency

with the source text, the theatre version of *His Dark Materials*, unlike the film, proved to be a

successful contribution to the development of the transmedia narrative because whilst being

aware of its place within the chain, it also became an autonomous work of art and allowed for

the intersubjective relationship between viewers and characters to form. Theatre, however, not

possessing the capacity for becoming an intertextual commodity in the same way that the Hollywood blockbuster does (with blockbuster budgets, large-scale production teams and far-reaching distribution networks), is unable to sustain the chain as a whole and merely functions as a platform that adds the collective experience of viewing in real time to the experience of the narrative in book form. The convergent design ecology requires that both book and film provide strong representations of the setting, plot and character development in order for the chain to develop successfully. This will be analysed in relation to the *Harry Potter* series and the role that film played in generating their success.

Consolidating a Textual Ecology: The *Harry Potter* Film Series

Although Rowling's first three books were not written as transmedia narratives, arguably the subsequent ones, even if unofficially so, were. The first film to be released, therefore, was important not simply as an adaptation, but also as a cultural artefact able to mobilise the momentum and interest required to fuel transmedia chains and an audiovisual traversal on which the textual ecology (later films, games, merchandise and even books) were based. As the *Harry Potter* brand evolved, each film was accompanied by a PR and marketing campaign that encouraged viewers to engage with the storyworld on multiple platforms and invited those who had not yet read the books into the ever-expanding fandom through the film and its ancillary products.

The films were promoted as tie-in films, but also as high fantasy films, so that it was made clear that it was not necessary to have read the books in order to enjoy the films. Although the book and film industries kept quite separate at the beginning of the collaboration, the publication and release dates of the texts were converged to keep audiences tuned in and

excited. Release dates became events, so that by the time *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (Alfonso Cuarón, 2004) was released, fans were driven to a heightened sense of expectation as the publication dates were accompanied by specific times (3.45pm on July 8th 1999 for *The Prisoner of Azkaban*). Websites accompanied each film release, inviting speculation about the differences between the books and the films, and also between each successive instalment in the franchise. Cast interviews, production interviews and 'behind the scenes' videos went viral online, and social media campaigns were developed to enhance the sense of community surrounding the franchise.

The first teaser poster for *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* was released on New Year's Day 2001, and the first trailer on 2nd March 2001. Following the release of the film, the soundtrack was released on 30th October 2001, and the video game on the 15th November 2001. Both Mattel and Hasbro began to release film-related merchandise, and the DVD and Extra Bonus material were released in February and May 2002, respectively. The metacommunicative level of play was foregrounded, as viewers were let into the world behind the 'Making of Harry Potter' and could see how various aspects of the story were created. In possessing this knowledge, readers and viewers could proceed to create their own interpretations of the storyworld, and the Internet was awash with various creative manifestations of participation (as will be discussed further in Chapter 4).

The creation of a believable storyworld across the 8 films was paramount to sustaining the knowledge and play community that grew around the transmedia chain, and as each platform joined, those previously established readers had to adjust their relationship to the text. By the time the series was complete, a solid networked public had formed around the storyworld and

in a process of play and performance were navigating, appropriating and networking the storyworld in order to appropriate and reconfigure it. This level of immersion and interactivity is facilitated by the specific *Harry Potter* storyworld design that draws upon characteristics of the fantasy genre, as discussed above in terms of *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Golden Compass*.

Inference Techniques in the *Harry Potter* Series: Book and Film

In Rowling's books, the magical world in which Hogwarts exists is a salient creation (in which each element in the secondary world has a corresponding element in the primary one), just like C. S. Lewis's Narnia, or J. M. Barrie's Neverland. In both of these, as well as Rowling's series, a magical world is juxtaposed with a fictional world, which closely resembles the reader's world of reference and facilitates immersion because semiotic codes of representation and meaning are shared. The muggle (non-magical, human) world in the *Harry Potter* series is fictional even though not magical, and the focus of Rowling's muggle world is definitely Privet Drive, the street which hosts the Dursley home (Harry's maternal aunt and uncle). Characterised by its impeccably kept front gardens and its rows of street lights, Privet Drive features at the start and finish of the first five books in the *Harry Potter* series and presents a world with which the reader can identify.

Rowling is careful to describe the setting of her story in detail and makes it clear that the muggle world acts as a stepping stone into her magical one. Like Lewis's wardrobe or Nesbit's flying carpet, then, Privet Drive acts as the familiar portal to a world of unfamiliar creatures and happenings. This is first indicated to the reader through Mr. Dursley's perspective as, whilst preparing to go to work in the morning, he observes the street and notices 'peculiar' things

happening; 'It was on the corner of the street that he noticed the first sign of something peculiar – a cat reading a map'.[24] The appearance of Albus Dumbledore, Headmaster of Hogwarts, and the transfiguration of McGonagall from a cat into a witch serve to highlight the saliency of the two worlds, as Rowling meticulously describes the magical world in substantial detail to readers who are still discovering the fictional space. In setting up her fictional world, Rowling alternates between an omniscient external focalisation technique when, for example, she describes Privet drive for the first time – 'a man appeared on the corner the cat had been watching' – and an internal one when she describes Harry's first crossing through Platform 9 ¾ – 'he closed his eyes ready for the crash' – in order to transport her readers into the magical world with the same level of comfort and anxiety that her characters demonstrate (14-15, 103). In this way, the author facilitates both spatial immersion, as readers learn more about the setting of the story, and the structuring logic of the fictional world, and also emotional immersion and intersubjective flow of the narrative – discussed in further detail later on in this chapter – experiencing the world through the perspective of the characters, most especially the protagonist, Harry.

Throughout the film versions of the story, the camera technique and focalisation add perspectives on setting, plot and character that are not present in the book. Point-of-view is complimented by the diegetic and non-diegetic aspects of the filmic medium, so that the magical world is juxtaposed to the muggle one through the music playing in the background and the varied lighting, which indicates clearly that magic is infiltrating through its subdued lighting techniques. Sound and lighting are used to invite viewers to make inferences about

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[24] J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (London: Bloomsbury, 1997), pp. 8-9. Subsequent page references given in-text.

both the Muggle and the magical worlds in *Harry Potter*. If they are not familiar with Rowling's series, the lamp post, the dark forest, the mist and Dumbledore's appearance are designed to serve as interpretative cues by evoking other fantasy universes, such as Middle-Earth, and wizards such as Gandalf. Few viewers, whatever their familiarity with the fictional world of *Harry Potter*, will fail to realise that this is a fantasy world, so the audience immediately expects that unusual events are about to take place though at this point they are invited to question the space of representation and to search around the frame for clues. These clues are provided by the close-up shots that alternate with the wide shots. In *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, for instance, this is consolidated through moments such as Dumbledore's raising of the Put-Outer (used to put out all the light in the street lamps), McGonagall's transmutation from a cat into a human, and Hagrid's descent on a motorcycle, huddling Harry in his jacket. Therefore, whilst in the first scene of the book the reader is presented with Mr. Dursley's account of unpleasant commonplace experiences, in the first scene of the film Dumbledore appears in Privet Drive, takes out a black-sceptre-like instrument, opens it so that a small industrial claw seems to emerge, and with it sucks in the light from the street lamps. The construction of the overall storyworld is almost identical, but at key points such as this opening sequence, when uninformed viewers need support, adjustments are made to the temporal sequence and perspective, not to close down interpretation, but rather to facilitate spatial immersion through the creation of clear traversals for the viewer to follow. .

Through the filmic *mise-en-scène*, the progression of the narrative is not restricted to descriptive shots that halt the progress of narrative as descriptive passages in the book do. For example, when the trio enter the Chamber of Secrets to recover the Philosopher's Stone, the *mise-en-scène*, together with the swooping camera angles and the variation of wide shot and close up, give audiences a sense of being present in that moment ontologically rather than

simply externally, thus enhancing levels of spatial immersion.The sequence in which the trio enters the trap door being guarded by Fluffy uses non-diegetic elements to build tension as the viewer is absorbed by the dramatic music, the darkened lighting and the alternating between long shots of the scene and close-ups of the trios' faces as each of them is given a chance to battle magic much darker than any to which they have been exposed so far. The bonds of friendship and honour are consolidated through Ron's act of self-sacrifice on the chess board, framed through alternating long, wide-angle shots of the chess pieces seen smashing themselves and close-ups of the characters' faces that highlight the fear and anguish they feel at that moment. In the book, the scene is understated as Rowling uses the third-person omniscient narration technique to describe the scene, keeping the reader detached from the emotions of the characters:

> He stepped forward and the white queen pounced. She struck Ron hard around the head with her stone arm and he crashed to the flow – Hermione screamed but stayed on her square – the white queen dragged Ron to one side. He looked as if he's been knocked out. Shaking, Harry moved three spaces to the left. The white king took off his crown and threw it at Harry's feet (305).

In the film, however, the chess pieces are huge and the devastation caused by the game is visible as they smash into pieces, flying over the characters' small heads. The scene starts with a low panning view of a darkened room and stone statues which are not immediately identifiable as chess pieces. It moves to a frontal long shot of the trio opening the door, followed by close ups of the trio's facial expressions. As they begin to walk forward, the camera cuts to a side view of them passing through the pieces but as soon as Ron realises that they are walking on a chess board, the scene cuts to an aerial wide shot of the chess game, whilst the whole scene gets brighter and positions Ron at its centre in deep focus.

The film establishes a spatio-temporal continuity that is beyond the diegetic and non-diegetic affordances of the book. Its continuity is enhanced by synchronous sound that deepens immersion as it adds layers of the real that were not previously present through the book. In the book, this scene loses much of its dramatic calibre and is described in a far more understated manner; for example – 'Their first real shock came when their other knight was taken … Had to let that happen,' said Ron, looking shaken … Hermione screamed but stayed on her square…' (303-05). The multiple layers of the film version (lighting, camera movement, sound etc.) allow the three characters to appear dishevelled and exhausted. Their efforts in recuperating the Philosopher's Stone, the film makes clear, have taxed them, and this is made more visible to the viewer than it is in the book, as the space around them reflects damage and yet is unyielding, inviting spectators to ask whether the characters can withstand the greater evil that is clearly at play. The smoky scene, alternating between an aerial long shot of the debris that is scattered across the chess board, the fires blazing amidst the broken statues and the close-ups of the characters' injured faces all serve to heighten the sense of spatial immersion that compliments what is offered in the book. In film, whilst more detail is given through the in-depth shot, it is presented in such a way (*mise-en-scène*) that audiences are invited to interpret the action as it plays out. Andre Bazin maintains that the use of the camera manipulates the audience's perception of scenes whilst maintaining ambiguity. It is, he explains:

> […] not just a more economical, a simpler, and at the same time a more subtle way of getting the most out of a scene. In addition to affecting the structure of film language, it also affects the relationships of the minds of the spectators to the image, and in consequence it influences the interpretation of spectacle.[25]

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[25] André Bazin, *What is Cinema? Vol. I*, trans. Hugh Gray (London: University of California Press, 1967; repr. 2005), p. 35.

In filmic fantasy discourse, spectacle serves as a form of mediation between the eye and the affective sense of the spectator. Ascribed a different dramatic function to the climactic moments in the book, spectacle becomes an exponent of Ryan's three immersive elements, combining setting, character and plot in a moment of visual excess that, in film, negotiates the spatial immersion described above with an emotional response from the audience. According to Leslie Kan, this becomes more complex with the progression of technology because:

> In cinema, television, radio and similar technologies, a temporal and spatial severance occurs between the spectacle and the spectator [as] the spectacle becomes temporally and spatially disseminated in a doubling of mediation so that the individual's experience of the spectacle is experienced as a mediation of technological apparatus [which] seems to produce a new type of awe and wonder based upon the medium specificity of the filmic image.[26]

Until it unfolds on screen, the chess game, for example, is part of a sequence of events yet once translated to film and converted into spectacle, viewers are absorbed in the moment's visual excess. The question of whether spectacle disruptively intervenes into the progression of narrative in contemporary film-making is relevant to my study, as I argue that it is through the juxtaposition of spectacle and pathos that film adds another level of spatial and emotional immersion to the transmedia chain. In film, both spectacle and pathos serve to scale the protagonist against the setting – to show what impact his/her personal quest will have on the storyworld – and whilst film, like books, obliges viewers to follow a fixed narrative sequence, according to Keane:

> […] spectacle has traditionally been regarded in terms of self-contained moments of visual excess. Seen in these terms, spectacle in effect short-circuits narrative, almost putting the film on hold while we're pulled into some other dimension where action and effects take over from 'natural' storytelling properties and dramatic revelations.[27]

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[26] Leslie Kan, *Theories of Media: Keywords* (University of Chicago, 2004), retrieved from: <http://csmt.uchicago.edu/glossary2004/spectacle.htm> [accessed 26/01/2014].

[27] Stephen Keane, *CineTech: Film, Convergence and New Media* (Hampshire: Palgrave, 2007), p. 57.

Although the narrative construction of fantasy tends to be amenable to the film medium, it is in these moments of 'visual excess' that film complements the books significantly. The book only possesses the affordance of telling the scene, whilst the film is able to show it. The film arrests its' viewers in moments of spectacle through its technological affordances (moving image, sound, animation) that are used to juxtapose the personal, intimate details of the hero's journey against the macrocosmic state of the storyworld. The effect is to halt the progression of narrative in a moment of multisensory description which in turn affects character development and emotional immersion (as discussed with reference to *The Lord of the Rings* above).[28] For instance, in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, Harry's importance as hero is established amidst the wreckage of the chess game, and following the injury of Ron, Hermione pulls the focus back to the microcosmic, Harry's own quest, reminding him that he must go on. In both book and film, Harry goes on alone. In the book, this takes place after he drinks a potion from a bottle that opens the door to the chamber, so that the only description of his transition into the chamber reads:

> It was indeed as though ice was flooding his body. He put the bottle down and walked forward; he braced himself, saw the black flames licking his body but couldn't feel them – for a moment he could see nothing but dark fire – then he was on the other side, in the chamber (309)

Omitted in the film, the potion-drinking scene is replaced by a much more dramatic establishment of space since the chamber is first viewed by the audience through a frontal shot of Harry walking down the stairs, followed by a pan, sideways shot of Harry's face in close-up as the camera swings round to give audience's Harry's perspective of the chamber. In the films, the horror of Harry's loss and the hints of what he is yet to sacrifice is made spectacular through visualisation including special effects, as Voldemort appears for the first time, as the double

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[28] In *The Lord of the Rings*, Jackson used CGI to represent a fantasy world that can be viewed from every available perspective, contributing to the audience's sense that they are fully immersed and able to occupy the storyworld space not just witnessing it from a specific vantage point as happens in a book.

face of Quirrell. A creature refusing to die, symbolised by his slit eyes and nose, bright red veins and deep, broken voice, he rises from the pile of ashes that Quirrell has become, too weak to form into a body of his own but still strong enough to plunge through Harry, causing him to collapse unconscious to the floor, as the viewer watches on helplessly. The moment is rendered dramatically in the film and adds significantly to the almost simplistic description of Voldemort in the book:

> Where there should have been a back to Quirrell's head, there was a face, the most terrible face Harry had ever seen. It was chalk white with glaring red eyes and slits for nostrils, like a snake (315)

Wide shots give viewers the sense of grandeur that the chamber instigates, and when Voldemort's voice is heard emanating from Quirrell's head it resounds around the chamber, establishing context for his re-embodiment. Although in the book he refers to himself as 'mere shadow and vapour' (315), in the film, this moment is made more epic because an aerial wide-shot of the entire chamber blazing in flames is alternated with the stairs leading to the chamber exit, but the movement of the camera suggests that Harry is trapped. In the book, Voldemort mentions Harry's parents but, in the film, he comes face to face with an image of his parents in the mirror so that the audience's affective relationship with this child, placed at the centre of such terrible danger, is accentuated in the film and the spectacle of Voldemort's resurgence is juxtaposed to the pathos of Harry's situation.

The combination of in-depth shooting and deep focus (termed by Andre Bazin as 'spatial realism'),[29] offers audiences enhanced affective and spatial immersion by contributing to the their 'phantasy of all-seeingness'[30] within film but, also, within the transmedia chain as a

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[29] Bazin, *What is Cinema?*, pp. 23-51.
[30] Christian Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema*, trans. Celia Britton, Annwyl Williams, Ben Brewster and Alfred Guzzetti (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), p. 299.

whole, as other media versions draw on the spatial realism that the film brings to the chain. The gratification that film offers to its viewers and more broadly, to participants in the transmedia narrative, is therefore that:

> [...] the reader's private landscapes blend with the textual geography. In those moments of sheer delight, the reader develops an intimate relation to the setting as well as a sense of being present on the scene of the represented events.[31]

As the audience gets a clear sense of the space of representation, it becomes possible to appreciate the epic plot moments in juxtaposition to intimate insights into character. In the Chamber of Secrets, readers are invited to question whether Harry can overcome the pain of his past to face Voldemort and later, whether a weakening Harry and Hermione are able to continue wandering across the magical world to find and destroy the Horcruxes in time to beat the villainous Voldemort, who is seen gaining strength throughout the series. As discussed above, and also in more detail below, if space is not established convincingly enough throughout the film series, these plot points risk losing their impact and other platforms in the transmedia chain, such as digital tie-in games, are jeopardised.[32]

The example of the confrontation with Voldemort in the Chamber of Secrets highlights the importance of spatial relationships through manipulation of the camera (placing prominence on the spectacle of scale at work), as it contributes to the sense of spatial immersion, that complements the description of setting provided in the books. This is partly because, in film, the world is often shown holistically, so that viewers seem to adopt an aerial position that frees them from ordinary human limitations, giving them more insight and power than most of the characters inhabiting the world, intertwining the focus on big spectacular scenes with small

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[31] Marie-Laure Ryan, *Narrative as Virtual Reality: Immersion and Interactivity in Literature and Electronic Media* (Maryland: The John Hopkins University Press, 2001), p. 122.
[32] David Butler, *Fantasy Cinema: Impossible Worlds on Screen* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), p. 83.

actions and details that are made to carry substantial narrative weight (combining spectacle and pathos).

Whilst pathos implies getting to know the inner voice of the characters, and facilitates viewers' immersion into the film (because personal battles are intertwined with the bigger battle for the magical world), it is also not unique to film. The book too, with its lyrical and deeply touching passages, is able to keep the reader immersed in the story and fate of the characters. Therefore, I argue, it is important to emphasise that it is only in using spatio-temporal continuity that the film enhances immersion by setting up a series of contrasts in size and scale. It does this by combining 'a broad, overarching perspective alongside a more intricate, focused understanding of the world'.[33] Evident in the scene in the chamber, this is also made clear in the build-up of good (through the character of Harry) against evil (the growth of Voldemort) throughout the series. In each encounter with Voldemort, space, and an overarching perspective, is used to indicate the scale of evil that Voldemort is generating on the one hand, and the power of love that Harry uses to generate a shield of good, on the other.

One of the most spectacular scenes in this regard is the battle that takes place at the Department of Mysteries in *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*. In the book (2003), as in the film (David Yates, 2007), the climactic battle between Dumbledore and Voldemort is preceded by the battle over the prophecy between the Death Eaters, including Lucius Malfoy and Bellatrix LeStrange and Dumbledore's Army. The student wizards are injured, and already the momentum is growing towards what becomes an inevitable crisis moment. When Dumbledore appears upon the scene shortly after Voldemort, the interplay between the book and the film

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[33] James Walters, *Fantasy Film: A Critical Introduction* (Oxford: Bloomsbury, 2011), p. 128.

becomes far more apparent, as Rowling describes aspects of the set to show the size and scale of the battle. She inserts the death of Sirius in a moment of complete chaos and disarray so that the reader feels disorientated and highly immersed in the story on an affective level. The chapters almost read like movie scenes, and the characters function like actors, performing a series of fast-paced actions that leave readers breathless and completely immersed in the moment.

In Chapters 35 and 36 of *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, entitled 'Beyond the Veil' and 'The Only One He Ever Feared', respectively, Rowling's style is dramatic, as indicated in the examples below. The characters do not pause to reflect, the omniscient narrator is simply observing context and action. In Chapter 37, 'The Lost Prophecy', the narrative pauses to allow Harry to absorb what has happened and the reader is brought in touch with his emotions. Chapter 38, the final chapter of this book, 'The Second War Begins', pushes the action forward, beginning with a Ministry announcement, 'HE WHO MUST NOT BE NAMED RETURNS' and ending with Harry's return to the Dursleys to indicate that the next cycle in the series was about to begin.[34]

In the film, however, spatio-temporal continuity must be maintained. It is not halted by moments of emotional reflection but rather by those of spectacular visual excess of which plenty of examples could be provided but in this sequence, perhaps most notably, the aerial shots of the Room of Prophecies at the moment when all the glass globes start collapsing to the ground atop the fleeing young Wizards and the final battle between Dumbledore and Voldemort. The descriptions provided in the book build to a crescendo as the language used is

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[34] J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (London: Bloomsbury, 2003), p. 745. Subsequent references given in-text.

graphic and full of emotion for example, 'then Harry's scar burst open and he knew he was dead: it was pain beyond imagining, pain past endurance' (719). In the film, the viewer is similarly absorbed in the moment as the shots change at a very high speed until Dumbledore whispers to Harry, 'Harry, it isn't how you are alike, it is how you are not.' Emotion and narrative progression are simultaneously presented to the audience facilitating immersion as the body is projected onto the represented space, the action recreated through a moment by moment re-enactment of the plot that highlights the emotions of the characters. Film, using aesthetic traversals introduced into the chain by the book, provides an augmentation of the storyworld through the multimodal/multisensory affordances of the screen, and allows for other media platforms to join the chain and for a knowledge and play community to grow around the storyworld, facilitating long-term engagement and emergent interactivity, as discussed further in Chapter 4.

With film, viewers are free to determine the severity of the situation for themselves by perceiving the spaces between objects and people, with resulting ambiguity that is not allowed by the book. Viewing a film is arguably unique, because audiences feel what the characters feel, see what they see and live with them (through the combination of spatial, affective engagement) in the moment. It adopts the premise that cinematic realism is predicated on the idea that the moments on screen were revealed in such a way that the viewer had no choice but to participate, as wide shots create spaces that require the spectator to really look, and deep focus allows those spaces to be visually real.[35] The moments the characters are experiencing, are viewed by the audience in real time. In this context, then, the in-depth shot approach allows, and even encourages, a focus on the *mise-en-scène* that highlights the continuity of dramatic space, allowing whole scenes to be covered in one take with a motionless camera or a swooping

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[35] Bazin, *What is Film?*, p. 229.

one. It also allows the space of representation to be presented multimodally, so that a sense of gratification prevails. The multimodal representation, created through the in-depth shot, therefore encourages cerebral participation on behalf of the viewer (what Ryan calls cognitive immersion), allowing greater opportunity to interpret the space and placement of events within the frame. Viewers are, so to say, meaningfully engaged within the spatial realism of the film and the intersubjective relationship with characters who they get to know through multiple perspectives.

In her work *Hamlet on the Holodeck* (1997), Murray maintains that this kind of cognitive and sensory immersion has been a representational goal in art and media for centuries, and has gone through a number of stylistic cycles. Both Murray and Ryan assert that it has recently become less prominent in the fields of art and literature, but in the film and digital game industry, belief that technology is inevitably creating more powerful means of simulation that can immerse the viewer in fully illusionistic experiences, that are indistinguishable from the real world, are prevalent and will be discussed further in Chapter 3 of this thesis. Chapter 3, however, also outlines how this kind of ideal immersion is impossible to achieve and has been partly displaced by the desire for interactivity, which – as is discussed above and elaborated on in Chapter 3 – is somewhat incongruently designed to complement full immersion in the way that Murray and Ryan describe it. As Murray and Ryan see it, audiences are encouraged to *forget* that they are experiencing designed entertainment, and instead to become fully immersed in the simulation that the film and the game provide. In their book, *Rules of Play: The Fundamentals of Game Design* (2004), Salen and Zimmerman, two digital game researchers, however, move away from this immersive ideal instead calling it 'the immersive fallacy':

> The immersive fallacy is the idea that the pleasure of a media experience lies in its ability to sensually transport the participant into and illusory, simulated reality. According to the

immersive fallacy, this reality is so complete that ideally the frame falls away so that the player truly believes that he or she is part of an imaginary world.[36]

Ultimately, they argue, the immersive fallacy is symptomatic of contradictory ideas about technology. On the one hand, it celebrates the enhanced affordances of new technology, such as spatial realism in film (enhanced by CGI, 3D graphics etc.) and convergence culture's celebration of the cultural attractor. On the other, it seeks to make that same technology invisible so that all the frames around the experience fall about, a contradiction has been termed 'the double logic of remediation' by Bolter and Grusin.[37]

Importantly, however, Salen and Zimmerman claim that immersion in new media does not occur through representations that are indistinguishable from reality but, rather, through the metacommunicative process of play (and make-believe) involved in *engagement with media*, where the audience/player is well aware of the artificiality of the play situation. In this scenario, both producers and audiences are aware of the careful negotiation that takes place between the servicing of audience desire for gratification whilst that same audience takes on work that is uncharacteristic of audiences in previous times. This form of interactivity as social practice allows audiences to contribute to the storyworld beyond the established production mechanisms of controlled response, in the case of film, mostly through the promotional material and ancillary products and events. Therefore, revival of the play aesthetic within the cultural industries allows participants to recognise the rituals, patterns and rules of play whilst also engaging with the possibilities and potentials for participation. As distinct media versions join the transmedia chain, these possibilities and potentials are expanded, as discussed in relation to film in this chapter. The following chapter will evaluate what digital tie-in games

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[36] Katie Salen and Eric Zimmerman, *Rules of Play: Game Design Fundamentals* (Massachusetts: MIT, 2003), pp. 450-51.
[37] Jay Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2000), p. 2.

add to the transmedia chain and how their design, production and distribution are influenced

by the book and film platforms as well as convergence culture

more generally.

Chapter 3: Interactivity and Play in Digital Tie-In Games

In *Inventing the Medium: Principles of an Interaction Design as a Cultural Practice* (2011) Janet Murray maintains that good digital design develops through interactive rituals between users and digital artefacts in society, expanding the depth and breadth of symbolic representations whilst broadening the spectrum of shared attention. Joined by Ryan in the claim that the main difference between old and new media is the definition of interactivity, these scholars writing during the boom of convergence culture agree that the textual architectures, that is the structures of choice and the modes of user involvement determine whether the media chain, and the distinct versions that compose it offer an adequate sense of agency and gratification.

The development of the transmedia chain as it expands to include film and digital tie-in games (here taken to refer to PC games) must necessarily consider a design ecology that is both top-down and bottom-up and also balances the aesthetic considerations of the story with the economic demands of the market for that particular medium. As the type of participation in narrative varies according to the medium's affordances it must also be negotiated within the collective creation of belief that forms around good digital design. Storyworlds and their design, offering different possibilities of interaction with setting, plot and character in distinct media versions, are crucial to sustain mental representations of the storyworld necessary for cognitive approaches to interpretation.[1] Ryan's definition of storyworlds that hinge on both static and dynamic components is crucial to a discussion of digital tie-in games, as it helps to describe the function of the game within the transmedia chain. Whilst static storyworld

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[1] Marie-Laure Ryan, *Narrative across Media: The Languages of Storytelling* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), p. 8.

components include details of geographical features, natural laws, social rules and values, a folklore and an inventory of existents, dynamic components capture the unfolding of the world through physical events that bring changes to the existents and give significance to the physical ones. Through digital tie-in games the storyworld is modified and transposed as the background structure of the world is redesigned and the source story is transferred to a different temporal and spatial setting. The player is also able to move to an internal/ontological type of engagement with the storyworld rather than an external/exploratory one which does not allow for any direct interaction with the storyworld, except through ancillary products as discussed in Chapter 2. The type of interactive mechanism of each medium within the chain is important in relation to immersion.

As a sense of virtual community grew around transmedia storyworlds at the turn of the century, notions of agency and emergence became more prevalent as the desire for knowledge and play became associated with the role of participants as networked publics. The private, autonomous position of the reader and player had to be reconfigured to cater for the more public, ubiquitous mode of engaging with narrative in its various media forms. The political economy of production and reception shifted from one of consumerism to one of connectedness that challenged traditional definitions of interactivity. Until convergence culture, interactivity was sold on the ground that it offered abundant choice in what participants did, saw or used but at the time of writing, interactivity is also taken to imply a networked community that is engaged in a long-term, large-scale conversation within a socio-technological storyworld.[2]

Balancing the demands of immersion and interactivity, digital tie-in games are important because they present storyworlds as navigable spaces that respond to players' input. They offer

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[2] Kelly Fuery, *New Media: Culture and Image* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 41.

gratification through emotional and strategic immersion (rather than total immersion) by allowing fans of the books and films to interact with the world they know and have become more directly attached to. As part of transmedia chains, digital tie-in games enlarge and adjust the coherence and linearity demanded by books and films by offering interactive choices to players. This is important because, in this way, play and performance are defined through the ludic (playable) capacity of the game. Setting, plot and character are subordinated to ludic progression (referring to structured activity with specific rules) in storyworlds that are rendered navigable but remain, within the context of the tie-in game, limited by the control of the production team and unable to achieve the type of emergent interactivity that is demanded of new media products. Outside of their function within the chain, the games have little scope or value and they remain restricted in the kind of experience offered to players. This chapter explores the narrative dimensions that these games add to transmedial storyworlds, outlining how they are influenced by other media versions within the chain and how they, in turn, whet the players appetite for a deeper level of immersion in worlds over which they desire to project themselves onto the characters garnering meaningful agency over plot and setting.

Translating Transmedia Worlds through the Ludic

In digital PC games, play is of a specific type, combining what Roger Caillois, in *Man, Play and Games* (1958) termed 'paidia' (based on the aspect of role-play), and 'ludus' (defined by the parameters of the game such as lists of equipment, spells, talents, degrees of physical strength and other quantifiable elements).[3] In this context, the participant engages with the story on both immersive and interactive levels. Ludic progression is determined in part by the

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[3] Roger Callois, *Man, Play and Games*, trans. Meyer Barash (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001 [1958]), p. 13.

compulsive and elective development of the narrative text. Lydia Plowman has commented on elective and compulsive involvement of readers/players, claiming that in interactive transmedia, narrative coherence challenges the notion that no episode may be redundant, and should take its place in a fixed sequence. The plot, Plowman claims, 'can be suspended or altered at various decision points – the foci of interactivity' that invite readers/users to make choices throughout its development.[4] Lisa Sainsbury argues, however, that multilinearity 'cannot account for the *explicit* invitations to reader/user activity required at the numerous points of narrative suspension (or interactivity) which have come to define multimedia'.[5] For this, the terms 'elective' and 'compulsive' narrative must be used as determiners of the extent to which narratives expect their readers to participate in their development. Sainsbury claims:

> A compulsive narrative [...] is simply one that compels the reader to move from one sentence, image or page to the next; the reader is *not required* to make a choice as to the order in which the plot is presented. Elective narratives [...] *require* the reader to make directive decisions that can affect both plot and story.[6]

In games, I argue, this is taken a step further, because apart from being elective and using textual withdrawal extensively in their creation of narrative, they are also ergodic and therefore, as Espen Aarseth points out, the demands on the reader to imbue the text with meaning that they themselves bring to it, is even greater. Being part of a transmedia chain of story development changes the way electiveness and compulsiveness are dealt with as each media version of the story takes its place within a chain of others and this is especially prominent in the fantasy digital games that are produced in tandem with the books and films in the series.

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[4] Lydia Plowman, 'Narrative, Linearity and Interactivity: Making Sense of Interactive Media' in *British Journal of Education Technology*, no. 27 (1996), pp. 92-105 (p. 92).
[5] Lisa Sainsbury, *The Postmodern Carnival of Children's Literature: Necessary Playgrounds and Subversive Space in the Protean Body of Children's Literature* (Diss. University of Surrey, 2000), p. 83.
[6] Ibid, pp. 83-84.

When a media version emerges on the market as the source narrative, it is often highly compulsive because it is responsible for presenting the world to the readers. In the case of the *Harry Potter* stories, as described in Chapter 1, the source narrative is the book, even though the film is also of substantial importance because of the way in which it translates the author's description of the storyworld into an audiovisual simulation. As subsequent media versions follow, however, they are able to render story more selectively, directing viewers and players through the spaces they choose to leave out. The game text relays narrative chiefly through the elective, ergodic process that is coupled with a metonymic process – a process of textual withdrawal and inference which allows meaning to be alluded to through code and symbol rather than direct description, as will be discussed further below.

Producers of the games that form part of transmedia chains face a double challenge: they must balance the demands of game play with the metonymic process of story development effectively within the transmedia chain. In this chapter, I will argue that because of the agency it awards to players, the elective game text locates its player in a position similar to that of the reader of a dramatic script. The relationship between game text and player is more like drama than it is like a book or a film. By allowing first-person internal perspective, game texts allow players to feel that they are present in the game world in ways similar to how actors are present on a stage, making the experience offered by game texts both ludic (participatory) and dramatic, as discussed below and in Chapter 4.

In order to enhance the participatory and dramatic potential of these storyworlds, the first person perspective is central and advertising materials make it one of the first points of appeal to potential players. On the packaging of the first *Harry Potter* game, the player is told:

> Be Harry Potter as you embark upon a mysterious journey filled with fun and mystery! Discover the many secrets of Hogwarts as you learn to ride your broomstick, play Quidditch and participate in exciting spell challenges. Ensure you attend your lessons to become skilled at magic spells as you study to become a wizard. Along with friends Ron and Hermione, prepare yourself to face You-Know-Who![7]

This is a dramatic modality combining elements of both elective and compulsive texts, inviting readers to return to the world of the story and take up a virtual self that often corresponds to one of the characters in the book, increasing the intersubjective form of interactivity and immersion, central to the concept of performance and role-playing and action-adventure games where the player controls a character in the game.[8] This dramatic modality and the interactive nature of games thus requires that authorial control be exercised through processes rather than events so players should be able to make dramatically significant decisions. Chris Crawford comments on this in *Interactive Storytelling* (2013), when he claims that the foremost cognitive modality of interactive storytelling is social reasoning. For Crawford, whilst plot specifies events, interactivity demands processes that are designed though the abstract, rather than direct, control of the storyworld. What Crawford terms abstract may also be discussed through the metonymical strategy of textual withdrawal. This implies that the ludic story universe must be conceived in terms of verbs instead of nouns as this allows it to become navigable, inviting players to interpret it through actions. In order for the invitation to participate to be successful, richness of choice is vital and dependent on the functional significance of each choice and the perceived completeness – number of choices in relation to number of possible choices. In the digital PC game version of the story, therefore, images, sounds, text and numbers are all data through which the player interacts with the process of storytelling. Together, these produce an interactive storyworld, 'a universe that contains all the dramatic elements the author wants the player to be able to interact with'.[9]

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[7]*Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, EA, 2001.
[8] Andrew Burn and Peter Parker, *Analysing Media Texts* (London: Continuum, 2003), p. 45.
[9] Chris Crawford, *Interactive Storytelling* (New Riders, 2013), p. 46.

Whilst digital PC games confine themselves to a few of the simplest modalities of human cognition – for instance, hand-eye co-ordination, puzzle-solving, spatial reasoning and resource management – games within transmedia chains also draw upon the broader traversals that span the book, film and online platforms, and invite the reader to interpret the work through a process of play. Players of these types of fantasy games are familiar with the storyworld through the book and film version, and enjoy re-visiting the familiar world of the story and spending time with the characters (emotional immersion); however, players also enjoy the *strategic* immersion offered by the gameplay and determined by the level of agency they are awarded. A key element of this is the intratextual nature of tie-in games: whilst they are unable to offer emergent interactivity through their own affordances, they do refer to and enlarge upon the known storyworld of the source texts. In assuming the intratextual nature of the chain they, like film, move beyond the limitations of the distinct medium in order to participate in transmedia's quest to 'map sociotechnological metaphors onto their players'.[10]

Callois's 'sociotechnological metaphor' is the central mechanism by which digital tie-in gameworlds invite readers to play. It also encompasses how they play within the context of digital tie-in games and what the effect of that engagement with play has on their relationship to the story. This chapter, in fact, suggests that the function of games within the chain is that they allow readers to become emotionally immersed in a fictional world through play, and that digital game play crucially allows them to adopt an internal/ontological perspective in a story space that is rendered navigable. The cognitive, emotional and kinesthetic feedback loop that

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[10] Roger Callois, *Man, Play and Games*, trans. Meyer Barash (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1958; repr. 2001), p. 484.

is formed between games and players makes digital games a particularly powerful medium for affecting players' moods and emotional states.

In *In Game* (2011) Gordon Calleja considers the compelling nature of such games and the extent to which they situate players in a performative domain that enables them variously to 'vent frustration through intense action, to become absorbed in the cognitive challenge of a strategy game, or to stroll at leisure through an aesthetically appealing landscape.[11] The metacommunicative process of play is accommodated in these games as they allow players to perform actions that are not taken seriously. In the real world a player presses buttons or keys while the screen displays actions in the fictional world. The action of pressing a button is translated into the death of Voldemort in the games, for example. In computer games, it may be argued, the real actions of narration are transformed into fictive plot actions and the story is actualised by the actions of the avatar, so that the game constructs a story through movement. According to Britta Nietzel, real actions of playing (such as pressing a button) are translated into acts of narration. She explains why:

(1) The actions of movement are different each time the game is played. This means that they involve the plot rather than the story.
(2) Games do not list movement actions in their score tables. Movements affect only the time taken to complete a level. This is a measure of performance and represents narrative rather than story time.
(3) Textual commands such as 'go west' and their visual equivalents are performative symbolic acts. They designate actions, but they are not the actions themselves.[12]

Therefore, in a computer game the world is rendered navigable and the distinction between the events of the story and the events of the narrative is not a chronological one, but one between potentiality and actuality, as they are developed in the game text and narrative. This potentiality

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[11] Gordon Calleja, *In-Game* (Massachusetts: MIT, 2011), p. 185.
[12] Britta Nietzel, 'Levels of Play and Narration' in Jan Christoph Meister, ed., *Narratology beyond Literary Criticism: Mediality and Disciplinarity* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2005), pp. 45-63 (p. 55).

and actuality replicate the process of appropriation and negotiation that takes place across the broader traversals of the transmedia chain and its invitation to construct reading as a process of orchestration. Greg Costikyan compares the experience of game playing to readers' interaction with stories and concludes:

> Stories are inherently linear. However much characters may agonise over the decisions they make, they make them the same way every time we reread the story, and the outcome is always the same...Games are inherently non-linear. They depend on decision-making. Decisions have to pose real, plausible alternatives, or they aren't real decisions. It must be entirely reasonable for a player to make a decision one way in one game, and a different way in the next. To the degree that you make a game more like a story – more linear, fewer real options – you make it less like a game.[13]

Here, Costikyan touches on a central factor responsible for the main difference between games and film or print and, perhaps, particularly relevant to tie-in games and their questionable level of success, in comparison to games produced outside of transmedia chains of story. Games are primarily ergodic.[14] Ergodicity refers to the amount of active input a reader or player needs to put into the text for it to come into being:

> […] the effort implicit in the ergodic is first and foremost a *disposition* to act, not merely the action of pressing a button and pulling a joystick […] Game involvement is indicated not simply by the direct input of the player or the display of such an action on the screen, but by the player's cognitive effort, which is not necessarily registered as a form of input.[15]

Cognitive effort, therefore, is translated into knowledge gained from not only the micro levels of the game – those directly involving game play – but also the macro levels, which refer to the layers of story surrounding the game and its creation. Within the context of transmedia, Ryan and Mackey have claimed, readers face the world structure and recognise what the text

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[13] Greg Costikyan, *I Have No Words & I Must Design* (1994). <http://www.costik.come/nowords.html> [accessed on 01/03/2013].
[14] Espen Aarseth *Cybertext: Perspectives on Ergodic Literature* (Maryland: John Hopkins University Press: 1997), p. 1.
[15] Calleja, *In-Game*, pp. 41-42.

posits as actual versus propositional attitudes, so that whilst playing the game, they are also applying the processes of meta-reading (also referred to above as the textual strategy of withdrawal – metonomy). They draw on the cognitive constructs that they have formed in order to negotiate their engagement with the storyworld rendered ludic.

The storyworld is represented through the design of the space and landscape within the transmedia chain. In games, landscape is crucial as it determines the actions that are permitted in the storyworld and therefore the level of agency that is given to players. Ultimately, agency is determined by the code used by designers who decide which characters are playable, the moves that they are able to perform, the ambits that they are able to enter and control, the parts of the story that are interactive and the variations on plot that different decisions taken by the player will affect.

Within transmedia chains, however, readers of the book who may also have, or have not, watched the films will turn to the games with a particular disposition to act. Having high expectations because they know the storyworld and characters well, readers expect to participate in the narrative in a more invasive way and landscape, in the context of fantasy tie-in games especially, becomes a play-space that embodies the socio-technological metaphor as described by Callois. In line with the cultural move towards more pervasive structures and systems of play, many recent successful games have designed space based on open landscapes which shifted from an object-centred and deterministic view of space into a culturally-sensitive appreciation of the relation between social practices and material acts, so that space is seen as socially constructed, rather than formally defined. The importance of story space is also discussed by Jenkins in his concept of an embedded narrative where the game world becomes an information space and narrative elements are read through spatial detail. This is extremely

evident in the spaces that are not necessarily contested spaces but rather backdrops in the games, settings that are visually detailed but cannot be entered, circumnavigated or interacted with. They stand on the edge of the game world, representing a greater environment – the rest of the world. These type of settings represent an earlier, less ergodic form of representation, as they take up the position of game spaces with no qualities assigned to them and they serve to keep audiences immersed. By including representations of vast areas of the story space, these digital tie-in games ensure that players remember that they are navigating a storyworld that is, in fact, larger than the game itself. Within transmedia chains, this feature is necessary as space in video games serves to fuel the story franchise further as the expanded setting presented is as widely referential as the books or the films.

Primarily, therefore, space functions as the context in which players have control over aspects of the storyworld through the agency they are awarded in game play. In the game version of *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, for example, the first free-exploration game in which players are encouraged to wander around to discover the environment, they find themselves at Hogwarts, encouraged by Fred and George to use the Marauder's Map in order to find their way about. Learning how to navigate place becomes central at this point because of Dolores Umbridge's presence in the school and the necessity to meet in secret. Manipulating the environment, players adopt the first-person internal and exploratory perspective. They are encouraged to activate the Marauder's Map, obtaining two lists of various places and people and visual hints of the location of characters. Introduced in *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, the Marauder's Map is an interesting device. It is described in the books as a magical document that reveals all of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry and is extremely valuable because of its ability to locate every person within the grounds. It is not fooled by polyjuice potion or the Invisibility Cloak, and it is said that Fred and George Weasley stole the

map from Filch's office in their first year at Hogwarts and it gave them clues, randomly coming to life until they learned how to activate and use it properly. The twins then passed the map on to Harry in order to allow him to join the other students on a trip to Hogsmeade after his relatives refused to sign the permission form, supposedly leaving him stranded at Hogwarts. Throughout his years at Hogwarts, it is implied that the Map was a great aid to Harry in order to find his way out of difficult situations; however, his use of it during his sixth year is most interesting in this context. Obsessed with Draco's daily activities, Harry uses the map to monitor him closely. Represented by a dot that moves around the parchment, Draco, viewed by Harry from a third-person perspective, seems to be navigating place so that the actions the character performs are always defined through Harry's interpretations of his movements through reference to the setting in which the story develops. For instance:

> […] Harry pulled out the Marauder's Map and his Invisibility Cloak from his bag. Having concealed himself, he tapped the map … and there, alone in the seventh-floor corridor, was Gregory Goyle […] He therefore sprinted up the stairs, slowing down only when he reached the corner into the corridor […] Harry turned to contemplate the blank wall behind which, he was sure, Draco Malfoy was not standing frozen, aware that someone unwelcome was out there […] It gave Harry a most agreeable feeling of power.[16]

Through Harry's use of the map, therefore, the castle and its grounds are described to readers as a navigable space, the structure of which is also essential to the way the story plays out in games. In games where engagement takes place through an omniscient point of view, players learn the environment's spatial layout, but when they are given a perspective within the environment, as provided by the Marauder's Map and also by having a perspective that is linked to the avatar (so that players only share the limited perspective of the avatar), they are only able to learn the space through navigation.

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[16] J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* (London: Bloomsbury, 2005), pp. 434-35. Subsequent page references given in-text.

In this context, game spaces often function in rhizomatic ways, as a network of linked points without a hierarchy or centre, which can be accessed through multiple entry points, similar to the transmedia chain itself. As players traverse the space, they build cognitive maps based on consistent internal images that allow players to gain experience and form memories of game play. Calleja claims that 'cognitive maps are accumulated through navigation in the environment as well as more general surveying by using vantage points, maps, and other more spatially holistic sources'.[17] Players learn to negotiate the unicursal corridors of game space, as well as an alternative structure known as 'tracks and rails', in which games offer a single available path of progress.[18] When freedom is restricted in this way, designers make up for lack of movement by scripting in more narrative and creating more emotionally-charged situations that keep levels of immersion and interactivity high, a dynamic described in further detail below but also comparable to the design ecology of transmedia chains. In order to compliment the affordances of each media platform and compensate for the restricted levels of interactivity and immersion that each medium holds, the chain functions as a holistic structure in which the distinct media are absorbed and enhanced.

In digital tie-in games within the *Harry Potter* series, the potentiality and actuality of interactive storytelling presents players with situations of play from which 'we learn patterns of spatial use', so that, 'played space is then a real space that has been impacted and affected by gamic ways of seeing and doing'.[19] These gamic ways of seeing and doing are what enable the metacommunicative process of play to function across the transmedia chain, countering the immersive fallacy. As Salen and Zimmerman explain, they also facilitate the performative

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[17]Calleja, *In-Game*, p. 79.
[18] Espen Aarseth, 'Doors and Perceptions: Fiction vs. Simulation in Games', *Intérmedialités*, no. 9 (2007), pp. 35-44.
[19] Georgia Leigh McGregor, 'Situations of Play: Patterns of Spatial Use in Videogames' (Proceedings of DIGRA 2007 Conference), p. 544.

interpretation that allows the *Harry Potter* storyworld to cross over into the real world through the dynamics of fandom, as will be described in Chapter 4.

Interactivity and Immersion: Incorporation in Ludic Storyworlds

As defined by Calleja, incorporation is an advanced form of immersion and refers to the, 'absorption of a virtual environment into consciousness, yielding a sense of habitation, which is supported by the systemically upheld embodiment of players in a single location, as represented by the avatar'.[20] Kinesthetic (the ability and know-how required to move around the game world) and spatial involvement (knowledge of the space of representation) are essential factors of game play in that they allow players to internalise the game environment. It is difficult for new players to become incorporated into the game world because they are extremely conscious of the ways in which they must manoeuvre their avatar in order to move, jump, shoot etc. Only once the kinesthetic movements are internalised can players begin to internalise the spatial ones. Unlike immersion, incorporation does not presuppose a dive into another space, but rather accounts for the blending of stimuli from different environments which are all integrated into the interactive storyworld.

As a concept, incorporation moves beyond the theories of immersion and presence that regard virtual environments as experientially separate otherworlds; instead, incorporation treats them as domains continuous with the media-saturated reality of everyday life. In constructing a sense of reality, humans do not consider the physical real as the stable point of comparison to which virtual phenomena are measured up, but rather they acknowledge that the virtual is a crucial

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[20] Calleja, *In-Game*, p. 169.

aspect of contemporary reality.[21] This means that the metacommunicative process of play replaces the desire for the complete represented simulation of the immersive fallacy.

Just as readers become immersed in a book and viewers in a compelling film, players may become incorporated into a successful game. The relationship between the player and the game, however, remains significantly different, since the interactive storyworld recognises and reacts to the presence of the player in ways books and films do not. During gameplay, ludic involvement implies skilful manipulation of the environment in order to progress and achieve certain goals in a quest-like manner. In the game, each quest functions as an attainable sub-goal that contributes to the higher-order goal of developing a character through increasing levels, each of which is a goal towards which players tend to work. The level of immersion of players into the gameworld is intertwined with the technological modality that is highlighted in the earlier part of the game when players are still learning how to manipulate the technological controls in their power, and so direct reference to the medium at hand is included in the text. This is achieved by using the second-person address through the use of the word 'you'. Although this is often intercut with shots of the characters listening to instructions alongside the player, a shift takes place when the game narrator suddenly starts referring to various parts of the hardware only at the disposition of the player, as demonstrated in the images below.

Players here realise that rather than being consumers of completed texts (book and film), they are called upon to take action, to grasp the first-person internal ontological perspective as described by Ryan in order to bring game narratives to periodic or complete closure. Because games function in real time, they invite players to monitor the gameworld meaning that they

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[21] Ibid, p. 156.

are called on to pay constant attention, in order to perform a series of actions that are repetitive and recursive.

As the representational and orientational functions of the text pull characters and players together, the avatar becomes central. The avatar functions as a personal/fictional alter-ago, and as players become more experienced, it becomes easier for them to manipulate the roaming point-of-view characteristic of the game text through the avatar. As their skills and know-how increase, allowing them to progress to more advanced levels of the game, the virtual environment they are navigating becomes more complex and more demanding in order to ensure that immersion is not broken by game play that is not engaging enough to maintain the player's suspension of disbelief.

The repositioning of readers/players is, in the context of digital games, a tangible one. At the beginning of the game, when the players are 'newbies', the image looks out of the screen at the player, but during game play, this is reversed, and the player is located in a fixed position with respect to the avatar. Normally placed within the universe just behind the character, players are linked to the characters whilst being distanced from them, just like a shadow, but still positioned through the first-person internal ontological perspective, where the player's perspective is evidently positioned from a distance, close behind the main characters.

Players are encouraged to internalise their immediate location within the arena, level, region and world, so that as 'cognitive maps of game environments improve, the player's spatial disposition to them shifts from the conceptual to the inhabited', tapping into a sense of belonging and pride that in transmedia chains is enhanced through consistency in the

representation of the storyworld.[22] The visual aspect is important to this process because appeal to other senses such as smell and touch is absent. In *The Image of the City* (1960), Kevin Lynch calls this 'imageability', or:

> […] that quality in a physical object which gives it a high probability of evoking a strong image in any given observer. It is that shape, colour, or arrangement which facilitates the making of vividly identified, powerfully structured, highly useful mental images of the environment.[23]

When imageability is faulty, the success of the game is compromised because players are not allowed to feel that this is the storyworld they expected, the same one as the book and the film. This is the case with most of the *Harry Potter* tie-in games and contributed to their broadly negative critical reception. Whilst the setting (primarily the interior of the Hogwarts castle) in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (EA, 2001), for instance, remotely resembles that described in the book and represented visually in the film, it is unable to create a believable story space. In the first game, the visuals consist of still pictures bathed in sepia with music and voices that fail to recreate the sense of familiarity that is essential to the effectiveness of PC games in a transmedia chain.

In Rowling's book, a detailed blueprint of a rich fictional world is provided with particular objects acting as symbols of the medieval setting of the story:

> Perched atop a high mountain on the other side, its *windows sparkling* in the starry sky, was *a vast castle* with many turrets and towers […] Everyone was silent, staring up at the great castle overhead. It towered over them as *they sailed nearer* and nearer to the cliff on which it stood […] They walked up a flight of stone steps and crowded around *the huge, oak front door*. […] Hagrid raised a gigantic fist and knocked three times on the castle door (123-24, my emphases).

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[22] Ibid, p. 85.
[23] Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City* (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1960), pp. 9-10.

The majestic presence of the castle and its scale are emphasised through the use of vocabulary such as vast, great, towered, huge, gigantic, and also through its affiliation with nature: the starry sky, the river and the cliff. Once inside the castle, the reader immediately meets Professor McGonagall, and once again the medieval setting is evoked, with reference to such things as flaming torches, grand staircases and golden goblets (125-29). These items indicate nostalgia for the better days gone by. Parallels are suggested between Hogwarts and Camelot, but the references also place Hogwarts firmly in the domain of high fantasy (evoking Tolkien's milieu), and are reinforced by the transmedia traversals across the chain.

In the film, the build-up to the viewer's first glimpse of the castle is given weight through a *mise-en-scène* comprising a dark sky and the crescendo of accompanying music. The viewer shares the students' viewpoint as they are given a frontal view of Hogwarts as an archetypal medieval castle alight with thousands of flickering candles that let out a warm yellow glow. The long shots are interspersed with close-ups of the first years' awed faces, which helps to accentuate the imposing presence of the castle. Because the game medium is mostly visual, it draws on these images to replicate the way in which the film has embodied the storyworld. Interestingly, games including and following *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* were produced strongly in collaboration with Warner Bros. to allow setting to be consistent throughout the different media versions. Even characters' faces are accurately modeled on the real-life actors, with the rendering of character becoming closer and closer to the film visualisations, as can be seen in the images below. The need for consistent embodiment through visuals and impersonation is evident throughout. In the improved version, from the moment players enter Hogwarts it is obvious that they are within the same space, though one is rendered through the simulated space of the game and the other is the represented space of the film. Despite their differences, both are clearly recognisable as Hogwarts. The grand staircase with

its swiveling stairwells and walls plastered with living oil portraits, the echoing corridors and background chattering from the classrooms almost makes players feel like they are back in school, so that even though the plot differs from that in the source narrative, the visual representation of the storyworld allows the players to remain engaged with the narrative.

Thus, the focus in *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* game was clearly to provide a ludic storyworld that allowed players to feel like they were living in Hogwarts, whilst acquiring the required knowledge required to move around it effectively in order to enjoy the pleasures of incorporation. In digital tie-in games, therefore, the navigable setting that provides participants in the transmedia chain with gamic ways of seeing and doing, compensates for changes to the plot and character development. The detailed descriptions and internal thoughts and feelings, as well as growth of the characters, are omitted in accordance with the demands of interactive storytelling. For instance, the cover blurb of *The Order of the Phoenix* emphasises the theme of friendship and the development of Harry's character:

> Harry Potter is due to start his fifth year at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. He is desperate to get back to school and find out why his friends Ron and Hermione have been so secretive all summer. However, what Harry is about to discover in this new year at Hogwarts will turn his world upside down.

On the other hand, the player of the game is asked to 'Explore Hogwarts with Harry to recruit all the members of the D.A., then teach them Defence Against the Dark Arts in the Room of Requirement'. The story line of the game, therefore, refers directly to the conflict of good against evil and the setting up of characters on either side of the conflict. Thematic development is reduced to a mere rounding up of the characters that form part of Dumbledore's Army (hereon referred to as the DA), a group of wizards and students put in place to fight evil, and even this part of the story is tackled in a completely different way in the book, which aims to

immerse readers into a believable magical world without requiring direct, overt action on their part.

In the book, the idea of forming a secret student group is presented and explained as a character thought process to readers who witness all of Hermione and Ron's concerns and enthusiasm as they present the idea to Harry and wait for his reaction. Readers are asked to share in the characters' emotions and growth and the story is relayed from an interior reflective perspective:

> 'Well,' said Hermione tentatively. 'You know, I was thinking today …' she shot a slightly nervous look at Harry and then plunged on, 'I was thinking that – maybe the time's come when we should just – just do it ourselves' (290).

Readers follow characters' emotional and psychological growth throughout the novel, and in this instance, are told that two weeks later Harry agrees to teach anyone who wants to learn from him and agrees to a meeting with all those interested. The focus throughout is on coming together, on acting on one's beliefs, on morality and life choices, as well as on leading readers through Harry's thoughts and feelings in order to enable them to sympathise and associate themselves with his view point, which is the focalising anchor of the story, as discussed in Chapter 1. Readers are made to feel that they know Harry intimately and that he and his fellow pupils are doing something important in resisting Umbridge and the Ministry of Magic.

In the text, the narrator conveys this by reporting how pleased Harry is with the first session, and the lift it gives to his mood. In the games, however, thoughts and emotions have to be translated into a series of actions, as Harry seeks out the individual members of the DA, has limited functional interactions with them, and then proceeds to fulfil the tasks they set him in order to get to the next level. In this ludic environment, therefore, actions centre primarily on rules (and objects) that give them meaning. These rules generate interesting forms of

contingency for the players to test and explore as they are expressed through a pursuit of personal and game-defined goals and are often referred to as evocative narrative elements that deliver information to the player through objects that may be picked up in order to reveal written, audio or visual material that add details to the story. In the PC version of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, for example, the game consists of 28 levels which, in the tab called 'Level Select', are named and listed according to five chapters. Players quickly realise that familiarity with Hogwarts, as it is rendered in the game, is necessary for progression, because in order to get through the levels they must solve puzzles associated with the school and the surrounding area, including collecting house points, wizard cards, Bertie Boot's Every Flavor Beans and chocolate frogs and making Fluffy (the three-headed dog) fall asleep.[24] The house points, cards, beans and frogs have different functions in the game; the 25 cards are hidden in secret areas, with the 25th and winning card being awarded to the player at the end of the game if Voldemort is defeated. In order to get this card, however, the player must have collected 250 beans throughout the gameplay, even though at no point is the value of the beans indicated to the player. The chocolate frogs increase Harry's health when he is wounded, but players are left to discover these semiotic qualities on their own.

Like Harry, Ron and Hermione, players are forced to reconfigure their strategy as they learn more about the world. It becomes clear that these puzzles and ludic rules predominantly serve to remind players that this is the Hogwarts of the book. In the book, Hogwarts is to Harry both a place where he belongs and a place full of tests; a mysterious castle where staircases change and portraits speak. Above all, in the book, Hogwarts is portrayed as a place where anything can happen because things are not always what they seem and unexpected things are constantly

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[24] Anna Gunder, 'The Migration of Media: Harry Potter in Print and Pixels' in Elizabeth E. Heilman, ed., *Critical Perspectives of Harry Potter*, 2ndedn. (New York: Routledge, 2009), pp. 291-307.

happening to the fabric of the building. The rules are discovered through experience of the space and this is captured in the description of Hogwarts are presented in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*:

> There were a hundred and forty-two staircases at Hogwarts: wide, sweeping ones; narrow, rickety ones; some that led somewhere different on a Friday; some with a vanishing step halfway up that you had to remember to jump. Then there were doors that wouldn't open unless you asked politely, or tickled them in exactly the right place, and doors that weren't really doors at all, but solid walls just pretending (98).

Thus, to develop an effective macro level surrounding the storyworld, consistency between different media versions of the story is key. Although the *Harry Potter* tie-in games are found lacking in terms of the meaningful level of agency awarded to players, in adapting to tone through the semiotic meaning embedded in the interactive storyworld, the later games of the series are rather more successful, reflecting the aging of the characters, as well as the darker, more threatening vision that is present in the later books and films.[25]

Ultimately, whilst the limited level of agency awarded to players remains frustrating throughout all the game adaptations, the final two games attempt to address the issue by becoming third-person shooters (giving a more omnipresent perspective of the world rather than restricting the view to that of the first-person relation with the avatar) that are linked very closely to the movies. In *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 2*, players may choose to play as different character-avatars. They are not frustrated by the change in avatar, because characters become avatars only at key points in the plot that concern them.

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[25] As a representative example of the game's reviews see: <http://www.gamespot.com/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerers-stone/> [accessed 01/05/2014]

The game assumes that players are familiar with the story and with the particular traits of each character. For example, in the level called 'The Basilisk Fang', the avatar is Hermione in the Chamber of Secrets, primarily because Ron (as the game assumes the player will know) is frightened of spiders. In the level, 'A Job to Do', McGonagall instructs students to blow up the bridge to Hogwarts, and players are given the chance to join Dumbledore's Army as they play though Seamus's avatar. Later, avatars change to Neville playing against the Death Eaters, and McGonagall against the ogres in 'A Giant Problem', allowing players to associate with most of the main characters in the story. In 'The Lost Diadem', the avatar is Harry against the Death Eaters until 'The Battle of Hogwarts', when it changes to Hermione against Fenrir, who is pitched as a 'boss' in a minor battle. Therefore, the game invites players to share the emotions and roles of the avatars as well as their challenges and achievements, benefitting from a shared involvement with the characters in the story by manipulating their avatars in the game.[26]

The point of game play, players are told at the start of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 2*, is to locate the Horcruxes (and this links to knowing the environment well) and eliminate Voldemort. To do this, they are required to fight monsters from the final and previous films, and so selecting an appropriate avatar is a ludic strategy that taps into assumptions of players' emotional connections with the story, making the game more appealing because of its ability to offer an opportunity for play, but also because it taps into player desires to belong to a community of like-minded people enabling them to speculate about plot, a point developed in Chapter 4. Furthermore, the process of creating successful traversals is enhanced by push elements of narrative in games.[27] He argues that the advancement of the scripted narrative in games is delivered through a number of elements including cut-scenes, quick-time events,

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[26] Calleja, *In-Game*, p. 43.
[27] Ibid, p. 121.

objects in the world as discussed above, dialogue and verbal text that all help to remind players that this is the same Hogwarts as that in the book and the film. Although in this case reference is mostly made to the film rather than the book (because these story-telling techniques draw on graphics, sound and image to add layers to the game narrative) they are labelled push elements because, as in the film, the player has no choice but to receive the information. As a result, game narratives, it may be argued, demonstrate a particular kind of intertextuality specific to transmedia narratives because they are determined by navigational principles influenced by both ergodic and non-ergodic traversals.

According to Gunder, parts of the game 'require the user to choose actively between alternatives in order to traverse the work' and other parts that players are forced to view without being able to respond directly.[28] Cut-scenes (excerpts from film footage extracted and used in the game; also known as push elements) are a primary example of non-ergodic storytelling in digital tie-in games, as they are spread sporadically throughout in order to strengthen the sensory modalities of the game. In other words, the cut scenes serve to link the game more firmly to the world of make-believe featured in other media versions of the story.

The push elements are also strategically chosen to support the plot lines, bringing to the fore parts of the story that are prominent in the book but hard to reproduce in interactive, elective versions. For example, in *The Deathly Hallows Part 2*, the game begins with the same narrative moment as the book; a cut-scene of Voldemort raising the Elder Wand to the sky from amidst a copse of trees. This indicates his increased power after retrieving one of the three powerful hallows, objects that will grant him power over death. Immediately, the scene cuts to a

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[28] Anna Gunder, 'The Migration of Media: Harry Potter in Print and Pixels' in Elizabeth E. Heilman, ed., *Critical Perspectives on Harry Potter*, 2nd edn. (New York: Routledge, 2009), pp. 291-308 (p. 293).

cinematic of the trio, Harry, Ron and Hermione, shown in the game walking along a beach with Griphook. They are negotiating a deal that would oblige him to lead them into the goblin bank Gringotts, but in return he requests the Sword of Gryffindor. This is slightly different to the film, as in the latter this conversation takes place in the Goblin's bedroom at Shell Cottage.

Ultimately, however, the juxtaposition of the cut-scene with the game cinematic helps the reader merge the story space as one. When this happens, interpretation of the story is facilitated for the player, even though the chronology is completely different from that presented in the book. In the book, the plot is set up around moments of suspense and curiosity as Rowling goes back in time, providing extensive detail to the background and events related to the first war against Voldemort, Harry's childhood and the mystery surrounding the hallows and horcruxes. Even though prior knowledge of the text is assumed, it is not absolutely necessary to game progression. The non-player characters speak as they move around, and game instructions appear on the screen leading the player forward, making the reader feel that, through play, they are able to socialise with the characters of the story, an important contributing factor to players' affective involvement in the gameworld. The characters, in accordance with their path in the film and the book, then progress to the vault and escape it atop the dragon and play their way to the village of Hogsmeade. They are reunited with Neville, who describes the changes taking place at Hogwarts since the trio left and through Harry, Ron and Hermione's shocked reactions, readers share in the horror of the events that are unfolding. In the game, this sequence merely serves to introduce the next level, 'A Problem of Security'. Plot, theme and character development are not approached directly through game play, but are therefore developed through the strategies of metonymy, as outlined above. The tie-in game can afford to render story metonymically largely because it bolts on to other media in the chain of production and consumption. Additionally, however, this is enabled by the macro and micro levels of story.

In digital games, one must distinguish between the 'story generated by the moment-to-moment actions within the game environment and the story that has been pre-scripted'.[29] These are represented by two temporal phases that the reader/player is aware of: the macro level, representing the time spent engaging with the universe offline, and the micro level, representing the moment-by-moment involvement of gameplay experience. With transmedia tie-in games, the reader's experience of a game rarely begins and ends with the actual gameplay. However, as this and the following chapter indicate, it also instigates a prolonged engagement before and after actual play, so that players' relationship to a good game, one may argue, often resembles fans' extended relationship to the literary franchise of their choice, and replays Callois's description of the socio-technological metaphor.

Jane McGonigal has highlighted the point that the convergence of ubiquitous computing, and the developing field of interactive arts – of which digital games is a part – challenge contemporary notions of where, when and with whom we play, as well as society's conceptions of play and work, real and virtual, public and private spaces and technologies. She observes how the technical, formal and social properties of each medium determine new experimental design spaces that intermingle storytelling with performance, and encourage readers to explore play as 'an embodied, social and highly consequential ritual, always already grounded in the practices of everyday life'.[30] The design ecology of art projects, as outlined by Dena, became even more crucial in the convergent, participatory environment of the turn of the century when representation was only as important as interactivity and immersion, and where the scope of all three came to be justified via the gratification offered to participants through agency.

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[29] Calleja, *In-Game*, p. 115.
[30] Jane McGonigal, *This Might Be a Game: Ubiquitous Play and Performance at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century* (Diss. University of California, Berkeley, 2006), p. 2.

Gameplay, McGonigal argues, is a very powerful medium for changing perspectives for the way it inspires new forms of interaction and networked publics. Whilst she focuses on ubiquitous computing, I maintain that transmedia storytelling can likewise serve as a field that cultivates 'future locations and contexts for embedded computation and networked interaction', as they, too, are able to produce abundant 'citations of play'.[31] In doing so, transmedia storytelling fosters new modes of techno-social intimacies, challenging the social and technological conventions of storytelling projects, as well as mainstream commercial publication and production processes. Readers are invited to discover the ludic affordances of story, both through the distinct media – such as the digital tie-in games discussed throughout this chapter – as well as the chain (viewed from the perspective of their iterability, the size of their fan base and their temporal persistence). Transmedia stories, it may be argued, often change the parameters of immersion and agency by encouraging the 'aesthetic practice of using real life as the interface to a game as well as the social practice of using gameplay as an interface to real life'.[32] The effect is to render storyworlds navigable and negotiable so that, as the next chapter proposes, the emergent potential of transmedia at the height of convergence culture is not simply embedded in the reconfiguration of the reader and reading processes, but also of new definitions of what features of immersion and interactivity are truly desirable within the contemporary media landscape. The following chapter will examine the playful interface of fandom that transmedia facilitates in the space between the storyworld and real life, in an attempt to understand the types of performance that are manifested through shared cultures and online networks in a spirit of community and creativity.

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[31] Ibid, p. 477.
[32] Ibid, p. 479.

Chapter 4: A Focus on Fandom: from Reading to Creating/Curating?

When the Internet became a mainstream distribution channel, circa 1995, it brought with it various promises of opportunity for reader participation to increase. Fandom, as a dynamic related to wider shifts within consumer culture, gained an important place in the transmedia chains surrounding cultural activators such as *Harry Potter*, and fans' relationship to the story was reconfigured in ways specific to the digital age. Previous chapters examined how narrative translates across media platforms, changing readers' modes of engagement with story. This chapter explores the extent to which the shifting landscapes of modern media encourage a prolonged, subjective interaction with narrative in readers who also became viewers, players, writers and curators. Additionally, it asks to what extent readers' personal involvement in the creation and interpretation of story can be assessed through the dynamics of play and performance in fandom. The nature of that play, in terms of interactive and immersion strategies that developed through convergence culture, is studied alongside the storyworld's design ecology, in order to establish an understanding of its function within transmedia narratives at the turn of the century.

As *Harry Potter* became established as a cultural activator, the Internet lowered the barriers to cultural participation in the production and distribution of interpretation, allowing the phenomenon of fandom to take place more globally and rapidly. Although in many ways *Harry Potter* fandom echoed others that came before it, such as those that developed around *The Lord of the Rings* and *Star Trek* (1966-2005), it was also different because, whereas the latter two had to transition from a print culture to an online one, *Harry Potter* fandom grew directly online. Before the early 1990s, fandom related mostly to detective and science fiction stories, such as *Sherlock Holmes* (1887-1927) and *Doctor Who* (1963-89). It took place almost

exclusively through one-on-one interactions and face-to-face meetings.[1] Fans got together at conventions and eventually began to write newsletters, 'zines' (magazines or pamphlets created by fans) and APAs (amateur press association additions to newsletters). Fan artefacts were physical and geographical boundaries restrictive until the Internet changed the dynamic – a process described by Murray, Ryan and Jenkins, and summarised here in the Introduction. Its connectivity, immediacy and hypermediacy contributed to convergence culture's demand for spreadable media products that could be distributed across multiple media platforms contemporaneously, generating long-term interest in readers. Suddenly, fandom became a space accessible on a daily level to all those with Internet access. During this time its use was mainly entertainment and 'precocious teens learned how to create those rudimentary pages and put them online'.[2]

The impetus for a knowledge society – or, as Castells put it, a 'networked' society – followed the development of convergence culture. Readers/audiences realised that the skills they developed through engagement with the Internet – multitasking, appropriation, distributed cognition, judgement, navigation, negotiation – allowed them to orchestrate meaning by playing across the media chain of story versions. In this way, readers develop a network of affiliations, engaging with the storyworld through a number of positions: reader, viewer, player, fan writer, online curator, etc. By adopting such cross-media textual processing, they engage in public performances of interpretation that alter their sense of agency. They participate in narrowcasting – the many-to-many communications of the Internet – as well as the flattening of distinctions between producers and consumers to different degrees as

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[1] For more detail on the history of fandom view: Francesca Coppa, 'A Brief History of Media Fandom' in Karen Hellekson and Kristina Busse, eds., *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet* (North Carolina: McFarland and Company, 2006), pp. 41-59.

[2] Melissa Anelli, *Harry, A History: The True Story of a Boy Wizard, His Fans, and Life Inside the Harry Potter Phenomenon* (New York: Pocket Books, 2008), p. 89.

transmedia enterprises negotiate digital economy, ubiquitous narrative and the tactical aspect of media within this cultural context. Tactical media (like the Internet), Lovink claims, are characterised by a mobility that enables grassroots users to usurp some of the creative power traditionally associated with mainstream authors and directors, a more emergent type of interactivity that is often manifested in fandom, as described in detail throughout this chapter. This emergent interactivity is not uncontested, as it requires a reconfiguration not only of the reader but also of the author and industry itself.

In 2000, for example, Anne Rice, then a popular author of vampire stories, banned all fan fiction of her work saying, 'It is absolutely essential that you respect my wishes',[3] and, at the same time, Warner Bros. issued a cease and desist letter to all owners of sites that used terms and images from the *Harry Potter* books. What ensued later became known as the 'Potterwar'. Rowling, although she expressed no desire to shut her fans down, had no objection to WB's desire to reign in the online enthusiasm for the series: 'There's always the worry that things get hijacked, and this has got nothing to do with money, for really nefarious purposes. How am I going to control it?'.[4]

But soon enough, Warner Bros. had to pull back and, in 2001, Diane Nelson, then the senior vice president of Warner Bros., told *Entertainment Rewired*, 'we've been naïve…the studio's letter is an act of miscommunication. We never intended to shut down any Web sites'.[5] By that point, Warner Bros. had had to deal with Claire Field, a British teenager who ran www.HarryPotterGuide.co.uk and passed her cease and desist letter on to British tabloid newspaper *The Mirror*, which then portrayed her as a victim of corporate avarice; Heather

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[3] Ibid, p. 92.
[4] Ibid, p. 94.
[5] Ibid, p. 97.

Lawver, a sixteen-year-old living in Virginia who ran a small site called *The Daily Prophet*; and Alastair Alexander, who set up www.Potterwar.org.uk as a worldwide action campaign against Warner Bros. in a kind of team effort to shift the media landscape on a global level. Anelli observes that 'Warner Bros. seemed to be struggling to fully grasp what it meant to have such an ardent, young, pre-existing fan base, as well as involvement from the author – an author who had specific wishes about keeping the series free from overcommercialisation'.[6] *Harry Potter* fandom clearly demonstrates how tactical media is partly concerned with crisis, criticism and opposition but also with opportunity, access and creativity. To harness the latter effectively, however, mainstream production houses need to adopt what Jenkins terms a culture based on blogging.[7]

In the blogging culture, rather than acting on the outside of a system aiming to subvert it, fans are allowed to act from *within* the storyworld as a networked public that is able to distribute and create rather than simply receive and interpret passively. The new forms of interactivity propagated by convergence culture, as described with reference to Ewers, Lovink and Fuery in Chapter 1, demand that the patterns of pre-circulation, circulation, production and consumption of story be maintained through nodal, distributed systems rather than mainstream monodirectional ones. And this is what the *Harry Potter* example demonstrates – that whilst mainstream publishing and production houses were resistant to active input into the originating processes of narrative creation, fans found a way to remain involved and to exchange knowledge through the metacommunicative process of play in the intertextual spaces of the transmedia chain, described in the examples given below.

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[6] Ibid, pp. 97-98.
[7] Henry Jenkins, 'The Cultural Logic of Media Convergence' in *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, vol. 7, no. 1 (2004), pp. 33-44 (p. 36).

The addition of the online platform to the transmedia chain allowed different tactical and strategic realities to emerge. Based on the subjective interpretations of the fans, as most frequently expressed through creative products that are distributed through the Internet, the boundaries of work and play became blurred through the figure of the 'professionalised fan'. Adopting the practices of extreme literacies described by Mackey, these fans revisit favourite textual structures and moments, 'reactivating these in cultural practices of play' and performance.[8] Arguably, due to convergence culture readers are participants in the design of experience that is simultaneously meaningful and playful, distinct and convergent in ways that suit the transience of the cultural moment in time. Describing the inadequacy of the term 'read' in view of all the activities that take place in the process of interpretation, Mackey reflects that 'play' functions well as a term that implies cross-media textual processing and makes room for a variety of activities.[9]

Online, game-based play, according to Mackey, can usefully be understood in terms of make-believe, in terms of performance, in ludic terms, in terms of strategy (the saliency and fluency aspects of immersion and engagement discussed in Chapter 1 of this thesis), as orchestrating and simply as 'not working'. Thinking of this activity as play is useful, not only because of all these connotations, but also because a) it allows shifting meanings across subjects and objects, making space for the agency and energy of performers required in emergent interactive narrative and b) it allows a liminal positioning of the reader because of its internal/external (to the storyworld) accommodation required in tactical interpretations. According to Coppa, the dynamics of fan relations to a source text are explicable through the performative with its focus on bodies, its repetition and its production within the context of media fandom. She claims that

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[8] Matt Hills, *Fan Cultures* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 41.
[9] Performance, is in Mackey's study, manifested in various ways, some more visible than others (she compares the gestures inherent in silent reading to the role-playing activities that fans engage in among other examples).

'In theatre, there's a value to revisiting the same text in order to explore different aspects and play out different scenarios; in television, we don't mind tuning in week after week to see the same characters in entirely different stories'.[10] Similarly, according to Coppa,

> fan fiction retells stories, but also changes them. If traditional theatre takes a script and makes it three-dimensional in a potentially infinite number of productions, modern fandom takes something three-dimensional and then produces an infinite number of scripts. This activity is not authoring texts, but making productions – relying on the audience's shared extratextual knowledge of sets and wardrobes, of the actors' bodies, smiles, and movements to direct a living theatre in the mind.[11]

Coppa insists that it is only when stories get embodied that they seem to generate truly massive waves of fiction. She distinguishes between the terms of embodied action – because writing is a visible physical activity, a verb, whilst authoring a text implies having power over it, taking public responsibility for it indicating a sense of control and not just creation. Therefore, Coppa's distinction between identifying participation not as the authoring of texts but rather as the making of productions is crucial. Fandom, she claims, is a cultural performance that requires a live audience becoming in itself an event:

> Fandom gathers together a live, communal audience for stories, and fans have adopted and adapted every mode of communication in an effort to ensure that fan fiction quickly reaches its target audience.[12]

And in this it functions differently from engagement with the book that is read in isolation and privately. It becomes an intersubjective process of communication where one is attempting to process the reading of others in a metacommunicative system of play that is manifested through consumption and performance within networked publics. These networked publics grow

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[10] Francesca Coppa, 'A Brief History of Media Fandom' in Kristina Busse and Karen Hellekson, eds., *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet* (North Carolina: McFarland and Company, 2006), pp. 41-60 (p. 225).
[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid, p. 239.

around branded storyworlds that are authored by publishing houses and production conglomerates and written by a creator who now no longer writes alone. Transmedia stories, like those about *Harry Potter*, therefore, become all about synchronic (spread widely) and diachronic (over time) brand growth that is based on a dialectic of pleasure (of the text) in which participants respond to the story's 'toyetic potential'.[13] The 'toyetic potential' of the storyworld is facilitated through the ease with which the books' complex plots and *mise-en-scène* lend themselves to multiplatforming development easily.

In this convergent transmedia storytelling environment, readers play, and in turn are played on, by the very paradox of play – the inside outside position inside the storyworld that leads to an appropriation and negotiation of story meanings. The reader-as-producer paradigm is a design approach and social phenomenon in which readers are given the opportunity to act as creative producers within the system of the story, modifying it on experiential levels through a form of metacommunication as they interact with the story in its liminal spaces. Salen and Zimmerman, arguing the same case for the 'player producer', claim that 'they have the potential to create entirely new contexts for play, an emergent property of games as open culture'.[14] Stories, like games, also enable new reading experiences as they create instances of transformative engagement through the pleasure generated by the situation of play that contemporary transmedia reading processes offer.

The five processes of convergence, technological, economic, social and organic, cultural and global, require that the different processes of play likewise converge. Callois's categories – *agon* (competitive play), *alea* (chance based play), *mimicry* (role-playing and make-believe

[13] Seth M. Siegel, 'Toys & Movies: Always? Never? Sometimes!' (12/02/2001) in *Brandweek*. <http://www.adweek.com> [accessed 25/01/2014].
[14] Katie Salen and Eric Zimmerman, *Rules of Play: Game Design Fundamentals* (Massachusetts: MIT, 2003), p. 554.

play) and *ilinx* (playing with the physical sensation of vertigo) – which he formulates as textual strategies or constituents, are reconfigured within the landscape of transmedial (ubiquitous) play.[15] In *agon*, readers impose their own code of meaning and interpretation on the text, thereby closing down its possibilities into fixed interpretations. *Alea*, on the other hand, plays on the fact that the nodal points of the text are contingent and unforeseeable, intensifying the difference of play. *Mimicry* becomes a play of transformation which blurs distinct boundaries between the real and the represented. *Ilinx* corresponds to a reader-response where the reader's own expectations are played on, 'where his "outside"' position is drawn into and erased in the play of the text. Eliminating the difference between the play of the text and the code of the reader, and halting the textual game in this way, would account for the flip-side of the aleatory rule of *ilinx*, which emerges as the play within physical and sensual structures, seeking new sensations in the interplay between bodily movement and perceptual input. In their interpretation of Callois' four categories, Salen and Zimmerman associate *agon* and *alea* with categories that generally contain games, so that play emerges from the players' movement through the rule-structures of the game, whereas the free play of mimicry is according to them, the play of representation (finding free movement within more typically rigid sign systems through imaginative play). The *Harry Potter* transmedia chain illustrates how these forms of play, which are also embedded in the processes of reading, operate on both tactical and emergent levels, reconfiguring both to more transformative degrees.

In his definition of transformative play, James Hans refers to the tactical power of play when he explains that it continually reconfigures its own structures rather than remaining contained

[15] Discussed in Bianca Theisen, 'The Four Sides of Reading: Paradox, Play, and Autobiographical Fiction in Iser and Rilke' in *New Literary History*, vol. 31, no. 1 (Winter 2000), pp. 105-28.

within them. Claiming that the gratification of play is embodied in the same but different experience that it affords, he maintains:

> In this regard, all play shares one thing with games: a familiar structure that allows one to play with the unfamiliar. This familiar structure is not universal; it is contingent upon the particular context of play. Nor is this familiar structure always the same. Indeed, it changes every time it is played with, for the occasion for new play introduces different elements into the activity that become part of the structure of any future play…The structure of the familiar then permits the introduction of the different; play in one sense is no more than the infection of the familiar by difference.[16]

Thus, participation in fandom and transmedia may be equated with an experience that involves 'the apprehension of an object, thought, or emotion through the senses or mind […] Active participation in events or activities, leading to knowledge or a skill [...] An event or a series of events participated in or lived through'.[17] Reading within fandom ultimately becomes a 'dialectic of value',[18] as fans identify moments inside the world that they relate to on an affective level, and then appropriate internally through conversation and performance. The individual responses of readers are negotiated in a collective environment that encourages non-competitive and affective play, so that fandom is established as both a product of subjective processes, including fans' personal attachment to the texts, as well as objective processes, like the texts' exchange value within wider cultural contexts.

Ultimately, this chapter returns to the question of consumption as opposed to productivity, arguing that fan cultures are both found and created, and that readers' input is neither completely subsumed nor exalted, but rather it is playfully negotiated through various modes of interpretation that are curated online. The notions of play and performance, as important elements in the interpretative process, need to be elaborated in order to establish how the

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[16] James Hans, *The Play of the World* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 1981), p. 28.
[17] Salen and Eric Zimmerman, *Rules of Play: Game Design Fundamentals*, p. 314.
[18] Hills, *Fan Cultures*, p. 90.

subjective interrelates to the collective understanding of the text, as the reading and writing processes change from solitary experiences to distributed/networked ones taking place within knowledge communities that invite readers to join in the scripting/designing/curating of meaningful story experiences.

Engaging in fandom allows readers to critique, modify and expand mainstream texts, providing the opportunity for them to comment on the world from the inside out. They join a literary knowledge community that interprets and performs stories in a celebratory fashion whilst, on the one hand, allowing an element of resistance and subversion of mainstream authorship to creep in (as discussed in the analysis of the podcast and fan fiction pieces below), and on the other, engaging in production and reception processes in ways that are not simply tactical but also emergent. Fans are also readers who acknowledge themselves as consumers of the story, buying into the world not only on a commercial level but also emotionally and ideologically. They are the self-pronounced experts on the story narrative elements as well as intertextual relations of the different versions within the chain in addition to their commercial and aesthetic dimensions. They exert their creative power over grassroots interpretations of the story, creating a homogeneous response to the story, thus awarding it cultural capital. In awarding the story cultural capital, fans also allow it to mobilise a networked public that acts upon reading as a socio-technological process of participation. Reading within this cultural context thus becomes an experience.

Equipped with the digital age skills of extreme literacy, young readers of transmedia narratives are placed in the metacommunicative position of reading the reading of others so that, unless they refuse convergence culture's invitation to participate in the synchronic media landscape, they become part of a fandom that performs a self-representation and self-performance.

Fandom is where the audience itself becomes part of the text and part of the intertextual commodity, participating in the same dialectic of value. As a networked public that constructs itself as a mediated and textual performance of audiencehood, fandom extends and intensifies the logic of commodification as long as the media being used is seen as tactical. Once it can be perceived as emergent rather than tactical, the role of the reader is no longer predominantly to represent and resist, but rather to play and perform in a more embodied, rather than simply imagined, way. Using computing and digital technologies to enhance experience design, transmedia stories therefore represent a model of reconfigured media power and 'a reshaping of aesthetics and economics'.[19] Successful transmedia, therefore, is mostly concerned with mobilising communities and using the power of story to do so. This is not simply a matter of applying strategies of resistance and consumption, but rather, as indicated above, through participation that is manifested in play and performance of the text. Thus, successful transmedia is primarily emergent, achieving a sense of critical play as participants attempt to creatively rewrite the landscape with which they are engaging.

Whilst in many transmedia chains – and certainly within the *Harry Potter* storyworld – source books have been credited with providing blueprints that readers can interpret in a process of establishing belief in the storyworld, print is, of course, technologically a predecessor to the maxims of virtual reality. It strives to offer readers the same immersive experience as ubiquitous storytelling but because it is produced and distributed by mainstream companies whose focus is commercial entertainment, it must rely on its paratextual elements to become immersive. The pleasure of narrative is thus found in the immersive potential of the storyworld, but also in the emergent interactivity offered by the communities that grow within the liminal playful spaces around the storyworld. In *Narrative Pleasures*, Mackey points out that between

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[19] Jenkins, 'The Cultural Logic of Media Convergence', p. 35.

2003-2010 (the years she was researching and writing that study), the 'social zones of interpretation have expanded, mutated, and become far more commonplace, in ways I was only partially aware of in 2003'.[20] She refers to studies on the evolution of literacies and the way in which they make a useful distinction between new 'technical stuff' and new 'ethos stuff'.[21] She claims:

> New 'ethos stuff' manifests itself in new literacies in ways that mark a difference from conventional literacies; according to Lanshear and Knobel, 'New literacies are more 'participatory,' 'Collaborative,' and 'distributed' in nature than conventional literacies'.[22]

Whilst the project demonstrates an interest in investigating conventional literacies, it also brought to light the way in which digital age readers play with the opportunities afforded to them by different media. Mackey adopts the term 'associative openness' to describe 'the collaborative invigoration of a set of representative symbols with lived meaning. The performance of interpretation is opened up for collective associations'[23] and, she claims, the Internet is the site where these practices are being manifested the most, arguing – in a reflection of what is sustained throughout the central chapters of my own thesis – that story will adapt to the form through which it is being presented.

Mackey distinguishes between personal associations of immersion and social forms of interpretive performance, and claims that new literacies enable the two to live side-by-side. Her initial focus on *understanding* and *analysing* as interpretative strategies shifted to issues of *creation* and *expression*, as the participants in her study drew on forms of collective associative openness that allow far more agency (and, by implication, pleasure) than any

[20] Margaret Mackey, *Narrative Pleasures in Young Adult Novels, Films and Video Games* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 231.
[21] Ibid, p. 9.
[22] Ibid, p. 232.
[23] Ibid, p. 233.

medium can provide in isolation (although this does not imply that the pleasures of private

absorption are not diminished by socially emergent engagements). Thus, Mackey concludes,

new technologies and formats will succeed or fail depending on how they enrich narrative

pleasures both for private enjoyment and social connection, as discussed through the examples

of *Harry Potter* fandom presented in this Chapter. Mackey concludes that:

> A climate of cultural mutation works most successfully when creators can anticipate that their
> audiences will bring both a reliable toolkit and a flexible mind to bear on new materials, new
> forms, and new devices. Recognising, making sense of, and appreciating the storyline in ever-
> changing settings is a challenge these participants (and, I suggest, many others like them) are
> clearly well qualified to meet. Such adept and resourceful interpreters provide the essential
> condition for narrative experimentation by those who create the stories.[24]

Transmedia is one such form of experimentation. As described in this thesis, each medium

offers different immersive and interactive aspects of the storyworld that increases readers'

gratification through the possibility of recursive and repeated interactions with the storyworld.

Coppa summarises this in relation to the *Harry Potter* series when she says that all the *Harry*

Potter books are presented to readers as unfinished texts that invite open speculation that allows

readers to participate in the storyworld over a long time-span, through different media

platforms.[25]

Whilst one may argue that readers can only affect production processes in the superficial ways

described above in terms of *The Lord of the Rings*, they can enact their own versions of the

stories in various contexts. Some fans, like Anelli, become directly involved with mainstream

production, but the broader impact of that on more general reconfigured reading positions has

yet to be studied. It could be argued, however, that Anelli was also auspiciously placed in a

position to succeed because her use of the Internet to carve a position of authority for herself

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[24] Ibid, p. 237.
[25] Francesca Coppa, 'A Brief History of Media Fandom', p. 241.

coincided with the time when the medium itself was booming, and, at the same time, struggling to define its position in relation to traditional media.

Arguably, Anelli, too, only succeeded in writing about content spheres related to the circulation and consumption of the *Harry Potter* stories, but no mainstream publication developing the world further would be possible. The challenges or opportunities she identifies are that, since the series became a phenomenon, it is now an entire creative universe within which no single author has control, because:

> […] millions of people are writing, reading, drawing, reporting, discussing, analysing, criticising, celebrating, marketing, filming, translating, teaching, theorising, playacting. Although Rowling may be responsible for putting together an initial series of words in particular order, only in the legal sense is she the 'author' of all these other creative productions. Or, to put it another way, she is the *author* in the sense of taking responsibility for these productions, but she's not the *writer* of those specific other expressions of the idea of a boy wizard at school. There are other creative players involved, some paid (the artists who illustrated the text; the scholars who are writing the critical studies of the series) and some unpaid (the fans who participate in heated analytical discussions on *Harry Potter* Web sites or mailing lists, fan fiction writers).[26]

Harry Potter thus becomes a rich art world in which its author continues to play a significant role. Whilst she does not retain control over all creative aspects of the storyworld, Rowling remains its primary writer, functioning as its curator. She is contextualised through this interactive community, which seems to operate more like a theatre production than the fabled solitary act of writing, and fandom seems to become community theatre[27] in a mass media world. This, Coppa claims, 'is not authoring texts, but making productions – relying on the audience's shared extratextual knowledge of sets and wardrobes, of the actors' bodies and their smiles and movements – to direct a living theatre in the mind'.[28] Additionally, I would suggest

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[26] Ibid, pp. 241-42.
[27] Ibid, p. 242.
[28] Ibid, p. 243.

it implies a reading process that is metacommunicative and play-orientated – curational – as demonstrated through the following examples of *Harry Potter* fandom.

Curating Play and Performance in the *Harry Potter* Universe

Following the convergence culture of the 1990s, the role of autonomous producers, and the degree to which the dialectic of artistic value is negotiated by the autonomous artist creator of the artwork (in this case Rowling and the *Harry Potter* book series) and the artwork's audience (in this case the *Harry Potter* fandom) remained contentious. Murray and Ryan's anticipation that audiences would become more active participants in storyworlds was not entirely fulfilled by a mainstream recognition of their creative interpretations, but rather by a reconfiguration of the production and distribution strategies of the art work. The experience of art, and more specifically of story, became durational, ubiquitous and emergent as it responded to online communication processes that encouraged procedural, participatory engagement with its world. The transmedia storyworld thus became an 'exhibition' of the processes of cooperation, exchange and coproduction that made it possible. Within this context, artistic autonomy is viewed as 'a sensibility toward the continued production of exchanges, commonalities, and collective transformations'.[29]

Although at the beginning of *Harry Potter*'s online journey Rowling kept herself apart from the general furore, in 2000 she began to engage with online activities by exploring what fans were saying about her work and how they made their interpretations public.[30] In an interview

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[29] Paul O'Neill, *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Culture(s)* (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2012), p. 95.
[30] Anelli, *Harry, A History: The True Story of a Boy Wizard, His Fans, and Life Inside the Harry Potter Phenomenon*, p. 77.

with Anelli, she describes the difficulty of engaging with a fandom that is both critical and forceful in its suggestions regarding the development of the series. However, apart from a moment of crisis in dealing with a fandom that Warner Bros. had deemed unruly (described above), Rowling's general reaction to fandom has always been to award it generous levels of attention. She listens to fan productions, such as the Pottercast, and has often read fan fiction. Her interest in readers' interpretations of her stories was made evident when, in 2005, she invited Emerson Spartz (founder of www.mugglenet.com) and Anelli to a private interview before the release of *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*. In December 2007, she featured as a guest on Pottercast #130 and #131, answering questions about Dumbledore's character, horcruxes, the publication of the *Harry Potter* encyclopaedia and a number of other topics. In other words, she became directly involved in the distribution of her storyworld online. Whilst, at this point (the early stages of the series' development), she insists that her writing was not influenced by fans, her awareness of different media affordances was inevitably more finely tuned than other children's authors would have been, due to the open access nature of the Internet, and in May 2004, she launched her official *Harry Potter* website.

In the beginning, the site offered a large amount of information about the *Harry Potter* storyworld, news and rumours, as well as an in-depth biography of Rowling herself. In an effort to keep the fandom alive and healthy, the site was redesigned and relaunched on the 12th April 2012, featuring three sections. The first contains information about Rowling, including a biography, news updates and an FAQ and a Rumours section, which replicates much of the information available on the original site. The second section was a one-page announcement regarding Rowling's new adult book, *The Casual Vacancy* (2012). The final section is about *Harry Potter*, and includes sections on *Pottermore*, the books and the films. In the run up to *Pottermore*'s launch, some of the information from Rowling's official site was removed, and

announcements that it would feature on *Pottermore* were featured. As Rowling is clearly at the centre of these online initiatives, it is clear that she has repositioned her role in relation to them to become the storyworld curator rather than a writer detached from such activities. She participated in the modification, expansion, transposition and quotation[31] of her storyworld as she engaged with the permanent updating of story versions based on the direct producer-consumer communication described by Ewers. Even ten years after the launch of the first official *Harry Potter* website, the storyworld continues to engage mass readership. A brief online search at the time of writing (Spring 2014) brings up over 10 official sites, including targeted sites such as WB studio tour packages, 7 virtual Hogwarts sites, 46 general fansites, 11 wikias, 9 podcast series, 7 online encyclopaedias, 57 RPG sites, 22 fan art/fan fiction sites, and over 20 varied websites including live chats, parodies and recipe sites.

The influence of participatory culture and the extent of its distribution cannot scientifically be measured but its breadth and scope can; these go some way to establishing how far texts, readers and the process of reading have changed. As described throughout this thesis, the ubiquity of the series through multiple platforms evidences that the digital age literacy skills outlined by Jenkins become even more prevalent as fan interpretation and expression become pervasive and begin to accommodate the voice of the author as directly involved in the orchestration of the reading process. In this way, the Internet does not simply provide a forum for resistance reading – a platform to balance out the influence of mainstream productions – but rather it enables a redistribution of influence and creative input that allows all players the opportunity for meaningful participation. Analysing the benchmarks and parameters of meaningful participation in story chains at the turn of the century (and subsequently) helps to

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[31] See Marie-Laure Ryan, *Narrative as Virtual Reality: Immersion and Interactivity in Literature and Electronic Media* (Maryland: The John Hopkins University Press, 2001).

establish a clearer understanding of the ways in which new media prompted new storytelling techniques, and how far the process of reading was changed in the meantime.

The decentralisation of text and reconfigured reading patterns are made evident in the fan websites that form part of transmedia narratives. Within this study, two prominent and well-known *Harry Potter* websites are, within this study, taken as examples to illustrate this point – *The Leaky Cauldron* (www.the-leaky-cauldron.org) and *Mugglenet* (www.mugglenet.com). Among the first such sites to emerge, they were founded by young readers who possessed the digital literacy skills required to create sites online, build networked communities and negotiate legal matters as discussed in Chapter 2. Their extreme literacy skills and ability to navigate and negotiate the story across multiple media platforms is indicated in the interface of both sites, which offer readers various multimodal reading paths, and overall, fulfil three narrative functions.

Primarily, these sites represent the fictional world of the source narrative as well as the various media versions of the story, connecting people from different parts of the production and reception process of each of the versions. Secondly, they offer performative, playful pathways of interpretation, inviting their users to post art, music, writing and many other forms of creative expression as representations of their engagement with the storyworld. Thirdly, they encourage a contribution to the conversation surrounding the source narrative, inviting viewers to comment and respond to posts and feeds generated on the sites. Overall, therefore, the main objective of the sites is to invite fans to *participate* and *create*. In fact, in seeking representation of the narrative elements of setting, plot and character, it becomes immediately obvious from the page setup that neither website provides a version of the three narrative elements; rather, they discuss representations offered in other media platforms. This implies that readers are

expected to engage with multiple versions at the same time, functioning in the role of hunters and gatherers, piecing the narrative together as they navigate the story space represented in the different media.

On the home page of both sites are a number of tabs that allow users to choose between various options: 'Leaky Info', 'Potter News', 'Features', 'Interactive', 'Galleries', 'The Books', 'JKR', 'The Films', 'The Park', 'For Fun' on *The Leaky Cauldron*, whilst on *Mugglenet* the choice is between 'Books', 'Films', 'Discussion', 'Fans', 'Fun', 'Media'. Just beneath the tabs, taking up approximately half the initial screen on both sites, is a news column that encourages the reader to keep updated with the latest developments taking place on the different media platforms offering versions of the *Harry Potter* stories. Surrounded by advertisements and links to blogs, podcasts, media clips of other versions of the story and fan productions of art, stories and many other paratextual elements, the configuration offers a busy, hypertextual network that allows the reader different types of experience, just like the elective text as described by Sainsbury and discussed here in the introduction.

However, not all the links are equally interactive. Whilst all the tabs lead readers to further information, the level of interactivity offered in the different sections varies. On *Mugglenet*, if readers click on 'Books', 'Films', 'Fun' or 'Media' they are allowed a choice of reading paths, but are ultimately choosing between routes predetermined by the web managers. The same happens on *The Leaky Cauldron*, where, if readers click on 'Leaky Info', 'Potter News', 'The Books', 'JKR', 'The Films', 'The Park' or 'For Fun', they access new links, but there is little they can contribute. Readers can follow links, but they cannot actively participate or create their own text within these strands. The situation is altered in the sections labelled 'Interactive', 'Discussion' and 'Fans', where in at least some of the threads, readers are encouraged to upload

and actively contribute to the space. These strands are particularly relevant because they move beyond basic choices to show how cyberspace may also work to reconfigure the reader through its ability to 'encourage the reader, listener or viewer to engage with […] information in a newly active, potentially aggressive and intrusive manner' as they playfully create and perform their own edition of the story'.[32] The text provides a focal point through which fans can identify with a virtual community they feel they belong to, at times also adopting or subverting the ideology that they may feel the text valorises.

The Pottercast (2005-13) is a good example of one such large-scale conversation which allows individual readers to join a network of like-minded fans with an interest in discussing the source narrative, and through that discussion, participating in playful forms of interpretation that are publically performed within the storyworld.[33] First appearing on *The Leaky Cauldron* website in 2005, it refers to the *Harry Potter*-based podcast; defined as 'an hour of Potteresque entertainment each week'. Pottercast production, which ran for 9 years releasing one hour a week, expects listeners to be familiar with both the books and the films, and throughout the Pottercast, reference to the multiplatform storyworld is frequently made, demonstrating the producers' awareness of *Harry Potter* as a distributed narrative.

The Pottercast was produced by fans, calling itself 'Harry Potter on Air'. Drawing upon traditional structures of radio, it featured a number of host presenters so that the shows were intrinsically poly-voiced, offering their listeners multiple perspectives and points of view that once again allowed readers to formulate and perform their own interpretations as the Pottercast provides a behind-the-scenes narrative of the story, told in small parts, from various angles.

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[32] George Delany and Paul Landow, *Hypermedia and Literary Studies* (Massachusetts: MIT, 1991), pp. 7-11.
[33] Pottercasts may be downloaded from: <http://www.the-leaky-cauldron.org/pottercast/?page_id=102> [accessed 01/01/2014].

Pottercast content varied from discussions that focus on the interpretation of the story in a section called 'Canon Conundrums' to discussions about other versions in the chain – such as 'Extendable Ears', which includes interviews with HP actors, directors, crew members and editors of the *Harry Potter* books and films. Ultimately, what is of interest here, however, is the negotiation of authorial voice and narrative situation – as seen in the following analysis of Pottercast #146 – and the way in which the Pottercast narrative feeds its way back into the source narrative, as seen in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* and as discussed below, demonstrating how different versions within multiplatform narratives affect each other, placing readers at the centre of those adjustments, through conversation and appropriation of the story. An example is provided below.

In Pottercast #146, the topic of discussion is Snape and Dumbledore. The discussion of character is based on the source narrative, which the Pottercast does not attempt to modify, as happens at The Magic Quill, an interactive fanfic column hosted by *mugglenet.com*.[34] Rather, it aims to enhance understanding of the story through glocalisation,[35] the personal adaptation of a mainstream story to reflect local and personal cultural realities and ideologies. The personalisation of the story is evident in the podcasts when one of the presenters quotes Rowling answering a question about Snape during a public interview. Rowling's own thoughts are presented together with presenter Sue's opinion of them. Because the three presenters are considered to be Big Name Fans (BNFs), or long-term fans who have occupied high-visibility roles, it is safe to assume that listeners of the Pottercast will be familiar with them, as

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[34] The Magic Quill may be viewed here:
<http://www.mugglenet.com/editorials/themagicquill/index.shtml>[accessed 12/06/2008]
[35] Manuel Castells, 'Epilogue: Informationalism and the Network Society' in P. Himanen, *The Hacker Ethic and the Spirit of the Information Age* (London: Secker & Warburg, 2001), pp. 155-178.

demonstrated in Anelli's book and others by Valerie Frankel (2012) and E. A. Pyne (2011).[36]

Some listeners may even identify with the presenters more than with Rowling herself, so that

their points of view and perspectives are integral/internal to the Pottercast, leaving Rowling to

function as a voice *external* to the *Harry Potter* story that has been localised within the context

of the podcast:

> And Jo said that-she talked about the importance of Snape and Dumbledore to the series and that – and I found this really, really interesting but she said that the series is based around their two plot lines. *(MA: Hm.)* What do you think about that? I thought that was really- *(FF: It makes sense.)* and she continued on to say to that the plot lines of Dumbledore and Snape in the *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* were actually the two most important characters, aside from the trio. I thought that was really interesting when you reflect back that's what she was thinking. So, she developed their plot lines right away.[37]

Since the Pottercast is 'narrowcast' – i.e. made directly relevant to niche groups of readers –

its creative assembling reflects the way in which the modern mediascape needs to be read as it

reflects the process of orchestration. Through orchestration, the source text is interpreted

through negotiation, potentially taking on new meaning. This is not as new a trend as it may

seem – in fact, it is quite the opposite, because in many ways online culture pits participatory

culture as the counter-response to the closed ownership system managed by the conglomerates.

Jenkins claims that:

> historically, our culture evolved through a collective process of collaboration and elaboration [...] and as more and more amateur works have entered into circulation via the Web, the result has been a turn back toward a more folk-culture understanding of creativity.[38]

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[36] See Valerie Frankel, *Harry Potter Still Recruiting: An Inner Look at Harry Potter Fandom* (Hamden: Zossima Press, 2012); Erin A. Pyne, *A Fandom of Magical Proportions: An Unauthorised History of the Harry Potter Fandom Phenomenon* (Ann Arbor: Nimble Books LLC., 2007; repr. 2011).

[37]<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-VIqA3i2zQw> [accessed 26/03/2011]
[38] Henry Jenkins, *Fans, Bloggers, and Gamers: Exploring Participatory Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), p. 288.

Online culture thus allows readers to respond by forging their own reading paths and designing their responses both individually and collectively, providing them with a platform that allows stories to be glocalised to represent a wider spectrum of ideologies and identities. The promise of reader emancipation that accompanied the proliferation of the Internet in the mid-1990s was not as straightforward as it seemed, and 15 years after the start of this trend it stands to be questioned. Through the section on *Pottermore*, this chapter demonstrates how mainstream enterprises ultimately harness power through various channels, pushing 'prosumers' back into insignificant roles, often breaking rather than fulfilling the promise of reader control. First, however, a deeper look at the implications of this promise needs to take place.

Socio-technological Play and Participation

The interplay between the subjective and the collective engagement with narrative through cyberspace indicates a self-directed networking strategy that connects the Internet to the social realm rather than splitting it into off- and online worlds. David Bell claims that 'individuals caught in the space of flows become networks themselves, and networked individualism becomes the new social pattern' in such a way that people have assembled 'portfolios of sociability' to match their portfolio careers, referring to 'project identities' that match their project based work lives'.[39] These endorse and strengthen fandom's dialectic of value by making subjective interpretations open to public discussion, appraisal and critique. The subjective nature of fans' involvement in the narrative world is reflected in a number of ways, discussed below, but also most evidently in the pen names that are chosen by readers contributing to the conversation about the narrative. Pen names such as 'snapehalfbloodprince'

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[39] David Bell, *Cyberculture Theorists: Manuel Castells and Donna Haraway* (Oxford: Routledge, 2007, repr. 2009), p. 68.

or 'GryffindorRulez' are consciously chosen as they create affiliations between fans of the same allegiances based on characters in the book. Basic information about fans appears beside each post; this includes the penname, the number of posts, the date and time of joining the forum and their real-world location, which is often identified as a fictitious one related to the book itself, e.g., 'Classified until such time as the ministry sees fit to release it', or 'hagrid' shut – the rock cakes really aren't all that bad'.[40] Although humorous and light-hearted, these associations of personal location with the places mentioned within the master narrative shows the fans' desire to immerse themselves in the world of the story.

Online culture thus extends the invitation to play and extends the world of play itself, allowing for a playful relocation of the reader into communities of like-minded readers where the fans' position outside-inside the world of their favourite character/story becomes possible. Readers form a collective identity through a network of affiliations among their mediated selves on the website. Fans often also add a signature that appears at the end of each post and serve to flesh out a fan's virtual self as fully as the medium will allow. These vary from 'I'd give up chocolate, but I'm no quitter' to more philosophical statements such as '"We need metaphors of magic and monsters in order to understand the human condition". – Stephen Donaldson'. Real-life events are also occasionally mentioned in signatures and function as identity markers, as they give an idea of the real-life culture that the blogger inhabits; for example, 'Happy 4th of July'. And these are often accompanied by pictures that also range from kittens to Dumbledore, inclusions that constitute a performance of the self, facilitated by the Internet.

Very often a narrative in cyberspace requires greater participation on behalf of readers when interaction between the real and the virtual occurs. Castells claims that culture is both virtual

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[40] Examples are taken from the Fan Fiction section on www.mugglenet.com.

and real, and in cyberspace the two collide, creating a dynamic that reconfigures readers through what he calls 'real virtuality', the daily interactions that take place between the reader and the storyworld so that the virtual storyworld becomes part of the readers' real everyday life.[41] Upon making a conscious choice to engage with the narrative world, the media become simultaneously technical analogues and social expressions of reader identity, creating interaction between the real and the virtual, yet this takes the discussion back to the debate about the extent to which this type of interaction with the master narrative is productive or, on the other hand, merely a matter of readers' challenging cleverly-planned commercial strategies of consumption.

In many cases, interaction in online fan communities goes beyond mere superficial conversation to include 'the creation of a performance space with the potential status and recognition that entails, and, perhaps the opportunity to engage in public discussions of normally private socio-economical issues'.[42] This is an important dimension because, as discussed at the start of this chapter, it recognises fandom as a response to dramatic rather than literary modes of storytelling, drawing attention to three elements central to many of the notions discussed throughout the thesis: i) the idea of immersion into fictional spaces, ii) the importance of traversal representation, and iii) the context of textual production within the contemporary distributed media landscape. What fandom does, according to Coppa, is to take something three-dimensional and transform it into a number of scripts relying on readers' knowledge of the setting, plot and characters, thus directing a living theatre and creating an interpretation that

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[41] For more on the concept of real virtuality see Manuel Castells, 'Epilogue: informalism and the network society' in P. Himanen, *The Hacker Ethic and the Spirit of the Information Age* (London: Secker & Warburg, 2001), pp. 155-178 (p. 170).

[42] Nancy K. Baym, 'Talking about Soaps: Communicative Practices in a Computer-mediated Fan Culture' in Cheryl Harris and Alison Alexander, eds., *Theorising Fandom: Fans, Subculture and Identity* (Cresskill: Hampton Press, 1998), pp. 111-29.

sits within the context of multiple interpretations that are produced as part of the online ongoing conversation about the story.[43]

In theatre, the collective effort that staging a play demands hinges on the multiple hands at work on different parts of the performance – set, costume, lighting, actors, etc. – so that the script becomes merely a blueprint for the whole production. Fandom takes personal interpretation one step further than theatre because, having fewer market forces to account to, it is able to take its revisiting of the story to more radical boundaries. This can be seen in the YouTube video, 'The Harry Potter vs. Voldemort Rap'. This home-made video is typical of the way fan-readers appropriate character and plot, re-rendering them into styles and contexts that reflect their own realities that are then performed as public interpretations of personal responses to the story. These interpretations, however, remain closely embedded in the storyworld, evidencing the strong influence of the source text and emphasising the way in which distributed narratives are positioned at the interface of corporate and grassroots production, evidencing the ideal design ecology as described by Dena.

The 'Harry vs. Voldemort Rap' video is produced by Indy Mogul and is part of the Indy Mogul Original Short series.[44] Gaining over 20,452,000 hits (as at 5th January 2014), the video is tagged as a test video and is shot on the roof of a high building showing a very contemporary urban scene in the background. This is the everyday world of readers; unfinished buildings and unattractive industrial landscapes containing none of the nostalgia of Hogwarts and the magical world. Whilst the set-up of this shoot is obviously basic and temporary, evidenced by the dilapidated inside of Voldemort's room and the makeshift gramophone, special attention is

[43] Coppa, 'A Brief History of Media Fandom', p. 225.
[44] Indy Mogul, 'Harry vs. Voldemort Rap' (14/07/2009).
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wTHn5oFPmi8>[accessed 05/02/2014].

given to consistency in the embodiment of the characters – costumes resemble those in the movies, with actors sporting cloaks, Harry with the Gryffindor colours and Voldemort with a reasonable high standard of make-up to create the slit-effect for his nose, visually resembling the mainstream embodiments of Harry, Voldemort and Rivers, a student reporter in Rowling's text. They also maintain the same roles. Rivers remains a reporter on the scene whilst Harry and Voldemort remain arch-enemies, the first embodying good and the second embodying evil. Here, as in mainstream versions, the two characters battle each other to determine the fate of the magical world; however, this time their power comes to the fore through rap rather than magic, a stance somewhat contradicted at the end of the short, when Voldemort kills all present by using the Avada Kedavra spell. Magic, it will be argued throughout this analysis, is too strong an element of this storyworld to be ignored completely, and in most fan versions an element of magic features, albeit to differing extents.

Magic and rap juxtapose the fantastic and the real, the mainstream and the grassroots, in an interesting way in this clip. Rap is not able to demonstrate the epic connotations that magic does, but it serves to externalise very strong emotions, which are particularly important in the final stages of Rowling's saga. It serves to translate into popular cultural terms the angst felt mostly by Voldemort – a shady character, a disturbed child, easily judged for his evil deeds, yet one who readers come to pity towards the end of the series. Like so many rap artists, Voldemort is cast as a victim of society and, choosing the path of self-destruction, he ends up dead. Rap as a genre embodies anger towards society and a sense that, had different opportunities presented themselves, had different choices been made, then this character would be otherwise. The rap genre allows the story to be performed in more direct, possibly offensive terms, with Voldemort saying to Harry, 'I'll slay your ass out like Cedric Diggory', 'You's a punk ass little kid', 'You're a peewee witch midget with a dead mommy', and Harry replying,

'If you look under my cloak you'll see my Hagrid size balls', 'I smoked basilisk and I'll smoke you too'. And, in the end, rap also allows the victim to triumph. This is his arena, and yet, because, in real terms, it would be too harsh for pleasant entertainment, Voldemort wins through a magic spell that allows both the rap version and the original to be parodied. Again, the fantastic is brought in to subvert the reality value of the performance, and the dialectic of value embedded in fandom's response to the story is reinforced through the blend of mainstream elements of the storyworld as they are juxtaposed to the real-life world of these fans. This demonstrates their affective relationship to the storyworld, which is expanded and appropriated through the orchestration of meaning.

The Expansion of the Storyworld through Emotional Immersion

The question of affect and emotional immersion was tackled in Chapter 3, and remains an important angle to examine in terms of reader reconfiguration in the contemporary, shifting media landscape. Fan-text affective relationships are formed through ideologies of 'objectivity', the capacity to associate with the narrative world on a personal level and, to a certain extent, discussed at the start of this chapter, also to play and perform this engagement. Whilst every reader's exposure to the story forms through different multimodal paths, ultimately Rowling's creation of a vast and detailed narrative space, of which only a fraction is ever encountered directly within the text, is crucial to the sustaining of fan activity based on the series. As is discussed in the Introduction, the fantasy genre is particularly apt to create opportunities for readers' interpretation to be based upon play and performance, because stories published within the genre generally feature elaborately-developed fictional spaces with intricate histories and characters. These narrative environments are not only important because

they afford re-interpretation and re-reading, but also because they stimulate creative speculation and a trusted environment for affective play.[45]

Furthermore, knowledge of her readership and the instant access to audiences allowed by the Internet gave Rowling insight into her readers, allowing her to craft the stories with the intelligence and depth that would keep them engaged with her storyworld for an extended period of time through multiple platforms that she curated in collaboration with Warner Bros. and the fan community. As the franchise grew larger and stronger, with mainstream media dominating more and more areas of fandom and the series being consumed by a wider variety of readers, Rowling curated fan expectations and market demands in order to keep the phenomenon fuelled. Fans also quickly learnt that, as Jenkins states in *Textual Poachers* (1992), their relationship to the text remains a tentative one, and although their attachment to the story in some ways makes it their own property, they realise that someone else has the power to do things to the characters that are in direct contradiction to the fans' own cultural interests. Whilst most fans are aware of the tense relationship between mainstream production houses and fan participation, they remain attached to the opportunity to distribute their own versions of the story through the online network, in order to continue commenting on the story from the inside out. A good example of this kind of textual subversion can, in fact, also be seen in the 'How Harry Potter Should have Ended' clip by How it Should Have Ended, also part of a series of clips which question the endings of various well-known popular movies.[46]

With over 12,721,000 views as at 5th January 2014, the clip carefully presents a parody of the original story, taking the whole plot line and character development of the series into

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[45] Matt Hills, *Fan Cultures*, p. 138.
[46] How it Should Have Ended, 'How Harry Potter Should Have Ended' (18/08/2011). http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YsYWT5Q_R_w [accessed 05/02/2014]

consideration. Rendered in animation, the five-minute short is complete with voice acting and a musical montage. It uses the time turner, a device that Rowling's characters use to travel in time, as the key object of its plot and is peppered with sarcasm and irony, both indicative of the subversive attraction fan creativity holds for readers, as they appropriate the cultural ideology of the storyworld to reflect their own interpretations more closely. In Rowling's text, the time turners were destroyed and not mentioned at all after the third film. This was possibly intentional, given that – as the makers of How It Should Have Ended claim – these magical objects had the power to turn back time, thereby righting many wrongs (a factor that would have complicated the narrative development in Rowling's books). In this short, however, Snape turns the dial about 262,000 times in order to return to the moment when Dumbledore meets Tom Riddle in the orphanage and decides to give him a chance at Hogwarts. Snape barges in on the conversation and kills Tom, saving all the good characters in the future and making Snape a more obvious hero.

The fan video taps into the most highly emotional moments of the source text, presenting the viewer with two sequences of all the characters who have died, one as they die and one as their deaths are reversed. The narrative is carefully crafted, as Snape is the one chosen to go back in time. In the source text, Snape is portrayed as a self-sacrificial character, and so his role as saviour of the day in this fan vid is credible. The makers of the video say that, as a result of this action, there are two Snapes, one living in the past under the invisibility cloak and one living in the present still secretly in love with Lily. Whilst the fan production is consistent with some elements of the mainstream versions, it is intrinsically different in the use of tone and language. The epic quality of the books and films is lost in deliberately more casual language, typical of fan productions. Dumbledore features first, welcoming all to Hogwarts, 'a place, I assure you, that is safe for children, and has absolutely no history that might threaten our entire existence.

175

But there is a huge killer snake downstairs, and a giant, vicious three-headed dog, and a tree that can kill you, and man-size spiders that can eat your face, and...', before he is stopped by McGonagall, who in turn is interrupted by the children complaining of the dripping hot wax that is falling from the floating candles in the Great Hall. During the final battle, as another example, Voldemort exclaims, 'I'm going to kill you, Harry. I'm pointing my wand as hard as I can' and, when Harry points out that he has tried that so many times before unsuccessfully, he breaks out into song, singing 'La lalala, too busy to hear you', creating great comic effect, at which point Snape shoots Voldemort in the head with a gun, whilst muttering 'Ah, muggleweapons'. Snape explains to Dumbledore, in response to his exclamation 'What the...? What is this?', that it is a long story, that told in words would take at least seven books to tell, so that Dumbledore replies, 'Alright, movies', at which point the short cuts to a screen saying 'The END'. And yet it is not.

The viewer is shown the Great Hall again, Dumbledore speaking, this time presenting the new Defence Against the Dark Arts teacher, none other than Professor Gandalf, who immediately bellows 'You Shall Not Pass!', to which Dumbledore mutters in reply, 'Oh, that's a little harsh! Classes haven't even started yet'. The clip thus demonstrates how playfully fans engage with the text, and how much of the creative appeal of fandom lies in re-writing mainstream versions placing the ideology and endorsed values of the source narrative in question, so that, successfully achieved, this allows readers to engage with multiple versions of the same story in different modes and registers. Thus, as Delany and Landow imply in *Hypermedia and Literary Studies* (1991), the transmedia representation of stories not only invites readers to navigate and choose amongst the multiple reading paths offered to them, but also to engage with the narrative in an intrusive manner, allowing them to project themselves onto the narrative space. Whilst Aarseth warns that this does not necessarily give readers creative power

over the story, it undoubtedly raises interesting questions about the role of the reader within franchise narratives and the type of participation that is required. An analysis of 'The Magic Quill' provides a good sample of reader engagement, and also serves to demonstrate how rapidly relationships and dynamics on the net change.

'The Magic Quill' is found in the 'Discussion' section, under 'World Famous Editorials', yet it functions in a very different way to the editorials which are mostly critical or opinion pieces about canonical texts. Upon clicking on 'The Magic Quill', the reader is told that this is an interactive fanfic column to which 'you' can contribute in order to 'inspire the next original tale of wizardry', thus placing the focus on the intrusive agency afforded to the reader through the Internet. Running from 2004-11, this column features regular instalments or chapters written by 'Robbie'. Readers were asked to submit their story ideas through the *Mugglenet* feedback system in no more than 150 words, and Robbie would then write out the instalment and post it. At that point readers could read and also comment on the instalment, so that their participation in the interpretation of narrative is public rather than private and active rather than passive. By the time the column reached Chapter 73, the format had somewhat changed. Instead of submitting general, random ideas, readers were asked to submit answers to specific survey and contest questions via the 'Chamber of Secrets' forums; later this changed once again and currently readers are asked to submit survey and contest answers as comments in 'The Magic Quill' blog, although the previous two methods are still also in use. Invitations of this kind clearly allow for elective reading, as readers can read selectively through the easily available archive, can read in sequence sticking to 'Magic Quill' instalments, or can also stop to browse the comments on the instalments submitted by the readers of the instalments. For the purpose of this study, it is necessary to understand how 'The Magic Quill' draws upon the source text

and contributes to the distributed narrative, as well as considering how the work of fans affects both the source texts and understanding of authorship.

'The Magic Quill' plot lines are set in a world that inhabits the borderline spaces of Hogwarts. The Hog's Head, Gringotts and Godric's Hollow, amongst others, are mentioned, but little time is spent developing place, as it is assumed that readers of 'The Magic Quill' are familiar with the source narrative. Consistent representation of the storyworld within the chain is sufficient to make this version successful in terms of storyworld design. The plotlines refer to important moments in the source narrative such as the birth of Harry (#2, #40, #41, #44) and the passing away of a great man (#60), but these function more as side events rather than formative elements that mould the direction of the story. The plot serves to provide readers with a moment-by-moment re-enactment of the narrative, so, in order to facilitate the reader's immersion, the structure of the 'Quill' echoes that of many medieval and fairy tale collections, such as that of *Arabian Nights* (1706), in which a set of stories are linked together through the context of their telling.

Traditionally, the context has involved a storytelling persona or series of them; in this case, four characters are sitting round a table in the Hog's Head, whilst outside, the snow swirls and the cold wind makes travellers shudder. Whilst the Hog's Head is a symbol readers would recognise and picture, the characters are original to the column. A veiled witch named Sadie, an invisible witch and wizard named Endora and Merlin, and a hooded stranger named Spanky exchange stories that reflect the choices readers have made along the way. The first episode begins with a story set on a night in December and it is called 'The Gifts of the Animagi'. The link to the source *Harry Potter* story is immediately established, as Endora asks:

'Is it about 'Arry Potter?' said Endora's eager, and rather mannish, voice. 'Your story, I mean?' 'Naturally,' said Sadie. She sucked on her pipe for a moment, then added, 'Now dry up and listen.' And the newcomer under the cloak drank, and listened…[47]

The story tells of a party thrown by Lily and James Potter. The past is rewritten and new characters are introduced and described in great detail. The plot unravels in an episodic fashion, drawing upon the source narratives, whilst at the same time stripping out its philosophical dimensions and more complex themes as the digital tie-in games does. It replaces them with the readers' own ideas and references, in a process of negotiation and appropriation. The function of the reader as 'prosumer' comes to the fore as the reader is asked to contribute ideas in 150 words or less and to 'tune in next week for another instalment of the Magic Quill'. If readers do not contribute, the 'Quill' will stop, and so the reader is highly encouraged to intrude into the narrative world as this particular text needs to be collectively written and read, rather than privately processed. 'The Quill', in fact, uses the collaborative blog format which allows for the pooling of knowledge in real time, though as a media application it demands to be collectively written.

At first the impact of the readers' contribution was vague, but a year after 'Magic Quill' was born, site managers found a more concrete way of sourcing their readers' ideas and creativity. They introduced the 'Double Challenge', a system which clearly demonstrated the opening up of the text and the manipulability of narrative that contributes to the refiguring of the reader. The 'Double Challenge' consists, on the one hand, of a survey, the winning vote of which will determine the general direction the storyline takes. The second part is a contest which asks readers to add particular details to the story with a view to integrating the winning contest entry into the 'Magic Quill' two weeks down the line. In the survey, readers are asked to decide upon

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[47] Retrieved from <http://www.mugglenet.com/editorials/themagicquill/tmq1.shtml> [accessed on 15/09/2010].

elements such as which character will drink a potion that will send them back in time, or which character should be the next to spin a tale. In the contest, readers are asked to describe particular magical objects, compose spells and invent names, and other such details. The suggestions made by readers are channelled into a forum that is available for all to see and comment upon, so that the choices being made by Robbie, the writer of the 'Magic Quill', are visible for all to see and discuss, and the reader has power over the text, playing an intrusive role. Each 'Quill' episode includes the name of the contest winner and often that of a runner up so that readers' input is acknowledged at each step of the process and readers of the 'Quill' can go back to the forum associated with the episode in order to evaluate Robbie's choice of suggestions, enhancing the public dimension surrounding the writing and reading of the text in this shared, distributed format.

The elective/ludic nature of the 'Magic Quill' is evident, as plot choices are highlighted at the end of each instalment or chapter. The collaborative aspect of this form of writing is made possible through the Internet, which has altered the communication model that exists in the publishing world and reconfigured the role of the reader so that, as discussed above, it is realistic to claim that in one day a fan could participate in a blog, write a piece of fan fiction, produce a video and write a review whilst listening to the latest Pottercast. The reader is invited to apply the skills learned through extreme literacy (as described by Mackey) and plays many roles at the same time in the same place. The knowledge community that forms around the transmedia storyworld offers them the possibility to critique, self-publish and participate in a community founded on the principle of metacommunicative play that foregrounds emergent interactivity and sharing producing stories that are, on the one hand, hybrids of writing and technology – because of the way that their form and development come about. On the other

hand, these stories are also hybrids because of the way in which they allow the reader to infiltrate and personalise the source text through narrowcasting.

Narrowcasting shows that the Internet has transformed the one-to-many logic, offering instead one-to-one and many-to-many at once, as demonstrated by applications such as 'The Magic Quill' and others discussed below. Castells implies that narrative is globally produced and locally distributed and that narrowcasting has, to a certain extent, replaced broadcasting in networked publics. In this context, the sources of narrowcasts are the readers who are found anywhere and everywhere, increasing the number of interpretations and reflecting the manipulability of narrative that comes into being when readers take on their reconfigured role as active participants in the creation of meaning through Internet participatory culture. By inviting the reader to join the networked public to engage with the narrative on multiple levels, and through different applications, the Internet expands the space of play and increases the level of interaction between reader and narrative, allowing the story and the readers to become part of a transmedia storyworld. However, as discussed above, emergent interactivity can only be effective if based on a design ecology that allows for creative authenticity within the chain. At the turn of the century, when the aesthetic and economic parameters of discourse, design, production and distribution are still being negotiated, the impact of fan productions remains debatable and will be discussed in the following section.

The Impetus of Fan Fiction and the Question of Authenticity

According to Hills, fandom is not a fixed object of study. Rather, it is always essentially playful and performative. It may, therefore, be termed a platform for metacommunicative play. Hills sees organised fan sites and activity as providing a cultural space for types of knowledge and

attachment in which readers may engage in play that both deals with fans' emotional attachment and suggests that fans may imaginatively create their own sets of cultural boundaries. These boundaries are neither rooted in an objective interpretive community or set of texts, nor are they atomised collections of individuals whose subjective passions and interest simply happen to overlap. They are, Hills explains, intrinsically based on the dialectic of value. The tension that supports this dialectic emphasises the inside-outside position of the creative fan in relation to the narrative universe and this position is often reflected in the fan fiction produced by readers, as discussed below.

Upon clicking on the tab entitled 'Fans' on *Mugglenet*, 10,000 stories written by over 3,500 authors (as of1[st] April 2013) become available to the reader. All drawing, in some way, upon the source narrative, these stories are also reflective of the predominant impulses that drive fandom, namely a desire to inhabit the fictional world on a day-to-day basis, to engage with the characters on a personal level, to make the story relevant to the reader's own life and to manipulate the narrative from the inside out, endorsing the dialectic of value and play. Divided into categories such as Romance, Humour, Alternate Universe and Dark/Angsty fiction, the sections on the websites indicate the ways in which readers interact with the source narrative. Most of the stories are, in fact, highly dependent on Rowling's text, many set in a time period before or after that developed in the source narrative, illustrating, for example, the protagonist trio's life post-Hogwarts, or Hogwarts life for the next generation of witches and wizards after the second war against Voldemort, sometimes including the children of the trio and their friends. Other stories are set in the time of the Marauders and focus on the school days of Lily, James, Sirius and Snape before the rise of Voldemort, whilst some revisit the past such as the founding days of Hogwarts, and others are often centred on the central characters in the books such as Dumbledore and Riddle.

Whilst some stories develop and appropriate plot lines, others focus on negotiating relationships between characters, so that the creation of fan fiction clearly requires a comprehensive knowledge of the source narrative as well as the multiplatform versions that develop in parallel to it. Canonical texts thus tend to have many narrative levels appealing to cross-over readerships, whereas, as a general rule, fan fiction is a niche narrative form, appealing to a specific reader model – usually readers who interact through and with the Internet medium and readers who have a particular interest in the specific character or aspect of the story being discussed in the fan fiction chosen. The hypertextual quality of the medium encourages its users to link to other media/material related to the chosen topic, allowing them to 'make their own edition' and create their own interpretation and meaning of the narrative.

Still, because ultimately the creation of fan fiction is mostly concerned with levels of grassroots subversion of mainstream ideologies, the point-of-view and narrative voice of these pieces are essential considerations in establishing the impetus of fan fiction. This is often, however, problematic, because – as the following analysis of 'Unforgivable' by 'eleven49' demonstrates – readers who are reconfigured into prosumers resist the static position offered by print and cinematic texts and instead have to come to terms with their inside-outside perspective on the storyworld. When translated into narrative voice, this position can allow a celebratory kind of critique of the source text, in the sense that fan writers can challenge the mainstream text's ideology by discussing alternative narrative options without assuming a position exterior to the narrative world. On the other hand, however, this inside-outside position, if administered haphazardly, may lead to a lack of immersion on the part of readers who are left feeling disassociated from the voice of the fan fiction piece they may be reading. In 'Unforgivable', for example, a popular fan fiction story found on www.mugglenet.com, the story begins with a

third-person omniscient narrator that uses Snape as an internal focaliser who provides the perspective of the story. The first sentence reads 'Snape's stomach growled, yet he didn't eat his lunch'.[48] However, the next paragraph changes its narrative technique as the writer changes to a first-person narrative with Snape sharing his thoughts: '*I'll have my chance soon... I'll show him*'. One paragraph later, the text reverts to a third-person omniscient narrator: 'Snape sat quietly, patiently waiting a few more minutes'. This movement between points of view continues until the narrative reverts to a flashback, resulting in a confusing medley of narration and focalisation techniques that struggle to present Snape's point of view. This may be because the writer's own point of view is internal. The following passage, for instance, demonstrates:

> Snape wonders how she will react. Will she forgive him? It seems like such a minor incident now [...] But, then again, Severus knows Lily. He was best friends with her for years, and he knows how stubborn she is; he knows how furious she gets when someone is tactless or rude, immature or cruel.

This narrative extract is told in free indirect speech. However, this simple technique is rendered problematic throughout the italicised part of the text, as the focalisation seems to be external to the story, observant of Snape and seemingly striving to share background information with the reader, much like the omniscient narrator tends to do:

> As he storms out the door, not hesitating to slam it behind him, he notes the shocked expressions on the faces of their classmates. Evidently, they've been following Severus and Lily's argument for a while...

It seems that because the fan writer is both interpreting Snape from the source text and writing Snape into a new perspective/situation, the narrating position and point-of-view become complicated, as they seem to negotiate the first-person narration position of 'I-as-protagonist'

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[48] All following quotations from 'Unforgivable' by eleven49 (20/06/2008) are taken from <http://fanfiction.mugglenet.com/viewstory.php?sid=79694&chapter=1> [accessed 15/09/08].

with a second narration position that provides the point-of-view of somebody who is not, and has never been, a character in the story, yet is always ready to intervene between the reader and story, in many ways adopting the position of the author, a premise discussed further in Chapter 5. The second narration position, in fact, provides a dominant external focalisation normally typical of instructive stories containing morals and novels of social criticism. At points, the text even begins to read like a script, with stage directions such as 'Lily's voice rises...', 'Snape stands up...', 'Lily scoffs, raising her eyebrows...', 'Severus makes an indignant noise...', making the reader feel that the narrator overtakes the focaliser without actually fulfilling the 'I-as-protagonist' role that would justify this happening.

Evident here is the writer's desire to inhabit the fictional world and, as happens in digital tie-in games, to embody one of the characters, represented by the avatars in the game, in order to live within the narrative world in the first person. The desire to engage with the characters on a personal level is demonstrated through the use of the first person, and although in this particular story the impact is thwarted by the writer's mediocre writing skills, fan fiction sports numerous pieces that successfully challenge the development or ideology of the source narrative from the inside-out, such as 'The Hush of Waiting', a fan fiction piece that retells the story of Sirius's return with a twist as it focuses on a gay relationship between Sirius and Remus, and 'The Witch's Guide to Pregnancy, Birth and Babycare', a particularly interesting short piece, that takes the conventions of the childcare manual and applies them to the ideologies that run under the surface of the books.[49]

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[49] To read 'The Hush of Waiting' by Victoria_p (01/01/2006) view
<http://musesfool.livejournal.com/1023677.html#cutid1> [accessed 01/09/2013]; for 'The Witch's Guide to Pregnancy, Birth and Babycare' by Nineveh_uk (15/11/2010) view <http://archiveofourown.org/works/131956> [accessed 15/06/2013].

Thus, in joining the multiplatform chain of story versions that are available to readers, fan fiction forums offer the added opportunity to re-craft the story by drawing upon both the mainstream texts as well as other texts produced by fandom itself. Readers, performing manifold roles as writers, researchers, directors and so on, are able to form hypertextual reading paths that allow them to engage with the story on multiple levels, allowing affective engagement to grow and manifest itself in a process of creative discovery and conversation. This conversation does not remain within the boundaries of fandom, but also spills over to influence the production of mainstream texts, an important aspect of multiplatform storytelling, the aestheticisation of play and the process of reconfiguration of the reader. The next section of this chapter will, in fact, deal with further discussion on the transmutation of the source text, a dynamic that came strongly into play with the convergence phenomenon that boomed throughout the publication of the *Harry Potter* series, and serves to show how the tensions that often lie between consumption and resistance, mainstream and grassroots, cult and culture may be negotiated through play and performance.

Multiplatform Inferences: The Transmedia Appropriation of Narrative Elements

In a convergent culture that nurtures distributed narrative and allows for emergent interactivity, traversals of meaning will necessarily be created, negotiated and adopted both top-down and bottom-up in transmedia chains of narrative. This is what happens in the latter half of *Harry Potter* production, as Rowling's position as story curator is consolidated and the influence of her growing fandom translates back into her writing of the series. This translation backwards is most evident in the final books of the series. Aware of the need to sustain prolonged engagement with the narrative, the books acknowledge the need to provide an open narrative with multiple possible story paths embedded in the macro level of the story. Readers are not

allowed to feel that the plot is predictable or that complete closure of the story is possible, and until the very end of the series important plotlines are left open whilst others are closed down in the individual books. For instance, the question of whether Harry will die in the final battle against Voldemort is emphasised throughout with the introduction of the prophecy and his viewing of Dumbledore's conversation with Snape through the Pensieve, described below. Until the last moment, readers are left in the dark as to the meaning and importance of the hallows, and it is only after the final battle that Harry shares this information with Ron and Hermione and, therefore, with the readers. Even then, the Epilogue, set 17 years later, raises the possibility of a story continued by the next generation. For now 'All is Well', yet the Malfoys, representative of evil, still stand at the far end of the platform, a reminder that evil is never completely eradicated and that a new quest may begin. The implication, therefore, is that the reader, like the player of the tie-in game, may yet be asked to participate in the adventure one more time.

Furthermore, throughout the book, devices such as the Pensieve, a stone receptacle used by witches and wizards to store and review memories, allow readers, together with the characters, to build their knowledge of the storyworld and the characters as they engage with the past, with stories untold in the main text, yet still present. Just as cut-scenes in the game serve to add to the macro level of the story, the memories that emerge from the Pensieve are relayed from a third-person point of view, providing a near-omniscient perspective of the events preserved, through Harry's perspective. The reader, recuperating information that had previously been withdrawn, is, through these visits to the past, situated inside the experience in a similar way that the player is situated within the game world itself, an aspect of reader engagement discussed further on in the chapter. In *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, when Harry witnesses the Death Eater Trials at the end of the First Wizarding War, he sees Barty Crouch

Jr. amongst those who tortured the Longbottoms to insanity, and realises that he is inside a memory.[50]

Rowling confirms that memories in the Pensieve allow one to view details of things that happened even if they did not directly experience them or remember them, giving her the opportunity to fill in narrative gaps and give more information about the characters without interrupting the flow of the plot, therefore by using the metonymic process and textual withdrawal techniques that games introduced. By using the Pensieve to travel back in time, Rowling finds a way around the book's natural compulsive forward moving trajectory, and allows her readers access to past events. In this case, agency over the temporal direction of the story lies in the hands of the characters rather than the readers, unlike in game play, when the player is given the opportunity to pause, save and return to particular moments of play.

The narrative pattern that underlies the story of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* draws upon the metacommunicative strategy of the elective game text, as the protagonists of the story embark on a quest to collect the horcruxes, the seven split pieces of Voldemort's soul, and the hallows, the three ancient objects that, if united, would give their owner power over death. As in game texts, when players are expected to collect various objects that increase or decrease their power and strength, in the book the more horcruxes and hallows the characters manage to amass, the more likely their chance of success in reaching the final goal is. In order to find and destroy the horcruxes and take possession of the hallows, the protagonists must overcome a number of obstacles that function just like the minigames in game texts – as, for example, the flight to transport Harry to the Burrow, the fight against Nagini at Godric's Hollow, the escape from the Malfoy manor after they had been caught by Snatchers, and many others. Just as

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[50] J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* (London: Bloomsbury, 2000), pp. 636-37.

players are given tools to help them progress along the progressive stages of the story (in the game, these are called levels), in *The Deathly Hallows*, Harry, Ron and Hermione are given gifts by Dumbledore that help them along their quest: the snitch Harry caught during his first Quidditch game; the deluminator, which removes and returns light to its owner and helps Ron find Harry and Hermione after he had left their camp; and the *Tales of Beedle the Bard*, which allows the trio to understand more about the hallows. Used effectively, these gifts help the characters achieve their goals faster, so that these items function like the game objects that increase avatars' energy bars, skills and chances of surviving the level in the game. Both book and game, therefore, seem to be operating according to the same metacommunicative ontology that allows for interpretation to be performed in situations of play that allow for the traversals of meaning across media platforms to be emergent, and therefore created both top-down and bottom-up.[51]

In Chapter 22 of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, for instance, Rowling acknowledges fan activity such as the Pottercast through the introduction of the Potterwatch. In the book, Lee becomes an undercover pirate radio anchor, broadcasting under the pseudonym of River, on an anti-Ministry of Magic radio station called Potterwatch to support Harry and the Order of the Phoenix. Ron discovers the radio station after his brief stay at Shell Cottage and spends most of his evenings, after having returned to Hermione and Harry, twiddling the dials of an old

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[51] McGonigal argues that at the turn of the century virtuality and reality are negotiated through ubiquitous play and performance which emerges through the power of collective play and the massively-collaborative community that is generated by the design ecology of a story franchise. Transmedia facilitates this kind of engagement as they become a space activated for play. Drawing on the work of Callois, Johann Huizinga and Brian Sutton Smith, McGonigal describes games through their classification and taxonomy establishing that they are constitutive elements of civilisation and that play creates new social situations that are temporary and constantly changing and dedicated to the performance of an act apart. Whilst both Huizinga and Callois theorise games as a bottom-up phenomenon, Sutton Smith posits the opportunity for a top-down creation of play, an active design toward specific ends, arguing that game design matters because it can be intentionally persuasive, strategically motivational of particular behaviours.

transmitter radio attempting to crack the password in order to be able to tune in to Potterwatch. Ron says of the station:

> *Potterwatch*, didn't I tell you that's what it was called? The programme I keep trying to get on the radio, the only one that tells the truth about what's going on! Nearly all the programmes are following You-Know-Who's line, all except *Potterwatch*. I really want you to hear it, buts it's tricky tuning in…[52]

Like Pottercast, Potterwatch serves to connect the trio to the magical world during their period of isolation as they hunt for the horcruxes, thus it, too, positions its listener inside-outside the magical world, enabling the trio to feel connected with the broader picture – part of the conversation that is going on beyond them. The narrator, for instance, comments that, 'Half of Harry yearned to hear more, half of him was afraid of what might come next. It was the first time he had felt fully connected to the outside world for a long time' (356). Like fans who tune to the Pottercast to learn more about the happenings in the magical storyworld of *Harry Potter*, the characters turn to Potterwatch to learn more about the happenings in the magical world as they are temporarily placed at its borders. Like the Pottercast, Potterwatch functions outside mainstream media, providing a different perspective; '"But before we hear from Royal and Romolus", Lee went on, "let's take a moment to report those deaths that the *Wizarding Wireless Network News* and the *Daily Prophet* don't think important enough to mention"' (356). It also features a similarly light-hearted tone and the kind of banter combining personal commentary with facts about the stories at hand found on Pottercast:

> I'd like to introduce a new correspondent: Rodent.'
> '"Rodent"?' said yet another familiar voice, and Harry, Ron and Hermione cried out together: 'Fred!'
> 'No – is it George?'
> 'It's Fred, I think,' said Ron, leaning in close, as whichever twin it was said, 'I'm not being "Rodent", no way, I told you I want to be "Rapier"!'

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[52] J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (London: Bloomsbury, 2007), p. 355. Subsequent page references provided in-text.

'Oh, all right then. "Rapier", could you please give us your take on the various stories we've been hearing about the Chief Death Eater?

[...]

Things are bad enough without inventing stuff as well. For instance, this new idea that You-Know-Who can kill with a single glance from his eyes. That's a Basilisk, listeners. (359).

Hearing his friends over the old transmitter, Harry is distracted from his reflections on the Hallows and is reminded that he belongs to part of a bigger community. Listeners of Potterwatch are connected through their 'devotion to the man with the lightning scar' (359). Like the Pottercast, then, the radio show targets a specific audience – Harry Potter supporters. It is produced from within that ambit of support, becoming a cultural element that is true to the principles of narrowcasting, as Lee, Kingsley, Fred and the other Potterwatch contributors are creating the show from a grassroots level, removing the distinction between producers and consumers of media content within the storyworld. Thus, Rowling's text demonstrates that in a fully developed and successful transmedia landscape of the kind that evolved around *Harry Potter*, although each narrative adapts setting, character and plot according to its medium of distribution, style and representation transmute across the media and consistency is strengthened as the different narratives leave an effect on other loops as well as the chain as a whole.

Potterwatch is not the only narrative instance in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* which evidences the effect of other media versions on Rowling's writing and her involvement in the production of the story in the film, game and online media. The development of character backgrounds in later books, and especially in relation to Snape's childhood and adolescence and his agreement with Dumbledore, as well as Dumbledore's youth and his relationship with Gellert Grindelwald, resonate with the way in which fan fiction seeks narrative gaps in order

to harbour speculation and develop alternative plot lines and character development, and, on the other hand, how Rowling was well-placed to be influential with all versions of the chain.

Researching the name 'Severus Snape' on Google brings up over 178,000,000 hits and *LiveJournal.com* lists over 390 active communities and more than 400 users listing Snape as a fan interest. Bookstores such as Borders chose an all-Snape method of marketing *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, including the choice of pro- or anti-stickers when the book is reserved. In character popularity polls, such as those held regularly on sites like *The Leaky Cauldron*, Snape ranks high often positioned just after Harry and Hermione. Rowling gave importance to Snape's character development throughout the franchise, even revealing the ending of the series exclusively to Alan Rickman in order to allow him to interpret the character more accurately. In an article published in *The Los Angeles Times*, Geoff Boucher describes how Rickman would often challenge the directions of Yates on-set, claiming to know more than the director himself. Boucher claims:

> Early on, years before the ending of the bookshelf series, "Potter" author J. K. Rowling took him aside and revealed the secret back story of Snape, trusting Rickman and Rickman alone with one of the biggest twists in contemporary popular fiction. That set up the actor up to portray Snape as something more complicated (and more tragic) than mere a black-caped villain.[53]

Rowling, acknowledging fan interest in the character of Snape, applied a series of narrative gaps and the generation of much suspense about his intentions in Harry's regard. Whilst she spoke about the writing process behind the creation and development of Snape's character, she was careful how much to reveal before the final book. She hinted numerous times at his

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[53] Geoff Boucher, '"Harry Potter": Alan Rickman Looks Back on Decade of Dark Magic', *The Los Angeles Times*, 30 December 2011. <http://herocomplex.latimes.com/movies/harry-potter-alan-rickman-looks-back-on-decade-of-dark-magic/#/0> [accessed 20/11/2013].

important role, claiming that readers should 'keep their eye on Snape'.[54] In numerous interviews she acknowledges fans' insights into the plot development and character arcs that often made her wonder how she had given herself away.[55] After the completion of the series, Rowling spoke more openly about Snape's character, stating that the whole series revolves around the Snape-Dumbledore characters. She claimed that although she always knew how Snape's character would resolve itself, she plotted his storyline carefully in response to fan interest:

> I had to drop clues all the way through because as you know in the seventh book when you have the revelation scene where everything shifts and you realise...what Snape's motivation was. I had to plot that through the books because at the point where you see what was really going on, it would have been an absolute cheat on the reader at that point just to show a bunch of stuff you've never seen before.[56]

Rowling uses a number of chapters in *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* and *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* to reveal more about the two characters, reinforcing her claims that their importance in the development of the story is actually central throughout. Tellingly, the techniques she uses in order to fill in the gaps to facilitate immersion for the reader are similar to those used by fan fiction to elaborate the source story, adapting and appropriating style and point of view through plot lines that are elective and move backwards and forwards in time, as demonstrated through the examples discussed below.

Secondly, the final chapter of the series, 'The Epilogue', echoes the way in which fandom resists closure using the episodic, elective plot as a way to keep the narrative ongoing, and the way in which plot lines and characters are developed demonstrate the opening up of narrative

[54] Retrieved from: <http://www.accio-quote.org/articles/1999/1099-connectiontransc2.htm> and <http://www.accio-quote.org/articles/2003/0626-alberthall-fry.htm> [accessed 20/11/2013].
[55] To read further: <http://www.accio-quote.org/articles/2004/0304-wbd.htm> and <http://www.accio-quote.org/articles/2005/0705-tlc_mugglenet-anelli-1.htm> [accessed 20/11/2013].
[56] Retrieved from: <http://www.the-leaky-cauldron.org/2008/4/3/jkr-snape-and-dumbledore-two-of-the-most-important-characters-in-deathly-hallows> [accessed 7/10/2013].

and the manipulability of the narrative space. The book echoes the need to keep the story open and Rowling herself indulges this need on various occasions after the publication of the seventh book. During a meeting with fans at Edinburgh Castle in 2007, Rowling revealed details about the storyworld at the time of the Epilogue.[57] She spoke about the grown-up life of Harry, Ron and Hermione and explained what prompted certain plot decisions in the closing book of the series. Disclosing changes to original creative decisions, such as that of keeping Arthur Weasley alive and of killing Lupin and Tonks, Rowling also discussed alternative endings with fans, acknowledging that fans' interest in the back stories of the *Harry Potter* books prompted her to develop their development further across the multiple media platforms to which she had access.[58]

Another clear example of fandom's influence on Rowling's writing is the development of Dumbledore's character. Whilst Dumbledore is introduced as a central figure in the story from *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, appearing in the first chapter of the novel to leave Harry at Privet Drive, the reader is left in the dark about much of his life throughout the following six books. Readers get to know something about Dumbledore as his character is focalised through Harry, but only the details needed to move the plot forward are provided until the final book, in which Rowling dedicates a number of chapters to filling in the gaps about Dumbledore's youth and his death. His relationship with Gellert Grindelwald is brought to the forefront through Rita Skeeter's book, *The Life and Lies of Albus Dumbledore*, published shortly after Dumbledore's death in a time of terror and anguish under the control of the Dark Lord, and which continues to instil doubt and fear throughout the wizarding world and even in Harry's own mind. The story in Skeeter's book presents facts as she interprets them; she

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[57] Retrieved from <http://www.beyondhogwarts.com/harry-potter/articles/jk-rowling-goes-beyond-the-epilogue.html> [accessed 20/12/2013].
[58] Retrieved from <http://perezhilton.com/2011-07-21-alternative-conclusion-to-harry-potter-and-the-deathly-hallows#sthash.BSfLBV7z.dpbs> [accessed 02/12/2013].

describes how Grindelwald, considered to be the most dangerous Dark Wizard of all time except for Voldemort, became friends with Dumbledore during the summer he lived in Godric's Hollow. The two friends made plans to find the Deathly Hallows and create a world in which Wizards would have complete control over Muggles, Skeeter claims. However, the friendship ended after a duel with Aberforth Dumbledore, Albus's brother, in which his sister, Ariana, was killed.

The reader learns that Grindelwald continued his evil quest, leaving England, stealing the Elder Wand and building an army. At the height of his power, however, Dumbledore confronted him and defeated him in a legendary duel, after which Grindelwald was imprisoned in Nurmengard for years until he was finally killed by Voldemort, who was in search of the Elder Wand. Later, Harry accepts that the young Dumbledore had been misled by Grindelwald, who took advantage of his feelings towards him and continues to follow the path set for him by Dumbledore with the additional information that he needs to succeed in the final battle. However, upon reading Skeeter's book, doubt is strengthened in his mind as she seemingly corroborates her own opinion with first-hand evidence obtained from Bathilda Bagshot. Because throughout the series Dumbledore's interactions with Harry are 'always about Harry', as Rowling states, the reader is never allowed to share Dumbledore's own perspective on himself and important events in his life, until the very end of the series when the older child protagonists are now mature enough to understand the nature of human behaviour better. Rowling claims:

> with Dumbledore, quite deliberately, you find out little about Dumbledore's own private life because his interactions with Harry are always about Harry, which sets up the fact that in the seventh book Harry thinks 'but why did I never ask?' He's gone away now and he's never even thought of saying: 'So how about you?' You know, at the end of one of those conversations which I think is something that happens after the grief, the regret that he didn't ask. And I also

think that Dumbledore had always been such an almost god-like figure to Harry in some ways, that he felt he couldn't ask him personal questions.[59]

The Life and Lies of Albus Dumbledore, albeit authored by the questionable pen of Skeeter, helps the reader to understand Dumbledore better, and, by introducing an alternative perspective to Harry's, puts the reader in a position where personal decisions about the nature of characters need to be made. Readers' emotional engagement with Dumbledore is finally strengthened in the chapter entitled 'King's Cross', where, for the first time, the story is told from both Harry and Dumbledore's perspective. Rowling, therefore, reconfigures the narrative technique of chronological storytelling normally associated with print texts and replaces it with episodic and elective, polyvoiced narration as demonstrated in the examples presented above and is also evident in the development of Snape's character, discussed in further detail below.

Snape first appears in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* as Potions Master and an immediate antagonism develops between Harry and Snape. His character remains undeveloped until, in the third book, readers are told about the incident that took place at the Shrieking Shack involving James, Sirius, Lupin and Snape. Later, in the fifth book, Harry uses the Pensieve to view one of Snape's childhood memories and sees him being bullied by James and Sirius and calling Lily a mudblood. Only in the sixth and seventh books, however, does Harry find out the truth about Snape's youth and his role in Harry's quest.

In a 2005 interview with Anelli, Rowling claimed that the Snape-Harry relationship had become as personal as the Harry-Voldemort relationship, linking the two characters in a number of ways, drawing upon whilst also fuelling the fan interest surrounding both

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[59] Retrieved from <http://www.the-leaky-cauldron.org/2008/4/3/jkr-snape-and-dumbledore-two-of-the-most-important-characters>[accessed 10/10/2010].

characters.[60] Harry uses the Potions textbook of the Half-Blood Prince throughout his sixth year at school, and also finds out that it was Snape who had alerted Voldemort to the prophecy, causing the latter to hunt down Harry and his parents. Snape's murder of Dumbledore at the end of the sixth book enrages Harry, who confronts him, so learning the truth about his identity as the Half-Blood Prince. Snape, however, disappears, and it is only in the final novel, as Snape dies at the hands of Nagini, that Harry finds out the whole truth. In his dying moments, Snape releases a cloud of memories and instructs Harry to watch them. Harry learns all about Snape's childhood and his true loyalties and is also provided with the information he needs to ensure Voldemort's final defeat through the conversations between Snape and Dumbledore. Rowling also comments on the way Snape's character was deliberately plotted as one of the most complicated ones, sporting many different facets that were only hinted at throughout, encouraging much speculation from the reader. Limiting the focalisation of these characters to Harry's restricted point-of-view helped Rowling to sustain the gaps credibly throughout the series; but her readers and original fans have now grown, and she must cater for their questioning minds. When, in the final instalment, the point-of-view becomes that of Snape himself, the reader is exposed to an alternative angle to the story in the chapter called, 'The Prince's Tale', as happens with Dumbledore in the 'King's Cross' chapter.

As Harry pours Snape's memories into the stone Pensieve, the narrative reads, 'To escape into someone else's head would be a blessed relief... nothing that even Snape had left him could be worse than his own thoughts' (532), so that the narrative is opened up and the readers' perspective on plot, setting and character becomes polyvoiced. The text allows Harry to view things from another's perspective. In the book, readers witness at first hand Snape's

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[60] Retrieved from <http://www.accio-quote.org/articles/2005/0705-tlc_mugglenet-anelli-1.htm> [accessed 10/05/2014].

conversations with Lily; 'Snape looked no more than nine or ten years old, sallow, small, stringy. There was undisguised greed in this thin face as he watched the younger of the two girls swinging higher and higher than her sister' (532). Thus, whereas the narrative technique of the book is generally a third-person heterodiegetic one with dominant external focalisation, when the reader reads memories from the Pensieve, the narrative technique changes to reflector-mode narration with dominant internal focalisation, as the story is seen through the eyes of a first-person reflector character bringing the readers closer to the characters by allowing them to live through some of their experiences with them. This facilitates immersion into the storyworld by interweaving the traversals of representation and meaning with those generated in fandom.

In the video game adaptation of *Deathly Hallows Part 2*, after the end credits in commemoration of the series, Harry enters the pensieve again and sees flashbacks from all the other games that end with a salute to the player that says 'Thank you for playing'. Numerous fan fictions use the pensieve as a technique to explore moments in the narrative past or future. This adaptation of narrative situation is what most fan fiction attempts to do, hoping to fill in the narrative gaps left by the books in order to supply information about aspects of the plot and characters that relate more closely to the readers' own ideas about the story. In a story named 'Confluence of Truth' by 'Liasis', the writer describes his fan fiction as an extension of Snape's background that is developed as 'Hermione takes an uninvited trip into Snape's Pensieve. She learns not only of his childhood but also of his mother's years at Hogwarts, knowledge of Voldemort, love for her only son, and greatest secret-her identity. HG/SS'.[61] Likewise, in 'Into the Pensieve', by 'ptcheerleading26', readers are given the chance to watch the next generation of witches and wizards as they look into Harry's pensieve. The writer states:

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[61] Liasis, 'Confluence of Truth' (17/01/2010). <https://www.fanfiction.net/s/5672753/> [accessed 02/12/2013].

'The next generation finds Harry Potter's pensieve in the attic. Join them as they watch Harry's adventures first hand. "Don't you guys see? We have always heard the legendary stories about all our parents, but with this", Al said pointing to the pensieve, "We can see them, watch them like a movie!"'[62]

These examples highlight the essentially playful and performative nature of fandom that allows readers to play and perform their various interpretations through the networked public. In line with Murray's predictions for the future of narrative in cyberspace, the Internet demonstrably ruptures the notion of narrative ending that necessarily exists in the print, cinematic and even digital tie-in game texts. Murray, Ryan and Mackey anticipated the way readers in the age of transmedia would expect digital media to lead to new narrative forms that display viral and mimetic qualities, but what they hadn't predicted was the level of emergent interactivity that would become the expectation of transmedia stories 15 years later. As long as the source text is able to sustain the distribution of alternative 'versions' (as is discussed in the Introduction), the Internet is able to accommodate them. The question of whether the alternative versions are truly emergent, or simply tactical, remains crucial, and one that is discussed in the subsequent section on *Pottermore*, as well as in the Conclusion of this thesis.

Rowling's impulse in the *Harry Potter* transmedia world is to keep opportunities for storyworld expansion and quotation open whilst maintaining her position as primary curator. Rather than end the series with the final conversation between Harry and Dumbledore through the portrait in the Headmaster's Office regarding the Deathly Hallows, she chose to end with an Epilogue. Through the epilogue, the story moves 19 years forward and, as is typical of fan fiction narratives, it deals with both established as well as new characters including Harry, Hermione, Ron and Ginny as well as their children, Albus, Rose, Lily and Hugo. The narrative voice is

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[62] Ptcheerleading26, 'Into the Pensieve' (31/07/2012). <https://www.fanfiction.net/s/8378151/1/Into-the-Pensieve> [accessed 02/12/2013]

that of an authorial narrator, so that the story is told from the point-of-view of somebody who is not, and has never been, a character in the story itself. It features a dominant external focalisation that is particularly adept at revealing a complex world:

> Autumn seemed to arrive suddenly that year. The morning of the first of September was crisp and golden as an apple, and as the little family bobbed across the rumbling road towards the great, sooty station, the fumes of car exhausts and the breath of pedestrians sparkled like cobwebs in the cold air. Two large cages rattled on top of the laden trolleys the parents were pushing; the owls inside them hooted indignantly, and the red-headed girl trailed tearfully behind her brothers, clutching her father's arm (603).

It remains vague whilst acknowledging the emotional journey Harry has experienced, as well as similar fears, desires and vulnerabilities in the younger generation of Potters. Rowling wrote a number of alternative endings to the series and has discussed these with fans. In a fan article that lists storyworld facts after the final publication of the series, readers are able to learn more about the world, the characters and the plot with most of the emphasis being given to character relationships and love stories, as well as the future career paths of the young protagonists they grew up with.[63] This may indicate that the interests of the original fan group, now in their early 20s, remain the most strongly represented as readers are told more about the postwar status of Harry, Hermione and Ron. Although Rowling claims that the series is built around Snape and Dumbledore, fan activity and interest clearly indicates that a coming-of-age association with the protagonists facilitated their emotional immersion into the story.

Increasingly, as the parameters of interactivity changed to offer more platforms for communication, interpretation and discussion through convergence culture, these young fans found themselves well equipped to manoeuvre their own paths within the world, a world that remained intrinsically and closely guarded by its original creator, who also believed that its

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[63] Retrieved from <http://www.buzzfeed.com/ellievhall/28-things-that-happened-after-the-harry-potter-books-ended> [accessed 02/12/2013].

spirit should be allowed to continue flourishing. For years after the publication of the last book, Rowling continues to evolve her world and offer more information about its inhabitants. The launch of *Pottermore*, discussed below, is one such initiative, as is the launch of an extended collaboration between Warner Bros. and Rowling, to produce a new series of 'Harry Potter inspired' films based on *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* (2001). The film series will feature settings and characters from the Harry Potter world lore and will be set in New York, 70 years before Harry's story starts. It will not provide a sequel or prequel to the Potter adventures, but will be developed across Warner Bros.' video game, consumer products and digital initiatives businesses including *Pottermore.com.*

Convergence culture allowed the *Harry Potter* chain to continue developing, even 15 years after the first book was published. Although the epilogue is an ending, for readers who followed the series throughout, in many ways it is also a beginning. It could, by narrating the start of another year at Hogwarts, easily be the first chapter of a new book; the introduction of the next generation of Potters and Weasleys could very well herald in the next series of adventures and quests. The reference to Draco Malfoy acknowledges that those previously associated with evil are still part of the wizarding world, and this encourages readers to speculate as they wonder whether the final 'All is well' (607) will soon be challenged. The reference to Teddy Lupin, and his romantic relationship to Victoire, also functions as a hint that readers are encouraged to take up and speculate about. And, of course, the development of Albus's character, as one that already bears significant resemblances to Harry, pushes the reader to wonder whether he, too, will have the mantle of leadership thrown upon him, and whether he, like his father, will bear it well.

Thus, although in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, the *Harry Potter* series as conceived and written in book form by Rowling comes to a close, the converged mainstream narrative has continued to grow, notably through the activities of *Pottermore* and the new film series launched in 2014. However, the next section, questions whether the site is a betrayal of fan freedom, playfulness and endorsement, or whether it is a gift to the franchise fans by an author who is negotiating her curation of the storyworld in a media landscape in which questions of access, openness and ownership are being heavily debated and negotiated.

The Ethics of *Pottermore*: Gift or Betrayal?

When *Pottermore* was launched in October 2011, readers were promised an interactive online reading experience like no other. Rowling claimed that the *Harry Potter* story universe was being opened up to readers' contributions and that 'YOU', i.e. each and every reader, were the main ingredient of this new storytelling process. As fans flocked to sign up to the site in their thousands, curious about the hidden treasures it promised to reveal, they were met with a structure that is emblematic of the tension between establishment and grassroots processing of story. Rowling is one of the few children and young adult authors who succeeded in maintaining the rights to the digital versions of her books and, moreover, one of the few authors whose following is large enough for her to bypass the retailer and sell her books through her own online store front, one of the main objectives behind *Pottermore*.[64] Whilst always being supportive of her fans' work, Rowling, together with her publishers and Warner Bros., was also firm in establishing where their rights to the story ended. A case in point is what happened to Steve Vander Ark, the creator of the *Harry Potter Lexicon*, who attempted to translate his

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[64] See <http://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/childrens/childrens-industry-news/article/47733-pottermore-interesting-but-not-a-game-changer.html> [accessed 01/01/2014].

website into a print encyclopaedia in October 2007, but was taken to court by Rowling and Warner Bros.[65] The firm attitude of the brand owners in this case and others like it exposes a tension at the heart of convergence culture around ownership and fandom.

Pottermore, whilst interactive, is certainly neither tactical nor emergent in nature. It is structured mostly like a digital game, integrating the published texts with new writings by Rowling, animated images and reference to the films through images and clips. Readers are encouraged to read the books whilst experiencing the site since, as with the digital game, *Pottermore* only provides supplementary material. Signing up with a pen name, such as 'ChesterQuill1079', readers begin their journey through *Pottermore* by exploring interactive versions of the book chapters, starting with *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*. Chapter 1, 'The Boy Who Lived', allows readers to discover back-stories such as why Petunia Evans married Vernon Dursley, the history behind the fallout between the Dursleys and the Potters, and the back-story of Minerva McGonagall. After leafing through the first digital chapter (as one would with an e-book) once again, readers are able to visit Diagon Alley, open a bank account and buy school supplies.

Users are able to participate in a quiz, be sorted into a house and have a wand choose them, as well as cast spells and brew potions. They participate in Harry's battle against Voldemort and celebrate his victory during the end-of-year feast. Yet, these functions are all pre-programmed and users' input is totally predetermined by the site's design code. Although the site features sections entitled 'Fan Art' and 'Blog', the content is passed through an editorial system that maintains full control of what actually gets posted and distributed so that users are, in fact, awarded very little creative and performative power, as defined at the start of this chapter,

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[65] See <http://thehogshead.org/jk-rowling-sues-steve-vander-ark-541/> [accessed 01/01/2014].

through the site. And in this sense, *Pottermore* is a betrayal. The 'You' implied in the invitation to join the site and participate in the activities is not given the tools to create personal interpretations or to interact with the storyworld and the community that formed around the brand but, rather, the site serves to add another loop to the multiplatforming of the story, reasserting whilst it does so the authority of the author and the mainstream production houses.

And, thus, whilst the site serves as a good example of convergent formats of the story, the participatory aspect of the convergence phenomenon, as described by Jenkins, is evidently, in this case, something quite apart. The site allows users to explore the *Harry Potter* world further but denies them the space to perform their own versions of the text, leaving them on the periphery of creative interpretation rather than at its centre. Jenkins describes these cultures in his work on convergence importantly identifying them as having emerged as:

> ties to older forms of social community are breaking down, our rooting in physical geography is diminishing, our bonds to the extended and even the nuclear family are disintegrating and our allegiances to nation states are being redefined. However, new forms of community are emerging. These new communities are defined through voluntary, temporary and tactical affiliations, are reaffirmed through common intellectual enterprises and emotional investments and are held together through the mutual production and reciprocal exchange of knowledge.[66]

The reciprocal exchange of knowledge is crucial to emergent social structures and implicit in Lévy's notion of collective intelligence, as each participant seeks to join networks of like-minded others, who share and discuss cultural and social phenomena through distributed worlds. In these distributed worlds, I argue in Chapter 5, audiences are transformed into publics that value the freedom offered by the play aesthetic and are looking for avenues in which, and through which, to stage their own version or performance of the storyworld. Equipped with the

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[66] Henry Jenkins, 'The Cultural Logic of Media Convergence' in *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, vol. 7, no. 1 (2004), pp. 33-44 (p. 35).

digital age skills that are embedded in their engagement with transmedia through the processes of extreme literacy, young readers participating in distributed storyworlds are able to negotiate and orchestrate their relationship to the story metacommunicatively, as in play. Partly, these young, digital-age readers participate in the reception and celebration of the mainstream texts that books, films, digital video games and online hypermedial sites offer them in ways that are prescribed by these media. However, the fact that they engage with the story through various traversals implies that they are also able to stage highly subjective interpretations in shared and connected networks. The impact of this shared environment on the design of literary landscapes has yet to be studied. However, in this dissertation some provocations in this direction have been made. The final chapter will discuss these provocations using the title of 'emergent narrative', to indicate some ways in which readers have appropriated the processes of play and performance, in order to make their literary experiences more meaningful.

Chapter 5: Emergent Interactivity, Play and Performance: Locating the Reader in Transmedia

We are beginning to create a play community – not a forever community with a fixed code, but a temporary community with a code we make up as we go along, a community that we can continue creating anywhere, anytime we find the people who want to create it with us. (Bernard DeKoven, *Creating the Play Community*)

In this thesis I have looked at the extent to which participatory culture affected what it means to be a reader of a text that, following convergence culture, exists on multiple platforms. Taking the *Harry Potter* series as a case study, I studied the translation of the storyworld into a transmedia story to test how far the claims by new media theorists, regarding readers' reconfigured literary skills and new modes of engagement with narrative, were facilitated by convergence culture's lower barriers to artistic expression and civic participation. The *Harry Potter* series, as it mobilised millions of people all around the world to participate in its storyworld, became a prototype of what Jenkins, Fuery and Callois have all referred to as the new socio-technological metaphor of communication. This new form of communication infers a type of interactivity that not only considers what a reader/viewer/player is invited to see and do in the storyworld, but also the growth of a networked community around it. As stories become interactive in this way, the space of the storyworld is seen as socially constructed rather than simply formally designed, so that – within this model – readers ideally participate by creating meaning as well as interpreting it.

As the franchise spread across media platforms, the community that formed within and around the *Harry Potter* world grew and adapted to the changing media landscape of the time and the reconfigured ideas of readership that gained relevance as digital practices contributed to new design ecologies. The new ecologies, balancing both economic and

aesthetic concerns, catered for the demands of the sociotechnological metaphor as well as the intertextual commodity that served the purposes of convergence culture, but they also responded to society's desire for a valid public sphere in which participation was welcome and feasible. The Internet contributed to the swift growth of networks that inevitably required literature's strategies of pre-circulation, circulation, production and distribution to change in order to become more accessible to readers who, as they developed digital-age literacy skills, became adept at taking on more than one role in the process of engagement with the storyworld. At the turn of the century, therefore, the extreme literacies developed through convergence culture changed readers' expectations of literary experiences, so that stories no longer remained remote alternative worlds authored by unreachable persons, but rather became processes of shared interpretation and performance. The anticipation that storyworlds would become encyclopaedic, spatial, participatory and procedural was indeed articulated by Murray and Ryan in the mid-1990s. However, the impact of this change was exacerbated by the spread of convergence beyond the cultural and technological impact on storytelling, also encompassing, as it did, global, social and economic strategies of production and distribution.

Throughout the thesis, I have argued that in the contemporary cultural scenario, the nature of narrative construction and the invitation to participation are reconfigured, as engagement with the storyworld is based on a long-term strategy of play and performance within storyworlds that aim to be ubiquitous and pervasive. The literary experience is reconfigured by the transmedia chain, so that the whole is more far-reaching than the sum of the individual parts. Distinct media operate within the chain, rather than independently, as they take their place within the textual ecology within which the semiotic and material codes remain recognisable to readers/viewers/players and participants in collective ways.

In the central chapters of this thesis, I studied the ways in which these textual ecologies become accessible through metacommunicative aesthetic coding, tactical interpretation and emergent situations of play. Within the context of transmedia, metacommunicative aesthetic coding refers to the representational system of the storyworld, which, when relayed consistently across different media versions, allows readers/viewers/players to construct variations on setting, plot and character in believable ways. This rendering of story in multiple media allows for the reading process to become an orchestration of meaning that allows readers to engage with the story through multiple platforms at the same time.[1] In this way, readers are also able to play (the capacity to experiment with your surroundings as a form of problem-solving) and perform (the ability to adopt alternative identities for improvisation and discovery) their engagement with story through transmedia's 'toyetic' potential. Ultimately, however, throughout the course of my study I have found that whilst digital age literacy skills have indeed developed extensively among young adults – allowing them to engage with the books, films, games that turn to the Internet as a mainframe for their intertextual activity – issues of access and ownership remain contentious even 15 years after the surge in *Harry Potter* fandom.

Whilst my expectation at the start of the research was to show that the *Harry Potter* series represented an auspicious moment for convergence culture, my conclusion is more ambivalent. J. K. Rowling, undoubtedly the most powerful author at the turn of the new millennium, did indeed generate a prototype for successful transmedia through the storyworld that she created; but the *Potter* series did not become a transformative emergent storytelling experience. Instead, the series activities have amounted to a reinstatement of tactical cultural power structures in which the author is positioned as

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[1] Margaret Mackey, *Literacies across Media: Playing the Text* (London: RoutledgeFalmer, 1999; rev. edn. 2006), p. 180.

curator of the work, guarding over storyworld rules and even, in the case of Rowling, maintaining control by attempting to rewrite the Potter canon years after the last book in the series was published. Within this scenario, readers are only able to play and perform within subscribed spaces of the storyworld. They apply their networking, multitasking, navigating and negotiating skills to make the story their own, as is demonstrated by various fan examples such as *IndyMogul* and *The Magic Quill*, but they remain unable to re-inscribe the design ecology of the storyworld. Authority over the storyworld remains, very clearly, Rowling's, and whilst she displays awareness that she is not the only writer operating within this space, she is also recognises her power to dictate the rules of play to both readers and producers.

Transmedia Design Ecologies: Expanding Readers' Experience of the Storyworld

Throughout the thesis, I have shown how each platform producer attempts to invest in play as a new dialectic which allows the publishing, film and gaming industries to provide the rules of the game, whilst recognising that readers seek the gratification offered by the fact that the rules are constantly being remade and transformed.[2] Forming part of transmedia, each distinct platform producer comes to terms with the new media idea that interactivity is a process in which audiences participate and perform, a practice that is, in itself, in a constant state of becoming, and in turn requires constant interactivity. In convergent transmedia storytelling, therefore, readers play and are played on by the very paradox of play – the inside-outside position in relation to the storyworld. In this way, transmedia has the potential to become a transformative play experience as new media interactive design strategies lead to multiple exchanges between the meanings of a story

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[2] See P. David Marshall, 'The New Intertextual Commodity' in Dan Harries, ed., *The New Media Book* (London: BFI, 2002), pp. 68-81.

and culture at large. Often, as demonstrated in the discussion on fandom in Chapter 4, it allows the context of the story to be negotiated and appropriated into one that functions as a constellation of representations; each representation providing an opportunity for participation at an intersubjective level.

Each platform within the transmedia chain must cater for the intersubjective relationship expected to form between participants acting as a networked public, but in order to enhance emotional and cognitive immersion into the storyworld, it also must consider the relationship between participants and characters. The immersive strategies of film, as discussed in Chapter 2, offer viewers emotional and cognitive immersion through the use of spectacle and pathos. These techniques augment readers' experience of the book by rendering the storyworld kinetic, bringing it to life through the actions of the characters in real time and juxtaposing the macro-level of the storyworld with the micro-level of character development throughout their journeys. Therefore, when the film and its ancillary products are the *second* platform to join the chain, as is the case with the *Harry Potter* series, they provide the first opportunity to experience the storyworld in real time, visually and collectively, allowing readers' 'private landscapes blend with the textual geography'.[3] Additionally, film is a particularly powerful media platform within the transmedia chain because its semiotic coding develops the storyworld in both static and dynamic ways, influencing traversals of meaning across all other platforms. Combining this with its expansion into an intertextual commodity allows it to herald the confluence of cultural forms and the creation of cultural attractors; or, as in the case of *The Golden Compass*, the film can actually halt the development of the transmedia chain in a way that

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[3] Marie-Laure Ryan, *Narrative as Virtual Reality: Immersion and Interactivity in Literature and Electronic Media* (Maryland: The John Hopkins University Press, 2001), p. 122.

theatre productions or digital tie-in games cannot, because of their limited aesthetic and economic resources.

As readers/viewers' disposition towards the storyworld becomes more actively participatory through the development of the story into a transmedia narrative, digital tie-in games enhance readers' enjoyment of the story by providing a version of the storyworld that is exploratory and ludic. In Chapter 3, I explored how the storyworld background structure is redesigned to suit the ergodic development of the story which is transposed to a different temporal and spatial setting. Assuming that players are familiar with the storyworld from the books and/or films, I argued that digital tie-in games enlarge and adjust the coherence and linearity demanded by the two platforms by offering interactive choices to players who are located in a position similar to that of the reader of a dramatic script. Through the first-person position offered by the avatar, readers/viewers who become players take up a virtual self that corresponds to one of the characters in the book, hence deepening cognitive and emotional immersion into the storyworld. If the storyworld representation is believable, digital tie-in games have the potential to enhance intersubjective engagement enough for it to propel players towards incorporation – an intense kind of immersion into the storyworld that regards the virtual environment as a domain continuous with the media-saturated reality of everyday lives.

When incorporation takes place, players' spatial disposition to the storyworld shifts from the conceptual to the inhabited increasing levels of play and performance within the storyworld.[4] And, ultimately, the textual architecture of the game – the structures of choice, modes of user involvement in the ludic progression of the story – determine

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[4] See Gordon Calleja, *In-Game* (Massachusetts: MIT, 2011).

whether the distinct media versions and the chain as a whole offer an adequate sense of agency and gratification. Most of the *Harry Potter* digital tie-in games lack a satisfactory degree of credibility, and so offer limited gratification to players. Gratification is crucial to the successful inclusion of the platform into the chain, and is mostly dependent on its ability to sustain narrative traversals and aesthetic representations of the storyworld across media platforms. This is necessary for the collective creation of belief to be sustained, and for cognitive approaches to interpretation to be made possible.[5] The lack of credibility and agency offered by mainstream digital tie-in games, is compensated by the performative affordances of the Internet.

In Chapter 4, I explored how the Internet allows readers to engage creatively with the storyworld's metacommunicative coding, offering the gratification of participating in a network that recognises creative effort. Applying tactical interpretation skills, they navigate, negotiate and appropriate the ontological sign-systems in ways that allow the storyworld to be narrowcast (localised and personalised). They become aware of the inside-outside position afforded them through the metacommunicative narrative situation, and have the skills to translate that awareness into a creative interpretation that, within convergence culture, is shared. Convergence invites the sharing of interpretation to take place in networked spaces, mostly virtual but also through events (as story increasingly becomes associated with events) for which readers (fans) gather as a community. In these shared spaces, the literary experience is always, to some degree, unpredictable, as audiences are transformed into publics that value the freedom offered by the play aesthetic and are looking for avenues through which to stage their own version or performance of the storyworld.

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[5] Marie-Laure Ryan, *Narrative across Media: The Languages of Storytelling* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), p. 8.

Defined by the modes and affordances of media and technology, but strongly influenced by the social relations that come into play, engagement with story in convergence culture is therefore not so much about full immersion and simulation as it is about experimentation within forms of community that are, as yet, tentative and constantly changing. (This is exemplified in Anelli's personal accounts of her experience in fandom.) The literary experience, in this cultural context, is akin to the dramatic performance that can be enacted multiple times, each time with a varying degree of similarity and difference. As readers participate in these enactments, they are partly responding to authors' curation of storyworlds and the rules that they set. They are also, however, playfully manoeuvring the gaps left by mainstream media. These gaps, which represent storyworld spaces from which the author's voice is either absent entirely or greatly modified, are what permit the storyworld to function in a manner embodied by emergent interactivity. The randomness of this interactivity is what allows for situations of play to arise as the parameters of virtual reality and real virtuality are blurred by transmedia storyworlds. As the storyworld emerges it accommodates multiple interpretations that may be repetitive and recursive, it therefore invites long-term engagement with the various stages of the production and distribution of the story, as well as, to a certain degree, its key players.

The randomness inherent in these reconfigured reading processes is what allows for emergent narrative to succeed. It is what theorists writing at the start of convergence culture predicted, to some extent, but failed to foreground as strongly as perhaps was necessary. Focusing on the immersive ideals associated with new technology and on the tactical power of new media such as the Internet, anticipation in the mid-1990s centred

on the nature and features of the more marketable intertextual commodity. This was exemplified by the *Harry Potter* phenomenon, but also provided a model from which other story curators developed transmedia works. In studying the shift from transmedia chains that maintain tight control over translations across media to chains which incorporate emergent media, issues of design remain important in understanding the kinds of reconfigured behavioural patterns stakeholders are invited to adopt and the restrictions and limitations therein.

Curating Participation in the *Harry Potter* Storyworld

Convergent storyworlds are, as the *Harry Potter* case study demonstrates, most often overseen or facilitated by an author who may, more properly, be termed a curator. The curatorial process, as Paul O'Neill explains, is always in many ways a dialectic, 'exposing to varying degrees the processes of cooperation, exchange, and agonistic coproduction that have made it possible.'[6] At the heart of the process is a reconfiguration of the understanding of 'autonomy as a sensibility toward the continued production of exchanges, commonalities, and collective transformations beyond any prefixed idea of profession, field of specialisation or skill set'.[7] It attests, O'Neill claims, to the 'messiness of its process of orchestration, administration, and cooperation.'[8] In the case of the *Harry Potter* series, this role is fulfilled by Rowling. Rowling *curates* the site (or storyworld) of the *Harry Potter* experience as it spans multiple media platforms. She is involved in the real, simulated, virtual and blended spaces of representation through which participants seek to participate in the new forms of interactivity that value the freedom offered by the

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[6] Paul O'Neill, *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Culture(s)* (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2012), p. 95.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid, p. 96.

play aesthetic, and are looking for sites in which (and through which) to stage their own version or performance of the storyworld. This role of curator is not free of the traditional power associated with the author, and is symbolic of the ways in which convergence culture succeeded in opening up narrative discourse and the processes of production and distribution. It is also, however, a reminder that, in spite of reconfigured relationships between authors and readers, it is still the former who own the storyworld and who ultimately determine the rules of play. This is especially true in the case of the *Harry Potter* series.

Rowling is joined by other such curators as Stephanie Meyer of the *Twilight* series, Suzanne Collins of *The Hunger Games* and Rick Riordan of the *Percy Jackson* series. The Harry *Potter* universe takes its place amongst older transmedia storyworlds, including *The Lord of the Rings*, the *Buffy* verse, Jane Austen's universe, *Doctor Who* and *Sherlock Holmes*. However, whilst many of these transmedia phenomena enjoy crossover audiences and increased popularity following the boom of convergence culture, the *Harry Potter* series, and Rowling as its curator, remain unique. Rowling is the only author in publishing history who singlehandedly has succeeded in bypassing media producers in selling the e-book versions of her series through the website *Pottermore*. Her branding strategies take on a unique blend of corporate brand strategies (normally associated with publishing houses), product brand strategies (normally associated with series), person as brand strategies (associated with authors) and work as brand strategies (associated with storyworld content).[9] In her case, the 'Harry Potter' brand and the 'J. K. Rowling' brand are even stronger than the Bloomsbury or Scholastic brands, so that, through *Pottermore*, Rowling demonstrates, to an unprecedented degree, that writers can take a prominent role

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[9] I. Pitsaki, 'Strategic Publishing Brands Management' in *The International Journal of the Book*, vol. 5, no. 3 (2008), pp. 105-13.

in the digital supply chain, reconfiguring publishing history in ways (and with consequences) that have yet to be established and studied.

Whilst *Pottermore* indicates significant shifts in the children's literature industry, as discussed in Chapter 4, it also highlights the difficulties of this rapidly shifting media landscape. Launched after the completion of the book and film series, *Pottermore* is ultimately in line with the historical inclination to enforce control over design, distribution, production and consumption (one may also say interpretation) of the *Potter* brand. In spite of this – and most interestingly, for the purpose of this study – the *Harry Potter* storyworld continues to expand and mutate, maintaining the live community that grew around it during the time of publication. To date, this is a feat that only Rowling has successfully accomplished. Other transmedia chains have had to be more cautious in their treatment of audiences, or have suffered the consequence of fading into the background whilst other series take their place.

Bypassing all retailers and selling the e-books exclusively through the *Pottermore* platform, Rowling chooses to maintain her commercial interest in the storyworld instead of, for example, distributing the stories (that had already grossed \$7,743,000,000 in book sales, as of June 2014) freely in the spirit of open access and public creative interpretation. Furthermore, introducing beta users as a division between early users and the common public, she creates the illusion that she is releasing some control over the storyworld, while actually further contributing to a hierarchical, closed distribution of power. Her claim that the site is 'interactive' is also undermined by the rigid, linear reading experience that it offers, and its failure to place the user, rather than the author, at the centre of its representation of the storyworld. Ultimately, therefore, the platform does not

bear the potential of a strong investment and long-term identification of fans and consumers because of Rowling's ongoing attempts to 'start and stop, channel and reroute, commodify and market' the participation of fans in the *Harry Potter* phenomenon and the whole process of audience reception'.[10]As long as Rowling and *Pottermore* deny users real agency, the more interesting aspects of storyworld development will continue to happen in grassroots forums and online, where emergent creative potential is allowed to flourish more freely.

Confirming her status as 'curator' of the *Harry Potter* storyworld, Rowling's hold over it is reinforced by her public attempts to rewrite canon seven years after the publication of the final book in the series. In a 2007 interview, Rowling surprised fans by unexpectedly announcing that Dumbledore, a central character in the series, is gay, and followed this up in 2014 with a declaration that the Ron and Hermione pairing was probably a mistake. Kelly Gallucci has questioned whether writers can continue to rewrite their books in this fashion even after they have been published without damaging the reading experience for fans. She observes: 'imagine the teen fury that would be unleashed if Stephenie Meyer revealed that Jacob, not Edward, was meant to be with Bella. If Jane Austen decided that Elizabeth belonged with Mr. Collins, not Mr. Darcy.'[11] Gallucci concludes that, even if logically (using Rowling's own words) this made more narrative sense, it would, in fact, dramatically alter the reading experience of those books in negative ways. It would, Gallucci implies, take transmedia too far.

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[10] Vera Cuntz-Leng, 'Potterless: Pottermore and the Pitfalls of Transmedia Storytelling' in Luigina Ciolfi and Grainne O'Brien, eds., *Magic is Might 2012: Proceedings of the International Conference* (Sheffield: Sheffield Hallam University, 2013), p. 68.

[11] Kelly Gallucci, 'Shipwrecked: Rowling rewrites 'Harry Potter' One Too Many Times' in *Bookish* (03/02/2014). <http://www.bookish.com/articles/-shipwrecked-rowling-rewrites-harry-potter-fandom-one-too-many-times> [accessed 01/06/2014].

Readers who are passionate fans of the canon ask for more information about characters and enjoy speculating about different narrative plot options – this is part of the immersive and interactive property of a transmedia storyworld. It is also part of the required expansion of the storyworld required by transmedia stories that are procedural and participatory.[12] Whilst digital age readers who enjoy multiplatform textual processing are keen to participate in storyworlds that are built on design ecologies which favour strategies of emergent interactivity they do not ask for the canon to be rewritten in determining ways. As Rowling does this, she confirms the idea that the reconfiguration of readers to creators (to one degree or another) can only develop its potential in a free, liberal environment that is not compatible with the ideological and commercial interests of authors and major media corporations involved in the *Harry Potter* series. She also places the storyworld at risk, as in an age dominated by the principles of convergence culture, readers seek gratification elsewhere. In the case of *His Dark Materials*, as discussed in Chapter 2, the whole transmedia enterprise was popularly perceived to have been jeopardised by poor production of the adapted film, *The Golden Compass*.[13] It is too early to determine whether *Pottermore*'s failures will have a similar effect on *Harry Potter* fandom. But in a broader study on modern young adult transmedia narratives, it would be relevant to analyse the ways in which Stephanie Meyer, Suzanne Collins and Rick Riordan managed their position within multiplatform storyworlds, and to what extent their respective design ecologies mirrored or developed those piloted by Rowling and the *Harry Potter* series. What is most relevant to note is that, *in spite* of these design oversights on behalf of Rowling, *Harry Potter* fandom continues to expand, through what is here termed the development of metafandoms.

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[12] Janet Murray, *Inventing the Medium: Principles of an Interaction Design as a Cultural Practice* (Massachusetts: MIT, 2012), p. 12.
[13] See, for example: <http://www.theguardian.com/film/filmblog/2009/dec/15/golden-compass-sam-elliot-catholic-church> [accessed 12/02/2014].

Emergent Interactivity in View of the Reader

According to Ryan, immersion and interactivity can only be reconciled if the interactive components of the environment broaden, instead of limit, the experience of the world.[14] In 2001-03, *Harry Potter* fans were still receiving Cease and Desist letters from Rowling and Warner Bros., being made to feel that they existed at the mercy of mainstream production houses. In 2014, questions of ownership, access, expression and distribution have been negotiated but still, as described above, Rowling exhibits a diachronic desire to integrate the design principles of convergence with an inability to use efficient interactive strategies. An overview of *Harry Potter* fandom in 2014 is indicative of the strengths and failures of the design economy adopted by Rowling. Apart from the opening of The Wizarding World of Harry Potter's Diagon Alley at the Universal Studios in Orlando in 2014, fans can look forward to the publication of *The Cuckoo's Calling* sequel, a play following Harry's pre-Hogwarts life to be staged in the UK, and more behind-the-scenes information of the 2016 spin-off film, *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*, all penned by Rowling herself. *Pottermore* continues to release book chapters and, at time of writing, is completing its instalment of the *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* series. Yet, as discussed above, all of these events represent tightly controlled commercial initiatives that only allow limited participation on behalf of storyworld participants.

Whilst the pace and scope of *Harry Potter* fandom is also changing,[15] it remains present and active, especially online. Characteristic of the participatory trends of 2014 is the

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[14] Marie-Laure Ryan, *Narrative as Virtual Reality: Immersion and Interactivity in Literature and Electronic Media*, pp. 307-31.

[15] For example, the original mailing list – Harry Potter for Grownups – had 30,000 members exchanging 8,000 messages in July 2003, compared to just 20 in July 2012.

LeakyCon convention. Defined as a convention 'that's been built around new ways of being in fandom', LeakyCon 2014 provides a clear example of the ways in which the *Harry Potter* storyworld is not emergent through mainstream strategies, but rather through grassroots participation. It continues to appropriate and expand the storyworld through an intertextual web of traversals that become familiar to the knowledge community surrounding the *Harry Potter* storyworld. The predominant musical theme of the convention is 'Gotta get back to Hogwarts where everybody thinks I'm cool' – the opening number from 'A Very Potter Musical', the Internet sensation that launched the career of *Glee* heartthrob, Darren Criss, and helped form a professional acting company, called Starkid. Starkid is, in fact, the highlight of the 2014 LeakyCon, and it functions as a metafandom that blends aspects of the *Harry Potter* universe with those of TV series *Glee*. Among other highly visible metafandoms at the convention are those surrounding NielCicierega's The Potter Puppet Pals and wizard rock, in which rock bands come together to compose and jam *Harry Potter*-related music. Vlogbrothers, who released a viral video log about fans desperate for the release of *Deathly Hallows* called 'Accio Deathly Hallows', are also a predominant feature of the convention. This is markedly different to *Harry Potter* conventions in the past. In the past, Harry Potter and his journey were at the centre of fan interest in the storyworld. Today, Harry may indeed have been replaced by his fans as the *Harry Potter* storyworld is side-lined and far more importance is given to the community that has grown around it.

In Conclusion

In further studies of the impact of convergence culture on transmedia storyworlds, it would be interesting to study the repercussions of *Pottermore*. The fundamental question

is to whether its long-term success or failure affects *Harry Potter* fandom in a parallel dialectic; more than that, beyond the *Harry Potter* storyworld, whether Rowling's design ecology will be taken up by other authors. It would also be relevant to conduct a more detailed comparison of the narrative elements of setting, plot and character across transmedia storyworlds designed and produced after *Harry Potter*, such as *The Hunger Games*, in order to establish whether the ontological properties of ubiquitous storyworlds have, indeed, intrinsically been reconfigured by the success of the series. The question of whether the fantasy genre exclusively permits such pervasive retelling and remediating is also interesting to study in comparison to other types of narrative such as realist fiction. If the narrative elements and design ecologies of these transmedia storyworlds are, indeed, radically reconfigured, how then do the theories of immersion and interactivity outlined by Murray and Ryan need to be reconsidered alongside Mackey's and Jenkins's discussion on extreme and digital literacy, beyond what this thesis has endeavoured to do?

The concepts of curation, metacommunicative play strategies, intersubjective modes of engagement and emergent interactivity are not only relevant to transmedia studies and the production of the distinct media, but also to the field of children's literature and new media literacy in general. Building upon this work – and that of Jane McGonigal, Christina Dena, and Celia Pearce – the idea of play and performance in ubiquitous and pervasive storyworlds is one that appeals especially in the light of new perspectives on readership and the reading process. The role of public networking, as outlined by Varnelis and Levy, and the expansion or limitation of its political, ideological and commercial influence, will determine contemporary notions of community, technology and story and allow us to comment more accurately on what here has been termed the 'interactive

221

fallacy'; that is, the idea of complete liberalisation of creative spaces that are free of authorial control, even as the terms 'author' and 'reader' are being radically reconfigured through contemporary textual ecologies.

Through convergence culture, society becomes a ludic space which encourages a processual engagement with art and more specifically with story. Through this process of engagement, the metacommunicative process of play allows readers' participation to be framed as an intersubjective experience. Within experiences of emergent interactive storytelling, the reader is immersed within a storyworld with multiple interfaces, within which (and through which) they perform. The reconfigured parameters of interactivity and immersion are reclassifying elements of everyday life as potential platforms for play that require consolidation of the skills implicit in extreme literacy. Through the development of these extreme literacies, more and more readers realise their role as participants in the networked publics that surround them. They recognise new spaces of play and develop socio-technological metaphors that allow for an essential ethic of social and public storytelling to develop. This new ethic is not simply one for readers, but intrinsically, one in which all stakeholders in the literary world are involved.

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