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Young Adults Reading Crossmedia Fiction

by

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the reading practices of 14 young adults in relation to crossmedia fiction, stories that have been adapted across a variety of media formats. In-person interviews were conducted with the goal of exploring how these young people selected, approached, experienced and enjoyed a variety of crossmedia stories. Findings suggest three important considerations for scholars in the areas of education, literacy studies, and library and information studies: (1) despite a significant body of literature suggesting that young people increasingly demand and seek out opportunities to participate in in their favourite storyworlds, youth remain very interested in opportunities for spectatorship, but this does not imply passivity; rather, (2) young people make active and informed choices in relation to crossmedia texts, and (3) the choices teens make, the experiences they seek, and the reasons they engage with crossmedia stories are diverse and refuse generalization.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

In 2009, my youngest sister was 14. Her favourite books were *Harry Potter* and *Twilight*; her favourite movies were the *Harry Potter* and *Twilight* films; and her favourite TV shows were *The Vampire Diaries*, *Gossip Girl*, and the brand new Fox comedy-musical, *Glee*. On September 9, we sat together in front of the TV in anticipation of the long-awaited second episode of *Glee*. The pilot had been released in May and the summer had been used to launch a massive promotional campaign. The *Glee* cast had embarked on a summer-long signing and Q&A tour across the United States, and attended ComicCon for a screening of the initial episode (BWW News Desk, 2009). They carried digital video cameras with them throughout the tour to document their experiences, and the videos were posted on the official Fox *Glee* website, which contained games, forums, and videos. Cast members used their personal Twitter accounts as promotional tools, and, to wrap up the summer, Fox held a Biggest Gleek contest that measured Gleek-dom by tracking *Glee*-related activity on social networking sites—mention the show, earn a point (Stelter, 2009).

By September 9 when the second episode aired, *Glee* had amassed an impressive fan base, and Lizzie was among them. Having been informed that I could not miss this television event, I sat beside her that evening interested to see what all the fuss was about. As was her custom when watching television, Lizzie had her laptop with her so she could look up information during the episode, chat with her friends, or otherwise putter about online if she got bored—and thank

goodness. If her computer had not been present, she would not have been able to inform me that Cory Monteith, the supposedly 16-year-old cast member, was, in fact, 27, nor would she have been able to show me an online video synopsis of the premiere episode, which I had missed. After the broadcast, she looked up featured songs and found most of them already posted on Youtube. Then off to her room she scampered, laptop in hand, and the house reverberated with the sounds of *Golddigger* and *Take A Bow* as performed by the *Glee* cast for the rest of the evening.

What played out in our living room that night mirrored, in miniature, Fox's summer-long promotional efforts, complete with lesser but still multiple approaches to the text through websites, social media, online video, and music. Since then, the multiple avenues of approach available in the *Glee* world have only multiplied, as the franchise and storyworld continues to expand. As of April 2012, *Glee* has released 11 CDs, 3 compilation albums, 5 EPs, and nearly 300 singles. In 2009, the Hal Leonard Corporation began releasing sheet music for the show's most popular tunes (Hetrick, 2009). DVD box sets for each season have been released in two volumes (one at Christmas containing the first half of the season, and one in the spring containing the second half of the season) and as complete sets, along with separate director's cut and extended content versions of specific episodes. After the season 1 finale, *Glee* announced that Little Brown Books would be producing a series of official *Glee* novels for young adults (Jordan, 2010), and, so far, three have been released. At the same time, official *Glee* apparel went into production through a variety of partners, Claire's picked

up the rights to an exclusive *Glee* jewelry line, Hallmark launched *Glee* greeting cards, and the Wii game "Karaoke Revolution *Glee*" was released (Szalai, 2010). Since 2010, the cast has been doing live concert tours throughout the summer across the US. In August 2011, *Glee: The 3D Concert Movie* was released in theatres. Finally, *Glee* spawned a reality TV show *The Glee Project* (aired from June to August 2011) wherein young performers competed for a seven-episode guest-starring role on *Glee*'s third season (Stelter, 2010).

While the official *Glee* franchise is enormous, the abundance of available *Glee* texts does not end here. Published, unofficial guides to the *Glee* universe can be purchased by the dozen on Amazon.com, and fan-created content continues to be produced at a staggering rate. Youtube is full of fan-made videos, including fans covering their favourite *Glee* songs, fan commentaries on episodes, fan-arranged mash-ups, and local glee club reproductions of *Glee* performance numbers. Unofficial fan sites abound and offer discussion forums, spoiler information, fan fiction, and fan art. And, perhaps my personal favourite fan-site, Fashionof*Glee*.com, hunts down clothing items worn on the show and posts information on where to purchase each character's look.

Glee is a typical example of crossmedia storytelling, with content— including adaptations, sequels, prequels, games, paratexts, and information—that spans a variety of media formats and offers readers a multitude of ways to engage with the storyworld. Lizzie, now 17, has insisted I clarify that she is no longer a fan of either *Glee* or *Twilight* (though *Harry Potter* is still close to her heart), but the entertainment she chooses continues to be crossmedia. Her favourite books

have websites, movies, TV shows, soundtracks, and merchandise; her favourite TV shows come with books, websites, forums and music; and her favourite movies are usually based on her favourite books or TV shows.

On that evening in 2009, as I listened to the echoes of Lea Michelle's voice lamenting her lost love, I wondered: what exactly was Lizzie doing up in her room with *Glee* music blasting? Was she visiting the show's websites and writing her own fan fiction? Was she chatting with friends about the show on Facebook? Was she imagining herself performing the songs as one of the characters? Or was she simply enjoying the music and ignoring the rest of the online and offline *Glee* texts available to her? Over the next few months, these idle curiosities turned into the more cohesive question that I brought to my soon-to-be thesis supervisor: What effects do stories circulating across media have on the reading habits and experiences of youth?

Study Overview

Much scholarly literature suggests a new participatory mode of engaging with texts. As the *Glee* example demonstrates, producers use crossmediation to attract audiences by extending their viewing options across a variety of media formats, and by using popular online and social media platforms as avenues for promotion (Gillan, 2011; Perren, 2010); but, this approach also results in audiences that are increasingly able to control their own media experiences and to treat media products as cultural resources to be used and reworked, instead of cultural products to be passively consumed (Fiske, 2003). A variety of scholarship suggests that teens are very involved in this participatory mode of engaging with

cultural and entertainment media, and are embracing their new roles as creators, circulators, and annotators of original and adapted or re-mixed creative texts (Jenkins, 2009; Thomas, 2007a; Thomas, 2007b; Ross, 2008; Gillan, 2008; Ito, 2007).

Much of this work takes as its object of study either textual forms designed to promote participation (e.g. fan forums, official websites, interactive transmedia entertainment) (Rose, 2011; Jenkins, 2006a; Jenkins, 1992; Ross, 2008), or young adults recruited because of their interest in participatory venues (Thomas, 2007a; Black, 2008). Very little research investigates what average young adults do with crossmedia texts, and much of the literature is made up of textual studies that draw conclusions about audience behaviours based on the affordances of the texts themselves (see Rose, 2011; Askwith, 2007; Brooker, 2003). Hence, there is a lack of research considering how young adults in general relate to crossmedia storyworlds. This study sought to fill this gap by investigating the activities of a small sample of young adults who were not recruited due to a pre-existing interest in participatory activities, and by focusing on the reception practices of participants rather than on texts themselves. It was my hope that this work would provide a better sense of what young adults actually do with the crossmedia texts available to them, and how and if these practices map to the existing literature.

Research Questions and Design

This study comprises analysis of interviews with 14 young adults between the ages of 12 and 17 intended to probe their interest in and engagement with a variety of crossmedia storyworlds. The specific research questions were:

1) To what extent do readers identify the presence or absence of crossmedia storytelling as part of their response to a given text, under the following headings:
   - Selection of text
   - Approach to text
   - Experience of text

2) To what extent do readers find pleasure in pursuing a variety of crossmedia instantiations of a common fiction? How do those who answer positively describe these pleasures?

3) How do readers find information about crossmedia stories or crossmedia versions of a story?

The data gathered in order to answer these questions form the present work.

The body of this thesis follows the research questions directly. After presenting an overview of the academic literature addressed to crossmedia storytelling in Chapter 2 and a description of the methodology employed to develop this study in Chapter 3, I consider the *selection* practices my participants employed in deciding which stories and texts to engage (Chapter 4). Chapter 5 examines how these teens *approached* crossmedia texts, including an analysis of how crossmediation affected the imaginative processes they employed, and how and when they took on spectator and participant stances. Chapter 6 considers the *experiences and pleasures* participants described in relation to crossmedia stories. Chapter 7 maps out the reader stances participants occupied in relation to individual crossmedia texts. This mapping illustrates the significant diversity of

reading practices and experiences these young people brought to and took away from the story texts on offer.

Conclusion

This thesis attempts to present an initial exploration of how young adults navigate complex and multi-layered crossmedia storyworlds. Despite the extensive body of literature examining young adult participation in online cultures, my participants, for the most part, reported far more conservative and selective behaviour in relation to crossmedia storyworlds. These behaviours were at least as much in line with Britton's (1984) notion of spectatorship as they were with participation. Only two participants out of 14 mapped closely onto the description of participatory culture found in the literature. Like Lizzie during our first night of the new season of *Glee*, the great majority of these young people were far more interested in online venues as information resources and access points for other media they wished to view. Though contemporary young people have a vast range of textual choices open to them, my results suggest that their responses to these choices may entail rejecting the new and relying on the known and familiar, at least provisionally and at least temporarily.

I do not mean to suggest that participants used media texts in unimaginative or outdated ways. On the contrary, they demonstrated great skill, and media expertise when managing and choosing among an overwhelming number of textual options. They were conservative crossmedia readers in the sense that they did not buy into or respond to every new and innovative idea or textual affordance presented to them. Rather than blindly following structured

patterns of participation, they sampled, chose, and used texts intelligently to suit

their own purposes.

CHAPTER 2

Review of the Related Literature

The past few decades have seen huge technological advances and increasing media convergence that have led to a general expectation that we will be connected to cultural products (stories, commercial products, news, social spaces) through a variety of media sources and formats. As a result, major changes have occurred in media production, marketing, and creative strategies, and readers, viewers, and players are developing new ways of, not just spectating, but also interacting with storyworlds.

Given the diversity of media forms involved, and the widespread social, educational, and economic implications of crossmediation, a variety of academic disciplines have taken an interest. Scholars from adaptation studies, film studies, game studies, comparative media studies, sociology, anthropology, education, marketing, economics, library and information studies, design, and cultural studies have all contributed to the growing body of literature exploring crossmedia storytelling. Given my particular focus on readers and audience reception, this chapter will draw from literature in the interdisciplinary fields of adaptation studies, media and cultural studies, reception studies, education, and new literacy.

Much crossmediation is the result of multimodal adaptations so I will begin with an exploration of how adaptation affects, alters, or expands storyworld possibilities. However, adaptation literature does not address how new media and the increase in digital technologies have affected story construction and audience

reception, and I will therefore consider this literature separately. I will then

explore how the digital age is expanding our notion of literacy, and introduce

scholarship that specifically addresses how young adults navigate the world of

crossmedia stories. Finally I will introduce theoretical concepts that informed my

thinking throughout this project.

Crossmedia and Adaptation

In the much-cited third chapter of his seminal work, *Convergence Culture*,

Jenkins (2006a) introduces the concept of transmedia storytelling:

> 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. Each franchise entry
> needs to be self-contained so you don't have to have seen the film to enjoy
> the game, and vice versa. Any given product is a point of entry into the
> franchise as a whole. (p. 97-98)

Transmedia as defined by Jenkins is the gold standard of immersive,

interactive media experiences. When the media studies literature discusses stories

in a multiplatform environment, they are often concerned with this gold standard

(see Rose, 2010; Davidson, 2010; Dena, 2009; Scolari, 2009; Long, 2007; Evans,

2008). But, while Jenkins (2006a) explores a variety of transmedia attempts

(particularly *The Matrix*), he is quick to note that "relatively few, if any,

franchises achieve the full aesthetic potential of transmedia storytelling" (p. 99).

A huge number of stories with multimodal content do not meet all of the above

criteria. Most offer a combination of some transmedia elements, like world-

building content (e.g., websites with character bios), and some crossmedia

adaptations (e.g., a movie version of a popular novel). I use the term crossmedia

as a slightly watered down version of Jenkins' transmedia to mean any story with multimodal content. My use of the term will be further clarified in Chapter 3.

It is tempting to think of adaptation as the commonplace and therefore less important or radical version of crossmediation; but, as scholars in the field of adaptation studies argue, adaptation is not straightforward, and can influence, expand or even limit the possibilities of a given storyworld. Hutcheon (2006) describes adaptations as "deliberate, announced, and extended revisitations of prior works" (p. xiv). While adaptations are not new, technological advances and new media formats provide new avenues for adaptation and have therefore aided in the growing ubiquity and variety of adapted texts (The New London Group, 1996, 2000; Lunenfeld, 1999; Jenkins, 2006a; Mackey, 1999). But adaptations do not merely reiterate an already established story with new visual or audio material. The adaptation of a story from one medium to the next affects—via contribution, limitation or elaboration—the original imaginative landscape (Hutcheon, 2006). Hence adaptations provide unique avenues for the exploration and expansion of imaginative worlds, and in turn affect the desires, expectations and practices readers bring to texts (Lunenfeld, 1999; Mackey, 1999). Understanding contemporary reading practices requires an examination of the various ways adaptations may alter the reader and reading experience.

Addressing this issue, Hutcheon (2006) suggests that adaptations are palimpsestuous in nature, "haunted at all times" by a prior text, or other surrounding adaptations (p. 6). Understanding the interpretive practices mandated by adaptations, then, requires approaching these texts as a web of stereophony,

citations, and echoes (Barthes, 1977). An examination of reader experiences and practices in relation to adaptations must approach them "as inherently double- or multilaminated works" (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 6).

Sanders (2006) echoes this sentiment, arguing that all new texts are connected to a grid of already existing texts, stories, and art. Further, Sanders provides an examination of the varying definitions and types of adaptations extant in an attempt to extend the field of terms and their uses and to counter any impulse to fix the concept. Adaptations studies, says Sanders, mobilizes "a wide vocabulary of active terms: version, variation, interpretation, continuation, transformation, imitation, pastiche, parody, forgery, travesty, transposition, revaluation, revision, rewriting, echo. As this list of terms suggests, adaptations and appropriations can possess starkly different, even opposing aims and intentions" (p. 18).

Following from Sanders' (2006) efforts to extend the meaning of adaptation, Frus and Williams (2010) argue that some adaptations go so far beyond the original text that they require a new designation: transformation. While Sanders goes so far as to identify and differentiate the various modes of adaptation extant, Frus and Williams (2010) argue that the increasing intertextuality of texts leads us away from the term adaptation altogether as it is too interwoven with notions of fidelity; what is required, they argue, is a more open term, transformation, that emphasizes the importance of understanding relationships between texts. Like an adaptation, a transformation is "a text that reworks an older story or stories," (p. 3) but a transformation radically alters the

source story so that the new product works independently of its source. Transformations include, but are not limited to, parallel novels that consider the same events as the source text from a different perspective (e.g., *Wicked*, *Mary Reilly*); texts that resituate a familiar story in a new context, setting, situation or with different characters (e.g., *Clueless*, *O*); and parodies (e.g., *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*, *Young Frankenstein*).

As the following chapters will show, my participants' reflections—indeed even the texts they most often chose to discuss—suggest that the insights of adaptation studies are extremely relevant to crossmedia storytelling. The notion that adaptations are "haunted" by their origin texts was borne out in many of my participants' comments, and fidelity remained a prominent evaluative criterion. Though adaptation theorists may be working to expand the definitions and critical vocabulary we bring to adaptations, my results, as we will see, suggest that some audience members are still quite wedded to traditional notions of adaptation and fidelity comparisons.

Adaptation studies offers theoretical and conceptual grounding for analysis of contemporary adaptations, but the field neglects to provide a thorough consideration of the effects of new media and digital technologies as stories become increasingly multiplatform, and closer to true transmedia franchises. Therefore, I now leave adaptation studies proper and consider the media and cultural studies literature addressed to adaptations and transmediation in the digital age in order to explore the cultural shifts and new audience and reader roles both created by and demanded from crossmedia stories.

Crossmedia Storytelling and Reception

Specifically addressing himself to the topic of adaptations in a new media environment, Lunenfeld (1999) suggests that the proliferation of adaptations across media platforms makes storytelling a process without end, as the original text is overwhelmed by sequels, prequels, and side plots until these offshoots become as important as their origin story. Hence, in the digital age, the way we understand and navigate story changes, and our relationship to space and time is likewise altered. We are explorers less of the physical world and instead of the online world where we see web pages ever in progress, developing link lists and mixed content, and leading us on a meandering journey through a liquid and ever-changing architecture. Meanwhile, story in a hypertext world "offers a never-ending variety of ways through material" (p. 14), and, as stories move online, increased participation makes storytelling an ongoing and unfinished process where receiver, creator and broadcaster roles are not firmly dominated by any group. *Unfinish* defines the aesthetic of the digital age and informs the narrative characteristics of crossmedia storytelling and the world-building it encourages (Lunenfeld, 1999).

Brooker (2009) provides a practical example of the aesthetic of unfinish in his exploration of the DVD release of *Blade Runner: The Final Cut*. He argues that, rather than offering a final, authorized closing to the *Blade Runner* story, *Final Cut* is presented as "just one part of an archive," inviting dialogue and debate regarding ambiguities in the text and thereby refusing to privilege the most recent incarnation of the series over earlier versions (p. 80). While the DVD set

provides Ridley Scott's final version of the film—the route the director chose—it is presented amid a package of alternate options, a unique approach to core-story franchise texts. This approach reflects a shift in the construction of popular fiction from a focus on narrative to a focus on world-building that can support a multitude of interpretations, voices and narratives.

But what happens to the audience in this world of unfinish and open interpretation? Jenkins (2004) suggests that a succession of new media forms has resulted in a striking shift in patterns of media consumption, allowing consumers to participate in the transmission, annotation and re-circulation of the texts they consume. Jenkins calls this shift toward reader engagement *participatory culture*. Through the use of online resources, readers engage texts in new and innovative ways, moving the practice of reading from a purely solitary activity to a social endeavor wherein texts form the foundation upon which story communities are forged. Within these communities, readers have the chance to engage, explore and expand fictional realms, perforating the barrier between real world/reader, and fictional world/text (Jenkins, 2009). Interactive communities and the new practices of interpretation they support add dimension and weight to theories of reading that see the textual consumer as active participant, recovering, reworking and modifying the texts they read (Jenkins, 2006b).

Gillan (2011) discusses how television networks have responded to audience demand for increased participation by developing new marketing and production strategies. Realizing that audiences are often using more than one screen or clickable device as they watch television (either on an actual TV screen

or on a computer screen), TV producers have attempted to harness this multi-clicking and focus it on the television show being watched. This is accomplished by creating extra-story content available through a variety of media platforms (CDs, websites, videogames). This extra content is intended to extend the television viewing experience into these other mediums so that they no longer compete for viewer attention, but contribute to continued interest in television texts. As Gillan argues,

> The Must-Click TV programming model assumes that the franchise content available through different mediums must click together seamlessly to form part of interlocking pieces of a whole experience (e.g., *Heroes Evolutions*), one that is structured to encourage viewers to make emotional investments that will ideally lead to economic investments. […] The key is to keep the TV franchise always in circulation and the audience always interacting with the show before and after its initial and subsequent broadcast airings. (p. 4)

Gillan is primarily concerned with providing a history of the evolution of the television industry over the past two decades and not with audience responses to these strategies, but her introduction of the concept of Must-Click TV is instructive when considering the sorts of audiences crossmedia texts attempt to construct. The Must-Click TV viewer must participate in her own entertainment if she is to gain the most from the experience; broadcast networks may provide the links, websites, webisodes, etc. but it is up to individual audience members to decide how to navigate this field of interrelated texts and whether or not, or to what degree, to take part.

Crossmedia storytelling, transmediation, and Must-Click TV may offer audiences opportunities to participate in and control their own entertainment, but this does not imply liberation from the influence of media producers and

marketing. Many authors have considered the branding and marketing

components of crossmedia and transmedia storytelling and the complex

relationship between entertainment producers and consumers. Jenkins (2006b)

insists that understanding cultural trends requires documentation of "the

interactions that occur among media consumers, between media consumers and

media texts, and between media consumers and media producers" (p. 135). He

describes three key trends that are shaping and altering the above relations. These

trends include:

- New tools and technologies that enable consumers to archive, annotate, appropriate, and recirculate media content
- A range of subcultures that promote Do-It-Yourself (DIY) media production, a discourse that shapes how consumers have deployed those technologies
- Economic trends that favor the horizontally integrated media conglomerates, encourage the flow of images, ideas, and narratives across multiple media channels, and demand more active modes of spectatorship (p. 136)

His description and analysis reveals a complex world of role negotiation

wherein audiences utilize new technologies to create online knowledge

communities and construct what Pierre Levy (1997) calls *collective intelligence.*

Knowledge communities interact with commodity culture and may lead toward

the production of storyworlds that allow room for more interpretation and

authorize a diverse range of fan performances that promote immersion. But, all

the while, media producers are anxious to harness and utilize the power of fan

communities to their advantage. What emerges is a picture of media consumers as

neither "totally autonomous from nor totally vulnerable to the culture industries"

(Jenkins, 2006b, p. 136). Rather, new media technologies and the storytelling

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techniques that emerge from these technologies produce dynamic relationships between producers, commodity culture and audiences. Ultimately, Jenkins (2006b) argues, "the interactive audience is more than a marketing concept and less than 'semiotic democracy'" (p. 136).

Concern about marketing and consumerism is a prevalent theme in literature that examines crossmedia storytelling for children and young adults. Sekeres (2009) offers a history of the commercialization of children's literature and the development of what she calls *branded fiction*, wherein books are merely one product in a line of many items sold under the same brand name and centered around an imaginative character, the *market child*. Sekeres argues that these products, united through their common purpose as access points to a character's world, allow readers a multitude of avenues for engaging a story (p. 412); they carve out, limit, and define a "playspace, the collection of diverse spaces in which the reader interacts with and plays with the products of branded fiction" (p. 399). Playspace is defined as the expanding realm in which reading takes place as stories spill into various media formats. Technologies extend the reach of marketing and allow children new ways of knowing characters that move beyond the playspace afforded by only a book (p. 412). Whether this extension results in an empowered reader who utilizes the expanding playspace in ways that afford control over stories and characters or whether it results in the production of a passive reader-consumer remains to be seen and, indeed, effects are undoubtedly more complex than these two possibilities suggest.

Mackey (2001) also addresses concerns regarding the commercialization of storyworlds in her study of the adaptations and satellite texts related to the movie *Men in Black*. Like Sekeres, Mackey examines the implications of a "corporate world of storytelling" wherein texts are adapted to various formats with an aim to maximize revenue from a given creative venture. Her discussion offers interesting insights about the opportunities crossmediation offers readers. First, she notes that the multitude of formats and mediums that engage *Men in Black* allow readers with different levels of interest to nonetheless participate in the cultural phenomenon in ways that suit their level of interest. In addition, Mackey posits that this world of adaptation, commentary and intertextual storytelling affects not only the original viewing of the film or reading of the book, but has enormous impacts on the post-reading process as readers have access to texts that may provide background or contextual information regarding either the story world or the world of story production (e.g., behind the scenes footage). Finally, like Sekeres, Mackey suggests that the ultimate effects of this broadened reading space are not yet fully understood and it is as-yet unclear whether expanding options for engaging a text lead to more critical reading practices, or more commercially indoctrinated readers. Once again, the answer is likely not one or the other, but a more complex combination of the two.

As the above literature suggests, the meaning of the term "audience" and/or "reader" is challenged by the participatory elements encouraged and even required by crossmedia storytelling. This shift in the role of the textual consumer means not just that new opportunities are provided, but that new skills must be

developed to navigate the complex, commercialized world of multimodal texts.
With this in mind, I now turn to the literature examining how the concept of
literacy is changing, and what this means for young adult readers.

Young Adults and New Media Literacies

In *Literacy in the New Media Age*, Kress (2003) states "it is no longer
possible to think about literacy in isolation from a vast array of social,
technological and economic factors" (p. 1). For Kress, our current era has seen
two central literacy-defining shifts: the dominance of writing is being overtaken
by the dominance of image, and the dominance of the book is being overtaken by
the dominance of the screen. Understanding contemporary literacy therefore
requires an in-depth examination of the affordances of writing versus image and
books versus screens. Ultimately, Kress argues that we can no longer consider
language "the sole, the main, let alone the major means of representation and
communication" (p. 35). Meaning is now more often than not communicated
across several modes and we therefore require an understanding of how that
spreading happens and what it does. Media literacy becomes about using the skills
and orientation of image decoding as the primary frame through which we
understand texts. The direction of literacy, then, changes entirely.

Kress (2003) represents a relatively traditional orientation towards new
media literacy with his focus on language and writing. Knobel and Lankshear
(2008) provide a very different approach. They avoid fixing literacy to language
and writing by insisting that the new digital age requires us to think of literacy in
the plural. They are not concerned with literacy; they are concerned with

literacies. They argue that this shift to plurality is necessary for three reasons: first, there is so much diversity in definitions of digital literacy that it becomes impossible to coherently refer to it in the singular; second, an expansive view of literacies may provide significant benefit from an educational standpoint; finally, understanding literacy as practice provides a useful strategy for examining and understanding what people actually do with texts, and what people do is not singular.

Knobel and Lankshear take their cue from the seminal work of the New London Group (1996; 2000), the first to pluralize the concept of literacy and to suggest that an understanding of the multiliteracies present in the lives of students must be incorporated into teaching practices in order to allow students "full and equitable social participation" (2000, p. 4). As new media forms emerge, meaning-making is no longer isolated to the realm of print texts, but relates to visual, audio and spatial cues as well. Meaning has become multimodal, dependent on all of the above cues (p. 5). Effective pedagogical practice, then, must take into account the various narrative forms that influence the lives of students if literacy education is to remain relevant and effective.

Mackey (2001) offers perhaps the most comprehensive reader study examining how young adults read and navigate narrative in different media forms. In *Narrative Pleasures in Young Adult Film, Novel, and Videogames*, she explores how and if the narrative understandings of young adults differ from one medium to the next, and whether literate strategies are transferred between mediums. This is accomplished through a study of 18-21 year olds reading through three entire

stories in a videogame, movie, and novel. Mackey notes that her participants move through the same series of reading phases in all mediums. These phases include: making initial decisions about what to pay attention to and predictions about possible story directions; immersing themselves in the storyworld or entering the fiction; orienting and filling in gaps where necessary in order to make progress through the story; balancing the need for detailed understanding with the need to keep moving through the story; and coming to conclusions and/or final judgments about the story. Ultimately, Mackey notes "the interpretive toolkit brought to bear on these three narratives [in three different narrative formats] were recognizably similar across groups and across media" (p. 237). In addition, this toolkit contained a variety of strategies for dealing with slippery texts, "materials that evolve and mutate across different media" (Mackey, 2007, p. 319). Participants were unfazed by, and in fact enjoyed, the lack of linear plotting present in the movie *Run Lola Run*, and they were not particularly challenged by the shifting perspectives offered in the novel *Monster*. Mackey's participants were less wedded to and dependent on a traditional Aristotelian schema of narrative as their primary method for organizing and understanding the stories presented to them. I would suggest that this effect may very well be the result of crossmediation, and the increasing proliferation of stories that require readers to jump from one medium to the next and from one form of narrative exposition (e.g., a linear television drama) to another (e.g., the online diary of a character).

I approached this project with an understanding that literacy is a multiple concept, and that young adults read and therefore make meaning and construct

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narrative and social understandings across a variety of media platforms and using a variety of visual, textual, and audio cues. As the above literature suggests, their toolkit for understanding story is diverse and includes strategies for assembling coherent storyworlds despite non-linear plotting and/or a diversity of perspectives and voices, and using narrative and extra-story information spread across media.

Young Adults Reading Crossmedia

While the above literature explores the changing face of literacy in relation to digital media, with the exception of Mackey (2011), it does not concern itself with how reading and narrative skills and experiences differ across media formats. Further, Mackey is not concerned with how young adults read a single story across media formats. Studies that do consider how young adults navigate crossmedia stories have a tendency to focus on either teens that are involved in online participatory endeavors, or on participatory sites themselves (see Thomas, 2007a; 2007b; Black, 2008; Hammer, 2007; Ito, 2007, Ross, 2008; Stein, 2011). So much focus on participatory teens can be contrasted with the relatively small amount of research that considers how the rest of the teen population is interacting with crossmedia content. Further, it may lead to a potentially false notion of young adults as exceptionally participatory, and as demanding and making extensive use of all crossmedia story avenues.

The only study I could locate that addresses how a random sample of young adults interacts with crossmedia story texts, is from 2001. In "Living on *Dawson's Creek*: Teen Viewers, Cultural Convergence, and Television Overflow," Brooker presents the results of a survey study of 67 young adult

viewers of *Dawson's Creek* and their level and type of interaction with

crossmedia content. Noting that contemporary teen fiction "increasingly

'overflows' from the primary text across multiple platforms—particularly onto

dedicated internet sites—and that certain programs invite a participatory,

interactive engagement which constructs the show as an extended immersive

experience" (p. 456), Brooker wondered whether or not teens were actually

following the textual overflow into these participatory, interactive venues. What

he found was interesting and somewhat unexpected. Only 9 of the 67 participants

surveyed noted any use of internet resources in relation to their engagement with

Dawson's Creek and only one of the 9 contributed content to the sites she visited

(p. 467). Even for these participants, internet sites were of secondary importance

to the show itself, and were primarily used to locate information about characters,

fashion, music, and actors. Ultimately, Brooker concludes that,

> Just because a dedicated website has set up a fully-immersive experience
> does not mean that the majority of viewers are using it as anything more
> than a reference book in-between screenings of what remains, for them,
> the primary text. These websites suggest an ideal visitor and viewer, a
> diehard fan who lives the experience of a show rather than merely
> watching it. As such, they are currently ahead of actual audience
> involvement, and offer a more exciting vision of convergence than that
> suggested by my audience research. Fans, we have to remember, are an
> active minority. The response of keen but uncommitted viewers is less
> dramatic than we might have expected or hoped. (p. 470)

My project follows from Brooker's work and attempts to see if, a decade

after his study, anything has changed. Though Brooker found regular and

immersive participatory engagement with crossmedia texts to be rare, perhaps the

increase in the ubiquity of crossmediation and transmediation have led more

young adults into this realm. I also wondered if a broader focus on all crossmedia

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texts, regardless of their origin text (i.e., not just television shows) would yield

different results. And, if young adults were still only rarely engaging with

crossmedia texts, why, in their own words, was this the case?

Theoretical Concepts

      This study used the work of several theorists to guide data analysis and

interpretation, including Rosenblatt (2005), Douglas and Hargadon (2001), Bruner

(1986), Gerrig, (1998), Harding, (1937), and Britton (1984). While the work of

the latter four scholars will be introduced when required in the ensuing chapters, I

provide below an outline of the work of Rosenblatt (2005) and Douglas and

Hargadon (2001) as their concepts are immediately and consistently relevant to all

chapters.

Efferent and Aesthetic Reading Stances

      Rosenblatt (2005) suggests that reading is a transaction between reader

and text. The reader brings past experiences, frameworks of understanding, and a

particular context and intent to a text, while the words, pattern, and story of a text

may in turn activate certain memories or ways of thinking, or stir up particular

emotions or sentiments in the reader. Readers navigate the various possibilities

offered by making a series of choices that ultimately lead to a particular

understanding and organization of meaning. The most important of these choices,

argues Rosenblatt, is the stance with which a reader approaches a text. Readers

may choose either an efferent or an aesthetic approach:

> The reader may be seeking information, as in a textbook; he may want
> directions for action, as in a driver's manual; he may be seeking some
> logical conclusion, as in a political article. In all such reading he will
> narrow his attention to building up the meanings, the ideas, the directions

to be retained; attention focuses on accumulating what is to be carried away at the end of the reading. Hence I term this stance *efferent*, from the Latin word meaning "to carry away."

If, on the other hand, the reader seeks a story, a poem, a play, his attention will shift inward, will center on what is being created during the actual reading. A much broader range of elements will be allowed to rise into consciousness, not simply the abstract concepts that the words point to, but also what those objects or referents stir up of personal feelings, ideas, and attitudes. The very sound and rhythm of the words will be attended to. Out of these ideas and feelings, a new experience, the story or poem, is shaped and lived through. I call this kind of reading *aesthetic*, from the Greek word meaning "to sense" or "to perceive." Whether the product of the reading will be a poem, a literary work of art, depends, then, not simply on the text but also on the stance of the reader. (p. 73, emphasis in original)

Rosenblatt argues that neither the stance nor the text necessarily comes first; a reader may select a text to suit her efferent or aesthetic purpose, or she may pick up a text and utilize cues from the author to determine which stance is most appropriate. In addition, any text can be read as either efferent or aesthetic; a reader might approach a poem from an efferent stance or she might read a critical analysis of the poem aesthetically.

For Rosenblatt, these stances are not binary or entirely exclusive:

Any reading event falls somewhere on the continuum between the aesthetic and efferent poles; between, for example, a lyric poem and a chemical formula. I speak of a predominantly efferent stance because according to the text and the reader's purpose, some attention to qualitative elements of consciousness may enter. Similarly, aesthetic reading involves or includes referential or cognitive elements. Hence, the importance of the reader's *selective* attention in the reading process. (p. 74)

Throughout this project, I was cognizant of where my participants focused their selective attention as they moved through crossmedia storyworlds, how the transaction between reader and text played out in relation to the texts participants discussed, and how and when they took up aesthetic and efferent stances. This

allowed me to attend to both the affordances and purpose of various crossmedia

texts, my participants' orientation towards those texts, and consistencies and

contradictions between the two.

Immersed and Engaged Pleasures

Rosenblatt provided me with a useful vocabulary to talk about the ways

my participants approached and oriented to texts. Douglas and Hargadon (2001)

provided me with the vocabulary to talk about the sorts of experiences and

pleasures my participants described through their investigation of the affective

pleasures of fiction. They suggest that when we read, we experience and often

oscillate between immersion and engagement in a story:

> When *immersed* in a text, reader's perceptions, reactions, and interactions
> all take place within the text's frame […] Conversely, in what we might
> term the '*engaged* affective experience', contradictory schemas or
> elements that defy conventional schemas tend to disrupt readers'
> immersion in the text, obliging them to assume an extra-textual
> perspective on the text itself, as well as on the schemas that have shaped it
> and the scripts operating within it. (p. 156, emphasis added)

In other words, we may find ourselves completely swept away by a story

and submersed in the fictional world we know to be imaginary (immersion), or we

may move in and out of this state of immersion in order to pay heed to the

construction of the narrative, to gain extra information about the storyworld, or to

otherwise consider the fiction from an extra-textual perspective (engagement).

Readers garner pleasure from both experiences. Like Rosenblatt's efferent and

aesthetic stance, engagement and immersion are not mutually exclusive concepts,

but exist on a continuum. Readers may move along that continuum, experiencing

varying degrees of immersion and engagement as they move through and interact

with a storyworld or a single text. Finally, though readers can experience both

immersion and engagement in relation to all stories, Douglas and Hargadon (2001) suggest that certain types of fiction employ schemas and elements that are more likely to bounce readers out of an immersed stance (e.g., hypertext fiction), while others allow readers to slip more easily into immersion (e.g., genre fiction).

One of the key objectives of this project was to investigate how young adults manage this oscillation between engagement and immersion in crossmedia storyworlds, and how and whether crossmediation disrupts or enhances immersion. Interviews, coding and data analysis were therefore oriented by the concepts of immersed and engaged pleasures. The chapters that follow attempt to tease out how and when my participants experienced engagement and immersion in relation to crossmedia storyworlds, and how and whether their enjoyment of these forms of pleasure affected their selection, use of, and experiences with crossmedia story content.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the concept and effects of crossmedia and transmedia storytelling through a review of literature from the fields of adaptation studies, media studies, cultural studies, reception studies, education and literacy studies. It has also described two conceptual frameworks for understanding reader experiences, Rosenblatt's *aesthetic* versus *efferent* reading stances (2005), and Douglas and Hargadon's *immersed* and *engaged* pleasures (2001), that guided data analysis and interpretation in the current study. Though this chapter constitutes the formal literature review, I will introduce and draw upon further literature throughout the following chapters to aid in my analysis.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

As can be seen from the literature review, there is a paucity of research investigating how young adults who are not already engaged in participatory activities navigate crossmedia storyworlds. The majority of work in this area takes a particular fan forum, fan site or fan text as the object of research (Ito, 2007; Mackey, 2003; Thomas, 2007b; Black, 2008; Hammer, 2007; Ross, 2008), or recruits young adults based on their engagement with fan culture (Thomas, 2007a), leading to a potentially biased understanding of young adults in general as avid members of participatory communities. I was interested in taking a broader view of young adult practices in relation to crossmedia storyworlds that did not focus on participatory venues. The research questions posed by the current study attempt to tease out a complete picture of young adults' interactions with entire storyworlds, considering all available texts and all potential modes of engagement.

Research Design

This study used interviews with young adults and textual exploration and analysis to investigate the following research questions:

1) To what extent do readers identify the presence or absence of crossmedia storytelling as part of their response to a given text, under the following headings:
   - Selection of text
   - Approach to text
   - Experience of text

2) To what extent do readers find pleasure in pursuing a variety of crossmedia instantiations of a common fiction? How do those who answer positively describe these pleasures?

3) How do readers find information about crossmedia stories or crossmedia versions of a story?

My aim was to provide an initial exploration of the reading practices of young adults in relation to crossmedia stories. Given the scope and exploratory nature of the research, the project used a small-scale reception study approach (Hagen & Wasko, 2000) to present a comprehensive examination of both the place of crossmedia storytelling in the reading lives of a selection of young readers, and the reading strategies crossmedia stories both authorize and demand. I take my definition of reception study from Hagen and Wasko (2000) who apply the term "to studies that focus on the meaning, production, and experiences of audiences in their interaction with media texts" (p. 8). While reception studies often consist of large focus group or survey data sets (Given, 2008), the ultimate goal is to identify a range of possible responses to texts at a particular moment in time; hence, reception study methodology is appropriate for in-depth investigation of a small sample of participants.

Definitions

This study relies heavily on the operational definitions applied to the terms *crossmedia storytelling*, *young adult*, *reader/reading*, and *text/paratext*. Following from Linda Hutcheon's (2006) definition of adaptation, *crossmedia stories* will be defined as stories that have been recreated or somehow revisited in a different media format (p. xii). The term "revisited" is used in order to include, not only stories that have been retold directly (or as directly as possible), but also to

tellings that expand, limit, supplement or alter the original imaginative landscape (e.g., fan fiction, sequels, prequels, merchandise etc.). The term *crossmedia* narrows the scope of this study to those stories that have been adapted across media formats. While it is possible to adapt a literary text within a single medium (e.g., adapting the *Berenstain Bears* picture books into young adult novels), this study focused specifically on stories that cross media formats (e.g., moving the *Harry Potter* novels into movies, videogames etc.).

While the term *young adult* is used extensively in the field of library studies, explicit definitions are rarely posited. Rather than defining age or conceptual boundaries, definitions are indirectly established via discussions of the unique collection and service needs of the group (see Sullivan, 2005; Abrams & Luther, 2004; Jones, 2007; Jones & Waddle, 2002; Rothbauer, 2005). This research suggests that young adults are a group that reads for pleasure and relaxation, that these reading activities relate to other leisure activities (Rothbauer, 2005, p. 107), that reading plays a role in identity formation (Rosenblatt, 2005, p. 4; Thomas, 2007b, p. 157), and that young adult reading encompasses various media forms (Sullivan, 2005, p. 57; Jones, 2007, p. 49; Abrams & Luther, 2004, p. 35). Studies variously bound this group by age, without establishing any uniform age range. Taking various studies into account, Rothbauer suggests that, broadly, *young adult* signifies individuals under the age of 24 (2005, p. 104).

Beyond mere age categorization, and library- and reading-related characteristics, this study understands *young adults* as those individuals between childhood and adulthood as defined by social and cultural norms. While a specific

age group was utilized, and the findings of library literature were taken into account when establishing this age group, this more substantive definition provides further context for the study, locating the individuals in questions as those no longer understood to be children proper, but not yet granted access to the title, full privileges or developmental categorization of "adult". Ultimately, the study included young adults between the ages of 12 and 17. Appendix A provides a breakdown of participant ages and grade levels.

In addition, the literature review and the above discussion of young adult reading practices suggest that the term *reading* expands beyond the bounds of printed texts. As such, *reading* will be defined broadly as the interpretive practices individuals bring to a variety of texts. Hence, reading is not understood as an act conducted in relation to printed texts only, and readers are not simply individuals interacting with books; rather, reading denotes a broad range of interpretive experiences as readers encounter and interact with a variety of media. Young adults read movies, videogames, websites, iPhone applications, etc. This study will, therefore, use the term reading to denote the interpretive practices we bring to a range of mediated texts.

Finally, I will use the terms *paratext* and *text* to refer to two different categories of crossmedia items. Gray (2010) argues that much of the textual proliferation crossmediation has produced is peripheral to the core narrative of the storyworld, and is designed to create hype, and synergy for and within a textual franchise. Using Genette's (1997) term, Gray calls these items *paratexts*, and argues that "a 'paratext' is both 'distinct from' and alike—or, I will argue,

intrinsically part of—the text. [My] thesis is that paratexts are not simply add-ons, spinoffs, and also-rans: they create texts, they manage them, and they fill them with many of the meanings that we associate with them" (6). Gray further suggests that screen studies are limited by their understanding of texts as individual units within a larger story universe:

> [A] film or program is but one part of the text, the text always being a contingent entity, either in the process of forming and transforming or vulnerable to further formation or transformation. […] It is a larger unit than any film or show that may be part of it; it is the entire storyworld as we know it. (p. 7)

While I agree with Gray's conceptual understanding of the term *text*, for the purposes of clarity, I will use *text* to refer to items in the storyworld that contain their own, complete narrative and could therefore stand alone and remain comprehensible without the assistance of other storyworld items or explanatory background information (e.g., movies, television shows, books, videogames). It is important, however, to keep in mind that these items may still work paratextually in some instances, for some readers, to frame and condition experiences and responses to other texts and paratexts in a story franchise.

Data Collection and Analysis

The study used three qualitative methods in data collection. These methods included:

- textual exploration and analysis of all crossmedia texts and paratexts associated with one anchor story representative of currently popular crossmedia fiction for young adults

- in-person interviews with young adults between the ages of 12-17 about their experiences with crossmedia stories

- the eliciting of specific responses from these participants to representative sample texts and paratexts from the world of the anchor story

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First, one representative story was selected to anchor research. This title was chosen based on the following criteria: (1) the story must not have originally appeared as a book; (2) the original text must be surrounded by multimedia extensions including, but not limited to, a TV show or film, and a website; and (3) new texts must be in ongoing production to ensure the currency and relevance of the story. Ultimately, *Glee* was selected as the anchor text.

A textual exploration of *Glee* was conducted to identify all the multimedia extensions in existence at the time of data collection. This project included intertextual analysis (Bazerman & Prior, 2004) to investigate the purpose, direction and "newness" of extensions. As indicated by previous research, I considered the commercial concerns of the texts' producers, as well as what the content added to the story world of the text and how the newness of both content and form invited various modes of play and new affordances to readers.

While textual analysis was ongoing, I began to recruit a sample of young adults between the ages of 12-17 to participate in semi-structured one-on-one interviews. Because the study is intended to offer in-depth description of phenomena at play in young adult reading practices and is not interested in producing broadly generalizable or transferable results, there was no attempt to obtain a representative or statistically significant sample. Initial recruitment took place in the Edmonton Public Library. After obtaining permission to recruit from the library's executive director, I attempted to recruit using posters (See Appendix E), and by speaking directly to youth at various library groups for young adults.

This recruitment method yielded only one participant, hence recruitment strategies were re-evaluated and a decision was made to attempt further recruitment through Edmonton Public Schools and professional contacts within the library community. Following ethics approval from the Edmonton Public School Board, I began recruitment via short presentations in two grade nine math classes and two grade seven language arts classes. This yielded eight more participants. Three additional teens were recruited through professional contacts. Two were recruited via snowball sampling for a total of 14 participants.

One-on-one (or one-on-two) interviews were organized at the participants' convenience at a location of their choosing. These interviews were expected to last approximately 1 hour, but ultimately ranged in length from 23 minutes to 1 hour and 38 minutes. In-depth phenomenological interviewing techniques (Seidman, 1991) were used to provide the freedom necessary to explore themes as they arose and to encourage participants to reconstruct their experience in their own words. The interview guide was designed using a modified critical incident technique (Given, 2008). At the outset of the interview, participants were provided with a broad definition of crossmedia storytelling and asked to tell me about their experience with a story that met those criteria, and in which they had some substantive interest. The example stories that participants chose served as the critical incidents. Guiding questions and a list of media formats to be covered were utilized to further probe participants and to ensure that all aspects of their experience with the selected story were discussed. A copy of my interview guide is included in Appendix F.

I then asked participants to select another crossmedia story in which they had some interest, but whose origin text was in a different format than the first story. For example, if Ann selected *Harry Potter* as her first example, I asked her to come up with another example that did not start as a book. By varying the stories discussed by the type of text in which the story originated, I hoped to ensure that I could speak broadly about crossmedia stories rather than narrowing focus to, for example, crossmedia stories that originated as books. I was also interested to see if the format of the origin text led to differences in participants' experiences of the storyworld.

Finally, all participants were asked to discuss their experience with, and thoughts about the *Glee* storyworld. This portion of the interview was significantly varied, as some participants had little to no experience with *Glee*, while others classified themselves as avid *Glee* fans. After an initial discussion of their experience with and knowledge of *Glee*, participants were presented with various texts from the Glee universe and asked to examine and comment on each. These items included The *Glee* Season 1 DVD, a *Glee* companion book, the first *Glee* novel, a *Glee* CD, the official Fox *Glee* website[1], and a fan-run *Glee* forum hosted by TelevisionWithoutPity.com[2]. These items were selected to represent a variety of media formats and crossmedia text and paratext types.

Interviews were conducted between March 2011 and September 2011, and were recorded on a digital recorder. I transcribed all interviews and conducted

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[1]http://www.fox.com/glee/
[2]http://forums.televisionwithoutpity.com/index.php?s=8f7f44ad2bcfffe073c0d75263b2aafe&show
[2]http://forums.televisionwithoutpity.com/index.php?s=8f7f44ad2bcfffe073c0d75263b2aafe&show
forum=1156

initial exploratory coding using NVivo qualitative data analysis software. Initial

broad categories based on text and paratext type, and Rosenblatt (2005) and

Douglas and Hargadon's (2001) reader stances and forms of pleasure were used to

guide early coding. More specific codes were developed inductively as themes

emerged during this initial work. In addition, print versions of all transcripts were

loosely hand-coded and rigorously studied. Coding, reading and writing were not

mutually exclusive phases in project completion; rather, I moved back and forth

between coding, reading and writing throughout the project. Ultimately, a

combination of coding based on text and paratext type and on broad categories of

interaction with the texts (selection, approach, experience, and pleasures) was

most useful in drawing out themes and singularities in transcripts.

Pilot Study

In preparation for this project, a pilot study was conducted in the fall of

2010. The study was designed as an initial exploration of the research territory

and as a methodological exercise to test interview guides, the anchor text, and

interview methods. Four young adults were recruited through personal and

professional connections. Data resulting from these interviews suggested that the

interview techniques and guides were very successful; participants responded well

to my initial request that they tell me about their experience with a crossmedia

storyworld, and provided fascinating, candid and thought-provoking

reconstructions of their engagement with their storyworlds of choice.

One problem arose during the pilot project. Pilot study participants

showed a marked focus on stories that originated in books and were adapted into

movies. Discussion of other media formats was brief and, on the whole, participants expressed a lack of interest in pursuing other media instantiations. While these findings are interesting in light of a literature that suggests a less conservative attitude among young people, I felt that the findings might be attributed to an unintended biasing towards the centrality of print. The anchor story for the pilot phase was *Percy Jackson*, which originated as a book series. I was concerned that my selection of a print-origin anchor story, along with some biased wording in my probing questions, and the fact that I am a library student (associated with books) might have caused participants to focus on print-origin stories and their movie adaptations to the exclusion of other texts and paratexts. To eliminate the possibility that my methods were skewing results, interview guides were reviewed and revised to eliminate any focus on books and/or book to movie adaptations. *Percy Jackson* was not used as the anchor story for this study. Instead, anchor story selection criteria were revised to require that the story selected was not originally a book, and *Glee* ultimately replaced *Percy Jackson*. Finally, it was decided that I would ask participants to discuss a second crossmedia story that originated in a different format than their first selection. In this way, I ensured that my data would include discussion of stories that found their origin texts in a variety of media.

Research Ethics

This study was reviewed and approved by the Education, Extension, Augustana & Campus Saint-Jean Research Ethics Board (EEASJ REB) at the University of Alberta. Though the Edmonton Public Library has no research

ethics body, the Executive Director of EPL reviewed my research proposal and recruitment materials and permission was granted to recruit via posters and EPL youth groups. When the decision was made to recruit further participants through professional contacts and the Edmonton Public School board, an ethics amendment was submitted to, and approved by the EEASJ Research Ethics Board. Separate ethics clearance to recruit within Edmonton Public Schools was granted by the Cooperative Activities Program. Separate permission from the principal of the selected school and the teacher of the affected classrooms was obtained.

All participants were provided with a letter of information outlining the study and were required to sign a consent form before any data was collected (see Appendices B and C). A parent or guardian was also provided with the letter of information and signed a separate consent form before interviews could take place (see Appendix D). In three cases, parents requested to be present during the interview session. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym during the transcription process to ensure the confidentiality of his or her identity. Participants are referred to by their pseudonyms throughout this document.

Evaluating the Results

Four factors are commonly used to evaluate the effectiveness of qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Given, 2008; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I attempted to address credibility by using mirroring techniques during interviews to check my understanding of participant responses (Kvale & Brinkermann, 2009), and through thick description of the data

(Geertz, 1973). I have described the context of data collection as truthfully and transparently as I can in an attempt to ensure dependability.

Transferability to other contexts is problematic. This study presents analysis of the selection habits, experiences and pleasures of 14 young adults in relation to crossmedia stories at a particular moment in time. Participants were not selected to be representative of all young adult populations. Crossmedia storytelling itself is a relatively new phenomenon and, as such, is continually shifting in relation to production strategies, motives, and content. I did not seek to provide definitive information regarding young adult attitudes towards crossmedia fiction, but instead to provide initial insights and directions for further research into this area. Again, I have attempted to describe sufficient context for the study to allow readers to make their own judgments regarding transferability.

Confirmability is complicated by my own history with young adult stories. My interest in this project was, in part, the product of my own avid engagement with young adult fiction, both academically and recreationally. It was rare for participants to mention a story with which I did not have some experience. My own experience predisposes me to certain interpretations, attitudes and patterns of thinking and this, no doubt, had both positive and negative effects on project development and data collection. Being immersed in young adult storyworlds granted me a degree of credibility with participants. They were excited when I recognized obscure story titles, authors, and creators and my knowledge allowed us to delve more deeply into their experiences with the storyworld as we could skip descriptions of the story itself, explanations of the origin of the text, etc. On

the other hand, it is possible that such story descriptions and histories might themselves have revealed interesting insights into participants' perceptions and understandings of the storyworld in question.

Ultimately, I believe my knowledge of young adult storyworlds was an asset as it positioned me as an insider. Particular challenges arise when working with young adults due to the inherent power imbalance introduced by the discrepancy in age between the participant and the researcher. I worried that participant responses would be censored or otherwise affected by the perception that I was an authority figure, akin to a teacher. My ability to converse about the stories and the variety of media formats with which participants engaged broke down some of those barriers and seemed to put participants at ease in the interview setting because they knew that I understood the attraction of the various stories and storyworld activities they enjoyed. This was particularly important during interviews with participants who engaged with various unofficial fan communities, writing or reading fan fiction, posting or reading fan forums, creating fan art, etc. These activities were often introduced with some embarrassment given the social stigma sometimes associated with fandom. Introducing my own interest in various fan activities reassured them they would not be judged as they were talking to 'one of their own.'

Personal history aside, confirmability was addressed through regular consultation with my supervisor regarding emerging themes, and through a lengthy and iterative analysis process.

Conclusion

      This study used interviews, and textual exploration to explore the selection practices, approach, experience, and enjoyment of 14 young adults in relation to crossmedia storyworlds. The primary method of data collection was in-depth interviews designed to allow participants to reflect freely on their choices, experiences and opinions. The following chapters present the attitudes and described behaviours of participants in relation to crossmedia story selection, approach, experience and pleasures.

CHAPTER 4

Selecting Crossmedia Stories

Our experience of a fiction begins before we read it; prior to engaging with a storyworld, we must select which storyworld among various options is of interest. When selecting single-medium stories, the act of selection is relegated to the pre-reading time-frame, and, once we initially decide what it is we plan to read, our selecting work is complete. In relation to crossmedia storytelling, selection is more complex. Not only must we make this initial selection of a story, we must continue to select which texts within the storyworld to engage and which to ignore or leave for a later date. Selection, then, becomes an ongoing task as we sort through the various instantiations on offer within our storyworld of choice. This chapter will explore both how my participants made initial story selections, and how they chose among crossmedia texts and paratexts within chosen storyworlds.

In relation to the initial selection of stories, my project sought to explore whether the presence or absence of crossmedia instantiations had any effect on participants' selection practices. For instance, did *Glee* become more or less appealing as a viewing option due to its various texts and paratexts? Did the presence of a *Hunger Games* website and Wikipedia article make young adults more aware of, and therefore more likely to read, *The Hunger Games*? I will begin by exploring participants' reflections on this initial story selection and the role of crossmedia texts in those decisions.

Choosing a Storyworld

When asked to discuss how they became interested in a given story,

participant responses fell, almost universally, into two broad categories: either a

friend or family member recommended the story, or the selection was related to

popularity and hype, which eventually led participants (sometimes grudgingly) to

read some aspect of that storyworld.

Peer Recommendations

Nearly all participants described at least one instance when they selected a

story based on the recommendation of a friend or same-aged relative. Kate

explains her decision to engage with *The Hunger Games* series as follows:

> Yeah, I got them [the books] from my cousin, cause my cousin is a big,
> big reader and I was like, "I really like fantasy novels, do you have
> anything…" fantasy fiction I like. […] She gave me this pile of books and
> in there was *The Hunger Games*. And I read them and, you know, I really
> was kind of grabbed into them.

Julia similarly attributes her decision to begin the *Twilight* series to the

influence of a friend:

> Yeah, this one friend of mine was reading the book and I'm big, I have a
> really big curiosity problem. So if one of my friend's books is sitting on
> her desk, I will pick it up and read the back. […] And, I read the back and
> I'm like "oh this sounds really interesting." So I asked her what it was
> about and she, like, told me basically the synopsis, plot, whatever you
> want to call it. And, uh, I decided I really liked them and I wanted to read
> them.

This focus on peers as selection resources is not unexpected. Howard

(2008; 2009) and Ross (1999; 2003) have both noted the importance of peer

friendships, influences, and recommendations on the selection practices of

readers. Howard (2009) notes that, while difficulty in selecting reading material is

a major barrier to youth leisure reading, peer friendships serve as one of the key motivators and may aid teens in conquering the sometimes-daunting task of selection. Furthermore, friendship and leisure reading practices may work to solidify each other as "teens read the same materials as their friends and are then able to participate in conversations about their reading and exchange books and magazines, which further strengthen friendship bonds and firmly establish group membership" (Howard, 2008, p. 301).

Callie provides an example of the mutually reinforcing relationship between friendships and stories when she relates how she met her current best friend "through *Harry Potter*":

> [Sarah] was at school. And like, I've, she has been at my school since, like, grade 1 or something. […] I hadn't really like paid much attention to her you know? […] I barely knew her name. […] but then in grade 5 we just kinda, I don't know what happened, but we somehow figured out that we both liked it [*Harry Potter*] a lot and we just, kind of, like, we just started drawing pictures […] and we just, like, emailed each other a lot and we found out we liked a lot of other things.

Jason notes that his interaction with friends frequently involves not only recommendations, but also warnings about what *not* to read.

> Uh, when I have a really good book, I, like, I try to spread the information on it, get them to read it. Same with movies: if I do or don't like it, I will tend to tell them, so warn them.

As noted above, this initial focus on peer influences in selecting stories is not surprising and not unique to crossmedia story selection. However, the social aspect of youth leisure reading may become increasingly important in crossmedia storyworlds as teens move through the various instantiations of a given story. Indeed, participant responses suggested that this cyclical relationship between

stories and friendships often influences the selection of further material within the storyworld and may support or discouraged sustained interest via the various texts and paratexts on offer. I will return to this idea later in the chapter.

Popularity and Hype

This second theme in initial selection might be more accurately described as an extension of friendship influence and recommendations. Many participants attributed their initial interest in a storyworld, not to the recommendation of a *specific* friend, but to the general popularity of the fiction among their peer group and/or society at large. Participants' perception of this hype varied from a sense that lots of people within their direct friendship circles were engaged with a story to a broader sense that "everyone was reading it." Bradley explains his decision to begin reading the *Twilight* series as follows:

> Well, all the girls at school were reading it. And me being a guy, I'm like, well, I don't know. It just, uh, everyone seemed to like it so I thought I might try it. And the first book was kind of slow, but then after that, it kinda built up.

Bronwyn explains her decision to "get into" the *Twilight* series as a combination of the direct influence of a friend and a more general sense of the series' popularity:

> Yeah, um, one of my friends read the whole *Twilight* series before I even heard about it, right? And everybody was reading them and talking about it and I was like, oh, so I'll just watch the movie and see what, see what it's like.

A distinction between direct friend recommendations and this broader social recommendation system arises when we consider the reasoning behind the decision to accept each form of recommendation. When participants discussed

direct recommendations from friends, acceptance was justified in terms of the fact

that they had similar reading or viewing tastes to the friend, and were therefore

confident that they would enjoy the selection on offer. When popularity and hype

were noted as reasons for selecting particular stories, the likelihood that the

participant would enjoy the story was less central. Instead, deciding to engage

with very popular storyworlds was motivated by a need or a desire to be 'in the

know', to stay on top of story trends, and to thereby be able to participate in

cultural dialog. Consider Kate's description of her decision to start watching *Glee*

again, despite the fact that she did not particularly enjoy the show:

> Kate: When it wasn't really that popular, I didn't really have a motive
> to watch it. Because I was like, I didn't really like it. It wasn't
> really that popular. People aren't really going to talk about it. I'm
> just going to turn it off. But then when people started talking
> about it, and asking me about it and, you know, saying, oh, this
> person's dating this person and now she's pregnant and this is
> going to happen, I was like, really? That sounds kind of funny.
> And then that got me watching it again.
>
> Laura: So would you say that there's maybe even a little bit of an
> element of… you have to watch it because everybody's watching
> it and everybody's talking about it?
>
> Kate: I think so. Yeah, I would definitely say, like, as sad as that
> sounds, right? I guess I'm not doing it to fit in, I'm more doing it
> so that I know what everyone's talking about. […] Like, when
> your friends start talking about it. And they all have these
> opinions on it and you're kind of sitting there like, I never watch
> it.

Here Kate describes knowledge of and interest in *Glee* as a sort of social

currency. If she doesn't watch the show, she loses the ability to participate in

social interactions with her friends. Irene and Jill (who were interviewed together)

go even further, suggesting that it would have actually been difficult *not* to watch

High School Musical:

Irene: Well, it's like, you don't really think about it, like, when *High School Musical* came out it was *High School Musical*. It was the next big thing. Like, everyone saw *High School Musical*.

Jill: It was, like, huge. And if you didn't you pretty much lived under a rock. No offense to people who didn't see it.

When I asked what Irene thought it was that made *High School Musical* so appealing to so many people she provided an interesting response:

I don't know, I guess it's the way they market it and, like, I don't know, they must, I don't really, never really thought about how it just instantly became the biggest thing on the planet. You know, like… yeah, they must have done some very clever marketing.

Though many participants discussed marketing and promotion as a potential motive in the *production* of crossmedia paratexts (particularly merchandise), Irene is the only one who identifies it as a factor influencing selection. As noted in Chapter 2, an increasing body of literature examines the marketing, branding and promotional aspects of crossmedia and transmedia storytelling (see Sekeres, 2009; Dickerson, 2007; Jenkins, 2006; Scolari, 2009; Gillan, 2011). Recall Sekeres' (2009) discussion of *branded fiction* wherein books are merely one product in a line of many items sold under the same brand name and centered around an imaginative character, the *market child*. Though she doesn't use the term crossmedia, Sekeres is talking about exactly that and suggesting that crossmedia storytelling is, in effect, about marketing, branding, and making storyworld characters into consumable products that can be bought and sold in various media formats. Crossmedia mutates typical branding strategies of placing products inside the narrative by making the fictional world itself the product (Scolari, 2009). Iconic elements of the story such as characters, topics and

aesthetic style express the brand and these properties can be mobilized in different forms of expression to sell new products.

That crossmedia is a new form of branding wherein the story and characters themselves are the products, is evident. That enormous resources are directed towards marketing storyworlds to teens is neither new nor surprising. What I hoped to glean from my participants was a sense of how aware of the marketing and commercial aspects of storyworlds youth are, and how they understand and navigate heavily marketed story franchises. It was therefore interesting to note that only a single participant made any explicit reference to marketing when reflecting on selection practices. It is doubtful that this is due to the fact that marketing had no effect on selection, but the absence of reference to promotional and marketing paratexts in the responses of participants raises questions about the level of youth commercial awareness. The sense of hype promotional paratexts are designed to create remained intact and participants noted this popularity and hype as a motive for engaging or refusing to engage with particular texts, but the paratexts that worked to establish *Glee*, *Twilight*, and *High School Musical* as major cultural phenomena faded into the background. I do not mean to suggest that this lack of attention to marketing texts establishes my participants as passive consumers, oblivious to the commercial aspects of storyworlds and happily making emotional and economic investments in branded fictions. It does, however, suggest that there is a role for adults in raising youth awareness of the underlying motives of media producers, such that youth approach all media texts with a critical eye.

Though only Irene noted the potential influence of marketing as a factor in her decision to engage in the *High School Musical* franchise, an awareness of marketing and commercialism became increasingly important when participants selected which texts to engage *within* crossmedia storyworlds. I will return to this topic later in the chapter.

Choosing Within Storyworlds

In crossmedia storyworlds the selection work of a reader does not end once a story of interest is chosen. A brief glance at the various texts on offer within the *Harry Potter* world (see Table 1) suggests that, in fact, choosing to engage with a crossmedia storyworld leads to a whole new array of selection

> **Cataloging Harry Potter**
>
> While various young adult fiction series have developed into storyworld franchises offering a multitude of crossmedia items, *Harry Potter* is, without doubt, the largest. As of July 2011, the estimated total revenue for the *Harry Potter* franchise (including book sales, box office revenue, DVD sales, DVD rentals, and toy sales) is an impressive $24,711,000,000[1]. Amazon.com has developed a separate Harry Potter store that catalogs the over 18,000 Harry Potter items available for purchase through the site, While an exhaustive list of all the various products available in the Harry Potter world is beyond the scope of this project, Table 1 provides some idea of the scope of Pottermania.
>
> [1] Statistics Brain. (2011, July 24). Total Harry Potter franchise revenue. Retrieved from http://www.statisticbrain.com/total-harry-potter-franchise-revenue/

decisions as readers decide which texts and paratexts to select within their storyworld of choice.

In his examination of branding in contemporary transmedia storytelling, Scolari (2009) suggests that transmedia stories produce multiple implicit readers/consumers that might exist on at least three levels: single text consumers, engaging with a single item from the textual universe, single media consumers,

engaging with the story through a single media platform, and the transmedia

consumer who engages with various media to develop an understanding of the

more extensive storyworld. While Scolari's categories are useful when considering the various consumer roles crossmedia texts create, my participants did not fit neatly into any of these categories. While different

Table 1: *Harry Potter* Items Available at Amazon.com		
Item Category	Examples	Number of Listings
Books	Original 7 novels, unofficial and official companion books (*The Unofficial Harry Potter Cookbook*) unofficial and official film guides (*Harry Potter Film Wizardry*), academic explorations of the *Harry Potter* phenomenon (e.g., *Reading Harry Potter: Critical Essays*)	5937
DVDs	Various versions of the 8 official films; 108 box set editions; individually sold video extras (e.g., interviews and discussions of film themes with directors and cast)	672
Audio CDs	Official and unofficial soundtracks	138
Posters	Movie and book posters	2935
Toys and Games	Action figures, *Harry Potter* Lego, replica wands, plush toys, board games, etc.	2212
Videogames	For each separate book/movie, for all gaming systems	146
Clothing/ Accessories	Shirts, scarves, ties, wizard capes, jewelry, etc.	1213

levels of engagement were evident, these levels were not defined or best

understood in relation to the number of media formats with which participants

engaged, where a single text indicated the least amount of engagement, a single

medium indicated a mid-range level of engagement, and multiple media indicated

the highest level of engagement. Indeed, even Jason, the participant who showed

the least amount of interest in crossmedia texts and paratexts, eagerly scoured the

internet for information on his favourite books and TV shows, with the stipulation that he was only interested in information about the "storyline itself." With this in mind, I suggest that it is most helpful to consider selection within storyworlds in terms of what the various texts and paratexts (regardless of media format) offer readers. Rather than focusing on categorizing types of reader/consumers, we might categorize texts and paratexts themselves. Considering what they offer us allows a focus on selection as a process wherein readers/consumers construct a relationship with their story of choice by sifting through the various items on offer and selecting based on the level of depth, breadth and personal identification they wish to establish with a given story.

Categorizing Crossmedia Texts

If we sort through the various instantiations of a crossmedia storyworld, it is possible to divide items into four categories: core-story texts, extra-story texts, world-extending texts, and ancillary texts. Core-story texts are those that present the narrative core of the story itself, including the original story text and any adaptations of that original story. The original book or books in a YA franchise and the subsequent movie adaptations of those books (or vice versa) would fall into this category along with some videogames that follow core story plots closely. Extra-story texts include all resources that provide information about the story texts themselves, from how they were created, to when they will be released, to who will be portraying characters in a movie. News releases about casting, an IMDb page with release dates for a movie adaptation, an author website with information about upcoming books in a series, or the director commentary on a

DVD are all resources that provide information about the texts themselves. World-extending texts add new material to the core story either by exploring side-plots or providing more information and/or description of the universe in which the story is set. Companion books, fan-fiction, some DVD bonus features, and spin-off series may be included in this category. Ancillary texts are story artifacts. These are objects either from within the storyworld (e.g. a replica of *Harry Potter*'s wand) or external to the storyworld (e.g. a *Harry Potter* movie poster) designed to create both profit and story-brand affiliation and identification. Merchandise such as dolls, toys, posters and t-shirts provide the most obvious examples of ancillary texts, but we might also include soundtracks and fan-created paraphernalia (t-shirts, models, etc.) in this category. Crossmedia readers may choose to engage with all four categories of text or limit themselves to a single category and this may differ from storyworld to storyworld. For example, one might engage with all four categories of texts in the *Harry Potter* world, but only be interested in core story texts in relation to *The Hunger Games*.

It is important to note that this is a rough sketch of general textual categories. There are no hard and fast rules regarding which texts belong to which categories, particularly when considering core-story texts. Individual readers may disagree about whether a specific text belongs to the core-story or is merely a complement or extension of the story. For example, while Chris's discussion of the *Harry Potter* videogames suggests that he would consider them core-story, Irene's comments depict them as significantly more peripheral, and akin to world-building texts. Meanwhile, Jess considers the *Dalton* fanfiction universe (set in

the *Glee* fandom) to be its own, separate core-story. For Jess, both the *Glee* TV show and the original *Dalton* fan fiction series constitute core-story texts for their respective storyworlds, but she also thinks of *Dalton* as a world-building text in relation to *Glee*. Like Jess, many of my participants demonstrated unique and sometimes conflicting understandings of where specific texts and paratexts fit into the larger organization of storyworlds. These

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The Daltonverse: Fan Fiction about Fan Fiction

Dalton is a 27-chapter fan fiction set in the *Glee* universe[1]. It follows the story of Kurt, one of *Glee*'s main characters, who, in season 2, briefly attends an all-boys private school named Dalton in order to escape bullying. The author calls *Dalton* her "own little attempt at a 'spin-off' show," and, indeed, it has been quite successful. Hosted on fanfiction.net, the spin-off has received 6822 reviews since first being posted in November of 2010. It has inspired a Daltonverse community[2] and roleplaying forum[3] on fanfiction.net, and led to over 2000 spin-off stories[4]. In the face of escalating fame, the author, CP Coulter, eventually revealed her true identity in order to protect her work and prevent others from claiming it[5]. She now hosts her own website[6], containing various Daltonverse extras, links to Daltonverse spin-offs and her other stories. Ultimately, *Dalton* has become a phenomenon in its own right and CP Coulter has become every bit a celebrity in the fan fiction community.

[1] http://www.fanfiction.net/s/6515261/1/Dalton
[2] http://www.fanfiction.net/community/CP_Coulters_Daltonverse/75187/
[3] http://forum.fanfiction.net/forum/Glee_Daltonverse_Roleplay/88623/
[4] http://www.fanfiction.net/search.php?ready=1&plus_keywords=dalton&minus_keywords=&type=story
[5] http://www.cpcoulter.com/this-is-me
[6] http://www.cpcoulter.com/

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categories, then, are fluid and the line between each is importantly permeable.

Selecting Core-Story Texts

Gray (2010) argues that, by the time we read a book/movie/TV show/videogame, we have inevitably already consumed many of its promotional paratexts, and these paratexts have conditioned our entrance to the text itself. Yet, when I asked participants to tell me the story of their relationship with a particular

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storyworld, all participants stated that their engagement began with a core-story text and ignored the role of what Gray calls *entryway paratexts*, "that grab the viewer before he or she reaches the text and try to control the viewer's entrance to the text" (p. 23). As noted in my discussion of hype, popularity, and story selection, it is unlikely that my participants had not speculatively consumed *Harry Potter* trailers, posters, reviews, etc. before reading the books or watching the movies. Nonetheless, these entryway paratexts did not show up in their accounts of their engagement with storyworlds. Instead, all participants stated that the first text they engaged with in a given storyworld was a core-story text, specifically the book, movie, or TV show.

I would suggest two possible explanations for the lack of mention of entryway paratexts. It is possible that my participants did not view promos, commercials, reviews, posters, trailers, etc. as distinct from the core-story texts they promote. When Bradley states that the first text he engaged with in the *Twilight* world was the *Twilight* books, this does not mean that he hadn't seen the t-shirts, posters, or promotional website, but that, because those materials were promoting the book itself, any engagement with them was subsumed under the category of "the book." Bradley simply did not see entryway paratexts as separate from the core-story texts they were promoting.

It is also possible the lack of mention resulted from differences in the way we consume entryway paratexts versus their core-story counterparts. Entryway paratexts call for speculative consumption, the process by which we use the paratexts on offer to evaluate what sort of experience and pleasures a multitude of

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core-story texts might provide (Gray, 2010, p. 24). Given the proliferation of media texts and their accompanying paratexts, we spend an enormous amount of time speculatively consuming in an attempt to decide which core-story texts we will engage and which we will not. Hence, there are many, many stories whose paratexts we will speculatively consume without ever continuing on to engage with the core-story. The engagement we have with entryway paratexts versus core-story texts is markedly different in terms of both our level of investment and the type of experience we have. We are less invested in the many movie trailers we view than we are in the actual movies we choose to watch, and we are far more likely to approach the movie trailers from an efferent stance—we attempt to glean information about whether or not we will enjoy the movie—and the movie itself from an aesthetic stance—having made the decision to watch this movie, we can sit back, relax, and lose ourselves in the story.

Most likely, the eschewing of entryway paratexts was the result of a combination of these two factors. I did not ask participants specific questions about the role of entryway paratexts in their engagement with crossmedia storyworlds, and it seems likely, for the reasons mentioned above, that it was this lack of specific probing rather than an actual lack of engagement with these texts that explains the lack of comment. Further specific exploration of how youth understand and utilize entryway paratexts, and specific consideration of how youth understand their paratextual connection to core-story texts, is warranted.

Entryway paratexts provide us with low-stakes ways to test out a storyworld before committing to engage with the potentially more intellectually,

emotionally, and time consuming core narrative. Interestingly, though participants

failed to mention the role of these paratexts as avenues to ease them into core-

story texts, many stated that movie adaptations played this role. If the origin text

was a book or lengthy book series, many participants opted to begin with the

movie adaptation before committing to read the book(s). Bradley became engaged

with the *Harry Potter* series through the movies and has not read the books,

though he is quick to clarify that he really enjoys books:

> Laura: So I find it interesting that you started with the movies and
> haven't read the books. Are the books something that interest
> you or not so much?
> Bradley: Oh, no books do, because I watched the first *Percy Jackson*
> movie and then I read the whole series.
> Laura: So it can sort of go both ways. But in terms of *Harry Potter* you
> don't really have a lot of interest in those books?
> Bradley: Yeah, partially too is they're very long so I would need to stay
> committed to that series and there are so many great new series
> coming out lately, kinda like, cause I haven't even read *The
> Hunger Games* yet.

For Bradley, the movie adaptations of *Harry Potter* allowed him to enjoy

the story, and to stay in the know and participate in social dialog without having

to read the very lengthy books. This freed him up to explore other book series.

While Bronwyn did eventually read the *Twilight* books, she tested her

interest with the movies before committing.

> Everybody was reading them and talking about it and I was like, oh, so I'll
> just watch the movie and see what, see what it's like. And I really enjoyed
> the movie, so I decided to read the books.

Kate tells a similar story in relation to the *Twilight* series:

> I watched the movies and then I read the book because […] before the
> movie came out and it was like everyone was so hyped up about *Twilight*
> and I was like "I've never heard of these books before." So I went to see
> the movie and everyone was like, "oh the book was way better." And I

really liked the movie so I was like, "well I could get more out of it." So that's what kind of made me want to read the books."

For Kate and Bronwyn, the movies were not a replacement for the books, but a tool they used to evaluate whether it was worth pursing the story further.

Later in Bradley's interview, we returned to the topic of selection. While he reiterates his concern with time-commitment and length as factors that dissuaded him from reading the *Harry Potter* books, he also introduces the question of difficulty as a barrier to books:

> Well, in the case of, um, *Harry Potter* and that, it's partially, I'm kind of a lazy person, laid back. Like, so in the case of the books, they're huge. Each is, like, 500 pages at least and there's, like 12 or… no not 12, but 8 of them. So that's a huge commitment to have. To have to read all of those! And *Percy Jackson* too. Like, just the books aren't that big. Cause with *Percy Jackson* all my friends have read it so I feel like I need to read it. *Harry Potter* too, but it's a bit more, like, higher level of reading I would say. That when it came out, like, for my age it wouldn't have been necessarily appropriate so over time I didn't really get engaged into it.

Here Bradley suggests that it was not just the major time-commitment that prevented him from delving into the *Harry Potter* books, but also the fact that the books were too challenging for him when they were released. The movies provided access to the *Harry Potter* storyworld that was not beyond his reach or abilities. Mary echoes Bradley's concern with book comprehension:

> Mary: Yeah, well I read the first couple books and then I started watching the movies and I kind of gave up on reading the books because I thought, I thought it was a lot easier to read… to read the movies… to watch the movies. Um, yeah.
>
> Laura: Okay, and what was it about the movies that was more appealing to you than the books?
>
> Mary: Um, I think that having it portrayed in a way that was easier to comprehend maybe? Um, because I started, I read the books when I was quite young and I wasn't understanding all of the parts and, um, I don't know. Just easier to comprehend some of the parts that were important.

Ann tells a similar story in relation to *Harry Potter*, though, rather than the

movies providing a welcome escape from the complicated books, Ann started

with the movies and later read the books:

> Well, um, like all my friends were reading the books when I was young,
> but I didn't like reading the books because I wasn't really a reader. And,
> um, I heard that there was going to be a movie coming out. And, um, I
> went to go see the movie and then I didn't like it at first and I just actually
> started liking it when the first part of the new, *The Deathly Hallows* came
> out. And then I read all the books and, um, yeah. I actually saw all the
> movies before I read the books, except for the last one.

Later Ann explains her difficulties with reading and suggests that, rather

than replacing the books, the movies allowed her a way into a story she might

otherwise have missed:

> Well, when I was little, well I didn't learn to read for a really long time. I
> had dyslexia and, um, I just hated reading. Like, and I, like I liked visual
> things and I think it's cool that they made a movie and that's how I sort of
> started liking it.

Crossmedia adaptations, then, might provide some youth with a window

into storyworlds they may not be able to access due to challenges with particular

media. Irene made this very point in our interview:

> So yeah, like, if one, one, sort… media format is blocked to you, well you
> just kind of don't use it. Then you have other options available to you, so
> you could use those.

There is a potential concern here that movie adaptations eliminate the

necessity of reading altogether. Why would teens invest extra time and energy

working through a lengthy book when they can watch the movie instead? But the

responses of my participants suggest that this fear is unwarranted. With the

exception of Bradley and Mary, all participants who watched a movie adaptation

before reading the book later returned to read the book. The literature supports this finding: as early as the late 1970s, in the earliest years of the young adult literature genre, a number of studies concluded that movie and television adaptations and tie-ins *increased* the popularity of their book counterparts (Burdenuk, 1978; Amey, 1981; Landy, 1974). This does not appear to have changed in the ensuing 30 years. But, perhaps more interesting is the overwhelming sense of obligation to read the original text that my participants expressed. Nearly all noted the importance of reading the book before watching the movie and, in the cases where the movie was viewed first, an obligation to go back to the original book was expressed. Even Mary, who gave up on reading the *Harry Potter* books once she started watching the movies, feels this obligation to the books, going so far as to call it a rule:

> Um, well I started with the books. I knew there were movies out and I told myself that I should probably read the books first, because that's kind of a rule, I guess, a universal rule that the books are usually better than the movies.

Though Mary gave up on the *Harry Potter* books due to challenges with the high level of reading, and is excited to see the last *Harry Potter* movies, she has held off on watching either of *The Deathly Hallows* films:

> I actually, I haven't seen the recent movies because […] I tell myself, even though I didn't read the few books in between the second and the last, I thought I should probably read the last book. I, I think I started reading it and I just got so lost in all of the pages, there was so much.

Mary expresses guilt at not having read the books and talks about reading the last book as a necessary rite of passage before she allows herself to enjoy the

movies. Other participants were not quite as self-flagellating in their sense of

obligation to the books, but the sentiment nonetheless appeared repeatedly:

Jill: But I think the only one [*Harry Potter* movie] that I ever saw in theatres was the, um, sixth movie when it came out. I don't think I ever saw the other ones. Because I had never finished the book series. I insisted on just, like, reading the books first.

Irene: Well, I had finished the series when I saw the first movie.

Laura: So was it important to you to finish reading the books before seeing the movies?

Irene: Yeah, because you want to see the base before you see the altered version, ya know?

Jason: Some people watch movies before they read the books and it just completely ruins their perspective on that, so they don't go to read the books and it's just so much better in the books.

Here Jason introduces another prominent theme that arose in our

discussions: most participants noted a preference for books over movies and

suggested that books are better than movies.

Bronwyn: Well there's *Twilight*. I watched the first movie before… and then I read the book after. And then I thought that the movie sucked after I read the book.

Irene: I've watched all the movies too, but personally I think the books are better.

Jill: I think that the books kind of are better because I, like, I agree how it's like you can imagine your own pictures and it's not like they're putting your mental image in our mind.

Callie: I liked them [the movies] a lot. I like the books better, though.

Kate: So of course movies can't compare to the books because, you know, they always don't really fully get in-depth as the books do.

Mary: I just kind of felt that everybody was always talking about, with any story, that the books were always better and more original than the movies and, um, yeah.

Even Mary, who is hesitant to accept that books are always better than movies is aware that "everybody" else believes this to be true. I will return to the issue of book to movie comparisons in Chapter 6. For the purposes of this consideration of crossmedia and selection it is interesting to note that, while core-story texts include movie adaptations, and those movie adaptations proved extremely popular among participants, they very rarely replaced the original books and a general sense of the superiority of the book format was present.

Though all participants engaged with some form of world-building or ancillary text, there was a set of readers (Bronwyn, Julia, Jason, Bradley, Mary and Jill) for whom the core-story texts were consistently the main interest. Bradley finds the slew of adaptations and paratexts overwhelming:

> They add on too many movies and TV shows and fan forums and it just becomes, well that's too complicated by now.

Julia's focus was consistently on books, though she did watch movie and TV show adaptations and spent a limited amount of time online searching for story information. However, she points out that all her extra-book engagement is related to the books themselves:

> Laura: So do you have any interest in that [online story material] or not really?
> Julia: Um, not really. *I just kind of read the books and look at other things to do with the books*.

Mary and Jill are more forthright about their preference for core-story material:

> Mary: *I think a story is enough*. I think that to love the story, you don't need to be, like, *Harry Potter* 24/7 your whole life. It doesn't need to revolve around it. If you love the story, you love the story and it's because of the story, not because of, um, you know, the merchandise and the online games.

Laura: So in terms of your online use with something like *Percy Jackson*, did you spend any time online?

Jill: Online? Mmm… kind of. I mean, that's where I did most of the research for like the movies and the books and stuff. But other than that… I don't know. I just, *I prefer to just, like, read the books and then just kind of let it be.*

All of the participants quoted above engaged with some world-extending or extra-story texts and paratexts. Of note here is not the fact that some readers never engage with the various extra-core-narrative texts on offer, but that these paratexts are considered significantly less important, and are relevant only to the extent that they support the core narrative. As noted in Chapter 2, various scholars have suggested not merely that transmedia and crossmedia storytelling results in a few new media format options for readers, but that it even alters the very process of reading and the desires and expectations of readers (Lunenfeld, 1999; Jenkins, 2006; Brooker, 2009; Abba, 2009; Askwith, 2007). While it is no doubt true that crossmediation provides readers with new options and holds the potential to reorganize the narrative experience in various ways, caution is warranted when making suppositions about the behaviour of readers and audiences based on the affordances of new forms of storytelling and media. Just because storyworlds now provide various opportunities for participation, user control, and broader exploration of storyworlds does not mean that a more conservative approach to these stories is no longer viable. Indeed, my participants suggest that there is still room for a significantly more traditional approach to large crossmedia storyworlds wherein a reader's primary interest and concern is with the core-story and the core-story texts. Sometimes the story really is enough.

Selecting Extra-Story Texts

Extra-story texts include all resources that provide information about the story texts themselves, from how they were created, to when they will be released, to who will be portraying characters in a movie. News releases about casting, an IMDb page with release dates for a movie adaptation, director's commentary on a DVD, an author website with information about upcoming books, or behind the scenes movie or TV pictures or videos are all resources that provide information about the texts themselves. While both extra-story and world-extending texts can be said to expand the storyworld in some way, world-extending texts maintain the fourth wall, assume the reality of the storyworld, and work to further immerse readers in the fictional universe, while extra-story texts exist outside the fourth wall of the fiction, admitting the fictional nature of the story.

Technical Extra-Story Texts

All participants used the Internet to find technical information about the extra-story world, including release dates for movies, information about casting and actors, or spoilers about upcoming books or movies. This was the most popular and ubiquitous use of the Internet in relation to storyworlds. In this case, the texts were selected based on their efferent value. Participants were looking for information only. Julia talks about how she stays up to date on her favourite stories:

> I go on IMDb and look for information about them [movies] because that's where they have like photos, trailers, um, they post the cast, what the movie's about.

Julia was mostly interested in upcoming movie information and used IMDb as her go-to source when curious about release dates, etc. While some participants, like Julia, had specific sites they depended on, many searched more broadly for the resources they required. Jill reflects here on her use of Internet resources to find information about the *Percy Jackson* series:

> I know with *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* series, when I was reading that series, um, after I finished the series, I was like really excited and I was hoping that they'd be coming out with a movie and then when they did I was like really interested in it. And I went online and I was kind of figuring out, like, okay, are they ever going to make a second movie and are they ever going to make any more books and stuff.

Throughout the course of our interview, Jill mentioned using Google searches, official websites for both books and movies, and various fan forums and blogs in search of desired information. This online sleuthing was common among participants. Tim describes his journey in search of information about his favourite TV show, *Departures* below:

> Tim: The first place I went was actually the *Departures* website cause, like, as you said, like all TV shows now have a website. And, cause, like on CityTV.com they didn't have all the episodes on, so I wanted to see what there, what other places they went to and other episodes so then they had the whole episode listing on the website, so I was able to look at that.
>
> Laura: So, um, do you ever find that you track down information about the actual people who are in the show?
>
> Tim: Um, yeah, cause we haven't watched all of them, like we haven't started right from the beginning so there are some things about their lives that we don't really know about. Like, one of the guys and then the camera guy, they were kind of the people who started it out, like started the show, but we didn't really realize that until they mentioned it, so then after they mentioned it, I like researched about them too, and, cause they mentioned that they had some sort of company, I think it was, uh, something to do with film-making that they'd done for like eight years or something so I research about that online.

All participants described some degree of selection based on efferent interest in extra-story texts and most listed a dizzying array of information resources available to them, not to mention complex strategies for locating the information they desired. Irene went so far as to describe a sort of meta-searching process:

> You can look on the Internet to gather information, but you can also look on the Internet to find out other places where you can gather information […] so to gather more information you find out how you can gather it.

The amount of time and energy participants invested in locating story-related information was striking and suggests the importance of story-related information seeking behaviours in the lives of young adults. A growing body of literature is beginning to investigate how individuals seek leisure-related information and the implications of the search strategies employed, the effect of increased information on the leisure activity, and the development of social networks of information (Hartel, 2003; Hartel, 2006; Yakel, 2004; Cox, Clough, Marlow 2008; Storie, 2008). For example, in his investigation of the information seeking behaviours of avid *World of Warcraft* players, Storie (2008) demonstrates that information seeking is a crucial piece of the gaming experience and, in the gaming context, it provides its own unique pleasures, allowing individuals to "play at the limits of their game" (p. 136) and increase their "commitment levels towards skill acquisition, character development, and guild participation" (p. 138).

Unfortunately, this body of literature does not specifically address *young adult* leisure-related or story-related information behaviour. Studies that do investigate youth information seeking (Branch, 2002; Chen, 2003; Bilal, 2001;

Large, 2004) conflate young adult with student identities and focus solely on instrumental and curricular-directed work (e.g. research skills, use of Boolean search statements, and issues of plagiarism). A deep analysis of either the leisure-related or story-related information seeking of young adults lies outside the scope of this study; however, my participants' responses reflect the observations and conclusions made by Storie (2008) and other serious leisure researchers, and point to the importance of story-related information seeking in the lives of young adults. In particular, the level of motivation to find story-related information was impressive. My participants were very interested in the storyworlds they engaged with and this interest created committed searchers. Future research might consider some of the following questions: How does this high level of motivation affect the search processes youth employ and the subsequent efficacy of those processes? Does curiosity and genuine interest in the search topic lead youth to explore more sources than they might consider in relation to more mundane information needs? How do the processes youth use when seeking story- and leisure-related information versus everyday life information or school-related information differ or resemble one another? Where and when do skills transfer either from leisure searching to academically oriented searching or vice versa?

Further examination of youth story- and leisure-related information seeking practices holds the potential to enrich information literacy instruction significantly.

<u>Critical Extra-Story Texts</u>

While technical extra-story texts provide a purely efferent experience that nonetheless may feed into enhancing aesthetic commitment, many critical extra-story texts offer aesthetic pleasures by providing the opportunity to imaginatively invest in the construction of the narrative or the core-story texts themselves. Recall that Douglas and Hargadon (2001) divide the forms of aesthetic experiences into immersion and engagement, with immersion involving the experience of losing oneself in the narrative of the story and engagement involving the pleasure garnered from understanding and examining the way a story is constructed. Critical extra-story texts seek to engage readers by providing insight into the construction of the story itself. Unlike technical extra-story texts, critical extra-story texts are designed to provide readers an aesthetic experience rather than mere facts.

Chris was, by far, the participant with the most interest in critical extra-story texts. His enthusiasm for filmmaking and writing led him to various Internet resources, interviews with creators and writers, and special features DVDs in the hopes of gaining a better understanding of the construction of his favourite storyworlds. Chris went so far as to carefully re-read *Harry Potter* books and films from an engaged stance, paying close attention to details in the scenery, scripts and direction. His attention to detail and keen interest in extra-story construction is evident as he discusses the portrayal of Hogwarts in the books versus the movies and the change in appearance as the movie series continued:

> Between the first and second movies I definitely noticed this, there was a model that my friend had of *Harry Potter* from the first film. It was

official franchise and, you know, I saw this just a couple days ago. And it had, it was a model of Hogwarts, but when you look at it, it was very not accurate. All you had was the Great Hall, which is the great hall where they all eat. Right? And there's a lot of exterior shots of the castle in the movies. But I realized and I also heard this through interviews with the, Alfred, something, the director of *Harry Potter* three, and, cause *Harry Potter* three actually he wanted to go in and make sure that Hogwarts three, that, sorry, Hogwarts in the *Harry Potter* three was as accurate as JK Rowling had imagined it to be. Cause in *Harry Potter* three you realize that there were a lot of dramatic changes to the landscape. Because in the *Harry Potter* two, the whomping willow, that tree that always moves? That used to be in a flat courtyard in the corner where they crash into it. But then in the movie it's actually on the hill now, it's on the hill now so they totally put it on the hill there and made it so that it was not in the courtyard anymore. There was a lot of dramatic changes. In the first two movies I realize that those were definitely not what JK Rowling's notes had been, how she imagined Hogwarts. […] Like if you play the video games for one and two, compared to three you realize, like, there's a lot of difference between, um, dramatic contrasts between how Hogwarts was made and how the map was and everything between one, two, three and then one and two and then three and four. Because every movie and book and game beyond three was very consistent. One and two were… they ha… those were very similar, but they weren't actually what the movie castle was, cause it was… I think it was just a collection of towers in a certain order. They didn't have the, uh, the Great Hall, they didn't have the clock tower that was in three, they didn't have the bridge that was in seven and five. Just a lot of things were missing. They weren't ordered.

Chris's interest in behind-the-scenes information and movie construction led him to a variety of extra-story texts, and even led him back to core-story texts in an attempt to better understand the film-making and design work at play in the construction of the *Harry Potter* universe.

While Chris's level of interest in this form of story information was not typical, a number of other participants expressed interest and even preference for story texts that offered this form of extra-story information. Here Kate discusses her interest in *Avatar* bonus features:

So I became really obsessed with that movie. I watched it… like I have the director's cut and everything up there, and so. But, with that, I wanted to live in that world. I needed to know more about it. I wanted to see it behind the scenes and so I went to the website and you know, like I saw deleted material and I saw, like, cause I also wanted to know, like, how did someone come up with this, this is amazing. So I saw, like the director's cut speaking and there was, like, this Go Green initiative where they wanted to plant trees. Cause obviously with *Avatar*, right everyone wants to make a greener planet. But I went there to, like I said, get behind the scenes, find out more, because at the time, I was, like really all for *Avatar*. So like, website definitely did help me get more information about it.

Kate's interest demonstrates an interesting connection between extra-story texts and world-extending texts or immersive texts in that her exploration of extra-story texts was motivated by a desire to "live in that world." For Kate, a better understanding of the construction of the *Avatar* universe enhanced her enjoyment of immersed reading experiences. Immersion and engagement, then, can and do work together, each supporting the overall engagement of the reader in an aesthetic experience of the text. As Douglas and Hargadon (2001) point out, sophisticated readers can shift between engagement and immersion, both enjoying the state of absorption and stepping out of the storyworld to consider the construction of the story.

Unlike Kate, Mary's interest in engagement-promoting texts was very much about escaping the storyworld. Here she describes her interest in bonus features on her DVD copy of *Lost*:

Yeah, and I think that I was drawn to that because I wasn't stuck in the story anymore. It had kind of come to life. Um, some of the bonus features were, like, Jimmy Kimmel came onto the set of *Lost* and, um, those type of things. I thought that was interesting because it had kind of come to life, but again it wasn't stuck in the story line. So there was a bit of reality… it's hard to explain.

Mary continued to express a sort of relief at being able to step outside of stories to learn about their construction, the actors who played various roles and why particular story-related decisions were made. I will consider the sorts of pleasures this form of text afforded Mary in greater detail in Chapter 6.

Some participants had very strong reactions to critical extra-story texts, either expressing keen interest in them and actively seeking as much extra content as they could find, or rejecting them outright because the texts insisted on bouncing them out of the storyworld and revealing its un-reality. While Chris, Kate and Mary fall into the former category, Ann provides an example of a very anti-engagement reader. Mary and Ann were best friends who requested to be interviewed together. The contrast between the two was striking with Mary expressing intense interest in critical extra-world texts, and Ann refusing to explore these items:

> Mary: I have those, like, director's comment books. Um, where there's pictures and, I don't know if it was written by the directors or put together by the directors, there's just quotes from the show. I have a few of those books.
> Laura: And what was the appeal there for you?
> Mary: Um, I think, um I was attracted to it because it's more behind the scenes stuff. Um, so that goes deeper into the story. And I think I enjoy that aspect of stories. So I think that's what drew me to those.
> Ann: I like being in the story. I'm completely different. I don't like seeing behind the scenes. I like…
> Mary: Because you don't like the fact that they're actors?
> Ann: That they're not the actual people. I'm like, oh no! It's not real.

Ann's dedication to maintaining the fourth wall of her favourite stories was very clear. While Mary scoured for extra-story texts to enhance her engagement with her favourite stories, Ann sought out world-extending texts to

further immerse herself in the fictional world. Though Ann's rejection of extra-story texts was more pronounced than any other participants', many nonetheless showed greater interest in world-extending texts, seeking a more immersed encounter with their fictions of choice.

Selecting World-Extending Texts

Like extra-story texts, world-extending texts can be divided into two sub-categories: official world-extending texts produced by the story franchise in question, and unofficial world-extending texts produced by fans. Participants engaged with both forms, but their selection of and attitudes towards each were guided by very different concerns.

<u>Official World-Extending Texts</u>

When participants mentioned official world-extending texts, concerns regarding authenticity and authorship featured heavily in their selection decisions. When I showed Ann and Mary (who were interviewed together) the *Glee* books, they were initially quite excited, but they were quick to qualify this enthusiasm with some hesitation:

> Mary: I would still be kind of skeptical about it.
> Ann: Like, is it written by somebody who is in the *Glee*, like… cause if it was just written by someone randomly…
> Mary: That's what I would be worried about…
> Laura: It's a part of the *Glee* franchise. So these books are branded with the *Glee* logo. So, um, I mean in terms of who the actual writer is, that would have been someone who was selected by the *Glee* franchise to write the book, and it's branded as *Glee*, so it's not, not a spoof. So it is actually associated directly with *Glee*. Does that make it more appealing to you guys?
> Ann: Yeah.
> Mary: I think so. I think I would have to keep an open mind and think that this isn't going to be the same quality, I guess. Not the same thing that you're looking for in the TV shows cause it's not… I assume

not written by the writers of the episodes. It's just someone involved with the franchise. I don't know, I think I would be a bit skeptical […] I think I would definitely try it out. I don't think that I would… um…

Laura: So it's interesting but you're cautious?

Mary: Yeah.

For Ann and Mary it was not only important that the *Glee* books were official, but that they met a certain level of authenticity related to authorship. Though they were somewhat reassured to hear that the books were part of the *Glee* franchise, they remained hesitant as they felt it unlikely that the novels were written by the same people who script the TV show. Hence, membership in the franchise was seen to guarantee a certain level of quality, but franchise branding alone was not a sufficient recommendation. Ann and Mary were also concerned with authorship as a marker of quality.

While discussing activities in relation to his favourite book series, Jason echoes this concern with authorship, stating that, when seeking spoilers and/or more detailed descriptions of storyworlds he only examines websites belonging to authors because "you trust the author more." The theme of trust for the author and an overall concern for authorship and authenticity remained prominent in Jason's selection and evaluation of various other types of book-related texts and paratexts. For him, the author's involvement qualified items as official and importantly defined which paratexts were valid and worth engaging with, and which were not.

Unofficial World-Extending Texts

In relation to official world-extending texts, precisely how official a text was and who was involved in creating it were key criteria when deciding what to read. In relation to unofficial world-extending texts, these criteria were no longer

relevant. This is not to say that questions of authority did not come into play, and indeed, some participants were hesitant to engage with unofficial world-extending texts at all precisely because they were not officially affiliated with the franchise or the authors, creators, writers, etc. Chris articulates his skepticism about fan fiction, in particular, his lack of interest in *Pottermore*[3], below:

> I don't think I like it that much cause it's the author who created that and I mean if she's overseeing it that's good, I mean, just saying. I don't think if it's too far fan-made, I don't know if it's going to be as good as if it was the author herself who is making it […] It's her world. […] It would be grand if it *was* really good. […] if there was a really nice writer who was a fan making it, I think it would be good, but still it's her world originally so I think she's the one who really would be truthful… not truthful, but the right person to make that continue along. […] There are some [fan fictions] that are really good, but it's still the idea that the author was the one who truly created it. She knows what she wants to do with this story, […] and, because it's her story originally I think I, I think that she should be the one to continue it.

While some participants were hesitant about unofficial world-extending texts simply because they were unofficial, the majority of participants who did not participate in the fan-made world said that enjoying fan-made content would constitute taking their interest too far. There was a strong sense that reading fan fiction, visiting forums, or viewing fan art is the domain of "crazy fans" who are obsessed with storyworlds. When I asked Bradley if he had any interest in fan fiction, he had this to say:

> Not really. I'm not big onto the whole huge fan crazy bit […] some people just go crazy. But, no. I haven't really done. I'm not too crazy onto any fan stuff.

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[3] *Pottermore* is a website created by J.K. Rowling and currently in beta testing. It will contain Rowling's notes from the *Harry Potter* books, additional information on the storyworld and will be open to some fan participation, although it is as-yet unclear what this will entail. For more information, see http://www.pottermore.com/, and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pottermore.

Meanwhile, both Mary and Bronwyn described engagement with fan content as obsessive:

> Mary: They're kind of obsessed with it if they're spending, like, first they do the books, then the movies, and then, oh, they have to get into the online stuff?
>
> Bronwyn: I don't really follow online fan things that much? Cause I'm not really that obsessed with it. Cause most people are, like, really hardcore about it.

For Bronwyn, Mary and Bradley, any engagement with fan worlds was too much. For other participants, defining what was acceptable in relation to fan-created content and what was not was more complicated. Jason and I had the following exchange regarding fan-created content:

> Laura: There's a pretty big fan world out there, especially online. You seem aware of that. What do you think of that?
> Jason: I think that it's okay for other people, but I'll just stick to my own world.
> Laura: And why do you say that?
> Jason: That it's okay for other people?
> Laura: Yeah and… yeah, we'll start there.
> Jason: I say it's okay for other people because some people just really get caught up in it and I just do it to pass time usually.

Jason later describes his interest in anime fan fiction and forums, and, in particular, a routine engagement with the anime site NarutoWire (nwanime.com), but continually qualifies that he does it "just to pass the time." Says Jason, "I'm not doting over the series. It's not my, the center of my world." Jason felt his selection of unofficial texts was acceptable because he limited both the amount of time he spent with them and his level of commitment to them.

In general, participant responses suggested that navigating the world of unofficial world-extending texts is a precarious business. Each had well-

developed ideas of what was acceptable engagement in storyworlds and what was unacceptable and these determinations were often about whether, how, and/or how often one engaged with the fan world. Selection became an interestingly value-laden process where boundaries were drawn and negotiated. It may be cool to be a total "Twi-Hard," as Mary described herself, but engaging with fan-created content is taking it too far. For Ann, fan videos are just good fun, but reading fan fiction crosses a line. For Jason, it's all fair game, but only if you do it to pass the time and aren't too into it.

Selecting Ancillary Texts

Ancillary texts, like unofficial world-extending texts, were a contentious realm. Participants expressed very strong opinions about the acceptability and value of story merchandise. Of note, though unofficial story merchandise exists (fan-created t-shirts, models, wands, etc.), all but one of my participants focused exclusively on official merchandise. A number of participants echoed their feelings about unofficial world-extending texts, stating that engaging with merchandise was going overboard:

> Mary: I'm not into you know, you like a story and so you buy the figurines and the, I don't know, I just, I'm not really into that sort of big fan, you know, I have all of the collections and everything. […] I think it's, you know, further than I would ever go and I think it's kind of strange when people buy, like, the Hogwarts, like the scarves and the hats and stuff and they're really in Hogwarts, but you're not actually there, it's just a story and I think that's kind of silly.

> Kate: Well just cause, what comes to my head is, you know, everyone's you know Team Jacob or Team Edward. That whole thing. Like, urg, you know? I see little pre-teens, like 13-year-olds who are like, "yeah, Team Jacob!" "Yeah, Team Edward!" And it just, I don't know, in my opinion, I find it kind of ridiculous. A little

stupid, almost, you know, because, um, the fact of the matter, the bottom line is it's not real. It's not a real thing. And people have almost become obsessed with it; you know what I'm saying?

Both Kate and Mary felt that people purchased merchandise in order to pretend to be part of the storyworld in question. Choosing not to engage with merchandise was, for them, about choosing to stay grounded in their own world. Merchandise was about make-believe and therefore perceived as silly, childish, and the purview of pre-teens.

Participants were also skeptical about the commercial aspects of ancillary texts. Interestingly, though various scholars have argued convincingly that children's and young adult books, movies, and television shows are commercial products (see Sekeres, 2009; Hade, 2002; Hade & Edmondson, 2003; Tashjian & Naido, 2007), none of my participants recognized or objected to the commercial aspects of storyworlds until we discussed merchandise. Jason was quite scornful of merchandise: "I think it's just big companies trying to get money off of a popular series." Of note in Jason's response is the sense that the series itself is not about money. Jason suggests that big companies exploit the popularity of stories by making commercial products related to them, but the books and story itself were not perceived as commercial products at all.

Jason was talking specifically about book series. Other participants who took issue with the commercial aspects of merchandise were quick to tie merchandise to movie adaptations rather than the books on which the movies were based and some even made a point of distancing books from merchandise:

> Laura: What do you think the motives are of the people who are producing all that stuff [merchandise]?

Kate: Money most likely. They want to make more money, as much as they can off of that movie [*Twilight*].

Bronwyn: Well most people buy it [merchandise] because they haven't read the books and they've only seen the [*Twilight*] movies. So they don't really know what it's about so they only think about the movie.

Both Bronwyn and Kate saw *Twilight* merchandise as paratexts of the *Twilight* movies and not the *Twilight* books. Both responses can be read as suggesting that the production of the movies was likewise commercially motivated, unlike the production of the books. While Jason, Bronwyn and Kate were all concerned that commercial products might infiltrate their favourite storyworlds, they never mentioned or considered the possibility that books are commercial products themselves. Each imagined a commercialism-free zone where books and their own book-reading practices resided. The commercial aspects of crossmedia storyworlds and the responses of participants will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.

Unlike Bronwyn, Kate, and Jason, some participants openly admitted a capitalistic drive behind their engagement with ancillary texts. When I asked Irene why she purchased *Harry Potter* merchandise she said, "You just want it. And it's awesome." Ann elaborates this theme, stating:

I like having it, like, seeing it everyday and, like, realizing that it's mine and I'm, like, yay, it's mine! […] I like, like, owning bits of the story. Like, everyday I wake up and I have a t-shirt and I'm like, yay! I get to have a bit of *Twilight* with me.

For Ann and Irene, reading books, watching movies and playing video games wasn't enough. They wanted to own a piece of their favourite storyworlds as well. For others, purchasing merchandise was less about owning part of the

story and more about publicly displaying their fan-dom and associating

themselves with their favourite series. Callie reflects on her reasons for

purchasing a *Harry Potter* toque below:

> Well, like I really like *Harry Potter* and stuff, so like I, I just think it would be, like I saw, like, the hat, for example, I saw it last October-ish and I, like I thought that it would, like, you know it's like, it's like, it's more of a toque. Yeah, and so it would be good for winter and stuff. And I was like, yeah, well it's a good toque that I can show to… show my *Harry Potter* fandom.

Callie's *Harry Potter* toque is easily recognizable and associates her with

a broadly popular storyworld. While Peter mirrors Callie's desire to wear

merchandise in order to show

off her fandom, he is involved in a much smaller, niche fan community. Peter is a

Brony: a member of the largely online community of 14-35 year old male fans of

the *My Little Pony* cartoon series. At our interview, he wore a t-shirt with the

"cutie mark" (the unique symbol displayed on each pony's backside) of his

favourite Pony, Rainbow Dash. When I asked him why he purchased the t-shirt,

he said:

> Well, part of it is, I'm, I'm really proud to be a part of this kind of community here. Because it, it's really just, it really blew me off my feet, so I really wanted to be a part of it and I wanted to show it. I hope somebody recognizes this someday [indicates Rainbow Dash cutie mark on his t-shirt].

Peter's engagement with *My Little Pony* is not limited to his interactions

with the show itself. Instead, the storyworld is what connects him to a community

of fans who form his primary social network. Wearing the t-shirt, then, is about

associating him with the *My Little*

Pony cartoon, but is more importantly about marking himself as a member of the Brony community. It is more akin to wearing a shirt with the logo of your high school than one with a *Harry Potter* emblem. In addition, Peter acknowledges that, given the relatively small size of the community and the lack of mainstream knowledge about *My Little Pony*, it is unlikely that many people will recognize the meaning of his t-shirt. There was a distinct sense of pride at the obscurity of his interest;

> ### My Little Brony
>
> *My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic* is an animated television show that premiered in 2010. Lauren Faust of *PowerPuff Girls* fame was brought on as creative director and executive producer of the Hasbro Inc.-owned show, and sought to produce an animated series for young girls that portrayed character depth, lots of adventure and "lots of different ways to be a girl."[1] When an article criticizing the animation of *My Little Pony*[2] was posted to the Internet forum site 4chan, forum-goers raced to watch the show, fully expecting to join in the criticism[3]. Instead, a great many 4chan-ers got hooked on the ponies, and the show quickly amassed an unlikely fan base: men between the ages of 14 and 35[4]. The group have dubbed themselves Bronies (a portmanteau of the words bro and ponies).
>
> [1] Faust, Lauren. (December 24, 2010). My little NON-homophobic, NON-racist, NON-smart-shaming pony: A rebuttal. *Ms. Magazine Blog*. msmagazine.com/blog/blog/2010/12/24/my-little-non-homophobic-non-racist-non-smart-shaming-pony-a-rebuttal/ (accessed February 8, 2012).
> [2] Amidi, Amid. (October 19, 2010) The end of the creator-driven era in TV animation. *Cartoon Brew*. http://www.cartoonbrew.com/ideas-commentary/the-end-of-the-creator-driven-era.html (accessed on February 9, 2012)
> [3] LaMarche, Una. (August 3, 2011) Pony up haters: How 4chan gave birth to the bronies. *Betabeat: The lowdown on high-tech*. http://www.betabeat.com/2011/08/03/pony-up-haters-how-4chan-gave-birth-to-the-bronies/ (accessed February 8, 2012).
> [4] Watercutter, Angela. (June 9, 2011). My Little Pony corrals unlikely fanboys known as 'bronies'. *Wired magazine online*. http://www.wired.com/underwire/2011/06/bronies-my-little-ponys/ (accessed February 8, 2012)

unlike wearing a *Glee* t-shirt, wearing a *My Little Pony* t-shirt marks him as a member of a small, specialized, and somewhat exclusive community.

Conclusion

Thus far, I have presented an overview of how my participants selected texts both in general, and within a storyworld. Participant responses confirm much of what the pre-existing literature tells us about initial story selection and the important role played by friends and peer groups, but also suggests the importance of hype and general popularity as motivating some of the selections teens make. Participants expressed varied levels of interest in the different types of texts and paratexts attached to any given storyworld. Interest in fan-created texts was limited and interest in both fan content and ancillary texts was contentious.

I turn now to questions relating to how participants approached crossmedia texts once selected, and the role of crossmedia in aiding and/or hindering their entrance into the imaginative world of their chosen fictions.

CHAPTER 5

Approaching Crossmedia Stories

Digital media have led to changes in the ways youth approach fictional universes and social and creative endeavors. Nonetheless, reading stories, whether in print, on a screen, in a videogame, or on a forum, requires imagination. At some point, readers must take an imaginative step into the storyworld. Literature examining how digital media, transmediation, and crossmediation have affected the reading practices of young adults does not often consider the internal, imaginative work teens engage in when approaching this new sort of fiction, and instead, attends almost exclusively to teenagers or individuals who are creating visible products on fan forums, fan fiction sites, and in online gaming communities (Ito et. al, 2010; Jenkins, 2009; Knobel & Lankshear, 2010; Ross, 2008; Thomas, 2007a; 2007b). While some of my participants did produce their own online story-related content, I was less interested in examining the products than I was in considering the imaginative work involved in such production and also in the vast array of emotionally and personally invested *spectatorship* all participants demonstrated. Indeed, even for the participants who produced content, the methods and the purpose of their engagement revealed a definite spectator preference.

In this chapter, I suggest that an exclusive focus on the ways youth *do* things with crossmedia ignores the internal imaginative work teens invest in these stories and risks losing sight of past insights about the importance of spectatorship (Harding, 1937; Britton, 1984; Applebee, 1977). While examining participatory

culture as a venue for youth production is important, we should not neglect a thorough consideration of the imaginative opportunities new media open for youth as spectators and the ways in which these opportunities are taken up. In addition, an understanding of participation as active and spectatorship as passive ignores both the active work done in the spectator role and the evaluative component of much cultural production.

With this in mind, I will begin with an examination of how readers step into the subjunctive, the make-believe space of the storyworld, and how my participants managed this initial step into their favourite stories. I will then outline Harding's (1937) and Britton's (1984) theory of spectator vs. participant roles and consider how my participants took on these roles.

The Subjunctive

Richard Gerrig (1998) suggests that being transported into a possible world and "away from the here and now" (p. 3) is a fundamental aspect of the reading experience; when we approach a story, we are invited to participate in the make-believe world it creates. Whether we know the ending or not, we proceed as though we do not know what will happen next, as though all hypothetical outcomes are possible. Jerome Bruner (1986) explores this shift from the real world of the here and now into the fictional world of hypotheticals through the concept of the subjunctive:

> I take my meaning of "subjunctive" from the second one offered by the *OED*: 'designating a mood (L. *modus subjunctivus*) the forms of which are employed to denote an action or state as conceived (and not as a fact) and therefore used to express a wish, command, exhortation, or a contingent, hypothetical, or perspective event.' To be in the subjunctive mode is, then,

to be trafficking in human possibilities rather than in settled certainties. (p. 26)

The concept of the subjunctive adds considerable depth to our understanding of the process by which we are transported into a fictional world. It is not a magical accident, but a choice that stories offer readers through a variety of discursive operations. Stepping into the subjunctive mode involves the reader choosing to accept the *as-if* of the story; she reads *Harry Potter as-if* wizards exist, *as-if* the future of the world depends on the destruction of horcruxes, and *as-if* the ending of the story is contingent and open, rather than already worked through in the mind of the author. The story is then processed in terms of the expectations, wishes, fears, opinions, beliefs, etc. of the characters and narrative voice. As Mackey (2011) elegantly puts it:

> Inside the world of the *as-if*, the narrative is *lived*, is *felt* as hopes, fears, assumptions, surprises; it is experienced prismatically through the lenses of human emotions coming to terms with an unknown future […] although it sounds esoteric, it is a relatively commonplace element of our encounters with fiction, and most people will recognize its power. (p. 78, emphasis in original)

Stepping into the subjunctive, then, involves choosing to participate in the fiction of the story, to give yourself up to the voice of the narrative and to agree to follow where it takes you.

Stepping into the Subjunctive

Various scholars have examined how and why readers take the imaginative step into the subjunctive in relation to stories in a single medium (Bruner, 1986; Langer, 1953; Gerrig, 1998), while others have explored how and if the imaginative work of immersing oneself in a story works the same way in

media formats besides print (Mackey, 2011; Ryan, 2006; Hayles, 2008). Mackey (2011) concludes "the initial step 'into' the story draws on an understanding of make-believe that is in crucial ways platform neutral" (p. 80). While our subjunctive experiences and the processes and textual elements that encourage us to enter the subjunctive may differ between media, the subjunctive works in a game, a movie, or a hypertext fiction as much as in print formats (Mackey, 2011; Ryan, 2006). But what might happen to the reader's relationship to the subjunctive when a story-reading experience spans a variety of texts and formats? I was interested to investigate how readers navigate imaginative invitations when moving between formats in a single storyworld. Would changes in the format of texts and paratexts make it more difficult for readers to enter the subjunctive, or would supporting texts and paratexts ease the process? Would readers enter the subjunctive in relation to all texts and paratexts in the first place? How smooth would be the shift from one medium to another, and how seamlessly would readers slip in and out of the subjunctive between formats?

As I moved through data analysis, I was extremely tempted to interpret discussions of *immersed* reading experiences and/or expressed desire for more in-story texts as indications of readers seeking to step into the subjunctive, and to understand discussions of *engaged* reading experiences and expressed desire for extra-story texts as indications that readers had stepped out of the subjunctive and were not seeking re-entry. However, it quickly became clear that I could not easily map immersion to the subjunctive nor was I correct in assuming that engagement automatically indicated a step out of the subjunctive mode. Rather,

participants demonstrated an ability to move between immersion and engagement

while maintaining their sense of the story as alive and possibility-laden. Consider

this exchange:

> Jess: Suzanne Collins writes in a way that's very peculiar and I really like the way she writes because, um… and her characters? The amount of emotion her characters exhibit, it's very deep and not many fan fiction writers could truly grasp that.
>
> Laura: So, following along that line then, would you say that your satisfaction with a book series and the author's writing has an effect on whether or not you are interested in fan work? Like, if you are connected with the author's writing style and how the author has portrayed the characters then you're not interested in the fan world? What do you think of that?
>
> Jess: […] It really depends. With *The Hunger Games*, I really liked the series. Obviously I'm a huge fan. But, um, I think that the characters, since she describes them very well, but not necessarily very detailed, but very specifically, um, it's more difficult to… I just, I like the mood of the books more than I like the actual storyline. Which is why I think it would be difficult to work the same characters and achieve the same mood. Whereas, well, I was very into the *Harry Potter* fandom for a while too. Because, um, there, JK Rowling did leave some, well, a lot of room to make up as to fill in the gaps.

At various points in our interview, Jess reiterated her engagement with *The*

Hunger Games storyworld and her strong connection to the character Katniss.

But, as the above quote demonstrates, she was also able to articulate how the

writing and the character construction, aided her step into the subjunctive space of

the story. When discussing various storyworlds, Jess continually emphasized the

importance of character development and writing style in her enjoyment and her

ability to "get into" stories. Indeed, all of my participants, like Jess, were able to

analyze and articulate the aspects of particular media formats and particular story

texts that helped them move into the imaginative world of the fiction and those

that inhibited this progress. In other words, they were able to analyze the way

narrative was constructed in different media and how and why that construction

contributed to or deterred their imaginative process (engagement), while at the

same time moving into the subjunctive space of the story (immersion). My

participants support Mackey's finding that, "in all formats, the subjunctive mode

is sufficiently robust to survive oscillation between depth and surface, between

immersion and engagement" (2011, p. 93).

Jess provides a cogent analysis of what allows her to move into the

subjunctive in relation to fan fiction, and what impedes that process. Rabinowitz

(1987) suggests that readers utilize rules of configuration in order to assemble the

aspects of a story into schemas that make sense (p. 44-45). In Jess's reflections

on her difficulty with *The Hunger Games* fan fiction, we see her applying rules of

configuration *across* formats. Rabinowitz states that:

> Rules of configuration […] do not tell writers what to do—at most, they
> tell writers the framework within which their readers are likely to respond.
> Writers may use this framework any way they wish, either by accepting it,
> stretching it, or even ignoring it. Rules of configuration are prescriptive
> only in the following way: they map out the expectations that are likely to
> be activated by a text, and they suggest that if too many of these activated
> expectations are ignored, readers may find the results dull or chaotic. (p.
> 113)

In the context of *Harry Potter*, Jess was less attached to the particular writing

style of the author and less invested in the precise construction of the characters.

She was more open to writers who (intentionally or unintentionally) stretched or

ignored the stylistic expectations set forth by JK Rowling in the original books.

But Jess had very specific stylistic expectations in relation to *The Hunger Games*

and, when fan fiction writers were unable to replicate Collins's writing, it was

enough to bounce Jess out of the subjunctive of that storyworld. Ultimately, her more lax attachment to the style and construction of *Harry Potter* allowed her to enjoy differing voices and writing styles in fan fiction interpretations and extensions without being bounced out.

Bradley had similar feelings about the *Glee* books. He was a fan of the television show, and had seen the books, but he stated that he was unimpressed by them and had no interest in reading them:

> It's not really something I would read considering the fact that it's *Glee*. It's a TV show and books… the books I think are a bit childish as well. So I wouldn't really kind of want… and it changes it up too because it's like, "Finn said." So it's kind of like, urg. Cause they say some kind of awkward stuff on the show so then in the books that kind of would be a bit… it's weird to have someone say something that just kind of seems out of place.

For Bradley, the translation of the TV show into book format was awkward and made things "seem out of place." This is not to suggest that format switching was always a problem for him; he was happy to see books move onto the screen via movies and/or videogames, but the opposite transition in the *Glee* universe seemed clumsy and labored. Ultimately, when Bradley's expectations regarding the style and feel of *Glee* were unsuccessfully translated into print, he chose not to enter the fiction of the book.

Both Bradley and Jess are describing situations in which the storyworld in question is *expanded* in anther medium through a world-extending text. While, as noted in Chapter 4, this form of text was popular, by far the most prevalent form of crossmediation discussed by my participants was book to movie adaptations, in which the film is intended to *retell* the story contained in the novel. In this

situation, participants had no uncertainty regarding how the story would unfold and, ultimately, end. We might then expect participants to have greater difficulty moving into the subjunctive given their background knowledge of the story's outcome; but both the reflections of my participants and commonplace experience with fiction suggest that this is not the case. We are able to get (indeed, often cannot help getting) caught up in a story all over again, even if we know precisely what will happen. Gerrig (1998) calls this phenomenon anomalous suspense, wherein a reader may "experience suspense with respect to an outcome about which he should not have any uncertainty" (p. 158). Gerrig argues that immersion brings with it "an apparently strict separation of knowledge between the real world and narrative worlds," (p. 158) wherein "what should be readily available (by virtue of solid prior knowledge) is not, in fact, readily available in the experience of the narrative" (p. 160). Once in the throes of anomalous suspense, we shed our background knowledge, and begin to read or watch as if we don't know the ending.

Many of my participants found movie adaptations to be potent enough that they were able to disconnect with their background knowledge and get caught up in configuring the story all over again while they watched the films. Consider Callie's evaluation of the *Harry Potter* movies:

> I liked them a lot. I like the books better, but the, the movies are still good. Like, they're really well made and I don't think I'd change anything about them […] I like to go downstairs and just go to the TV and just watch it whenever. Cause they're the kind of movies that you can watch over and over again.

However, even participants who enjoyed movie adaptations immensely were extremely sensitive to any deviations from the expectations laid out by the original book. Callie did not completely divorce herself from her previous knowledge and expectations of how the story would unfold and, when deviations did arise, they were distressing enough to incite a search for explanations, if not to cause her to reject the movie altogether:

> Except like in some of the movies like in the third movie, they like changed a lot of stuff. Like they took out like a few chapters like they took out an entire like scene that was kind of important. They changed it with something else. I don't know why they did that. But they… I was looking on the special features of that disc and they, they had made a scene for that. They had made a scene. But I, but I don't know why they cut it.

For other participants, the anomalies were, at times and in certain movies, enough to completely over-ride the suspense. Bronwyn, Kate and Jason all demonstrated very low tolerance for movie adaptations that deviated from the original book.

> Jason: Usually I'm not looking so much forward to a movie because I know that they have to cut some parts out and you won't get the full experience from just watching the movie. And, like, say with the *Eragon* trilogy, they messed up the first movie so badly they couldn't even continue on with the series.

> Kate: You could really put your own perspective into the book. You could imagine your own characters because I think the actors in the movie really have an effect on how good that movie is. […] Like, for example, me, I don't really like Kristen Stewart. I don't find that she expresses the emotion that Bella does in the book. And when I read the books I was much… it was much easier for me to relate to the characters than in the movie.

> Bronwyn: I decided to read the books. So I read the whole series and I really disliked the movies cause they left a lot out […] and I don't think they cast it properly. That's just me.

The primary concerns and complaints of those unsatisfied with movie adaptations were that movies left things out and that casting was inappropriate. Interestingly, all participants stated that they would continue to watch movie adaptations of their favourite stories, even knowing they were unlikely to be satisfied. In addition, most made statements to suggest that they were, at times, swept away by the movies, but that, when it became evident that a scene was missing or when characters they felt were poorly cast entered a scene, they had trouble maintaining their immersion and often became frustrated. Kate, for example, says that, while she is still excited to see the remainder of the *Twilight* movies, she works hard to ignore Kristen Stewart in the movies and insert her own version of Bella that she imagined in relation to the books:

> This is going back to what I said earlier about Kristen Stewart, I don't feel that connection with her as much as I do when I read Bella in the book. So I'm excited to see the movie, but I'm going to try to imagine my Bella from the book in the movies. […] and I was thinking you know, when I saw the movies, "oh, I totally could have been Bella, I would be a better Bella."

Because I did not observe participants while in the process of reading texts, I have no way of drawing definite conclusions about what happened during the reading process, but the above statement suggests that Kate made a concerted effort to ignore Kristen Stewart when she was on screen and that her appearance in a scene bounced Kate out of the subjunctive and into a more critical, engaged stance, evaluating Kristen Stewart's performance instead of living and feeling the narrative through Bella's hopes and fears (although it is possible that she simply inserted herself into the story as a "better Bella" and lived and felt the narrative as the heroine).

A final note on the subjunctive: so far I have limited my discussion to the operation of the subjunctive in fictional universes, but that is not to say that fiction is the only place where the subjunctive operates. We can step into a fictional story, but we might also shift into the subjunctive mode in relation to an anecdote a friend relates, a news story in the morning paper, a reality TV show, or even a hockey game. Gerrig (1993) sets out to reveal just how pervasive the experience of narrative worlds is and, though he doesn't use the term subjunctive, he is clearly referring to the same realm of *as-if*:

> It is a rare conversation among adults that does not depart from the here and now. All such instances allow a journey to a narrative world to begin. Clearly, we enjoy many activities that are explicitly designed to prompt experiences of narrative worlds: novels, newspapers, movies, television programs, history books, representational artworks, and so on […] I intend narrative and narrative world to be neutral with respect to the issue of fictionality. Although many of the theoretical statements I cite are framed specifically around the experience of fiction, I suggest that they yield insights that apply to the experiences of all narratives. (p. 7)

We can step into the subjunctive while reading *Harry Potter* by proceeding *as-if* the fate of the world rests with Harry, or we might step into the subjunctive while watching a hockey game by proceeding *as-if* the fate of the world rests on whether or not our team wins the game. Ultimately, we can be swept up in the *as-if* worlds of both fictional narratives and real-world narratives.

Tim opened our interview by stating that he was quite worried that he wouldn't be any help because he didn't think he had much interest in crossmedia fictions. However, he did have a great interest in geography and travel that significantly influenced his television viewing habits, his reading habits, his

online activities and his friendships more broadly. In particular, Tim was an avid

fan of the reality TV travel show, *Departures*:

> I'm watching this show online lately called *Departures*. […] It's about two
> guys from Canada who traveled the world for a year. Well it started for a
> year, but then it's gone on for three seasons, but, like, whenever I watch
> the show, I always have to have Wikipedia open at the same time, so then
> I, like, if they're in Mongolia I search up about Mongolia […] and I collect
> maps and I collect atlases and stuff so, like, I have lots of maps of all the
> places I go to, so it's kind of cool to, like, chart out where they've been
> even though it's not me, it's kind of like I'm able to live vicariously
> through the TV show.

Tim's descriptions of watching the show and living vicariously through

the hosts' travel experiences were very similar to other participants' descriptions

of escaping into the world of Hogwarts through the *Harry Potter* movies or living

the romance of Bella and Edward through the *Twilight* books. Tim's travel world

likewise came with its own assortment of crossmedia texts and paratexts,

including the maps and Wikipedia pages mentioned above, travel books, and other

travel information websites. Tim describes an active engagement with online

resources where he learns more about his favourite countries and even plans his

own imagined visits.

> My friend Mila […], we both really love to travel and especially this show,
> *Departures*, we're really able to talk about it and connect about it […] and
> we always talk about future trips that, like, dream trips that we'd like to
> take, so I told her, oh yeah, I just watched the episode about Madagascar
> and that looks really cool, and we plan our trips.

He even goes so far as to become engaged with the music of, and fictional

writing about countries of greatest interest:

> We went to Iceland last summer, my mom and I, and I, like, fell in love
> with the country. I'm like totally Iceland obsessed now. So Sigur Ros [an
> Icelandic band] is my favourite band ever and I really like Bjork [an
> Icelandic singer] too and I'm just, anything Iceland. So I watched the

> *Departures* episode about Iceland of course […] and I play music and stuff so I have uploaded some videos of me playing covers. So I posted covers I did of Sigur Ros. […] and right now my Mom is at a, she's sorting books for her [work] and she brought me back this book about Iceland and it was by Farley Mowatt. So I read that too.

It would be overstating the case to suggest that Tim's engagement with all travel-related texts was always about stepping into a subjunctive world of travel possibilities; Tim certainly described instances where he searched out geography texts or visited the Wikipedia entries for a country in order to locate an interesting fact, just for the fun of it. But, as the above quotes illustrate, much of Tim's engagement with travel texts and paratexts *was* about finding things out in order to support the mental activity of entering the subjunctive space of his virtual trips. Tim read guidebooks and marked maps *as-if* he was planning his dream trips; he listened to music from Iceland to learn more about the country and to connect him to both Iceland itself and his story of that place. In these instances, his research was located in the engaged zone of subjunctive activity, wherein critical reading practices and information seeking are done in order to enhance and maintain immersed experiences. Meanwhile, his aesthetic experiences with music and fiction added depth and texture to his travel stories.

Tim provided a fascinating counterpoint to my other participants, demonstrating that, while we tend to think of crossmedia and the subjunctive mode in relation to fictional stories, teenagers are also building their own crossmedia worlds based on real-world interests; these worlds also offer up a subjunctive space of possibilities and the potential for immersed experiences. While Tim's travel interest was not connected to any specific crossmedia-

producing franchise, he nonetheless built his own crossmedia world, picking and choosing from all the media and resources at his disposal to create an immersive travel universe. Many other participants stepped outside official franchise products, selecting their own unique mix of texts and paratexts to create their *Harry Potter*, *Twilight*, or *Glee* storyworld experience. My participants suggest that, whether crossmedia options are immediately obvious or not, teens are adept at sorting through media products and informational resources to create their own crossmedia experiences. A great deal of agency and personal preference is involved in this process as textual options are evaluated and selected in order to craft a unique storyworld.

Ultimately, all of my participants described experiences in which they stepped into the subjunctive of their chosen fictional or real-world stories; further, participants often selected and moved between formats in ways that sustained and extended their imaginative engagement with a given story, though the texts and paratexts that served these purposes differed for different participants.

It is important to remember that merely making the step into the subjunctive mode is a participatory step by definition. However, this is not the sort of participation in crossmedia, transmedia, and new media that the literature discusses, and it was not the end of the story for my participants. Instead, they demonstrated two versions of stepping into storyworlds: some stepped in *as-if* to *participate* in the story, intervene in the narrative, or otherwise create their own storyworld product; others stepped in *as-if* to *watch* the action, content to be spectators and not interested in intervening or producing. Though the literature

primed me to expect a great deal of stepping in *as-if* to participate, most of my participants were content as spectators. Few of my interviewees participated in storyworld activities and often the forms of activity they engaged with, on closer examination, were more in line with Harding's description of the role of the onlooker than that of the participant (1937).

The Role of the Spectator and the Role of the Participant

In 1937, Harding outlined his theory of the spectator role (or "onlooker role") as a way to articulate a particular orientation to the world. For Harding, responses can be divided broadly into participant (or operative) responses and onlooker (or evaluative) responses. In the former, we respond by doing something, acting in order to control or change our environment. In the latter, we perceive and evaluate and thereby develop a sense of the possibilities of our social and cultural context. It is in the spectator role that we "give shape and unity to our lives and extend our experiences in an ordered way" (Britton, 1984, p. 325). The distinction between the participant and the spectator, then, is not a distinction between involvement versus lack of interest, activity versus passivity, or commitment versus detachment. Both participant and spectator stance provide the opportunity for active and committed engagement and either may lead to uninterested passivity or boredom.

Britton (1984) uses Harding's work to consider the ways we use language. We may participate in a verbal transaction, in which we *do* things like ask a question; or we may create verbal objects, in which we *make* things, for example telling a story. Britton matches these categories of language use with Rosenblatt's

(2005) reading stances, where the verbal transaction maps to an efferent reading

stance—reading for information and/or meaning—and the verbal object maps to

an aesthetic reading stance—reading for pleasure and/or the experience itself. I

have coalesced these insights into a single figure:

Figure 5-1: Spectator-Participant Continuum

Aesthetic Reading Stance	Efferent Reading Stance
Verbal Object	Verbal Transaction
SPECTATOR	PARTICIPANT

As demonstrated in Figure 5-1, both the aesthetic reading stance and the

creation of verbal objects map to the spectator role, despite the fact that creating

verbal objects involves acting by producing something. Hence, writing fiction or

literature is:

> […] writing in the role of the spectator—spectator of men's lives, of one's
> own past or future or might-have-been: writing freed from the participant's
> need to respond with action or decision: free to savour emotions which
> participants must discharge in action or eke away in anxiety. […] It is not
> enough that things happen to us, that we act and are acted upon. We need
> to turn back, and by the power of imagination seek the pattern, the order,
> the meaning (1963, p. 42-44)

For Britton, the product of the action is not the focus; reading, watching,

and much writing and creative production maps to the spectator role because the

function of the action takes center stage. The primary question to ask is not

whether or not a person *does*, *makes*, or *visibly intervenes,* but rather what is

happening for the reader or creator? If we consider the roles youth employ when

interacting with digital texts as a distinction between spectator and participant,

"the line between author and audience, indeed the term 'response,' begins to blur.

We use language in the spectator role when we tell a story; we use it when we

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read a poem; we use it when we pass an idle moment with an amusing anecdote"

(Applebee, 1977, p. 3). We may inhabit the spectator role when we write fan

fiction and when we read it, when we watch a beauty guru's YouTube makeup

video and when we attempt to emulate those techniques in our own videos. If we

routinely focus on the *visible products* of youth engagement, we run the risk of

ignoring a huge amount of invisible work.

Participants Spectating and Participants Participating

At the outset of my project, I expected to discover an immense amount of

participation. While I certainly encountered some, many stances taken up by my

participants, both when viewing crossmedia content and when producing their

own content, were more cogently explained by theories of spectatorship, or by a

fluid alternation between spectator and participant roles. In this section, I consider

how, why and when participants took up participant and spectator roles in relation

to different texts and paratexts.

Just Looking

Of my 14 participants, 3 (Bronwyn, Julia, and Bradley) had firm anti-

participation attitudes and policies; while they had some awareness of available

participatory content, they were adamant that they would never read, look at, or

otherwise engage with any of it. When I asked Bradley what he thought of online

participatory venues, he stated that he had no interest in "the whole huge crazy fan

thing," because he had "better things to do really than go online and talk to some,

yeah, be in my basement and talk to some other guy in his basement on our

computers about a book." When I asked Julia what she thought of fan-created

sites, she said, "I personally think that if you write on that site [a fan-created site], you kind of have no life." These three participants demonstrated by far the most traditional relationship with storyworlds, ignoring almost all texts and paratexts outside of the original books, movies, or TV show. Even their use of Internet sources to gather technical storyworld information was limited to official or widely known sites like IMDb (Internet Movie Database), Rotten Tomatoes, and official book and movie websites. They approached texts as spectators and were only interested in core-story versions of and information about their chosen texts.

Friendship-Driven and Interest-Drive Participation

Though the majority of my participants were not very interested in online participation in relation to storyworld content, all participants expressed interest in online social media websites and nearly all were active on Facebook, MSN, Twitter or all of the above. In their study of children's and young adults' use of digital media, Ito et. al. (2010) identify two genres of participation: friendship-driven participation and interest-driven participation. Friendship-driven participation involves participating in online venues with already established friends, primarily through social networking sites, while interest-driven participation involves participating in an online venue because of its association with a particular niche interest, and establishing friendship networks through and because of that similar interest.

All 8 of my "just looking" teens actively participated in online venues, but their participation was peer-driven. This is not to say that social media use and storyworld interactions were entirely separate. Many participants told me that they often discuss favourite stories through social media sites, but this sort of online interaction was analogous to real-world discussions they might have; social media, then, provided a new avenue to engage in already established offline patterns of interaction.

It is important to note, however, that these two genres are not binary categories; youth can, and my participants did, shift between the two modes of participation. Irene and Callie, in particular, were very engaged in online venues that would seem to promote interest-driven participation, but both girls most frequently visited the sites "with" an offline friend. Peter, meanwhile, had developed online friends in the *My Little Pony* community and their interactions were no longer limited to discussions of *My Little Pony*.

A further 2 participants (Kate and Jill) were initially negative about online fan-created content, but eventually admitted to visiting some fan sites and viewing some fan created content. They were, however, strictly committed to a "just-looking" approach, denying ever participating in storyworld activities, and never mentioning any instance in which they produced their own storyworld content. Kate watched fan videos, but had no interest in creating her own. Jill read forums, but never joined in the discussion. For these two teens, spectating versus participating was yet another invisible boundary distinguishing acceptable storyworld involvement from unacceptable storyworld involvement. It was okay to lurk and to look, but not okay to contribute.

3 participants (Mary, Ann, and Jason) admitted to occasionally contributing content to participatory forums, but reinforced that this was extremely rare and, for the most part, they were only there to look. Interestingly, Jason was the participant who expressed the most negative assessments of story crossmediation and adaptations. He had very little interest in anything but the original version of a story and repeatedly stated that he would rather "stick to his own world" than become involved in online storyworld content. However, later in our interview, Jason admitted that he "passed through" forums occasionally because they provided useful information and up to date news and speculation about his favourite anime series: "I've looked at just what people think of the series, what they think will happen in the series, like things coming and going, stuff like that."

Locating information was the most cited reason this very anti-participation group initially sought out fan-created content. In some instances, participants maintained an efferent stance throughout their engagement. In these cases, they neither stepped into the subjunctive *as-if* to watch nor *as-if* to participate; rather, they didn't step in at all. However, in most instances, this initial efferent stance got a bit fuzzy as participants watched fan videos and read forums and fan fiction. Though they all initially sought out fan content with an efferent purpose (e.g. finding out what might happen next in a storyworld or who might be cast in a particular movie role), their descriptions of their experiences once the desired content was located suggest that they ended up somewhere between an efferent and an aesthetic stance. Ann was very engaged in the casting of Renesmee for the final Twilight movie. She mentioned searching for updates about casting, but also watched fan-made dream-cast videos:

> I liked seeing what fans came up with, like, what options kind of, what was going to happen. Like, I always searched up peoples' suggestions for Renesmee […] like who was the actor and I thought that was really cool. Like, I got really excited about it [the movie].

Though Ann was initially focused on figuring out who would officially get the part of Renesmee, fan videos seemed to sweep her away into the imaginative world of the story. She pictured how the movie adaptation might unfold with each potential actress and this imaginary activity re-ignited excitement about the movie itself.

Though fan-created content did not play a major role in the experiences of any of the 8 participants discussed above, it is interesting to observe how these texts nonetheless crept into the storyworld experiences of many. While fan

content remained at the outer edges, it was part of 5 of these participants' assembled crossmedia storyworlds, and led, however accidentally, to some immersed experiences.

The self-reported experiences of these 8 participants suggest two major considerations for researchers. First, it is worth considering that a perhaps underestimated number of young adults see little appeal in participatory venues, fan communities, and other opportunities to produce storyworld content and, therefore, these relatively new storyworld appendages do not have a significant impact on their experiences with story narratives. This observation does not mean that these participants were not deeply engaged with their favourite stories, but rather that their engagement took place primarily in relation to more traditional media formats (books, movies, TV). The focus of much literature considering new narrative theories in relation to crossmediation, and the frequent assumption that most or many youth are very engaged with participatory and online storyworld content may be misguided, and could lead to a skewed perception of how young adults navigate narrative in crossmedia storyworlds.

Second, it is worth considering that a perhaps underestimated number of young adults *are* engaging with participatory venues and fan-created content, but are doing so as spectators rather than participants. Their active engagement with participatory storyworld content comes from responding to, assimilating, and critiquing texts as readers, listeners, or watchers. If research continues to focus on youth who are actively producing content, we may fail to understand the effects of participatory venues on the crossmedia experiences of teens that are just looking.

Further research is required to examine what, more positively, young adults are doing when looking at participatory culture online, and the role that "creeping" or "lurking" in participatory venues plays in their experience of stories.

Participating in Private

While the 8 participants above were united in their denigration of fan-created content, the remainder of my participants had no such bias; in fact, some (Peter, Irene and Jess) associated themselves openly with fan communities, and others (Tim, Callie and Chris) were happy to discuss their online activities. However, as I moved through these interviews, it became evident that association with a fan community and/or an interest in producing storyworld content did not necessarily mean a participant was posting content online. Some participants were content to spectate in public and participate primarily in private.

Jess was one of the participants who identified strongly with an online community. An avid user of FanFiction.net, Jess described fan fiction and the community of writers on FanFiction.net as an important part of her life. She was involved in a number of fan fiction worlds, including the *Harry Potter* and *Glee* fandoms, and she stated that she both reads and writes fan fiction. Jess demonstrated an immense amount of knowledge about the *mores*, etiquette, and operation of the fan fiction community, and described in detail the pleasures she garnered from writing fan fiction. However, later in our discussion, she revealed that she rarely posts the stories she writes.

> I don't publish every single one of the stories; actually, I seldom do, only the ones that I'm satisfied with and I think won't be too embarrassing. […] But I've posted a few, like, five, ten? But, um, I took some of my earlier works down because it's embarrassing, you know?

As our discussion continued, it became evident that Jess reads significantly more often than she writes fan fiction, and her profile is not particularly robust, hosting relatively few stories, most of which are works in progress. Hence, her online presence on FanFiction.net is not particularly representative of the amount of time she spends on the site, or her level of identification with the community.

Chris was quite similar to Jess in this sense. He described an avid engagement with online participatory venues, and talked quite a bit about his own writing and filmmaking throughout our interview. However, when I asked him more specifically whether he posted content online and where that content was posted he told me:

> There's one [site] which I put my own stories on sometimes. I haven't, I don't know, I've took it off because I'm afraid, nobody, I have to rewrite this. I'm too afraid to, what people will say. Well, I'm not afraid to, I just don't think it's ready. And because I'm not ready, I'm afraid people will do that.

Like Jess, Chris told me about his various creative endeavours and his engagement with and commitment to online participatory communities, but later revealed that he was reluctant to publish his own work. Most of his participation was done in private and the resulting products were never made available for public consumption.

Irene and Callie were involved with more interactive online communities. Irene was very engaged with an online Warrior Cats role-playing game (RPG), and Callie frequented iScribble.net, a collaborative drawing site. On each site, participants contribute to the creation of stories or artwork. Both sites are fast-paced and transitory; RPG stories might be written over the course of a few hours, and may, thereafter, be ignored or even deleted depending on the forum. On

iScribble.net, participants collaborate on drawing boards, deleting, redrawing, drawing over the work of others, and discarding boards altogether at (for the uninitiated) a dizzying pace. Irene and Callie participated regularly in their respective interactive online environments. But this form of participation seemed distinctly different from those described by Chris and Jess. First, Callie and Irene contribute only part of the finished narrative or artwork; because many people work together, no one person is responsible for what is produced. It is therefore harder to single out and judge individuals for their work. Second, in interactive forums, the final product is not the primary concern; rather the process (and fun) of furiously scribbling or moving the story action along is the ultimate objective; there is therefore no reason to be nervous about the goodness of the end result.

Callie illustrates the contrast between these two forms of online participation. She also participates in a fan art site similar to typical fan fiction sites. On DeviantART, artists create a profile and post their completed artwork for others to peruse, critique and enjoy. While Callie regularly and publicly participates on iScribble.net boards, her use of DeviantART was very similar to Jess and Chris's use of fan fiction sites:

> Most people post drawings. I sometimes post drawings too. But mainly I just, like, follow people […] I wasn't a very good drawer […] so I posted, uh, basically, just to kind of add to my account just to make it not look, like, blank.

Like Jess and Chris, Callie rarely posts content, is primarily interested in the work of others, and expresses concern that her work is inadequate, while in the more interactive realm of iScribble.net, she felt free to experiment and enjoy the process of drawing with others. The iScribble.net environment led to an

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increased level of public participation, but it also led to a form of participation

that matches Harding's (1937) and Britton's (1984) conception of a participatory

stance more readily than does the act of posting a story. When contributing to an

iScribble.net board, Callie is "actually 'doing' something, as distinct from

thinking or watching, talking or imagining" (Harding, 1937, p. 248). The fast pace

of iScribble.net makes the creative process very reactive; Callie responds quickly

to the work of others in order to intervene in, modify, and control her

surroundings. When Callie posts her drawings to fanficton.net, she only

participates, in Harding's sense, at the moment that the completed drawing is

actually posted online; the creation of the work itself takes place in private, and,

as the following section will demonstrate, that process is "freed from the

participant's need to respond with action or decision" (Britton, 1963, p. 42).

Instead, it is about thinking through, imagining, and representing an image of a

character, scene or relationship. For iScribble.net, Callie creates in the role of the

participant; for DeviantART, she creates in the role of the spectator.

Spectating While Creating

> Writing in the spectator role, then, produces a verbal object—something
> that you and I and the beginning writer can achieve, as does the poet, the
> novelist, the playwright. A kindergarten girl, for example, in a school in
> Vancouver, drew a picture of a tree and wrote under it, "I saw the tree and
> then I walked away from it for ever," and a boy of the same age in
> England drew some brown chalk marks and wrote, "Exploring the rocks.
> A place called Cromer. I knocked the loose lumps of mud." I would argue
> that this is not language to inform, but to raise a celebratory plaque, a
> monument to experience. Such language in its fully developed form—as a
> fully shaped piece of discourse—becomes the language of literature.
> (Britton, 1984, p. 236-7)

When Jess, Chris, and Peter write fan fiction, when Callie carefully crafts

her pictures, and when Tim performs his favourite music, they are creating in the

role of the spectator. A product emerges and, in many cases, ends up posted to a participatory venue for others to enjoy, but the goal in producing that thing is not efferent communication, and the language, images, or sounds are not meant to inform, but to "raise a celebratory plaque, a monument to experience." I do not mean to suggest that, when creating, my participants sat firmly and statically in the position of spectatorship; rather, following Harding (1937), I suggest that,

> In most activity we must expect a continuous fusion of operative response, intellectual comprehension, perceptual enjoyment, and […] the evaluative form of response. Yet though they are no more than aspects or phases of a complex whole, one or other generally predominates. (p. 249-50)

In this section, I consider the importance of the evaluative component of the production my participants discussed, and suggest that it is when producing from the spectator role that many of my teens engaged in their most creative work.

Jess reflected thoughtfully on her experience writing fan fiction at various points in our interview and makes evident the slippery nature of spectatorship and participation when creating:

> It's [fan fiction] appealing, because of the appeal, um, of having control over something that could possibly, potentially happen in the show. And that is, I guess that is part of the appeal because it's characters that you know well and it's interesting to see how everybody else interprets them […] and it's interesting, when you write, for example, it's nice to put yourself into somebody else's perspective and try to write from that perspective I guess. […] It's relating to somebody else, even fictional, and, um, it's also putting your own spin on a role.

Jess describes writing to control and intervene in the storyworld, acting in order to change outcomes, and she finds this chance to participate in shaping the story enticing. Jess has stepped into the storyworld *as-if* to participate, to alter outcomes and to make characters act in the way she chooses. But Jess goes on to describe the experience of stepping into another character's shoes in order to relate to

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somebody else, and, here, the contemplative component of her writing becomes evident. Jess is testing out perspectives, representing potential experiences, and presenting possibilities for herself and her characters while simultaneously reflecting on these options and actions and generating and refining her own value system and world-image. In writing, she may take on the spectator role in order to experiment "without the partisanship of someone who, because he or she is participating, is liable to gain or lose by the outcomes of the event" (Britton, 1984, p. 326). The spectator orientation to the writing process allowed Jess to explore the fictional realm of *Glee* in order to develop a richer understanding of herself and the culture around her (Jenkins, 2006a, p. 185).

Chris was perhaps the participant most enthusiastic about his creative work. He spoke at various points in our interview of his filmmaking, writing, and musical composition as philosophical outlets wherein he tests out the possibilities of his imagination:

> On a very, very, very philosophical level, we are limited by the universe we live in. We are, our imaginations are captured by the world we live in. Because we were born into this world, we are, all we know is this world, all we know is the physics of this world. […] I mean you can create a different universe but it's still grounded in reality that comes from this. […] you can't go so far as to make a totally different universal physics, totally different Newtonian physics. […] So that's how all artists create. I mean that the only thing restricting them is that idea that you, the human mind isn't great enough to do that [create a different physics]. […] So what I want to do with my lifetime is make a fantasy… not a fantasy, make another world for yourself where you can have characters clash in that dramatic sense because if you have a fantasy… in *Lord of the Rings*, you couldn't have that dramatic situation where those two characters […] the two hobbits are isolated on Mount Doom, […] because if you tried to put that into a real life setting it would be totally benign and stupid and it wouldn't work, right? […] So you need that other world, to portray that.

Chris suggests that some possibilities, relationships, and truths about

human nature can only be portrayed in a fictional universe that stretches our

capacity for imagination. All his creative endeavors reflected his ongoing quest to

create new environments where he could imagine different and new possibilities,

uncharacteristic relationships and characters that push the boundaries of

acceptable social norms. He told me that people often think his work is very

"dark," but that he does not agree.

> They just think dark because they don't understand the dark, the, like, the
> things behind my art. They don't understand, the, like, I wrote this piece
> […] It's about the psychology of a detective who is affected by a world,
> you know, the violence in it. And, you know, I wanted to see how he could
> make, like, a positive outlook of it.

Here Chris describes his writing as a way he can figure things out, even

sort out how people might cope with difficult situations. Britton (1984) and

Harding (1937) suggest that it is through our experience as spectators that we

generate and refine our value systems. Through his creative experimentation with

characters, possible worlds, possible responses and possible relationships, Chis is

working out and shaping his own outlook on the world, and this outlook and value

system is carried forward and applied when he participates and interacts in the

real world *and* when he creates imagined worlds in his creative works. Hence,

when Chris writes, he is both developing a worldview and simultaneously acting

it out, by shifting seamlessly between spectator and participant roles.

Considering the internal work Jess and Chris do when producing fiction

and films reveals the important role of spectatorship in their creative processes.

Creating things is not just about making a mark on a storyworld, or controlling

storyworld action, but about testing out real-world values and possibilities in a

fictional environment. For Jess, experimenting in a world she already knows and testing out reactions for characters she feels connected to gives her a chance to consider how she might negotiate situations and relationships and the complications and consequences of various actions. Meanwhile, Chris is eager to emulate the imagination-stretching techniques of his favourite crossmedia storyworlds in order to consider how he, and various characters, might react to and cope with extreme circumstances and hardships. Both identified the spectatorial component of their creative processes as central to their enjoyment of writing and one of the main reasons they write in the first place. Participatory venues may encourage writing and production, but my interviews with Jess and Chris suggest that focusing on the participatory aspect of these activities may miss a major component of why they create and what they get out of their creative processes.

Building a Community

Many of my participants described themselves as "fans" of the stories they discussed; however, they used the term in the limited sense of someone who reads or watches a story regularly but does not participate in the broader fan culture and has no connections to larger fan networks. Beginning in the 1980s, cultural and media studies scholars took an interest in fan culture, often seeking to redeem fandom from its popular conception as the domain of weird, obsessive fanatics (see Jenkins, 1992; Fiske, 1989; Fiske, 1992; Radway, 1984). Instead, fan cultures were argued to be social communities engaged in a diverse repertoire of reception practices, and participating and intervening in the storyworlds they consume

(Jenkins,
1992). These
fans, in
many ways,
fit the
definition of
the
participant
Harding
(1937) and
Britton
(1984)
forward.
They are
highly
productive,
and utilize
preferred
reading
practices to
critique and
speculate
about, and

Love, Tolerance, and Sincerity Online

Since the fateful 4chan discussion that spawned the Brony movement, Bronies have worked to create a vibrant and diverse online fan community made up of safe, accepting spaces that propagate the show's themes of love and tolerance. The Bronies are a striking example of neo-sincerity[1], a move away from an irony-laden approach to pop culture, and towards earnest, passionate appreciation and engagement with various cultural forms, regardless of their low-culture or geeky status. Indeed, the Bronies are very sincere and *very* active, creating fan videos, mash-ups, endless memes, fan fiction, fan art, reviews, podcasts, and any other form of fan-created content you can think of. The community has gained significant media attention from Wired, Fox News and the Wall Street Journal[2], even receiving "shout-outs" from Stephen Colbert[3] and the producers and writers of the show themselves. Lauren Faust is slated to appear at BroNYCon 2012[4] and both she and other producers, animators, and crewmembers have openly engaged with the Brony community, doing interviews for various fan sites, and even going so far as to insert Brony inside jokes into episodes[5]. If you're tempted to write the community off as weird and creepy, you're not alone. Bronies themselves were initially shocked by their love for the show: "*First we can't believe this show is so good, then we can't believe we've become fans for life, then we can't believe we're walking down the pink aisle at Toys R Us … then we can't believe our friends haven't seen it yet, then we can't believe they're becoming bronies too.*"[4] But, despite early skepticism, these Bronies are adamant defenders of the community they have created: "*I believe the fan base for this new generation of My Little Pony is one of the most amazing/unexpected things to come out of the internet in a long while.*"[6] I tend to agree.

[1] Watercutter, Angela. (September 21, 2010) Sincerely ours: Glee's success cements age of geeky new sincerity. *Wired magazine online*. http://www.wired.com/underwire/2010/09/new-sincerity/ (accessed February 9, 2012)
[2] See Glover, Dan. (2011) In living glover. *Fox News Network*. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fqEDIFfy4Yg; RedEye. (2011). Wired reports on "bronies" male fans of My Little Ponies. *Fox News Network*. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fi27530dDCc&feature=related; Vara, V. & Zimmerman, A. (November 5, 2011) Hey, Bro, That's My Little Pony! *Wall Street Journal*. http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970203707504577012141105109140.html?mod=WSJ_hpp_RIGHTTopCarousel_1
[3] Colbert, Stephen. (August 1, 2011). Shout-out to my Bronies. Comedy Central. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o8WrKIvSEWI
[4] See www.bronycon.org
[5] Fan Characters. (April 21, 2011). *Equestria Daily*. http://www.equestriadaily.com/2011/04/equestria-daily-faq.html
[6] Watercutter, Angela. (June 9, 2011). My Little Pony corrals unlikely fanboys known as 'bronies'. *Wired magazine online*. http://www.wired.com/underwire/2011/06/bronies-my-little-ponys/

rework and reorganize texts and textual meanings. While my comments about the contemplative aspects of cultural production certainly apply to fans and fan communities as well, fans in Jenkins' sense are far more interested in production and active, public participation in the communities to which they belong than my participants. It could be said that fans are/were the earliest members of participatory cultures.

One of my participants, Peter, was part of a fan community. As noted in Chapter 4, Peter is a Brony, a male fan of the *My Little Pony* television show and member of the enormous online network of men aged 14-35 who share this unusual interest. I was directed to Peter specifically because of this involvement in the *My Little Pony* community and, indeed, Peter is a very active participant in a variety of *My Little Pony* activities. He co-hosts a weekly live podcast series in which he and a group of *My Little Pony* fans from Britain and the United States discuss the latest episode of the show. He produces *My Little Pony* vector tracings that he submits to online contests. He writes fan fiction and has even had one of his stories published on Equestria Daily, the most popular and respected fan-created *My Little Pony* website. He is active on a number of *My Little Pony* - related messaging boards, fan forums, and chat networks.

But Peter's participation in a variety of productive activities was not the main thing that set him apart from my other participants. It was Peter's focus on the *My Little Pony* community over the *My Little Pony* text itself that provided the main contrast. As Peter said, "most of my interaction with it [*My Little Pony*] has not been the show itself; it's been with the people who actually watch it now,

more so than actually watching the show." He goes so far as to call the *My Little Pony* community an "internet nation":

> It's like, it works as, like, an internet nation. That's how it works. […] and it's a great place to test out ideas and ideologies and all that. It's a really, it makes a really good sandbox for some reason. It just, it really does, because it's like you have the love and tolerance thing and then you have the, the um, you have issues faced and then you have, and then that turns into rights issues and, you know, all that.

The *My Little Pony* community was a place where Peter could explore, generate, and refine his own value system, but it also served as a space where he could apply that value system in meaningful ways:

> I'm doing a kind of a declaration of rights for the people of this, um, for the people of this community. Because, recently, I've seen a lot of, um, like, a lot of exclusion and a lot of, um, a lot of segregation among the groups and I'm like, this doesn't make any sense. This is love and tolerance, what the hell are you doing? Usually the people that do this are involved in, like, you know pornographic, um, exploits or they're doing things with you know, things that are less desirable. They like to go out and do those things and you know, you know, oh love and tolerance for everyone, except you. You're not allowed. Right? So I said, well, come on, that's crap. You gotta let them in. You gotta let them have the same kind of exposure that regular people get or the "regular people" [makes quote sign with hands]. So I got together with, um, I got together with a political sciences student from Arizona and a political sciences student from Britain and, and we sat down and we decided to try to write one up. And we're still writing it out because they've, they're busy though. So, but that's generally how it goes. To try to get it accepted by the major, um, publishers of the content. Like, the, on different websites.

Buckingham (2000) suggests that a major contributor to young adult lack of interest in the news and politics is the result of a sense of disempowerment.

> By and large, young people are not defined by society as political subjects, let alone as political agents. Even in the areas of social life that affect and concern them to a much greater extent than adults—most notably education—political debate is conducted almost entirely 'over their heads'. (p. 218)

But Peter is not a bystander in the *My Little Pony* community; rather, the community has provided him with opportunities to consider complicated questions about rights, discrimination, and community, while the participatory potential of the Internet has empowered him with the tools to be heard. He is even embracing the opportunity to become something of a political leader, as he considers what the *My Little Pony* community should or could look like, and lobbies for the adoption of his declaration of rights. Through his engagement with *My Little Pony* fandom, Peter is learning how to be an engaged and responsible member of a community. Online fan communities centered on non-political, even fictional interests may well be a "good sandbox", where youth can experiment with political involvement and engaged citizenship.

Peter has a real love for and deep appreciation of the *My Little Pony* television show; but, to use a metaphor employed by my supervisor, the ponies and their story are, in this case, sort of like the hole in the donut. While many people outside the Brony community have noted that the show is strangely addictive and amusing (VanDerWerff, 2010; Morgan, 2011), at the end of the day, it is a relatively uncomplicated story about a group of ponies learning life lessons designed to be comprehensible and entertaining to children as young as four. What I find far more interesting than the television show itself is the complex, diverse and incredibly engaged community (the donut) that has sprung up around it. I do not mean to denigrate the quality of the show's content (Peter talked quite intelligently about its use of animation techniques, and plot devices), but rather to suggest that, in some cases, storyworlds provide simplistic, but

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manageable gathering points around which youth can explore more complicated

questions of citizenship, artistic expression and how to be with others. For Peter,

being a Brony provides him with an alternative social community in which to

explore complex social, cultural, and political questions.

Participating and Spectating in Private and Public

It is worth considering how new these participant and spectator

distinctions and positions are or are not. Certainly many online participatory

opportunities are new, but, as already noted, other literature has considered these

effects of convergence culture in great detail, and I therefore will not rehash them

here. The sorts of private participation (e.g. writing stories never to be published),

along with the contemplative component of that participation is, likewise, not new

or unique to the digital age; children and teens have long been able to write their

own stories in private and engage in the imaginative play this involves. It strikes

me that what is new in this mix is the opportunities for privately spectating in

public spaces, specifically in online venues designed to encourage participation.

All but 3 of my participants mentioned engaging in this sort of spectatorship, and

many spent a great deal of time combing through fan-created sites and social

media venues just to look at creative work, or read discussions about stories they

enjoyed. The potential to lurk in public spaces from the privacy of our own homes

is a unique feature of the Internet and my data suggests that, unlike public

participation, it is a very popular way of exploring storyworlds. This is, perhaps,

particularly interesting given the unflattering language used to describe these

practices. Observing the action on participatory forums without participating is

colloquially dubbed "creeping" or "lurking," language typically associated with pathological behaviours. An important question for future research, then, might be to tease out in greater detail what youth enjoy about "creeping", why they so often use participatory venues for non-participatory purposes, and how they associate or do not associate with the negative terms used to describe these practices.

It might also be interesting to explore why so many venues that are supposed to revolutionize the role of the audience by offering spaces for participation are not (according to my admittedly limited data set) regularly eliciting that participation. For many of my participants there seemed to be an important boundary line separating those who participated on these forums and those who did not. Though I have insufficient evidence to draw conclusions about why this boundary existed, my suspicion is that it has something to do with identity and vulnerability. Most of my participants had very developed and very negative ideas about the type of people who participate in online story spaces. It is possible that some young adults cannot or will not join in online conversations because they feel they neither can claim nor want to claim a fan identity and the membership in a particular community that entails. There is also some evidence in my data to suggest that my participants avoided contributing content in public spaces because it rendered them vulnerable. While privately experimenting with creative writing, drawing or film-making is not new, going public with that content is a very different operation that opens the door to critique, and even ridicule. If young adults are relating to crossmedia stories as a way of shoring up their identities, then the vulnerability they might experience by going public with

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content creation, or even publically voicing their opinions online, might be very frightening. A thorough investigation of the role of identity and vulnerability in preventing public participation is beyond the scope of this project; however, I would suggest that a further exploration of the relationship between these concepts might provide interesting insights about youth identity development in participatory cultures.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explored how and when crossmedia storytelling aided and/or hindered my participants' ability to enter the imaginative world of the stories they enjoyed. I then suggested that the great majority of my participants were more interested in merely looking at storyworld content than participating in the creation of that content. My findings suggest that, while teens may be exploring online texts and paratexts more often than they were a decade ago in Brooker's study (2001), most are still not engaging in the full range of participatory forms available to them, preferring to simply lurk and look. Further research might explore the appeal of spectatorship in participatory venues that was so popular among this group of teens, and why participation was so rare.

CHAPTER 6

Experiences and Pleasures

While much attention has been paid to the effects of crossmedia on reading and narrative construction (Page & Thomas, 2011; Rose, 2011, Brooker, 2003; Evans, 2008), on the evolution of media convergence (Gillan, 2011; Tryon, 2009; Ross, 2008), and on the role of convergence culture in youth learning (Buckingham, 2007) the experiences and pleasures youth derive from interacting with crossmedia storyworlds are explored significantly less. When experience and pleasure are considered, it is done in relation to isolated technologies, and new media phenomena; the pleasures and experience of gaming, media-mixing (Ito, 2007), or fan fiction (Thomas, 2007a), etc. are considered individually, but the appeal of accessing various media formats in a single storyworld or in pursuit of a single interest is often neglected. My interest was to understand the particular sorts of pleasures associated with stories that span various media with various affordances that offer very different experiences. While participants certainly reflected on the particular pleasures enjoyed in and offered by specific media formats within storyworlds (e.g., gaming lets me control the *Harry Potter* world), there was also much reflection on how crossmediation expands the experience of a given story and how participants enjoyed and took advantage of that expansion.

Returning to the work of Douglas and Hargadon (2001), I have divided the pleasures described by participants into engaged pleasures and immersed pleasures. I conclude the chapter by considering the pleasures participants associated with crossmedia consumerism.

Engaged Experiences and Pleasures

Recall that engaged pleasures are those experienced when we step out of the narrative itself in order to pay heed to the construction of the story and to garner a better understanding of aspects of the storyworld (Douglas and Hargadon, 2001). Though all participants moved back and forth between immersed and engaged stances in relation to their stories of choice, a number of participants described primarily engaged experiences with storyworlds. Two themes emerged when participants were asked what they enjoyed about the engaged experiences they were describing and the opportunities offered to them by broad crossmedia storyworlds as a whole. First, participants enjoyed the sense of mastery and expertise that particular media formats offered, and that the sheer number and variety of texts available allowed them to cultivate. Second, participants related the importance of choice, which led to a sense of freedom and control over their favourite stories. With so many texts and paratexts available, participants could choose and control their own level and type of engagement with the storyworld. Choice, freedom and control were also mentioned in relation to specific media formats, particularly videogames and fan fiction. Finally, every participant made comparisons between crossmedia texts and the majority of these comparisons centered on book to movie adaptations. I will therefore conclude this section by considering what this focus on book to movie comparisons tells us about the experience of young adults in relation to broad crossmedia storyworlds.

Expertise-Mastery

When I asked Callie why she enjoyed playing the *Harry Potter* computer game, she informed me that she was very good at it. That we like doing things we are good at and are less keen on doing things we are not good at is not surprising; studies examining young adult reading have often pointed to the importance of establishing a sense of competence in reading skills (Smith & Wilhelm, 2004; Rothbauer, 2006). But crossmediation of stories, and the enormous amount of available information about them, allows readers to become more than just "good at" the game, or knowledgeable about the movies. Participants were able to become *experts* in their storyworld of choice. In Callie's case, this expertise allowed her to navigate the computer game with ease:

> I like it because after I read the book and I watched the movie and stuff then I understand all the spells that you have to do in it and I understand basically the whole plot of it. Cause, like, there's nothing… it's one of those games where it doesn't really have like a thing to guide you. Like, it doesn't say, like "now go to… something to defeat a big spider." You have to just kind of go into it yourself. But it was kind of easier for me because I'd already, like, I know a lot about it. So I had… I just kind of knew, okay, well after he goes to potions class, then I guess it's time to go into the chamber of secrets.

Irene was continually delighted by the wealth of information she found on the Internet in relation to her favourite storyworlds:

> There are, like, so many different things you can find out, like I went on the Internet to look at the website cause that's what it said in the back of one of the books and I wanted to find out more about the books. And I found like just a wealth of information. There's so many clubs and, like, art websites and so much different fan-based, um, more information that you can gather from looking through different medias.

While many participants searched for information about their favourite storyworlds, Irene's approach was different in how open her searches often were.

For most participants, information gathering in relation to stories was conducted to answer a particular question (e.g. when will *The Hunger Games* movie be released? Why does Snape try to kill Harry in the last book?) Irene's approach was less about searching and more about browsing various sources in the hopes of gathering anything new. She, more than other participants, expressed an understanding of storyworlds as unbounded. With *Warrior Cats* in particular, there was no limit to the world, and she savoured the sense that as long as she kept looking, she would continue to discover more places, people, mythology and plot. She loved exploring the various crossmedia and online aspects of it, learning more and more about the cats and sharing her expertise with friends.

Irene's expertise found its focus inside the storyworld. She knew all there was to know about the forest, the various warrior clans and the backstories of prominent and minor characters. Chris, on the other hand, enjoyed mastering the *Harry Potter* and *The Lord of the Rings* worlds from an extra-story perspective. While, certainly, he demonstrated an abundance of knowledge about mythology and plotlines, he was more interested in knowing everything there was to know about the construction of the world itself, the decisions the writers, directors, and actors made and the most minute details of the setting, filming, or writing. Here he describes his understanding of the exact layout of the Chamber of Secrets:

> I just tried to keep finding out about the Chamber of Secrets and more details about that. […] but because a lot of it was unknown, I really tried to find out, instead of creating for myself, what the creator, JK Rowling had thought of how that would look. I mean, where would this tunnel lead in the Chamber of Secrets, where would it lead? What her vision of it was.

During our interview, Chris pulled out his iPhone regularly to refresh his memory about storyworld information. He described interest in movies, books, soundtracks, websites, videogames, and interviews in his quest to better understand the construction of various storyworlds and the intentions of authors and producers. When I commented that he was a bit like a human encyclopedia, he was delighted, stating that he was always looking to expand his knowledge base. Expertise in relation to his favourite stories was a huge source of pride for Chris.

Certainly some participants had no interest in mastering story-related texts or games nor were they aiming to become experts on the *Harry Potter* universe. Many were content to enjoy the story in a few formats and move onto something else. However, the unique opportunities for mastery and expertise offered by the proliferation of texts, information, and story resources that defines crossmedia storytelling were not lost on the above participants. Crossmedia stories offer the chance to master not just the use of the various media formats in which a story is represented, but to utilize all those formats to master the storyworld itself. Again I am left wondering what might happen if the zeal with which these young adults search out, engage with and develop expertise in their favourite fictional storyworlds, was harnessed and applied it to real-world experiences, and political and community narratives. Borrowing a page from the TrueMajority action group[4], Jenkins (2006a) calls the realization of this transfer process *serious fun* (p. 82), and offers case studies of its accomplishment, including an exploration of

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[4] TrueMajority is a US liberal advocacy group. They merged with USAction in 2009. See their website: http://usaction.org/ for more information.

how educators can and are embracing the informal pedagogy of fan communities to promote literacy, and how activist groups sought alliances with *Harry Potter* fan communities to further civil rights goals. Considering how librarians and educators might use the knowledge, expertise and passion youth develop in their interaction with crossmedia storyworlds to foster new forms of serious fun is an important question for future research—with due acknowledgement of the perils of colonizing recreational pleasures for more earnest purposes.

Choice-Freedom-Control

For some participants, what was enjoyable about crossmedia stories was not that variety led to expertise and mastery, but that different formats gave them different options, and they had the freedom to pick and choose how they wanted to see their favourite stories represented and what level or depth of engagement they were interested in. Bradley believes choice is the primary appeal of crossmedia stories, because they allow readers the opportunity to find the version of the story they like:

> I think you like to see the different retellings. It's kind of like the fan forum. They retell it; they make it to their liking. In that way, it's kind of different so you're kind of looking for the way you like it.

> Crossmedia, says Bradley, allows people to find, not just the format

they're most comfortable with, but the telling of the story they like best. This was a particularly important appeal factor for Chris, Irene, and Jill in relation to videogames.

> Chris: Choice. Um, making movement. I mean, being involved. Definitely. You being in control […] manipulating environments, manipulating the actions within another type of world. That's what videogames do.

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Jill: I think with a videogame and the movie, I think it's because when you're watching the movie, you're just sitting there and you're watching the picture. But the videogame, you can interact with it. And you can play the game and you can, like, um, bend the story to your character […] So I think it's just because it's more interactive. With a movie, it's just, you're sitting there; you're watching the movie. […] The story is already in front of you and you have no choice. And with the book I think it's a little bit different because it's still that the story is laid out in front of you but you have the choice to alter the pictures and create the images in your mind.

Irene: So I guess it's really a difference of, like, what format you like to do things in. Like some people might not want to interact with it. They just like, you know, watching the story roll out in front of them. They like being, they like observing. But, like I'm the type of person, I like interacting with things. So I'll, I'll get in there and I'll want to, I'll want to be one of those people and you know start interacting with the world. So I guess… I guess with videogames […] you can interact more so it's really a choice of freedom. Like, if you just want to, you know, sit there and watch the story or if you want to jump in there and change things and really get a grasp on it.

Jill and Irene had a very clear sense that different media formats offer different levels of choice-freedom-control, with movies providing the least opportunity for viewer manipulation or interaction, books following, and videogames offering the most. Both Jill and Irene were clear that they engaged with all three media at different times, but that one of the factors in their decision regarding what to engage at a given moment was governed by how much control over and interaction with the text they wanted.

Jill, Irene, and Bradley also expressed that the variety of options and formats available in crossmedia storyworlds is what makes crossmedia appealing overall. If you're not much of a reader, wait for the movie; if you want interaction, head for the videogame; if you're looking for participation, check out

a forum. The experience you want is out there; all you have to do is find it. As Irene repeats throughout her interview, crossmedia provides readers with options.

A final note on the pleasures of choice and freedom in relation to crossmedia texts: if crossmediation allows access to popular stories in various ways and with various levels of engagement then it also allows more ways for more people to participate in the social dialog about popular texts. In her study of youth engaging with new media technology, Mackey (2002) notes:

> In the kind of society where choice is so extensive, people need to be able to join in at different levels. You may not have seen the exact episode of *Friends* being talked about, but you know the series and can follow the details. You haven't read one book by an author but you have read others, or you have read books by different authors in the same series, or you have seen a film adaptation. You haven't seen the movie but you have seen the back story of its filming on the television programme *Entertainment Tonight*. Being able to join in the conversation in one way or another is a valuable asset in contemporary social life (p. 45).

In Chapter 4, I noted that some participants selected texts in order to be able to participate in the social dialog surrounding popular stories. Mackey suggests that crossmediation allows individuals the chance to access popular texts and thereby the conversation surrounding popular texts, at different levels. Crossmedia, then, allows individuals to choose *how* they gain access to that social dialog.

Criticism and Comparison

As noted previously, each interview began with a standard description of crossmedia stories. This definition and description was produced with two primary concerns in mind: (1) I did not want to restrict the stories the participants selected by emphasizing stories that began as books, and (2) I wanted to ensure

that a variety of media formats were represented in my examples so as not to limit the scope of discussion. Despite my carefully constructed description, all but 3 participants selected stories that originated as books and were later adapted into other media formats as their first crossmedia example. Further, when these 11 participants were asked to "tell me about" their experience with their chosen story, all responses initially focused on the original book and the movie adaptation. Consider the following participant comments:

> Bronwyn: Well, there's *Twilight*. I watched the first movie and bef… and then I read the book after. And then I thought that the movie sucked after I read the book. They left out almost half of the book.

> Kate: I went to see the movie and everyone was like, "oh the book was way better." And I really liked the movie so I was like, "well I could get more out of it." So that's what kind of made me want to read the books and once I read the books it's just, you know, it's great books, like, I don't care what anyone says. It's actually pretty good books. So of course movies can't compare to the books because, you know, they always don't really fully get in-depth as the books do.

> Mary: Well, I started with the books. I knew there were movies out, and I told myself that I should probably read the books first, because that's kind of a rule.

> Jason: Some people watch movies before they read the books and it just completely ruins their perspective on that, so they don't go to read the books and it's just so much better in the books and movies ruin it.

Not only were these participants focused on books and movies, the discourse they used to describe movie versions of the story focused on fidelity comparisons to the origin text as the primary method for evaluating the "goodness" of the movie. This attachment to fidelity echoes some elements of the critical discourse of adaptation studies, wherein both academic and popular

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criticism may regard adaptations as secondary, derivative and inferior, and fidelity to the original or source work is the primary critical criterion by which adaptations were judged (Hutcheon, 2006).

This approach to adaptation can be contrasted to work in the field of crossmediation that discusses the increasing openness of multimodal storyworlds, and the flexibility of audiences in relation to these texts (Jenkins, 2006a; Lunenfeld, 1999; Bolin, 2010). With youth being touted as eager adopters of all things digital, immersed in digital technology, and demanding crossmedia stories (Ross, 2008), I was surprised to hear these youth describe their experiences in such limited terms and with such a focus on "old" media. Of course, as our conversations continued, I discovered that all participants were engaged with other texts and paratexts, digital extensions and transformations, etc., but in most cases these were only mentioned in response to direct probes or as background in explaining or discussing interest in core-story texts. While it may be true that youth are "always connected" (Pew Research Centre, 2010, p. 25) in some areas of life, this connection and engagement did not appear to infiltrate, at a conscious level, my participants' perceptions of their experiences with stories. In addition, though we scholars may note changes in media consumption patterns in young adults and herald these as the dawn of a new era in how youth relate to stories and media, we must keep in mind that the young adults we're talking about may not perceive their behaviours as indicative of any sort of change in story-consumption patterns, and instead see new media extensions of stories as supportive of, but peripheral to their storyworld engagement. Just because they engage, doesn't

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mean they can't be engaging in ways that correspond with traditional reading practices and narrative understanding.

Though much of the criticism in which my participants engaged focused on movies as bad adaptations of books, there was no doubt that they enjoyed analyzing the differences, similarities and inconsistencies between crossmedia retellings. Many participants were visibly excited and, even, passionate when discussing the various texts in their favourite storyworlds. Callie, who was very interested in book to movie fidelity was disappointed that the *Harry Potter* movies "left things out", but continued to discuss at length which aspects of the story she felt were reasonable cuts and which were not unreasonable:

> In some of the movies like in the third movie, they like changed a lot of stuff. Like they took out like a few chapters like they took out an entire like scene that was kind of important. They changed it with something else. I don't know why they did that. But they… I was looking on the special features of that disc and they, they had made a scene for that. They had made a scene. But, I… but I don't know why they cut it out.

Chris was similarly prone to even more vehement and detailed analysis of book to movie adaptations, and clearly both enjoyed and took great pride in taking a critical eye to adaptations, and stories in general:

> Well in the last one there was this entire speech that Harry Potter, Harry had. And they took it out of the film. And it was really good. I don't know, I mean definitely in terms of how the film was made, the book, I think a film is supposed to be a hundred and thirty-forty minutes and the book was about six hundred pages and it was, even it was split into two parts. You can't put everything in. But that was a really important scene in the book I believe. And they took it out. They replaced a lot in the movie.

Part of the fun of comparisons and criticism was clearly tied to social interaction. As discussed in Chapter 4, peer influence is a significant factor in youth reading selection, and some participants expressed a need to engage with

certain stories so they could participate in and contribute to an ongoing dialogue with their friends. Comparisons between various media instantiations of stories provide some of the fodder for these conversations. When the *Percy Jackson* movie was cast, Jess was quick to strike up conversations with her friends about the casting of a brunette to play the role of the blonde Annabelle: "We were like, can't you find a blonde in Hollywood?" Jason described debriefing with a friend after seeing the *Eragon* movie and later warning friends against watching it: "The person I went to go see the movie with, we had a conversation about how it was changed and everything. Yeah, then I […] told friends not to watch the movie cause it was bad."

In their examination of the development of brand communities, McAlexander, Schouten, and Koenig (2002) found that mutual evaluations and the sharing of experiences in relation to particular brand products are major factors in developing and maintaining a sense of affiliation and affinity between members of a group. My participants all described this sort of social interaction in relation to one or more of the stories we discussed. Comparing crossmedia instantiations and criticizing various media re-creations was an importantly social activity; evaluating crossmedia with friends was fun at the same time that it solidified bonds within peer groups.

Immersed Experiences and Pleasures

Recall that immersed pleasures are those that occur when we are completely absorbed in a story (Douglas & Hargadon, 2001). All but 2 participants referenced this sort of complete absorption in a story as something

they greatly enjoyed. My question was whether or not crossmedia storyworlds offer extra opportunities for immersion and/or how my participants utilized the various aspects of crossmediated stories to create immersed reading experiences.

Two themes arose in participant responses. First, many participants were eager to see their favourite stories continued, often in a particular media format and sometimes in any format, so that there would be more story in which to become immersed. Second, participants stated that some media formats helped them "bring the story to life". There was a great deal of interest in escaping into a fantasy world and, for some, crossmedia components helped them do just this.

Continuing the Story

While many participants were reluctant to engage with particular media formats (fan fiction, video games, etc.), their boundaries regarding which crossmedia they were interested in and which they weren't was importantly focused on the purpose rather than the format of the extension. Participants (Jill, Bradley, Ann, Mary, Kate, Chris, Julia, Bronwyn, Jason) were generally excited to see adaptations, but more excited about the prospect of a crossmedia extension that continued the core-story texts. This trend was, in many ways, anticipated by their early reflections on their preference for series stories rather than one-off stories:

> Jill: I like it how it's like, series. Because I like it how the story like continues and it's not just one book and it's not just individual. So it kind of keeps you like guessing until you finish it. And then, definitely when the movies came out I was really excited and I wanted to watch them.

Bradley: Well, cause the first books were so enjoyable and all that, so, like you just kinda wanna re-experience it. Like, it's for sure not the same book, but it's just the feeling of being in this world.

Ann: Well, I like series a lot and I think it's good for popularity too. Lots of people like series. I think they like that it keeps going and you're waiting for the next thing to come out.

Kate: When you finish that first book, it's in your head. And you're like, I need to read that second book, I need to find out what happens to Tally and I need to know what happens. It stays with you until you can start reading it again.

That youth have an affinity for series fiction is not a surprise. Researchers (Barstow, 1999; Mackey, 1990; Ross, 1995; Ross, 2009; McKechnie, 2006) have suggested a variety of explanations for the popularity of series fiction: their attractive packaging (Barstow, 1999 p. ix; McKechnie 2006, p. 83), that the story continues sometimes endlessly, allowing for ongoing engagement (McKechnie, 2006, p.83), that series feel comfortable and safe (Ross, 1995, p. 224), and that they function as a cultural currency and social activity embedded in social relations (Ross, 1995, p. 226). Crossmedia fiction, to some extent, can be seen as an extension of the series logic, offering many of the same pleasures. Youth can continue to engage with an already familiar storyworld near-endlessly as new translations, adaptations, extensions, prequels, sequels, etc. continue to roll out. Haralovich and Trosset (2004) suggest, "narrative pleasure stems from the desire to know what will happen next, to have that gap opened and closed, again and again" (p. 83). The appeal of both series fiction and crossmedia storytelling may lie in the repetition of the "and then what" questions they allow. In crossmedia storyworlds, especially in relation to fan fiction, there is always an opportunity to delay the story resolution and ask "and then what" one more time.

My participants were universally eager for more story. When I asked Ann

about the appeal of *Glee* books, she had this to say:

> Like, if it was just saying the episodes, it wouldn't be, it would just be
> whatever. But I think it's cool that they have other aspects of it, like, being
> told.

When I asked Bradley, who was generally uninterested in crossmedia

fodder, if there was any crossmedia product related to the *Glee* franchise that

would interest him, he said:

> Bradley: A movie!
> Laura: So a movie would be interesting to you?
> Bradley: Yes it would.
> Laura: Okay and why is that?
> Bradley: Because it is, like I said earlier, an extended episode

Bradley limited his interest in crossmedia extensions by both format and

purpose throughout our conversations. He was only interested in crossmediation

that offered more story, he was exclusively interested in television, movie, and

book formats, and he required *consistency* in format. *Glee* books held no appeal,

but he was excited to see a movie because it was "an extended episode"; a movie

extension offered him both a storyworld he was familiar with and the media

experience (screen viewing) he was familiar with in relation to that storyworld.

Ann and Mary were more willing to move into different formats in search

of new story material, but they showed a marked preference for story

continuations in the original format and, for certain stories, were only interested in

more story material if it was presented in the original format. When I asked them

about their interest in *Pottermore*, they responded:

Ann: Well, obviously I want *Harry Potter* to continue, but I don't play on the computer very much, and I wish it was in book form or something like that.

Mary: Yeah, I agree with that. I think that's kind of taking it a bit too far. Only if the story would continue in book form, then… yeah.

Meanwhile, Kate was happy to explore different formats in search of new story material. She explains her interest in *Twilight* fan fiction like this:

I would like to hear more of this world […]. so it's sort of like keeping that thing alive still even though it might have finished.

Kate considers the *Twilight* story "finished" because the author will not be creating anything new in the *Twilight* world. In general, participants were more receptive to crossmedia extensions of stories that were not "finished" (i.e., the author, producers, writers were still creating new official story material). Once the official story was over (and "official" here was defined either as something that was produced by the author of the book(s) or was part of the original television or movie series), most participants moved on to other stories. Their affection for "completed" stories remained, but their engagement petered out even when new crossmedia material was being released and fan communities remained actively involved in producing related content. Irene reflects on the appeal of *Warrior Cats* versus *Harry Potter* like this:

Like, the *Warrior Cats* books, there's like 20 books in that series right now and they're still going. So I don't know, maybe it's just because there's more, you know, new connections and new things… new ideas that are popping up with, as each book comes out. Yet with *Harry Potter* you know, I'll look for information, but it's not going anymore as much, so I just kind of, yeah, you just look on there and you say, "oh that book was cool." And then you just… yeah.

Ultimately, while most participants expressed interest in and described enjoying material that continued their favourite stories, a few important factors

influenced the acceptability of crossmedia continuations. For some participants, it was important that new story information was provided in the same format as the original. Other participants remained concerned with authorship and franchise authenticity.

Escapism and Role-Playing

A number of participants were eager to be carried away by their favourite stories, escaping from reality into fantasy:

Bradley: You leave all your stresses and stuff, you just go to a different world where you can just be whoever you want and be, whatever you want, and it doesn't matter if you're someone else.

Kate: In the books when you read, you just kind of become, I'm going to use that word again, you become submersed in the world, right, like, you know your mind's in it, your heart's sometimes in the books too and so it's like an escape.

Julia: It's mostly just an escape. Cause when I read a book, I actually feel like I'm in that book watching, kind of like Christmas Caroling, I don't know. I just get really lost in my books.

Participants described escapism in relation to individual media formats, but there was little consistency about which format was best for escapism across responses. Callie and Bradley described escaping into videogames; Ann, Kate, and Julia read books as an escape; Jess and Irene wrote fan fiction and participated in role-playing games, while Chris, Ann, and (again) Bradley, preferred movies and television for their escapist pleasures. While most participants described the escapism stories allow as straightforward fun (e.g. Callie, "I know this kind of sounds cheesy but I like being in their world. You know? Yeah […] I don't know, it's just fun"), Jess states that writing fan fiction is

not just about escaping, but working through her own feelings and issues in a fictional space.

> But writing in itself is rather therapeutic and writing about somebody else's life is, you know, it's at the same time, it's a way to escape into another world, but while, you know, relating to your own sentiments and feelings and your own world and it's interesting to connect it to you.

Jess echoes observations made by Thomas (2007a) in her case study of two adolescent females creating collaborative fan fiction online. Thomas suggests that fan fiction and RPGs provide a therapeutic outlet where adolescents can express angst and confusion and rehearse desires and fantasies in the safety of a fantasy zone. Jess repeatedly asserts the cathartic aspects of writing, wherein she is able to both "rant" about "things in life I am not quite happy about," and utilize the characters and stories she creates to work through her issues and struggles. The characters Jess writes, then, are always infused with parts of herself, making writing " a very intimate thing."

Thomas's (2007a) work argues that fan fiction and RPGs provide an outlet not just for working through angst and frustration, as Jess described, but for experimenting with identities, and testing out ideal selves:

> [T]he girls have both infused aspects of their "real" selves into their characters, [but] the opposite is also true: the fictional characters are also a means for the girls to fashion new and emerging identities for themselves as they develop into adulthood. The characters allow the girls the freedom and power to author an identity (Bakhtin, 1998) which plays out their fantasies and desires: of their physical bodies, their hopes and dreams for the future, and their ideas of romance. Their characters are a rehearsal of who they want to become, and in role-playing that ideal self, they can grow closer to becoming that ideal (p. 160)

Interestingly, it was Kate, who did not participate in fan fiction or RPGs, who describes this sort of identity-change-room at work in her fantasy role-

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playing. Kate revealed a vivid and ongoing fantasy world centered on the *Avatar*

and *Twilight* stories that she acted out in the physical world:

> I would pretend that I was Enovi and I was waking up in the morning and whatever, and I was going hunting or whatever. Things I didn't see in the movie I would make up in my head.

Kate describes *Avatar* role-playing that allowed her to imagine and, to

some extent, enact a life that realized her environmentalist ideals and goals. At the

same time, the romantic focus of the *Twilight* books allowed Kate to explore a

very different kind of embodiment:

> After I read the [*Twilight*] books whenever I would go for walks or I would go to the park, I'd make myself Bella and I'd kind of, like, pretend that Edward was watching me. And that would affect the way I would act. When, when no one's watching you, you're kind of just whatever, walking around, but when you feel someone watching you you're like, [walks more gracefully] you know what I mean.

Here we see Kate rehearsing the role of, and learning to understand herself

as an object of the male gaze (Mulvey, 1975), to adjust her behaviour in

compliance with the standards of femininity, and to take pleasure from being the

object of male desire. It is perhaps disturbing, and certainly interesting, that

Kate's rehearsal of romance was exclusively about being watched. Kate didn't

imagine *seeing* as Bella sees, or *doing* what Bella does, or *being* someone else

subjectively; Kate's fantasy was entirely about being looked at as Bella, and doing

the things that make Bella appear the way she appears physically to Edward.

While I suspect that Kate perceives power for herself in her/Bella's ability to hold

the male gaze—and it would be overly simplistic to suggest that the power

relationships at play when female bodies are looked at are straightforwardly

imbalanced—this is not enough to quell my own discomfort and concern in the

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face of Kate's fantasy. Thomas (2007a) describes the identity rehearsal of her two

fan fiction writers as a positive, even empowering exercise in self-exploration, but

Kate's fantasy life suggests that the role-playing and fantasy some fiction inspires

may be about learning and practicing gender norms that enact problematic power

imbalances and place women in the role of object. Kate's experience reveals the

sometimes high stakes nature of youth role-playing in relation to fictional texts

and reveals how larger social issues may be played out and/or reinforced in this

imaginative space.

Not only did *Twilight* inspire Kate to conjure a fantasy world wherein she

was the desirable heroine, it also convinced Kate that, in the real world, boys and

romance were worth considering and perhaps she should pay a different kind of

attention to her male peers:

> I kind of went through a phase where I wanted my own vampire, as
> probably every other girl did. Where I wanted that boy who was going to
> love me unconditionally […] I wanted it to be real. I wanted to be Bella. I
> wanted to have my Edward and kind of just be submersed in that world.
> […] It changed my view on guys a little bit you know what I mean? […] I
> don't know how to put it but it's kind of like I was almost looking more
> for an Edward instead of just, you know, whatever, being friends with
> guys. I was kind of more looking for that pale skinned, light haired kind of
> guy you know, wherever I would go.

Kate describes her encounter with *Twilight* as the source of a major shift in

her thinking about boys and romance. The story not only inspired Kate to pursue

romance in her own life, it provided her with the script of an ideal romance and

information regarding what characteristics she should seek out in a mate and what

characteristics she should strive to embody in order to attract that ideal mate.

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When I asked Kate if and how crossmediation effects or contributes to her fantasy life, she explained that the variety of media products, adaptations and story information available in her favourite storyworlds offered her more ways to connect with the story and "help bring it to life."

> I wanted to live in that world. I needed to know more about it. I wanted to see it behind the scenes and so I went to the website and […] I saw deleted material and I saw […] the director's cut […] so like, website definitely did help me get more information about it. And that was before the extended cut came out […] and obviously when that came out, it was more of the movie and I was like, I have to get this! I need to see more of this […] and that's why the extended cut was so, like, I need it? Because it would help bring that to life.

Kate provides a brilliant example of engaged reading supporting an immersed experience. She actively sought resources and information about the making of the movie, the director's vision, and the special effects in order to enhance her imagined experience of the *Avatar* world. Murray (1997) argues that surrendering ourselves to a story is an active process in which we choose to focus attention and energies in ways that support immersion:

> When we enter a fictional world, we do not merely suspend disbelief so much as we actively create belief. Because of our desire to experience immersion, we focus our attention on the enveloping world and we use our intelligence to reinforce rather than to question the reality of the experience (p. 110).

Kate used resources designed to reveal the un-reality of the storyworld, but was able to focus her attentions in such a way that they reinforced rather than questioned the reality of *Avatar*.

This section has focused primarily on Kate as a particularly interesting case study of the immersive possibilities crossmedia storytelling offers and the experiences it can be used to support. While many participants expressed

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excitement at the prospect of losing themselves in a story while reading, watching, or writing, they were happy to leave the storyworld behind when they put down the book, turned off the TV or walked away from the computer. Kate was uniquely absorbed in her favourite stories, and she provides fascinating (if sometimes troubling) examples of the ways fantasy and play can be used to experiment with identity, to practice roles, and to play at relationships. Birkerts (1994) argues that, when we read fiction, we do not merely leave the storyworld behind when we put down the book; rather "in many vital ways [reading] is carried on—continued—when the reader is away from the page" (p. 95). After we leave our immersed experience of a fiction, the story begins its shadow life, haunting the reader, invading his or her reality, and, providing a lens through which the world may be viewed (p. 101). Kate provides a striking example of this shadow life of reading and how potent and affecting fiction can be for young adults. As Birkerts says:

> Nothing I read now, alas, could affect me the way certain books did when I was in my teens. I fear that I will never be as taken with an author as I once was with D.H. Lawrence or Henry Miller or Thomas Mann. Now when I read a book that matters I feel that I am carrying it around inside me. Then it was the reverse: I was living my life inside the enclosure of the work. *Women in Love* was not just an intense reading experience—it was a powerful initiation. Through the novel, through what I took to be the Lawrentian sensibility in general, I worked out my first substantial thoughts about love, passion, and sexual power. Rupert Birkin throwing stones into a pond was more commandingly present to me than any of the adults who tried to direct my steps (p. 102).

Consumerism, Ownership, and Identity

As noted in Chapter 4, my participants were split on the question of merchandise. Some (Ann, Callie, Irene, Jill, Julia and Peter) enjoyed owning

story-related clothing, toys, etc. while others (Jason, Mary, Kate, Bradley and Bronwyn) were scornful of such items because they were perceived as immature and/or the result of big corporations trying to make money off their favourite stories.

Those who did own or want to own merchandise, clothing, toys, and other ancillary texts articulated two primary pleasures derived from these items: simply owning a piece of a story they loved gave some participants great satisfaction, while others saw merchandise as a way of celebrating their favourite stories and, in the process, identifying themselves with that storyworld.

Ann, Irene, and Jill were the most vocal about the joys of ownership. Though they all found it challenging to articulate what it was they enjoyed about owning things, each expressed great pleasure in having a piece of their favourite storyworld for themselves:

> Jill: I think it was just because it [*Glee*] interested me so much and I thought it was, like, so cool so I thought it… I thought it would be… I thought it would more, like connect me to the story, I guess? If I had the merchandise and it was… like I can sit there with my bracelet and my cup [laughs].

> Irene: I have a wand and I have, like, I can't even think of the list. So, yeah, I guess the *Harry Potter* merchandise is very successful for it because if you like the books then you want to take a piece of that for yourself and, yeah, have that around you. […] You just kind of have it. You just want it. And you have it. And it's awesome.

> Ann: I like having it, like, seeing it everyday and, like, realizing that it's mine and I'm like, yay it's mine! […] Like, owning bits of the story. Like, every day I wake up and I have a t-shirt and I'm like "yay! I get to have a bit of *Twilight* with me."

Jill's response, when written out, doesn't do justice to how perplexed she was, as she tried to define why she wanted a *Glee* cup and a *Glee* bracelet. It was

clear in her interview that even she was not satisfied with her final explanation;
not much can be done with a cup and a bracelet, and even Jill recognized this,
laughing at the image of herself sitting with a cup in hand a bracelet on her wrist,
feeling more connected to the *Glee* world.

Irene was more forceful, even ruthless, when I asked her why she might
want to own merchandise. She speaks of taking a piece of the story for herself, of
claiming story items, of wanting them, and having them, and loving it. Her final
sentence reveals a consumerist cycle she seems familiar with: yearning for an
item, getting that item, and feeling fulfilled when she finally owns the desired
product. Ann is even more upfront about the pleasures of ownership, expressing a
sort of capitalistic glee at owning *Twilight* merchandise.

In her 2003 book, *Branded*, Quart charts the rise of teen consumerism and
the role of branding on young adult consumption patterns. In the 1980s, says
Quart, advertisers began to recognize the immense buying power of young adults,
and increasingly targeted brand advertising at this age group in the hopes of
inculcating them into a pattern of consumerism and consumption for
consumption's sake (p. 7). While I am hesitant about the lack of agency attributed
to teens in many examinations of youth and advertising (and Quart considers
ways in which some teens are pushing back against brand marketing later in the
book), the responses of Jill, Irene, and Ann suggest that one of the pleasures youth
associate with crossmedia storyworlds is, indeed, the opportunities to buy branded
products, and, further, that purchasing and ownership are not the means to
achieving particular pleasures, but instead *are themselves* the pleasure.

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Wu (2010) offers a more redeeming analysis of the appeal of paraphernalia in the *Harry Potter* world:

> Paraphernalia give concrete existence to objects more or less meaningful to the world the novels set out. To be able to wield the boy wizard's wand, or to own the Sorting Hat, is to confirm materially that world. Pottermania thus participates in the long familiar notion that reading enables imaginative transport by supplementing it with the facticity of things. Thanks to the wand and the hat, the glasses, the broom, and the golden Snitch, that transport comes with carry-ons (p. 190-191).

All three girls hint at this function of merchandise. Jill thinks merchandise will "connect me to the story", Irene wants to have a piece of the story around her, and Ann is excited to "have a bit of *Twilight* with me." Though their statements are vague, they suggest that Wu may be on to something. By making storyworlds concrete, by confirming them materially, the merchandise allowed these participants to surround themselves with the material evidence of the *Harry Potter*, *Glee* and *Twilight* worlds. Having the objects that make up their fictional worlds present in their real worlds made them feel more connected to those worlds, and aided immersion. It is worth considering whether this sort of interest represents a kind of immersed ownership, wherein both enjoying and purchasing these items is done within the *as-if* of the storyworld.

While Jill, Ann and Irene were a bit fuzzy on the purpose of their merchandise, other participants were quite explicit. Callie was very involved in *Harry Potter* related internet shopping, but was clear that all her purchases were practical and that they were about showing off her love for *Harry Potter*. Recall this quote, previously cited in Chapter 4:

> Well, like I really like *Harry Potter* and stuff, so like I, I just think it would be, like I saw, like, the hat, for example, I saw it last October-ish

[…] and it's more of a toque. Yeah, and so it would be good for winter and stuff. And I was like, yeah, well it's a good toque that I can show to… show my *Harry Potter* fandom.

Callie's hat and the messenger bag she later describes saving up for were practical, *and* they allowed her to identify herself with the *Harry Potter* franchise. As discussed previously, Peter was also attracted to ancillary texts that associated him with the extremely niche *My Little Pony* community. Other participants too were interested in ancillary texts as a means of self-branding. While Julia's interest in jewelry produced by *The Moral Instruments* franchise was not about associating herself with the storyworld, it is nonetheless about asserting a particular kind of identity and attitude she saw reflected in the story and in the jewelry:

> There were some stuff that I found online that had to do with the *City of Bones*, like the Runes and stuff? […] The jewelry was really interesting cause they had, like, fearless on a ring or on a necklace, yeah […] But that stuff was interesting to me because I have a very different sense of style.

Similarly, Jess was interested in clothing from the *Glee* world, not because it would associate her with *Glee*, but because she felt it to be reflective of particular personality traits:

> I'm very interested in, um, there's also a blog called Fashion of *Glee*, pretty much. Because ever since I first started watching *Glee* I was…I paid special attention to what every character wore because it's all very different and it's all very interesting and it reflects their own personalities, so I just go online and look at what they were and try to find them myself.

Jess described mining the show for fashion tips to build her own personal style, but also enjoyed the online hunt as she searched for hints about who was wearing what and where she herself might purchase the items.[5]

Most of the scholarship addressing the role of ancillary texts in the lives of young adults has focused on children and, as a result, on the potential for these items to act, not as static objects, but as potential sites for immersed play, wherein children use merchandise to generate new stories, meanings and interpretations of story texts. In this vein, Fleming (1996) has suggested that toys generate their own textuality, an open field of play and an "ultimate refusal of narrative closure" (Fleming, 1996, p. 96). Following from Fleming, Gray (2010) argues that toys generate their own meanings beyond those provided by their origin story and that readers use toys to fill in the gaps between franchise story options and to explore as-yet un-told narrative possibilities.

Both Fleming and Gray are concerned with toys and play. I would contend that the generation of textuality they describe is all potentiality that has to be activated by a playing person. None of the participants in this study who owned or were interested in ancillary texts, merchandise or toys described playing with these objects, and, hence, they remained objects, markers of identity, or things to be consumed.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the various experiences and pleasures my participants garnered from their interactions with crossmedia storyworlds. My

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[5] see Gillan, 2008; Gillan, 2011; Brooker, 2001 for further discussion of fashion poaching, blogging and forums in relation to teen television.

participants reported a variety of both engaged and immersed pleasures, many of which were either particular to, or enhanced by crossmedia storyworlds. Engaged pleasures included the ability to develop expertise in relation to a given storyworld, to choose among a variety of storyworld texts and control both their level and type of engagement with a storyworld, and to engage in the often social activity of comparing and critiquing various crossmedia instantiations, particularly adaptations. Immersed pleasures included the opportunity to find more story material and to continue engagement with the story beyond the original text, and the ability to escape into the storyworld and engage in role-playing activities. Finally, I considered the consumerist pleasures participants described in relation to ancillary texts, and suggested that consumerism was driven and enjoyed due to a desire to own a piece of the storyworld. This in turn, both publically and privately, enhanced participants' feelings of connection with the story and allowed them to identify with the storyworld in question.

CHAPTER 7

Mapping Crossmedia Encounters

The previous chapters have examined how my participants responded to three stages of the reading process in relation to crossmedia stories: selection, approach, and experience and enjoyment. I have attempted to tease out both commonalities and singularities evident in participant reading habits and responses while portraying the unique nuances of each participant's fictional engagement. This chapter will be used to further illuminate these nuances by considering more closely how individual participants classified, used, and experienced the texts available in individual storyworlds.

Creating the Map

I have argued that both immersed and engaged experiences and spectator and participant roles exist on a spectrum and that readers move between each state at various times in their reading experiences:

Figure 7-1: Engaged-Immersed and Participant-Spectator Continuums

If we cross these two continuums to make an X- and Y-axis, we end up with the following graph:

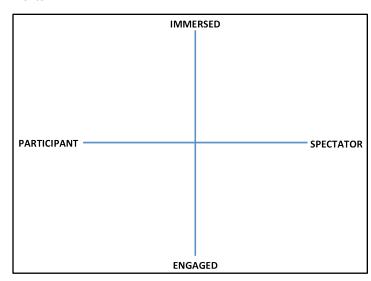**Figure 7-2: Quadrants of Interaction with Crossmedia Story Texts**

Figure 7-2 represents the possible experiences and approaches to crossmedia texts available to my participants. They could be engaged spectators, engaged participants, immersed spectators, or immersed participants to greater or lesser degrees and in relation to a variety of texts.

If I place one final layer over this graph, I have mapped out the variety of orientations my participants brought to the texts we discussed and their understandings of the place of those texts in the storyworld.

Figure 7-3: Zones of Encounter with Crossmedia Texts

The term canon is used in fan studies literature to define "the overall set of storylines, premises, settings, and characters offered by the source media text" (Parish, 2007, p. 28). Pearson (2003) expands on this definition by suggesting that, while only the source media texts are technically canon, other texts can be canonical in spirit:

> The collective episodes of the original text have themselves established a metaverse rich with spatial/temporal narrative settings and character possibilities: fans can, if they wish, indulge in an imaginative extension of the metaverse that conforms in spirit, if not to the letter, to the 'canon'. (para. 4)
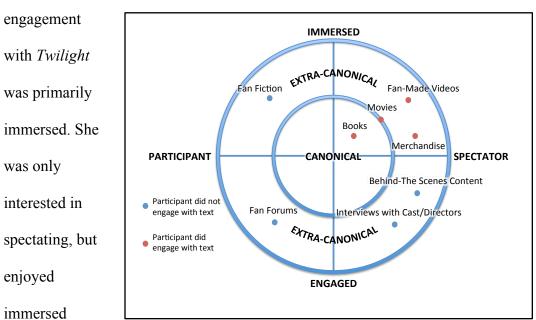
All of my participants had a clear sense of which texts in a chosen storyworld counted as official, "true", or canon texts and which were more peripheral; but the rules that governed this boundary varied between participants and rarely aligned exactly with the definition of canon presented in the fan studies literature. You could say that my participants accepted these definitions of canonicity in spirit if not to the letter.

In what follows, I use Figure 7-3 to map out the engagement patterns of individual participants in relation to the stories they mentioned. The visuals below provide summaries of participant preferences and reading habits as well as allowing comparison between readers. With 14 participants, and a huge variety of texts and storyworlds, presenting concise comparisons and summaries is challenging, and graphing offers a useful shorthand. In some cases, this graphing provides striking evidence of a participant's preference for a single quadrant of the graph. In other cases, it demonstrates how scattered a participant's interests were. Reading across graphs, it is hard to deny the diversity of experiences my

participants carved out of available storyworld texts. At the same time, they

demonstrate a definite skew towards spectatorship rather than participation.

Ann and Twilight: Immersed Spectator of Extra-Canonical Texts

Ann's

engagement

with *Twilight*

was primarily

immersed. She

was only

interested in

spectating, but

enjoyed

immersed

Figure7-4: Ann's Engagement with Twilight Texts

spectatorship in relation to a variety of extra-canonical texts. Ann adored the

Twilight books, and repeatedly talked about Stephanie Meyers' writing style and

story construction as being the primary draw of the story. Her responses suggest

that she considered the book to be the only text belonging to the canon of the

Twilight universe. The movies sat somewhere on the line between canon and

extra-canon, and merchandise and fan-made items were definitely extra-canonical.

This analysis did not, however, stop her from immersing herself in fan-created
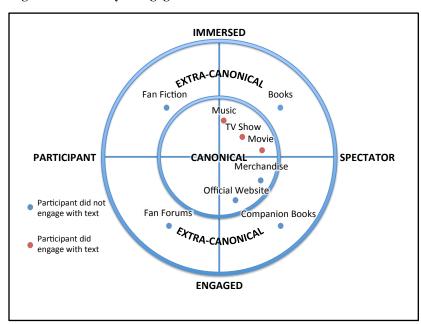
videos, and enjoying merchandise.

For Ann, two important boundaries limited acceptable and enjoyable

interaction with storyworlds: first, she was extremely negative about participation

in fandoms, suggesting that writing fan-fiction and engaging with fan-forums was taking interest in a storyworld too far. Second, she was very invested in immersed interactions with all storyworlds, and she rejected all texts that she perceived as promoting engagement and breaking the fourth wall of the fiction.

Bradley, Jason, Jill, Bronwyn, Kate and Julia: Immersed Spectators of Canonical Texts

Bradley, Jason, Jill, Bronwyn, Kate and Julia were all primarily interested in immersed spectatorship as well, but they were uninterested in texts they considered extra-canonical. Figure 7-5 illustrates Bradley's interaction with *Glee* texts and is

Figure 7-5: Bradley's Engagement with *Glee* Texts

exemplary of the other participants' graphs. Bradley, Jill, Jason, and Julia all stated that they just wanted to enjoy the story and leave it at that, and all participants except Kate were very negative about fan participation. The group as a whole was a bit more lax in their decisions regarding what was canonical and what was not canonical. For the most part, they accepted official franchise products as canonical, though Bradley demonstrates an
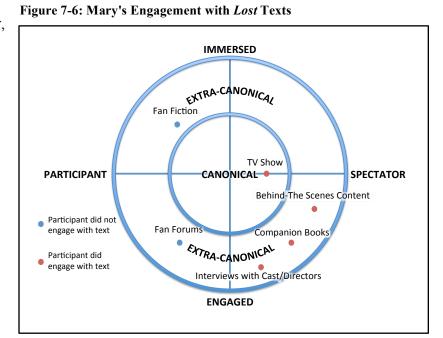
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exception to this rule by excluding *Glee* books due to their print format. Despite a broader definition of canon, this group was only interested in watching the original media texts and adaptations of those texts. Jason, Jill, and Bronwyn were similarly unwilling to view new content in a new media format as part of the canon, with the exception of movie adaptations of books. For this group, being officially affiliated with the storyworld franchise was a necessary condition for a text to be considered canonical, but it wasn't quite sufficient. They also considered consistency in media format as a selection criterion.

Engaged Spectator of Extra-Canonical Texts: Mary and Lost

Mary was similar to Ann in her definitions of what constitutes canon and what does not, and in her enjoyment of extra-canon content. However, unlike all the participants discussed so far, she was not primarily interested in immersion, and instead enjoyed going behind the scenes, hearing about

Figure 7-6: Mary's Engagement with *Lost* Texts

the making of the *Lost* series, and re-watching the television show itself in order to figure out the puzzles and examine the construction of the story.

I do not mean to imply that Mary was never immersed in *Lost* texts.

Rather, I suggest that the television show provided her with both immersed and

engaged pleasures. Unlike Ann, Bradley, Jason, Jill Bronwyn, Kate, and Julia,

who were only interested in immersion, Mary watched *Lost* episodes both to be

lost in the story *and* to analyze the text in light of the various other engagement-

promoting texts she enjoyed, like behind-the-scenes footage, interviews with cast

and crew members and directors and writers, and companion books that analyzed

each episode. Hence, Mary spent most of her time in the *Lost* world reading extra-

canon texts that promoted engagement.

Chris and Harry Potter: Engaged Spectator of Canonical Texts

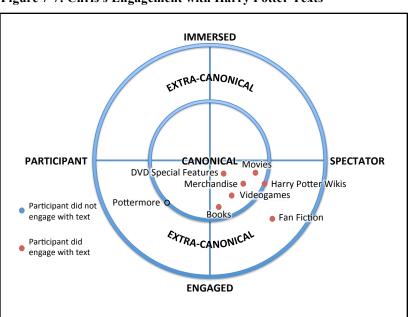You will recall that Chris was very engaged with the *Harry Potter* texts,

Figure 7-7: Chris's Engagement with Harry Potter Texts

particularly in analyzing differences between the sets in movies and videogames and attempting to sort out JK Rowling's exact vision of the

storyworld. He exemplified engaged spectatorship, but was only interested in

texts that would help him construct a canonically accurate likeness of JK

Rowling's *Harry Potter*. Chris took franchise affiliation as a marker of canonicity, though he did not consider these texts to be reliable in some cases. For example, he noted that the movies and videogames were inconsistent, and he therefore sought out other canon sources to figure out which version of the setting was intended by JK Rowling. His use of wikis was particularly interesting; he was quick to acknowledge that these were not official sources, but he considered them to contain canonical information as long as their citation chains were reliable. Chris did admit to enjoying some fan fiction, which he did not see as belonging to the *Harry Potter* canon, but he was quick to clarify that he would only read fan fiction if they were true to the spirit of JK Rowling's version of *Harry Potter*.

Jess, Callie, and Irene: The Spectator-Participants

Jess, Callie and Irene all described enjoying participation in certain fan activities. However, even these teens have far more dots on the spectator side of the graph than on the participant side. Taken together, the graphs

Figure 7-8: Jess's Engagement with Glee Texts

provide a strong sense of the spectatorial component of the pleasures even my

self-described active fans enjoyed.

Figure 7-9: Callie's Engagement with Harry Potter Texts

Figure 7-10: Irene's Engagement with Warrior Cats Texts

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Barriers to Participation

Despite a literature suggesting I should find a great deal of participation, most of my participants were primarily interested in spectatorship, and the graphs clearly demonstrate this skew toward watching rather than doing. I reexamined my transcripts in the hopes of gaining further insight into the reasons for this spectator bias, and observed three major barriers to participation among this group of teens: lack of interest, stigma, and insecurity. Participants reflected varying levels of concern with and influence from these barriers.

Lack of Interest

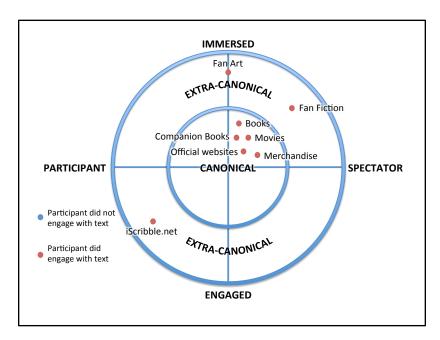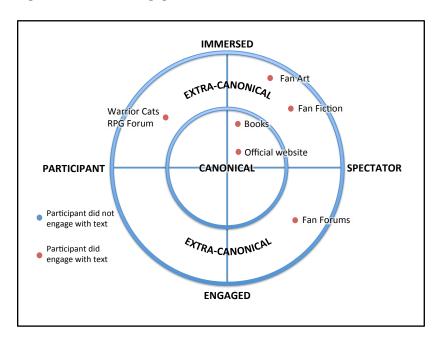The great majority of my participants simply had no interest in participating in their favourite storyworlds. A few told me that they were too lazy for that sort of engagement. Bradley even compared writing fan fiction to school assignments. Stories were, for these participants, a way to escape, relax, and take time off from their busy lives, and to them that activity seems to presume a spectator stance.

Jenkins' 2009 report entitled *Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century* suggests that young adults need to develop a core set of literacy skills and aptitudes if they are to act as full members of participatory culture. While I don't disagree that educators have a responsibility to help youth develop these skills, what happens if young people simply don't want to use them and would rather just watch? If, as Jenkins suggests, the skills young adults acquire through participatory play in leisure environments will later be important to their ability to be fully engaged and

successful citizens, then is it also the job of educators and librarians to foster an interest and continued engagement with participatory venues? Should Bradley be encouraged, even assigned, the task of discussing stories on forums, writing fan fiction, and otherwise participating in the storyworlds he enjoys? If participation is, as the literature generally suggests, a good and important activity, what do we do if teens are simply uninterested?

Stigma

I have noted that the majority of my participants were very negative about fan-created content and had clear and unflattering ideas about the kinds of people who write fan fiction, spend time on forums, and otherwise participate in storyworlds. Even those who participated themselves often admitted this involvement with some shame. Irene, for instance, labeled herself a "total internet geek", while others who were proud of their fan affiliations were nonetheless aware of the stereotypes and were quick to become defensive about their activities and the communities to which they belonged (Jess, Peter). The stigma surrounding participation, may be a major barrier to experimenting with participation online. Further research is required to investigate this sense of stigma and how it affects young adult participation or lack of participation in crossmedia storyworlds and beyond.

Insecurities

As discussed in Chapter 5, my participants' decisions about how to engage with story texts were sometimes motivated by insecurities; many participants with interest in participatory venues were reluctant to post content because of a lack of

confidence in their writing or drawing abilities. Recall that Jess, Chris, and Callie were all hesitant about sharing their fan fiction and fan art online because they didn't feel their work to be good enough.

Research that considers barriers to youth participation is generally concerned with youth lacking the technological skill to produce content, or having inadequate access to technologies required to participate (Jenkins, 2009; Buckingham, 2007; Holderness, 2006; Ito, 2010). I have not yet seen the question of personal risk, in the sense of risk to youth identity and confidence, addressed in the literature. Instead, much writing about participatory cultures hails participation as empowering youth and building confidence (Jenkins, 2009; Thomas, 2007a). This enhancement may well be the case for some (Peter being a good example), but others, like Jess, Chris, and Callie, may shy away from active engagement due to insecurities. I do not deny the likelihood that participatory cultures offer opportunities for empowerment, but the risks to youth confidence and their own insecurities about competence are an important barrier to ongoing participation and unlocking this empowering potential. It is worth considering the role educators and libraries may serve in building youth confidence to overcome these insecurities. Future research might investigate in more depth the risks youth perceive when posting content online.

The Outliers: Peter and Tim

I have argued that all my participants demonstrated unique idiosyncrasies in relation to crossmedia selection and enjoyment. Peter and Tim, however, were two definite outliers whose responses and patterns of interaction with crossmedia

texts were markedly different from those demonstrated by other participants. Peter

and Tim were the only two participants who mapped to the participatory mold the

literature anticipated. However, as noted in Chapter 5, Tim's participation did not

take place in fictional storyworlds, but in a non-fictional subjunctive space.

Below, I graph their patterns of engagement and consider the unique features of

their experiences.

Peter and My Little Pony: Engaged Participation in Extra-Canonical Texts

Peter was particulary interesting due to his lack of interest in immersion in

the *My Little*

Figure 7-11: Peter's Engagement with My Little Pony Texts

Pony

storyworld even

when watching

the television

show. Instead,

Peter enjoyed

engaged

pleasures in

relation to the

story texts, but immersed pleasures in relation to the Brony Community. While he

was not interested in immersing himself in the magical Pony land of Equestria, he

was interested in immersing himself in the *as-if* of the *My Little Pony* fan world.

He moved through the various fan texts on offer, and participated in the

governance of the community *as-if* this "internet nation" had as much real effect

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on his world as any aspect of the offline world. And, indeed, for Peter and the other Bronies, it did.

Tim and Iceland: Mapping Engagement with Non-Fictional Texts

Tim, like Peter, was a definite outlier among my participants. He had very little interest in fictional storyworlds, and instead, his leisure time was largely consumed by his interest in world travel. In Chapter 5, I argued that Tim stepped into the subjunctive of his travel worlds when he planned fantasy trips to countries of

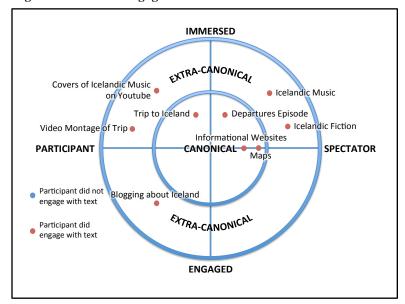**Figure 7-12: Tim's Engagement With Iceland-Related Texts**

interest and used various available texts to support this imaginative work. Tim's engagement with Iceland-related texts demonstrates the major difference between the fictional and the non-fictional subjunctive: with a non-fictional subjunctive, Tim could take participatory action in the real rather than the virtual world, and he did, by traveling to Iceland.

Regardless, the zones of engagement defined in my chart appear to apply in relation to non-fictional as well as fictional leisure activities. Tim considered information texts containing factual information about Iceland to be his primary

resources for both immersed and engaged travel-world experiences, and I have therefore mapped these texts to the canonical zone. More aesthetically focused texts, such as Icelandic music, fiction, and Tim's own video and musical creations supported his interest as a sort of textual surround and I have therefore mapped them to the extra-canonical realm.

Conclusion

This chapter used graphs to map out the reading habits of participants in relation to specific storyworlds and to consider how these young people understood, classified, and enjoyed crossmedia texts. These graphs demonstrate that participants used individual and idiosyncratic textual classification schemes, and demonstrated a variety of engagement patterns with the various texts available to them. With the exception of Peter and Tim, participants were significantly more interested in spectatorship than in participation. However, we should not discount the amount of participation required merely to sort through and select among the various texts within storyworlds. As Gillan (2011) points out, consumers of crossmedia and Must-Click TV, have no choice but to participate in their entertainment experiences to the extent that they are required to choose among media options. What the graphs fail to show is the clear sense of agency and purpose my participants brought to this selection process. Each had a developed idea of the sorts of engagement they enjoyed and the level of interaction with which they were comfortable, and they used these criteria to sift through available texts and make informed decisions about what to read and what not to read. In choosing paths through crossmedia story options, my participants

demonstrated, in some very real ways, that they are far more participatory than

previous generations, even if their engagement with selected texts was primarily

spectatorial.

CHAPTER 8

Conclusion

What effects do stories circulating across media have on the reading habits and experiences of youth? This research suggests that the answer to this question is complicated. Crossmedia stories offer young adult readers a variety of ways to engage with storyworlds through a variety of media platforms, and my participants responded in kind with a variety of unique, and purposeful methods of selecting, approaching and enjoying the texts on offer. Given my small number of participants, it would be idle to argue any definitive conclusions. Nonetheless, this work suggests three important considerations for scholars in the areas of education, literacy studies, and library and information studies: (1) youth remain very interested in opportunities for spectatorship, but this does not imply passivity; rather, (2) young people make active and informed choices in relation to crossmedia texts, and (3) the choices teens make, the experiences they seek, and the reasons they engage with crossmedia stories are diverse and not particularly generalizable.

The Importance of Spectatorship

From selection through to experience, the desire to watch the action in a storyworld unfold informed many of the choices participants made in relation to crossmedia story texts. Spectatorship proved an important mode of interaction with texts that were specifically designed to elicit participation as well as those more straightforwardly designed for consumption. While some participants had strong negative feelings about participatory venues, particularly fan-created

participatory venues, this did not stop the majority of my participants from lurking in these venues in search of story information, spoilers and critical comment. The skew towards spectatorship does not imply that my participants were passive consumers of crossmedia texts; rather, they were often more interested in the immersive possibilities offered by both participatory and non-participatory textual options and used these texts to explore and define their tastes, value systems, and worldviews. Finally, though most participants were content to spectate once they had chosen a given text, the work of sorting through and selecting among the various crossmedia texts on offer is, in itself, a form of participation. Crossmedia storytelling makes the very concepts of spectatorship and participation increasingly complex and nuanced.

Active Crossmedia Consumers

My participants were aware of the diversity of textual options available to them and they tended to be quite knowledgeable about both the affordances of these texts and their own reading preferences. While I was shocked to discover the huge amount of *Glee*-related content available, none of my participants was at all surprised when I presented them with a variety of these textual options and many even pointed out examples of other texts I had not discovered in my systematic textual exploration. They all talked intelligently about what they saw as the purpose of various crossmedia texts, why they did or did not elect to engage with each, and what they enjoyed about the texts they did select.

The Diversity of Young Adult Reading Habits

My participants were all very different. Each brought unique understandings of individual crossmedia storyworlds, a variety of opinions about the texts available in those worlds, and diverse desires and preferences to their selection and reading experiences. When building library collections, and designing library and educational programming for youth it is tempting to understand young people as a homogenous group with similar reading habits and levels of interest in various crossmedia texts. Programs often cater to a small subset of young adults, and, more recently, the subset being targeted tends to be the one that matches the participatory mold laid out by the literature. Resisting and questioning the urge to homogenize young people and their texts is as important for librarians and educators as is finding new ways to scaffold and support them if and when they choose to explore more participatory routes into storyworlds. This requires real respect for the all the various routes, roles, and pleasures young people take through, take on, and enjoy in relation to their favourite stories.

Limitations

This study is limited by two major factors. First, the number of participants involved is insufficient to draw broad or generalizable conclusions. In addition, this study is cross-sectional and captures the responses of a single set of readers at a single moment in time in a limited geographical area (Edmonton, Alberta). Results, then, are importantly contextual and may not hold across time or place.

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Final Thoughts

Crossmediation offers youth the opportunity to pick and choose their own paths through storyworlds and my participants did just that, each in his and her own way. What is needed now is more robust research that is at least as sophisticated in as these young adults. Work that limits its scope to the participatory affordances of texts and the young people who take up those affordances loses sight of both the work that takes place when spectating, and the ways in which audiences negotiate and use media to their own purposes, often in ways that ignore the intended function. While it is important to consider early adopters of participatory activities and new technologies, it is equally if not more important that we attend to the larger group. This group may be conservative by the standards of those early adopters, but their developing sense of which texts suit their needs—recreational, social, psychological, etc.,—and how to navigate through them is striking in its assured confidence. These young people are sifting, sorting, setting priorities, making sense, and enjoying the crossovers. And they're doing most of these activities without any prior formal education in how to do so. It's pretty stunning when you think about it.

A final reminder of the seemingly limitless diversity in the ways young people understand, use, and enjoy crossmedia texts: I recently asked Lizzie why she owned a replica of Ron Weasley's wand and a pair of Harry Potter glasses. She looked at me as though it was absolutely obvious and said: "so one day I can show my kids."

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Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	Age	Grade	Recruitment Through	Stories Discussed
Ann	15	10	Edmonton Public School	*Harry Potter*, *Twilight*, *The Hunger Games*, *The Last Song*, *Glee*
Mary	15	10	Edmonton Public School	*Harry Potter*, *Twilight*, *Lost*, *Glee*
Jason	16	10	Edmonton Public Library	*Harry Potter*, *Twilight*, *NewsFlesh* series, *Eragon* trilogy, *Criminal Minds*, *One Piece*, *Glee*, *Magic the Gathering*
Jess	15	9	Snowballing	*Harry Potter*, *The Hunger Games*, *Glee*, *Dalton*, *Percy Jackson and the Olympians*, *Full Metal Alchemist*
Bradley	13	8	Edmonton Public School	*Twilight*, *Harry Potter*, *Toy Story*, *Spiderman*, *Conspiracy 365*, *Glee*, *Percy Jackson and the Olympians*, *His Dark Materials*
Tim	14	9	Professional connection	*Departures*, *Harry Potter*, *Glee*
Callie	12	7	Professional connection	*Harry Potter*, *Glee*
Jill	13	8	Snowballing	*Percy Jackson and the Olympians*, *Harry Potter*, *Twilight*, *High School Musical*, *Glee*, *The Kane*

				Chronicles, The Sweet Life of Zack and Cody
Irene	12	8	Edmonton Public School	*Harry Potter, Warrior Cats, High School Musical, Glee, The Guardians of Ga'hoole, Percy Jackson and the Olympians, The Hunger Games*
Kate	15	10	Edmonton Public School	*Twilight, Harry Potter, The Hunger Games, Avatar, Glee*
Julia	15	10	Edmonton Public School	*Twilight, The Mortal Instruments, Heartland, Nicholas Sparks, Glee*
Bronwyn	14	10	Edmonton Public School	*Twilight, Harry Potter, Gossip Girl, Glee*
Peter	17	11	Professional Connection	*My Little Pony, Glee, The Elder Scrolls, Battlefield*
Chris	15	10	Edmonton Public School	*Harry Potter, Apocalypse Now, Twilight, Glee, The Lord of the Rings, Hitman, Call of Duty, Halloween, Dexter, Inglorious Bastards, Paranormal Activity*

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APPENDIX B

Letter of Information

Crossmedia Storytelling and the Interpretive Practices of Young Adults: A Case Study
Participants Needed for a Study of Crossmedia Storytelling

Participants are needed for a study of crossmedia stories. The participants will take part in one interview during between January and September of 2011. It is hoped that these interviews will provide insight into the reading practices, interpretive strategies, and experiences of young readers in relation to stories that span a variety of media platforms. The interviews will explore the perceptions, experiences, expectations, thoughts, feelings and interpretive strategies of participants in response to the various crossmedia versions of a number of contemporary stories.

The interviews will last approximately 1-2 hours. They will consist of semi-structured questions and will be recorded on a digital audio recorder. The recording will be transcribed with identifying information removed to ensure confidentiality. The transcripts and audio files will be kept on a password-protected computer accessible only to the researcher for a period of 5 years following the completion of the research as per GFC Policy 92.2. Consent forms will be kept in a secure lockbox for the same length of time.

The researcher is a master's student in Library and Information Studies (MLIS program) in the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta. She holds a Bachelor of Arts. Your participation in this study will play a significant role in the completion of the researcher's master's dissertation. Upon completion of this study, results will be presented at scholarly conferences and published in scholarly journals.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Participants may decline to answer specific questions and/or withdraw from the study at any time during the course of the interviews. In order to maintain confidentiality, participants will be assigned a pseudonym. There are no foreseeable risks that may arise from research participation.

The researcher will comply with the University of Alberta Standards for the Protection of Human Research Participants, which can be accessed via the following link: http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/gfcpolicymanual/policymanualsection66.cfm

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by the Faculties of Education, Extension, Augustana and Campus Saint Jean Research Ethics Board (EEASJ REB) at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the EEASJ REB c/o (780) 492-2614.

For more information, please contact:

LAURA WINTON (MLIS Student)
School of Library and Information Studies
Email: lwinton@ualberta.ca
780-863-5345 (private voicemail)

DR. MARGARET MACKEY (Professor)
School of Library and Information Studies
Email: margaret.mackey@ualberta.ca
780-492-2605

APPENDIX C

Letter of Consent

Crossmedia Storytelling and the Interpretive Practices of Young Adults:
A Case Study

Participant's Name:_____

I have read the letter of information, had my questions answered to my satisfaction, and understand the general nature, purpose and procedures of the study as explained to me by the researcher.

I understand that the data resulting from my participation will not identify me in any way. I understand that I may refuse to answer particular questions and I may withdraw from this study at any time.

I give permission to be interviewed once between January and September of 2011 as part of the researcher's Masters of Library and Information Studies thesis. I understand that this interview will be audio recorded, and that the recording, interview transcript and field notes will only be used for education and research purposes as outlined in the letter of information.

I understand that the researcher will provide me with a copy of the information letter and a signed copy of the consent form for my records.

Participant's Signature: _____

Researcher Signature: _____

Date: _____

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by the Faculties of Education, Extension, Augustana and Campus Saint Jean Research Ethics Board (EEASJ REB) at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the EEASJ REB c/o (780) 492-2614.

APPENDIX D

Letter of Consent for Guardians

Crossmedia Storytelling and the Interpretive Practices of Young Adults:
A Case Study

Participant's Name: _____

Guardian's Name: _____

I have read the letter of information, had my questions answered to my satisfaction, and understand the general nature, purpose and procedures of the study as explained to me by the researcher.

I understand that the data resulting from my child's participation will not identify him/her in any way. I understand that my child may refuse to answer particular questions and may withdraw from this study at any time.

I give permission for my child to be interviewed once between January and September of 2011 as part of the researcher's Masters of Library and Information Studies thesis. I understand that this interview will be audio recorded, and that the recording, interview transcript and field notes will only be used for education and research purposes as outlined in the letter of information.

I understand that the researcher will provide me with a copy of the information letter and a signed copy of the consent form for my records.

Guardian's Signature: _____

Researcher Signature: _____

Date: _____

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by the Faculties of Education, Extension, Augustana and Campus Saint Jean Research Ethics Board (EEASJ REB) at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the EEASJ REB c/o (780) 492-2614.

Sample Recruitment Poster

DO YOU HAVE A FAVOURITE TV SERIES?

ARE YOU BETWEEN THE AGES OF 12 AND 17?

IF SO, PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY ABOUT STORIES ON TV!

Laura Winton (Master's Student)
University of Alberta
Email: lwinton@ualberta.ca
Phone: 780-863-5345

Dr. Margaret Mackey
University of Alberta
Email: mmackey@ualberta.ca
Phone: 780-492-2605

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by the Faculties of Education, Extension and Augustana Research Ethics Board (EEA REB) at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the EEA REB at (780) 492-3751.

Interested? Please contact Laura Winton for more information.
lwinton@ualberta.ca
780-863-5345

APPENDIX F

Interview Guide

Introductory Questions:

Do you have any questions about the study so far?
How old are you?
What grade are you in?

Introductory Blurb/Preamble:

I'm interested in stories and characters: which stories you like, which stories you don't like, what you like or dislike about them, and how you engage with them. More specifically, I'm interested in stories that exist in different media formats. For example, a story might have a TV show and a movie, with a book series attached, an iPhone applications, and videogames, and so on. I'm also interested in social media: things like facebook, twitter, online forums, youtube, myspace and their role, if any, in stories you enjoy.

Story Questions:

- How did you hear about the story?
- What made you want to engage with the story?
- What was appealing about the story?
- What wasn't appealing about the story?
- In what media formats have you engaged the story?
- In what order did you encounter these items?
- What did you enjoy about the story?
- What did you dislike about the story?

- Tell me about the various texts associated with the story:
  - Where were you engaged with them?
  - When?
  - With whom?
  - How did you feel?
  - What did you enjoy?
  - What did you dislike?
  - What did you do with each text?
- Have you engaged with any social media in relation to the story? (fan forums? Twitter? Facebook? Making videos? Fanfiction?

Text Formats to Cover:

- Books
- Movies
- TV shows
- Videogames
- Websites
- Fan fiction
- Fan forums

- Information about actors
- Information about authors
- Information about directors
- Bonus features

- DVD extra features
- Companion books
- Merchandise
- Posters
- Collectibles
- Clothing