How the Internet is Holding the Centre of Conjured Universes[1]

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In Medias Res

The Internet is an indisputably influential force in changes to the way entertainment is conceived, produced, distributed, experienced and critiqued. My research is of course, therefore, entering the theoretical discussion *in medias res*. I do not wish to duplicate extant research into the area of entertainment and the Internet. Instead, in the interests of efficiency and originality, this paper aims to contribute to the emerging and therefore under-theorised area of cross-media entertainment. Cross-media entertainment is the love child of a variety of factors, Henry Jenkins has outlined five: technological, economic, social, cultural and global convergence (Jenkins, 2001; Jenkins, forthcoming-a). Technological convergence refers to the digital format and its multi-modal and interoperable affordances. Economic convergence to the horizontal integration of the entertainment industry: conglomerates. Social or organic convergence refers to the new multitasking strategies. Two key studies in the area have identified 'simultaneous media usage' or SIMM (Pilotta, Schultz et al., 2004) and the *Middletown Media Studies 2 (MMS2)* 'concurrent media exposure' (Center for Media Design, 2005b)[2]. This behaviour is not necessarily new, but signals the emergence of a technology-specific 'polychronic' culture, a development from anthropologist Edward Hall's geographic-specific 'polychronic' and 'monochronic' cultures (Hall, 1959).[3]

Cultural convergence refers to the new forms of creativity and global convergence to the global circulation of content. Likewise John T. Caldwell sees the 'second-shift aesthetics' of cross-media forms bringing 'new forms of rationality to unstable media economies' (Caldwell, 2003: 135). This paper explores cultural convergence, the new forms of creativity and the experience of it that convergence facilitates. It is the contention of this paper that unlike oral cultures, who would 'use stories of human

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[1] I invoke the term 'conjured' instead of 'narrative' or 'fictional' so I don't exclude any qualities that are neither narrative or fiction.

[2] SIMM is described as 'multiple exposures to various media forms at a single point in time for the same media consumer' Pilotta, J. J., D. E. Schultz, et al. (2004) 'Simultaneous media usage: A critical consumer orientation to media planning' *Journal of Consumer Behaviour* 3(3): 285-292.http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/jws/cbh/2004/00000003/00000003/art00008. The Center for Media Design at Ball State University proposes the term 'concurrent media exposure' to describe 'content from multiple media simultaneously available through shared or shifting attention' Center for Media Design (2005a) 'Concurrent Media Exposure Definition', *Ball State University*, [Online] Available at: http://www.bsu.edu/cmd/article/0,2060,216227-14634-36634,00.html.

[3] Monochronic cultures do one thing at a time while polychronic cultures engage in multiple tasks at the same time (Hall, 1959).

action to store, organize, and communicate much of what they know,' (Ong, 1982: 140) cross-media entertainment necessitates the use of the Internet to store, organize, and communicate a story and what people know about it.

Methodology

There have been some comprehensive interrogations of the cross-media phenomenon in terms of the tactics to accelerate commercial success of a 'super entertainment system' (Kinder, 1991), the new-Hucksterism of the 'new intertextual commodity' (Marshall, 2002), or the ideological effects of 'inter-media world franchises' (Lemke, 2005). This paper, however, seeks to explore cross-media works from an aesthetic perspective. The first section explains this notion and reframes entertainment forms in a platform agnostic manner. What follows then is a listing of some issues, problems, obstacles specific to the experience of cross-media entertainment. I then outline how the use of the Internet has solved or circumvented these issues and propose psychological motivations for the behaviour.

Art in the Age of Cross-Media Production

Walter Benjamin observed that '[t]o an ever greater degree the work of art reproduced becomes the work of art designed for reproducibility' (Benjamin, 1968: 226). Likewise, the work of art produced across media becomes the work of art designed for cross-media production. Texts created across media have varying dependencies between them. The most common cross-media relationships are adaptation and repurposing. With each addition of media form the palette from which adaptations can migrate has widened. And now, with digital format facilitating a platform agnostic-approach to reproduction, adaptation shares the stage with ever increasing repurposing of content. On the one hand we have the urge to reform a story (or game) into a new media form and arts type with varying degrees of fidelity, and on the other hand we have to the urge for one medium to become a 'transparent' container to another medium so that its medial form is somewhat continuous (Bolter and Grusin, 1999)[4]. From this diversity of media choice and the experience of persistent motifs we have fertile ground for an emerging form: that of 'polymorphism'. Rather than repeat, a polymorphic approach to the production and experience of a work is informed by a schema where all media are created equal. There is no primary media from which all others must echo. Each media is a valid artistic platform that provides a unique window to a world. Polymorphism privileges the complexity of many forms above reproduction.

Polymorphism is proposed here as the key notion that describes the design and experience of entertainment in the age of cross-media production. From an aesthetic perspective, it is the drive towards a work of art that includes all art and media forms. This urge is prefigured in the synergistic work of Richard Wagner's 'Gesamtkunstwerk' or 'Total Work of Art' (Wagner, 1993 [1895]), F.T. Marinetti et al's 'Futurist Cinema' (Marinetti, Corra et al., 2001 [1916]), Moholy-Nagy's 'Theatre of Totality' (Moholy-Nagy, 2001 [1924]) and Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger's (The Archers) multi-art-form cinema. The point of difference between these instantiations and those that are the concern of this paper is the shift from many art-forms being available at the same time and place and somewhat pre-assembled by

[4] It is noted that 'transparency' is just one degree in a four-step remediation process that Bolter and Grusin outline: transparency, translucency, hypermediacy, and absorption.

the producer, and art-forms that require the experiencer of the work to traverse media platforms in order to assemble the work, the works are 'cross-sited' (Ruppel, 2005)[5]. In addition, the point of difference between a polymorphic approach and properties that are distributed in different media platforms is that polymorphism provides unique content in each platform[6].

On Works

This expansion across media platforms happens on two levels: Work and World. Since the works traverse media and art forms, have varying degrees of narrative and ludic modes and the study of these forms are inter-disciplinary[7], I term the singular story or game as an *EventRealm*. The EventRealm is an abstract boundary that is inclusive of all the texts that are needed for coherence. The two-part films of Quentin Tarantino's *Kill Bill Vol.1* (2003) and *Kill Bill Vol.2* (2004) have one EventRealm. The serial form, which is employed in all types of media, involves the segmentation of a single entity which is delivered in instalments over time. Each segment is not self-contained, unlike a series or episode which is. Robin Nelson identified a third form, a hybrid of both a serial and series with what he terms as 'flexi-narratives' (Nelson, 1997). The units of a serial, series and flex form can be delivered over a single or multiple media platforms.

Arts types or 'formats' that have an *EventRealm* that expands over more than one media platform are exemplified in 'cross-media games': pervasive games, urban gaming, alternate reality games, augmented reality gaming, ubiquitous gaming and so on. I will concentrate on one form for this paper: 'alternate reality games' or ARGs. These works deliver plot points and puzzles over tens to thousands of websites, blog posts, faxes, emails, SMS and so on. No single component in any media or art form is self-sufficient and no single player can traverse them all. One example is an ARG that accompanied the Canadian television series *ReGenesis* produced by Shaftsbury Films: the *Extended Reality Game: ReGenesis* by Xenophile Media. In the second season (2006), the show follows the dramas of a North American Biotechnology Advisory Commission (NorBAC). NorBAC has an online website that looks like any company

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[5] Marc Ruppel defines 'cross-sited narratives' as 'multi-sensory stories told across two or more diverse media (film, print literature, web, video games, live performance, recorded music, etc.)' (Ruppel, 2005).

[6] Jill Walker has explored 'distributed narratives': works that are distributed in space, time and authorship (Walker, 2004). The examples Walker gives are of works that, although available in various media platforms, do not require a cross-media traversal. A case in point is Nick Montfort and Scott Rettberg's *Implementation* (2004-2006), a novel Walker cites where paragraphs are stuck on poles, walls and fences around the world. *Implementation* spans 238 paragraphs that can be experienced on the main website, other sites such as flickr, printouts of the sheets, live locations and public readings. A person may experience components of the work across platforms, but can experience the entire 238 paragraphs in a single platform. It is because the work is not designed to be strictly experienced across media platforms it is not a polymorphic form explored in this paper.

[7] Indeed, because I see transmedia works as having both narrative and ludic elements, that within an entire conjured universe a variety of forms are present and the study of them is interdisciplinary, I propose a discipline-agnostic approach to research into traversals across modes, a mode being a media platform, arts types, rhetorics and so on: Transmodiology. The terminology offered in this paper, therefore, is a (placeholder) step towards a nomenclature that can traverse fields. It is an approach that, through its aim for a theory that encompasses all, continues the romantic lens of Ionian Enchantment as explored in Stephen Pearl Andrews' 'Universology' Andrews, S. P. (1872). *The Basic Outline of Universology*. New York,, D. Thomas. and Edward O. Wilson's 'Consilience' Wilson, E. O. (1998). *Consilience: The Unity of Knowledge*. New York, Knopf : Distributed by Random House..

website[8]. Visitors of the site can take a virtual tour of the facility and undertake tasks that test their investigative and scientific abilities. At the end of the tour, the results are so impressive the visitor is offered a position as a field agent for the company. Following on from the issues being dealt with by the on-air characters, agents are given tasks to complete each week, including 'hacking' into characters' emails, infiltrating anarchic groups, emailing scientists, watching podcasts, participating in forums and phone calls. These duties impact the broadcast world, with on-air characters referring to the evidence collected by field agents.

The 'extended reality game' (ERG)[9] could be played without watching the TV show (a necessity considering the show was only broadcast in Canada) and the TV show could be watched without playing the game. There are two points to be made about the unique dependencies between the texts positioned across media platforms. Each week of the ERG required players to traverse multiple sites. The sum of texts offered each week is a cluster of activity that does not, however, constitute an EventRealm. An ERG, indeed ARGs, have an EventRealm that spans the entire breadth of the media platforms and the entire length of the work. These games are the most extreme form of cross-media entertainment for they have a segmentation/coherence ratio here equivalent to paragraphs in a book: each cluster of components (the sum of the sites and emails traversed each week) are all 'kernals' in the Chatman sense but each cluster has miniscule material volume. This is a sub-unit of the serial form, which is the segmentation of a single entity delivered in instalments over time.

There are three 'works' available, therefore, in the *ReGenesis* experience: the 'work' of the *ReGenesis* TV show season; the 'work' of the *ReGenesis* ERG; the 'work' of the TV show and ERG. For those that watched and played *ReGenesis* the dependency between the 'works' of the TV show and ERG could be viewed as Nelson's flexi form. This is because the TV show had scenes that had information the players discovered (simulated obviously because they were pre-shot), and the ERG included podcast summaries of the TV show to provide plot detail for forthcoming missions and rewards through recognition of the player activity.

On Ur-Worlds

At the *Ur-World* level we interrogate the unique content distributed over media platforms that contributes to an entire property. There can be many EventRealms at the Ur-World level, with various arts types, media forms, levels of interactivity and even without directed movement between them. An Ur-World is the sum of all the texts created by original, commissioned and in some cases licensed producers that defines a conjured reality. Unlike the notion of a 'storyworld' being a cognitive process where, as Narratologist David Herman explains, 'narrative comprehension is a process of (re)constructing storyworlds on the basis of textual cues and the inferences that they make possible' (Herman, 2000) an Ur-World has a taxonomical function. This approach is championed in Steven E. Jones argument that the multimodal and dynamic notion of D.F. McKenzie and Jerome Gann's 'text' should be applied to the analysis of videogames and their accompanying "para-texts" (Jones, 2005). However, rather than view texts as paratexts in the Genette sense of a threshold

[8] http://www.norbac.ca

[9] The term 'Extended Reality Game' or ERG is the name used by the producers of the show to refer to their specific production. Formally, it is still an ARG. I employ ERG therefore, when referring to the specific work, and ARG when referring to the artistic form.

(Genette, 1997), the Ur-World categorisation is a grouping of texts that define the rules and dynamics of a conjured reality[10].

Possible rules and dynamics that define a world are explored by Lizbeth Klastrup and Susana Tosca in their notion of a 'transmedial world' as an 'abstract content system' with 'distinguishing features' that originate in the first and sometimes subsequent presentations of a world which can then be employed in derivative texts (Klastrup and Tosca, 2004). Klastrup and Tosca propose three core features: Mythos, Topos and Ethos[11]. It is not within the scope of this paper to discuss the reasons behind delineating between producers of texts within a world. I will, however, be exploring fan[12] preference for official content in this paper. An important point too, with the notion of an Ur-World is that it is a grouping that can apply to constructions of real or fictional objects. Indeed, an Ur-World is interchangeable with a brand and akin to Marsha Kinder's 'entertainment supersystem' which ' is a network of intertextuality constructed around a figure or group of figures from pop culture who are either fiction [...] or "real" [...]' (Kinder, 1991: 122).

Additionally, as Henry Jenkins observes in his forthcoming book *Convergence Culture*, '[t]ransmedia storytelling is the art of world making' (Jenkins, forthcoming-a). The notion of an Ur-World is also meant to indicate an artistic approach, the creation of a world manifest in a collection of texts rather than a text representing a world. Designing, experiencing and analysing the collection of texts at the Ur-World level from an aesthetic perspective is somewhat new. There have been many case-studies that interrogate worlds from a transmedial but nevertheless industrial, such as Tony Bennett and Janet Woolacott's treatment of *James Bond* (Bennett and Woollacott, 1987), Dennis Bounds' study of *Perry Mason* (Bounds, 1996) and David Buckingham and Julian Sefton-Green's analysis of *Pokémon* (Buckingham and Sefton-Green, 2004). Practitioners are beginning to, however, create properties that provide unique content in different media platforms, for the sake of art, as well as commercial considerations. Indeed, the boundaries of art and commerce are not clearly delineated, and this is another characteristic of the polymorphic nature of these forms. Transmedia case-studies that acknowledge the artistic intention include Drew Davidson and Mark J.P. Wolf's work on *D'ni* or *Myst* (Davidson, 1999; Davidson, 2001; Davidson, 2005; Wolf, 2006) and Henry Jenkins' analysis of *The Matrix* (Jenkins, forthcoming-b).

Henry Jenkins analysed the Wachowski Brothers franchise *The Matrix* and discovered a dependent relationship between the various texts, which includes feature films, websites, anime and comics (Jenkins, 2001; Jenkins, 2003b; Jenkins, 2003a). Jenkins

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[10] I use 'World', then, to denote all the texts, regardless of producer, that persist the Ur-World but don't define it.

[11] Klastrup and Tosca describe 'mythos' as the establishing conflicts and characters, it is 'the central knowledge one needs to have in order *to interact with or interpret events in the world* successfully' (Klastrup and Tosca, 2004, original emphasis). Topos is the historical and geographical setting of a world and is defines '*what is to be expected from the physics of and navigation in the world*' (ibid., original emphasis). And finally 'ethos' is the 'explicit and implicit ethics of the world', it is the 'knowledge required in order to know *how to behave* in the world' (ibid., original emphasis).

[12] The notion of a 'fan' also needs to be revised as it seems to be applied to any person who is active in following or persisting or poaching a world, activities which are not longer applicable to only those that admire or 'love' a creative production. Fans referred to in this paper, therefore, are just active viewers, players and sometimes admirers of a conjured universe.

introduced the notion of 'transmedia storytelling', recently extrapolating the idea as a story that 'unfolds across multiple media platforms with each new text making a distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole' (Jenkins, forthcoming-a). An example Jenkins gives is the path of a particular message across media platforms. In the 2003 short anime, 'The Last Flight of Osiris', Jue and her crew discover the machines are boring to Zion. In the anime she just manages to post a letter warning the Nebuchadnezzar crew of this impending danger. In the 2003 videogame, *Enter the Matrix*, one mission for the player is to retrieve the letter from the post office. Finally, during the beginning of the second film, *The Matrix Reloaded*, Niobe (who is one of two characters in the game) reports on the "last transmissions of the Osiris". Each of these works, were self-sufficient and obviously provide a unique EventRealm in each media platform. Here, the ERs contribute to an understanding and experience of the world of *The Matrix*, as envisioned by the Wachowski Brothers and artists they commissioned.

To summarise, a series, serial and flexi form can be delivered across media platforms. I use the term 'cross-media entertainment' to encompass all the possible combinations of forms available in the age of cross-media production: an EventRealm that traverses media platforms, repurposing, adaptations, unique components across platforms in an World (what Henry Jenkins' terms 'transmedia'). Such Worlds have an incomprehensible diversity: original, commissioned, sanctioned and unsanctioned producers; long-form, short and micro narratives; linear, interactive, generated and emergent narratives; push and pull content; mono- and multi-modal media; fixed, mobile, converged, networked technology; public, private, mass, remote, virtual and personalised address; traditional, hybrid and emerging genres; literary, popular, marketing, anarchic and pedagogical rhetorics; fiction, nonfiction and alternate realities; real, virtual and augmented realities. Producers select modes according to (among other things) transmedia poetics, experiencers select on a contextual, preference and skill level and likewise with researchers. This turbulent universe creates noise and complexity. Just as Steven Johnson's 'metaforms' 'prosper at those threshold points where the signals degenerate into noise, where the datasphere, becomes too wild and overwrought to navigate alone' (Johnson, 1997: 32), the following Internet activities are the binding forces that are holding conjured universes (the sum of all human-made created texts related to a particular Ur-World) together.

The Role of the Internet in Cross-Media Entertainment

Issue 1a: Orphaned Entertainment & Real-Time Navigation

With works that are distributed over a variety of media platforms, how can a person be notified as to their existence and then find them? Although a work may have a high degree of dependency between texts — the creator having taken a polymorphic approach to Ur-World creation — many producers still do not refer to other texts within their Ur-World or sufficiently motivate audiences to move between them. To use a web design analogy, if a webpage isn't linked to by another it is 'orphaned'. Due primarily to inchoate poetics and the technically difficult task of linking non-networked texts, the majority of cross-media entertainment — whether at the EventRealm, Ur-World or World level — is orphaned entertainment.

At the EventRealm level is the orphaned nature of 'alternate reality games' (ARGs). To recap, they are works that deliver plot points and puzzles over numerous websites,

blog posts, emails, SMS and so on. No single component, or iteration, is self-sufficient and in many cases the components are not linked either hyper- or intertextually. These works are played in real time over weeks or months with updates happening many times a day. It is often part of the 'game' for players to find the components themselves and then share them with the other players located across the planet. It is often the case that as buzz around a game increases players join the experience mid-way to late in the experience. For the players that enter late, they can access a range of texts distributed across media platforms in any order. The disbursed texts of ARGs are equivalent to Marie-Laure Ryan's 'complete graph' architecture (see figure 1) (Ryan, 2001).

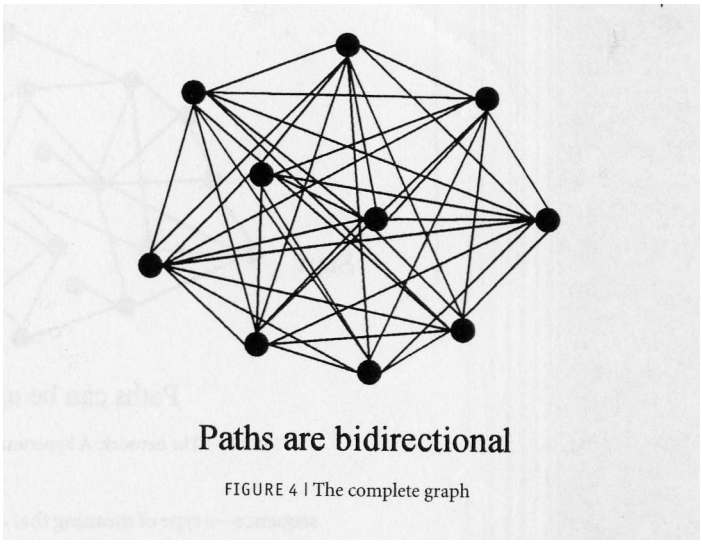


Figure 1: Scan of 'The Complete Graph' by Marie-Laure Ryan (Ryan, 2001: 247)

Ryan uses the graph to illustrate the bidirectional accessibility of a particular type of interactive text, which she explains 'makes it practically impossible to guarantee narrative coherence' (Ryan, 2001b: 246). Likewise, the late comer to an ARG has free access to all the texts and most are not linked at all. How does the experiencer of a non-linked work with texts distributed over media platforms find out, efficiently and effectively, what order to navigate the texts?

Internet Activity: Online Trails & Guides

Game walk-throughs are guides that offer tips and tricks for playing any type of game. They have been around for a long time, in print and online form. ARG communities have developed this notion to create guides that assist a player whilst the work is active. They use forums, listservs and wikis but what is peculiar to ARGs is the player-created 'Trails' and 'Guides'. The latter, Trails and Guides, are listings of all the components as they are revealed or found, updated in real time. A Trail is a chronological listing of all the components and a Guide is a narrative description of the 'game' as it emerges. 'The Trial' and 'The Guide' were approaches created by brothers Dan and Adrian Hon respectively in 2001 for the first widely known ARG: Microsoft and Dreamworks' *The Beast* (Hon, 2001a; Hon, 2001b). These guides are peculiar to the Internet in a few ways: all the information that is used in the guide is sourced from 'in-story' websites or other players' reports on blogs, forums or listservs; they need to be updated and published many times a day, and need to be accessible globally at anytime of the day: affordances only the Internet can supply. Here is an example of the narration Adrian Hon supplies at the beginning of The

Guide:

> ‘So I set off by searching for 'Jeanine Salla' on Google. The first link on the list is for Bangalore World University. BWU is, for all intents and purposes, a very large university with multiple world campuses. It has all the departments that you'd imagine such a university in the future would have: 'Datasphere Studies', 'Climate Control' and... 'A.I. Studies'. Also on the front page of BWU website is a link to a news story mentioning that a Dr. Jeanine Salla, permanent professor of A.I. Studies at the BWU-New York City campus, has been named the current occupant of the Dynatech Chair in Computational Psychology. Interesting.
>
> To find out more about Jeanine, I go to the A.I. Studies department page which gives a little background information about what they do. Nothing important. The page does however let you input the name of a faculty member to find their personal page, and typing in 'Salla' reveals her bio. There's some information about her current work in trying to imbue AIs with 'motivation' to learn, evolve and work.’ (Hon, 2001a)

ARG guides augment the discourse of the commissioned producer’s work in two ways. When analysing the rhetoric of the guides, it is clear from the employment of *orientation*, *complicating action*, *evaluative* and *coda* techniques used they are ‘personal experience narratives’ (PENs) (Labov and Waletzky, 1967). The PENs frame the experience for those during the work and provide detail for understanding of the work posterior to the event. They have pedagogical function too, providing methods of navigation and interpretation for newcomers to mimic. To what extent too, is The Guide part of the work? The productions could be seen in the Bourriaudian sense as having a high ‘co-existence criterion’: works that facilitate a dialogue between the artwork and experiencer (Bourriaud, 1998).

Issue 1b: Orphaned Entertainment & Ur-World Navigation

The Matrix franchise by the Wachowski Brothers is an example of an intricately weaved Ur-World construction that has little inter-text referrals to alert and guide audiences across texts. The referrals that were there did not rise sufficiently above established commerce rhetoric and so remained in the audiences’ minds commercial exploitations without aesthetic intent. An example is the URL listed in the end credits of *The Matrix* (1999):

‘www.whatismatrix.com
password:steak’

Firstly, this referral would only be seen by those willing to sit and watch the credits right until the very end (mostly likely to be fans) and although it has some intrigue the password it doesn’t have enough motivation for a mono-text audience member to go to the website. It most certainly does not provide any information about any of the other texts, such as the short comics that elaborate and continue *The Matrix* Ur-World online. I have spoken to many people who had no idea *The Matrix* was explored over so many texts. The only ones who knew about them were those who found the Ur-World motivation enough for transmedial action: fans.

How does *whatisthematrix.com* guide experiencers to online and offline content that persists the Ur-World? As you can see in figure 1, the ‘schematic instructions’ provided at the site, content is categorised according to the three films and then a

mainframe section. The film sections provide meta information such as interviews and content in the form of wallpapers and photos. The comics, books and anime that persist the Ur-World are listed in the 'mainframe' section. Rather than present the content in chronological order according to Ur-World order or release order, they are presented as additions, tie-ins with no indication as to their significance in defining or understanding the Ur-World.

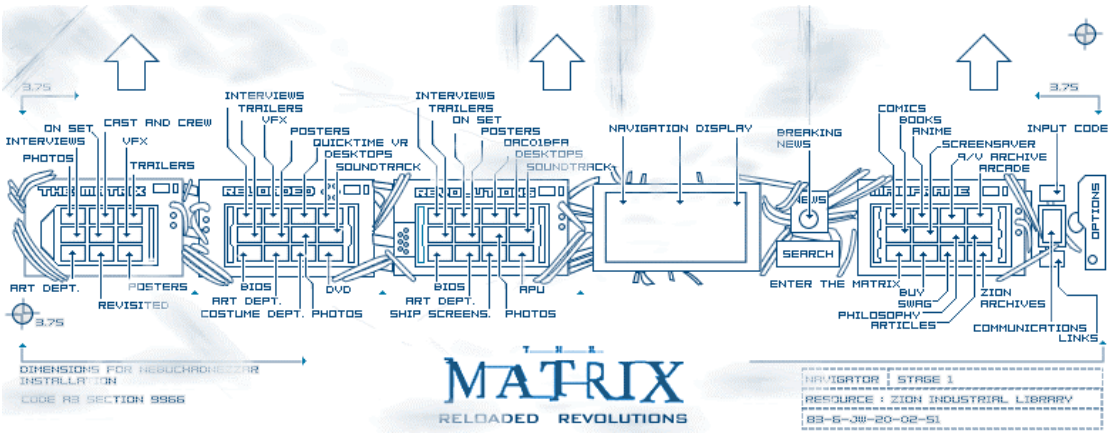
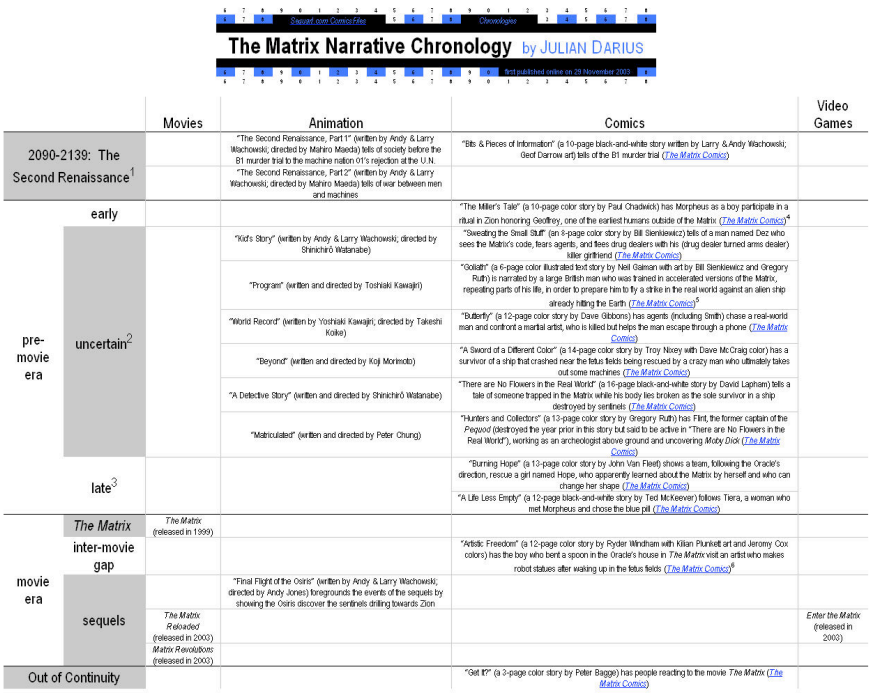


Figure 1: Schematic Instructions for navigation through the entire *The Matrix* website [Online] Available at: http://whatisthematrix.warnerbros.com/rl_cmp/rl_instructions.html.

Indeed, the work of aggregating all the texts within an Ur-World and beyond is often undertaken by fans and is framed in a manner that preferences meaningful relations between texts rather than mono-text and exploitative rhetoric.

Internet Activity: Anarchony Audit

Gerard Genette introduced the term anachrony into Narratology to identify when there is a difference in temporal ordering between the story (fabula) order and the discourse (sjuzhet) order (Genette, 1980 (1972)). With the development of Ur-Worlds that are manifest over a many texts in various media platforms over time, the interplay between Ur-Worlds (crossovers) and the explosion of fan fiction, anachronies propagate. To bring some order to the complexity and facilitate immersive navigation, fans create online guides that reorder the anachronic discourse into a chronological order. An example is 'The Matrix Narrative Chronology' created by Julian Darius (Darius, 2003) (see figure 2). Although not exhaustive, Darius lists the *The Matrix* Ur-World texts in categories of movies, animation, comics and videogames in the order they occurred in the Ur-World.



The Matrix Narrative Chronology by JULIAN DARIUS

		Movies	Animation	Comics	Video Games
2090-2139: The Second Renaissance[1]			"The Second Renaissance, Part 1" (written by Andy & Larry Wachowski; directed by Mahiro Maeda) tells of society before the B1 murder trial to the machine nation 01's rejection at the U.N.	"Bits & Pieces of Information" (a 10-page black-and-white story written by Larry & Andy Wachowski; Geof Darrow art) tells of the B1 murder trial (*The Matrix Comics*)	
			"The Second Renaissance, Part 2" (written by Andy & Larry Wachowski; directed by Mahiro Maeda) tells of war between men and machines		
pre-movie era	early			"The Miller's Tale" (a 10-page color story by Paul Chadwick) has Morpheus as a boy participate in a ritual in Zion honoring Geoffrey, one of the earliest humans outside of the Matrix (*The Matrix Comics*)[4]	
	uncertain[2]		"Kid's Story" (written by Andy & Larry Wachowski; directed by Shinichirô Watanabe)	"Sweating the Small Stuff" (an 8-page color story by Bill Sienkiewicz) tells of a man named Dez who sees the Matrix's code, fears agents, and flees drug dealers with his (drug dealer turned arms dealer) killer girlfriend (*The Matrix Comics*)	
			"Program" (written and directed by Toshiaki Kawajiri)	"Goliath" (a 6-page color illustrated text story by Neil Gaiman with art by Bill Sienkiewicz and Gregory Ruth) is narrated by a large British man who was trained in accelerated versions of the Matrix, repeating parts of his life, in order to prepare him to fly a strike in the real world against an alien ship already hitting the Earth (*The Matrix Comics*)[5]	
			"World Record" (written by Yoshiaki Kawajiri; directed by Takeshi Koike)	"Butterfly" (a 12-page color story by Dave Gibbons) has agents (including Smith) chase a real-world man and confront a martial artist, who is killed but helps the man escape through a phone (*The Matrix Comics*)	
			"Beyond" (written and directed by Koji Morimoto)	"A Sword of a Different Color" (a 14-page color story by Troy Nixey with Dave McCraig color) has a survivor of a ship that crashed near the fetus fields being rescued by a crazy man who ultimately takes out some machines (*The Matrix Comics*)	
			"A Detective Story" (written and directed by Shinichirô Watanabe)	"There are No Flowers in the Real World" (a 16-page black-and-white story by David Lapham) tells a tale of someone trapped in the Matrix while his body lies broken as the sole survivor in a ship destroyed by sentinels (*The Matrix Comics*)	
			"Matriculated" (written and directed by Peter Chung)	"Hunters and Collectors" (a 13-page color story by Gregory Ruth) has Flint, the former captain of the *Peqvod* (destroyed the year prior in this story but said to be active in "There are No Flowers in the Real World"), working as an archeologist above ground and uncovering *Moby Dick* (*The Matrix Comics*)	
	late[3]			"Burning Hope" (a 13-page color story by John Van Fleet) shows a team, following the Oracle's direction, rescue a girl named Hope, who apparently learned about the Matrix by herself and who can change her shape (*The Matrix Comics*)	
				"A Life Less Empty" (a 12-page black-and-white story by Ted McKeever) follows Tiera, a woman who met Morpheus and chose the blue pill (*The Matrix Comics*)	
movie era	*The Matrix*	*The Matrix* (released in 1999)			
	inter-movie gap			"Artistic Freedom" (a 12-page color story by Ryder Windham with Kilian Plunkett art and Jeromy Cox colors) has the boy who bent a spoon in the Oracle's house in *The Matrix* visit an artist who makes robot statues after waking up in the fetus fields (*The Matrix Comics*)[6]	
	sequels		"Final Flight of the Osiris" (written by Andy & Larry Wachowski; directed by Andy Jones) foregrounds the events of the sequels by showing the Osiris discover the sentinels drilling towards Zion		
		The Matrix Reloaded (released in 2003)			*Enter the Matrix* (released in 2003)
		Matrix Revolutions (released in 2003)			
Out of Continuity				"Get It?" (a 3-page color story by Peter Bagge) has people reacting to the movie *The Matrix* (*The Matrix Comics*)	

Figure 2: Screenshot of 'The Matrix Narrative Chronology' by Julian Darius [Online] Available at: http://www.sequart.com/matrixchronology.htm

Ur-Worlds that blend, or crossover, pose particular problems as the volume of texts and complexity of Ur-World data increases to almost unfathomable amounts. *AvP* or *Alien versus Predator*, was conceived by Chris Warner with his Dark Horse comic, *Alien versus Predator*, in 1989. It is a merging of two Ur-Worlds: the 1979 Ridley Scott film *Alien* and the 1987 John McTiernan film *Predator*. Cameron Rhyne created an online *AvP2 Timeline* to 'to help tie the events of AVP2 together in an orderly timeline and help curious players appreciate how the 3 storylines tie together' (Rhyne, 2003).

A trans-film-intra-world chronology of the events depicted in the films of the *Back to the Future*, 'A Trilogy Chronology', lists the events in the order they would occur in the real world (Gow, 2004a). This isn't strictly an anachrony audit, as the film does deliver the events in the order they occurred – there is no analepsis or prolepsis. However, the reordering has still been undertaken to order events as they would occur from the point-of-view of real world (non time jumping) chronology. Gow also lists the texts in order of their release with his 'A Real History' chronology (Gow, 2002).

Paul Kerensa's *The Movie Timeline* is a timeline of events that have occurred in films (Kerensa, 2006). The premise is that all events, whether fictionalisations of real events or outright fictionalisations, are on the same level, as long as they have been depicted in a film. The timeline juxtaposes, therefore, events from a wide range of Ur-Worlds.

Wikipedia plays a significant role in aggregating information, being an accessible online resource for multiple authors to contribute to. On the English Wikipedia there is an entry for 'Fictional Timelines' (unknown, unknown). On this page are links to wikipedia timelines for Worlds such as *Buffy*, *Star Trek*, *Harry Potter*, *Doctor Who*, *Futurama*, *The Sopranos* and *Ultima*.

Internet Activity: Spatial Visualisations of Worlds

Spatial visualisations of information about a world or mixture of worlds have been created by studios and fans alike. Unlike the hand-drawn maps provided in books such as J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, these maps are posterior to the main work, dislodged from the original work and therefore intended rhetorical function.

Keith Gow created a 'crossover grid', *Tommy Westphall's Mind: a Multi-Verse Explored*, which is a visualisation of the 234 TV shows that cross-reference each other, beginning from *St Elsewhere* (Gow, 2004c)[13]. The inter-Ur-World (indeed dreamworld) references are described in Gow's 'Crossover Grid Key' (Gow, 2004b). In figure 2, we see a close-up screenshot of the center of Gow's Grid. The spatial relationship between the shows is explained in Gow's key: two characters from *St Elsewhere* visited the *Cheers* bar; characters from *Cheers* visited the *Wings* airport; *The Tortellis* is a spin-off of *Cheers*; *Frasier*'s show (a spin-off of *Cheers* too) had a 'character' from the *John Larroquette Show* visit; the *John Larroquette Show* referenced Yoyodyne, a client in *Angel*'s Wolfram & Hart; another client of Wolfram & Hart, Weyland-Utani, made weapons featured in *Firefly*; a *Firefly* class ship was featured in the 2003 *Battlestar Galactica* (ibid.).

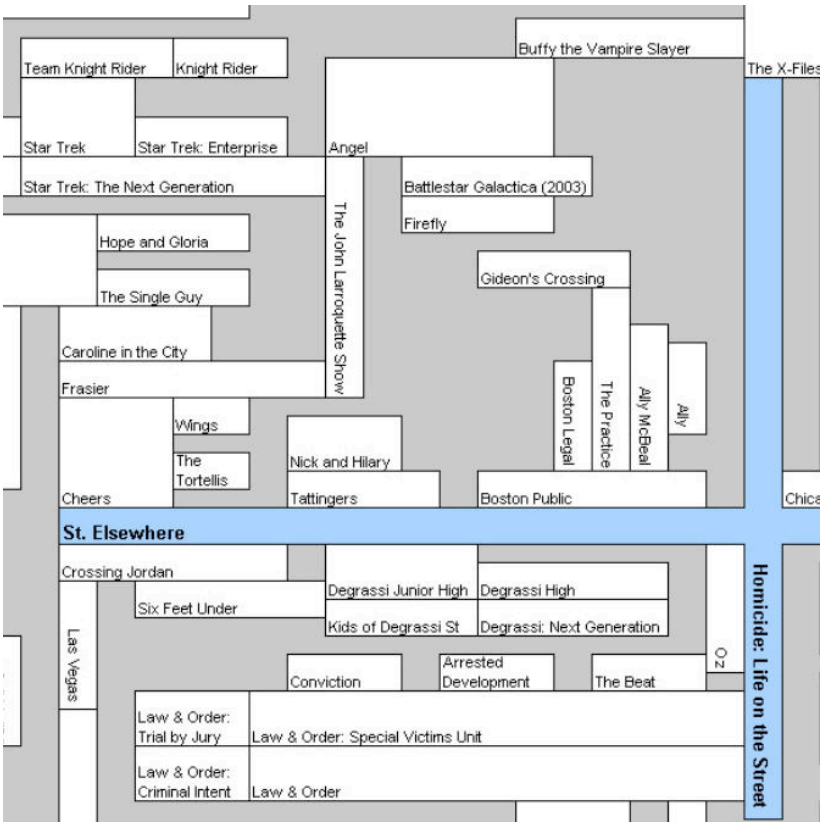


Figure 3: Close-up screenshot of Keith Gow's *Tommy Westphall's Mind: a Multi-Verse Explored* Crossover Grid (Gow, 2004b)

Fans of the *Lost* Ur-World update their Lostpedia regularly. Of the many items in this

[13] The premise of the grid, *Tommy Westphall's Mind: a Multi-Verse Explored*, is based on the final episode of *St Elsewhere*. The final episode of the series ends with the entire series being dreamt up by an autistic child, Tommy Westphall. Every show, therefore, within *St Elsewhere*, and every show *St Elsewhere* references and vice versa are all in the imagination of Tommy Westphall.

vast database are visualisations of connections between characters (unknown, 2006). Figure 4 is an image of the connections between characters in season 2 of the television show. The connections are created because the concept of 'six-degrees of separation' is a theme of the show. To chart the relationships between the characters is a task that may bring the experiencers closer to understanding the Ur-World.

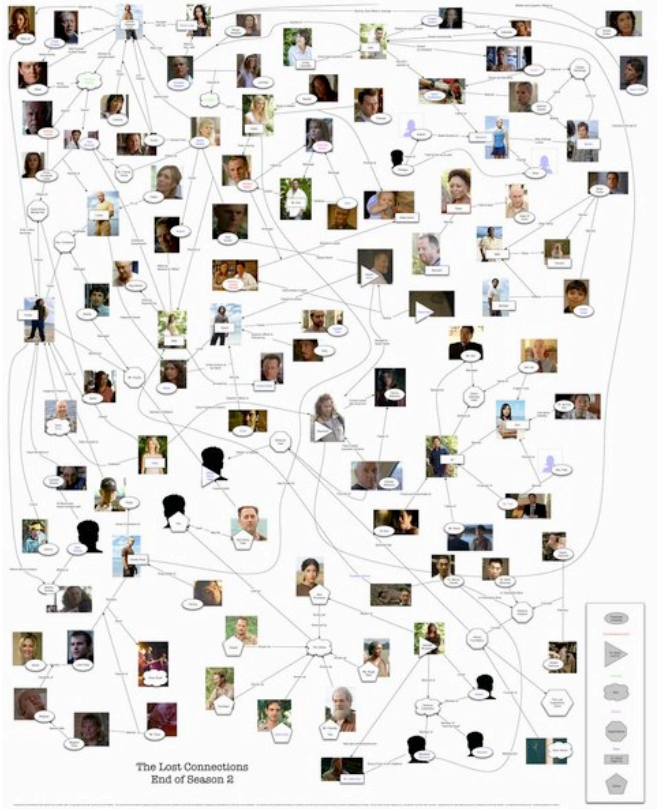


Figure 4: 'Character Connections Through Season Two' of *Lost* from Lostpedia (unknown, 2006)

A non-fan created example is the *Sopranos Map* produced by HBO using Google Maps (HBO, 2006) [see figure 5]. The interactive map, housed at the HBO website, has pins on the locations where incidents have happened in season five of the *Sopranos* Ur-World. When you clink[14] you see a short video excerpt, photos and a synopsis. This map provides a visual mode of exploring artifacts of a world, aids in 'buzz' and assists in providing a recap but holds little function in the understanding of the Ur-World.

[14] 'Clink' is a wonderfully efficient portmanteau of 'clicks-on-link' introduced by :schraefel, m. c., L. Carr, et al. (2004) 'You've Got Hypertext' *Journal of Digital Information* 5(1): article 253,.http://jodi.ecs.soton.ac.uk/Articles/v05/i01/schraefel/

Figure 5: Screenshot of *Sopranos Map* (HBO, 2006)

While it is noted that some of these visualisations could occur without the Internet, there are still strong roles the Internet has played in their existence. Firstly, the Internet facilitated access to the complex data represented, whether through searches or collaboration with others; and the Internet enables self-publication to a potential global audience, which in turn is also a motivating factor in persisting with the arduous research such projects entail.

The Cognitive Function of Anachrony Audits & Spatial Visualisation of Worlds

Such efforts by fans can be attributed to the function of 'wayfinding', 'navigation' or 'cognitive mapping' as introduced by Kevin Lynch in *the Image of the City* (Lynch, 1960) and then developed by Roger Down and David Stea in 'Cognitive Maps and Spatial Behaviour' (Downs and Stea, 1973). Fundamentally, the creators of anachrony audits act as pivot points, directing people to texts, and so are employing the cognitive mapping techniques of 'orientation' (determining one's location relative to nearby objects), 'route decision' (choosing a route to a destination), 'route monitoring' (checking if the route chosen is leading to the desired destination) and 'destination recognition' (confirmed you've reached the desired destination). To illustrate, I will reframe the techniques according to the function anachrony audits, spatial visualisations (pivot points) play in the experience of cross-media entertainment:

- Orientation: they assist in orientating the experiencer since they help determine their progression through an Ur-World relative to the position and volume of surrounding texts;
- Route decision: pivot points that aggregate Ur-Worlds according to their release or provide an anachrony audit assist experiencers in making decisions about a path of experience through a work. Paths can be according to the producer's discourse as displayed at the level of release, through the path of the Ur-World events or some other route.
- Route monitoring: they provide (usually) route guides that are updated according to new texts and therefore offer the ability to check progression through the Ur-World.
- Destination recognition: they give feedback to experiencers that they have indeed covered all the texts in the Ur-World.

Issue 2: Frame-less Content

With the ease of self-publication now available anyone (with some finance and access) can have a book published, a DVD burnt and a website uploaded. Previously, the process of creative production required passing through moderated gateways such as publishers, broadcasters, investors and so on. This means, as many theorists have discussed in greater detail, there is a deluge of content that is not necessarily amateur but is unmediated by what Wark terms the 'vectoralist class' (Wark, 2004). Content is placed online and offered direct to an audience, they are not housed within a publisher or broadcaster site. They can however be offered through aggregators who at present appear to preference informal and person-based metadata, persisting the grassroots rhetoric.

Juxtapose this phenomenon with the 'immersive aesthetic' approach of much contemporary entertainment, exemplified by 'alternate reality games' (ARGs) (McGonigal, 2003). One of the various immersive aesthetic techniques Jane McGonigal cites in her 2003 DAC paper, is the creation of websites for fictional characters and fictional companies that are identical to real-life ones, indeed:

> 'Aesthetically, technologically and phenomenologically speaking, there was no difference at all between the look, function or accessibility of the in-game sites and non-game sites' (ibid.: 112)

What the advent of self-publication and immersive aesthetics has in common is the reduction of 'frames'. Frame analysis (Goffman, 1974) focuses on cues that are given that guide an experiencer to, through and out of the fictional world represented, they are 'metacommunications' (Ruesch and Bateson, 1951). Katharine Young, a Narratologist, distinguishes between three levels of frame: 'taleworld', 'storyrealm' and the 'realm of conversation' (Young, 2004: 76-107). The taleworld is 'a realm of unfolding events and enacting characters' (ibid.: 80), it is 'the events the story is about' (ibid.: 77). The storyrealm is the 'realm of discourse transpiring in the here and now' (ibid.: 76), the presentation of the events in the taleworld. It is the 'realm of conversation', where prefaces and codas reside, that is removed by the immersive and unmediated practices of Internet publication. Studios and students deliver content with the same lack of framing metadata. There is no cue as to the fictional status of the work and, more importantly, there is no information about the producer of the work. Without cues such as a publisher or broadcaster the producer of the content cannot be identified. This causes difficulty for audiences for many reasons, one of which is that it makes it difficult to distinguish between 'official' and 'unofficial' texts.

A fan-created alternate reality game set in *The Matrix* world, *Metacortechs* (Aiken, Cain et al., 2003), was launched alongside *The Matrix Revolutions*. Many fans of *The Matrix* signed up to the game, thinking it was produced by the Wachowski Bros. But, as journalist Andrew Losowsky noted, fans were perturbed when they realised the game was not "official":

> 'It became the most successful ARG ever, with around 12,000 players and visits logged from 118 different countries. But when the truth became known, many people felt very angry at what they saw as wilful deception. "I made the mistake of giving all my private information. I thought it was official," said one Matrix fan in the forum

thelastfreecity.com. “I feel stupid and scammed and ripped off”.’ (Losowsky, 2003)

Why would fans delineate between ‘official’ and ‘unofficial’ production? They serve a different function. Original, licensed and commissioned content *defines* the Ur-World, and unofficial content *contributes* to it or *persists* it. Official production is a ‘primary text’ (Cover, 2004), that has the sole authority to produce ‘kernals’(Chatman, 1978)[15]. Fans are not the only ones that make such delineations. Lucasfilms Ltd has been carefully managing[16] what it regards as ‘official continuity’ for many years. Especially since George Lucas has revised versions of his films with each release, and deemed them definitive visions (Butler, 2006a). Since 1997, ardent fan and Star Wars Tales writer Nathan P. Butler, has been cataloguing and classifying all the creations within the Star Wars universe. Butler augments the ‘official’ four-level canon created by Lucas Licensing’s Holocron continuity database maintained by Leland Chee to include fan created works. He identifies in his tome *Star Wars Timeline Gold*, nine levels of ‘officiality’ (Butler, 2006b). These levels are characterised by their role in defining the *Star Wars* World. So, although commissioned and fan-fiction may persist the core elements of a world — acknowledging the transmedial elements of mythos, topos and ethos (Klastrup and Tosca, 2004) — they do not necessarily define them.

In addition to the role as kernel creator, the primary producer also defines what is ‘in-game’. The notion of an ‘in-game’ space was recognised by Johan Huizinga in his seminal work on ‘play’, *Homo Ludens* (Huizinga, 1950):

> ‘The arena, the card-table, the magic circle, the temple, the stage, the screen, the tennis court, the court of justice, etc., are all in the form and function play-grounds, i.e. forbidden spots, isolated, hedged round, hallowed, within which special rules obtain. All are temporary worlds within the ordinary world, dedicated to the performance of an act apart.’ (Huzinga, 1950: 10)

With the removal of producer-identifying frames, players need to develop skills in identifying the magic circle through different means. For every ARG there is an accompanying thread in a forum and listserv that addresses what sites are part of the magic circle and not. Indeed, establishing ‘OOG’, what is out-of-game, is a skill that many see as part of the game.

Internet Activity: Whois Lookups & OOG Threads

Players use a variety of methods to decipher whether a text is OOG or not: discourse analysis (assessing the language used); time & effort (assessing whether it is a fan-fiction or not: the inference being someone wouldn’t spend that much time on something they’re not paid to do); assess accuracy (does the information correlate with what they know about the narrative they know is official?); assess production values (does it look professionally engineered?); hyperlinking (does it link to in-game

[15] It should be noted that Chatman does not align kernals and satellites with producers. I am appropriating his term -- importing his delineation between parts of a text that have a higher status than others and juxtaposing it with the producer status.

[16] ‘Managing’ is perhaps too kind a word, considering LucasFilm has been aggressively issuing orders to *Star Wars* fan fiction creators to ‘cease and desist’ since the late 1980s. Source: Shefrin, E. (2004) '*Lord of the Rings*, *Star Wars*, and Participatory Fandom: Mapping New Congruencies between the Internet and Media Entertainment Culture' *Critical Studies in media Communication* 21(3): 261-281.

sites & do they link back?); narrative & gameplay relevance (does it provide information and tasks that are relevant to the game at present, is it in-line with where the game is at?); time online (does the site look like it has been online for a very long time and therefore is not part of the ARG?); technical: checking the source code and 'whois lookups'. These OOG activities could not be achieved without networked collaboration through forums and listervers, and Internet-specific skills such as checking the source code of a website and 'whois lookups' (reports on the owner of an IP address)[17]. Dave Szulborski, in his Guide to Playing Alternate Reality Games encourages players to use whois lookups, as do all the player forums and online guides (Szulborski, 2005).

There are a few reasons why players try to decipher the owner of a domain name:

1) the producer of the site reveals clues for the game;
2) the producer of the site may reveal who the puppetmasters are (though not encouraged);
3) the player is unsure if the site is in-game because either:
    a) it is not 'in-play' yet (it was found before any references to it);
    b) it may not be within the current game (eg: there are many *Lost* sites that have been created by ABC before the ARG);
    c) it is fan-fiction and not part of the ARG;
    d) it is a real site that happens to fit in with the world!

In the recent ARG accompanying the *Lost* TV series, *The Lost Experience* (2006), players have been spending a lot of time distinguishing between what is in the current magic circle and which is not. The problem has been that there are many commissioned sites that are not necessarily part of the ARG or part of the ARG at the time, and there are many fan produced works. Players may know about official sites, but the information in them is not necessarily to be brought 'in-game' as yet. Johnnie Young, the moderator of *The Lost Game Yahoo Group*, provided assistance on just how to establish the magic circle amongst the Internet noise:

> 'But again, it doesn't matter if you can't decide whether a site is owned by ABC or a fan. All that matters is if we've been led to a website because of a clue or a link from an official In-Game website, blog, commercial, advertisement, etc.
>
> A site isn't In-Game until it is officially brought In-Game.' (Young, 2006)

Concluding Remarks

As has been shown with the activities of magic circle moderators, anachrony auditors, visualisers and trail guides, the Internet is an essential binding force in the experience of cross-media entertainment. Indeed, the cross-media, cross-world and cross-mode navigation being undertaken should indicate to designers the need for texts to be linked and for pivot-points to aggregate them. The conscious and artistic connection between texts is part of the shifting from a mono-text paradigm to a polymorphic one. With the examples explored in this paper, audiences are proving clear advice on how

[17] Indeed, even though 'puppet-masters' have learnt to take advantage of the privacy function when registering a domain name, players have been alerted to the fact that 'a privacy service like this can often be a clue in itself […] since the WhoIs information for all the websites that are part of the game will always display the same exact name and address for the private registration company' (Szulborksi, 2005, 24).

to proceed.

There are many more functions the Internet facilitates in the experience of cross-media entertainment, indeed all entertainment, that are not explored in this paper. Of note are what I term ‘Metaform Registeries’, where the plethora of intertextual references found in works are collated and explained; how Wikipedia and the Internet Movie Database are Meta Conjunctive; how information about upcoming television episodes and filmic moments are “leaked” to create a particular semiotic agreement when viewing: ‘Game Goggles’ and ‘Proxy Auteurs’, where the auteur may be dead, but the fan is a charmed ventriloquist.

By focusing on activities outside of the intended realm of a work this research shows how the Internet is being used to fill the gaps in mono-text approaches to design; the pivotal role of the person (fan, player, audience) in the disseminating, interpreting and collating of entertainment for a range of audiences and points-of-entry, and how emerging cross-media forms use the Internet as a backbone. The introduction of a transmodal approach to studying cross-media entertainment, and accompanying terminology, contributes to an emerging area and mediates troubled extant ones. Above all, cross-media entertainment forms could not exist without the influence and use of the Internet. To be fluent in cross-media therefore, one needs to understand the glue that binds all elements: at present it is people on the Internet.

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