

Multi-text Magic: Harry Potter in book, film and videogame

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Burn, A (2006) 'Multi-text Magic: Harry Potter in book, film and videogame', in Collins, F and Ridgman, J (eds) *Turning the Page: Children's Literature in Performance and the Media*, Bern: Peter Lang

OLD WINE IN NEW BOTTLES?

The Harry Potter phenomenon both affirms and challenges traditional conceptions of children's literature. The novels are curiously familiar compendia of traditional motifs, fantasy furnishings, and heroic exploits; but they also represent and address the contemporary child, the child of the late twentieth century, perhaps. The veteran analyst of children's literature Nicholas Tucker argues this ambiguity well and even-handedly (1999). He lists the aspects of the novels that derive from older genres of children's literature: the Cinderella story, the Victorian and Edwardian boarding-school genre, the fantasies of E Nesbit, and the tuck-obsessed post-war narratives of Enid Blyton. But he also argues that Harry is designed to appeal to the videogame generation, with his magic maps, virtual toolkits, and the arcade-like game of Quidditch.

The bulk of the critical literature so far has, however, attended to Harry Potter largely as a literary phenomenon. While some have explored the cross-media franchise (Mackey, 2001; Appelbaum, 2003), there has been no detailed analytical work on how exactly the stories are transmuted across different media, with one exception that produces as detailed analysis of the game of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (Gunder, 2004); and one which considers the modality system of the game of *The Chamber of Secrets* (Burn & Parker, 2003).

In this chapter, I will focus on how the cross-media transformations of the story, in which children's engagement extends across novels, films, computer games. As Margaret Mackey points out (2001), this is not by any means a new phenomenon – she cites the growth of Frank L Baum's *Wizard of Oz* series a hundred years ago, and its extensive (and lucrative) adaptation into plays, comicstrips and trading cards. However, the computer game at least is a new medium since those days; and the media and literary landscapes inhabited by children have also changed.

In looking across the different media, a number of questions arise. What happens when a print narrative is transformed into a film (a relatively familiar phenomenon); and then into a computer game (a less well-understood process)? And how do child audiences, readers, spectators, players, actually engage with these texts?

The first question has usually been addressed, in literary and film studies, within the field of adaptation theory. This field has been dogged by a tendency to privilege the literary source, though more recent work has perceived the dialogue between literature and film

as a two-way process, in which both media produce new works characterised by their distinctive formal and aesthetic properties, and in which influence may flow in both directions.

Similarly, the adaptation of film texts into computer games has begun to receive critical attention. A recent collection of essays, *Screenplay* (2003), for instance, looks at adaptation from film to game and game to film; and at similarities, such as how some games mimic filmic qualities, as well as differences, in particular in the participatory nature of gameplay.

The Potter phenomenon demands something more. Like its close contemporary, the *Lord of the Rings* sequence of films and games, it demands a rethinking of adaptation across book, film and game (there is further territory in the variety of merchandise; but the major three forms are more than enough for this chapter).

The approach adopted here will be to see the texts as a series of social and semiotic transformations (Hodge and Kress, 1988). This chapter will analyse one scene from *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, looking across the book, film and computer game. It will integrate the analysis with interview data from a group of eight thirteen year-old children in Cambridge and three twelve-year-old children from London, conducted in 2003. The question is: what kinds of transformation are evident in these texts and in their uses by readers/spectators/players; and what social interests are at stake?

This work forms a subset of two research projects in computer games at the Centre for the Study of Children, Youth and Media in the Institute of Education, University of London. The first project is *Textuality in Videogames* (2001-3), funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Board in the UK, a study of roleplaying games. The second is *Making Games* (2003-7), funded by the Economic and Social Research Council and the Department for Trade and Industry, a research and development project in partnership with Immersive Education Ltd to develop a games authoring software tool.

A STORY OF MEDIA CHANGE AND TRANSFORMATION.

The question of how narratives are carried over from one medium to another is, of course, an old one. Walter Ong describes in detail how the tradition of oral narrative gives way to print (2002); and his account prompts some questions about the Potter phenomenon. Children's literature is arguably closer to oral narrative than its adult counterpart – closer to the oral forms of folktale and to the forms of oral simulation in the literary fairytale; closer to the cadences and performative style of spoken storytelling; closer to what Ong calls the 'psychodynamics' of oral narrative. And Rowling's style, whether by instinct or design, is closer to these than more 'literary' children's literature. Its points of reference are not, like Philip Pullman's, Blake and Milton, but the popular forms of folktale (werewolves, witches, dragons, magic mirrors), comicstrip and film fantasy (flying cars, invisibility cloaks), irreverent comic literature (grotesque relatives, wacky potions, exaggerated bullies).

One of our interviewees, Ilana, was able to recall the book with considerable accuracy:

ILANA: He uses [his wand] in the book, he uses it for the Lumos spell, and then I remember they say he was prepared to fight to the death, cos when they're surrounded he said, 'He drew out his wand and he was prepared to fight to the death, even if, even if he drew his wand he knew there were too many' or something, and, um, I don't think he actually cast a spell but he sort of got his wand out [*waves hand clasping imaginary wand*].

This kind of recollection and reworking can be seen from one point of view as a residue of oral storytelling – after all, Ilana (and the three children in the London interview) all refer to the experience of hearing the book read to them. Interestingly, Ilana, a child with wide experience of reading (she attributes Rowling's use of owls as letter-carriers to the influence of Arthur Ransome's *Pigeon Post*), transforms two of Rowling's very plain words into rather more literary substitutes: *reached* becomes *drew*; *ready* becomes *prepared*. So if Rowling's prose is often a kind of speech-like writing, in this performative transformation, it becomes a kind of writing-like speech.

The books resemble oral narratives in other ways. There are important forms of the redundancy Ong notes: the repetition necessary to offer listeners easy handles on which to hang characters and ideas. So, for instance, the reduction of Harry to 'The-boy-who-lived' and Voldemort to 'He-who-must-not-be-named' operate as convenient formulae both for writer and for reader, like the kennings of Old English oral narrative such as *mere-hrægl*, 'sea-garment', for a ship's sail; or Homeric epithets like 'long-tried royal Odysseus'. Other kinds of redundancy can be seen in formulaic events which plug into the narrative at convenient points, such as Uncle Vernon's rages, shopping in Diagon Alley, Platform 9 $\frac{3}{4}$, and the Housepoints ceremony.

However, it is also possible to see the films and computer games from the point of view of oral narrative. In one sense, they literally restore the oral which is frozen out by print: dialogue is brought to life in the films, and the computer games also contain dialogue, as well as spoken narrative (voiced in *The Chamber of Secrets* by the British comic actor, Stephen Fry). In a more extended sense, though, the films and games produce other aspects of oral narrative – they are time-based media, like an oral story; and they display some of the values and characteristics of what Ong calls 'the secondary orality' of highly technologized societies. This notion is developed by scholars of electronic media, such as Lanham (2001), who argues that the texts of the electronic age undo the fixity of print, restoring the provisionality of the oral, and at the same time locating texts in a public space, like oral rhetorics, and unlike the solitary individualism of print.

Ong proposes a number of properties of oral narrative, of which I want to consider three in relation to the successive transformations of the Potter texts. The first of these is Ong's notion of the 'heavy hero': a stereotypical character delineated through a few memorable characteristics, and representing one or two important qualities. Secondly, he argues that oral narrative is 'agonistically-toned': the hero's problems are externalized rather than

psychologised, and addressed physically, often through combat. And thirdly, he identifies a participatory, empathetic element in oral narrative, in which the narrator can become closely associated with the protagonist, and the listeners become immersed in the story.

We can see how this might fit Harry. In the books, he represents a couple of clear qualities (courage; magical power); and is clearly identified by a few physical attributes (scar, glasses, black hair, green eyes). Pivotal moments of the stories involve physical conflict: against Voldemort as Quirrel, against the basilisk, against the Dementors, and so on. We are located 'with' Harry through a schematic link with his presence, thoughts and point of view, generating the kind of empathy that Ong's model requires.

In the film, the 'heavy hero' is developed in images of the boy-hero located in the tropes and conventions of comicstrip adaptations in film and television: in the neo-Gothic darkness of Tim Burton's *Batman* movies, the swooping shots of Sam Raimi's Spiderman flying over the New York skyline, or Raimi's fantasy TV series, such as *Xena, Warrior Princess*. The saturated colour, high production values and CGI monsters of these texts are all shared by the Potter movies.

In the games, the figure of the heavy hero becomes more pronounced. As Janet Murray argues (1988), games are not good at producing psychology, but are good at producing characters who solve problems through conflict, which she compares to the heroes of the Homeric narratives. In one episode of *The Chamber of Secrets* game, for instance, the player as Harry confronts the giant spider Aragog. Whereas in the book and film, Harry fails to fight the spider, and has to be rescued by the flying Ford Anglia, in the game this episode is transformed into a set-piece ludic conflict, in which the monster becomes the classic end-of-level boss of adventure and role-playing games, and an economy-driven battle ensues in which Harry's spells counter Aragog's venom, with the life-points of both protagonist and antagonist draining away in the corner of the screen.

However, the analysis here will also explore two other dimensions of the Potter texts. Firstly, the 'heavy hero' needs some modification in the context of children's literature. As proxy for the child against the adult threat, he needs to be small, resourceful and vulnerable, more Odysseus than Achilles, more Jack the Giant-Killer than either.

Secondly, if the Rowling novels (and, in different ways, the films and games) pull backwards towards oral narrative and forwards to Ong's secondary orality in certain ways, in other ways they pull towards something quite at odds with the function and structure of oral narrative. The novels chart the growth of the protagonist through adolescence, via a series of rites of passage in the form of both fantasy metaphors and realistic depictions of friendship, love, and bereavement. In this sense they are more like the tradition of the *Bildungsroman*, or novel of formation, whose central representational strategy is psychological realism. This aspect of the novels was recognized early by critics (Jacobs, 2000): they develop many characteristics of the *Bildungsroman*, especially in its form in the English novel of the 19th century, summarized by Buckley in *Seasons of Youth* as 'a convenient synonym for the novel of youth or apprenticeship' (Buckley, 1974, p 13). Like Jane Eyre, or Pip in *Great Expectations*, Harry is an orphan

with cruel relatives, he leaves home to discover himself, and he undergoes an education both in the formal sense and in life.

However, by producing what is in effect a *Bildungsroman* stretched out over seven novels, Rowling has dynamically altered the impact of the text on the audience; at least for the generation who are growing up with the novels. For them, the representation of adolescence is almost realtime – the seven years of Harry’s growth will have taken place in about ten years of writing. At the same time, slightly out of sync with the novels, but more compressed overall, the films rework the evolving narrative of Harry’s growth. To the affordances of the printed word are added the affordances of the casting couch, though here used for an unusual purpose. Not only are Harry, Ron and Hermione’s physical attributes made flesh in Radcliffe, Grint and Watson, but their physical passage through adolescence is also recruited for the representational purposes of the franchise; for instance, the breaking voices of the two boys is noted by Rowling and Steven Kloves, the writer of the first three films, in an interview on the DVD of *The Chamber of Secrets*.

Before moving on to look in detail at the basilisk scene in *The Chamber of Secrets*, it is important to note that Ong’s emphasis on the spoken word has been accused of phonocentrism (Chandler, 2002). It will need adaptation in order to apply to semiotic modes other than speech – visual design, dramatic action, and the codes of filming and editing in the films; programmed interactivity in the games. The Potter texts, then, will be seen as multimodal (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2000), combining and integrating different signifying modes and media. The book uses written language, which is relatively straightforward. The film represents a transformation of the narrative into a combination of modes (dramatic action, speech, visual design, lighting, music) within the overall design of the moving image, which I have referred to elsewhere as the kineikonic mode (from the Greek for move, *kinein*, and image, *eikon*). The game represents a further transformation into a different combination of modes, which subsume the kineikonic (insofar as the game is an animated sequence); but combine it with the ludic mode, in which game-elements (obstacles, challenges, penalties, rewards, goals) are integrated with economies and rules within a programmed game system. Finally, the children transform aspects of all three into speech, in the interviews; though one girl also makes board games, drawings, and improvised games.

BATTLING THE BASILISK: ST GEORGE MEETS JACK THE GIANT-KILLER

At the end of *The Chamber of Secrets*, Harry conquers Voldemort and his alter ego, Tom Riddle by engaging in battle, fighting the basilisk with the sword of Godric Gryffindor, in the Chamber of Secrets:

Harry threw his whole weight behind the sword and drove it to the hilt into the roof of the serpent’s mouth.

But as warm blood drenched Harry’s arms, he felt a searing pain just above his elbow. One long, poisonous fang was sinking deeper and deeper into his arm ...

The character relations remind us here that the 'heavy hero' figure has a particular configuration in children's literature and fairytale. Here, since the protagonist is proxy for the child against the giant adult, it is necessary for the character to be vulnerable, often physically small, and in need of support from helpers, magical or otherwise. Rowling's addition of the wound emphasizes Harry's vulnerability, and the magical help from the phoenix resolves the sequence appropriately. This vulnerability was remarked on by a number of the children in our study. Jenna compares Harry to Frodo in *The Lord of the Rings*, because 'they always end up getting hurt or something'. Sam sees a similar likeness: 'Well it's just, it's kind of like a struggle for him, to do whatever he wants to do, you know, like Frodo wants to get the ring to Mount Doom'. Both of them go on to emphasise the role of the helpers, comparing Ron to Sam Gamgee in particular. However, Jenna's remark seems to recognise that the team are a kind of heroic unit, connected functionally as Propp's model (1970), but also as a team in a computer game:

JENNA: He's a bit like, um, Ron and Hermione are a bit like Sam, like they're always there for him, and it's like they are brave separate, but all together they're better, they're more braver.

In the film, the moment is translated faithfully, in common with the narrative in general, as part of a close collaboration between Joanne Rowling and Steven Kloves, the scriptwriter for the first three films. Kloves' script for this scene does indicate movements and actions, adding an element not in the book, requiring Harry to clamber up a huge statue of Salazar Slytherin for his final confrontation with the monster. Clearly this exploits the spatial possibilities of film, expanding the possibility of dramatic camera angles, and adding a vertiginous quality to the scene. However, Kloves' script also makes explicit a meaning not obviously present in the book, likening Harry to St George killing the dragon:

SCRIPT (<http://www.fortunecity.com/tattooine/clarke/38/chamberofsecrets.html>)
Harry WHEELS, sword in hand, and fends off the slashing serpent like St. George and the dragon. In a mad rush of courage, he PITCHES HIMSELF onto the serpent, SLIDES DOWN its back and rolls up, SWORD RAISED. Too tired to flee, Harry simply waits. The serpent rises and, FANGS BARED... STRIKES.
Marshalling every ounce of strength left to him, Harry drives the sword upward, deep into the roof of the SERPENT'S mouth. It HISSES in PAIN, thrashing MADLY as it drives a FANG into Harry's arm. Harry clutches his arm in agony, stumbles back and falls to the floor, watching as the serpent THRASHES briefly... then goes STILL.

The image of St George suggests a particular narrative of Englishness, of course. While the actual film is unable to name St George in this explicit way, the series of shots which represent Harry, the sword and the basilisk make up syntagmatic structures which suggest this Englishness. A detailed example is the profile shot which places the plucky figure of Harry into a relation with the basilisk, linked by the thrusting sword: a syntagm of two

actors and two opposing actions (the monster's biting teeth and the boy's thrusting movement); a syntagm in which monster and boy are both Actor and Goal, subject and object, giver and receiver of the death blow. However, the syntagm is not symmetrical: the boy is lower than the monster, indicating the vulnerability of the child protagonist. For this to be understood as a particularly English image would require interpretive work on the part of the spectator, making the connotative link with St George which is lost in the transformation of script to film. However, other signs in the syntagm also produce suggestions of Englishness: the closeup on the sword of Gryffindor recalls Harry's house, suggesting that this desperate struggle is another way for Harry to defend the honour of his House; as indeed do other moments in the books, films and games, in which Harry is rewarded for life and death struggle by being awarded House points. While this imagery is clearly derived from traditions of British public-school stories and the values they promote, it is not clear that a child reader at the beginning of the twenty-first century would make this connection. However, they would recognise more generally, perhaps, that Harry's battle is somehow connected with the institutional values of school. Ochirbat, in the Cambridge interview, expresses a strong dislike of the character, because 'he's like a teacher's pet'. This interpretation reverses the value system of fighting for House and school, via a subcultural suspicion of such values. It may also be that for this boy, whose family recently immigrated to Britain from Mongolia, such archaic images of Englishness are simply incomprehensible.

The moment of Harry's conquest of the basilisk in the film consists of a multimodal assemblage, behind which lie discrete modes of design and production. There is the actor himself, Daniel Radcliffe, who executes a series of movements (slashing, scrabbling for the slipping sword, gazing desperately up at the basilisk). This dramatic mode (gesture, action, facial expression) is combined with the visual design invested in the character – the scar, the glasses, the costume. Integrated with this element of the scene, to complete the dramatic syntagm, is the monster, produced by a combination of animatronic animation and computer-generated animation (CGI). The semiotic provenance of the monster is complex. The visual design is partly inspired by the book, which includes several partial realizations in the form of adjectival phrases such as 'bright, poisonous green, thick as an oak trunk'. However, the moving image mode needs more, being obliged to render a complete realization. The DVD contains a gallery of concept drawings, including a selection for the basilisk; and these consist of a number of photographs of snakes, and concept drawings closely modelled on cobras. The final animation has a head strongly reminiscent of the current generation of CGI and animatronic dinosaurs, in the *Jurassic Park* series, for instance; and this kind of popular filmic provenance seems as important here as the literary origin of the basilisk. The monster is also reminiscent of realizations of dragons in fantasy films of the same period, such as *Dragonheart* (Cohen, 1996). In this respect, the associative freight they carry strengthens the connotative link with St George indicated in the script.

A good deal of the dynamism of the basilisk sequence is created by camera movement, characterised by the fluid, mobile camera of modern action films. While this creates a sense of urgency and instability in general in this scene, it also offers specific meanings, such as the ability to alternate between Harry's point-of-view and the monster's while

they race through the tunnels of the Chamber of Secrets. The director explains how this was achieved:

It didn't occur to me before I started shooting *Chamber* that I could actually shoot a great deal of the Basilisk (a giant serpent) sequence at the end of the film on a Steadicam. That kept the entire sequence moving and alive, kept it from the point of view of the snake. So effects these days are an amazingly liberating tool for a director.

(DGA MAGAZINE, Jan 2003,

http://www.dga.org/news/v27_5/feat_columbus.php3)

The cinematography in this sequence, then, emphasizes the agonistic nature of the 'heavy hero': it works to intensify action, combining with the martial blare of the brass-heavy music of John Williams' score, and the imagery of weapons, teeth, and blood. In terms of affect, it produces a complex typical of action and horror films. The imagery of facial expression, disheveled clothing and frantic action represents a combination of fear and courage; and these are transformations of the linguistic designs of the script: '... like St. George and the dragon'; 'In a mad rush of courage ...'. These in turn are transformations of the book, in which the protagonist's fear is represented in this sequence as 'horrorstruck' (p 234), '... as Harry trembled ...' (p 234); while his courage is implied by decisive action verbs: '*threw* his whole weight behind the sword and *drove* it to the hilt ...' (p 236). The quality of courage, again indicative of the 'heavy hero', was noted in our interviews by Jenna. Comparing the quests of Harry and Frodo, she says 'they have to have the courage to do it'; and she predicts that Harry will increase in courage in the sixth and seventh books.

The other important part of the affective complex is the emotions made possible for the spectator. In part, we are offered a share in Harry's emotions, and in this sense, the film operates as a horror film at this point, in which, argues Carol Clover, spectators are victim-identified (1993). This position means that the heavy hero must be constructed as considerably more vulnerable than in the Homeric model; and the provenance of the story in children's literature and fairytale also requires that Harry be vulnerable as well as brave, as we have noted above. With reference to another episode in the film, Harry's confrontation with the giant spider Aragog, several of the children make it clear that they feel in the position of victim in relation to the spiders, as in this observation by Phoebe:

PHOEBE: There's a bit where they're in the car, and you think they've escaped, cos Aragog's kind of, held back, and the, and the, and there's a couple of smaller spiders running round, and then suddenly there's a huge spider which just JUMPS [violent forward thrust of right hand] onto the back of the car [same hand on forehead], and even if, even if the spider itself isn't that scary, it's kind of, it just kind of makes you do that [demonstrates jump with face and hands], cos you think they've kind of got away.

Turning now to the computer game, the most important difference, of course, is its participatory nature, and particularly the ability to play Harry. The box of the game

challenges the player: 'Dare you return to Hogwarts? Be Harry Potter and unlock the mystery at the heart of the Chamber of Secrets'. These demands, constructed as interrogatives and imperatives, are central to the grammar of the computer game (Burn & Schott, 2004). The narratologist Gerard Genette argues that the indicative mood is the characteristic mood of narrative – it presents a story as statement (1980). Games, by contrast, ask questions or issue commands. In this respect, the game emphasises the participatory quality of Ong's model of oral narrative, in ways that the book and film are unable to do. The 'I' of the player and the 'I' of the protagonist are fused in a pronominal synthesis – player becomes protagonist in the game-grammar, literally conducting (some of) his actions. In a similar way, Ong relates how the narrator of a traditional African story, Mwinde, becomes so immersed in the story at one point that the third person slips into first person in his telling.

In the basilisk sequence, we play Harry, as we have throughout the game. This is a third person game in which we are poised behind Harry, a typical position for the adventure game genre. The basilisk is introduced in a cut scene (a non-interactive animated sequence) in which Tom Riddle says his piece. Then the player/Harry faces the basilisk, ready for combat. The sword has already been dropped by Fawkes, and replaces Harry's usual weapon, his wand. The sword is operated in the same way, with the left mouse button; while the mouse is moved to aim at the target. Meanwhile, the basilisk spits out gobbets of poison which weaken the player-character. The relative strength of the protagonist and antagonist are realized as economies: Harry's life is represented by a lighting-shape at the top left of the screen, which empties as he is weakened. The basilisk's life is represented by a green bar at the bottom left. If Harry loses, the character dies (in fact, he faints in the Harry Potter games) and returns to the previous Save point. If and when he wins, the basilisk dies, and the game moves into a final cut scene in which Harry, Ron, Ginny and Lockhart are flown home by Fawkes, to be suitably rewarded by Dumbledore, as in the book and film.

As in the film, the characters, the space and the monster have to be rendered fully as visual constructs. The game is temporally different, however, in that the time is partly controlled by the player, who can stretch out the battles with the basilisk by continually dodging it, for instance. However, the central principle is that the player assumes some of the agency of the protagonist. The 'he' of Harry Potter, the third person of the book and, effectively, the film, is still present: Harry is clearly still a character in an audiovisual narrative, and some of his actions (and all of his speech) are controlled by the game system. But some actions are controlled by the player. It is important to be clear about this. The actions are not ones which affect the overall sequence of the narrative in the game – those are invariable, as they have to be for the game to function as an adaptation of book and film. The actions at the player's disposal are, rather, ones which belong to freestanding micro-sequences of narrative. In this scene, to be defeated by the basilisk does not mean a different ending to the story – it merely initiates a repetition loop typical of game temporality – in games, actions are often repeated many times, as in a play rehearsal, or in a recurrent dream. This changes the quality of the event – the adrenalin of the game still fuels it, but the narrative surprise is gone, as Freud points out about recurrent nightmares in his theory of the compulsion to repeat (1920/1986).

However, the repetitions are never quite the same – in this sequence, for example, the player has different options – to dodge and shoot or just to shoot; where to stand; how close to the monster to go. These options are determined by the actions available. Harry can move forwards, backwards, to the left, to the right (arrow keys); jump (control key); fire the sword (left mouse button). These six actions, analogous to verbs in language, may appear limited and reductive; but in fact they function as a form of restricted language (Halliday, 1989) typical of games, which a dexterous player can deploy skilfully to progress rapidly through the game's challenges, puzzles and obstacles.

Thus, as players, we are located in an interstitial grammatical space – we are immovably fixed behind Harry, our point-of-view unchangeably attached to his; and in this sense, the game offers a kind of first person experience. However, in the 'grammar' of gaming, this is technically a third-person position, in that we are not looking out through the character's eyes, with only a hand visible as a sign of the character. To understand this in terms of filmic focalization, we are between two of the three available points of view proposed by Pouillon (1946) – *vision avec*, or seeing with the character, and *vision par derriere*, or seeing from behind, a more detached narrative standpoint. However, where filmic focalization theory partly explains how audiences are located in relation to the character, it does so in terms of seeing – in Genette's well-known question, 'Who sees?'. This is important in the computer game; but insufficient. It needs to be supplemented by the question 'Who acts?' And, as we have seen, the answer is as ambiguous as the seeing question – we act in part; but the action is partly determined by the actions the game allows us, by the programming of the objects and entities upon which we can act; and by the actions we are not involved in at all, those that are carried out in cut scenes.

The game-text can only offer us a system of meaning-potential, however (Halliday, 1989). Whether players really 'become' Harry Potter in their own minds is not predictable, and depends on many factors. The children in the Cambridge interview all claimed that they did not feel as if they 'were' Harry; merely that they were controlling him from above:

ALI: You're in the third person, you're watching Harry move around, so you're not looking at it from the first person, so you're not really being Harry Potter, you're just watching him and controlling what he's doing.

However, there was some indication that the player can feel more closely connected with the avatar as a result of the intense action demanded by the game:

ILANA: Um, well, when you're playing like, really, sort of in a very sort of high adrenalin bit, I suppose you kind of don't realise you're controlling him, you're like sort of obsessed with the game, but, um –

However, what was also clear was that the game itself was not able to determine the experience of participation – this depended on the individual player, and on their experiences of, and investment in, media cultures generally, gaming, and Harry Potter.

Jenna in London asserted:

JENNA: You're controlling it, really, and it's actually like you're there, and you're the one that's doing it, you're Harry Potter.

For Jenna, the determining factor was her dedicated love of the whole Potter phenomenon. For a girl who made her own Harry Potter boardgame, and who roleplayed Harry Potter in the playground with her friends, it was not surprising to find that she experienced the game-play in the same way.

Rather differently, Ochirbat, an experienced gamer, found this game very restrictive:

O: I think that all, like, basically, literally all games, like first person or not, or anything like that, you don't actually feel like you're controlling them, cos, you don't actually live them, cos, you have to follow instructions, you can't do whatever you want. In some games you can, but not all of them, you have to follow instructions, to go somewhere, or it's not going to work. Cos you don't actually control them, do you – you have to follow instructions. Which is pretty boring sometimes.

Ali, on the other hand, argued that the principle of choice was important:

ALI: The point is that you can do it if you want to. The point isn't whether you want to or not, the point is that sometimes there are choices.

The affective complex the game constructs operates quite differently from book and film. The animated avatar is not built to represent emotion; though some of the high camera angles in the cut scenes emulate the film's construction of Harry as victim. His expression cannot change while we play him; no explicit representation of fear or courage is possible. However, the ingredients are there for us to experience these emotions. We may feel the apprehension as the monster approaches; and we can choose between cautious dodging in our movements or rash attack; variations on the courage of the protagonist. Also, the characteristic affect of the horror film is cued by sound – the dripping of water; the grunts Harry emits when injured; and the roaring of the basilisk (curiously, no music). However, the predominant emotion, perhaps, is excitement – what Ilana called 'the adrenalin rush' of the game. In this case, this is produced by the representational aspect of the game (the appearance of the monster and the sewer-like Chamber), integrated with the ludic challenge, in which the economies of life-points and weapons, and the movement skills of the player, provide their own dynamic. In some ways, this complements the dynamic of the narrative. In other ways, the basilisk, which is designed to pop up unpredictably out of different manholes, is generically related to arcade game challenges which may raise the ludic modality of the game for players who recognize and enjoy this genre; but which may, by the same token, lower the modality for players who desire a strong representational link with the source texts.

The game, then, produces little or no psychological development of the character; and in this respect the game-Harry is more unambiguously like the formulaic characters of oral narrative. Similarly, the agonistic aspect of the character is emphasised; although in the basilisk episode Harry's battle is central in all three texts, his earlier confrontation with the monstrous spider Aragog is quite differently structured in the game. Whereas in the book and film he and Ron are simply rescued by the flying Ford Anglia, in the game the player conducts a long battle against the spider – the agency of the character is completely reversed in this sequence. If this makes Harry more of a heavy hero, it also makes him less of a child hero, perhaps, as it reduces his vulnerability, making him less dependent on his helpers than he is in film and book. However, the text can be experienced in many ways by real players. Ali's experience of this episode in the game was that she could not conquer Aragog, but 'died', and had to be helped out by her big sister. Her experience of the game, then, located her very much in the position of the child hero, courageous but vulnerable and dependent; a position which considerably modifies the one apparently offered by the game-text.

In another respect, the game resembles the structure of oral narrative more than film or book. The player's work is in important ways an act of improvisation. The pattern of this work depends on experience: an experienced player will make moves which carry the micro-narrative forward decisively and smoothly; though some repetition will be necessary. Similarly, the oral poet will rework the micro-narrative with well-known stock formulae. Both player and poet are actively engaged in constructing the narrative at this level, and have some freedom about the order of certain events, the timing, and so on. However, both have much less control over the macro-narrative. Odysseus must come home to Ithaca; Harry must kill the basilisk.

CONCLUSION

On the one hand, then, the Potter narrative can be seen as formulaic quest, descended from oral storytelling, folktale and fairytale, and adaptations of these forms in nineteenth and twentieth century children's literature. In this regard, the narrative patterns provide comfortable cycles of repetition, which the children recognize:

JENNA: ... And it's always near the end where all the trouble starts, and they end up, like, half-happy and half-sad. Like in the fifth one Sirius Black dies, but Dumbledore ends up hurting Voldemort.

The characteristics described by Ong are differently adapted, however, in the three media. In the book, the emphasis on action is carried by the flow of action verbs and the dynamism of the prose; by the bold delineation of characters, sustained by easily recognised and recalled attributes; by the use of a fantasy modality to allocate heroic power to Harry. In the film, the agonistic quality is carried by the dynamic filming and editing techniques of action cinema; by the use of visual designs deriving from familiar fantasy genres, recognised by the children in close contemporaries like *The Lord of the Rings*; and by the generation of a hybrid affective complex characteristic of action and horror genres. In the game, the heavy hero is foregrounded, since action is what the game

does best; in part, the action repertoire of the 'heavy hero' is handed over to the player; while the affective charge of the events are altered by the excitement of gameplay, informed by ludic economies such as life-points, weapon power, and real time combat.

On the other hand, these formulaic qualities exist in some degree of tension with the *Bildungsroman* function, which emphasises the growth of Harry; the trauma of his bereavements; his increasing powers; his relationship with girls; and his conflict with and eventual accommodation of the norms and values of the adult (wizard) world. These qualities are represented in film and book side by side with the structures of folktale. They may appear to be contradictory. For one of these sets of generic structures, Harry only has one story – the endlessly repeated battle against Voldemort. For the other, he has to have a developing story, in which his relationship with his dead parents, with the Dursleys, with his friends, with the opposite sex, with his enemy, all change as he grows up. Nevertheless, insofar as the combination works, it offers the benefits of both structures to child readers.

However, how these readers, spectators, players engage with the Potter phenomenon, how they enter this fantasy world, whether their interest is in Harry's magical action or his psychological growth, depends on the individual. It depends on their needs, on their own experience of family, school and friends, and, importantly, on their experience of children's media cultures, in which I include the Potter novels (by what definition are they not a form of popular media?).

Thus, for Jenna, Harry's developing friendships can be imported into her own lived friendship with Myrtle and Natasha, as they improvise around events from the meeting in the train in the first novel to an imagined rescue of Cho Chang after a lover's quarrel. For Ali, the reading of the novels can be a strong affective experience:

ALI: I think I like – I think, for me, when I read the books, sometimes I sit there reading them for hours in end, and by the end, I feel kind of, I have the same feelings as Harry, as like, it's Christmas and I'm really happy, and then suddenly I've just stopped reading where he's really angry, and I stop and I think "God, I'm so angry!", and I just wonder, what am I angry for? And for me, it's, it's an escape, I, I sit there and I read and I get into another world, another realm, it's not my life, it's someone else's, and it's a different place for me, really.

For Ilana, they can be a way of making abstract judgments about values across media texts, as she sees Harry and Frodo both 'plagued by honour'. And for Sam, the companionship theme is an important image of friendship:

SAM: Ron's a bit like Samwise Gamgee [smiles] – I like Samwise Gamgee. ... Well he's his companion, and he's Harry's companion, and they share a [grips right forearm with left hand] strong bond.

However, the narratives do not serve for all the children as a positive image of development and growth. For Ochirbat, Harry Potter represents a kind of boyhood that he is becoming increasingly uneasy with: too good, too complicit with adults, too weak:

OCHIRBAT: Yeah but Harry Potter's like sad, he's just like such a little, um, um, he's like a teacher's pet, he's just running around doing this stuff. ...

I'd like it if he could get better spells –

ILANA: Like Avada kedavra, or something, a killing spell?

OCHIRBAT: No, like flame, like a flamethrower [laughs]

This unease becomes a formulation of judgment and taste, a critique both of the values and the aesthetic properties of the texts. The 'heavy hero' aspect of Harry Potter is unsatisfactory judged against his wider gaming experience; while the *Bildungsroman* aspect has a negative value – a model of development and growth to be treated with suspicion.

These engagements have important implications, finally, for education. Internationally, the notion of media literacy has an uneasy relationship with mother tongue teaching, which in Anglophone countries is inextricably linked with the teaching and learning of print literacy. What the Potter phenomenon demonstrates is the value of a popular, cross-media, mythopoeic complex of narratives, which children can use to explore the growth of identity, the nature of their social roles, the power of fantasy, and the pleasure of participatory story. But we can only realize the benefits of all this if we can expand our conceptions of literacy, to embrace films and games; and if we can expand our notion of popular media to include literature.

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