

Books Bleeding out of the Screen: Engaging with Imaginary Books on Screen Through Replicas

Tonguc Sezen
University for the Creative Arts, UK

Abstract

Imaginary books are books that do not exist except as components of other fictional narratives. This paper surveys the complex interplay between imaginary books featured in screen narratives and physical books written to replicate them. The paper first discusses the functions and portrayals of imaginary books on screen. It explores different approaches to transforming imaginary books, especially imaginary books of fiction into official diegetic extensions as part of transmedia storytelling practices. It then examines how fans replicate imaginary books physically and textually based on these portrayals. It concludes with a discussion of how these transformations provide alternative readings of screen narratives.

Keywords: Imaginary books, replica books, diegetic extensions, diegetic portals, transmedia storytelling

Introduction

Imaginary books are imaginary objects containing pseudo-hypodiegetic narratives, stories-within-stories that are not told. Supposedly written by fictional characters, they traditionally exist only within secondary worlds to the extent of their referential functionality. In screen narratives, they are usually portrayed through titles mentioned by characters, quotes, or props. Laura Kohlrausch proposes the term 'feigned intertextuality' to describe a 'reference to a fictitious pretext, simulating the gesture of 'classical' intertextuality, as the text feigns a claim to immediate referability in the (perceived) reality of the recipient' (2018: 157). Kohlrausch uses the word 'forgeries' in her writing to describe imaginary books referred to or quoted in stories as if they were part of the extratextual reality. By claiming authenticity and availability, feigned intertextuality encourages readers to investigate textual forgeries. Meaning, by being seen or referred to, imaginary books create the illusion of availability regardless of the completeness of the props representing them. Audiences seem to have developed a desire to explore these enigmatic literary suggestions since 'must-read lists' of imaginary books are not uncommon (Fallon, 2014). Creating a feeling of longing among audiences, imaginary books thus encourage commercial transmedia paratextuality on one side and practices of fan creativity on the other.

As products of creative and forensic fandom or industrial transmedia storytelling, replicas and interpretations of imaginary books allow audiences to fulfill their desires to own and read imaginary books. Borrowing a term from live-action role-playing games, replica books based on imaginary books can be considered manifestations of 'material bleed'. While the phenomenon of bleed describes the mutual exchange of feelings, thoughts, relationships, and physical states of players and the characters they play as (Bowman, 2018), material bleed describes how imaginary objects can cross boundaries of secondary worlds into the primary world of the audiences as prop replicas and become part of fans' pretend-play as a counterpart of the imaginary object. Sharing some aspects of material bleed in terms of carrying information out of secondary worlds, Sarah Atkinson (2019) proposes the term 'diegetic portals' to describe fictitious imaginary content spread to primary world platforms to perform various narrative functions. Diegetic portals can extend and enhance secondary worlds by providing new experiences set in them, tell stories beyond a screen narrative as documents from the past or the future, and finally present the operational logics of screen narratives through fictional objects functioning according to those logics. Diegetic portals can take multiple forms but are mostly developed as variations of digital content, like social media accounts supposedly run by fictional characters, which usually play timebound promotional roles (Atkinson, 2014). In this regard replicas and officially sanctioned publications based on imaginary books can also be considered diegetic portals extending fictional worlds. However, since their production and utilisation are not as flexible as digital content, their narrative functions are relatively limited compared to other diegetic portals on digital platforms, but for the same reason they may also be more long-standing.

Since early 1990s, parallel to the evolution of transmedia storytelling practices in screen media, officially sanctioned tie-in publications based on imaginary books are utilised by film and television producers to commercially exploit the content they control (Freeman, 2014). As transmedia extensions, such books orbit screen narratives as ancillary texts in a hierarchical fashion, reflecting the 'mothership approach' in transmedia storytelling, where each satellite adds new layers to a core narrative, while this core narrative is designed to be perceived as a self-contained story (Jenkins, 2014). Yet, while a replica orbits the mothership, the imaginary book it's based on may be an integral part of the core narrative. Adapting Marie-Laure Ryan's (2015) 'vector structure' for interactive texts, which describes such texts as combinations of predetermined sequences of events with optional storylines that users can follow based on their choices, we can see any imaginary book as a node on a forward-moving narrative, and its replica as a roadside attraction reached via an optional side branch growing out of this node. In other words, while the portrayal of an imaginary book in a screen narrative may be essential in understanding that story, reading the replica of that imaginary book could be considered enriching but optional.

Keeping the charade of being written by imaginary characters, replica books try to imitate the form and literary style of imaginary books on screen, based on minuscule fragments of textual and visual evidence. The relationship between an imaginary book, a prop in a film, and a replica raises questions about their originality and authenticity. The imaginary book serves as a concept with imagined characteristics but lacks actual content. The prop visually represents the book in a film. The replica aims to replicate the appearance and concept while also going beyond the original material. These complex dynamics challenge audiences and readers to question the originality and credibility of each element. It is crucial to be clear about the origins of concepts, interpretations, or additions, and who was involved their creation. In this regard, this paper surveys the ways imaginary books in film and television narratives are adapted into actual books. The paper first discusses the functions and portrayals of imaginary books on screen, then examines how books based on imaginary books are instrumentalised by integrated transmedia storytelling, continues with the exploration of how portrayals on screen become subject to fan creativity, and concludes by discussing their unique characteristics and how they offer alternative readings of screen narratives.

Imaginary Books on Screen

Described by L. Sprague de Camp as 'books that were never written, but which exist solely as a title, with perhaps excerpts, in a work of fiction or pseudo-fact' (1947: 7), imaginary books can serve multiple narrative functions with varying importance. According to George A. Kennedy (2004), they can be both satirical and critical, but also be utilised to contribute to the plot, characterisation, theme, or meanings of a larger narrative. Imaginary books' representation on the screen depends on their function and importance in the script. They

can be cited or quoted by characters without even being seen or be represented through props created as design solutions with varying levels of completeness and complexity.

Prop Covers and Instrumental Quotes

The book cover is one of the most common physical representations of imaginary books on screen. A paratext, the book cover is alongside the dust jacket one of 'the first manifestation of the book offered to the reader's perception' (Genette, 1997: 27). An advertorial material, a book cover is a visual interpretation of a manuscript, which uses both novelty and genre conventions to impress potential readers and incept expectations (Mendelsund and Alworth, 2020). Combining text and visuals to create a feeling of longing, book covers are inviting and thought-provoking design objects. Setting up potential narratives, prop covers as paratexts of imaginary books invite their viewers to imagine stories which do not exist or only exist as fragments.

Imaginary book covers in Alex Ross Perry's *Listen Up Philip* (2014) sum up and poke fun at the life and career of the narcissistic novelist Ike Zimmerman, a fictionalised version of the acclaimed author Philip Roth (Bérenger, 2017). As imaginary books they draw attention to themselves, lampoon Roth, and expose literary marketplaces as a form of cultural criticism (Taylor, 2020). While the filmmakers had written synopses and even publication histories for each one of these books (Haglund, 2014), for the audience they only exist as covers they must fill in with their imagination and their knowledge of Roth and his work filtered through the portrayal of the fictional Zimmerman, thus these covers convey the construction of complex intertextualities across media on a metafictional level.

Focusing on imaginary books in media franchises, Phillip Fitzsimmons argues that they 'can act as keystones to the structure of both the stories and the worlds in which they appear' (2022: 67). According to Fitzsimmons (2022), quotes of imaginary books can create the feeling of high-quality writing in readers and audiences through proper contextual use of language. Echoing Fitzsimmons, Edward Lauterbach (1980) argues that by sounding properly old and culturally alien, imaginary books add a feeling of verisimilitude to stories of fantasy and the occult. In this regard, imaginary book quotes can be seen as successful literary hoaxes building on their readers' expectations and sometimes prejudices. When accompanied by genre or period appropriate covers, the effectiveness of such quotes rises.

In Tim Burton's *Beetlejuice* (1988), a hardcover prop book with a custom cover resembling 1940s PSA art was used to portray the *Handbook for the Recently Deceased*, the regulatory document for the afterlife, which was also quoted multiple times by multiple characters. While the facts and instructions in the book moved the story forward, the technical style of the text filled with jargon and bureaucratic material also contributed to the portrayal of the afterlife as a familiar procedural hell filled with paperwork (McKeague, 2020). In other words, short but purposefully written quotes and a prop with a custom cover were used to create the illusion of an actual bureaucratic document contributing to the worldbuilding of the film.

Levels of Completeness of Prop Books

The completeness and level of detail of a story prop representing an imaginary book depend on the story, cinematographic decisions, and mise-en-scène arrangements of a production. Story props representing imaginary books with a key role in a story can be partially or even fully realised. In Roman Polański's *Rosemary's Baby* (1968), adapting Ira Levin's 1967 novel of the same name, sections of the imaginary reference book *All of them Witches* by J.R. Hanslet are shown to the audience in close-up shots. Accompanied by images of several historical figures and previous readers' handwritten notes, these sections providing important plot points were directly adapted from Levin's novel. However, additional sections about witches and witchcraft not originating in the novel could also be read in passing, creating the illusion of an actual book with coherent content. Yet, these additional sections were not written by the scriptwriters or the prop department. Instead, the prop was built on Gillian Tindall's *A Handbook on Witches* (1965) by erasing certain sections and inserting custom-written paragraphs into Tindall's text. Handwritten notes were then added to draw attention to important plot points and to create the illusion of historicity (O'Dwyer, 2019). *All of them Witches* thus was a borrowed book modified to become an imaginary book, which coherence was an illusion.

Detailed, coherent, fully realised prop books are rare but do exist. One of the most detailed and complete prop books in recent years was developed for the 2021 television adaptation of Emily St. John Mandel's novel *Station Eleven* (2014). The title of the novel and the series comes from an imaginary self-published comic book that survives an apocalyptic pandemic and becomes a semi-religious text for some and a cherished historical artifact representing hope for others. Playing a major role in the novel, parts of its story are either quoted or explained, and the drawings and textual arrangements on some pages are described in detail (Méndez-García, 2017). According to Vermeulen, 'the novel adopts the title of the comic it cannot represent, only evoke, as that formal decision inserts a moment of medial insufficiency, and therefore of loss' (2018: 18). During the production of the series, however, a custom prop was drawn by comic book artist Maria Nguyen based on a manuscript written by the showrunner Patrick Somerville and partially inspired by designs of the art department (Harper, 2022). Throughout the series, this prop book was read, quoted, discussed, and even performed by multiple characters. Being Nguyen's visual interpretation of Somerville's adaptation of the imaginary comic book in St. John Mandel's novel, this prop book is a complex metatextual construct. As a fully realised object, it contributes to the actors' immersion in the story world. Its on-screen portrayal helps fans to understand character motivations. It provides reference points for comparative readings of the series and the novel. Because it was conceptualised as an artistic work predating most of the events of the story with no causal prerequisites to be meaningful, it could be read as a self-contained narrative without any alterations if it were made available to the public.

Imaginary Books and Transmedia Storytelling

Fully realised prop books become bleeding objects when extracted and repurposed post-factum as officially sanctioned replica books. Extending the boundaries of fictional worlds into the everyday life of fans (McClellan, 2018), such publications offer the experience of what Ross Garner calls ‘mimetic tangible nostalgia’, or a longing towards officially licensed merchandise ‘bringing physical form to either previously intangible or ephemeral items’ (Garner, 2021: 74). Such exact replicas, like the *Book of Secrets* from *National Treasure: Book of Secrets* (2007) which was made commercially available by the original prop’s designer Ross MacDonald himself (MacDonald, 2018), are rare parallel to the scarcity of fully realised prop books in screen narratives. Thus, most officially sanctioned books based on imaginary books are creative interpretations presented in a ‘reality envelope’ propagating ‘accepted imaginative realism’ in audiences and encouraging them to willingly ‘suspend their disbelief, agree to play along, and “believe” that the transtexts are “real”’ (Knox and Derhy Kurtz, 2016: 56). Such books are examples of integrated transmedia storytelling in the form of a ‘diegetic extension, in which an object from the storyworld gets released in the real world’ (Mittell, 2015: 298). It is important to note that books as diegetic extensions can be published without being previously introduced as imaginary books. For example, despite not appearing in any other media, *Aliens: Colonial Marines Technical Manual* (Brimmicombe-Woods, 1995), is presented as an authentic guide from the future, describing the history, organisation, and tactics of Colonial Marine Corps from *Aliens* (1986). Thus, it can be argued that officially sanctioned publications based on imaginary books have a twofold reality envelope, aiming to create both the impression that these books were written by fictional characters, and that they are the exact same imaginary books seen on screen.

Coordination and Exploitation

Pioneering the utilisation of imaginary books as licensed products in transmedia storytelling, *The Secret Diary of Laura Palmer* (Lynch, 1990) from *Twin Peaks* (1990-1991) was written in conjunction with the development of the second season, with the knowledge that some of its content would be featured in the series as an imaginary diary (Lynch, 2010). Published before the release of the second season, it fleshed out the titular Laura Palmer as a character and contained subtle clues for future developments of the series’ narrative without revealing crucial plot points (Mittell, 2015; Hassler-Forest, 2018). Even though reading it was not required to enjoy the series, the book had narrative value for the fans of the show, its creative process contributed to the development of the show directly, and it functioned as a promotional material for the second season. However, the coordinated production *The Secret Diary of Laura Palmer* should be seen more as an exception than the norm in terms of officially sanctioned publications based on imaginary books.

Many such publications are developed in a more derivative and opportunistic manner, leading to unexpected narrative conflicts. The differences between the imaginary self-help book *Playbook* supposedly written by the character Barney Stinson from the sitcom *How I*

Met Your Mother (2005-2014) and the publication based on it exemplifies such a conflict. First featured in the fifth season of the series in 2009, the imaginary book played a key role until the end of the series representing the evolution of Barney. While it was quoted directly in several episodes, the prop representing it was scarcely seen and was probably only partially materialised as a book cover and some pages in line with the industry practices discussed above. An official interpretation of the *Playbook* attributed to Barney was published in 2010. It was advertised on his website, another diegetic portal, as a conversion of the handwritten imaginary book. This conversion covered sections mentioned in the sitcom before its publication, others that would appear in later seasons with slight alterations, and a few which would never get mentioned or depicted throughout the series (Stinson and Kuhn, 2010), thus it acted both as a historical retrospective and partial foreshadowing of Barney's actions. However, the book was also missing sections featured in seasons produced after 2010, especially later ones reflecting Barney's character growth. This asynchronicity was a natural outcome of the transmedial commercialisation of the imaginary book as a narrative element before it reached its conclusion in the story. In other words, the print book was an optional side branch providing insights into an earlier version of a character.

Pseudo-Imaginary Books

In line with what Muzellec, Kanitz, and Lynn (2013) call 'planned reverse product placement', an imaginary book may also be introduced in a screen narrative to become a tie-in publication. In other words, a tie-in publication can be utilised as a fully realised prop book to become a pseudo-imaginary book. In this regard, according to its lead ghostwriter Nate Dimeo, the book *Pawnee: The Greatest Town in America* (Knopé, 2011), featured in the comedy series *Parks and Recreation* (2009-2015), was first conceived as an independent diegetic extensions on the history and citizens of the fictional town of Pawnee, Indiana, where the series was set, but when the opportunity arose, an episode was produced about it (Pascale, 2012). The book was introduced and played a key role in the episode 'Born and Raised' (S4: E3) as a factual book attributed to the lead character Leslie Knope and continued to be seen as a background prop throughout the rest of the series. The officially sanctioned book was published around the same time with the same attribution, with the same cover seen on-screen. The portrayal and the publication strategy temporarily linked the replica book to a specific moment in the series, minimising the risk of asynchronicity with later episodes. It was structured and written as a parody travel guide, which could be approached as a stand-alone text filled with tongue-in-cheek local information. Featuring quotes from characters and references to the events of the series, it also added new dimensions to readers' understanding of the show and its characters while also relying on their knowledge on them in interpreting the complex intertextual humor it offers.

According to Knox and Derhy Kurtz (2016), the reality envelope which attributes an imaginative realism to diegetic portals is a complex and fragile construct requiring ongoing coordination. When an ongoing screen narrative reaches its conclusion, its online diegetic extensions stop receiving updates and became orphaned as relics of a timebound intertextual

construct. If they rely heavily on referentiality, replica or officially sanctioned publications based on imaginary books may share a similar fate after the end of the commercial growth of screen narratives they are based on. As diegetic extensions connected to a secondary world also on a meta-level, official publications based on imaginary novels on the other hand, are examples of tie-in publications, which may remain relevant as stand-alone, self-containing stories even when the screen narratives they originate in stop circulating.

Works of Fiction as Diegetic Extensions

The novels *Heat Wave* (Castle, 2009) from crime drama *Castle* (2009-2016), *Snow Falling* (Villanueva, 2017) from the romantic comedy/drama *Jane the Virgin* (2014-2019) and *Marriage Vacation* (Brooks, 2018) from the drama *Younger* (2015-2021) exemplify this kind of potentially self-containing extracted publications. The fictitious authors of these imaginary novels are either protagonists or important side characters in each series. The books' authoring and publication periods are main storylines; thus, audiences are familiar with the fictional authors' struggles and inspirations. As the narratives progress, they are also informed about the imaginary books' supposed overall storylines, are given specific details like *Marriage Vacation* featuring an explicit sex scene on page 58, see how fictitious readers react to drafts, and are shown props with genre-appropriate covers as visual interpretations of the books' content. Spread to multi-episode arcs, all these fragments help audiences construct mental images of the imaginary books' styles and stories, create the impression of verisimilitude, and build up certain expectations.

As examples of integrated transmedia storytelling, when each author finally published their books in-universe, unsurprisingly with great success, tie-in novels within reality envelopes were also published. Attributed to fictional authors and sharing the same covers with their imaginary counterparts, these diegetic extensions were aiming to provide the literary experiences promised on-screen. In other words, they were interpretations of imaginary books, offering the experience of mimetic textual nostalgia. In this regard, as a reflection of *Castle*, *Heat Wave* was written as a compressed retelling of most of the previous season's episodes embedded in a new, larger case, enhanced with characterisations focusing on the thoughts and feelings of the main characters (Wells-Lassagne, 2017). Similarly, *Snow Falling* was a re-fictionalised, alternate retelling of the first two seasons of *Jane the Virgin* set in the early twentieth century (Martinelli, 2017). Finally, *Marriage Vacation* was a pseudo-semi-autobiographical novel, retelling events previously alluded to in *Younger* from a side character's perspective (Berger, 2018). From a production point of view, these books were tie-in novels re-fictionalising and adapting on-screen narrative elements. They were written by ghostwriters who had to follow certain restrictions and directions imposed on them by the producers (Clarke, 2009). According to Tom Straw, the ghostwriter of *Heat Wave*, he was instructed not to adapt *Castle*, but to build on its key narrative promises and reflect the titular character's personality as an author. In this regard, he describes his novel as 'Castle's idealized version of his ride-along experiences from the show' (Cogdill, 2017). Calling her novel 'a treat for fans of the show', Caridad Pineiro, the ghostwriter of *Snow Falling*, explains how she tried

to mirror the main love triangle in early seasons in a historical romance setting, while also exploring alternate directions for the story, to provide a familiar and yet new experience. To construct the imaginary author's style, she studied the portrayal of the imaginary novel on-screen, used an unnamed humorous narrator as the series did, and inserted elements from the series into the story for fans to recognise (Walker, 2017). Jo Piazza, the ghostwriter of *Marriage Vacation*, too explains how she studied *Younger* to develop an outline based on the themes and events of the series, while following producers' instructions to treat certain characters in specific ways, to include references for fans to spot, and to synchronise her writing with the on-screen representation of the imaginary book, including purposefully positioning an explicit sex scene on the exact page mentioned on-screen (Berger, 2018; Hoggatt, 2018). Despite privileging fans as readers, each ghostwriter also specifically underlines that their books were written to be self-contained stories within the genre conventions they work with, and thus aim to be appealing to readers who are not familiar with the source materials as well.

As components of integrated transmedia stories, these actualised versions of imaginary novels were vertically embedded hypodiegetic narratives, or stories within stories (Nelles, 2020). Despite being fictional stories supposedly written within other frame stories, they were concealed adaptations, which core implied readers were audiences of frame stories. Fictional characters' reactions and insight to imaginary novels as their thematic precursors were instrumental in their creation, alongside exposed fragments. In this regard, the graphic novel *Deadly Storm* (Castle, 2013) from *Castle* suggests an additional variation of officially sanctioned fictional diegetic extensions based on imaginary novels on screen. Featured briefly in two episodes, this imaginary graphic novel was supposed to be based on an imaginary character the titular author had killed off before the series started. Therefore, unlike in *Heat Wave*, neither the series nor the portrayal of an imaginary book could provide a proper basis for an adaptation or interpretation. Like Zimmerman's imaginary novels, when *Deadly Storm* appeared on screen, it was a promise without content, a narrative enigma for fans to explore. Thus, according to Wells-Lassagne (2017), the published graphic novel acted more like an authorised version of fan fiction, adopting genre conventions of noir, and specifically borrowing elements from the film *Chinatown* (1974) and fusing them with formal aspects of comic book adaptations. As a self-contained story with characters not deeply explored in a frame narrative, the graphic novel could be read and enjoyed without any knowledge of the urtext it appeared in. Moreover, any knowledge on the urtext would also not enhance the meaning of the graphic novel in any significant way. Not being a concealed adaptation and having no causal prerequisites, *Deadly Storm* demonstrates how in theory diegetic extensions based on imaginary works of fiction can challenge the hierarchical aspects of transmedia production.

Fans Replicating Imaginary Books

Any type of portrayal of imaginary books on screen can be seen as examples of what Henry Jenkins calls (2009) 'extractable content', or textual or material aspects of a story that fans can take away with them. Based on their portrayal in screen narratives, fans' interests in imaginary books can lead to multiple forms of extractions or poaching beyond the limits of officially sanctioned publications. For example, privileging imaginary books' direct contributions to worldbuilding, fans can collect, decipher, and map out quoted sections of imaginary books as reference points in orienting paratexts like encyclopedic wikis (Mittell, 2015). While acknowledging their existence and role within the fictional world, this practice adds little to the overall experience of an imaginary book beyond their portrayal on screen. As designed objects, props representing imaginary books can also appeal to reference and design-oriented fans, who are interested in production design and worldbuilding elements of a franchise as much as its stories (Rehak, 2018), leading to the creation of behind-the-scenes analyses of imaginary book props. Multiple fan websites collecting, analysing, and curating the material sources of *The Grail Diary* from *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* (1989), can be seen as examples of design-oriented fandom formed around imaginary books (Bertelsen, 2022). Their analysis not only reveals how the original prop was constructed by remixing text and art created for the film with content from other sources, including thematically aligned non-fiction books, and prop documents created for earlier films, but also narrative elements inserted into the prop book by the art department, which provided insights into the characters despite not being intended for the audience (Wiseheart, 2019). As forensic analyses of prop books, object-oriented fan activities can also provide design guidelines for mimetic fandom.

Fan Replicas as Artistic Expression

Focusing on the material aspects of prop making, mimetic fandom describes fans' creation of screen-accurate but also individualised replicas of imaginary objects (Hills, 2014). Fan-made replicas of the horrifying imaginary pop-up book *Mister Babadook* from *The Babadook* (2014) exemplify such mimetic fandom. While some pages of the book are shown in the film with detail, others are skipped, thus replicating the book requires not only an analysis of the portrayal of the three-dimensional pages on screen but also creative inventions to complete missing content while keeping the general characteristics. As a result of this, fan replicas of *Mister Babadook* are crafted with slightly different techniques and drawn in styles reflecting their makers' skills and interpretations of the source material, with additional personalised pages (Standley, 2016; Eaton, 2020). This personalisation is strangely in-line with the film's depiction of the eerie book, since throughout the film it dynamically transforms, adapting to protagonists' interactions with the menacing titular monster. Its illustrations, rhymes, and narrative elements change to mirror and accelerate characters' descent into darkness. Thus, each individual fan replica is an amalgamation of the same starting point depicted in the film with each fan author's personal experience and interpretation of the story. This creative

activity embedded in replication reflects how mimetic fandom deconstruct any strict binary between affirmational fandom which aims to restate source materials and transformational fandom which aims to reconfigure them into novel forms and combines these two creative approaches in fan production together (Hills, 2014). In other words, the creation of a screen-accurate replica book does not only require imitation of on-screen appearances of an imaginary book, but also design critique and artistic self-expression.

Illusion of High-level Drillability

Beyond curation and material replication of their portrayal, fans' interest in imaginary books can also be understood in terms of drillability. According to Jason Mittel, drillability refers to how a media text 'encourages forensic fans to dig deeper, probing beneath the surface to understand the complexity of a story and its telling vertical descent into a text's complexities' (Mittel, 2015: 287). Drillable media texts present complex storylines, preferably supported by transmedia extensions, which provide opportunities to explore motivations, rationale, and repercussions of events. It can be argued that feigned intertextuality creates the illusion of high-level drillability by cross-referencing genuine-sounding imaginary books. This illusion suggests the presence of sources in a fictional world containing details and information, that may or may not be within characters' reach in a narrative. Should audiences uncover these sources, their comprehension of the fictional world would be augmented, broadening their understanding and insight. While authentic drillability promotes active engagement with transmedia texts to cultivate a sense of exploration and discovery, the direct pursuit of imaginary books remains unattainable. Thus, the existence of imaginary books in a narrative can become the inspiration and object of textual productivity and textual poaching (Fiske, 1992; Jenkins, 1992), leading to the creation of fan-made drillability.

Forensically studying the representations of an imaginary book, fans can speculate on how the rest of the text should flow and write or mash up new sections imitating the style of the source material for consistency. In doing so, they can repurpose literary mechanisms giving imaginary books their verisimilitude to craft second-degree forgeries. Regardless of the genre or fictitious nature of the imaginary book in question, these new texts can be seen as a type of fan fiction or user-created additions to fictional worlds. As 'an extension of what audiences do all the time while experiencing a world; filling in gaps as world gestalten occur' (Wolf, 2014: 279), they are collections of theories and speculative ideas that fans consider to be part of the fictional world, despite lacking official validation. The creative processes behind such texts can also share characteristics with mimetic fandom, since the aim is to replicate the style of the texts portrayed on-screen accurately, while also producing an interpretation of the missing content. In other words, the study of the content, design, and form of imaginary books may lead to the production of replica books by fans, which are aimed to be both screen and universe accurate, and fully realised, if necessary, with fan-written and/or designed filler content.

Evidence-Based Suggestions

In line with what Matt Hills (2014) describes as fan-driven grassroots fabrication, universe accurate, extended fan interpretations of imaginary books can be found on online crafting and propping platforms such as Etsy (2005-2023). One such example is the *Advanced Potion Making* from *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* (2009). Despite their abundance, imaginary books seem in the *Harry Potter* (2001-2011) film series are rarely fully realised as props (Revenson, 2020). Despite playing a key role in the story, *Advanced Potion Making* too is only portrayed by a partial prop book. With a custom cover and detailed custom pages, it provides an overview of the material characteristics and textual style of the imaginary book for fans to imitate and interpret while building up their own version. Being part of a larger franchise however, these custom pages are not the only sources for forensic analysis. In this regard, writing about his experiences in crafting interpretive replicas of textbooks featured in *Harry Potter* films, artist Jack Tuckwell describes how he studies books, films, video games, and other sources and tries to arrange the information he collected into a coherent text, but also must create his own content: 'I do have to create a lot of additional content myself, of course, as it simply doesn't exist. My books would be VERY short if I only used what was offered in official canon!' (Tuckwell, 2022). His replica of *Advanced Potion Making* contains not only accurate reproductions of pages seen in the film, but also hundred-plus additional unique pages written, designed, and decorated in the same style (Tuckwell, 2022). Visually, the book imitates the style of the prop properly with wear and custom handwritten notes which play a major role in the film, thus reflects characteristics of mimetic fandom. The textual content of the replica book seems to be a mashup of replicated *Harry Potter* film content, original fan art and text imitating the style of the sections portrayed in the film for consistency, and borrowed content, mainly from online alchemy, occult, and *Harry Potter* community websites, which resembles the creative remixing of the *Indiana Jones* art department in creating *The Grail Diary*. Smooth editing combines all these materials into a consistent book which plausibly could exist in the *Harry Potter* universe. Thus, as a fan creation, Tuckwell's *Advanced Potion Making* represents an interpretation of the imaginary book with the same name, which offers the experience of fan-made drillability to its readers.

Questions on originality, canonicity, legality and representations are as relevant for fan-made replicas as they are for other types of fan-writing and fan-creativity (Kohnen, 2018; Kompare, 2018). In this regard the plausibility of the content of a fan-made replica book may clash with the authenticity and canonicity of officially sanctioned, instrumentalised, and sometimes timebound transmedia extensions based on imaginary books. In this regard, compared to literary diegetic extensions written by J.K. Rowling, such *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* (2001) credited to the fictional Newt Scamander, which were intended to co-exist and be connected to other official *Harry Potter* texts while providing fans with authorised insights into the wizarding world (O'Dette, 2018), *Advanced Potion Making* fills a void formed by the inaccessibility of the imaginary book. As Tuckwell's evidence-based suggestion it has the potential to be accepted as a component of the fictional universe among fan communities, or become fanon (Busse, 2017). A position that would be subject to

negotiation among fans if an officially sanctioned interpretation of the same imaginary book were to be released in the future. Like any other fan-made replica, a replica of an imaginary book is 'both immaterial and material, both authentic and inauthentic: it is a physical product that nonetheless relies on an absent or noncoincident media text for its meaning' (Hills, 2014: 5). They are prominent examples of retrospective transmedia engagement as an enduring and often open-ended process of piecing together dispersed story worlds from official and fan created sources over time leading to complex and unique interpretations (Williams, 2020). They require an elaborate creative approach combining aspects of forensic fandom, design-oriented fandom, fan fiction, and mimetic fandom. As physical and textual interpretations of on-screen representations of imaginary books, they prospect venues of interest implied by feigned intertextuality and literary forgery.

Conclusion

Imaginary books in screen narratives are literary promises implied through quotes, reactions, and props. They are used by filmmakers to create story worlds, to build up characters, and as critical tools. While their portrayal in screen narratives potentially exhaust their role as narrative kernels, giving the impression of verisimilitude by feigned intertextuality, narrative forgery, and imitation of design conventions, they are transformed into objects of desire. Thus, while their introduction as physical objects may not expand the stories they originate in in significant ways, they create the expectation that reading them may deepen fans' understanding of fictional worlds, or simply provide them the joy of owning a physical copy of a book which was also owned by their favorite fictional characters. While on rare occasions fully realised props representing imaginary books can be extracted from screen narratives to become commercialised replicas exploiting production art for pretend play, categorically incomplete, most imaginary books cannot simply become available for audiences. Their extraction can only be possible through creative interpretations of on-screen representations, which can either be done by fans or by the producers of screen narratives they appear in.

The integration of imaginary books into transmedia stories through official diegetic extensions opens multiple possibilities but also leads to questions on the mutual relationship between the imaginary book, the physical book, and the fictional world. Officially sanctioned replicas or interpretations of imaginary books are produced to promote, exploit, and extend fictional worlds. Their publication may follow, coincide, or precede imaginary books' appearance on-screen. These temporalities change the hierarchical relationships between the physical and the imaginary book and create variations of narrative and material entanglements. When materialised, an imaginary book becomes a transmedia extension of a fictional world presented in a reality envelope. As diegetic extensions they share some characteristics with their online counterparts, providing new, immersive ways to approach screen narratives and their secondary worlds through content originating in those worlds. Their literary styles can enhance fictional authors' characterisations by giving them internal voices and writing styles. Being books however, they are formally self-contained and not as

time-bound, dependent, and fragmented as their digital counterparts. In other words, the medium of book gives such texts a completeness. This becomes even more evident in diegetic extensions based on imaginary works of fiction, which, while mainly targeting fans, can also be read, and enjoyed as stand-alone texts written in specific genres.

Fans can also create their own individualised interpretations of imaginary books from screen narratives. The production processes of such interpretations require deep forensic analyses focusing on both textual and material representations of imaginary books, exposing and critiquing of the ways screen narratives create the illusion of verisimilitude, and recognising their unseen aspects. Their findings provide the guidelines for coordinated efforts in mimetic and craft-oriented physical replication and creation, alongside textual poaching, and partial fan fiction. The utilisation of this multifaceted, almost interdisciplinary approach transforms a fully materialised replica book into a rare, multi-dimensional, intricate construct which incorporates various aspects including art and design, worldbuilding, and narrative characterisation. This process deepens fans' understanding and mental immersion in secondary worlds and may lead to the creation of fan-made drillable texts expanding the fictional world in ways not envisioned by the creators. In theory, these replicas could embody the potentiality of an imaginary book as represented in a screen narrative, encompassing all its in-universe literary functions. They provide fans a unique and immersive connection to the literary elements of screen narratives and hold the potential to become a widely accepted parts of fanon, until their visions are challenged by official publications.

This paper surveyed the complex relationship between screen narratives, imaginary books, and replica books as material objects that bleed out from fictional worlds into the real world. Production and consumption of replica books are deeply intertwined with fandom and transmedia storytelling practices. While this paper focused on general characteristics of books as diegetic extensions originating from film and television narratives, future studies exploring specific types and techniques of replication, or imaginary books and replicas originating from other types of screen media such as video games would reveal further details on their narrative functions, and the ways we produce and perceive them. By doing so, we can deepen our understanding of the intricate relationship between storytelling, imagination, and the material objects that bring fictional worlds to life.

Biographical Note

Dr. Tonguc Sezen is a Senior Lecturer in Games at University for Creative Arts. His academic research focuses on the intersections of new technologies, design, and storytelling, including transmedia worldbuilding and narrative design in games.

Contact: tongucsezen@gmail.com

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Chinatown (Roman Polański, 1974)
Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince (David Yates, 2009)
Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade (Steven Spielberg, 1989)
Listen Up Philip (Alex Ross Perry, 2014)
National Treasure: Book of Secrets (John Turteltaub, 2007)
Rosemary's Baby (Roman Polański, 1968)

Television

Castle (ABC, 2009-2016)
How I Met Your Mother (CBS, 2005-2014)
Jane the Virgin (The CW, 2014-2019)
Parks and Recreation (NBC, 2009-2015)
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Station Eleven (HBO Max, 2021)
Twin Peaks (ABC, 1990-1991)
Younger (TV Land / Paramount+, 2015-2021)