

READ/VIEW/PLAY: METATEXTUALITY ACROSS MEDIA IN *THE NEVERENDING
STORY* AND THE INKWORLD TRILOGY

By

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To Dada, above all, and to Babai, Ma and Pablo as well

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AQ</i>	<i>Auryn Quest</i> (2002), the PC game licensed to DreamCatcher Interactive Inc. for North American distribution.
<i>ID</i>	<i>Inkdeath</i> (2008), the third novel of the Inkworld trilogy by Cornelia Funke
<i>IH</i>	<i>Inkheart</i> (2003), the first novel of the Inkworld trilogy by Cornelia Funke
<i>IH2</i>	<i>Inkheart</i> , the diegetic novel written by Fenoglio, existing within Funke's text, and portrayed within the 2008 film and video game adaptations of <i>IH</i> .
<i>IHf</i>	<i>Inkheart</i> (2008), the New Line Cinema film directed by Iain Softley
<i>IHg</i>	<i>Inkheart</i> (2008), the Nintendo DS video game licensed to DreamCatcher Interactive Inc.
<i>IS</i>	<i>Inkspell</i> (2005), the second novel of the Inkworld trilogy by Cornelia Funke
<i>NS</i>	<i>The Neverending Story</i> (1983), the novel written by Michael Ende
<i>NS2</i>	<i>The Neverending Story</i> , the diegetic novel within Ende's text
<i>NSf</i>	<i>The Neverending Story</i> (1984), the Warner Bros. film directed by Wolfgang Petersen
<i>NSg</i>	<i>The Neverending Story</i> (1985), the graphical text adventure game developed by Ocean Software Limited
<i>NSII</i>	<i>The Neverending Story II: The Next Chapter</i> (1990), the Warner Bros. film directed by George Miller
<i>NSIIg</i>	<i>The Neverending Story II: The Next Chapter</i> (1990), the 2D side-scrolling platform video game developed by Linel

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Michael Ende's *The Neverending Story* (1983) and Cornelia Funke's Inkworld trilogy [*Inkheart* (2003), *Inkspell* (2005) and *Inkdeath* (2008)] were written (more than) two decades apart, yet we may discern fundamental philosophical similarities between these two sets of children's texts. At the most obvious level, they both belong to the class of children's books which have bookworms as the primary protagonists. They are, therefore, prime examples of novels that showcase the relationship between books and their readers, embodying the very notion of bibliophilia. More significant however is the fact that they are works of children's metafiction as well, and a central aim of this study is to map zones of conceptual and structural similarity between them, delving into the various specific ways in which they manifest as well as negotiate their metatextual status. To wit, I delve into the existing critical conversation about the didactic, functional and affective dimensions of children's metafiction, arguing for the affective elements of desire and the promise of intimacy that these texts foster. I trace also an anticipatory and commentarial (for Ende and Funke, respectively) aspect of the texts under consideration, especially with regard to their incorporation of functional and philosophical tenets of new medial textual forms. Also particularly interesting is the fact

that both Funke's and Ende's novels have been widely adapted into nonprint media, including films and video games across various platforms. This issue of adaptation of the literary texts across multiple media—specifically, the cross-medial representations of the metatextual concerns at the heart of the novels—provides the other focal point of this study.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Michael Ende's *NS* (1983) and Cornelia Funke's Inkworld trilogy [*IH* (2003), *IS* (2005) and *ID* (2008)] were written (more than) two decades apart, yet we may discern fundamental philosophical similarities between these two sets of children's texts. At the most obvious level, they both belong to the class of "children's books whose protagonists are bookworms" (Nelson 223) and are, therefore, prime examples of novels that showcase the relationship between books and their readers, embodying the very notion of bibliophilia in the process. More significant however is the fact that they are works of children's metafiction as well, and a central aim of this study is to map zones of conceptual and structural similarity between them, delving into the various specific ways in which they manifest as well as negotiate their metatextual status. Also particularly interesting is the fact that both Funke's and Ende's novels have been widely adapted into nonprint media, including films and video games across various platforms. This issue of adaptation of the literary texts across multiple media—specifically, the varied representations of the metatextual concerns at the heart of the novels—provides the other focal point of this study.

Before we extend our discussion any further, however, it may be fruitful to provide a definition of "metafiction." In her 1984 book-length study, Patricia Waugh proposes one of the most influential definitions of the term:

Metafiction is a term given to fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality. In providing a critique of their own methods of construction, such writings not only examine the fundamental structures of narrative fiction, they also explore the possible fictionality of the world outside the literary fictional text. (2, italics in original)

Both Funke's and Ende's texts fit neatly within the limits of Waugh's definition: they are self-conscious narratives that display an extraordinary consciousness of books as both material artifacts and imaginative objects which occupy in a sense a dual position in the world, capable of influencing and changing material reality at different discursive levels. Extending and celebrating this unique position of books as objects intrinsic to the human experience, these texts are also remarkable for the ways in which they engage in metaleptic play when it comes to their formulations of narrative structures, deliberately dissolving diegetic boundaries. In the process, they display a highly philosophical stance about the webbed, intertextual, contingent nature of reality or life itself.¹

A spate of recent scholarly work has focused on children's metafiction, teasing out their various narrative strategies and theorizing about their didactic, moral or critical functions.² Taking Waugh's definition into account, Claudia Nelson (2006) goes on to discuss a number of metafictional texts (including *IH and IS*) in her article. She dwells both on their somewhat prescriptive thrust ("reading is fun") as well as their subversive potential for figuring "story as rebellion," hence pointing out "a kind of double didacticism" (233) in which these texts engage. Fanfan Chen (2008) on the other hand

¹ Gérard Genette defines the term diegetic thus: "any event a narrative recounts is at a diegetic level immediately higher than the level at which the narrating act producing this narrative is placed" (228). Any (narrative) act resulting in a transgression of these narrative levels is termed "metalepsis." See Chapter 2 for a more detailed exploration of the term and its significance in case of the texts under discussion.

² See Dudley Jones (1999), Virginie Douglas (2004) and Joe Sanders (2009) among others for some examples of scholarly explorations of children's metafiction within the last decade. This has helped fill the dearth of analytical commentary on both Ende's and Funke's texts, in particular, and this study is meant to participate in as well as extend the critical conversation.

provides in-depth analyses of metaleptic structures as particular instances of (fantastic) narrative strategy in both Funke and Ende, among other authors.³

Following these scholarly explorations, the first section of this study hopes to engage especially with Nelson's argument to further complicate through close reading of Funke's and Ende's texts the notion of the (kinds of) prescriptive and subversive messages of the Inkworld trilogy as well as *NS*. This becomes necessary particularly if we wish to incorporate the metatextual narrative of *ID* in our analysis.⁴ I will then consider critical receptions of the concept of "metalepsis" on the part of certain theorists, focusing specifically on their need to ascribe either a positive or a negative value to it. Funke and Ende's own treatments of the transgressive breaches in which their novels abound may also be read in an ambiguous light. While celebrating the power of the imagination, the "violence" inherent in such transgressions also lays down the essentially negative, cautionary aspect of excessive imaginative play by the child reader. The first section of the study concludes by addressing the desire for accessing the fictional realm that such immersive, metaleptic narratives generate in their readers. The aspiration to metaleptic transgression is more openly embraced in new media forms, and this section will explore the narrative strategies incorporated in the structures of Ende and Funke's texts that mimic the interactive forms of medial experience which are characteristic of new media texts. This desire for greater access and interaction arguably also manifests itself through the generation of commodities and spin-offs

³ Apart from Nelson and Chen, also see Maria Nikolajeva (1996) for her discussion of Ende's indebtedness to strategies of fantasy borrowed from folklore and fairy tales, thus presenting him as an inherently intertextual writer.

⁴ The American (translated) edition of *ID* (October, 2008) [following the original German *Tintentod* (2007)] was published after both instances of critical commentary on the series so far.

(video games, films, etc) that promise the reader a greater level of interactivity and engagement with the basic narrative premise of the original novels.

The next two sections of the study concern themselves with the transmedial articulations of the basic narrative premise of the novels by analyzing existing film and video game adaptations across various platforms, broadly in terms of how these interpret or utilize the potentialities of the original literary narratives, and how the reader/user interactive premise of the novels plays out in narratives expressed in different media. In tracking the ways in which the narrative of the novels morphs and changes across media, the study considers the films and video games as independent texts in their own right in addition to their status as adapted works; my specific focus however is on analyzing the various representations of the metatextual, self-referential elements that are at the (philosophical) heart of the literary texts.

CHAPTER 2 METATEXTUAL NARRATIVES IN FUNKE AND ENDE

Pedagogical Designs

How Books Live and How They Die

Claudia Nelson argues that in spite of its self-consciousness and the consequent problematising of narrative forms, metafictionality too exerts a subtle didactic thrust on its readers, akin to more structurally conventional children's literature. Especially in metafiction about children who love to read, or who encounter books/stories within the course of the narrative, the prescriptive element lies precisely in that the self-referentiality of the text emphasizes and models the pleasure of reading for kids—not just that “reading is fun”, but perhaps more importantly, that which is fun to read. The kind of inherently intertextual “library lists” (Nelson 228) provided by many metafictional authors—including Funke—become important in the prescriptive scheme of their fictions. In Funke's case, this instructive element is extended to a much greater degree. The Inkworld trilogy deals not only with readers and the dynamics and pleasures of reading, but with the whole life cycles of books, thus also providing an overview of the institutional mechanisms through which a reader gains access to the book in the first place. In a sense, Funke presents her readers with a history of the book—from writing to publishing, to its consumption (at various registers, by various people), to its inclusion in libraries and archives, and significantly, the eventual fate of all books.

IH, especially, is the novel that is obsessed with the status of books as material artifacts (in addition to their imaginative dimension) and is utterly steeped in the various aspects and concerns of the book trade as a whole. It shows its readers the various stages of the production and reception of books in general as a journey of sorts. Along

the way we encounter: Meggie, the portrait of the perfect reader and lover of books¹; Mo, the character who gives books new “dresses” and new lives as a bookbinder and restorer of damaged books—in the process, allowing Funke to dwell on the tools of his craft and the methods by which he lovingly restores books, as well as the individual material components that physically go into creating volumes (down to the glue used for binding them); Elinor, the eccentric collector and connoisseur of priceless, rare books and the owner of a vast library (who discusses with Meggie, among other things, printing practices during the times of Aldus Manutius); and finally, Fenoglio, the author of *IH2* and several other volumes, a character who provides insights into the writer’s mind, his craft, and his relationship with his own creations. Once narrative thresholds are crossed and we are introduced to the cast of characters within the Inkworld, Violante provides the model of a royal patroness, commissioning works from authors, illustrated by the master craftsman Balbulus. On the other end of the spectrum, the series also abounds in illiterate villains intent on destroying books, as well as instances of the indifferent callousness that can lead to the demise of entire libraries, so that we are introduced to a large cast of characters including ones who nurture and value them and others who do just the opposite.

The destruction of books, in fact, is one of the most important thematic and narrative obsessions of the Inkworld trilogy in general. We are first introduced to the horrors of people damaging books in *IH* when Elinor gives Meggie a long lecture about the miserable condition in which several of her precious rare books and manuscripts had been found and the possible reasons for these—from the specter of fishmongers

¹ The entire first chapter of *IH* is devoted to Meggie’s fierce love of books, and to her memories of growing up in a house full of books of all sorts.

tearing off pages of books for wrapping their fish to the idea of people cutting off bindings of hardcover books to provide soles for their shoes in desperate times. The first inkling of the horror awaiting Elinor and Mo and Meggie later on in the novel comes when Capricorn's thugs collect all (but one) surviving copies of *IH2* and burn the lot. However, the worst desecration of books occurs exactly in the middle of the novel—effectively dividing it into two halves, pre- and post-destruction—when Basta, Capricorn's henchman, burns down Elinor's vast library, reducing it to a “shapeless mound of ashes, pale gray in the moonlight, gray as moth wings, gray as burnt paper” (286). It is the single worst act of destruction within the whole of *IH*: nothing that happens to any of the characters within the space of the novel matches the scale of this tragedy, and Funke gives us a terrifying vision of a world without books, without learning, for as a shell-shocked Elinor tells a disbelieving Meggie, “when people start burning books, they'll soon burn human beings” (173).

As Matthew Battles points out in *Library: an Unquiet History* (using a term coined by Martin Kern), biblioclasm is the rule, not the exception, and Funke seems determined to press this point upon her young audience. Even within the Inkworld, Mo plots the Adderhead's destruction through a particularly subtle form of book-murder, and we are privy to two more instances of destroyed libraries: the Barn Owl's library is burnt, and the one at the Castle in the Lake is damaged beyond repair through what amounts to criminal negligence. If metafiction functions to prescribe the pleasures of reading to its child audience, Funke extends this to foster a greater awareness of the materiality, and thus the attendant vulnerability, of the loved books with which they may engage. This can also be read in directly cautionary terms, of course—child readers need to learn the

manifold ways in which books can soon be destroyed or damaged; in this, they may become more responsible readers, owners and caretakers of books.

Models of Readers and Modes of Reading

The depiction of the trajectory of production and consumption of books also serves a more subtle pedagogical purpose. While seeking to instruct her young audience in the life cycles of books, Funke complicates their awareness of the levels of interaction and complexity that may characterize one's relationship with a book—bookbinders are readers too, for instance—shaking an unquestioning assumption that only the artifact and its consumer exist in an imaginative/interactive milieu, with no one else in the equation. The child reader thus gets an idea of others who may also lay claim to a text and help determine its fate.

Quite apart from this, the Inkworld series is an introduction to the reading process itself, and instructive in the sense that it categorizes and classifies different reading styles, providing models of different kinds of readers. This ties in with Nelson's contention that authors of metatextual works "typically include both passionate readers and reluctant ones in their casts of characters, thus offering a range of potential identifications to fit a range of prospective consumers" (227). Funke takes this a step further, however, to provide a perhaps more morally loaded, didactic model of good/bad readership that applies to both child and adult readers. On one hand we have passionate readers like Elinor, Mo, Darius, Meggie, and Violante², but representing the

² Even among the models of "good" readers, there is always an implied hierarchy of readers who are more skilled/powerful than others. For example, Nelson counts Townley, E. Nesbit and Funke among authors who make distinctions between what she calls "good readers and bad" (229), using the terms however more to indicate levels of readership, i.e., skill/talent, rather than a more ideologically loaded good/bad binary distinction.

dark side of the coin is the equally devoted reader Orpheus (who of course is an author as well). In a recent article, Joe Sanders criticizes the tendency on the part of several children's metafiction authors to stress that "the relationship between reader and text is . . . an uncomplicated, benign [one] that implicitly argues that whatever else might need subverting, the reader-book bond is sacrosanct" (351). When Sander's argument is considered in conjunction with the extremely positive light in which children's metafiction treats readers and the act of reading, we may posit that such a trusting relationship model implies the following: if a book portrays obvious bibliophiles, these devoted readers must, by extension, also be trustworthy figures. In other words, the formulation that "books are safe, that they are to be trusted" (Sanders 351) can also be implicitly stretched to include their most devoted—that is, their best—readers as well.

Both Funke's and Ende's texts strongly resist such an implication, however, complicating the possible relationship models between books and readers by also portraying readers who have gone over to the dark side, as it were. In a milder vein, these texts depict the actions of disobedient readers. Meggie in *IS* gives in to an essentially selfish impulse to experience the hypodiegetic³ reality of *IH2* although she well knows the attendant heartbreak and worry she would cause her loving parents. While this testifies to her individual will and ability, it also demonstrates her thoughtlessness and places her family in subsequent mortal danger when they follow

Within the Inkworld trilogy, the readers at the top of this implied hierarchy are the ones who have the rare talent to read aloud others' words with so much sensitivity and feeling that they can make the words come alive. It is to be noted, however, that for Funke this level of skill is not dependant on one's moral standing—Orpheus, one of the most black-hearted villains in the series, is also one of its most accomplished readers.

³ A hypodiegetic narrative is one which is at a diegetic level immediately lower than the level at which the narrating act producing the main (diegetic) narrative is placed. For instance, Fenoglio's *NS2* provides the hypodiegetic level inside the diegetic *NS* written by Michael Ende.

her into the Inkworld. Meggie's defection then provides an example of the child reader so seduced by words that she foregoes all her other ties and obligations—clearly an example to be avoided.

As mentioned before, Orpheus occupies the position of reader-as-villain in the Inkworld trilogy. In *IS* and *ID*, he exemplifies the model of a truly passionate reader who seeks to emblazon his own stamp on the story that has fascinated him since childhood. However, he uses his intimate knowledge of the hypodiegetic world contained in *IH2* to twist the narrative to his own selfish ends. Orpheus feels no compunction in killing and maiming the magical inhabitants of the world he loves: his relationship with the book is simultaneously that of petty, murderous utilitarianism and of delight and wonder. However, it is significant that in spite of the fact that Orpheus abuses the reader-book bond at several levels, he still has the right (and the ability) as a devoted, careful reader to participate in and determine the story as much as, say, Meggie—an obviously identifiable “good” reader—does.⁴ Funke's clear message to her audience in this regard seems to be that the relationship you forge with books depends ultimately upon your personality—to wit, that there are as many kinds of readers as there are people, but that they all have equal rights of interaction with the text, and the ability to engage in such interactions. Orpheus' exploitation of the Inkworld is a very obvious model of “bad” readership, one that Funke's young audience should presumably avoid emulating. It becomes significant precisely because Funke does not paint a wholly rosy, uncomplicated and benign picture of the kinds of interactions that are possible between

⁴ Also significant is the fact that he is the only one among the villains to be spared death or severe punishment for his actions. We last see him setting off for the uncharted northern parts of the Inkworld; Funke leaves open the idea of his possible continuing authorship over the narrative.

readers and texts. This is important especially in charting a deliberate—and somewhat radically subversive—move away from the kinds of naive, trusting reader-text models other instances of children’s metafiction provide.

In light of the prescriptive aspect of caring for books (considering their material status) that the previous section of this article touches upon, it may also be interesting to note that Orpheus’ model of bad readership—reflected here in his callously utilitarian attitude towards a story he loves, essentially mining it to serve his own interests—is also pre-figured in the way he physically (mis)treats the books in Elinor’s library. He mishandles the tomes and volumes he is surrounded by—paying attention only to their textual content, but otherwise utterly uncaring about damaging them. When he is angry or frustrated, he does not draw the line even at flinging them out of windows. Funke thus draws a clear connection between the two kinds of abuse one may perpetuate on books—considered in their imaginative capacity as well as their material dimensions—delineating how both instances starkly subscribe to models of bad readership. The prescriptive stance employed here, that is, to avoid such a position as (child) reader, is pretty evident.

Michael Ende practices a similar form of didacticism in *NS*, but in a more morally ambiguous vein, refusing to provide clearly separated models of good/bad readership. Ende’s *NS* opens with an instance of theft when Bastian steals a copy of the diegetic *NS2* from Carl Conrad Coreander’s bookshop.⁵ Bastian is a dishonest reader⁶ in this

⁵ Interestingly enough, the book opens with Coreander’s rant about how children are apt to abuse books: “Listen, my boy, I can’t abide children. ... [T]hey’re no good for anything but ... breaking things, smearing books with jam and tearing the pages. ... I have no children’s books, and I wouldn’t sell you the other kind” (6, italics in original).

case, but Ende complicates his image by simultaneously setting him up in a position of power as the privileged reader, the chosen one.

In children's metafiction, such a clear delineation of the privileged reader is usually the traditional space of (mental) substitution, that is, where the child reader is most likely to identify with the main character. However, Ende does not present his audience with a protagonist who adheres to a clearly-demarcated moral register of good-bad, but one who is very much a flawed human, simultaneously representing both positive and negative models of readership. His didactic thrust is thus tempered by the notion that it is up to his readers to choose the correct course of action among many simultaneous possibilities. Initially, Bastian is meek and cowardly, not very courageous or attractive; the Bastian who breaches narrative, diegetic boundaries to enter and participate in the hypodiegetic reality of Fantastica soon takes on the trappings of a true (literary) hero. Ende upsets a possible laudatory view of this on part of his readership, however, by demonstrating that this kind of heroism may not resonate on a moral/emotional scale as well, and that the process of moral degradation is an insidious one indeed. Bastian starts off as the privileged reader, rescuing Fantastica by shaping it according to his wishes, adorning it with stories of his own making. Yet he slides into a model of bad readership when in misjudging (that is, misreading) his allies and well-wishers such as Atreyu and Moon Child he allows pride and vanity to take precedence, tries to forcibly rule over all Fantastica, and in the process turns on the very people who had helped and nurtured him. Eventually, he has to lose his very identity in order to

(In *NS*, the diegetic narrative of Bastian's world is printed in italics, and the hypodiegetic narrative of Fantastica is printed in a Roman font, providing a clear typographical distinction between the two narrative levels.)

⁶ A variation on the model of the disobedient reader, mentioned earlier.

regain a sense of self. Ende's didactic message here is more nuanced, then: he makes the preferred model of readership very clear, but the choice of opting for any of the possible models ultimately rests with his audience (who, of course, are also *readers*).

Complicating Author-ity: Mechanisms of Story

Critics have traditionally celebrated children's metafiction for its subversive potentials, in that it forces readers out of what Sanders calls "comfortable narratives" (350) by focusing on "the unsettled and ambiguous relationship between fiction and reality" (Didicher 144). Nelson points out that in addition, a characteristic of children's metafiction is that it often subverts adult hegemony, emphasizing the pleasures of rebelling against certain kinds of adult dictates and attitudes by a display of "ostentatious belief . . . in the disposability of adult authority" (230). Among other examples, Nelson holds up *IH* and *IS* as works which impart enormous agency to Meggie, their chief child protagonist, and mentions that this is accompanied both by Fenoglio's loss of control over his own creation, as well as "a loss of voice, and thus of agency, on the part of both of Meggie's parents" (232). Both these instances may then lead the child reader to be skeptical of adult authority. However, in closing, Nelson tempers her previous observations thus: "Self-consciously radical, these children's metafiction have their conservative aspects as well" (234).

It is on this last statement that I would like to focus while offering a revision of Nelson's argument concerning the extent of subversive authority Funke actually grants Meggie. If we take into account the narrative trajectory of *ID* as well while tracing the arc of the whole Inkworld series, a somewhat different picture emerges from the one that Nelson has posited. We see instead a dimming of the series' radical potential and more of its "conservative aspects" at play. Meggie never does fulfill the promise of ultimate

agency with which *IH* ends—that of her becoming a writer and shaping the destiny of the story in her own hands. Her only creatively assertive role is when she reads Farid and herself into the hypodiegetic narrative in *IS*, and even that is portrayed as a selfish and willfully disobedient gesture that leads to loss and heartbreak. Once within the Inkworld, Meggie is incapable of achieving a dominant role in the narrative, and is reduced to exercising her special talent for teasing reality out of fictional words only in a handful of desperate occasions.⁷ We may claim that the sequence at the end of *IS*—her interrupted reading essentially becomes the cause of Cosimo’s demise and the accompanying bloodshed—foretells the lack of agency that will attend her at the close of the series, where she becomes an almost completely inactive and ineffective figure. Her desperation is trebled since she has to depend solely on the creatively weakened Fenoglio’s words, instead of authoring them herself. Moreover, Meggie’s parents regain their agency once in the Inkworld, playing many parts and taking on several roles, while she remains relatively static, simply hiding in safety; her only eventual task, somewhat disappointingly, is choosing between two suitors. At the end of the trilogy, it is thus amply clear to the readers that the subversive potential Meggie embodies in *IH* has not ultimately been borne out.

In his recent article, Joe Sanders expresses his “frustrations with the severe limitations that exist on . . . [the subversive] energies” (352) of children’s metafiction. He argues that instead of highlighting the often “muddled” subversive stances that such instances of children’s literature may incorporate, it may be far more profitable to focus the scholarly spotlight on the critical, interrogative and analytical faculties they attempt

⁷ For instance, when Mo needs to be rescued from the White Women, Meggie reads him into recovery.

to foster in their young readership. His comments ring particularly true in case of the Inkworld series, which (as discussed above) does not depict more conventional subversive models, such as the empowered/privileged state of the young protagonist. Instead, the novels are remarkable for tracing the complex mechanisms of how stories are crafted and shaped, essentially “explor[ing] a theory of fiction through the practice of writing fiction” (Waugh 2, emphasis in original). Funke provides her readers with a distinct form of critical engagement through an introduction to some of the underlying principles of narrative—specifically, novelistic—formation. This is of course different from the critical interrogative readership that Sanders discusses, but both provide a young audience with alternative ways of viewing any texts they encounter, and promote a deeper understanding of them, in terms of the principles governing narrative and other textual content, as well as introducing them to different strategies of reading itself. I shall try to illustrate below how Funke attempts to complicate her reader’s notion of narrative mechanism as well that of authorship, perhaps ultimately becoming “subversive” in this regard.

Nelson notes that *IS* severely undermines the power of Fenoglio the (primary) writer figure who “loses his author-ity, as his fictional creations increasingly go their own way and words refuse to do what he would have them do” (233). In both *IS* and especially *ID*, Fenoglio struggles with writing and his faith in his authorial ability is severely dented. Taking advantage of this, Orpheus becomes the twisted usurper of Fenoglio’s mantle as writer, wreaking considerable harm in spite of his limited (and mostly borrowed) skill. If we consider writing to be one of the most important forms of (adult) power, Funke seems to be making a radical observation regarding the extent of

adult authority here. But one might also argue that Funke provides to her child readers a more honest and balanced vision of power equations in an adult world—where authority is not determined solely by one source, but is shared and filtered through multiple players, not all of them necessarily morally upright. Fenoglio as the primary author is important but not the only determinant of his narrative universe and by dwelling on his extensive writer's block and creative agonies Funke humanizes the god-like creator while still leaving him with enough power to influence key points within the story. We may then say that Funke sets out to provide to her young readership a sense of the creative process as well as various other factors that determine the crafting of stories.

Sanders emphasizes the fact that certain kinds of children's metafiction dealing with the relationship between books and their readers subtly encourage them to question and probe the nature of the book itself while still maintaining an affectionate relationship with it. In other words, readers are encouraged to not take books for granted but to develop a more dynamic approach to their interactions with textual narrative. In her texts, Funke provides a literalisation of this dynamic questioning of the way the narrative of the Inkworld is shaped even while depicting the process itself. Throughout, we encounter characters who question the unexpected twists and turns the story is taking and seek to take control of it. Perhaps more importantly however, Funke brings out the inherent complexity of story-crafting by highlighting instances of their *failure* to gain this control; for example, Fenoglio and Meggie's attempts to simply provide "quick-fix", patched-up solutions to the problems they identify within the story, without taking into account the narrative complexity of the Inkworld universe. Their efforts are resounding failures. The replacement Cosimo they hastily conjure up is a

bootless, confused character, and the vague declaration that with Cosimo's return, "a great new age began" (*IS* 277, italics in original) is completely ineffective because it fails to provide the underlying narrative support and structure that delineates how this came to be.

The subversive (even while subtly instructive/didactic) quality of Funke's writing may perhaps lie, then, in refusing to provide simple answers to dilemmas wracking the story or the refusal to provide neatly wrapped up endings in order to better depict the complications inherent in the writing process itself.⁸ However, what is significant is that she ties in this subversion with that adoption of a critical, interrogative stance that Sanders formulates. *IS* and *ID* are remarkable precisely because they deal with a story gone wrong, and with a demanding narrative that will not be patched up with half-hearted, lackadaisical solutions that do not take into account its manifold complexities. The failure of the story may then become a learning moment for the child reader. It may be, as well, a simultaneous validation of him/her as reader, because the implicit message here is that (adult) authors need to remain true to the spirit of their stories and perhaps more importantly, that they may not pass off just anything on their discerning (child) readership. In short, stories that do not do justice to their premises are likely to be resounding failures, and (child) readers should exercise their critical judgment to recognize this and even reject such works if necessary.

Books about readers and reading thus often delve—through demonstration—into the theory of narrative, simultaneously testing the limits of the creative process in the

⁸ In the penultimate chapter of *ID* we are told of the possibility—even the certainty—of future war between the two male heirs of Ombra and the Castle of Night, Funke's own way of complicating the "happily ever after" motif by signifying that it is not the end of all bloodshed within the Inkworld, only a lull in it.

depiction of storymaking/telling. This is certainly true of Ende's text. The central concern in *NS* is the creation of a (fantastic) narrative through the power of imagination, propelled by the author's wishes. Bastian is here simultaneously reader and author, as he interacts with the diegetic *NS* to create the hypodiegetic story out of the formless void of the Nothing. The first creative aspect that Ende highlights is the importance of naming⁹, thus laying down the fundamental authorial power of determining the identities of one's own creations.¹⁰ Bastian's very first acts of authorship are to name the Childlike Empress, the desert Goab and the night forest Perilin; moreover, as Nikolajeva points out, in order to possess objects, Bastian must first name them (175). Perhaps most significant about the way Ende depicts Bastian's authorship, however, is the importance attached to the *wishes* that frame and form Bastian's adventures in *Fantastica* and thus determine its history and narrative trajectory. While crafting the hypodiegetic story, Bastian must creatively and critically engage with it through the (self-conscious) mechanism of his wishes. The story literally refuses to take shape whenever Bastian does not deliberately employ his intellectual faculties: for instance, he is stuck in limbo within the Temple of a Thousand Doors unless he can determine what the next stage in the narrative should be. He thus has to actively engage with the narrative in order to determine (and experience) its potential trajectory, holding up once again the model of a critical, interrogative reader/author who must probe beneath the surface of the texts he encounters to experience their multifaceted dimensions in full.

⁹ See Nikolajeva 175 for a discussion of the significance of naming in *NS*.

¹⁰ This, of course, alludes to Adam's naming of the animals of Creation in Genesis.

Metalepsis: Critical Receptions and Authorial Treatment

As briefly mentioned above, metaleptic play is the key narrative strategy of Funke and Ende's metafictional texts. The concept of "metalepsis" was first theorized by Gérard Genette in his seminal work *Discours du récit* (1972, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, 1980), an investigation of the structures and formal devices of literary narratives—virtually the first to develop what Jonathan Culler in his introduction to the English translation calls a "systematic theory of narrative" (7). Genette defines a model based on potentially several independent narrative ("diegetic") levels within a literary text, and "narrative metalepsis" as interdiegetic crossings at the level of narration, that is, "any intrusion by the extradiegetic narrator or narratee into the diegetic universe (or by diegetic characters into a metadiegetic universe, etc.), or the inverse . . . [producing] an effect of strangeness that is either comical . . . or fantastic" (234-5).¹¹ Extending Genette's original formulation, Monica Fludernik identifies and renames five distinct kinds of metalepsis that he mentions: "authorial", "narratorial", "lectorial", rhetorical or discourse metalepsis (following Marie-Laure Ryan's formulation), as well as the so-called pseudo-diegetic metalepsis. For our purposes, the second kind of metalepsis identified by Fludernik—where the narrator moves into the story with the narratee and fully participates in that level of reality in a complex capacity—is especially useful since both Funke's and Ende's texts are structured around this specific narrative device. Instances of metalepsis can also be located in extra-literary scenarios; essentially, any actions that cross diegetic boundaries—that is, that involve interactions between

¹¹ This specific mention of the "fantastic" becomes especially significant in case of Funke's and Ende's works considering their use of fantasy as a distinctive central trope while dealing explicitly with various levels (and layers) of textuality that are populated, among others, by the extradiegetic narrator, the diegetic reader(s) and various hypodiegetic characters.

tiered but functionally and ontologically separate components of a particular system—may be considered metaleptic in nature.

It is evident from the above definitions that all metaleptic acts necessarily involve breaching boundaries. In this section, however, I would like to highlight a significant trend in the widely varying critical receptions of this concept. Theorists (narratological or otherwise) of metalepsis are rarely neutral about its implications or ideological positioning, and seem to feel the need to formulate it in either strongly positive or negative terms. N. Katherine Hayles belongs to the former category of commentators. Her concept of “intermediation”¹² in digital machines, focusing on the twin ideas of “dynamic heterarchies and fluid analogies” (44), is inherently metaleptic in that it deals with interactions between the various independent operational levels of multi-agent computer programs. It is pertinent to mention here that Hayles uses a biological metaphor—the glowing image of “a fetus growing inside a mother’s body”¹³ (45)—to describe her concept of dynamic heterarchies that involve and subtly change the different levels of an established complex system. She thus proposes a biologically-formulated metaleptic model for describing ways in which we may conceive of the operation of digital (literary) texts, in terms of complex interactions between its components (to which are generally attributed comparable agency). What I would like to

¹² To explain this concept, Hayles uses the biological/social metaphor of the emergence of highly evolved systems through dynamic interactions of simpler units to create more complex ones, which in turn engage in their own interactive dynamic hierarchical structures to finally function as a whole or totality of an organism/system. Hayles imagines “the human and digital computer as partners in [such] a dynamic heterarchy bound together by intermediating dynamics” (47). She moreover develops the concept of “fluid analogies” to incorporate the idea of recursive feedback and feedforward informational loops that enable the creation of meaning from a bunch of codelets containing “information.”

¹³ This is something we may also conceive of as being an inherently metaleptic action, although reversed in terms of origin: the fetus and the mother are two autonomous beings after the gestation period, but during pregnancy, the ontological levels separating what would eventually be two entirely separate beings are breached.

draw attention to is her extremely positive formulation of the metaleptic mechanisms at work within this model.

Marie-Laure Ryan is another theorist whose critical investigations of metatextuality evidenced through the device of metalepsis are especially significant. Embarking on a discussion of literary metalepsis, she moves on to locate metaleptic impulses and structures in extra-literary fields as well, analyzing the metaleptic potentials of digital texts, machines and (simulated) environments, such as instances of virtual reality (Ryan 2006).¹⁴ Ryan further broadens Genette's formulations of what she calls "rhetorical" metalepsis—that is, a transitory transgression on an interdiegetic level, a temporary breach after which the levels are sealed off from each other again, remaining fundamentally unchanged—by bringing into the discussion Brian McHale's concept of "ontological" metalepsis, or in other words, one that involves a more significant changing and/or transformation of the narrative levels by the metaleptic action. Like Hayles, Ryan also frequently uses a biological metaphor to describe metalepsis, but we must mention its essential discrepancy with the metaleptic model proposed by Hayles. Her extremely stark biological correlative to describe the ontological metaleptic action is that of "an invasive growth that destroys the structure" (208) of the breached hypodiegetic world. She deliberately uses loaded terms like "contamination" to describe the ontological metaleptic action (in extending her discussion of metaleptic situations to extra-literary scenarios, in the case of Mathematics or logical computational structures,

¹⁴ In her explanation of the idea of metalepsis, Ryan uses the metaphor of the "stack" (a key concept of computer programming) or a "multileveled data structure whose components are processed in an order known as LIFO: last in, first out" (204), to provide another model of Genette's narrative registers.

for instance), likening it to “a cancer that destroys from within the ambitions of totalitarian . . . systems” (212).

Debra Malina also focuses on negative connotations of metaleptic violence inherent in such ruptures of narrative (quite distinct from the narrative violence that the plot brings into being), a notion at which she arrives via a deconstruction of the term “intrusion,” as posed by Genette while defining “metalepsis.” Here, the focus on negative connotations of diegetic transgression (especially in case of subject formation) essentially relates Malina’s reading of metaleptic devices to Ryan’s approach. The implication of the term itself becomes somehow that of an action that violates the natural(ized) order of things/reality, producing an effect that Malina describes as “inevitably jarring . . . through destabilization and disorientation to outright violation” (3). This description of the affective quality of the metaleptic moment (literary or otherwise) also provides an example of the kind of morally/ideologically loaded terminology often used to describe it.

Given these instances of ideologically-loaded critical receptions of metalepsis, it seems significant to point out the ways in which even Funke and Ende’s representations of the metaleptic event are also ambiguous in terms of their prescriptive status. While using the trope as a positive metaphor for readerly immersion and engagement with texts, these authors simultaneously stress its negative aspects as well, representing its inherent violent proclivity even while hinging their narratives on its operations. It is not a coincidence that the first metaleptic event¹⁵ in *IH* brings sorrow, tragedy and heartbreak

¹⁵ I refer, of course, to the first accidental instance of a metaleptic breach when Resa disappears inside the Inkworld and Capricorn, Basta, Dustfinger and others are thrust out into the diegetic reality. However, this incident is extra-textual since we only learn about it from Mo’s account to Meggie.

in its wake, when Resa disappears inside the hypodiegetic narrative in place of the characters that materialize in the diegetic universe. The structural violence implicit in the metaleptic act itself is thus reflected even at the level of narrative trajectory.

Indeed, this is a pattern that is repeated throughout the series. For Funke, a metaleptic breach is always one of violence, symbolically represented by the condition that whatever emerges out of a text must necessarily be replaced by something forcefully wrenched from the diegetic reality instead, thus simultaneously framing the act within the rhetoric of loss. This violence characterizing the metaleptic act at the conceptual level is also corroborated by more literal representations of brutal events that accompany practically each instance of narrative transgression in the Inkworld series.¹⁶ I would also argue that the way Funke positions Meggie as a disobedient reader within the *IS* narrative reveals her ambiguous stance on the ideological implications of metalepsis. Meggie desires to experience the Inkworld, culminating in her disobedient act of reading herself into the hypodiegetic narrative. As I have also mentioned above, this act does reaffirm her status as a superior reader in terms of skill, but it is significant that Funke presents this metaleptic desire as an essentially selfish impulse, a heightened level of textual immersion that can tear apart relationships and families.¹⁷

We can trace a similarly ambiguous positioning of the actual act of metalepsis played out even in *NS*. Although a voracious, imaginative reader, Bastian is reluctant

¹⁶ The most obvious example that comes to mind is Mo's near-death at Mortola's hands just after Orpheus reads them into the Inkworld in *IS*.

¹⁷ This is also reflected, though to a lesser extent, in Resa's obvious love and desire for the Inkworld in spite of the hardships she has faced there. Nelson frames this in terms of rebellion when she points out that "Meggie's mother in *Inkheart* turns out to have enjoyed her sojourn in the title realm—perhaps more than she might have enjoyed looking after her three-year-old" (233).

from the very beginning to participate in a concrete capacity in the hypodiegetic Fantastican reality. However, he is literally forced to enter it when the Childlike Princess leaves him with no other choice, and Ende's description of this metaleptic transgression echoes its distressingly coercive nature. Once ensconced within the hypodiegetic level, Bastian shapes the world through formulating wishes—the catch, however, is that the cost of every wish is a memory of his previous existence, eventually ensuring total loss of self-identity.¹⁸ I would argue that this is a more subtle form of violation prompted by Bastian's transgressive act, one that underlines his whole sojourn within Fantastica. This is the dark underbelly of the metaleptic impulse, segueing negative critical formulations of metalepsis with morally ambiguous authorial representations of the same.

The reasons behind such authorial stances are less clear, however. As discussed above, both Funke and Ende use the narrative device of metalepsis as a metaphor for valorizing (at times with a clear didactic thrust) various aspects of the book-reader relationship as well as the reading process itself. How then may we explain the subtle yet simultaneous positioning of the metaleptic act as something inherently steeped in violence and therefore potentially dangerous?

The implied violence is perhaps a reference to the fact that reading may also be construed, in addition to its world-making effects, as a transgressive activity, whence we seek entrance into (narrated) realms of experience and modes of thought that are not our own; in the process, we are changed. Increased critical consciousness comes at the cost of a previous naiveté about the story's machinations, for example, and

¹⁸ This foreshadows in a way the fundamental imperative of replacement (albeit of concrete physical entities) that accompanies metaleptic breaches in Funke's narratival universe.

fundamentally alters the way the (child) reader subsequently perceives or approaches that text—and potentially, any text. However, it must also be pointed out that such a double positioning of the trope encompasses a more functional aspect as well by making the sensitive—in other words, “skilful”—reader actively question the author’s ambiguous position. This is, of course, a critical approach prescribed within the texts themselves while delineating the ideal reader-book dynamic. In a way, the reader is thus (unconsciously) prodded to enact the very style of critical approach the narrative recommends.

However, although such a heightened critical sensibility is held up as a desirable goal while engaging with texts—certainly, this is consonant with practices of reading taught in school—the underlying violence of the scene of reading may also reflect an (adult) anxiety about the child reader’s knowledge acquisition process itself. A child’s immersive engagement with books (especially in case of precocious readers such as Bastian and Meggie) is of an extremely intimate nature, creating a mental and imaginative space from which adults are more often than not barred entry. Books are dangerous things, the ideas they express even more so, and immersive models of child-book interactions promote an unsupervised and thus a fundamentally *unregulated* reading experience. This is rich in subversive potential indeed; after all, no adult may fully be privy to how books shape the mental landscapes of children. The violence underpinning authorial representations of metaleptic breaches then seems tied to adult anxieties concerning the agency and independence of children, especially in light of the prescriptive aspects of these metatextual novels and the broader didactic premises of children’s literature. This subtle emphasis on darker and more transgressive aspects of

reading-as-metalepsis is thus an authorial strategy that deliberately also positions these texts as cautionary tales, warning child readers against the (negatively formulated) seductive aspects of literature, even as they allow these selfsame readers to participate in an opening up of boundaries of imaginative play.

I would like to end this section by pointing out a third kind of critical reception of metalepsis that is more neutral than the ideologically loaded positive or negative formulations I have already discussed. However, it is more allied to the negative theoretical considerations of the term, in that it is essentially dismissive of the impact of metalepsis when strictly contained within (literary) narrative bounds. Marie-Laure Ryan adopts this trivializing stance, for instance, in addition to her more emphatically negative one. She justifies this dismissiveness on the grounds that we as readers encountering literary metalepsis will never experience it in actuality, thus reducing it to a kind of (ultimately futile) literary/narratological parlor trick.¹⁹ Now, while considering the literary device of metalepsis, Monica Fludernik presents a far more neutral critical stance than either Ryan or Hayles. She neither condemns its intrusive/transgressive potential nor praises its deliberately subversive properties in renegotiating (literary) boundaries to create complex dynamic elements in newer, synthesized narrative levels. However, she is also allied to Ryan's point-of-view in that she dismisses it simply as a literary exercise that exists solely for generating pleasure and for increasing the imaginative forays of

¹⁹ Ryan is characteristically emphatic in her ultimate dismissal of the narrative device:

"Metaleptic texts make us play with the idea that we are fictional . . . but they cannot turn themselves into the command language that scripts our lives, into the matrix of irreality that envelopes our existence, and in the end, they cannot shake our conviction that we inhabit the only world that exists "for real," because this world is the one we inhabit corporeally. We can visit other worlds in imagination, but our bodies tie us to the base of the stack" (230).

writers in terms of experimenting with form and technique.²⁰ Its subversive/critical potential is tamely contained, or in other words, Fludernik doesn't place any importance on impact it may have on readers or the ways in which it may complicate their relationship with the text itself. Perhaps more importantly, like Ryan, Fludernik also neglects to consider the element of experiential desire on which metaleptic narratives inherently play.

This readerly desire—of accessing, of experiencing more of a text or a world than is possible in “real” life—is, I would argue, at the heart of all instances of explicitly metaleptic fictions.²¹ A sense of breaking free of structural and conventional rules of narrative, that is, rules of how a world or reality may be created, ordered and presented to readers, is in part what lends the notion of metaleptic transgressions—even, or perhaps especially, within a fictitious setting—its peculiarly seductive charm. Thus, while acknowledging the value of the above critical pronouncements concerning the limitations of literary metalepsis, I would however like to argue for yet another approach by which to gauge the importance of metaleptic narrative structures in children's texts, in light of this often unarticulated but nonetheless implicit readerly desire. Consequently, in the following section I will look beyond the idea of mere pleasure-generation in order to posit desire as the chief affective condition of metaleptic reading, and offer a new way of considering the impact of metaleptic children's literature: in terms of their anticipation of, and consequent invitation to, new and varied degrees of interaction with the story-world created and presented by the original literary texts.

²⁰ This emphasis on the pleasure metaleptic devices generate in readers also allies Fludernik's theoretical formulations with Nelson's idea of the pleasures of reading that children's metatextuality fosters.

²¹ Although I speak specifically with reference to children's metafiction in this instance, this readerly desire is not only a child's desire, but may be fundamental to all readers.

Narrative as Commentary: Embracing New Medial Forms

In adopting a dismissive stance with regard to metalepsis, both Fludernik and Ryan point out the reader's consciousness of the artifice of diegetic transgressions as a mere demonstration of the literary—their awareness that the transgression is taking place within a fictional realm—and thus its ultimate failure as a device with any real impact on the reader, no matter how philosophically attractive it may be otherwise. Although the characters in the diegetic universe are supposed to mirror our own positions in the world and our own hold on reality (hence their shock and disbelief when first encountering an interdiegetic breach), this perceived homology is unsustainable in the “reality” of reading. However, I would like to place stress on the fundamental desire that is at the heart of such metaleptic scenarios involving readers and representations of reading. Such texts in effect literalize the desire to immerse oneself within hypodiegetic realities of loved stories, thus to experience depicted events at first hand and to interact with agents of the storyworld. More importantly for our purpose, in simultaneously negating actualization of such experiential possibilities, these texts also play on readers' desires to go beyond this inevitable limit of metalepsis—a consequence of its being a kind of gimmick of narration—in order to formulate alternative ways of experiencing, that is, engaging with the primary text in a more “active” capacity. This second form of readerly desire is translatable in newer modes of access to and different registers of interaction with the narrative premises of the primary texts.

In new media (that is, post-print) forms, the aspiration to metaleptic transgression is more openly made a basis of the medial experience itself, and I would like to argue that Funke's and Ende's recognition and celebration of this trope is reflected in several ways within the structures of their novels. These texts embody the idea that metaleptic

structures operate on multiple registers within the complex multi-tiered world of the narrative, and we may trace deliberate narrative strategies that they employ which embrace the authors' awareness of—as well as the more general possibility of—such interactive forms of (new) medial negotiations. We may also conceive of certain sections of the texts (especially in case of *NS*) as anticipating a newer register and level of (reader) engagement in other media, in the way that these sections mimic those media's reader-story dynamics. Similarly, the more recent Inkworld series often incorporates structural elements that essentially act as commentary on established contemporary new media forms as well as those that were beginning to emerge. These metaleptic texts may thus also be envisioned as print narrative models that prefigure other, more interactive forms by structurally embracing some of the same principles and philosophical modes of operation that characterize the new(er) media.

One of the central debates of new media theory, especially in case of electronic literature, is whether user agency or authorial control plays a greater role in determining the operations and outcomes of narratives. Electronic texts often foreground a more explicitly interactive user-oriented model, in which the user is able (or appears to be able) to choose (and hence determine) the outcomes of narrative strands she seeks to follow/explore. In such cases—especially for forms like hypertext fiction, network fiction and interactive fiction (IF)—user participation is often essential to production of the narrative. N. Katherine Hayles echoes this when she emphasizes the notion that electronic literature opens up the traditional creator/audience top-down hierarchical model to allow for a more interactive experience in which user agency is seen to be paramount. At first glance, Funke and Ende's narratives also seem to, respectively,

represent and anticipate (Ende, after all, writes two decades before Funke, in an age when interactive new media that we today take for granted were significantly less abundant) this notion of a more pro-active reader who shapes the hypodiegetic narrative in significant ways. Bastian and the various readers in the Inkworld trilogy all change the hypodiegetic reality they encounter; the depiction of the ways in which they determine the narrative arcs of the hypodiegetic *NS2* and *IH2* essentially debunks the model of the passive reader, highlighting instead the agency that reader may wield.

A user-oriented model also stresses that such a narrative approach essentially foregrounds the impossibility of holding on to “fixed” texts, even in the case of printed texts that cannot, as a rule, themselves transmute.²² *IH2*, for instance, is changed and (may we say?) transmuted beyond recognition in the course of Funke’s series.²³ When Mortola seeks to re-enter the hypodiegetic Inkworld in *IS* to find Capricorn—her son who had died within the external, diegetic universe in *IH*—she finds to her bitter disappointment that once the story has been propelled along one particular narrative thread, there is no going back *in that particular version of the story*. The narrative resolution within the hypodiegetic *IH2* at the end of Funke’s series is however, only one

²² This, of course, is a central tenet of the assertion that new media texts differ, substantially, from their print precursors. One should also take into account, however, printed works that attempt to play around with their physical forms/structures in a bid to provide more flexible ways of accessing the text, as it were. A hypertext novel such as Mark Z. Danielewski’s *House of Leaves* as well as, say, choose-your-own-adventure stories, are sites of such experimentation. In these texts, creators attempt to play around with the notion of alternate modes (if not sites) of access, allowing for greater agency on the user’s part in changing and determining narrative structure, plot, and story resolution.

²³ It is important to note, however, that nowhere does Funke directly answer another vital question her novels suggest in this context: although the story of *IH2* changes beyond recognition during the course of the series, we do not find any evidence that this was reflected at a material level, i.e., in case of the actual print form of *IH2* within the diegetic world. Implicit here is thus the notion of what may be termed “a secret life of books,” one that Roderick Townley’s Sylvie Cycle of books narrativises, for instance. This is further concretized by use of the *mise en abyme* scenario in case of the hypodiegetic *IH2*; see note 24 in this chapter for a fuller explanation.

possible outcome of the story, and the narrative self-consciously stresses this potential variability throughout.

Funke's series thus contains within itself a sort of consciousness of its possibly contingent articulation (What if she publishes other editions/versions of the novels? What happens when they are re-written for the screen? etc.), and in this acknowledges the idea of contingency and constant change within the creative realm: that a particular manifestation of any text may only be an instantiation, a snapshot, of the possible variants it may potentially realize.²⁴ This self-consciousness within the Inkworld series then prefigures those hypertextual/electronic/digital texts that contain within themselves the possibility of (limited) change, having in common the idea of the rejection of a fixed form of any text—Michael Joyce's hypertext novels *afternoon* and *Twelve Blue*, or works using randomizing algorithms for their generation, such as Jim Andrew's *On Lionel Kearns*, for instance. B.S. Johnson's *The Unfortunates* (2008) and Marc Saporta's *Composition No. 1: a Novel* (1963) are some other canonical instances of such randomizing works. We may claim that Funke deliberately comments on/acknowledges such contingent textual potentials as she represents the hypodiegetic *IH2* as a (constantly-changing) text that variably executes the differing commands that various readers (Mo, Meggie, Darius, Orpheus, Fenoglio himself, etc.) may contribute to the execution of the narrative, in their differing engagements/interactions with its levels.

²⁴ *IS* incorporates an instance of *mise en abyme* when Meggie reads Orpheus inside the hypodiegetic narrative level and Orpheus arrives there clutching the last surviving material copy of *IH2*: the book in effect disappears inside itself. Thus we have two hypodiegetic versions—two “snapshots”—of Fenoglio's *IH2* within Funke's series: the original, material copy with its previous storyline intact (Dustfinger dies an inglorious death and Capricorn is still alive at its end), as well as the (updated) hypodiegetic narrative strands within the Inkworld which have followed an entirely different trajectory (including all the new transgressive characters).

Issues of authorial power as well as textual control and creation become exceedingly complicated in such cases. Do we need an author to provide every single aspect of the hypodiegetic “realities” that are changed through intrusive metaleptic processes, or are there self-determining narrative elements that go on to create elements or aspects of the stories with which the authors are not explicitly concerned? Moreover, how does the interactive reader have access to a section of the narrative that the author has not explicitly delineated, and how does this then detract from the former’s much-celebrated agency? These are some fundamental questions that new media theorists often grapple with, and which are also foreshadowed in the ways Funke and Ende construct their respective narrative trajectories.

I would like to point out here that the determinate role of the extradiegetic narrator becomes especially important in holding together semblance of continuity of the different diegetic levels of a “stacked” or layered narrative. In *NS*, for instance, the extradiegetic narrator, who has access to the hypodiegetic Fantastican world as well, constantly mentions different strands of the story which are then left untold.²⁵ However, through the narrator Ende also fundamentally undermines the user agency that has been apparently bestowed on Bastian, the privileged user/interactor. Since the narrator emphatically determines which of the abovementioned narrative strands we are going to follow (i.e., have access to), he also takes on the mantle of editor. As a consequence, the question of reader interactivity/control (Bastian’s apparent power over shaping Fantastican reality, since he is in the position of the privileged user/interactor, in this

²⁵ A refrain running through Ende’s text is the line, “But that’s another story and shall be told at another time”—usually after providing quick, sharp, blurb-like glimpses into the futures of other secondary characters (within the hypodiegetic world of Fantastica) that the narrator chooses to not follow at that moment of time. Since we do not ever meet these characters again, Ende’s text remains essentially open-ended, refusing to resolve several narrative threads that it tantalizingly holds out throughout.

instance) becomes more problematic. This is especially so when the story that seems to affirm the reader's participation in creating his or her own narratives, exposes the agency of the author Michael Ende as well, in his position of power at the extra-extra-diegetic level "above" the narrator.

In *NS*, we are told that only Bastian's imagination can save Fantastica, which was suffering from a mysterious disease that threatened its very existence. It is when Bastian enters the hypodiegetic world and re-names the Childlike Empress (the source of all magic in Fantastica), as well as the formless surroundings around him, that the world takes shape again. But the narrator still has the upper hand, as it were, in presenting to the extradiegetic readers (i.e., us) the (edited) story of Bastian's re-creation of the realm. In other words, although Bastian may think himself the most powerful creature within the realm of the hypodiegetic text, his position as a privileged user/interactor—that is, his agency to perform different actions and determine the structure of the narrative he now confronts—is actually contingent upon the behaviors of agents beyond his control.

When Ende thus strips away Bastian's false notion of agency²⁶, he is in effect anticipating the problem of the essentially fallacious dream of user agency and interaction that will come to characterize later critical discourse on new media. This highlights the fact that while newer media forms foster a certain notion of interactivity (and the implied agency), this is often largely illusory. In interactive fictional works—

²⁶ This is also reflected towards the end of the experiential narrative itself: Bastian loses control over the story, and even his own identity is lost for a time.

those that rely on user input in order to be executed²⁷, for example; or ones that hinge on the trope of user choice (i.e. agency) to privilege certain narrative strands over alternate ones²⁸; or that depend on user discretion to determine when narrative “closure” may be said to occur²⁹—the apparent agency of the user is however bound strictly within the confines of the code (the larger “stacked” and determining narrative structures, in Bastian’s instance), so that in a sense, all algorithmic possibilities are accounted for and the question of “agency” becomes nothing but a theoretical or at any rate a very limited possibility.

We might thus also argue for a reading of these metatextual/metaleptic fantasy novels from the point of view of theories of (new) medial forms, hence embarking on an essentially retrospective venture. Certain fantasy adventure sequences within Funke’s and Ende’s texts may, for instance, be fruitfully considered in terms of how they reflect/foreshadow issues present in certain contemporary or later forms of gameplay. For instance, the notion of “recapture” that Terry Harpold provides in his analysis of metaleptic moments in three specific games (*Zork: the Great Underground Empire* [1982], *Virtual Valerie* [1990], and *Bad Mojo* [1996, 2004]) becomes particularly valuable when we consider a certain section of *NS*. Harpold brings to the fore encounters of the underlying structural/computational “code” (including hardware constraints/deficiencies) and the semiotic structures of the story level of the gameworld, in instances where the

²⁷ Such as David Knoebel’s “Heart Pole” (2006) from his collection *Click Poetry*, where the user determines the narrative sequence by clicking and manipulating the mouse.

²⁸ Most works of hypertext fiction, such as Adrienne Eisen’s *Six Sex Scenes* (2001) or Shelley Jackson’s *Patchwork Girl* (1995), incorporate this feature.

²⁹ Michael Joyce’s first-generation hypertext *afternoon: a story* (1987) is a good example of such a narrative determination.

player refuses to explicit rules of the game, thus exposing the limits of possible interaction with the gameworld. The expressions of these limitations, he observes, are commonly “recaptured” by the semantic structure of the gameworld itself (that is, in the responses of the interface), so as to make the limit of the game appear to be a limit of the gameworld itself.³⁰ The characteristics of this recapture are specific to each game, making them “unusually self-conscious of its medial conditions” (Harpold 93).

This notion of “recapture” is particularly useful in unpacking certain narrative structures in Ende’s text, in which the interactor/hero is forced to encounter the limitations of the hypodiegetic world he has entered. At the very beginning of Bastian’s hypodiegetic adventures, Moon Child explains the basic conditions of his Fantastican sojourn: he must create and navigate the realm by the mechanism of wishes. She explicitly warns him that without his wishes, “there won’t be any more Fantastica” (Ende 204). Grogaman too underscores the importance of conscious wishes when he tells Bastian that “[w]hat you don’t wish for will always be beyond your reach” (Ende 237). However, at a certain point in the narrative, Bastian refuses to play by the rules when he stops wishing for anything in his reluctance to return to his diegetic world. In such a scenario, without an express command/wish, the structural specifications of Fantastica (literally, in terms of the creation of the landscape, which Bastian needs to wish into being) do not “compute,” since the input (in terms of Bastian’s actions, or rather, his inaction) is inappropriate if that specific sequence of the adventure is to take place. The textual reality of Fantastican geography is thus negated in order to “punish” him and

³⁰ For example, a space that should reasonably appear to exist in the gameworld given the shapes of spaces adjacent to it, but which is not in fact defined in the game’s database, will be represented as closed, locked, or otherwise inaccessible to the player’s avatar.

prod him into acting in an appropriate manner: as Harpold puts it, “to behave badly is to play badly” (96), and until Bastian follows the rules, he is stranded in an endless loop of inaction, doomed to wander the same formless pathways forever. This, then, provides an instance of the way in which Ende crafts sections of his texts in terms of gameplay—in what is an inherently self-reflexive narrative strategy to provoke his reader/interactor’s consciousness of the medial specificity and the latent structural limitations of the textual reality of the diegesis.

This self-conscious incorporation of extradiegetic facts such as authorial control and determination of narrative forms, necessarily set off against the desire and tantalizing possibility of readerly agency; or the affirmation of the contingency of the creative process and the impossibility of holding on to particular “fixed” texts; or structuring the narrative in terms of gameplay—these are only some of the ways in which Ende’s and Funke’s texts reflect philosophical debates and stances that will come to (or already) characterize new media scholarship. When Ende creates a web of intratextual references through the narrative digressions in *NS*, he is in effect drawing bridges and points of connection between different branching narratives that share a horizontal plane of existence, in order to mirror the model of a non-linear, hypertextual narrative.³¹ What seems significant here is the authors’ awareness of how the narratives themselves are crafted/structured to reflect the commentarial stances they adopt.

I would also argue that in adopting such self-reflexive stances, these texts also essentially hold out the possibility of newer forms of engagement with regard to their basic narrative premise, playing on the aforementioned (second form of) desire they

³¹ This is, of course, set in direct opposition to the vertical hierarchical narrative levels with which *NS* is concerned for the most part.

confirm in their readers. In self-consciously embarking on an investigation of and commentary on their own (narrative) medial condition while allying themselves structurally with newer media texts, they also point toward newer, multiple modes in which we may think of accessing the fantasy worlds they conjure. The pleasures inherent in this immersive model of readerly pursuit can then be translated in terms of other forms of interactive media that may allow the reader to—differently—traverse technological (and imaginative) means of encountering the work.

Therein lays the significance of the commodities and spin-offs that the primary texts generate. Both *NS* and *IH* have been released in multiple media: the novels were followed by film and video game adaptations which essentially play on this desire to engage with primary texts at different narrative registers (textual, audio-visual) and/or more “interactive” capacities. These metaleptic texts then position themselves in a certain way so as to encapsulate and reflect, even within the way their narratives are structured, the possibility of later forms of remediation. The transgressive desire at the heart of the metaleptic device—that of shattering level boundaries—becomes couched then not just in subversive terms but is rather translated ultimately in terms of *intimacy*, in the promise of a customized interactive narrative space that promises the reader a greater level of (interactive) access to the story beyond simply the plot, that is, a specific articulation of the story expressed by the print text.

In light of such a specific register on which metatextual children’s novels operate, the subsequent sections of this study will concentrate on analyzing the ways in which this desire and promise of intimacy is borne out (or not, as the case may be) when it comes to adaptations of Ende’s and Funke’s originally print literary texts in other media,

which include film and video games, among others. While situating these different interpretations of the novels within the discourse of general adaptation theory, the specific focus of the study will however not be just what happens to the “original” work in case of different medial representations. My intention, rather, is to track how, and the degrees to which, the novels’ central concept of self conscious referentiality, i.e., metatextuality, is repositioned across diverse media.

CHAPTER 3 METATEXTUALITY ACROSS MEDIA?: FILM ADAPTATIONS

Every best-selling novel *has* to be turned into a film, the assumption being that the book itself whets an appetite for the true fulfillment—the verbal shadow turned into light, the word made flesh.

—Anthony Burgess, “On the Hopelessness of Turning Good Books into Films.”

Anthony Burgess’s oft-quoted 1975 *New York Times* article on film adaptations of literary works, although dripping with vehement cynicism about the entire process in every passage, also serves as a quick reminder of the past (and present) cultural significance of film adaptations of literary texts. It comes as no surprise, then, that adaptation studies is one of the areas of inquiry to branch out from the broader discipline of film studies. In considering some basic tenets about adaptations of Funke’s and Ende’s metatextual children’s novels across media (both films and video games), some background regarding the major critical perspectives, both “classic” and contemporary, within the discourse of adaptation studies seems to be in order. This section will briefly touch upon some major strands of critical thought within (film) adaptation studies and chart the ways in which consideration of the same is fruitful while analyzing the on-screen adaptations of *IH* and *NS*, while also delineating points of departure necessitated in light of the focus of this specific study. This will be followed by the analysis of the films in question.

Film Adaptation: a Brief Critical Background

Novels into Film, George Bluestone’s 1957 book-length critical work is considered one of the foundational texts of adaptation studies, as is Geoffrey Wagner’s 1975 text *The Novel and the Cinema*, and they may be taken together as representative of what one may term the “classic” critical approach to film adaptation of literary texts,

particularly novels. It is Wagner who, for instance, first lays down three distinct kinds of possible film adaptations: 1) *transposition*, “in which a novel is directly given on the screen, with the minimum of apparent interference” (222); 2) *commentary*, “where an original is taken and either purportedly or inadvertently altered in some respect . . . [and] could also be called a re-emphasis or re-structure” (223); and 3) *analogy*, where the films transpose a work of fiction significantly, and include more than one analogous technique, representing “a fairly considerable departure for the sake of making *another* work of art” (226-7). Dudley Andrew provides another scheme for categorizing adaptations, roughly mirroring Wagner’s (but in reverse order of their degrees of fidelity), such as “borrowing” (little or no claim to faithfulness), “intersecting” (recreating the original text in terms of its distinctive qualities), and “transforming” (an attempt to represent the “essential” qualities of the text) (Andrew 10).

While discussing “transposition,” Wagner further comments that it “has been the dominant and most pervasive method used by Hollywood throughout history” (222). This last remark serves to gesture toward a critical trend that has traditionally characterized much of adaptation studies—viz., the “fidelity” debate. Judging a film adaptation based primarily on its “faithfulness” to the original (print) novel has proved to be a pervasive and persistent emphasis of both popular and critical discourses (McFarlane 8). Some recent adaptation theorists—among them, Christopher Orr, Brian McFarlane, Imelda Whelehan and Thomas Leitch, to name a few—however, have taken an unequivocal stand against what they consider an essentialising and reductive approach. For instance, McFarlane comments in *Novel to Film: an Introduction to the Theory of Adaptation* (1996): “Discussion of adaptation has been bedevilled by the

fidelity issue, no doubt ascribable in part to the novel's coming first, in part to the ingrained sense of literature's greater respectability in traditional critical circles" (8). Interestingly, he holds up the categorizations (Wagner, Andrew) mentioned above as ways of challenging, however obliquely, the primacy of the fidelity argument, since they champion the necessity of specifying the *type* of adaptation—and thus, crucially, their distinct positioning along the fidelity scale—when it comes to critical evaluation (11).

McFarlane's statement also brings to the fore (and condemns) the implicit practice, on the part of a great deal of critical conversation, of considering film as a medium inferior in some (usually tacit respects) to printed text. Later theorists, including Whelehan and Leitch, have commented more extensively on this curious denigration of film's inherent value when placed on a comparative scale with (high, print) literature—an almost unarticulated axiom of the overall critical discourse. Interestingly, Deborah Cartmell proposes the inverse scenario while introducing Danny Boyle's 1995 adaptation of Irvine Welsh's novel *Trainspotting*: "In adaptations of arguably 'oppositional' or 'counter-cultural' texts . . . little concern is given to fidelity" (27). Through the following example, she goes on, crucially, to connect the thorny issue of fidelity almost exclusively with the supposition of print's superiority: "it's rarely mentioned that the film *Trainspotting* is an adaptation, while Ang Lee's film *Sense and Sensibility* is *always* referred to as an adaptation" (27, emphasis in original). This, of course, only serves to highlight the (critical) fetishisation of "high" literature over (narrative) film, that perceived medium of the masses, thus transferring the high/low cultural debate onto an inter-medial arena rather than one dominated simply by genre considerations within the same medium ("poetry" vs. "pop lyrics", for instance).

According to McFarlane, the three-fold trap—that is, a misdirected emphasis on the issue of fidelity, the incorporation of “impressionistic,” subjective notions of comparison between the two texts, coupled with the sense of films as a somewhat inferior medium—may be intrinsically associated with the vital lack of a central theoretical discourse at the heart of adaptation studies; as he points out: “In view of the nearly sixty years of writing about the adaptation of novels into film . . . it is depressing to find at what a limited, tentative stage the discourse has remained” (194). His contention is echoed by other theorists as well. Thomas Leitch, for instance, is extremely vocal in declaring that one of the primary deficiencies of contemporary adaptation studies is the conspicuous absence of any definitive theoretical framework or methodology, and goes on to say that a “flood of study of individual adaptations proceeds on the whole without the support of any more general theoretical account of what actually happens, or what ought to happen, when a group of filmmakers set out to adapt a literary text” (149).

Therein lies the significance of McFarlane’s work in contemporary adaptation studies: crafted as a remedial gesture in response to this perceived vacuum, he lays down a more theoretically rigorous notion of adaptation, as well as a distinct methodology of analysis, one that clearly distinguishes between those elements that are transferable between media (“narrative”) and those which are not (“enunciation”). McFarlane’s methodology of comparative textual analysis is deliberately crafted along a non-judgmental basis (avoiding the “Is it good/faithful enough?” question), and draws a distinction between “*narrative*” (i.e., those functions in narrative that Roland Barthes characterizes as “cardinal,” ones that relate to the development of the story, and may

thus be easily “transferred” from one medium to another since they are not tied to a specific semiotic system) and “*enunciation*” (those elements which “involve intricate processes of adaptation because their effects are closely tied to the semiotic system in which they are manifested” (20) and which thus necessarily require what McFarlane terms “adaptation proper”). The second notion of “enunciation” is particularly vital for the present purpose of analyzing adaptations of explicitly metatextual novels, and will be taken up later on.

The selection of theorists’ comments and views represented above is specifically oriented with respect to film, of course, but their observations—most crucially, the central theoretical lacuna identified above, the rejection of the fidelity claim, and the questioning of what, in light of the intertextual matrix that also illuminates and informs film, may be considered the “original” text—must be taken into account in any discussion of the adaptation of texts across media (including video games, say, in addition to film). This section of the study is concerned primarily however with the film adaptations of Funke’s and Ende’s novels. The question of video game adaptations will be taken up in the subsequent chapter.

Metatextual Narratives and the Challenges to (Film) Adaptation

In light of the above discussion, I am unconcerned with the notion of “fidelity”: the objective here is certainly not to make value judgments on basis of a one-to-one correspondence with elements of the novels as depicted (or not) within the films. I would like to add one crucial reason in this regard, in addition to the several others theorists like McFarlane, Leitch et al., have enumerated for the rejection of such a critical approach. The notion of fidelity, I would argue, especially does not hold for adaptations of metatextual novels which display full awareness of their status as only *one* possible

(and thus an essentially contingent) articulation of a text. Both *NS* and the volumes in the Inkworld trilogy dismiss the notion of a central, original text that occupies a position of superiority by virtue of its foundational status. At the end of *NS*, for instance, Mr. Coreander explicitly implies that the *NS2* used to exist with a different story before, positioning it thus as the ultimate interactive text. This of course is only one mention of several, scattered throughout Ende's text, of the ways in which the conception of texts depends ultimately on their individual readers: in effect, that there may be as many texts as there are readers. Read in this light, the notion of metaleptic breaches is, in effect a literalisation of the notion of varied interpretive exchanges between story and reader—at various literal (depending on the medium) and metaphorical (imaginative, symbolic) levels—through the depiction of alterations of the previous plot and story structures via the specific conceit of fantasy. In extending readers' desire to interact with the text at different registers, metatextual novels would thus seem particularly ripe for adaptation (film or otherwise) in rejecting notions of fixed, original textual forms.

It becomes crucial, however, to identify points of departure that become inevitable when considering the adaptation of explicitly metatextual novels. Most of the critical discourse within the discipline has concentrated on the adaptations of "high" literature written in a principally realist mode. Even in case of children's fantasy novels which have been (often repeatedly) filmed—say the Harry Potter series of films, or the *Chronicles of Narnia* or *Peter Pan*—I would argue that the mode of presentation of the original literary texts is essentially a "realist" one. That is to say, although the plot of the novels includes all manners of fantasy elements, the mode of presentation of these fantastic aspects does not call into question or problematize in any way their right to

belong within the narrative universe; in other words, their presence within the world of the story, though a source of delight/terror and adventure, is *naturalized* and adheres to an internal logic of representation. Within J.K. Rowling's storyverse, magical creatures enjoy as secure a position as humans do, and the notion of time moving differently within the human and Narnian worlds in C.S. Lewis' series, say, is only another function of a specific storyworld, and hence established as the natural order of things. The mere inclusion of fantastic elements does not detract from the "realism" or internal logic and coherence of the narrative in this regard. Thus, in terms of adaptation, these fantastic elements manifest themselves as yet another set of cardinal functions that, in McFarlane's terms, can enjoy a smooth "transition" into filmic representation. A large part of this naturalization depends on the kinds of narration in which the novels engage—omniscient third-person narration, for instance, usually has the effect of affirming events, characters, psychological patterns, etc. being depicted in the novel.

The case of metatextual narratives, I would argue, presents its own set of problems on which adaptation studies have not yet adequately theorized. *IH* and *NS* are depicted for the most part via third-person narration, include several cardinal elements (story, character functions, psychological patterns, etc.) on which the narrative is defined, and are hence ripe for transfer across media. Read as sheer adventure stories, they translate very well indeed to the medium of film or the video game. However, the philosophical and conceptual problems of their own material and imaginative positioning in the world; the self-conscious questioning (through metatextual and metaleptic narrative tropes) of their own nature and status as texts as well as their own formal constraints and modes of creation; and the awareness of their own possible contingent,

variant (both formal and material) embodiments: these are issues central to both novels, and articulated to a great extent through self-referential elements embedded within their structural components, in addition to the actual storylines that reflect these core concerns. These, of course, are precisely elements that defy seamless adaptation across media. Even in case of the “cardinal,” that is, narrative elements, the question under consideration is less the bald transfer of plot elements, but rather ways in which the film adaptations must negotiate some of the narrative preoccupations inherent in the novel: the relationship of readers and books, of the text and the world, and the dangers, delights, and practices of reading and imaginative play.

It is in this context that we ask two broad sets of questions that are fundamental to adaptation studies (and that McFarlane has attempted to answer, but which in most instances gets subsumed within a primarily loose, non-theoretical discourse), with specific reference to *IHf* and *NSf*:

1. What elements of the original novel are being adapted (and how), and which parts get left behind? Do the films pay more attention to the above-mentioned cardinal elements or those intangible “enunciative” elements which are wholly or partly dependent on particular semiotic systems for their articulation, and hence resist adaptation across media?
2. What of those intangibles—self-consciousness, self-referentiality, etc.—which are an intrinsic, irreducible aspect of metatextual narratives? Do the films under consideration include any sort of attempt at “adaptation proper”—that is, an “enunciation” of the intangibles peculiar to the structure and philosophical positioning of metaleptic novels (verbal)—through representative elements that are embedded within their own specific semiotic system (the intersection of verbal, visual, and aural)? In other words, apart from depicting the narrative elements of the novels, do the films self-consciously represent in any way their own status as cinematic texts, either by introducing *metafilmic* techniques of representation or through other possible cinematic means?

Encircling both these sets of questions are certain other concerns that are beyond the scope of this study: viz., the question of whether it is even possible to conceive of an

inherently metafilmic adaptation of a metatextual novel—that is, an adaptation that is primarily based on the enunciative elements of specific medial articulations. Would such an endeavor be recognizable as an adaptation, or would it become its own originary text in presenting through the metafilmic ideas and tropes of self-referentiality, a narrative that questions and negates its own “fixed” status in the world?

These are the framing questions, the critical filters through which I will address the film adaptations of Ende’s and Funke’s novels. A key theoretical orientation of this study is thus to treat the adaptations as individual texts in their own right, considering each as a discrete entity, while simultaneously mapping their zones of overlap across trans-medial representations—that is, considering the *inter-relationships* among the various medial interpretations (novel, film, video game).

Enunciations and Cardinal Functions: Novel into Film(s)

NSf (1984), directed by Wolfgang Petersen, received decidedly mixed reviews upon its theatrical release. Vincent Canby, the *New York Times* film critic, lambasted the film, calling it a “bargain-basement,” “graceless, humorless fantasy for children.” Directly counter to this harsh appraisal was Roger Ebert’s glowing review for the *Chicago Sun-Times*, which praised among other elements the depiction of devoted readership within the film, singling out the “framing device of the kid hidden in his school attic, breathlessly turning the pages” for particular praise. Over the years, audiences have seemed to veer towards the latter, positive reception of the film. Twenty-six years after its initial release, one may certainly proclaim it a children’s “classic” and an ambitious early precursor to such later fantasy film juggernauts as the Harry Potter series—incidentally, also a part of the Warner Bros. stable. This enduring view of the

film seems further corroborated by the recent reports of a studio-sanctioned “reboot” of the *NS* franchise, tentatively scheduled for a 2012 release (Zeitchik 2009).

Before embarking on an analysis of the film(s) under consideration according to the parameters of inquiry delineated in the previous section, we need however to first define two concepts, that is, “narrative” and “plot,” fundamental to our critical endeavor. Gérard Genette provides three linked yet distinct notions of the first term in *Narrative Discourse*, “[designating] each of these three aspects of narrative reality by univocal terms” (27). These are: a) *story*—“the signified or narrative content,” referring to the oral/written/audio-visual discourse that tells of an event or a series of events; b) *narrative*—“the signifier, statement, discourse or narrative text itself,” that is, the succession of real or fictitious events; and c) *narrating*—“the producing narrative action, and by extension, the whole of the real or fictional situation in which that action takes place” (27). Crucially for our purpose, Genette points out that “analysis of narrative” (in the second sense of the term) may be undertaken “*without regard to the medium*” (25, my emphasis); in other words, the study of “a totality of actions and situations taken in themselves” (25) is essentially independent of the medial basis of a given narrative.

Drawing upon Genette’s complex formulation of the term, Marie-Laure Ryan provides a further integrated yet wide-ranging definition of narrative, one that can nevertheless accommodate the crucial characteristics of the term as it manifests itself independent of, and hence across, media:

A narrative text is one that brings a world to the mind (setting) and populates it with intelligent agents (characters). These agents participate in actions and happenings (events, plot), which cause global changes in the narrative world. Narrative is thus a mental representation of causally connected states and events that captures a segment in the history of a world and of its members [i.e., story]. (Ryan 2004, 337)

Plot, in other words, is the distinctive way in which narrative/story—that is, the “basic succession of events”—is articulated in particular instances. Narratives across different media—novels and films, say—can have the same raw elements of story, but these may be ordered via entirely different plot artifices that “alter sequence, highlight different emphases . . . [and] defamiliarize the story” (McFarlane 23). This crucial distinction between plot and story needs to be kept in mind especially as we delve into a discussion of the cardinal functions of different narratives. What is most easily transferred across media is the story, not necessarily the plot, and the inability to distinguish between these two very distinct functions forms the basis of much of the pervasive discourse on “fidelity.”

It should be noted at this juncture that *NSf*, although sharing its name with the literary text, is an adaptation of only the first half of Ende’s novel. The film, positioned largely as a straightforward action/adventure one within a fantasy setting, has Atreyu’s quest as its main narrative preoccupation, and thus sets its action primarily within the hypodiegetic *NS*. As Ebert also mentions, Bastian’s diegetic reality is used as a (vertical) framing mechanism for this hypodiegetic space, and the film cross-cuts the main action within Fantasia with various shots/sequences of Bastian reading, ensconced within a wonderfully depicted, cluttered yet cozy attic-space.¹ These instances of visual cross-cutting are important in that they depict the simultaneity of interlinked action between the two narrative levels: Bastian reads (and reacts) within his diegetic reality, and *through the reading act*, the events within the hypodiegetic story-world are unfolded. These alternating sequences thus “transfer” elements of story—in

¹ Ende’s *Fantastica* is re-named *Fantasia* within both *NSf* and *NSII*, as well as their game adaptations.

this case, the succession of events in both Bastian's and Atreyu's worlds—irrespective of media.

It becomes crucial, however, to note that when we consider the abovementioned alternating depictions of different diegetic realities in the film in terms of their specific representational techniques, they also serve as examples of “adaptation proper” of the interdiegetic representational duality Ende adopts. Ende makes use of *typography* to represent the shift in narrative levels: in *NS*, the action within the diegetic world is represented by dint of *an italicized font*, whereas the hypodiegetic world is represented through regular Roman font. Here, the typographical features of the verbal medium within which Ende's novel is situated function as his extra-linguistic device for indicating diegetic difference, embedding his narrative thus within the purely iconic properties of a print sign system. The typographic, extra-textual tools of verbal representation that Ende uses in his novel to denote the back-and-forth between diegetic and hypodiegetic narrative levels cannot be simply “transferred” across media, without significant levels of meaning being lost in the process. While filming, this enunciative element of the novel has to be “adapted” (in McFarlane's specific usage of the term) instead into its cinematic equivalent. In this instance, its enunciative element of the film—that cinematic characteristic or mode of expression which is a function of the particular sign system on which it draws, and which can in no way be replicated within a novel (and vice versa)—is represented through the technique of *montage*, of the *cross-cutting* of audio-visual sequences to reflect the two diegetic narrative levels, with shots (visual signifiers) building up entire vignettes of sequences that simultaneously draw on aural signifiers.

If we look at the film adaptation of *NS* simply on the basis of its cardinal functions, adopting the methodology of analysis McFarlane lays out, it is quickly clear that, at the level of the basic story, character functions, and fields of action, there is ample fodder for transferring the novel's narrative basis into film. When determining the cardinal functions of narrative (both film and novel), we may readily perceive both points of overlap as well as items of difference. While they are both concerned with telling the same story, *NSf* transforms or even does away with several specific scenes and characters, entire events in fact, which had been part of the book's plot. However, this does not interfere with the main story at hand, as long as essential story and character functions, say, are preserved even across the non-articulation of specific elements of plot in the adapted version.

For instance, *NSf* does not portray the fantastic swarm-monster Ygramul the Many, whom Bastian encounters by the Great Chasm in the Dead Mountains after escaping from the Swamps of Sadness. Within the novel, this sequence is vital because of two cardinal functions of story: a) within *NS*, it is here that Atreyu first meets the luckdragon Falkor, and more importantly, b) it is here that we find the first instance of metaleptic breach across diegetic levels: as Bastian reads about the fearsome monster Atreyu is facing, he inadvertently lets out a cry of fear, which is incorporated and represented (via typographical means, as mentioned above) *within* the hypodiegetic narrative he is reading. The novel takes note of this crucial moment, but does not dwell on it, moving on instead to the resolution of the current adventure at hand. Now, although the film chooses to simplify the overall plot by getting rid of this sequence entirely, it keeps the basic story intact by incorporating these cardinal points of narrative

at other places in its plot. Atreyu's meeting with Falkor, and the first metaleptic breach—both essential elements of the overall story—are incorporated in the plot of *NSf* but not necessarily in precisely the same plot-settings as in Ende's story. This occurs throughout the film adaptation, but as noted before, our concern is *not* with the fidelity or the one-to-one correspondence of, say, plot elements across media. It is more interesting to discuss, for instance, the possible reasoning behind certain stylistic and structural choices when it comes to the adaptation.

As outlined in the previous section, one of the questions that frame this study's discussion of adaptation is the notion of whether or not the films attempt to represent, at any level, the "intangibles" with which the books must deal. Can we locate any elements within *NSf* that veer, be it ever so slightly, towards breaking the fourth wall—that is, that include the option of self-reflexivity? In this regard, we may identify two sequences within *NS* that suggest an analogous degree of medial self-awareness. The first occurs towards the end of the film, when Atreyu has reached Spook City and is tentatively exploring the ruins. In terms of plot-significance, this is where he meets and kills Gmork, the evil werewolf. I am more interested, however, in the sequence immediately before he becomes aware of Gmork's presence, when, during his exploration of the ruins, he encounters colorful, detailed murals depicting his adventures on the crumbling walls. Atreyu discovers to his shock that the murals present a visualized narrative of *his life and adventures so far*. Crucially, the murals show not only the past, but the (immediate) future (and one presumes, the distant future as well): just as he turns to see a mural depicting a huge, menacing, black werewolf, Gmork comes into view.

This sequence is purely the film's own—Ende's text provides no such pictorial conception of the diegetic story. I would argue that this is the film's own way, however tentative, of gesturing towards a kind of metatextuality, manifested however in purely visual terms, and embedded, thus, within one of the sign-systems it draws from. In case of the film, then, the murals become important as an alternative text of the story, but in a different medium, allied with the characteristics of film—crucially, a visual one. Although mute, they point to the existence of different perspectives (none of the murals are exactly framed like the film's various shots) and ways of seeing and representing the narrative of which Atreyu is a part, and hence problematise, in however limited a fashion, the notion of singular, authoritative texts even in case of *NSf*.

Another crucial sequence that the film alters significantly merits discussion, because in addition to its faint metatextual indications, it implicitly reveals the film's deliberate distancing from Ende's novel in terms of its self-positioning. This essentially gestures towards the very different *intent* supporting the production of creative texts, even when nominally the "same" text. Questions of intent assume importance within our study only insofar as they impinge on and shape the works under consideration in specific, tangible ways. As such, we may argue that through the choices of which story functions to include and which to discard while adapting across medial forms, the film indicates aspects of its own positional stance, including its anticipation of (and changing to fit the (perceived) needs of) a certain target audience.

The film, as mentioned before, focuses more on the action-adventure-fantasy elements of Ende's novel, that is, on its hypodiegetic quest-narrative, than on its extended metatextual meditations, at the level of both structure and narrative. Thus, in

keeping with its own particular orientation, *NSf* significantly alters the crucial novelistic sequence, Chapter Twelve or “The Old Man of the Wandering Mountain,” where Bastian comes face-to-face with the Childlike Empress across diegetic borders, and where, after a lengthy struggle, he finally acquiesces to interact with (i.e., enter) *NS2* and thus save Fantastica. At precisely the middle of the novel, it divides the novel into pre-and post-Fantastican descent, but this comprises its functional value only at the most obvious level. In fact, this sequence is in a sense the philosophical focal point of Ende’s narrative, bringing the notion of its own metatextual nature into a crisis of faith and representation, albeit within a fictional setting. As I have previously also mentioned in the second chapter, when Bastian hesitates to interact with the hypodiegetic *NS2*, the Childlike Princess *forces* him into a confrontation of the nature of his own being (in this case, his own textual position as a fictional character in Ende’s *NS*), and plunges the narrative into an endless “loop of inaction,” a *mise en abyme* structure that he eventually shatters only through acquiescing to the Empress’ command. It is here that Ende makes his metatextual stance most clear, incorporating within his novel a palpable, literal awareness of its own textuality, the philosophical dilemma at the heart of the novel incorporated within its very structural basis, in the way the actual opening passages of the diegetic *NS* are literally included within, and thus made an inherent part of, the hypodiegetic *NS2*.

NSf, however, entirely alters this sequence, extrapolating from it only the cardinal elements it needs for completing the story, minus the heavy-handed philosophical self-positioning of the books. From the novel, it extracts the dramatic tension of Bastian’s crisis of faith, as well as the tussle of wills and desire between him and the Childlike

Empress, but removes entirely the setting (the Wandering Mountain) and the Old Man from the film representation. Fittingly enough then, it locates its own crisis-point within the visual equivalent of an almost totally-destroyed Fantasia, the Ivory Tower clinging precariously to an asteroid which is also beginning to crumble from within, *visually* signifying the imminent textual destruction that forms the crisis at hand. Ende's positioning of an endless textual vortex, literalizing, thus, "the story that never ends" is inherently *textual* (verbal) in its manifestation; it thus becomes one of the "enunciative" characteristics of the novel that resist smooth "transfer" to the screen, and must be adapted into audio-visuals modes of expression, instead.

I would like to conclude my discussion of *NSf* with the observation of the few ways in which the film gestures to its own structural bases in the above crisis-sequence. There is an explicit verbal instance of metatextuality in this sequence, articulated primarily through dialogue. At the end of the film, Atreyu confesses to the Childlike Princess that he has failed in his mission to locate the human child who was to be the savior of Fantasia. However, she reassures him and says that Atreyu has not failed, since the human child has been following him on his adventures all along, referring indirectly to Bastian. As the puzzled Atreyu wonders how this may be, the following exchange of dialogue takes place:

Childlike Princess: He doesn't realize that he's already a part of *The Neverending Story*.

Atreyu: *The Neverending Story?* What's that?

Childlike Princess: Just as he is sharing all your adventures, others are sharing his. . . . They were with him when he hid from the boys in the bookstore. They were with him when he took the book with the Auryn symbol on the cover, in which he's reading his own story, right now. (*NSf*, 1.19.52 – 1.20.28)

Clearly, she is referring here to Wolfgang Petersen's *NSf* as well as directly acknowledging the audience who is watching the film ("they," refers to the readers/viewers), and in the process, exposing Bastian's own fictional status. In this rare moment of explicit self-referentiality, the film then engages in a definite instance of metaleptic transgression.

Moreover, in addition to such explicit verbal acknowledgements of its own metafilmic tropes, the sequence goes on to cement this further through filming/camera techniques as well. At the conclusion of the above dialogue with Atreyu, the Childlike Princess almost breaks the fourth wall, as she stares directly into the camera to appeal to Bastian, who responds in the same fashion, addressing her while gazing straight into the camera. I say "almost," of course, because the characters are meant to be communicating with each other (as opposed to the audience) through an effective dissolution of diegetic boundaries. In the absence of the typographical means through which Ende makes his diegetic level distinctions, the film must create its own, distinctive structural, referential (visual) tropes for representing metaleptic transgression. It thus simulates, as noted above, the inherently metafilmic trope of shattering the fourth wall to indicate communication across discrete diegetic narrative levels. I would argue that through these filmic techniques (dialogue, camera angles/modes of address), *NSf* establishes a distinctive medial self-consciousness, however slight, even as it rejects the specific kind of textually-based metatextual musings inherent in the novel.

If *NSf* is the adaptation of the first half of Ende's book, *NSII*, the 1990 sequel directed by George Miller, is loosely inspired by the second half that charts Bastian's experiences and adventures within Fantastica. This film departs significantly from the

literary text, and in Wagner's terms could be classified as an "analogous" adaptation rather than as "transposed" one. *NSII* is of interest to this study precisely *because* of this hybrid nature, because it exists in a complex relationship-matrix to its source text. *NSf*, as we saw, while incorporating its own representational worldview, was however largely "faithful" to the basic story functions within Ende's novel, even while it privileged certain aspects of it over others. *NSII*, however, presents an instance of an extensively re-modeled adaptation, wherein the script-writer and director enters into a dialogue with the literary source, plucks different cardinal functions and refashions them in new contexts to create entirely new filmic arrangements.

I argue in the second chapter that the literary texts under consideration incorporate elements of interactivity within their structure, and that the emphasis on metatextuality, on multiplicity, on unfixed, varied, textual forms also portends a kind of embedded knowledge of the possibility of other manifestations of these texts as well. These, then, are textual forms which may be experienced in a very different manner, with greater emphasis on interactivity and user determination, and with a greater/different set of options for exploration. *NSII* is a prime example of an interactive (adaptive) approach to the original literary text and thus, I would argue, actually incorporates the kind of dynamic engagements towards which its "source" text gestures.

Intertextual structures are particularly important in case of *NSII*. We must not forget that it is inspired not only by the second half of Ende's novel, but that it has *NSf* as a direct film predecessor. As such, we need to keep in mind that the shadow of Petersen's film also impinges on *NSII* at various different levels (visual, verbal, aural) within the narrative. A primary instance of a visual correlation between the films would

be the distinctive silhouette of the Ivory Tower, established by the first film. Another prominent intertextual (aural) element would be the extremely well-received soundtrack of *NSf*, especially the popular title track sung by the pop-singer Limahl. While the changes in cast meant that human characters could not sustain a high level of visual congruency with the previous film, Fantasian characters like Rockbiter and Falkor are nearly exact models of their predecessors and heighten the sense of familiarity with Fantasian flora and fauna.

In terms of plot elements, *NSII* concentrates on the figure of Xayide and her attempts to manipulate Bastian into losing a sense of his self. This, while a major element within Ende's text as well, is however only *one* of several narrative strands and issues laid out in the latter part of *NS*, which depicts Bastian's adventures within the hypodiegetic *NS2*, focusing on his emotional growth and maturity. The film chooses, however, to dramatize Xayide's evil manipulations to the exclusion of the other aspects of the story, and liberally utilizes settings, spaces, characters etc. mentioned within Ende's novel in a singularly de-contextualized fashion. It also introduces newer characters, events, and other narrative elements of its own.

I would like to briefly mention here the nature of the malaise affecting Fantasia, as depicted within *NSII*. At the start of the film, Bastian is inside Mr. Koreander's store when he hears whispering, seeking his help, emanating out of the *NS2*. As he picks it up, the printed text of the pages he is holding open inexplicably disappears. This, then, is the physical manifestation of articulation of the Emptiness (as opposed to the Nothing in *NS/NSf*) as the second film represents it. Within the world of Fantasia, rocks are

losing substance, the land is undergoing an upheaval, but in the real world, the malaise is translated in terms of the materiality and visibility of print and paper.

Although the Nothing was attacking Fantasia in the first part of *NS* (and *NSf*) to devastating effect as well, Bastian did not have any problems reading the narrative. This points to the fundamental difference in the premise of metaleptic transgression here, as translated in purely visual terms: Bastian does not “read” the book, but instead *literally falls inside it*. In other words, he is embodied through/within *NS2*. Another fundamental area where *NSII* moves to a conceptually different plane is regarding the nature of wishes within Fantasia. In the novel, Bastian re-created Fantastica through his wishes. The crucial thing to note here is that his wishes had a more central premise of creation, and only later did they take on a less significant dimension. In this film, his wishes become a mere superficial mechanism—as reader/interactor, he is no longer the creator of the narrative, but simply another element of it, taking the role of yet another adventure hero that people might simply read about (as indeed, his father does).

In its several departures from the second half of Ende’s novel, perhaps the most interesting structural element *NSII* introduces is the framing mechanism of another reader within the diegetic reality—Bastian’s father, Bernie—thus keeping intact the back-and-forth-between-diegetic-levels conceit of both the first half of Ende’s novel as well as *NSf*. Within Ende’s novel, the second half takes place entirely within the hypodiegetic level, and the novel considers the issue of authorial creation (and the costs of creation) wholly within this immersive setting. *NSII*, however, forcibly keeps open the reader-book interaction binary at an externalized level, mostly for heightening dramatic tension, by having Bernie read about the exploits of his son within the pages of *NS2*. As

a result, the instances of cross-cutting between the different diegetic levels in *NSII* are both more numerous and more explicit in terms of depiction. The newly introduced framing mechanism also allows for a greater narrativization of metatextuality, though this metatextual quality is strictly represented as that of the book. To this end, we hear the text of the *NS2* to a much greater extent, as Bernie reads it aloud at various parts of the film. The film also shows the viewer the actual printed text of *NS2* in three or four lingering shots, including the text describing Bastian's encounter with Mr. Koreander, that is, the hypodiegetic novel-text of one of the earlier scenes in *NSII* itself. Although it does not reference its own metatextual status explicitly via filmic means, this added framing device allows *NSII* to reference an alternate narrative of the events it had previously depicted. It thus *shows* us that the text is, in this sense, a filmic "meta" gesture, in that it binds the text to a visual—filmic—instance. In the process, it draws subtle attention to its own medial status as a film text.

The case of *IHf* (2008) is similar to *NSf* in that it is a more or less "faithful" adaptation of Funke's novel. ("Faithful" is used here not in an evaluative, judgmental capacity, but simply as a term that serves to indicate the relatively easy, and easily identifiable, "transfer" of a number of cardinal functions across media.) To this extent, the screenplay by David Lindsay-Abaire replicates many of the situations and story and character functions in Funke's print text, pruning the somewhat rambling, confused plot to create a tighter sequence of actions. It also transforms certain elements to effect changes in character functions—for instance, the role of the Magpie is much diminished within the film, whereas in the novel she is a terrifying figure.

The only other significant modification of narrative agency lies with Meggie. As I observed earlier, *IH* makes concessions to the delicate sensibilities of its child protagonist by sparing her the burden of murder—instead, Mo utters the actual words that demolish Capricorn at the close of the novel. *IH* ends with the promise of greater agency for Meggie, who vows to become a writer as well as a gifted reader; however, this promise of agency is not ultimately borne out within the series. It is in this context that the characterization of Meggie in the film becomes particularly powerful, in that it provides her with much greater agency than is given her in the book. In *IHf* she is not only a reader but a writer as well, literally crafting the words of the villains' demise on her own body, inscribing the words on her arm. Moreover, with the indexical quality of film, it is possible to incorporate this dimension of characterization without actually explicitly gesturing towards it in terms of (narrated/verbal) text. In a story that is concerned to a large extent with fictional characters acquiring a physical dimension, this literal embodiment of the text elevates Meggie's character from a mere little girl to the most powerful figure of the film. Most significant for our purpose, however, is the fact that this is achieved mainly through sign-systems grounded in filmic expression, and thus achieves the distinction of "enunciation".

However, as noted also in the above instances of film adaptation, *IHf* demonstrates only a limited attempt at working with elements of "adaptation proper." Moreover, due to its formal conventionality and adherence to "realist" film representational techniques, *IHf* proves less self-conscious and experimental than *IH*. The film concentrates instead on narrative fidelity that actually flattens the intensely philosophical metatextual premise of *IH*. In incorporating *representations* of

metatextuality, it essentially becomes a *narrativization* of metatextual concerns rather than actually questioning/investigating aspects of its own enunciative formal and medial determinations. Thus, the film for the most part does not attempt to “adapt” the enunciative elements, that is, the experimental, conceptual basis of *IH*.

Within *IHf*, the only glimpses of an enunciative attempt to reference the nature and potential of its medium occurs just before the climax, when it briefly gestures towards a metafilmic referentiality in terms of cinematic techniques of textual creation. As mentioned before, one of the most important elements of both *NS* and the Inkworld series is that they constantly undermine their status as the definitive text, and hint at other possible textual variations. In this sense, *IH* may be conceptualized as a story about textual variants come to life through the trope of fantasy. Towards the end of *IHf*, we may map a similar idea of the de-centered text.

The climactic sequence in the film occurs in the large amphitheatre in Capricorn’s village. The terrifying entity known as The Shadow is to be called forth from the hypodiegetic *IH2*, and Meggie is the star performer whose voice will coax him out of its pages. All around, there is a general sense of a great celebration. The stage is literally set as spectacle—Meggie is dressed up for the occasion, amidst cheering spectators, in a grand, tiered amphitheatre festooned with red banners—but the film provides a more conscious presentation of it as a spectacle worth recording, with massive spotlights focusing on Meggie as she walks up to the stage, for instance.

Most significantly, however, the film depicts a man with an antiquated movie camera (complete with whirring sound effects to produce a vintage feel), recording the entire event. We first have a long shot of the cameraman, followed by a frontal mid-shot,

but then, crucially, the entire visual perspective of the film's narrative shifts. For about the next three minutes in the film (1.18.14—1.18.17), we see events in black and white, in the form in which they are filmed by Capricorn's henchman. I would argue that this doubling of events through an entirely different directorial perspective becomes a key moment, a vortex of possibility articulated within the film. *IHf* becomes metafilmic the moment it rejects the idea of "transparency" and foregrounds its own cinematic technique, jolting us into an awareness of the constructed nature of the narrative, and the extent to which it is medially determined. In the moment when the film shows us the events through the gaze of a camera wielded by an unnamed intradiegetic character, it is explicitly self-referential and conscious of its own status as a filmic text. Moreover, the acknowledgement, however briefly, that there exists other versions (apart from the one to which the film allows us access) of the events in the climax, another gaze that recorded what it considers the story's most important moment, destabilizes the putative emphasis of the film as such, on the representation of events of the storyworld. It need hardly be pointed out that this is all the more powerful since it is articulated within the plot purely through cinematic means, and entirely independent of any novelistic artifice.

In closing, I would like to make one more observation in this regard. The hypodiegetic film embedded within *IHf* becomes a lost text precisely at the point where its existence collides with the story of the novel insofar as "transferred" into film, since everything burns down in the end, including the camera and the reels it contains. And while this is not commented upon in the film itself, I would argue that this transfer of the philosophical basis of the novel into purely cinematic terms remains the film's one,

crucial moment of metatextual, self-referential possibility, one it gestures towards all-too-briefly but ultimately fails to realize more generally.

CHAPTER 4 DOUBLE ALLEGIANCE: VIDEO GAME ADAPTATIONS¹

While discussing video game adaptations of metatextual novels such as *IH* and *NS*, one of the first questions we need to address is the issue of the primary texts on which the games are based. The video game versions—*NSg* (1985), *NSIIg* (1990), and *IHg* (2008)—of Ende’s and Funke’s novels were released after (or concurrently with) the films discussed in the previous chapter, and we need to keep in mind that they are primarily adaptations of these *film* versions, and not the print texts. That is to say, the video games with which this chapter is concerned have the unique status of being *adaptations of adaptations*. Recognition of this central fact immediately complicates our understanding of and approach to the games under discussion, by highlighting, as it were, their double allegiance to the “stories” they relate. As I shall establish, the games take the films as their primary points of reference, but allude to aspects of the print texts in more shadowy, subtle ways as well, in certain structural as well as formal terms that gesture towards their unfixed and largely unarticulated relationship to the novels.

In this context, the framing questions that guided the analysis of the film adaptations in the previous chapter provide a suitable point of departure for the discussion at hand. McFarlane’s methodology of distinguishing between the representations and “transfer” of cardinal functions of a text, as opposed to the “enunciative” aspects of it, seem of particular importance in the case of adaptations based on openly metatextual works. However, as I argue in the previous chapter, the films are for the large part entirely unconcerned about metatextual aspects of the

¹ For the sake of convenience, I am considering the term “video games” as analogous to “computer games” within this study.

novels. Except for the brief flashes of medial self-awareness that I discuss above, they concentrate more on simply depicting the hypodiegetic adventure/quest elements of the source texts, and these cardinal story-functions lend themselves well to thus uncomplicated transfer across media. It hardly comes as a surprise, then, that if considered purely as adaptations of the films, the video games are barely concerned with the fundamental philosophical premise of the novels. Instead, their primary focus seems to be on transferring their adventure/story elements as the basic narrative premise within which to situate gameplay. However, especially in case of *NSf* and *IHf*, the games refer to (as well as incorporate, to an extent) the philosophical, metafictional premise of the novels in ways that are not apparent at first, since in many cases, these gestures are embedded in specific medial determinations of the games—for instance, in the choice of specific game genres and gaming systems/platforms.

The importance of the games to the study at hand is also situated in the ways in which they open up and offer access, through purely interactive means, to the storyworld originally established by the literary text, but accessed at one remove—that is, with reference to the visualization the films provide. The central premise in case of the games is that of exploration, narrative determination (in case of the 1985 *NSg*, an instance of a text adventure game), interactivity, and the different ways in which one may experience functions of story. This chapter thus concerns itself with the ways in which the video games replicate specific cardinal functions from both the films and the novels, but translate their use-value into more interactive terms. In the process, they thus fundamentally alter their import and significance for the reader/player, who is able

to access these aspects of the storyworld in more intimate, familiar terms than either the novels or the films may allow.

Playing Neverending Stories

To date, three separate games have been developed from the basic premise of *NS*. *NSg*, a graphical text adventure story (that is, interactive fiction) modeled after *NSf*, was released in 1985 by Ocean Software Ltd across three different systems, viz. Amstrad CPC, C64 and ZX Spectrum.² This was followed five years later by *NSIIg*, a 2D platform game adapted from *NSII*, and released by Linel across C64 and Amiga systems.³ The last game to be released in the market was *AQ* (2002), a 3D adventure game by Dreamcatcher, Inc. While the first two may manifestly be considered adaptations, *AQ* presents a very different case. It is not an adaptation of either the novels or the films, but is instead an action adventure game that is loosely “inspired” by the novel, in that it minimally utilizes some of the settings, characters and objects established by Ende’s text, but exists within its own, entirely distinct storyworld, though one nominally designated Fantasia. This chapter will focus on only the first two games as adapted works, considering the ways in which we may map their relationship to their originary texts.

NSg establishes its status as an adaptation of the film from the very beginning, largely through visual means—for instance, it provides the iconic silhouette of the Ivory tower in the background for a large part of the game. However, it is a text adventure game, (a kind of “interactive fiction”) and thus also subtly borrows from and refers to the

² For the purposes of this study, I will be referring to the game as played on the C64 system.

³ All mentions of *NSIIg* refer to the Amiga version of the game.

tropes established by such renowned examples of the genre, such as *Adventure* (mid-70s), *Zork* (1977), etc. The cardinal functions that it transfers originate not only from the film, then; sections of the game, in both structure and content, hark back to Ende's novel, and there are also intertextual references to gaming spaces and conventions established by the major games of the genre.

It must be mentioned at this point that the choice of game-genre is also a significant factor to consider when thinking about *NSg*'s status as an adapted work. A text adventure game (albeit enhanced by limited graphics) seems a particularly apt choice for video game adaptation of a work as invested in books, readers, and the pleasures (and pains) of the reading process as *NS*. While discussing the advent of text adventure games, Espen Aarseth, though mostly inclined toward a ludological perspective, designates it "a new type of literary artifact," an experimental literature which constitutes "an artistic genre of its own" (1997, 107). Although Aarseth expressly clarifies that adventure games are *not* novels, he goes on to state that "they present an alternative mode of discourse; a different type of *textual pleasure*" (1997, 109, my emphasis), a point that Nick Montfort later echoes in *Twisty Little Passages*, his book-length study of various kinds of interactive fiction.

Aarseth proposes the notion of "intrigue" (leading to a narrative that he names an "ergodic discourse" (1997, 114)) in case of the text adventure, as an alternative to the usual "plot," "narrative" or "story" present in narratological discourse, but it is this emphasis on the *pleasures* of experiencing a very different function of text that is most significant for our purpose. Montfort holds that part of this textual pleasure is generated from interactive fiction's dependence on riddles and puzzle-solving, but that, crucially,

the other element that enhances this pleasure is the “sense of exploring a new world or space” (4). This emphasis on the pleasures of exploration, and that of interaction with/within a purely textually determined space via reading as well as the input of words is crucial—especially since I argue that the affective basis for (children’s) metafiction rests on the reader’s desire of greater levels of access, with a promise of (consequently) greater pleasure. Moreover, the player does not only get to explore Fantasia, but as Montfort points out, “actually contributes] writing that is part of the text and serves to operate the program” (4), that is, she gets to materially contribute to the performative text of the game, in however limited a fashion.

I would thus argue that such a game genre is particularly suited to embodying the kinds of writerly and readerly operations that Ende lays out in his text, and that are represented, in however reduced a fashion, within *NSf*. As I observed earlier, at a certain point within Ende’s text, Bastian has to literally craft the Fantastican world via the mechanism of wishes, the designated operative function within the narrative; this seems, for instance, allied to Montfort’s observation that “learning to operate the text, and discovering what language is accepted and understood, is part of the pleasure of interactive fiction” (34). Could we perhaps say that just the choice of this particular genre of computer games as the vehicle for adaptation helps embody and represent, in a more immanent fashion, some of the functional aspects of the kind of metafictional narrative Ende crafts? Of course, such a consideration naturally allies *NSg* not only with *NSf* as an originary text, but also brings forth *NS* as a fundamental yet less obviously manifest influence, drawing shadowy connections that point towards a double allegiance to both novel and film.

Explicitly positioning *NSg* as an adaptation is important if we are to understand its textual operations and nature of the quest involved in the game. The paratextual material of the game becomes especially important in this respect. The manual states clearly at the outset that “the computer game follows the main theme of the film”, thus making its “origins” explicit via its paratext. As the manual describes it, *NSg* is “a graphic text adventure with illustrations for some locations, some ‘Events’ and all objects.” It also explains, among other things, that the input language the game parser will recognize “has been deliberately kept simple to allow more room for game data,” thus accounting for the very limited vocabulary that the player has at her command. The playing screen is divided roughly into two parts. Of these, the bottom section contains the words to be read and typed in. The left side of the upper section consists of illustrations of the player’s current position, or the events taking place, and the right side usually contains the distinctive silhouette of the Ivory Tower, with the objects in the inventory superimposed on it.

Crucially, the manual also sets the “frame narrative” of Bastian escaping to the school attic and settling down to read the book, and provides the opening sequence and central problem of the hypodiegetic narrative, although the nature of Atreyu’s quest is not specifically delineated. This paratextual description becomes important in terms of the visual correlatives that the game draws with its filmic predecessor. Once the game starts, the player “reads” *NS2* into being and determines how it is shaped by directing Atreyu’s player character within the hypodiegetic Fantasian world. In the textual manifestations of the hypodiegetic gamespace, there is no mention of Bastian; unlike the film, there is no sense of back and forth between diegetic levels. It is almost

tempting to believe that the player in her interactive capacity assumes Bastian's position as the determining reader in charge of (literally) shaping Fantasia through textual means.

However, shortly through the game, we see a picture of a hunched Bastian reading *NS2* in the upper left corner of the screen, a graphic that is repeated several times during the course of the game. This purely visual means is the *only* way in which the game proper, as it were, acknowledges the existence of Bastian. It is significant, nevertheless, in the way it draws explicit attention to game-player interaction. The player/interactor reads the text (commands, directives) on the screen as well as issuing replies and reports (Montfort 26-27). Bastian's presence within the visual space then serves to complicate the role of the interactor, by underlining the existence of another reader/interactor *simultaneously* reading (playing?) *NS2*. With the interactive mantle having been passed to the player, Bastian can only be a rival in textual determination—the way he reads Fantasia into being is not necessarily the way the player would.

At the very least, then, this visual representation of an alternative possible textual determination/manifestation serves to make the interactor aware at all times of her own specific yet contingent position *vis a vis* the text. That there are as many texts as there are readers is, of course, a central philosophical tenet of Ende's novel, and the game, once again, manages to gesture *both* to the film (in the visual correlative of Bastian surrounded by the familiar objects in the attic, as seen in the film) *and* the novel (by complicating the notion of reader/authorship).

NSg, above all, is a quest narrative with definite tasks to complete, goals to accomplish, and progression across levels. There are three locations within which the

game-sequence is articulated: one set across the Great Forest, the grassy plains of Atreyu's home, the mountains beneath which Morla's cave lies, the great desert, and the spaces of the Southern oracle; the second within Spook City; and the third inside the Ivory Tower on the asteroid, after Fantasia has disintegrated. Espen Aarseth's "string of pearls" structure of the narrative trajectory of quest games seems appropriate here: within each "pearl" or level, there is choice and agency on part of the player, but "on the level of the string there is no choice at all" (2004, 367). This applies especially to quest/adventure games that are adaptations—to a large extent, there is a kind of narrative determination already in place. The player already knows the outcome of the adventure; unless her player character dies within the game (in the encounter with Gmork the werewolf, say), the successful completion of the game will always see Fantasia restored and the Childlike empress saved. The player's pleasure in this case lies chiefly in the exploration and textual determination of the storyspace according to the "pearls" of the narrative trajectory, in solving puzzles, collecting objects and meeting characters, in the opportunity to satisfy her desire of interacting with an already loved and familiar story. It comes as no surprise, then, that the paratextual elements also stress the "exploratory" nature of the game: "You are embarking on a voyage of discovery with problems to solve, obstacles to avoid, characters to meet, and an ultimate goal" (in this case to save Fantasia from the "Nothing").⁴

A primary characteristic of this exploratory bent is that the game borrows cardinal functions of story, characters, etc. from the film, but mines this material for its own aims, to create sections where they may be translated in terms of necessary or possible

⁴ Though in a very different context, this "exploratory" quality is also true of *IHg*.

action on the player's part. In other words, specifically when we consider the status of computer game adaptations of films, sequences with pure narrative function are transferred and appropriated in primarily ludic terms, to enhance gameplay according to the tasks of the specific kind of game. Although the exploratory aspect of the various game-levels are based on settings, situations, characters from the films (which thus serve an orienting function, however minimal), they acquire their own resonance within the "gameworld," that is, in the diegesis of the game. Thus, for instance, the player character Atreyu needs to explore, find and collect a horn so that he may summon Falkor the luckdragon. Failure to do so means that he will never be able to fly across the otherwise impassable desert, and move on to the next levels of the game. Of importance in this instance is the *use-value* that is attached to cardinal functions (in the above example, the character of Falkor, and the machinations required to summon him) transferred from the film/novel, to lend it a particular ludic resonance within the game-space. Thus, even when characters, events, objects and situations within the game are nominally the same as in the film-text, in terms of (ludic) use-value within an interactive game-setting, their function *in the game*, and the ways in which they operate might be entirely different. There's an *illusion* of a direct correspondence, but on closer examination, this doesn't hold up; the gameworld characters are unique and quite separate, in several aspects, from their filmic/literary counterparts.

The same logic of conceiving events, actions, characters in terms of playability determines what cardinal functions the game developers choose to transfer across media. For instance, the sequence in the Swamps of Sadness where Artax dies provides one of the most memorable, affective scenes of the film; however, in the

context of an adventure game-setting with an emphasis on exploration, collecting objects and puzzle-solving, Artax's death can serve no function since it cannot be translated in terms of gameplay. Thus, while Atreyu does have the option of meeting Artax and heading off towards Morla's cave on his back, Artax's piteous death does not figure within the game world. Similarly, the dangers the game poses to the player's avatar must be very different from the ones delineated in the film and book. The overall quest/concern is similar or same, but the particulars must differ—the texts are interested in depicting/representing very different, medially-invested, versions of the adventures. In the text adventure game, there is not much scope for danger—the only possible dangerous situations come in form of the wraith and Gmork within Spook city, but they, too, are easily avoided and Atreyu may continue his quest without any significant encounter with misery or danger.

I'd like to make one last observation regarding the settings and spaces within *NSg*. For the most part, it depicts familiar settings from the film, even while it establishes its connections with the novels via more shadowy means. In the second level of the game, during the Spook City sequence, however, most of the explorations to find certain objects take place underground, in the ruined bowels of the city. This underground sequence is complete with crumbling cellars, forgotten cave-like spaces, a torture chamber, a demon wraith executioner, mysterious holes in the ground, etc.—elements which are completely the game's own invention. These locations and their perils are not present in the novels or the film. They are, clearly, spatio-structural allusions to the tropes established by classic text adventure games like *Zork* and *Adventure* (which in their turn were inspired by *Dungeons and Dragons*); as Montfort points out, these

games usually included extensive subterranean spaces where the player had to find hidden objects, and which were populated by menacing figures such as the troll, the vampire bat, the cyclops, etc. (99-101).

Adaptation works here at two levels—the first, of course, is in terms of direct cardinal functions from the films. But in terms of design and movement, and the methodologies, tropes and conventions of gaming (for instance, map-making in order to create a spatial outline of Fantasia, underground adventures, puzzle-solving), *NSg* is linked to other games from which it borrows/adapts these conventions, placing it in a separate discourse altogether and aligning it with other games that follow similar gaming conventions.

NSIIg is a much more straightforward case of adaptation, focusing primarily on the action and adventure elements of *NSII*, and as such does not concern itself overmuch with metatextual elements of the film. For instance, it almost completely rejects the reader-book back-and-forth frame-narrative that *NSII* introduces. This game is interesting in that it represents the only adapted version of *NS* that is situated entirely within the hypodiegetic *NS2*, and entirely foregoes even a hint of the larger metatextual or philosophical elements of the book or film. Its only concession to depicting the hypodiegetic nature of *NS2* is the open-book conceit that begins and ends the game—aligning it with the common cinematic trope of immersion within a depicted on-screen volume.

It is also the least text-based of the different medial articulations of *NS* that we've encountered so far. In its rejection of larger issues of the novels and the film, and extracting simply the core story functions of *NSII*, it presents a remarkably shorn

narrative structure that is very much secondary to the primary ludic functions of the game. The game openly acknowledges its association with *NSII*, imports all the major action sequences from it to translate into the action sequences in the different levels. In addition, there is a minimal amount of intertext in between each sequence to provide a rudimentary narrative by which to orient the player as to where her onscreen avatar is, and what task she is supposed to complete next. These sequences, in turn, are based on major locations/events within the film, even providing brief summaries where necessary, and as such, there is relatively smooth transfer of major cardinal functions in terms of story and player-characters between the two media. These functions, however, are re-arranged in settings that enhance their gameplay aspects and encourage playability.

For the most part, the game is presented through a side-scrolling, platform game perspective, excluding two sequences. In translating the sets of *NSII* into pure graphics, *NSIIg* provides some interesting artistic interpretation of a given set of spatial configurations to fit the design conventions and needs of classic platform games. Its design sensibilities are extremely direct, placing it in a particular niche, and determining character movements and interactions in specific ways. The result is a curious mixture that at once recalls *NSII*, but also such classics as the 1989 platform game version of *Prince of Persia*, say.⁵ This game then also establishes intertextual connections of its own, in terms of its broader genre, beyond the literary or cinematic texts on which it is putatively based. In this instance too, the choice of the gaming platform determined

⁵ It may be pertinent to mention here that the games for the C64 and Amiga systems were somewhat different in graphical design, music, and intertext between sequences. Although largely adopting the same set of actions and action sequences, the ways in which the narrative basis of the film was recounted in the intertexts differed significantly, for instance, as did the difficulty level of gameplay and the quality of the graphics.

which elements from the source texts it chose to adapt, and those it chose to reject. The graphical, action-oriented nature of the platform game—including actions like running, jumping, chasing, fighting monsters, scaling walls, fleeing on a horseback, swimming in the rapids—these were extremely well-served by this format, which interpreted its source text entirely in terms of the number of actions the player-character could be made to perform in a contemporary, popular video game genre. Players accessing this game thus got an opportunity to encounter an entirely different element of Fantasia than any they had encountered so far, engaging in vicarious heroic deeds, and rescuing the entire land from destruction through more straight-forward, action-oriented choices and actions.

The Simulated Book: *Inkheart* Adapted

Look, I know reading isn't cool anymore, but getting your kid *Inkheart* on the DS is pretty much like getting them a book anyway.

—Jack DeVries, online *IHg* review

DeVries's ambiguous defense of books—excerpted from a scathing review of *IHg* (2008), played on the Nintendo DS dual-screen handheld game console—is important precisely because it addresses a fundamental issue at the heart of this instance of adaptation across media. While *NSIIg* deliberately refused to include the purely narrative elements of its film and literary predecessors by rejecting those cardinal elements of story, character, etc., in favor of its potential for gameplay, *IHg* is a prime example of exactly the opposite impulse. Released as part of the merchandising drive that accompanied the theatrical release of *IHf* in December 2008, it exists in an uneasy space between a graphic-based adventure game and what one may almost term an interactive reading device, with intermittent gameplay merely as a side-feature.

As I have discussed above, when it comes to video game adaptations, the choice of the gaming system becomes paramount in determining the extent to which specific cardinal functions and enunciative elements may be adapted across media—in this instance, from films to video games. The gaming systems chosen as the vehicle for the adaptation are of course dependent on existing technologies and gaming platforms, but the influence of the primary texts also loom large in such instances. It is not a coincidence that two of the three game adaptations of these metafictional novels about books, readers and modes of reading are so text-dense. In this case, it seems as if the choice of the DS console was a major factor in the game's text-heavy structure.

The DS is a handheld game console with a clamshell design. It has two LCD (liquid crystal display) screens facing each other. Of these, the bottom one is a touchscreen where the player may manipulate objects with the help of a stylus, and there are traditional gaming controls located on either side of the touch screen. For *IHg*, however, the developers chose to rotate the usual orientation of the DS, so that instead of holding the two screens in a top-bottom fashion, the player holds them side-by-side, facing each other, as if reading a book. In this position, the regular LCD screen is to the left, and the touchscreen to the right hand side, so that the structure of the handheld console game mimics that of a book where the narrative is split up between the two virtual “pages,” recto and verso. Since one has to continually use the stylus to manipulate objects on the recto screen, the illusion of a bound volume that one may both read and write in, is complete.

Thus, even the choice of the gaming medium reflects or associates itself with the material form of books in particular, allying itself at the level of appearance as well to

bridge the representational gaps between the two distinct media of game and novel. So, like the novel whose narrative may be mapped in terms of gameplay (or sequences which may be imagined as such), so does the game, the adapted text, constantly refer back to and align itself with the original print text, even when it is more immediately adapted from *IHf*. The shadow of the print text is paramount in this case, in spite of the many direct visual references to the film.

The fact that the game barely requires the use of any of the standard console controls adds to the verisimilitude of the console's emulation of the codex. Moreover, to proceed with the game, the player is required to read an unusually large amount of text. Apart from simulating the appearance of a book, it almost reads like one as well, except that the text is complemented by cinematic elements in terms of cut-scenes, etc. In addition, the game includes extensive sequences of dialogue between the primary player-characters, and it is through the combination of constant dialogue and the graphics that the narrative of the game progresses. (To a large extent, one may perhaps even read *IHg* as a screenplay of sorts.) The game thus seems determined to immerse itself in the pleasures of textual modes of expression, even at the cost of the pleasure that may be generated by its interactive elements.

Whenever a player-character speaks within *IHg*, her or his portrait appears on the left screen, while the smaller avatars are shown in relationship to their surroundings on the recto screen. This is one of the primary areas of transfer of cardinal functions from the film itself—the portraits are accurate depictions of the actors in the film. For instance, whenever Mo speaks, the actor Brendan Fraser's likeness appears in his place. The connection between the game and its originary text is thus visually reinforced

throughout. Moreover, apart from this visual correspondence on which the game insists, a significant amount of the basic story, character and plot functions have been transferred from *IHf*. We have seen, of course, that except for the brief moments of metatextual possibility towards its end, the film does not concern itself with the enunciative features of adaptations; not surprisingly, this is reflected in the game's singular disinterested stance about depicting metatextual elements via enunciation. Seemingly following the film, the mini-games that depict the literalisation of the spoken word become, even in this case, a narrativisation (and consequent flattening) of the metatextual premise of the books, and thus lack conceptual or philosophical gravity.⁶

IHg is a point-and-click adventure game that rests on the premise of exploration of various depicted spaces via the dual screens. It is perhaps in this exploratory bent that the game exhibits an almost voyeuristic affect. The gameplay consists of a certain number of tasks that a player (acting as various different characters within the gameworld) must complete, along with frequent mini-games that are set apart from the broader gameplay narrative. These tasks—including collecting various objects, eavesdropping on conversations, finding hidden objects, escaping from captivity, and rescuing others, or in other words, interactive gameplay opportunities weaved into basic plot elements transferred from *IHf*—all involve an extensive survey and inventory of surrounding spaces in order to locate objects that one may use for carrying out the assignment at hand. In other words, to proceed through the gameworld, the player must necessarily explore every nook and cranny of her surroundings, click on (that is, interact

⁶ In the sequences where Mo and Meggie read aloud from the texts, the corresponding mini-game requires the player to trace the stylus over a line that appears on the touchscreen. She thus literally traces (or squiggles) a mark on the "page" with the stylus to represent words becoming flesh and blood, as it were.

with) objects to gauge their worth, and figure out inventive ways to make use of them, so that she may complete relevant tasks. This is accompanied, perhaps too frequently, by lengthy conversations with other characters inhabiting the gameworld, as well as equally lengthy commentary on all spaces and objects she encounters. The world is brought to being via text and graphics, but it is through the exploration of the world that the text, the description, the narrative, as well as additional visualized locales are generated. While it is precisely the option to look around and explore the world within the game that plays to our metaleptic desires of experiencing otherwise inaccessible (hypo)textual worlds, this over-reliance on words to keep the sequences moving detracts from the play element of the game.

In this respect, the fact that the player is able to inhabit various avatars within the space of the game also becomes significant.⁷ She then not only explores spaces (and the words associated with and lending meaning to those spaces), but also different characters and their various traits, in however rudimentary a fashion. While the game does not extend or explore the metatextual premise of Funke's novel, the fantasy of intimacy and greater (and very detailed) access, in more material, deterministic terms, is indeed borne out to a large extent. This is the case even in the sequences where the limits of user interactivity, and the impetus of the narrative steering the reader/player along one particular path, become apparent.

As noted before, their status as adaptations necessarily forces the final outcome of these games along pre-determined pathways. The pleasure and the affective promise of the game in this instance, much like the others I have described, lie ultimately in the

⁷ At various points in the game, the player may take the role of Mo, Meggie, Dustfinger, Farid, and in two instances, even Gwin and Toto!

ways in which the gameworld offers us an illusion of greater and more dynamic access to imagined realities—a fantasy that lies at the heart of the narrative metaleptic transgressions of the children’s fantasy novels on which the games are, ostensibly, based.

CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION

This study aims to intervene in the existing critical conversation about the affective, didactic and functional dimensions of children's metafiction in general, but focuses its approach via the consideration of two specific instances of such texts. As I mention, there is a dearth of critical commentary on both the Inkworld trilogy and *NS*, and the first section addresses this lack, above all.

I argue above that children's metafiction enacts complex, multivalent lessons about both the pleasures and dangers of reading—these analyses, as I have shown, complicate the existing scholarship on this particular genre of children's literature. Moving away from specific considerations of the subversive elements of, and the critical faculties encouraged by, metafictional narratives—as respectively articulated by Nelson and Sanders—a major thrust of my critical and theoretical meditations involve delineating the ways in which children's metafiction “anticipates” new medial forms, structures and strategies. These anticipatory or commentarial functions of such texts have not been adequately theorized before, and I provide a clear basis for analyzing the functional and affective basis of these narratives in their non-print avatars. Moreover, these texts complicate our theorizations of metalepsis, by simultaneously incorporating both a strong element of desire and the promise of intimacy in terms of the child readers' access to them.

Moreover, as I also discuss above, existing critical and theoretical discourse on film adaptations have for the most part ignored the question of adaptation of implicitly metafictional texts (as opposed to texts written in the “realist” mode), specifically in terms of the transfer of their enunciative elements. Multimodal/cross-medial adaptations

of these children's metafictional texts at once perform metalepsis and make clear that the adaptation of metafictional texts is an issue of even greater complexity. Since, unfortunately, it is one that is thus far understudied, the comparative analysis of the adaptation of these children's metafictional literary texts across multiple non-print media becomes especially important as a possible space for critical intervention within the existing discourse on film and video game adaptations. This study, in considering the workings of metafictional texts across their cross-medial adaptations, stands therefore at the junction of literary, cinematic (specifically, adaptation) and new medial studies in theorizing ways in which these different textual forms help us re-think the theory of both metafiction and its specific operation, metalepsis.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Poushali Bhadury was born in 1984 in Kolkata, India. The elder of two children, she grew up however in a large joint family along with a number of first cousins, uncles, aunts and her paternal grandparents, apart from her own parents and brother.

Graduating from South Point High School in 2003, she joined the Department of English at Jadavpur University, Kolkata, ranked the best department in the country by the national University Grants Commission. There, she earned her B.A. in 2006, majoring in English literature. She then went on to complete her M.A. in English literature from the same department, graduating in May 2008.

August 2008 saw her moving to a different continent to join the English Department at the University of Florida, this time with a concentration in children's and adolescent literature and culture. She completed her second master's degree (with a thesis component) and received her M.A. from the University of Florida in the spring of 2010. Upon graduation, she pursued her Ph.D. from the same department, in order to further her research and teaching interests in comparative children's literature and textual scholarship. She aims eventually to teach literature at the university level. Apart from academics, she is passionate about travelling—visiting new places, meeting different people, and experiencing different cultures and customs—and her goal is to bring her two chief interests together in her professional life.