Monsters
and the
Monstrous

'A Horror Story that Came True': Metalepsis and the Horrors of Ontological Uncertainty in *Alan Wake*

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Abstract

Monstrosity is often conceptualized in spatial terms. The *OED*, for example, defines 'monster' as a 'creature which is part animal and part human'; that is, a living being that crosses the line between human and non-human. Similarly, Julia Kristeva conceives of the abject as that which crosses the boundary between Self and Other and Sigmund Freud's notion of the uncanny metaphorically relocates the strange and unknown to the known sphere of the home. Transgression of spatial borders is thus key to conceiving and understanding monstrosity. The present article argues that, especially recently, the phenomenon narratologists refer to as 'metalepsis' – that is, the transgression of boundaries separating (onto)logically distinct worlds – has frequently been used to create uncanny, monstrous spaces. By employing the narratological concept of metalepsis to the 2010 videogame *Alan Wake* and some of the paratexts contributing to the transmedia universe surrounding the game, I will demonstrate that the monstrous space constructed (and constantly deconstructed by metaleptic transgressions) in the gametext (and its surrounding paratexts) is, however, not limited to the fictional universe as such, for it even incorporates what we generally assume to be 'real' space.

Key Words

Videogames, media convergence, uncanny, Gothic space, transgression

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1.   Metalepses: Monstrous Transgressions

Conceptualizations of monstrosity have repeatedly employed spatial metaphors. Julia Kristeva's well-known *Powers of Horror*, for example, suggests a way of understanding monstrosity in relation to what she terms 'abjection' – that elusive presence that does not 'respect borders' and 'positions,' and which following Kristeva might be best described as 'the place where meaning collapses.'[1] Although spatiality always plays an important role in helping grasp abstract concepts and thus abounds in Kristeva's work, spatiality, or, more specifically, the transgression of spatial borders, proves to be key to understanding one of her underlying arguments, namely that crossing (or even merely threatening to cross) certain boundaries can be considered abject, monstrous, that is.

In his elaborations on the 'uncanny', Sigmund Freud, likewise, employs spatial metaphors. According to Freud, the uncanny is 'that species of the frightening that goes back to what was once well known and had long been familiar.'[2] Transgression again takes an important role, since Freud's starting point is the assumption that horror is evoked by 'the excessive stress that is laid on psychical reality, as opposed to material reality.'[3] Freud thus sees the collision or fusion of two worlds as one of the prime ways to elicit the uncanny. Nowhere is this idea more apparent than in Freud's word choice – *Das Unheimliche*. After all, the term implies that the home, which is supposed to be a safe haven, known, protective and comforting, has been invaded by an alien, strange and unsettling presence, transforming the familiar into something (partly) unknown in the process. Both Kristeva's and Freud's approaches thus

suggest that transgression lies at the heart of conceptualizing monstrosity. While crossing from the realm of the dead into the realm of the living (or vice versa) becomes the focal point of their attention, Freud highlights in a commentary that

> an uncanny effect is often and easily produced when the distinction between imagination and reality is effaced, as when something that we have hitherto regarded as imaginary appears before us in reality.[4]

This conflation of reality and imagination is part of what Monika Fludernik has referred to as the 'metaleptic mode' characteristic of any recipient's engagement with a fictional text ('text' should be understood in a broad sense here), for recipients – metaphorically – step into fictional universes when immersing in texts.[5]

Fludernik develops this idea in her elaborations on 'metalepsis'. Like many other narratological concepts, metalepsis was conceived within the contexts of the analytic frameworks available for studying (print) fiction. In his book *Narrative Discourse*, Gérard Genette describes the phenomenon as 'any intrusion by the extradiegetic narrator or narratee into the diegetic universe . . ., or the inverse.'[6] Over the past few decades, a number of narratologists have critiqued this rather restrictive conceptualization, for Genette disregards transgressions between diegetic and extradiegetic worlds and extratextual reality – for example, when a character or narrator directly addresses the recipient. In addition, Genette's unimedial focus on print fiction has opened up his definition to revisions from scholars working in the field of transmedial narratology. From such a transmedial vantage point, Werner Wolf has proposed a broader definition of metalepsis as 'a usually intentional paradoxical transgression of, or confusion between, (onto)logically distinct (sub)worlds.'[7] While metalepses were traditionally thought to deconstruct texts and thus disrupt immersion, more recent studies have demonstrated that they can, in fact, serve a host of functions.[8] Sonja Klimek has, for instance, argued that metalepses can 'result[] in complete immersion,'[9] especially in fantastic tales, in which metalepses often 'celebrate the magical power of fantasy . . . and thus work towards . . . immersion.'[10] This claim also holds true for horror texts, which, after all, belong to the macrogenre of the fantastic. More specifically, in horror tales, metalepses frequently aid immersion, help create an illusion of reality, by playing a crucial role in the construction of monstrosity.

In Wes Craven's *New Nightmare* (1994), for example, Wes Craven (played by Wes Craven) explains that Freddy Krueger, the villainous former child murderer created by Craven's movies, tries to transgress the borderline between fiction and reality:

> I can tell you what the nightmare's about so far. It's about this entity – whatever you want to call it. It's old. It's very old. It's existed in different forms in different times. The only thing that stays the same is [that] it lives for … [t]he murder of innocents. … [The entity's weakness is that] it can be captured … [b]y storytellers …. Every so often, they imagine a story good enough to sort of catch its essence. And then, for a while, it's held prisoner in the story… . But the problem comes when the story dies. … When the story dies, the evil is set free.[11]

In these bits of dialogue, Craven stresses that Freddy is a narrative construct; Freddy Krueger is merely part of a story. Even though there are various character traits that mark Freddy as a monster on many levels (his past as a child murderer, his killing of teenagers in the present, the visual construction of the character with burnt face and knives for fingers, etc.), at

the heart of Freddy's monstrosity lies his capability and willingness to transgress ontological borders. On the one hand, he moves from the realm of the dead into the realm of the living,[12] but, and this aspect is especially emphasized in *New Nightmare*,[13] he can also transgress the line separating reality from fiction, on the other.

As indicated above, *New Nightmare* presents merely one exemplary 'old' media artefact that suggests a strong connection between metaleptic transgressions and monstrosity. Even though 'new' media often merely remediate 'old' media and adapt narratives to new media contexts, metalepsis provides an exemplary case in which this translation into a new environment proves highly significant, for computers and videogame consoles may be considered 'metaleptic machines,'[14] as they translate performative action in the real world (moving the mouse, pushing buttons, but also certain moves etc. thanks to interfaces such as Nintendo's Wiimote and Microsoft's Kinect) into virtual action in the gameworld.

2.   Crossing Ontological Boundaries in *Alan Wake*

The videogame *Alan Wake* depicts some days in the life of its titular character. A crime fiction and thriller writer by profession, Alan Wake has been suffering from writer's block for two years, which is why his wife Alice has convinced him to take a vacation in the small-town of Bright Falls in the Pacific Northwest, hoping that a change of environment will stimulate Alan's creativity – an aspect he is not entirely aware of in the beginning.

However, already before players get to know the reasons for the Wakes' vacation in Bright Falls, darkness looms large over the entire narrative, for the opening cinematic creates a nightmarish atmosphere by audio-visually reconstructing one of Alan's dreams in which he runs over a hitchhiker. After the dead body has disappeared, the uncontrollable world of cinematics fades to gameplay. While Alan seems to be constantly aware that he is recounting one of his past dreams, as Alan's voice-over narration tellingly employs the past tense, for the player, the participatory dimension of the videogame eclipses said awareness, as Alan's dream becomes enacted reality. Only some moments into the actual game, the hitchhiker reappears, addressing Alan:

> You don't even recognize me, do you, writer? You think you're God? You
> think you can just make up stuff, play with people's lives and kill them when
> it adds to the drama? You're in this story now, and I'll make you suffer![15]

Although this sequence is part of one of Alan's nightmares, as the narrative unfolds, it becomes clear that this is exactly the situation Alan finds himself caught in – he has become a character in his latest novel. However, Alan has to realize that he is not merely a character in his latest novel; even worse, the 'real' Alan is a character in a piece of fiction by a writer named Thomas Zane, who died some thirty years earlier (and who, possibly, is Alan's father – in more than one way). Thomas Zane repeatedly transgresses ontological boundaries and appears in the gameworld as a figure surrounded by a bright light, underscoring the 'the author is God' equation established by the hitchhiker's first two sentences. While in the early goings, Zane's function is tutoring the player in gameplay mechanics, his important role to the narrative at large emerges only in the latter episodes of the game.

Alan's nightmare comes to a rather sudden end after he has reached a lighthouse, as he wakes up on a ferry about to reach Bright Falls. After having been presented the key to their vacation home by a witch-like woman, Alan and Alice find their way to Bird Leg Cabin on small Diver's Island in Cauldron Lake. When darkness falls a few hours later and power blacks out in the cabin, Alan can hear Alice's screams coming from the house. Thinking that Alice has fallen (or jumped) into the lake, Alan jumps into the dark water, only to wake up in a crashed

car in the woods, feeling 'like [he] had woken from one nightmare and entered another.'[16] On his way back to town, Alan discovers that he cannot remember what happened in the past week and that he has apparently been working on a novel called *Departure*. After finding several pages of the book manuscript, Alan begins to understand that his writing was 'an act of creation that had rewritten the world.'[17] As Alan feverishly hunts for traces of his lost wife, he learns that Diver's Island was, in fact, destroyed some thirty years earlier and that Alice was taken hostage by a dark force that needs a writer in order to be written into existence, underscoring that, as Tzvetan Todorov put it, the 'supernatural is born out of language,' for supernatural creatures 'exist only in words.'[18]

As the plot outline presented above may have already indicated, from Thomas Zane appearing in a story(-within-a-story) he penned to Alan Wake finding manuscript pages he wrote that have created the world he is living in, *Alan Wake* is filled with metalepses – that is, transgressions of ontological boundaries – and thus constructs a monstrous space that no longer adheres to the laws of nature.[19] This merging of different ontologies leads to confusion among characters and players. In fact, metalepses are so omnipresent in *Alan Wake* that it proves difficult to focus on specific examples. Arguably, the most elaborate metalepsis is presented by the narrative short-circuit created by the complex structure of the events taking place in Bright Falls, which are experienced by the gamer while playing the game. These events are entirely based on a story-within-a-story-within-a-story (the *Departure* manuscript, that is), while at the same time created by someone theoretically external to the storyworld (Thomas Zane, that is), who, however, repeatedly appears in the storyworld. Effectively, this 'master metalepsis' fuses different ontologies and thus also explains many of the other metalepses occurring in the narrative – since Alan's life is merely Thomas Zane's creation (and the events Alan and the player are experiencing nothing but the product of Alan's imagination – written into Alan's character by Zane), why should the laws of 'nature' in this fictional universe necessarily correspond to ours? Alan's obvious confusion caused by his increasing realization that certain facts of life assumed to be indisputable are countered in front of his very eyes, however, complicates matters. In the beginning, Alan tries to rationalize the uncanny events he is experiencing first-hand, tries to convince himself that he is merely dreaming, but, as he notes, 'it felt real enough to make me sick.'[20] Alan's agent Barry Wheeler brings Alan's internal struggle to a point: '[W]hen you're starting to confuse fiction with reality, you're buying yourself a ticket to the funny farm.'[21]

While Barry's primary fear (at least early in the game) appears to be seeing his client go crazy, Alan's most fundamental problem is that he does not really confuse fiction with reality, but rather starts to comprehend that the two cannot be that easily differentiated, if differentiated at all. Indeed, the more pages of his book manuscript Alan reads, the more he (and characters around him) realizes that everything happening to him mirrors events described in *Departure*. This ontological confusion results in many uncanny moments in which certain events are first described in the manuscript before they do, in fact, happen in the 'real' world of the game and experienced as enacted reality by the player. In the opening moments of the game's fifth episode, for example, Alan and Barry are in prison after having been arrested by FBI agent Robert Nightingale, who believes that Alan killed his wife. When the lights abruptly go out in the Sheriff's office and Sheriff Sarah Breaker wants to release Alan and Barry from their prison cell, Nightingale experiences a déjà vu, looks at the manuscript, and is suddenly snatched by the Dark Presence, never to be seen again. The FBI agent loses two pages of the manuscript which read:

> Nightingale tried to make sense of the manuscript. It was disjointed and strange. He didn't understand half of it, but it all rang true, impossibly true.

He took out his hip flask when he reached the page that described how he reached the page that made him take out his hip flask.

It wasn't the booze that made his mind reel.

Nightingale felt the situation veering out of his control, but the gun at least felt steady in his hands. He was ready to fire, resolved that he would let this happen over his dead body – and yet he hesitated.

He had seen this moment before, read it in the page. He was transfixed by the déjà vu and the horror that he was a character in a story someone had written. Then the monstrous presence burst in behind him and dragged him into the night.[22]

One may be tempted to connect this narrative short-circuit to Jean Baudrillard's ideas concerning hyperreality in which 'the signs of the real' precede and eventually substitute 'the real.'[23] However, *Alan Wake* does not take it quite that far, for the gametext 'leaves the principle of reality intact,'[24] as there is a world (if not more than one) external to the simulacral world that Alan had inhabited for so long. After all, in the end, Alan learns that the only way to free Alice and destroy the elusive power is to write an appropriate ending to *Departure*. In order to do so, however, Alan has to be replaced by his double, Mr Scratch, in the simulacral world he has come to know, in which Alan ceases to exist, while Alan begins to inhabit a parallel universe of sorts (Alan describes the space as 'a strange zone beyond our world'[25]), transgressing ontological boundaries in the process.[26] This parallel universe, presented in vapid colours and in which Alan has practically nothing to do but use his old-school typewriter in order to 'crack open the door' and write himself out of his story,[27] proves to be the 'real' world, which, however, only Alan and Zane seem to be aware of.

Despite all the stylistic tricks reminiscent of postmodernism *Alan Wake* plays, the gametext thus presents a rather modern worldview – a world in which the 'real' has not been entirely submerged by simulacra yet. At one point in the game, Alan notes that, for him, 'the supernatural had always been nothing but a metaphor for the human psyche.'[28] Even though the 'had been' might indicate a change of perspective caused by the events in Bright Falls, Alan maintains pre-postmodern way of thinking until the very end, for his only goal is to escape the story and (re-?)enter reality. In addition, *Alan Wake*'s incredible amount of self-reflexive moments asks players to consider such a comment as a means to untangling the narrative mystery. And, indeed, Alan's comment presents an approach to decode the gametext (on one level, at least), since it underlines that the constant metaleptic transgressions employed in the narrative are a metaphor for the human psyche, for all of the metalepses depict 'the subject as . . . pathologically divided between reality and phantasy,'[29] that is, in a constant process of identifying with (positively or negatively) idealized images.[30]

On another level, *Alan Wake* touches upon a similarly fundamental aspect of human existence. As Brian McHale already stressed some twenty-five years ago, metalepses are eventually all about life and death, and death comes 'with the end of discourse and silence.'[31] Tellingly, Alan notes that if he stops writing, 'the world [he's] making dies.'[32] Of course, due to the various narrative short-circuits presented in the gametext, stopping to write would also result in Alan's death – or maybe not? This question cannot be conclusively answered. And this insight proves key to understanding *Alan Wake*. This ambiguity, this uncertainty must be accepted and it concerns not only the boundaries between reality and artifice, but also 'the boundaries between our living selves and our dead.'[33]

3. Stepping Into and Out of the Storyworld

Alan Wake's metalepses do, however, also open up some interesting points concerning the digital convergence culture we are all participating in. The metalepses discussed above engage in a constant process of 'remediation' by not so much reflecting on videogames' characteristics,[34] but rather the medium's role in the contemporary mediascape. Establishing this self-reflexive connection to the media environment surrounding it allows *Alan Wake* to 'explor[e] how stories are told across media' in the age of transmedia storytelling.[35] Although the producers and distributors of *Alan Wake* have utilized a veritable storytelling machinery to transmedially expand the game's narrative by publishing a novel, a (of course fictional) report on the events in Bright Falls, and a six-episode live-action web series that serves as a prequel to the game (not to mention the more recent use of twitter in combination with a website in order to drop clues regarding the sequel's plot and its connections to the first game[36]), it should be stressed that the process of telling stories across media should not be conceived a one-way street, but rather a dialogic phenomenon.

John Fiske's ground-breaking study *Understanding Popular Culture* argued already more than twenty-five years ago that audiences frequently resist what Stuart Hall called the 'dominant meaning' communicated by mass media.[37] In his book *Textual Poachers*, Henry Jenkins went a step further by emphasizing that fans are not merely passive consumers of mass entertainment, but active agents who appropriate the material provided by 'rework[ing] the program ideology . . . in order to make the texts speak to different perspectives.'[38] However, the emergence of Web 2.0 and 'participatory culture' has tremendously affected scholarly investigation, for '[t]he debate now centers on the terms of our participation, not whether spectatorship is active or passive.'[39] In this media environment filled with potentially active prosumers, fans 'create their own original fictional narratives based upon and around videogames,'[40] thus 'expand[ing] the [transmedia] world in a variety of directions.'[41]

'What does this have to do with metalepsis in *Alan Wake*?' one might wonder. More than one would at first imagine. Indeed, by looking at Andrew Blake's (unfinished) fan fiction tellingly entitled 'Andrew Blake,'[42] one will quickly understand how important some fan productions are to discussing metalepsis in the contemporary mediascape. Blake's text, the first episode of which was published nearly two years after *Alan Wake*'s Xbox 360 release, is set two years after the events depicted in the game. The annual Deer Fest is about to be celebrated in Bright Falls when 16-year-old Andrew Blake and his parents arrive in town. Andrew has a soft spot for the supernatural and is fascinated by radio show host Pat Maine's story about the disappearance of celebrity writer Alan Wake two years earlier in the area. One night, Andrew's parents disappear from their cabin in a scene that very much resembles Alice's disappearance in *Alan Wake*. Andrew gets hit on his head, passes out, and realizes later on that he cannot remember what happened in the last three days. After a quick turn of events, he first finds himself incarcerated and then in the middle of the on-going battle between those possessed by the Dark Presence and those who are not.

In her illuminating piece on metalepsis in fan fiction and vidding, Tisha Turk argues that '[p]articipatory culture is inherently . . . metaleptic,' for

> immersion in the fantext requires not only engaging in the pretense that the
> fictional world of the source text is real . . ., but also engaging in the pretense
> that the fictional world of the source text and/or that the characters in the fan
> work are contiguous with those of the source text.[43]

This is a sound observation, indeed, but 'Andrew Blake' works on a different level, too, for Blake – much like postmodernist writers from John Barth to Woody Allen – creates a

double that enters the fictional universe just as much as his 'real' self becomes part of the storyworld that segues into reality. In fact, 'Andrew Blake' thus depicts two different kinds of immersion – one more distanced (a kind of 'projected identity'[44]), the other one completely given in to the story.[45] In other words, the fan fiction 'simultaneously establish[es] and deliberately break[s] down the separation between [user] and character.'[46] Yet while the previous quote is taken from in an insightful article by Annika Waern on 'bleed', that is, character identification, in *Dragon Age: Origins* (2009), what 'Andrew Blake' is indicative of is not so much identification with characters (after all, the game's protagonist is only briefly referred to by name), but immersion in a storyworld that becomes part of the user's life (story).

4.   Our Doubles – Our Selves

        Yet Blake's fan fiction is not only suggestive of how far immersion in a fictional universe can truly go, for it also highlights the participatory dimension established between user and game(text) so characteristic of videogames. This observation leads back to *Alan Wake* per se, since the game's metalepses are not restricted to the diegetic realities depicted in the game. As Bob Rehak outlines, avatars 'appear on screen in place of, indeed as direct *extensions* of, the [player]: sites of continuous identification within a diegesis.'[47] However, Rehak also highlights that any direct one-to-one correspondence between users and their avatars is overly simplistic, because 'players actually exist with their avatars in an unstable dialectic whose essential heterogeneity should not be elided.'[48] This notion of player participation brings the present analysis to full circle by returning to the idea of computers and videogame consoles as metaleptic machines, for *Alan Wake* suggests that such a one-to-one correspondence between player and Alan does, in fact, apply to the game in certain respects.

        Chief among these correspondences is the fact that *Alan Wake* – like all videogames created so far – lacks a truly interactive dimension. Even though players might be given many choices and arrive at different narrative closures in contemporary videogames (albeit not in *Alan Wake*'s case, as there are neither multiple ways to solve problems, nor alternative endings), actions are restricted by the respective programmes. In the gameworld, Alan comes to realize that his life is to a great extent predetermined by the manuscript for *Departure* despite being able to influence certain aspects of his life – most importantly, saving Alice, although this feat requires a great sacrifice. In a way, this experience mirrors the player's when playing *Alan Wake*. Indeed, throughout the game, 'there are periods in which the player is in control of gameplay and at others not, creating a dynamic rhythm between self-determination and pre-determination,'[49] for cinematics repeatedly disrupt the participatory experience, taking 'control away from the player,' thus 'reinforc[ing] the sense that a metaphysical "authorial" force is at work, shaping the logic of the game.'[50] This metaludic dimension raises players' 'awareness of being limited by the rules of the game, of not being able to entirely freely roam the gameworld, of not being allowed a truly interactive experience.'[51]

        However, Alan is likened to the player on a much grander scale, too. As was already indicated above, Todorov highlights that the 'supernatural is born out of language.'[52] *Alan Wake* follows in Todorov's footsteps by suggesting that the Dark Presence is merely a linguistic construct and in the process lays bare its own artificiality, as well. However, the gametext adds a crucial dimension to Todorov's argument by underlining – in a truly postmodernist fashion – that the borderlines between reality and artifice have become blurry. In his ruminations spurred by 9/11, Slavoj Žižek argued that '[t]he ultimate . . . paranoiac fantasy' of (post-)postmodern subjects is 'start[ing] to suspect that the world [they are] living in is a fake, a spectacle staged to convince [them] that [they are] living in a real world.'[53] For a long time, this realization seems to be the root of the horrors experienced by many of *Alan Wake*'s characters, too, as they play their roles in their 'life stories' just as much as players perform their real-world roles in the

stories we tend to call life ('written' by an 'Author God', whose simulacral existence predetermines ours?). Arguably, this (post-)postmodern existence has assumed hyperreal qualities that make it increasingly difficult to differentiate between the virtual lives of these characters and our 'real' lives.[54] Yet Alan Wake's personal horror is of a slightly different kind: At the conclusion of his metaleptic crossings into various universes, Alan is not the one living in a world of simulacra, but outside of it, in a dull, monotonous world characterized by 'all work and no play' – to allude to one of the numerous intertexts *Alan Wake* references – while the ones he loves most are caught in a spectacular world of fakery. This is what Alan's horror is about, at the end of the day: Through repeated metaleptic transgressions, Alan Wake is not only likened to the author and creator of his life, the one responsible for Alan's destiny, that is, but also to the gamer sitting in front of the monitor, TV, or projection screen who is trying to escape everyday reality and immerse in a fictional universe for a few hours by controlling and – in a way – stepping into a virtual double. In effect, the gametext thus welcomes players to (or maybe even warns players of) a desert of the real – more *The Matrix*'s version thereof than Baudrillard's or Žižek's, mind you – that can be metaleptically entered and exited at will. In effect, *Alan Wake* draws an image of human existence that is intricately (inter)connected with virtual presence(s) and thus suggests that human subjectivity has become increasingly 'fragmented, decentered, and . . . schizophrenic' in this world,[55] as human beings enact their life stories in physical reality and perform various roles in multiple virtual realities, not necessarily simultaneously, but rather alternatingly. And this existence as both real living and breathing creatures and virtual embodiments that constantly transgresses ontological boundaries may be considered monstrous, indeed.

Notes

[1] Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 4: 2.

[2] Sigmund Freud, 'The "Uncanny",' 1919, trans. James Strachey, in *Sigmund Freud, Vol. 14: Art and Literature*, ed. Albert Dickson (New York: Penguin, 1990), 340.

[3] Ibid., 364.

[4] Ibid., 367.

[5] Monika Fludernik, 'Scene Shift, Metalepsis, and the Metaleptic Mode,' *Style* 37, no. 4 (2003), 392–396.

[6] Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980), 234.

[7] Werner Wolf, 'Metalepsis as a Transgeneric and Transmedial Phenomenon: A Case Study of the Possibilities of "Exporting" Narratological Concepts,' in *Narratology Beyond Literary Criticism: Mediality – Disciplinarity*, ed. Jan Christoph Meister, Tom Kindt, and Wilhelm Schernus (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2005), 91; original in italics.

[8] For a detailed discussion, see Karin Kukkonen's introduction to *Metalepsis in Popular Culture* (2011).

[9] Sonja Klimek, 'Metalepsis and Its (Anti-)Illusionist Effects in the Arts, Media and Role-Playing Games,' in *Metareference across Media: Theory and Case Studies*, ed. Werner Wolf, Katharina Bantleon, and Jeff Thoss (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009), 184.

[10] Sonja Klimek, 'Metalepsis in Fantasy Fiction,' in *Metalepsis in Popular Culture*, ed. Karin Kukkonen and Sonja Klimek (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2011), 37.

[11] *New Nightmare*, directed by Wes Craven (1994; Los Angeles, CA: New Line Cinema, 2011), Blu-Ray.

[12] Granted, Freddy is merely resurrected in teenagers' dreams. However, the fact that he repeatedly ends up in the real world (usually toward the end of the respective movie) supports the argument.

[13] Metalepses repeatedly occur in the movies belonging to the Elm Street franchise – in the first film (1984), final girl Nancy succeeds in first taking Freddy's hat and then Freddy from the world of dreams into the real world, in *Dream Masters* (1988), a character is sucked into the reality of an embedded movie, in *Dream Child* (1989), characters step into a comic-within-the-movie, and in *Freddy's Dead* (1991), Freddy pulls another character into a videogame-within-the-movie.

[14] Marie-Laure Ryan, *Avatars of Story* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 224-226.

[15] *Alan Wake*, developed by Remedy Entertainment (Redmond, WA: Microsoft Game Studios, 2010), Xbox 360.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, trans. Richard Howard (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1975), 82.

[19] *Alan Wake*'s lead writer Sam Lake has acknowledged the influences of Paul Auster's *The Book of Illusions* (2002), Bret Easton Ellis' *Lunar Park* (2005), and Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves* (2000) on the gametext, see

http://community.remedygames.com/showthread.php?t=1844, all of which share the theme of ontological confusion with *Alan Wake*. However, especially the connections to Danielewski's post-postmodern haunted house tale go much deeper.

[20] *Alan Wake*.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993), 2.

[24] Ibid., 3.

[25] *Alan Wake*.

[26] *Alan Wake*'s diegetic space is filled with monitors and TV screens, some of which show episodes of the TV show-within-the-game *Night Springs*, others provide looks into the past, and some offer glimpses into this alternative universe.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Andrew J. Webber, *The Doppelgänger: Double Visions in German Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 1.

[30] Although this psychological dimension already plays an important role in *Alan Wake,* especially the two DLC episodes (which are part of the PC release), in which Alan and the player metaphorically re-experience Alan's psychological trauma, it is even more emphasized in the game's follow-up, *Alan Wake's American Nightmare* (2012), in which Alan has to constantly confront his evil doppelgänger.

[31] Brian McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction* (London: Methuen), 222.

[32] *Alan Wake*.

[33] Martin Jay, 'Forcefields: The Uncanny Nineties,' *Salmagundi* 108 (1995): 21.

[34] Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000).

[35] Racquel Gonzales, '"This must be a bad movie": Genre and Self-Reflexivity in *Alan Wake*,' *FlowTV* 12, no. 5 (2010): n. pag., http://flowtv.org/2010/07/this-must-be-a-bad-movie/, accessed December 2, 2012.

[36] See https://twitter.com/SamLakeRMD/status/209048041888559105 and the website linked to in the tweet.

[37] John Fiske, *Understanding Popular Culture*, 2nd Edition (New York: Routledge, 2011), 23. Stuart Hall, 'Encoding, Decoding,' in *The Cultural Studies Reader*, 3rd Edition, ed. Simon During (New York: Routledge, 2007), 483-487.

[38] Henry Jenkins, *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 176.

[39] Henry Jenkins, 'Why Fiske Still Matters,' in *Understanding Popular Culture*, 2nd Edition (New York: Routledge, 2011), xxx.

[40] James Newman, *Playing with Videogames* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 51.

[41] Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 116.

[42] Andrew Blake [thedrew2639], 'Andrew Blake,' *FanFiction.net*, March 29-October 12, 2012, http://www.fanfiction.net/s/7968630/1/Andrew-Blake, accessed December 2, 2012.

[43] Tisha Turk, 'Metalepsis in Fan Vids and Fan Fiction,' in *Metalepsis in Popular Culture*, ed. Karin Kukkonen and Sonja Klimek (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2011), 99-100.

[44] Zach Waggoner, *My Avatar, My Self: Identity in Video Role-Playing Games* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2009), 156.

[45] Alison McMahan is only one of many scholars to highlight that there is both diegetic and non-diegetic immersion (68-69).

[46] Annika Waern, '"I'm in love with someone that doesn't exist!" Bleed in the Context of a Computer Game,' *Journal of Gaming and Virtual Worlds* 3, no. 3 (2011): 240.

[47] Bob Rehak, 'Playing at Being: Psychoanalysis and the Avatar,' in *The Video Game Theory Reader*, ed. Mark J. P. Wolf and Bernard Perron (New York: Routledge, 2003), 103; italics in original.

[48] Ibid., 104.

[49] Tanya Krzywinska, 'Hand-On Horror,' in *ScreenPlay: Cinema/Videogames/Interfaces*, ed. Geoff King and Tanya Krzywinska (London: Wallflower Press, 2002), 207.

[50] Ibid., 211.

[51] Michael Fuchs, '"My name is Alan Wake. I'm a writer": Narrative Complexity in the Age of Transmedia Storytelling,' in *Game On, Hollywood: Essays on the Intersection of Video Games and Cinema*, ed. Gretchen Papazian and Joseph Michael Sommers (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2013), 147.

[52] Todorov, 82.

[53] Slavoj Žižek, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real!* (New York: Verso Books, 2002), 12.

[54] In the context of this argument, see also Michael Fuchs, 'Hauntings: Uncanny Doubling in *Supernatural* and *Alan Wake*,' *Textus: English Studies in Italy* 25, no. 3 (forthcoming).

[55] Jeffrey Sconce, *Haunted Media: Haunted Media: Electronic Presence from Telegraphy to Television* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000), 171.

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