Torchwood's trans-transmedia: Media tie-ins and brand 'fanagement'

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Abstract:

Taking the BBC Wales/Starz TV programme *Torchwood* as a case study, this article focuses on what have been termed "media tie-ins" (Clarke 2009), i.e. books and audios that utilise characters/events of the television series. Although such tie-ins may not appear to wholly fit Henry Jenkins's (2006) definition of "transmedia storytelling", insofar as they do not obviously contribute to a single storyline across media platforms, these products nonetheless expand the hyperdiegetic world of *Torchwood*, thereby acting as a form of transmedia narrative. In this piece, I challenge the notion that transmedia extensions automatically or necessarily give fans more of what they want (coherence/continuity). I introduce the term "trans-transmedia" to emphasise how these paratexts do not only move across different media (from TV to radio/CD/download/novel/DVD/web), but also move across industry and fan discourses (Bolin 2011; Hills 2010a). I argue that, in *Torchwood*'s case, media tie-ins have been utilised to respond to fan criticisms of the TV show's developing narratives, attempting to quell and deactivate negative fan commentary. Trans-transmedia is thus not simply about serving fans; it is also about seeking to manage and protect the brand value of a TV series, thus involving a form of discursive "fanagement". Fan expectations and dissatisfactions are problematically engaged with, and disciplined and contained, at the level of niche paratexts rather than in the TV show *Torchwood* itself.

Keywords: brand, fandom, media tie-ins, *Torchwood*, transmedia.

Counting *Children of Earth* and *Miracle Day* as a single story each, *Torchwood* has 28 televised tales running across 41 episodes. However, there have also been 17 novels, a collection of short stories – comprising 5 different titles – 7 radio plays, and 10 original audio books (Parker 2010). *Torchwood: Miracle Day* was accompanied by an animated motion comic, *Web of Lies*, whilst series 2 was accompanied by an alternate reality game involving the character Abigail Crowe (Ford 2008a and 2008b:165). Coincidentally, this

makes a total of 41 TV episodes and 41 stories across other media, as of June 2012. Factoring in assorted short stories and comic strips published in the now-defunct *Torchwood: The Official Magazine*, there is more official *Torchwood* story content *not* on television than otherwise.

In the following discussion, I will therefore consider whether *Torchwood*'s media tie-ins, i.e. new, official stories told outside its originating medium of TV, can be considered as "transmedia storytelling" following Jenkins's (2006) influential definition. I will focus, in particular, on the most recent iteration of *Torchwood*, *Miracle Day*, along with its accompanying online extension (*Web of Lies*), its three "prequel" novels and its four "sequel" audios. I will argue that Jenkins's approach needs some modifications in this context, in particular to address tensions between *Torchwood*'s industrial status and the reading practices of its divided fandom. With regards to this problematic, *Torchwood*'s transmedia extensions display a further 'trans-' quality: one of moving across industrial/fan practices. I will hence suggest that the show's transmedia stories need to be seen not only as moving across media platforms, but also as travelling across discourses (of brand management and fan activity). Theories of transmedia storytelling which assume newfound or relative harmony between the (TV/film) industry and fan readings/responses potentially downplay the extent to which transmedia can act as a sort of 'trans-transmedia', uneasily bridging fan and branding practices (Mann 2009; Johnson 2012) whilst simultaneously traversing media platforms. I will thus argue that *Torchwood*'s media tie-ins act as a sort of transmedia 'fanagement': responding to, and anticipating, fan criticisms, as well as catering for specific fractions of fandom who might otherwise be at odds with the unfolding brand, and attempting to draw a line under fan resistance to diegetic and production changes. Unlike "fan-tagonism" (Johnson 2007) which symbolically disciplines fan practices by incorporating images of fandom into the TV text's diegesis, transmedia 'fanagement' appropriates fan readings in a similarly disciplining manner, but at a niche, paratextual level.

In order to develop this argument, I will begin by re-reading Jenkins' important work on transmedia storytelling (2006, 2007, 2011). I will then move on to consider *Torchwood* more generally in the second section of this essay, before finally focusing on *Miracle Day* and its specific transmedia offshoots.

Hyperdiegetic world building and market logic: does transmedia storytelling give fans what they want?

The term "transmedia storytelling" has been defined by Henry Jenkins as "a process where integral elements of a fiction get dispersed systematically across multiple delivery channels for the purpose of creating a unified and coordinated entertainment experience" (Henry Jenkins 2007 online). For Jenkins there is an aesthetic unity or coherence constructed via transmedia storytelling: in essence one story, one fiction, is told by virtue of its narrative elements being distributed across platforms. There are a couple of important dimensions to this process. One is that the narrative world can be distinctively built up, fleshed out, and

layered through transmedia storytelling such that it becomes an immensely rich space capable of sustaining a great volume of fan engagement over time. World-building therefore becomes a key concern of transmedia storytelling:

> More and more, storytelling has become the art of world building, as artists create compelling environments that cannot be fully explored or exhausted within a single work or even a single medium. The world is bigger than the film [or TV series – MH], bigger even than the franchise – since fan speculation and elaborations also expand the world in a variety of directions… World-making follows its own market logic, at a time when filmmakers are as much in the business of creating licensed goods as they are in telling stories (Jenkins 2006:114—5).

As Jenkins observes in *Convergence Culture*, world-making means that "a hardcore fan" can devote "close attention [to the mise-en-scene] as details add to… understanding" of the diegetic space. Furthermore, Jenkins notes that "some fans trace these [world building] tendencies back to *Blade Runner* (1982)", giving rise to the not inconsiderable irony that a 1980's box office failure – most especially its emphasis on art direction and design (Hills 2011:44—9) – can now be taken to prefigure a whole commercial mode of transmedia storytelling. Elsewhere, I have characterised cult film and TV storyworlds as "hyperdiegetic", arguing that only a fraction of any such world is ever actually seen on-screen, but by implication it continues, coherently and consistently, outside the media frame. Writers such as Derek Johnson (2009:37) and Carolyn Jess-Cooke (2012) have productively articulated the concept of hyperdiegesis with transmedia storytelling, pointing out that this leads to a "continually expanding hyperdiegesis" across "multimedia platforms and… tie-ins" (Jess-Cooke 2012:85). By stressing a kind of hyperdiegetic extension, Jenkins suggests that transmedia world-building "rewards" fan readings at the same moment that it responds to and enacts "market logic". Better serving audiences and building better media franchises are seen unproblematically as two sides of the same coin. Transmedia storytelling – thought of as an aesthetic of unity and coherence – is thus assumed by Jenkins to directly represent fan cultures' needs and requirements, unlike older models of franchising:

> The [established] licensing system typically generates works that are redundant (allowing no new character background or plot development), watered down (asking new media to slavishly duplicate experiences better achieved through the old), or riddled with sloppy contradictions (failing to respect the core consistency audiences expect within a franchise) (Jenkins 2006:105).

Although Jenkins suggests he is "not preoccupied with the "newness" of transmedia" (2011 online), allowing the consideration of radio plays and novels as much as ARGs, his work does

repeatedly set transmedia storytelling against older franchising/licensing models which are read as leading to pure narrative repetition, non-medium-specificity, and narrative incoherence. Jenkins even restates this exclusionary binary in his blog post on 'Transmedia 202': "What I want to exclude... is "business as usual" projects which are... simply slapping a transmedia label on the same old franchising practices we've seen for decades" (2011 online) But by reading non-transmedia franchising as "sloppy", Jenkins creates a somewhat monolithic view of 'old' licensing contrasted with 'new' coherent and integrated transmedia (Evans 2011:28). One difficulty with this model is that it implies that audience expectations and desires are unproblematically met by transmedia storytelling. Unlike prior licensing models, transmedia storytelling can supposedly deliver the "core consistency" that audiences expect – although I would argue that this emphasis on consistency is far more important to fan cultures than to any generalising notion of "the audience". Previous work on fandom, Jenkins's own among it (e.g. Jenkins 1992; Hills 2002), has demonstrated the extent to which fan cultures typically draw on series history to read for continuity (Tulloch and Jenkins 1995:147—9), and identify continuity errors before "retconning" them away, for example via fanfiction fixes which rework the canonical text so that contradictions are retroactively ironed out. If hyperdiegetic consistency constitutes a major fan requirement, then transmedia storytelling more-or-less implicitly brings the contemporary industry and fan readers into harmonious alignment, according to Jenkins' account.

And yet there are a number of difficulties with straightforwardly accepting this industry/fan alliance. For one thing, what if fan cultures are divided by radically different stances toward the unfolding text? While one group of fans may wish to return to an earlier phase in the franchise's development, another group may wish to keep up with current narratives and transmedia extensions. The avoidance of redundancy – where this merely reiterates character relationships – can be at odds with a section of fandom actively desiring such "redundancy" in the form of stories about characters who have left the current show, or who have been killed off. The notion that transmedia storytelling can unite industry and audience thus assumes that it can identify *a priori* what (fan) audiences want. But if sections of fandom want different things in terms of redundancy or consistency – with some fans seeming to enjoy identifying and resolving inconsistency – then Jenkins's binary of new transmedia versus old-style "licensing" cannot stand up to closer scrutiny.

And even if professionalized fans are recruited to write media tie-ins and hence create transmedia stories, there are typically industrial limitations which restrict the stories they can tell. The use of fans as transmedia creators and tie-in writers follows a specific industrial logic, as M.J. Clarke has identified:

> [T]ie-in writers use fandom and nonwork viewing habits as an informal source of research... Intimate connection with the series gives tie-in writers easy access to the minutiae of continuity, already seen to be paramount among the

concerns of licensors ... This fandom also hypothetically gives the writers easier access to their implied reader (Clarke 2009: 443-4).

Despite being fans of the TV show they are extending into other media, "tie-in writers must avoid fan speculation that would... fall in error of the principle of playing by the rules of the on-air series and... potentially invoke the ire of displeased fans" (Clarke 2009:445). As a result, tie-in writers must draw on extremely detailed, immersive fan knowledge of the text/canon, but without engaging in anything that could be construed as fan elaboration or speculation. Clarke suggests that the "closest analogue" for this "specific type of fandom" is "academic television studies" (2009:448) in which detailed knowledge of the text is called for, but that text cannot or should not be reworked (as it frequently is via practices of fanfic and fan interpretation).

Like scholars, then, tie-in writers are hemmed in or interpretively constrained, albeit by industrial parameters rather than by academia's institutional norms of textual accuracy. The type of transmedia storytelling represented by media tie-ins, even where this appears to empirically unite fandom and industry in the form of fans being paid to create official texts, thereby necessarily fails to unite dominant forms of fan practice (speculation and textual transformation) with industrial practice. As Göran Bolin usefully points out in *Value and the Media*:

> Transmedia storytelling... has the dual quality of being both market and non-market motivated, or, to put it the other way around, it is driven by both artistic and non-artistic motivation. And transmedia stories can also result from the engagement of both the media industry (for economic reasons) and non-market motivated fans (2011:98).

Taken together, Clarke and Bolin's points caution us from too easily or quickly equating "market logic" with fan service. And we also need to remember that Jenkins's discussion of transmedia storytelling in *Convergence Culture* is essentially a tale about Hollywood, and thus about American commercial culture. Nick Couldry has argued that international differences "are obscured by the generality of the term 'convergence culture'" (2011:498), and it can be helpful to consider convergence 'cultures' in the plural (2011:495). A similar argument was set out a few years before Couldry's polemic, this time by Jonathan Gray: "public service broadcasters such as... the BBC in the UK... can rarely deliver the same level of [transmedia] expansion as their American... commercial counterparts" (2008:95).

When analysing *Torchwood*'s transmedia stories, then, we need to supplement Jenkins's seminal framework from *Convergence Culture* with a number of additional concerns. Firstly, transmedia storytelling cannot automatically better serve fans by virtue of non-redundancy and consistency, since fractions of a fan culture may appreciate forms of "redundancy" and/or enjoy interpretively wrestling with degrees of narrative inconsistency.

Non-redundancy may actually bring transmedia storytelling into conflict with sections of fandom, whilst consistency can close down modes of fan reading (i.e. actively reading-for-continuity and retconning). Secondly, transmedia storytelling needs to be considered in its precise institutional and industrial context (commercial/public service/mainstream/niche) – one which is also likely to be a national context given the ongoing significance of national broadcasting arrangements and the rise of "national webs" (Lovink 2011:20). In the following section, I will carry these issues forward by relating them to detailed consideration of *Torchwood*'s tie-in novels and audios. Emphasising the need to consider these media tie-ins not only as transmedia stories, but also as trans-discourses or trans-practices that cut across industry and fandom, will mean focusing on them as instances of *trans*-transmedia.

Industry/fan tensions in *Torchwood*'s tie-ins: retconning, retro-storytelling, and globalising

Torchwood's transmedia storytelling has generally involved what might be thought of as 'old' media: radio plays, audio books, novels and magazines. Rather than being strongly oriented towards online brand extensions, *Torchwood* displays a form of public service transmedia. As such, this operates within the BBC's institutional agendas and aims, for example channelling *Torchwood*'s fans towards Radio 4 in the case of *Lost Souls* (Lidster 2008) and *The Lost Files* (Laight 2011; Scott 2011; Goss 2011a), thereby boosting the younger audience and the demographic reach for the BBC's upscale radio station. And the creation of audio books and novels (frequently drawing on a labour force of professionalized fans) also fits into a well-established pattern of BBC practices whereby its TV dramas can be commercialised and sold to a niche, fan market. The use of online transmedia material cannot be readily monetised by the BBC (given that it is not able to derive funding from advertising), ironically suggesting that BBC transmedia extensions tend towards old media because a commercial revenue stream can safely be derived without upsetting or destabilising the BBC's supposedly 'public service' position. *Torchwood*'s distinctively "low end" (Jenkins 2011) transmedia thus i) shepherds *Torchwood* fans to public service but "minority" media outlets in order to shore these up by making an argument for their audience reach, and ii) non-controversially monetizes fandom despite the BBC's status as a public service broadcaster.

Within this institutional context, *Torchwood*'s transmedia storytelling has also repeatedly repaired or retconned errors in the TV text:

> [F]ollowing… 'Cyberwoman'…, the official *Torchwood* website provided information… that attempted to correct… what some fans had regarded as a glaring error in the plot. Fans had asked how the eponymous Cyberwoman was not sucked into the void along with the rest of her kin during the climax to the *Doctor Who* episode 'Doomsday'… and the site retroactively explained away the

problem: "The only exceptions were those being converted with material entirely derived from this side of the void" (Perryman 2008:31).

And in a further example of this textual repair, *The Torchwood Archives* – a book collecting together material from the BBC America 'Captain's Blog' (Evans 2011: 182n15) – also retconned inconsistencies across series one episodes, such as the fact that nobody appeared to have noticed that Ianto was harbouring a Cyberwoman in the Hub's basement. According to *The Torchwood Archives*, Captain Jack had been investigating clues to this: "Energy surges in the lower areas of the Hub remain unexplained" (Russell 2008:58). Although these paratextual retcons could be interpreted as timely responses to fan anxieties and concerns (thereby protecting the *Torchwood* brand), they can also be read as closing down fan debate and discussion. In "Authorised Resistance: Is Fan Production Frakked?" Suzanne Scott puts forward the persuasive argument that we need "to be mindful of the creative restrictions [on fan debate] that come along with this breed of narrative expansion" (2008:217). Referring to podcasts from *Battlestar Galactica* showrunner Ronald D. Moore, as well as webisodes, Scott points out how "an abundance of "authorized" convergence content is also a threat" to ways in which fans can work within canon and produce fanfic and their own fan-cultural interpretations (2008:215). Since it continues to be official, fan-targeted transmedia can use this status to foreclose fan discussion, and shut down fan creativity and productivity. In *Torchwood*'s case, retconning potential continuity errors in series one may seem to give fans what they want, but this process also appropriates fan practices. Whereas in the past, fans themselves would have retconned *Torchwood*'s questionable TV narratives, now BBC blogs, books, and websites do this for and on behalf of fandom. Official transmedia retconning – placing brand extensions in a dynamic relationship with the overarching hyperdiegesis – actively rationalises the show's seriality into newfound "core consistency", rather than simply displaying such coherence and unity. This is very much a trans-discourse or trans-practice, migrating from fan culture into official production (from fanon to canon) in a way that refutes specific fan audience criticism of the brand whilst also blocking off avenues for fans' productivity. *Torchwood*'s hyperdiegesis is discursively patrolled in such moments, with transmedia paratexts (Gray 2010) feeding back into the 'hub' of the TV series.

  Torchwood's tie-ins attempt to forestall fan critique in other ways. As well as occasional retconning, *Torchwood*'s transmedia storytelling has also insistently looked backward to prior phases of the TV series, engaging in a sort of "retro" narration whereby old settings (Cardiff and the Hub) are featured in new stories, along with the return of characters no longer featured in the TV series (Owen, Tosh, Ianto, Suzie). In one sense, this harking back to hyperdiegetic pasts recognises and legitimates fan cultural capital (encyclopaedic knowledge regarding textual continuity), but it also responds to sections of fandom who have strongly resisted, and contested, changes in the TV show. Such fan resistance is notable, for instance, on the amazon.co.uk pages for the latest audio books, set

after *Miracle Day*. As the show moves forward via these non-TV continuations, fans have tagged the products with labels such as "fanfiction is better and free", "not torchwood", and "not worth the money" (http://www.amazon.co.uk/Torchwood-Red-Skies-Joseph-Lidster/dp/1445871963, accessed 26/5/12).

Seemingly once again responding to fan critique, a number of *Torchwood*'s tie-ins are thus significantly commemorative of *Torchwood*'s past phases as a TV show. Televised *Torchwood* has been reinvented in the move from series to series, arguably most radically in the post-Ianto Jones, US/UK change from series three to four, but also in the move to BBC2 (in series two), and the move to BBC1 without Tosh and Owen (in series three). The TV show *Torchwood* has been consistently retooled by its production teams (Hills 2010b), often to the dismay of dedicated fans. Tie-ins, target-marketed at the fan audience, have therefore offered a refuge from disliked transformations within the TV text. For a series whose brand ident has been "everything changes", tie-ins represent a chance to turn back the diegetic clock, resist change, and return to the "golden age" of series two, or the pre-series three line-up featuring Ianto. They have repeatedly honoured and commemorated *Torchwood*'s lost icons and character relationships. For example, *Lost Souls* features a number of scenes where Jack and Gwen discuss how they feel about the loss of Tosh and Owen, working to create "emotional realism" (Hills 2010a:100) rather than swiftly moving on from the end of series two, and so reassuring fans that these characters haven't been forgotten. *The House of the Dead* (Goss 2011a) not only enables Jack and Ianto to be reunited post-*Children of Earth*, but also to proclaim their love for one another. This honours the Jack-Ianto relationship, providing fan service for loyal audiences who felt the pairing was poorly treated by the events of series 3.

It is not just deceased characters that are brought back, or remembered, so as to proffer reparation for the TV text's movement ever onward into new formats. The Hub itself is commemorated in *Long Time Dead* (Pinborough 2011), a novel that tells one more tale about Cardiff after Torchwood have left the city. This does not fill in a gap in *Torchwood*'s timeline, since the official TV narrative has quite simply moved on: from its point of view, there is no gap to be bridged here. However, from the alternative point of view of fandom mourning the loss of the Hub, and the show's Cardiff Bay setting, *Long Time Dead* revisits and commemorates the centrality of the Hub to *Torchwood*'s own history. Rather than merely extending *Torchwood* into non-TV media, these tendencies permit the brand's TV developments to be temporarily reversed via transmedia retro-storytelling. As Lynnette Porter has remarked, *Torchwood*'s insistent reworkings from series to series indicate "a new facet of television storytelling, in which an established TV series can become anything needed in the marketplace, despite its original premise or genre" (2011:157). And where a brand becomes so powerfully marked by discontinuity, disruption and dis-unity (significantly *contra* Jenkins's assumptions about the contemporary media franchise and its transmedia storytelling), then sections of fandom are likely to become vocal online opponents of what they deem to be textual inauthenticity: "It seems that many fans of the original, Welsh

culture-steeped series were happier in the Old World of *Torchwood* and continue to play with those themes through fan videos, fanfiction and fan art" (Porter 2011:157). And, we need to add, through official tie-ins which restore the character of Ianto Jones to *Torchwood* by using a pre-*Children of Earth* setting, or which return to the show's grounding in Cardiff.

These retro adventures – out of alignment with the brand's current positioning and retooling – nonetheless acknowledge faultlines and fractures in the show's fan reception. They blatantly serve a fraction of *Torchwood* fandom, acting trans-discursively as an appropriation of fan critique and commentary. But such a move also reinforces an industrial rift: *Torchwood* becomes powerfully split between transmedia tie-ins which are free to hark back to prior incarnations of the show, and the TV series as a symbolic 'hub' which continues to be repositioned and reinvented for an international audience. It is only at the level of niche tie-ins (almost under the radar of the TV series and the international TV industry) that 'retro' fan service can be indulged by the likes of comic strips, audios, and novels (all of which have featured fan favourite Ianto Jones after his demise in *Children of Earth*). Far from sustaining "core consistency", retro-storytelling actively engages with specific fan "needs" (Couldry 2012:178). One difficulty, though, is that these niche paratexts may not always flow across national and linguistic boundaries. While *Torchwood* the TV series has been dubbed and sold overseas (e.g. in France), it has rarely been adjudged economically viable for its transmedia tie-ins to be likewise translated (or re-recorded in the case of audio readings/performances). As a result, niche forms of transmedia storytelling which may address transnational fan cultures are less likely to be caught up in "transmedial flow" (Bould 2012:152) *contra* the enthusiastic discussion of such flows in *Convergence Culture* (Jenkins 2006:2). *Torchwood*'s trans-transmedia may migrate across fan and industry practices, but it tends to lack transcultural flow, as well as symbolically containing fan resistance by responding to this only at a niche level, sequestered from the TV series as 'hub' and as the major point of industrial and brand value.

Ironically, given that *Torchwood*'s tie-ins do not always travel 'globally' with the show, falling by the wayside as part of the supporting transmedia "'noise' of television [and its] socio-historical context" (Brunsdon 2010:67), these very tie-ins have occasionally sought to transform the *Torchwood* brand precisely by globalizing its hyperdiegesis. Although the same move was ultimately made in *Torchwood: Miracle Day* – which I shall discuss shortly – this development was very much prefigured and road-tested at the level of transmedia storytelling.

In its initial guise, *Torchwood* was designed to be a "very easily budgeted format show for BBC3" (Davies in Darren Scott 2011:45) with its regular characters, SUV, and Hub based underneath Cardiff Bay all being easily replicated in tie-in novels: "programme brands need to provide opportunities for extension… what [brand manager] Ian Grutchfield … refers to as having 'transferrable characteristics'" (Johnson 2012:160). *Torchwood*'s design meant that formatted elements such as Captain Jack Harkness's immortality, the distinctive Cardiff setting and diegetic "Rift", and even the programme's opening voice-over, all

constituted highly transferrable characteristics. However, extending the TV show into a series of novels – and into its first BBC Radio 4 play *Lost Souls* (Lidster 2008) after series two – meant that other media beyond television could be utilised in distinct ways. As radio producer Kate McAll observes of *Lost Souls*, a story based at the Large Hadron Collider, CERN, and broadcast as part of Radio 4's 'Big Bang Day' publicizing the LHC's switch-on: "How much would it have cost to fly everybody to Switzerland and film there? A hell of a lot more than doing it on radio! That's why we're the first people to take Torchwood abroad" (McAll in Hugo 2008:15). Later audio adventures would also introduce "Torchwood India" in Delhi (Goss 2009), as well as featuring a submarine mission: "***Submission***, by Ryan Scott, would be a multi-million dollar movie, if it could even be shot at all. Taking in... a bustling Japanese harbour and US Destroyer, [and travelling] to the bottom of the Mariana Trench, it's nothing if not ambitious, and clearly shows one of the benefits of an audio-only story" (Coupe 2011 online).

And yet, using transmedia tie-ins to 'globalize' *Torchwood* threatened to undermine its series one and two transferrable characteristics. Such transmedia storytelling actively transformed, or even transgressed, the show's early brand identity. Repositioning the series as a globetrotting SF thriller rather than a show grounded in Cardiff meant potentially damaging its textual authenticity in fans' eyes, and it is notable that after visits to Switzerland and Delhi, *Torchwood*'s audio adventures tended to settle into a more Cardiff-centric approach. Likewise, the tie-in novels rarely stray from a Cardiff setting prior to *Miracle Day* and its series of prequels.

The logic behind 'globalizing' *Torchwood* in early transmedia extensions was partly an industrial one; although TV budgets wouldn't stretch to international filming, the series could be given a greater scope and scale on radio/audio. However, this common-sense approach (which also contrasts the budgetary limitations of television against radio and novel-writing) evidently brought the brand into tension with fan constructions of *Torchwood*'s textual authenticity. As blogger Cameron McEwan says in his review of one of the most recent *Torchwood* audio books – this time set on another planet rather than merely being internationally transposed – "lordy knows how the Cardiff loving fans feel about that" (McEwan 2012 online). As I have argued elsewhere, *Torchwood*'s transmedia storytelling has largely stepped back from this expansionist tendency, again attempting to draw on fan discourses of *Torchwood*'s 'identity' by focusing on non-TV stories marked as "Cardiff epic" (see Hills forthcoming).

What retconning, retro-storytelling and the movement away from 'globalising' transmedia stories all share is a sense of adopting fan interpretations and priorities in fan-targeted transmedia paratexts. Yet each of these manoeuvres does more than simply mirror fannish textual productivity *per se*. Official retconning closes down spaces for fan creativity; retro-storytelling responds to one segment of fandom, therefore potentially reinforcing fan divisions as well as cleaving specific fan responses from the 'mass' audience; and an internationalised *Torchwood* is seemingly dropped when it meets with fan resistance, only to

ultimately be reinstated in the "primary" TV text when industrial contexts and pressures call for fan readings to be ignored or assuaged by showrunner Russell T. Davies. Defending the decision to move to US/UK co-production on *Miracle Day*, Davies emphasised that Cardiff and Wales would remain as locations in the new look *Torchwood*, as well as seeking to reassure fans that this would follow established continuity: "People are wondering, 'Is it a reboot or a relaunch?' No: it's literally the same show, but transplants itself to America" (Davies in Berriman 2011:58). Here, Davies proffers "core consistency" not through transmedia storytelling – or arguably even via the text of *Miracle Day* itself, which diverges in vital ways from the character of Jack Harkness as set out in BBC Wales' *Torchwood* – but rather through paratextual discourses aimed at addressing fans' concerns. The transmedia consistency celebrated by *Convergence Culture* goes missing in this case, and what fans are left with are (hollow) discourses of continuity somewhat at odds with the broadcast text of *Miracle Day* (in which, for example, Jack Harkness's bisexuality was seemingly recoded as homosexuality). It is to this most recent TV iteration of *Torchwood*, and its cluster of transmedia extensions, that I will now turn.

Alongside, before and after "the miracle": transmedia storytelling surrounding *Torchwood: Miracle Day*

Although *Torchwood*'s various iterations have all been accompanied by media tie-ins, *Miracle Day* provoked a particular wealth of transmedia content. This is likely, in part, to be due to *Miracle Day*'s US/UK co-production, and to a greater perceived need for web-focused promotion in the US context. The 10-part motion comic *Web of Lies* was released alongside *Miracle Day*'s initial broadcast schedule; it was available via an iTunes app, before eventually being compiled and repurposed – minus its interactive puzzle-solving components – as a DVD extra. Introducing narrative imagery that was synchronised with the TV serial (e.g. the Soulless), the fact that *Web of Lies* was more significant in the US commercial context rather than in the UK's public service environment was evidenced by the fact that Starz *Miracle Day* website linked to it whereas the BBC's *Torchwood* page did not.

As well as this animated online/DVD paratext, *Miracle Day*'s first-run transmission was also accompanied by the staggered release of three prequel novels, *First Born* (Goss 2011b), *Long Time Dead* (Pinborough 2011) and *The Men Who Sold The World* (Adams 2011). And these were followed by four audio book sequels the next year: *Army of One* (Edginton 2012), *Fallout* (Llewellyn 2012), *Red Skies* (Lidster 2012), and *Mr. Invincible* (Morris 2012). *Miracle Day* thus enjoyed transmedia storytelling in three different media beyond its TV text (four if the repurposing of *Web of Lies* for DVD is included). Its July 14th 2011 UK TV premiere was also preceded by three Radio 4 plays, broadcast on July 11th, 12th and 13th. Unlike the other media tie-ins referred to, these radio plays did not form part of *Miracle Day*'s hyperdiegesis as prequels or continuations, although narrative elements such as Jack wondering if he might ever die (in Goss 2011a) did foreshadow the events of *Miracle*

Day (also resonating with advance publicity and promotion for series four, e.g. Davies in Berriman 2011).

Of these three radio plays, collectively dubbed *Torchwood: The Lost Files* (Laight 2011; Scott 2011; Goss 2011a), James Goss's *The House of The Dead* was perhaps most notable. Broadcast just one day before *Miracle Day* commenced in the UK, this drama sought to provide closure to the romance of Captain Jack Harkness and Ianto Jones (a character pairing celebrated as 'Janto' in fan discourse). A somewhat daring move, this transmedia intervention – in which Jack and Ianto are given a chance to declare their love to one another, before Jack has to finally say goodbye and close the rift – is certainly readable as blatant fan service. But at another level, it is also a canny management of fan desire. On the verge of *Miracle Day* and new TV *Torchwood*, *The House of The Dead* paratextually implies that fans should now, once and for all, let go of the past and move forward into a new chapter alongside the brand. As such, *The House of The Dead* attempts to draw a symbolic line under Ianto's death, and under the controversial events of *Children of Earth*. *Contra* scholarly arguments that transmedia storytelling keeps narratives open and ongoing, if not "never ending" (Jess-Cooke 2012:73; Miekle and Young 2012:79), this transmedia tale aims to close down fan speculation and provide (or even enforce) closure for fans who had refused to let go of 'Janto'. It can hardly be wholly accidental that the Radio 4 play offered on 'day zero' ahead of *Miracle Day* was very much aimed at placating Janto-inspired fan criticism, and thus hopefully protecting the fourth series from off-brand fan antagonism.

But this was only one brand management strategy amongst *Miracle Day*'s transmedia array. Other narrative extensions sought to paratextually cue audience readings of the TV series by emphasising aspects of its first episode. For instance, the prequel novel *First Born* opens with a sequence where Gwen and Rhys are pursued by a helicopter (Goss 2011b:8) and concludes with Gwen observing "Well, no sign of any helicopters" (2011b:251). Such a book-ending device drew readers' attention to a sequence in 4.01 'The New World' where "a helicopter chases people down a beach" (Davies in Berriman 2011:57). Advance publicity repeatedly referred to this scene as evidence of *Miracle Day*'s production values (see also Myles in Berriman 2011:57), and it is also dwelt upon in the 'FX Special' Region 2 DVD extra. In essence, episode 4.01's helicopter stunt was used as a "dispersible textual moment" (Hills 2008:32) which could be scattered across promotional interviews, special effects making-ofs, and tie-in novels, in order to paratextually reinforce a sense of *Miracle Day* as ambitious, big-budget TV spectacle. Images of multiple helicopters circling overhead are even incorporated into the Region 2 DVD cover of *Miracle Day*, promising a scale of spectacle which the TV show does not, in fact, deliver.

Other tie-ins use fleeting detail to anchor themselves in the diegesis of *Miracle Day*. For example, *Long Time Dead* – published 4th August 2011 – mentions "an unfamiliar name stencilled on an empty packing crate" in the ruins of the Cardiff Hub: "Colasanto" (2011:238). This implies that the corporation run by Captain Jack's lover in *Miracle Day*, Angelo Colasanto, is buying up remnants of Torchwood's alien technology, a piece of

narrative information which fits into the events of *Miracle Day* episodes 7 and 8 (first broadcast in the US on the 19th and 26th August, 2011). For the carefully attentive fan, then, Colasanto is buried in the text of *Long Time Dead* as a sort of 'Easter egg' or bonus; when the name is first mentioned in 1927 in *Miracle Day*, fans who have been keeping up with *Torchwood*'s transmedia releases will immediately recognise it as relevant to present-day Torchwood Cardiff. In this case, a significant narrative "kernel" of the TV serial – that Angelo has been collecting Torchwood technology in order to evade the miracle – is prefigured and supported by a seemingly inconsequential detail or narrative "satellite" in *Long Time Dead*. Retrospectively, the reference to Colasanto reinforces the narrative events of 4.08 'The End of the Road', but read without knowledge of *Miracle Day* episode eight it seems merely to be an excessive, odd piece of trivia. The status of this as a narrative satellite or kernel (Booth 2010) hence fluctuates depending on whether and when readers piece together *Long Time Dead* and *Miracle Day*. For those missing the link it is meaningless; for fans reading *Long Time Dead* in advance of Miracle Day 4.07 and 4.08 it could have cued a specific, knowledgeable reading of Angelo's TV appearance, and for those developing an encyclopaedic knowledge of *Torchwood*'s series history after the fact, it unifies the tie-in novel and the TV text.

As well as containing analogues of *Miracle Day*'s publicity, and diegetic 'Easter eggs' which shift between narrative satellite/kernel, it is striking that the prequels and *Web of Lies* both also work to integrate *Miracle Day* into *Torchwood*'s longer series history. Whereas the TV text is linked back to preceding series (name-checking Owen Harper, for example), such links are typically fleeting. In fact, given the historical timeline put forward by *Miracle Day* then the Families would have been involved in their scheming, unbeknown to Torchwood Cardiff, across the diegetic time frames of series one through to three. *Web of Lies* attempts to tackle this inconsistency and production contingency by reading (and writing) the events of *Miracle Day* back into *Torchwood*'s series history. To this end, "miracle day" is mirrored by a "missing day" from 2007 when Jack and Gwen are subjected to retcon (memory-wiping) gas so that they won't remember encountering a group intent on securing Jack's blood as a "key" to the Blessing. Gwen is shown to be in touch with Tosh, explicitly placing this "missing day" before the end of series two. The chemical retcon is used in gaseous form by *Torchwood*'s opponents, and as a result *Miracle Day*'s premise is itself retconned into events of *Torchwood* series one/two in such a way as to explain Jack and Gwen's (and the original texts') ignorance of events. Of course, extra-diegetically, *Torchwood* series one—three are ignorant of *Miracle Day*'s backstory for the simple real-world production reason that this storyline had not been conceived or planned for. *Web of Lies* thus converts production contingency and incoherence into hyperdiegetic continuity. It works, paratextually, to (retro)actively reshape *Torchwood*'s series memory into an overarching whole rather than a series of discontinuous retoolings.

It is not alone in this process, since the prequel novels *Long Time Dead* and *The Men Who Sold The World* also work to bridge the narrative themes and preoccupations of

Children of Earth with *Miracle Day*. Where *Web of Lies* seeks to retroactively integrate series four into series one and two, these novels seek to smooth out changes in narrative focus between series three and four. They take the political commentary of *Children of Earth*, where the UK government was forced to decide in favour of decimating its own population, and replay versions of this satirical, science-fictional critique. By "getting back to that *Children of Earth* stuff that worked so well" (Davies in Berriman 2011:56), the prequel novels more closely tie series three and four thematically together compared to the television text of *Miracle Day*. There is little emphasis on government decision-making in series four; instead the institutional focus moves to a medico-media-military frame, and to intelligence agencies such as the CIA, thus displacing the direct political commentary that so effectively and scathingly distinguished *Children of Earth*. By contrast with *Miracle Day*'s symbolic take on institutional politics, the prequel novels depict a coalition Deputy Prime Minister in the UK who is intent on selling Torchwood's lethal collection of alien artefacts to American bidders:

> "We're in a recession, and there's only so many cutbacks we can make before the cut is going to be running along our political throat, as it were. There's only so much we can blame the jobless scrounger element of society for… We need a cash injection and quickly. The Americans seem the obvious choice as far as we can see" (Pinborough 2011:232).

As well as drawing the political themes and tones of *Children of Earth* into *Miracle Day*'s diegetic frame, this also meta-textually cites *Torchwood*'s own situation where American money became the method of funding series four in the face of BBC cutbacks. And by the time of the third prequel novel, this unnamed Deputy PM who sports "a yellow tie" (Adams 2011:183) – and so presumably approximates to real-world Liberal Democrat Deputy PM Nick Clegg – is physically assaulted by one of his shadowy political 'servants':

> Mr Black charged across the office, grabbed the man by his boring tie and yanked his head sharply down so his forehead banged off the surface of his desk.
> "You can't—".
> Mr. Black proved him wrong by bouncing his face off the desk blotter again. This time it gave him a nosebleed…
> "I am…"
> "Nothing… You are a caretaker who holds the coats while the rest of us get on with the important stuff" (Adams 2011:182—3).

Pouring scorn on the UK coalition government which emerged after the 2010 General Election, these prequels have a far more referential approach to real-world capital-P Politics

than *Miracle Day*, thus bridging the concerns of series three and four, and bringing the narrative focal points of *Children of Earth* into closer alignment with *Miracle Day*'s diegesis.

Prequel novels and the *Web of Lies* hence function as paratextual bids for hyperdiegetic coherence, seeking to modify and overwrite the production contingencies created by *Torchwood*'s reinvention within different production contexts (e.g. as a BBC3 show, as a BBC1 show, as a Starz vehicle). By discursively re-packaging contingency as continuity they again anticipate and appropriate patterns of fan interpretation. Tulloch and Jenkins have demonstrated how fans' "particular competence is their intimate and detailed knowledge of the show" (1995:147), and that "discursive power in establishing the 'informed' exegesis" of a TV series is enacted within fan cultures (1995:150). With regards to textual continuity, fans have archetypally had the "power to gloss" series history "in their quest for meaning" (1995:147 and 149). *Torchwood*'s trans-transmedia seeks to industrially take back that power by paratextually glossing series history, thereby offering up an official integration of series one/two, three and four which papers over discontinuities and formatting disruptions. Although this may once more appear to 'give fans what they want', *Torchwood*'s textual history continues to be marked by irreconcilable continuity errors highlighted in fan readings (see e.g. Preddle 2011:468), and its official, fan-targeted hyperdiegetic glossing runs the risk of emphasising the fact that "core consistency" remains absent or problematic in the 'hub' of the TV series. Where coherence instead has to be retro-actively produced in transmedia stories, this niche, paratextual reparation potentially undermines itself by stressing the domination of production contingencies in relation to *Torchwood*'s TV texts.

As well as paratextually taking back "the power to gloss", or at least seeking to pre-empt fan debates, criticisms and interpretations, this mode of transmedia storytelling also follows a further industrial logic. The *Miracle Day* sequels are less concerned with installing diegetic coherence for fan readers, and more concerned with *Torchwood*'s continuation as a brand. The first two sequels recall the diegetic events of *Miracle Day* in passing; *Army of One* features Gwen and Rhys drawing out money for Esther's family, and characters in *Fallou*t ponder whether the miracle has returned. But in each case, *Miracle Day* is emptied out of meaning; it seems to have had no major impact on the diegetic world that Gwen, Rhys and Andy Davidson inhabit. And where a tv narrative "kernel" could be followed up on, e.g. the newfound immortality of Rex Matheson, then fan listeners are teased by references to this character who ultimately doesn't feature in *Army of One*. The sequels thus acknowledge *Miracle Day* but seemingly refuse to make any significant contribution to building on its diegetic consequences. The result is a curious sort of narrative 'holding pattern' where *Torchwood*'s future feels cyclical rather than linear or directional. The *Doctor Who Magazine* review of *Army of One* even describes the version of *Torchwood* represented here as "pretty much the same as it always was" (Bishop 2012:73).

However, these sequels are not purely repetitive. *Fallout* fleshes out the character of Andy Davidson, as he is given an unexpectedly heroic denouement, while *Red Skies*

transplants Torchwood and Captain Jack Harkness to a new world rather than the new world of America, stretching *Torchwood* somewhat uneasily into *Doctor Who*'s conventional SF territory. Indeed, the narrative of *Red Skies* hinges on the anomalous presence of Torchwood as a supposed God – "praise be to Torchwood... Torchwood is everything" – on the alien planet Jack has visited. *Red Skies* also suggests that Gwen Cooper may have met an unhappy fate, with this plot development motivating Jack's (re-)return to Earth in *Mr. Invincible*. Despite layering and thickening the world-building of *Torchwood*, these episodes do not significantly contribute to *Miracle Day* as a sjuzhet; in Jenkins's terms they would perhaps qualify as old-style "licensing" rather than genuine transmedia storytelling. Yet to dismiss these sequels as simply aesthetically uninteresting, or as old-style merchandising, would mean failing to perceive how their narrative mode in fact plays a crucial role for the BBC and for *Torchwood*. Such niche, transmedia paratexts maintain a brand presence; they offer a sort of looped continuation, keeping *Torchwood* ticking over and cycling through its hyperdiegetic back catalogue.

    Red Skies, for example, revisits a flashback from the series two episode 'Fragments' (in what amounts to a flashback to a flashback), whilst *Army of One* seeds its monstrous antagonist back into series one/two *Torchwood* featuring Owen and Tosh. And David Llewellyn's *Fallout* falls back on his own creation – the Russian equivalent of Torchwood, the KVI – which had earlier featured in tie-in novel *Trace Memory* (Llewellyn 2008). As such, these tie-ins insistently loop back through earlier moments of *Torchwood*'s history, making the explicit or implicit flashback their dominant aesthetic mode. Considered from one vantage point, these stories give fans what they want: they knowingly draw on series history and established continuity in order to coherently generate more episodic *Torchwood*. But seen from a different perspective, such brand iterations are ultimately more "a system of connection" rather than a meaningful continuation (Jess-Cooke 2012:48); that is, they primarily aim to keep fandom connected to the show, conserving brand loyalty and fan activity. Rather than failing to match up to definitions of transmedia storytelling, such stories – trailing in the wake of television seriality – act as trans-transmedia by hybridising fans' attention to continuity and series history with an industrial logic of brand presence and "*connective* response" (Jess-Cooke 2012:74). *Torchwood*'s fan fractions can re-connect with the brand through audios such as *Army of One*, *Fallout*, *Red Skies* and *Mr. Invincible*. As such, it was perhaps no accident that the *Miracle Day* sequels were released approximately one year after the premiere of series four, making them part of a lived cycle of *Torchwood* consumption for fans, and filling in what would otherwise be a gap year with no new TV series on the horizon. Where the prequels attempted to fill in the hyperdiegesis of *Torchwood*'s series history, the sequels attempt to fill in (fans') time, recognising rhythms of media production, e.g. annually broadcast series.

    I have previously described BBC Wales' *Doctor Who* as a "fanbrand" (Hills 2010a:66), arguing that it displays a consistency valued by fandom. In this analysis, I was too quick to equate branding with a notion of "core consistency" – an equation that is also played out in

Convergence Culture (Jenkins 2006). What *Torchwood* demonstrates, all too vividly, is that a contemporary TV brand can become profoundly inconsistent as it moves between different institutional contexts, e.g. there are different pressures/restrictions acting on *Torchwood* produced for BBC1, BBC2, BBC3, Radio 4, and Starz (see Porter 2010 255—62). For *Torchwood*, then, transmedia storytelling targeted paratextually at fandom becomes a way of symbolically transforming production contingencies into hyperdiegetic continuity. But this 'fanagement' – the attempted management of fan readings, responses and activities – does not merely give fans what they want, i.e. coherence and narrative consistency. Instead, it protects brand value by responding to fan criticism regarding continuity errors, and anticipating possible fan critiques. It also engages in retro-storytelling fan service by addressing fans who have vocally opposed brand developments, e.g. the death of Ianto Jones, while seeking to draw a line under this fan resistance by proffering transmedia closure to Jack and Ianto's story one day before *Miracle Day*'s UK premiere (in *The House of the Dead*). And *Torchwood*'s media tie-ins have engaged in a mode of brand stretching (globalizing and further science-fictionalising the series), testing the water for TV developments, as well as sustaining brand presence. Rather than harmonising fan activities and branding practices, these transmedia strategies can be viewed as *trans*-transmedia: they represent trans-discourses which move across industry and fan contexts as well as across media platforms. Fandom isn't merely catered for in this process; there is a strong degree of what I've termed 'fanagement' through which fan debates are closed down; fan readings are paratextually corralled and contained outside the TV text; and fan resistance to *Torchwood*'s US co-production or Ianto's demise is contested. Fanagement amounts to more than paratextually manufacturing continuity – that is, appropriating fans' "power to gloss" – it also counters fan criticisms of the brand as well as keeping *Torchwood* alive. Media tie-ins may provide work for professionalized fans, and they may cater to fan readings (such as 'Janto'), but these exercises in niche storytelling remain a form of brand management (Mann 2009:111) seeking to manage the active fan audience, and attempting to paratextually deactivate fan complaints. Trans-transmedia doesn't simply unite fandom and franchise; rather, it seeks to appropriate fan discourses in order to protect the 'hub' of a TV series and its brand value.

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