



Advertising the Yellow Brick Road: Historicizing the Industrial Emergence of Transmedia Storytelling

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Tracing the industrial emergence of transmedia storytelling—typically branded a product of contemporary media convergence—this article provides a historicized intervention on the configuration of transmedia storytelling in U.S. culture at the turn of the 20th century. I draw on L. Frank Baum’s *Land of Oz* storyworld and its multiple texts and promotional tie-ins as a case study for revealing how the industrial rise of transmedia storytelling can be recontextualized as a cultural product of early-20th-century modern advertising. The article maps the ways in which Baum engineered *Oz* stories transmedially at this time according to broader slippages between content and promotion across platforms.

Keywords: transmedia, mass culture, advertising, narrative, cross-promotion, *Land of Oz*

Introduction

This article provides a historicized intervention on the configuration of what has come to be known as transmedia storytelling at the turn of the 20th century, a term that is perhaps the most aesthetically theorized component of media convergence and one that has gained significant academic presence over the last decade. Most explicitly theorized by Henry Jenkins, transmedia storytelling is itself the convergence of textual forms and involves the telling of “stories that unfold across multiple platforms, with each medium making distinctive contributions to our understanding of the storyworld” (2006, p. 334). Having been contextualized most prominently as a product of the contemporary media landscape, transmedia storytelling is typically understood in relation to technological convergences and the horizontal integration of media conglomerates. Although it is tempting to regard these events as implying revolutionary shifts in production practices, it is important to recognize the extent to which distribution and exhibition models have remained bound to more traditional means of consumption. It is therefore also important to thoroughly historicize the means by which such industrial phenomena, including transmedia storytelling, have evolved historically.

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For that reason, this article has two aims. First, it identifies some of the early business strategies used to construct an industrially produced text and its fictional narrative across the borders of multiple media when no such media was yet integrated on an industrial level. Second, it aims to comprehend how the dynamics of this particular case study can be understood as reflective of broader industrial-cultural shifts in the United States at the turn of the 20th century—a historical period when increased mass promotion meant the increased cross-borrowing of its cultural products. The emergence of new forms of modern advertising provided the cultural backdrop for ways through which a number of literary authors developed transmedial fictions within a system of industrialized cultural production. If media convergence, as Jenkins has argued, “makes the flow of content across multiple media platforms inevitable” (2006, p. 106), then so too did the emergence of other, equally convergent industrial-cultural contexts of the past, such as early consumer culture and its affiliated industry phenomenon of modern advertising during the early 20th century. Such industrial developments fortified narratives to flow more freely across multiple media, with these industry phenomena, among others, each defined by their ability to flow across mass culture, encouraging connections between media and audiences in ways that enabled fictional characters, stories, and even storyworlds to flow across with them. These promotional cultures—as shall be argued throughout this article—initiated the industrial rise of transmedia storytelling. Central to this industrial rise was a slippage between concepts of *content* and *promotion*, which was fortified through this broader rise of modern advertising.

Daniel Borus (2009, p. 6) characterizes this specific slippage in ways that understand this period’s systems of industrialized cultural production as a “culture of multiplicity,” arguing that a culture of multiplicity had infiltrated almost every field of entertainment by 1900. This, according to Borus, encouraged a number of significant transformations in aesthetic forms as commercial logos, fictional characters, and brands all began to traverse platforms. Cultural multiplicity, Borus argues (2009, p. 6)—a concept signifying the “open-ended possibilities” of art and advertising—“gave coherence and meaning to the development of culture in the years between 1900 and 1920,” emerging as perhaps the defining cultural characteristic of early-20th-century America. Yet challenging this characterization of multiplicity is its relationship with the mass audience. “The child born in 1900,” as Henry Adams had asserted in his *Education*, “would be born into a new world which would not be a unity but a multiple” (1918, p. 210). For Lawrence Levine (1990, p. 171), as for Borus, the notion of multiplicity symbolized this “new world” at the turn of the century. The emergence of this period’s mass audience sits at the core of this article, for its unification of audiences comes hand in hand with the alignment of fictions told across platforms. Let us keep in mind that Jenkins, in his description of media convergence, defined this phenomenon not simply according to “the flow of content across multiple media platforms” but in terms of “the migratory behavior of media audiences” (2006, p. 2). For Jenkins, “creating transmedia storyworlds” is the process of “understanding how to appeal to migratory audiences” (2008). It is important to recognize that a conceptualization of this audience in a historical context was complicated, one which would be formed as a unified mass most decisively out of the multiplied many. It is therefore important to highlight that our concern here is with an altogether different conceptual framing of transmedia storytelling than that which exists today—one born out of historical consumer culture rather than contemporary convergence culture. In reframing cultures of early-20th-century industrialization as a conceptual historicization of

contemporary transmedia convergence culture and its production practices, this article reveals one of the ways through which similar properties of media production have emerged historically from very different industrial-cultural conditions.

Grounded in such cultural factors as turn-of-the-20th-century immigration, new forms of mass media—such as newspapers, comic strips, and magazines—along with the related textual activities of an emerging mass audience, this article addresses the industrial-cultural configurations that would enable one particular text to be constructed as a transmedia entertainment phenomenon during a historical setting rarely discussed in such transmedial terms. At the center of these configurations is L. Frank Baum's novel *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, first published by the George M. Hill Company on May 17, 1900—a novel emblematic of this turn-of-the-century transition from the United States as a rural economy into an urbanism of industrialized mass culture. The story sees Dorothy, a young Kansas farm girl, whisked away by a destructive cyclone from her gray and weathered farm home and her Uncle Henry and Aunt Em, only to emerge in a magical fairy world known as The Land of Oz. There Dorothy is greeted by a host of colorful characters such as the Scarecrow and the Tin Woodman, each embarking on a quest to find the powerful Wizard of Oz. The novel's fictional journey across the magical and vibrant Land of Oz was reflected in the period's rising cityscapes—glitzy shop windows, high-rise billboards, colorful comic strips, and magical cinema screens all transforming the United States into its very own Emerald City of mass communication.

An Emerald City of Communication

In mapping the complex ways through which author L. Frank Baum engineered *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* as a transmedial fiction spanning a multitude of media during the first decade of the 20th century, it is crucial to frame this process according to its broader relationship with industrialized cultural production in the United States at the turn of the 20th century. A formal but conceptual point about the methodological approach of this article is indeed its sole focus on the United States. This focus has been designed not necessarily to elicit a generalized explanation about the historical industrial rise of transmedia. After all, the mechanisms of industrialized cultural production were connected with many other capitalist economies—particularly with those in Europe and its traditions of serial fiction in 19th- and 20th-century British and French newspapers. Nevertheless, many of the broader industrial transformations that are framed as the cultural backdrop of this study's propositions—transformations of industrialization and mass consumer culture—have been centralized around the U.S. landscape (Borus, 2009; Cronin, 2010; Mizruchi, 2008). The late 19th century and the first decade of the 20th century had indeed witnessed the United States' transformation into an urban-manufacturing economy of industrialized production, in turn prompting, as James Norris (1990, p. xiii) writes, "a major transformation in the behaviour of American consumers." Nowhere is this transformation better illustrated than in the form of modern advertising, its development coinciding with other significant industrial-cultural transformations. Susan Mizruchi (2008, p. 138) notes that "advertising expenditures rose from \$50 million just after the Civil War to over \$500 million by the century's end, and magazine editors recognized how fully implicated they were in the business end of their enterprises." Advertising would transform the process of consumption into entertainment, with the leisure of reading becoming synonymous with the leisure of

shopping, steering readers from the pages of periodicals to the stores of produce. Around the turn of the century, as Mizruchi has noted (2008, p. 139), “for the first time, advertisements, literature, and images from photographic to painterly became packaged together as mutually enhancing products,” with such slippage developing as a by-product.

Mizruchi (2008, p. 140) reiterates that this notion of “readers as consumers, together with heightened awareness of their own commercial prospects, preoccupied authors of the time in a way never before seen.” The mass-produced magazines of the period, for instance, developing in the post-Civil War era as a platform to meet the growing need to advertise the new consumer products of the industrial age, began building upon particular techniques of modern advertising, encouraging participation from consumers to entice these consumers with visual content for the sake of steering them elsewhere, across platforms to other related products. When conceived in the mid-18th century, the magazine was defined by its interactivity. Similar to the Internet in the contemporary media landscape, the magazine of this historical era was a platform wherein readers could “come together to share, collaborate, debate” (Gardner 2012, p. 109). The establishment of magazines was in itself an important step in the direction of creating an active, migratory audience, which, for the first time, was being encouraged to participate in the culture around them—actively shaping that culture, traversing borders. As Gardner points out (2012, p. 103), “one of the central ideas governing the early magazine was that the magazine should create a space whereby readers could themselves participate as writers.” As we shall see, the magazine’s interactivity, how “it worked to collapse the distance between author and reader” (Gardner, 2012, p. 103), would influence the ways in which transmedia stories developed at this time.

According to Mark McGurl (2011, p. 686), by the first decade of the 20th century, “the key elements of a preoccupation with mass visual culture in modern American fiction were in place.” This culture of promotion, of multiplicity, permeated far beyond the pages of magazines. Modern advertising was essentially a language—a strikingly visual language—that was fast permeating the borders of different platforms and media, each blurring into the others in ways that begin to explain how and why the fictional stories, characters, and indeed storyworlds of this period began to permeate more freely the borders of different platforms and media. At the forefront of many of this era’s most innovative advertising-initiated transmedia practices was author L. Frank Baum, writer of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* novel, its multiple sequels, a series of newspaper comic strips, and a range of promotional tie-in materials such as mock newspapers (see Table 1). Lyman Frank Baum, born May 15, 1856, was a cultural entrepreneur who had been interested in innovative forms of advertising long before he began writing novels. His time as a promoter began when he was producing his own stage plays in the 1880s, writing a number of successful plays that toured the country. These roles exposed Baum to the importance of advertising, skills that he developed when founding an innovative trade journal about the emerging industrial practice of visualized advertising and the commercial art of department store window dressing called *The Show Window*, beginning publication in 1897. The journal was followed with a treatise on window dressing titled *The Art of Decorating Dry Goods Windows and Interiors* in 1900—the same year, notably, as the author published *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. This conception of window dressing similarly exploited the underlying dynamics of modern advertising, again blurring conceptual understandings of content and promotion by developing the artistry of finely dressed store windows to entice consumers, first attracting their attention

visually before steering them in-store toward products. According to Dorothy Davis (2006, p. 292), “long before the cinema or broadcasting existed, the department stores were helping to mould the tastes of the rising middle class.” The New York Times reported on September 8, 1901 (“Art of Window Dressing,” p. 5), that “it was not until the big department stores appeared, with their wealth of different merchandize, housed in splendid light and airy new buildings, that the full art of window dressing began to spring up.” Indeed, it was during this particular time that “store keepers realized that in the show window laid a great possibility,” one wherein “the objects of the show window can be made to induce customers to enter the place” (p. 5).

Table 1. L. Frank Baum’s *The Land of Oz* Texts Across Media, 1900–1907.

	Novel	Theater	Comic strip	Mock newspaper
1900	<i>The Wonderful Wizard of Oz</i>			
1901				
1902		<i>The Wizard of Oz</i>		
1903				
1904	<i>The Marvelous Land of Oz</i>		<i>Queer Visitors from the Marvelous Land of Oz</i>	<i>The Ozmapolitan</i>
1905	<i>The Woggle-Bug Book</i>	<i>The Woggle-Bug</i>		<i>The Ozmapolitan</i>
1906				
1907	<i>Ozma of Oz</i>			

That L. Frank Baum had dabbled in a host of extensive business activities—working as a promoter, playwright, newspaper publisher, developer of window dressing—before finding success as a novelist was supremely important to the development of his Oz stories as an expansive, unfolding transmedial storyworld. This importance ultimately stemmed from the author’s apparent aptitude to develop his fictional creations according to the emerging commercial systems of modern advertising—constructing content as promotion, and indeed vice versa. In *The Art of Decorating Dry Goods Windows and Interiors*, Baum described particular strategies for catching the attention of window shoppers and turning them into absorbed spectators. In Baum’s words:

How can a window sell goods? By placing them before the public in such a manner that the observer has a *desire for them* and enters the store to make the purchase. Once in, the customer may see *other things she wants*, and no matter how much she purchases

under these conditions, the credit of the sale belongs to the *window* [emphasis added]. (1900a, p. 146)

One of Baum's techniques was what he termed the "illusion window" that would be "sure to arouse the curiosity of the observer" (1900a, p. 82), transforming window shoppers into audiences, each gazing upon a "screen." Baum had thus envisioned the promotion of shopping as entertainment, with Max Mosher (2012) arguing that Baum was largely instrumental to the ushering in of the age of modern advertising. In these commercial spaces of shops, as Erika D. Rappaport (1995, p. 132) also notes, "customers were asked to see buying not as an economic act but as a . . . cultural event." Just as the concept of advertising enabled the leisure of reading magazines to become almost indistinguishable from shopping, the advent of window dressing continued the period's rapid cultural transformation of consumption into entertainment—"transforming 'shopping' into a 'fine art'" (Rappaport, 1995, p. 130). "Most impressive of all," wrote the *Daily Chronicle* on March 15, 1909, of the art of window dressing, "were the lights and shadows behind the drawn curtains of the great range of windows suggesting that a wonderful play was being arranged" (p. 21). Another *Daily Chronicle* reporter, this time writing on March 16, 1909, made the connection even more explicit, describing the window-gazing crowds as "spectators of a tableau in some drama of fashion," with each window "a painted background . . . depicting a scene" (p. 14). As the shop window contributed to "a new visual landscape in which the street had been turned into a theatre and the crowd had become an audience of a dramatic fashion show" (Rappaport, 1995, p. 134), a synchronized relationship was formed between these media spectacles and these promotional visuals, with both illustrating scenes of drama within a frame. As such, the visualized language of advertising began to permeate U.S. culture, with this visual language of the "illusion window" soon materializing in different forms across different entertainments—transforming its multiple aspects and spaces into promotional or even cross-promotional screens and windows. In its facility to steer audiences across platforms, from a scene in one windowed spectacle to another, it is crucial to pinpoint this period's consumer foundations and its cross-promotional culture as part of the industrial beginnings upon which transmedia practices would blossom amid shifts toward industrialized culture.

Following the Yellow Brick Road

By the time *The Wizard of Oz* stage show had been released in mid-1902, the turn of the 20th century had witnessed substantial economic growth, leading to broader cultural changes across the country. All cultural industries began to be affected by this rise in cultural multiplicity and its cross-promotional exploitation of visual content as an advertising agenda. Before the mid-19th century, few forms of mass communication had existed—particularly forms that provided all parts of the nation with shared information. Yet media at the turn of the 20th century was a rising business in the United States. The jobs created by other growing industries such as retail, oil, and railroads attracted millions of immigrants. Both newspaper and book publishers understood the potential of the booming population. With the U.S. population rising from around 50 million to 91 million between 1890 and 1910, what was needed, Mizruchi (2008, p. 143) notes, "were techniques of persuasion that get all these people to buy" these media forms—techniques of cross-promotion not wholly dissimilar in concept to the practice of window dressing, which similarly strived to increase commercial breadth through the use of visual content.

Narratives that could sell and sustain the purchase of newspapers would become the most important in this industry, and as industrialization and mass production grew, strategies of cross-promotion soon became the priority of many national newspaper chains, which were well situated to accommodate a mass audience.

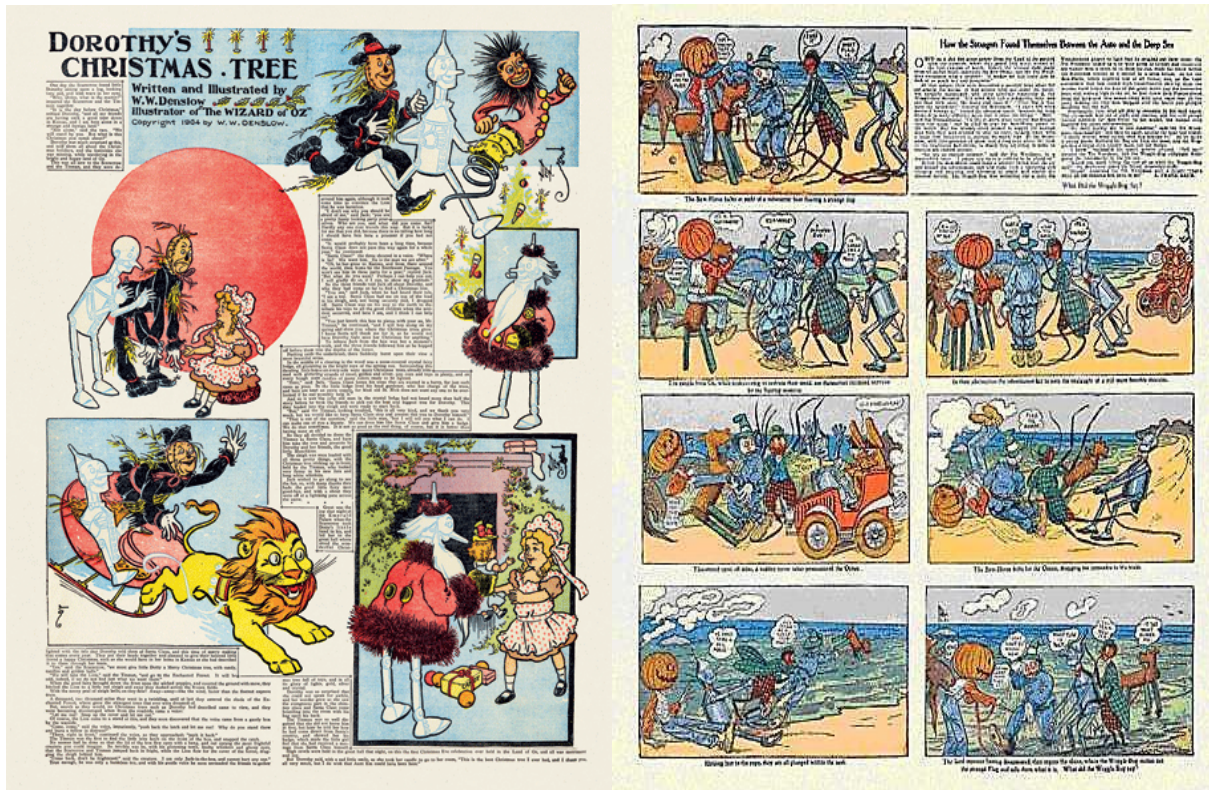
Feeding both ends of the social spectrum simultaneously, the nation's newspapers were a kind of cultural mediator between the upper and lower levels of society, inviting a mass U.S. readership to emerge as a partial consequence. At the epicenter of this cross-promotion was the utilization of the recently flourishing newspaper comic strip—an ideal advertising platform not only because its format consistently found a sizable audience but because it transformed diverse demographics into a shared mass readership. It is important to historicize the cultural climate of window dressing as a reflection of early comic strip culture, with the latter ushering in comparable techniques of consumer-oriented visual artistry that similarly exploited such content to steer audiences toward particular products and productions. The newspaper comic strip first developed certain cross-media practices around the turn of the century, when fictional characters—as visual signifiers inside a frame—facilitated a move across platforms as advertising mechanisms.

Newspaper comic strips had been formed at the heart of this period's broader cultural shifts—a period when modern advertising soared. Comic strip characters, as Ian Gordon (1998, p. 105) notes, further transformed “the process of consumption—advertisement, purchase, and use—into entertainment” in much the same way as shopping had achieved. Richard Outcault famously developed 1902's Buster Brown, an early comic strip character, in a way that enabled Outcault to license the character's image to manufacturers of a wide range of products and productions. Ian Gordon (1998, p. 43) argues that only with the *Buster Brown* comic strip did the medium reach its full potential as an advertising tool, noting that “the importance of [its] marketing is that it was intended from the start to be licensed to other products.” This cross-media activity must indeed be historicized as that which stemmed from the economic fabric of this period's emergence of modern advertising, and one that would soon expand into *transmedia* activity, where the narratives themselves, along with their fictional characters, would traverse multiple media, narrating the adventures of characters across media serially in ways that would similarly function as cross-promotion—steering audiences across media via the promotion of new yet interrelated narrative content.

After all, serial narratology, as Jason Scott (2009, p. 14) notes, “enhances the possibilities of advertising and exploitation through the established market for the second and subsequent instalment.” Such narrative structures essentially entice audiences to come back to the next edition, keeping these audiences hooked on what will happen next. In other words, it is the story itself that can function as a means of advertising—the continuing interconnectedness of multiple stories serving to steer audiences from the initial attraction of the first media text to the continued purchase of the text's related products. In this way, transmedia storytelling also operates as a promotional tool—or, more specifically, as a cross promotional tool—because the audience must consume all the numerous media texts available to comprehend the entire story.

This notion of exploiting transmedia storytelling as a mechanism for cross-promotion—the links between each of the texts encouraging the sustained purchase of more and more texts—is reflected, albeit implicitly, in the scholarship on contemporary transmedia storytelling. Geoffrey Long (2007, pp. 14–15) observes that “a common philosophy in [transmedia storytelling] is the drive to continue exploring the [storyworld]—one increased by promising not narrative repetition but narrative extension.” This extension increases the appetite for consumption in much the same way as advertising boosts the appetite for consumption. U.S. television producer Tim Kring, creator of *Heroes* (NBC, 2006–2010), describes the migratory behavior of audiences with transmedia storytelling: “They tune in to *Lost* then explore the island’s history in an online game” (Kushner, 2008, p. 1). “It is transmedia storytelling,” Kring continues, “that ultimately lures the audience into buying more stuff—today, DVDs; tomorrow, who knows what” (ibid.). Using narrative content as a cross-promotional strategy for steering audiences to other related media texts is fundamental to the economic strategy of transmedia storytelling. Each media text in a transmedia narrative is thus in a sense an advertisement for all the others; each individual media text functions as a “self-contained” (Jenkins 2006, p. 98) text as well as cross-promotion for the larger fictional world.

Epitomizing such developments in transmedia storytelling at the turn of the 20th century, enabled via the wider cultural turn to industrialization, was the promotional work of L. Frank Baum. Following the publication of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, correspondence between Baum and his publisher reveals the author’s dissatisfaction with how the novel had been promoted. However, with the bankruptcy of the George M. Hill Company and the establishment of Reilly & Britton in 1904, Baum allied himself with a new publisher that would thoroughly apply the period’s rising shift toward modern advertising. Inspired by the newspaper comic strip’s newfound effectiveness at promoting fictional characters across the borders of media, Baum and his publishers exploited this commercial phenomenon, adapting principles of cross-promotion to the creative processes of expanding the Land of Oz storyworld as a textual transmedial construction. A detailed and notably complex advertising scheme—one founded, most pointedly, on the commercial exploitation of content as promotion, which had become a commonality amid broader slippages between brands and fictional characters—soon sprawled across media to advertise Baum’s first Oz sequel novel titled *The Marvelous Land of Oz*, published on July 5, 1904.



**Figure 1. Queer Visitors from the Marvelous Land of Oz,
August 28, 1904, to February 26, 1905.**

The result was 26 comic strip pages (see Figure 1), each written by Baum and syndicated by the *Philadelphia North American* to the Sunday comics sections of newspapers across the country. The series, titled *Queer Visitors from the Marvelous Land of Oz*, the first component of a much larger cross-promotion scheme, ran weekly from August 28, 1904, to February 26, 1905. The narrative events chronicled in the *Queer Visitors* comic strip began shortly after the end of *The Marvelous Land of Oz* novel, picking up on narrative threads from both of the earlier published novels. This was significant in terms of developing a certain transmedia narratology. In Jenkins' ideal model of transmedia storytelling, media platforms take on a specific meaning relating to the creation of a wider, coherent fictional storyworld that is delivered to the audience in multiple forms and platforms. Transmedia storytelling thus can be understood as an industrial strategy whereby multiple media texts align to build a storyworld and to narrate the fictional adventures of that storyworld in a way that better serves the story, fleshing out and filling in the gaps from one medium with the stories from another. For Jenkins (2006, p. 21), "to fully experience any

fictional world, consumers must assume the role of hunters and gatherers, chasing down bits of the story across media channels [to] come away with a richer entertainment experience." In this way, the *Queer Visitors* comic strip simultaneously advertised the release of Baum's second novel and formed a narrative bridge between this book and the earlier *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, filling in the gaps of one medium with the stories of another. The character of Ozma, for example, having been announced as new ruler of the mystical Land of Oz during the denouement of the second novel, performs her first act of diplomacy in the comic strip—authorizing the visit of Oz characters the Scarecrow, the Tin Woodman, and the Woggle-Bug to America, where the adventures of the comic strip series took place. A flying contraption known as the Gump had been taken apart at the end of the second book and was reassembled in the comic strip series to provide the characters' transportation to America.

Queer Visitors from the Marvelous Land of Oz was thus notable for re-establishing characters. Whereas *The Marvelous Land of Oz*, the second Oz novel, had replaced primary protagonists such as Dorothy with new characters, the subsequent comic strip returned to the first novel's more famous protagonists. This shift can be understood in relation to the comic strip form itself and indeed its earlier discussed industrial construction as part of a broader cross-promotional consumer culture. Ian Gordon (1998, p. 14) points out that the comics industry assumed that the "development of popular characters, rather than the graphic form per se, accounted for a comic strip's success." Whereas the second Oz novel had focused on a new set of protagonists, expanding the fabric of the fictional storyworld, the era's newspaper comic strips and their institutional tendency to prioritize *recurring* characters as successful advertising mechanisms (as witnessed in the cross-media dispersion of Buster Brown) had in fact influenced Baum to return to the series' more familiar faces of Dorothy, the Scarecrow, and the Tin Woodman. As noted earlier, such promotion-oriented cross-media exploitation of fictional characters—transposing the image of a character as a framed spectacle on a comic strip page, facilitating the reader's shift across the borders of media like a decorated shop window that steers its onlookers toward products—encouraged the development of storytelling as that which also facilitated cross-promotion of related products. After all, by re-establishing the first Oz novel's characters as part of a continuing adventure in the *Queer Visitors* comic strip, Baum effectively joined the previously detached narrative events of the first, the second, and even the third Oz novel (*Ozma of Oz*, published on July 30, 1907) with the stories of the comic strip as threads of a larger transmedia adventure. From their initial landing point in Missouri, the comic strip's Oz characters traveled to the Kansas farm where both the Scarecrow and the Tin Woodman are reunited with Dorothy for the first time since the original novel, extending the story of these protagonists across different media. New narrative content was thus provided to those who followed the Oz adventures across media. In "How the Saw-Horse Saved Dorothy's Life," published on October 9, 1904, for example, the once gray and weathered Kansas farm was revealed to be more prosperous, with readers learning about a mortgage taken out by Uncle Henry to rebuild the farm after its destruction in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*.

Such narratological intertwining of multiple plots threaded across different media forms as part of a cross-promotional strategy to point readers to the purchasing of novels might, in this context, at least, be conceptualized as narrative-fronted promotional content. This concept can be defined as the production of fictional content that may or may not possess its own in-built revenue stream, such as newspaper

comic strips, yet operates primarily as a cross-promotional mechanism for the subsequent sale of other texts or products belonging to or extending from the same intellectual property. Such promotional content typically exploits a serialized narratological structure as that which itself points audiences to the consumption of additional iterations. In the case of Baum's comic strips, then, we can conceptualize the cultural effects of modern advertising at the turn of the 20th century as that which became exploited by the period's authors (including Baum) as opportunities for greater cross-promotional exposure of their literary texts—adapting these principles of cross-promotion to the form of a narrative that crosses media. Peter E. Hanff, an Oz historian and former president of the International Wizard of Oz Club, insists that “there can be no doubt that [Baum's] comic pages were thought of by the author and his publishers as a way of promoting his new book” (personal interview, July 5, 2012). In other words, it was precisely this historical period's newfound conception of exploiting forms of promotion as content, and indeed vice versa, with the era's comic strips being devised institutionally as mass promotion, which had informed the construction of the *Queer Visitors* comics as that which functioned to advertise multiple Oz novels through such strategies as narrative-fronted promotional content—threads of intertwined, transmedial story extensions. The industrial practices of cross-media promotion and product tie-ins that had been readily exploited by the comic strip industry, such as the case of Richard F. Outcault's Buster Brown—themselves parts of the broader cross-promotional strategies of mass culture—thus began to operate alongside and in conjunction with more authorial practices of what has since become understood in altogether different industrial contexts as transmedia storytelling: the systems of content and promotion only *together* building the industrial origins of transmedia storytelling.

Across the Rainbow

These cross-promotional strategies surrounding the book evidently worked, with *The Marvelous Land of Oz* becoming one of the five most in-demand novels according to a report published on October 15, 1904, in *The New York Times* (p. 92). In much the same way as Mizruchi noted that this era witnessed “for the first time, advertisements, literature, and images packed together as mutually enhancing products,” newspaper comic strips had taken these opposing dyads of content and promotion and further collapsed them inside of one another—placing cross-media characters and even transmedia storytelling at the forefront of a cross-promotional sales agenda. Indeed, it is this development of exploiting narrative-fronted promotional content—a practice embedded within the cultural-industrial influences of modern advertising—that must be emphasized as a crucial step toward the industrial rise of transmedia storytelling. This practice of exploiting recurring fictional characters and serial narratives that unfold across different media platforms to better promote the products on an intellectual property was ingrained into the economic fabric of modern advertising.

However, this amalgamation of content and advertising—this cycle of spectacles, each featuring fictional characters that traversed platforms through the slippage between the language of advertising and its promoted products—bled far beyond the form of comic strips. In the case of *Oz*, it would also traverse into the outer pages of the newspapers that published these comics. *Queer Visitors* may have been devised as a promotion for *The Marvelous Land of Oz* novel—advertising Baum's sequel with a series of comic strip sequels, each set in between past and future books—but the comic strip was also integrated

into an even larger advertising scheme that reflected this blurring of content and promotion, itself standing at the heart of the era's mass consumer culture. Beginning on August 18, 1904, newspapers including the *Philadelphia North American* and the *Chicago Record-Herald* published mock news stories in their publications that foreshadowed narrative events from the comics, including announcements declaring that an unidentified flying object was approaching Earth, which in the first of the comic strips had been revealed as the Gump transporting its comrades from The Land of Oz. Competitions had been interwoven within the various comic strip stories, each encouraging active participation from readers in ways that shaped the continuing narratives of the storyworld. The most prominent example was called "What Did the Woggle-Bug Say?" The first 17 comics ended their narratives with this question, with a character having asked the Woggle-Bug a riddle relating to his adventure. Readers were invited to guess the answer to these riddles in exchange for a prize, with the correct answer chosen by Baum and in turn inspiring the next chapter of the comic. Much publicity surrounded this competition, with the narrative events of the comics steering readers toward the purchase of related Oz commodities in much the same way as a department store window both attracted and directed consumers toward particular related products in-store.

Such forms of reader participation can be traced directly to the rise of the magazine, which had aimed to exploit reader participation in the hope of circulating readers across borders. As we have seen, throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries, magazine readers had been encouraged to contribute as collaborators—"expected to serve as both subscribers and as potential contributors" (Gardner, 2012, p. 107). The culture at the heart of this practice was in many respects a lineal ancestor of today's participatory culture, a historical antecedent where binaries between content and promotion, author and reader, first began to be broken down. It was also a culture of what Frank Kelleter (2012, p. 22) describes as "a close interaction between producers and consumers" that would later permeate the process of writing novels. L. Frank Baum regularly received letters from readers who contributed recommendations for plot developments, many of which Baum followed and incorporated into future novels. An array of works ranging from literature in magazines to comic strips in newspapers suddenly began to spread from one platform to another, in turn encouraging increased participation from consumers who were invited to follow works across platforms. For Kelleter (2012, p. 22), such a form of productivity should be understood as "a certain core feature of American popular culture at large," which stresses the importance of reframing both participatory and convergence culture in accordance with the historical rise of mass consumer culture.

Indeed, much scholarship devoted to the study of transmedia tends to synonymize its core attribute of heightened audience participation with the context of convergence culture—maintaining suggestions that the broad history of entertainment coincides with radical shifts from the passive to the active audience. However, just as Baum's earlier treatise on window dressing advised that one "must arouse in [the] audience . . . longing to possess the goods you sell" (1900a, p. 8)—and indeed just as newspaper comic strips in the early 1900s continued to encourage this same transformation of the "largely indifferent audience of passers-by" into a more "absorbed spectator" (Baum, 1900a, p. 8) via strategies of narrative-fronted promotional content along with reader-driven competitions in magazines—we realize

that the platform-crossing active audience was as much an emerging characteristic of 20th-century consumer culture as it is a continued characteristic of 21st-century media convergence.

The cross-platform quality of the *Queer Visitors* comic strip and its competitions must therefore be understood in this context as a broader cultural practice that would effectively merge disparate demographics and class structures into a shared mass active readership—the mass-addressed comic strips prompting readers to “assume the role of hunters and gatherers, chasing down bits of the story across media channels,” to reiterate Henry Jenkins’ evaluation of the contemporary effect of transmedia storytelling (2006, p. 21). The narratives of *Queer Visitors From the Marvelous Land of Oz* invited a readership of both upper and lower classes to consume a select newspaper as part of a shared mass readership, promising threads of an expanding, serialized, transmedial narrative experience that transcended social divides through its placement in national newspapers. With the “windows” of comic strips snowballing this emerging mass culture of consumption across various media platforms, many audiences were indeed encouraged to follow Baum’s capitalistic symbol of the yellow brick road—not literally to the Emerald City, but figuratively to numerous other textual iterations of the yellow brick road across media. The broader cultural changes that had been taking place at the turn of the 20th century—a time that had seen a dominant turn toward mass communication—inspired authors such as L. Frank Baum to both further exploit and expand upon what newspaper comic strips had already achieved: using fictional characters and stories as mass promotional platforms for a range of products. The cultural correlation established between the newspaper and its ability to promote fiction to a mass audience across media informed Baum’s subsequent creation of *The Ozmapolitan*, for instance, a series of mock promotional newspapers sent from the fictional Land of Oz.

The Ozmapolitan was a publicity tool devised by Baum—the first issue of which was released in 1905 shortly after the first publication of both *The Marvelous Land of Oz* novel and the *Queer Visitors* comic strip (see Figure 2). The faux newspaper, written by Baum and released as a giveaway item inside select newspapers, was also envisioned with the purpose of promoting Baum’s second Oz novel, offering readers “in-universe” interviews with notable characters. Mock newspapers such as this were popular during the period. Another example was HMS *Discovery*’s 1901 trip to Antarctica, which included many branded and promoted items. In exploiting the newspaper form’s inherent cross-promotional possibilities while building on the cultural climate of cross-promotion, *The Ozmapolitan* incorporated visual advertisements for the release of Oz books. Beyond these advertisements, moreover, the newspaper was also brimming with new narrative content relating to events from inside The Land of Oz, many of which took place between the story events of the various novels and comic strips.

The Ozmapolitan

EMERALD CITY—LAND OF OZ

No. XJZ

5TH DAY—3RD PERIOD—REIGN OF OZMA

Vol. Q

A SWELL DINNER

The Mayor of Jupiter to Enter...
tains Distinguished Visi-
ters from Land of Oz.

Jupiter, 4th day, 3rd pe-
riod. Wireless special to
OZMAPOLITAN.) Arrange-
ments are being made by
the Mayor of Jupiter to en-
tertain the Scarecrow and
Tin Woodman party as they
come through on their way
to the United States in Au-
gust. It is most likely that
the celebration will take the
form of an Airship Ban-
quet, and the government-
sponsored air cruiser "Non-
stopper" will probably be
rededicated to Royal Green
and Gold, emblematic of the
Land of Oz, as a mark of
special courtesy toward the
representatives of Her Royal
Highness, Princess Ozma of
Oz.

It is also expected that
the Mayor will proclaim the
day of the Banquet a National
Holiday.

FAREWELL TO JINJUR.

A handshaking was given
last night in honor of the
general flagger, late of the
army of revolt, at which
many of her sympathizers
were on hand to give public



notice of their courtesy to
her cause. They feel that
when her personal memoirs
are written and disseminated
among the people there will
come into the world a new
view of the cause leading to
the revolt. Whether or not
she succeeds in justifying
her cause it may be truth-
fully said that the General
is very popular and unless
her extreme political
tendencies would lead her
to the highest honors. It
was noted that many at-
tended the function who
thought to be unalterably op-
posed to her cause.

YIELDS CONSENT.

THE SCARECROW MAY GO.
The Princess Decides that the
Trip to the United States
May Be Made.

After many consultations
and the sending of many
wireless special to the
United States, Her Royal
Highness, the Princess Ozma,
has at last consented to the
proposed visit of the Scar-
crow and the Tin Woodman
to the United States. Mr.
L. Frank Baum and Mr.
Walt McDougall has prom-
ised to give them a good
time and see that no harm
comes to them. It is said
that a million children want
to see them in that far
away country owing to the
kindly story written of
them by Mr. Baum, our of-
ficial historian. However, it
was not until Little Dor-
othy of Kansas sent her
special plea that the Prin-
cess finally gave her con-
sent. Little Dorothy says
she may return with them,
and if she does it is need-
less to say she will be ro-
yally received. She says
Tin, her very intelligent
dog, is well and will come
with her.

A GREAT DISCOVERY

University of Haze Experi-
ments may Revolutionize
Transmission of News.

MARR, 4th day, 3rd pe-
riod. (Special wireless ac-
gram to the OZMAPOLI-
TAN.) The astronomical de-
partment of the University
of Haze has determined to
test the value of their new
signal method of communi-
cation with other worlds,
and accordingly will try to
communicate with the Scar-
crow and Tin Woodman party to
ascertain what points they are able
to see the signal. The result
of this experiment will be
watched with great interest
as the new method is much
less expensive than the pre-
sent wireless system of com-
munication by electricity.

EXCURSIONS TO ST. LOUIS

The Interplanetary Company
May Undertake to Organize a
Trip to Big Exhibition.

The Flying Machine business
seems to be in a most flour-
ishing condition, all of the
manufacturers reporting more
orders than they can fill. The
Zerchou - Kiddione Machine
comes on the market within
a short time. These will be
of the large capacity, ac-
cessible factors and will be
put in service by the Inter-
planetary Co., Ltd.

WILL LEAVE SOON.

FOR THE UNITED STATES.
The Scarecrow Submits to an
Interesting Interview
Concerning the Proposed
Trip to America.

The Scarecrow was seen
last night regarding his trip
to the United States. He
was very much pleased that
Royal consent has been
made. A trial voyage to
America, going over the sea-
route on the Scarecrow party,
he says he can make the
voyage in one-third less time
than the Flying Gump, and
with twenty people on board.
So confident is he of this no-
tion that he is willing to
make a rate of forty percent
per passenger for the round
trip, allowing a reasonable
profit in the faraway land. He
hopes to bring about this
change in time by the great
St. Louis Exposition
before it closes.

RETURNED WITH THANKS

Whether he did it as a
joke or not, a New York
architect has caused a lot
of fun among the officials
of our city. Having heard that
a valuable letter had been
offered for the best plan for
relieving the congestion of
this city's population, this
architect has planned for a
huge building four stories
high, each floor constituting
a complete home in itself. In
this manner the same ground
now required for one family
would be sufficient to ac-
commodate four families. The
architect said that these
apartments were called
"flat" in New York and
"chickens" in Chicago.



LATEST PORTRAIT OF THE SCARECROW, BY MARR.

The Scarecrow on being
shown the building and the
plans laughed heartily and
said: "That reminds me of
the stores I have read about
the Cliff Swiftness as for
myself, I would not like to
live in a house where I could
not fall to the grass without
hurting myself."

TO GENERAL JINJUR.

Easy to look at,
Pleasant to see,
Major the my heart,
Oh, really cool!
—Lucky Jones.

Princess Ozma has made John
B. Still, the artist, a Chancellor
of the City Order of Okmoks of
Oz, in recognition of his services
in illustrating the last historical
volume of Mr. Baum, which is
called "The Marvelous Land
of Oz."

EXTENDING THE CITY LIMITS.

From our special corre-
spondent in the U. S. A., Mr.
L. Frank Baum, who is also
the Official Historian of the
Land of Oz, we learn that
the actors, named Montgom-
ery and Stone, have made an
amusing hit by giving build-
ings of his Majesty, The
Scarecrow, and his Majesty,
The Tin Woodman, in promi-
nent theaters of that coun-
try. The boys will have to
take in this show as one of
the features of their trip.

In another column will be
found a letter from their
other. This is the first one
we have had in a long time.
We hope she will write
more frequently in the fu-
ture.

The Contrary Lion was
seen on our streets a few
days. He reports having had
the hunting down of his
kind. He says he was
never in better health in his
life.

"Tip" has been working
hard for a permit to go to
the United States on the
Scarecrow party. It is said, however,
that the Flying Gump will
have all it can carry on so
long a journey. Poor Tip-
toe deserves the trip.

The Standard Army has
threatened to have his whole
army sent to the In-
dianation of his associates.
It is said that he will
be permitted to do so,
but only on the condition
of his Majesty, Princess Ozma.

Gen. Jinjur expects to
take a trip into the
Land of the Winkies very
soon. In another col-
umn where she may write a
letter to the Editor from her
point of view. She may
think that the good before
she returns.

Jack Pumpkinhead and the
Animated Saw Horse are in-
separable. In another col-
umn may be found an ac-
count of the recent race
around the tracks of the
Emerald City Jockey Club
yesterday. The Saw Horse
looks all records.

The Ozmapolitan

4
CITY NEWS IN BRIEF.
Clear and cool in the
weather man a prediction for
tomorrow.
Princess Ozma has made John
B. Still, the artist, a Chancellor
of the City Order of Okmoks of
Oz, in recognition of his services
in illustrating the last historical
volume of Mr. Baum, which is
called "The Marvelous Land
of Oz."
"Tip" says he is going to
build a barn for the An-
imated Saw Horse and have
it ready for him on his re-
turn.
Tickets to the Grand Par-
ade will go to the Scarecrow
and Tin Woodman party. Jack
Pumpkinhead is invited.

TO GENERAL JINJUR.
Easy to look at,
Pleasant to see,
Major the my heart,
Oh, really cool!
—Lucky Jones.
SOMETHING WORTH SEE-
ING.
From our special corre-
spondent in the U. S. A., Mr.
L. Frank Baum, who is also
the Official Historian of the
Land of Oz, we learn that
the actors, named Montgom-
ery and Stone, have made an
amusing hit by giving build-
ings of his Majesty, The
Scarecrow, and his Majesty,
The Tin Woodman, in promi-
nent theaters of that coun-
try. The boys will have to
take in this show as one of
the features of their trip.

New Book for Children
Young or Old
The MARVELOUS LAND OF OZ
A Sequel to the "Wizard of Oz."
BUT A COMPLETE AND CHARMING
STORY IN ITSELF, BEING A
FURTHER ACCOUNT OF THE AD-
VENTURES OF THE
Scarecrow and
Tin Woodman
Whose Wholesome Fun both in Book and on the
Stage have won the hearts of a million children and
parents. About 160 illustrations—16 of which are
full page in multi-color—They are full of fun, as is
also the story. Size, 9 1/2 x 7 inches. 288 pages.

THE BOOK IS NOW READY
List Price, \$1.25
LIBERAL DISCOUNTS TO THE TRADE.
We guarantee that this book will be extensively advertised and we confidently believe it will be the "LEADING JUVENILE" of the season.
THE REILLY & BRITTON CO.
PUBLISHERS CHICAGO, U.S.A.
84 Adams St.

Figure 2. The Ozmapolitan, 1904–1905.

For instance, the debut issue of *The Ozmapolitan* published an interview with the Scarecrow, who discussed the circumstances of his visit to the United States—a visit that was later narrated in the *Queer Visitors* comics. "We will start," he said, "about the first of August and will expect to land somewhere on American soil early in September" (*The Ozmapolitan*, 1904, p. 1). *The Ozmapolitan* not only promoted the Oz characters' impending reunion with Dorothy but revealed that it was in fact Dorothy's desire to see her old Oz friends once again that sparked the *Queer Visitors* trip in the first place—Dorothy's letter of request having been sent to the rulers of Oz following the events of the first novel (*The Ozmapolitan*, 1904, p. 1). *The Ozmapolitan*, a promotional item for a separate product, thus similarly blurred the divide between an advertisement and a text, further developing a transmedia story tapestry through its multiplication of fictional characters across platforms—each respective iteration weaving into the others across media as part of a mass advertising strategy that crossed the both media and audience divides. Serving simultaneously as a narrative bridge between novels and as a hype-building advertisement for these novels, once again an item of Baum's work had occupied the status of a promotional shop window. This example emblemizes the role of the migratory audience that Jenkins has understood as an attribute of transmedia storytelling (2006, p. 2). Through the promotional tools of the *Queer Visitors* comic strip and *The Ozmapolitan* newspapers, the disparate threads of multiple Oz story strands were sewn together—

making hunters and gathers of its audience, chasing down “bits of the story across media channels [to] come away with a richer entertainment experience” (Jenkins, 2006, p. 21). The Oz experience had come to resemble what Naomi Klein (2000, p. 44) has since termed a “cross-promotional web”—mixing artistic content and promotional strategy to produce components of a historical transmedia practice.

Although the strategy had been largely opportunistic rather than planned, Baum clearly aimed to cross-promote his Oz storyworld, its characters, and its produced media texts, with *Queer Visitors from the Marvelous Land of Oz* leading to their developments as an expanding web-like transmedia tapestry—entire characters spun off in and across other media. The Woggle-Bug, for example, had in fact been one of Baum’s most elaborately transmedial constructions. Introduced in *The Marvelous Land of Oz*, the Woggle-Bug returned in the *Queer Visitors* comics, appearing in each of the stories. As Baum was writing the comics he was also planning the publication of *The Woggle-Bug Book*, released toward the end of the comic strip’s syndication run in early 1905. The story of *The Woggle-Bug Book* begins where the final *Queer Visitors* comic strip story ends—narrating the tale of how the Woggle-Bug became separated from his Oz comrades after the narrative events of the comics. *The Woggle-Bug Book* was advertised in newspapers including the *Chicago Record-Herald* (June 22, 1905, p. 18) alongside Oz novels and listed in the *Motion Picture Studio Directory and Trade Annual* of 1905 as a “sequel to “Wizard to Oz” (p. 129). *The Woggle-Bug Book* was promoted as an extension of the Land of Oz storyworld, integrating a multitude of texts from different media as parts of a platform-crossing narrative.

All this cross-promotional activity was building to *The Woggle-Bug* stage play, a musical comedy extravaganza produced in the same style as 1902’s *The Wizard of Oz*. *The Woggle-Bug* musical opened at the Garrick Theater in Chicago on June 18, 1905. Its narrative once again had been devised as a continuation of the Woggle-Bug’s adventures following the events of *The Marvelous Land of Oz* novel, the 26 *Queer Visitors* comics, and indeed *The Woggle-Bug Book*—simultaneously intended to promote the sales of each of these texts precisely via exploiting a serial narrative arc interwoven across each text. It was the further embodiment of the mass consumer culture described throughout this article, with the period’s preoccupation with the cross-promotional lure of advertising once again feeding into the development of Baum’s construction of storytelling. With each Woggle-Bug product serving as both content and promotion for a range of narratively interwoven products, readers were invited to follow these stories of the Woggle-Bug, itself similarly interwoven into a larger narrative of The Land of Oz, as each text branched from the others as if following the forking paths of the yellow brick road. Given such elaborate transmediality, we can certainly understand why a trade publication such as *Variety* addressed the Oz stories at this time specifically in relation to their cross-media promotional presence. In a review of *The Woggle-Bug* play published on July 18, 1905, *Variety* referred to the stage production as the “sister play” of *The Wizard of Oz*—a term acknowledging its entwined, web-like correlation (p. 20). In steering audiences of the era across media through efforts of such transmedial narration, such historical cases of transmedia storytelling were indeed forms of cultural mediation, with the unified mass emerging decisively out of the multiplied many. Just as the authority of the Wizard in Baum’s fictional fairytale rests on his promise to give the people that which they desire—luring characters toward consumption via tactics of smoke and mirrors—so too was the authority of this period’s promotional culture: luring the masses toward the purchase of multiple media texts and tie-in products through the use of narrative and visual

content, all of which was placed upon various screens and windows. In its ability to traverse the borders of media, connecting a series of distinct narratives into one unified whole in a way not conceptually dissimilar to the way in which industrialization had sought to connect the nation through the formation of an emerging mass culture, or the way in which modern advertising had similarly sought to connect mass consumers through the extension of advertising content across both promotional materials and media texts alike, transmedia storytelling was an apt reflection of the period.

Conclusion

This article highlights the importance of re-examining the neglected historical context of what contemporary scholars such as Jenkins call media convergence, revealing how the phenomenon of transmedia storytelling must be understood not solely in relation to the rise of digital media technologies of the early 21st century but also as part of the media and culture of the early 20th century. In exploring the interlinking of advertising, narrative, authorship, and the rise of mass media, this article asserts that transmedia storytelling was born out of advertising strategies, emphasizing that both of these phenomena amplified concurrently as products of broader cultural shifts toward the rise of mass culture around the turn of the 20th century. Advertising was not a new phenomenon in 1900. In 1758, Samuel Johnson reputedly said that “ads are now so numerous that they are negligently perused,” arguing that “the trade of advertising is now so near to perfection that it is not easy to propose any improvement” (cited in Williams 1980, p. 172). Yet advertising’s rising cultural prominence around the turn of the 20th century, along with the interrelated rise of mass media, collided to found the industrialization of strategies of transmedia storytelling that have since come to define practices of the contemporary media conglomerate. It is this historical context that enables an understanding and indeed a reconceptualization of Baum’s Land of Oz storyworld as a piece of intermediary U.S. popular culture—or, as Frank Kelleter (2012, p. 26) aptly reiterates, as “a wide and constantly expanding realm of interlocking, transmedially active, mass-addressed commercial stories.”

Both the department store window’s and the comic strip’s displays of frozen moments, each captured inside a visual frame, indicated how storytelling could fulfill a mediating function in an emerging mass culture of industrialized multiplicity. As narrative and visuality endeavored to channel the subject’s floating attention as both a viewer and consumer, the practice of guiding a story across multiple cultural forms was indeed far more important to spectating at the turn of the 20th century than has typically been assumed. Many of author L. Frank Baum’s Oz products and productions served as emblems of the zone between textual media product and promotional material that is most appropriately characterized as narrative-fronted promotional content—a phrase capturing the complex ambiguity of the period’s interaction between texts and advertisements that is itself fundamental to understanding the phenomenon of transmedia storytelling as a historical industrial practice.

The emergence of new forms of modern advertising provided the cultural backdrop for ways through which literary authors such as Baum developed transmedial fictions, with these promotional strategies to some extent initiating the industrial emergence of transmedia storytelling. Yet such strategies revolved around the workings of an individual writer, with Baum exploiting the emergence of

new media as opportunities for greater cross-promotional exposure of his literary texts. Many of these same industry practices would influence the development of more corporatized models of transmedia storytelling, with mass consumer culture impacting on 20th-century transmedia storytelling during the 1920s, particularly by marking its transition from the authorship of a single literary writer to the transauthorial ownership of a media franchise. We would only need to consider the claims of this article in relation to the work of Kristen Thompson (2007, p. 4), for instance, who hints at the historical rise of the media franchise when pointing toward Mickey Mouse and its model of producing spin-offs and merchandise in the 1920s. Similarly, authors such as Edgar Rice Burroughs would later acknowledge the slippage between content and promotion as central to the development of his Tarzan works as comparably media-spanning narratives in the 1930s, with Burroughs once referring to his opted "brand of advertising" for Tarzan stories as "the all-fiction variety" (n.d., p. 55). It was transmedia storytelling, too, employed in Baum's era as a promotional practice before evolving in these later decades into the corporate media practice more familiar to the contemporary media landscape, which most prominently ascertained the means of expanding fictional worlds across early-20th-century culture.

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