Yer a reader, Harry: HP Reread Podcasts as digital reading communities

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Abstract:
The emergence of reread podcasts – in which hosts revisit a favourite book or series, inviting listeners to reread alongside them – offers insight into new digital reading communities that often emerge around active fandoms. Focusing on the popular sub-genre of Harry Potter reread podcasts, this paper asks what lessons these new reading communities can teach us about the practice of rereading, the capacity of podcasts to create new kinds of interactive publics, the link between podcasts and fan communities, and the roles these podcasts play in readers' lives. Interactive and participatory yet structured around the expertise of the host, reread podcasts have the potential to become pedagogical and thus transformative online spaces.

Keywords: Harry Potter; podcasts; fandom; rereading; reading communities

The world of digital reading encompasses blogs, Goodreads pages, social media feeds and fan fiction archives – but a particularly understudied facet of contemporary digital reading is the ever-growing genre of reread podcasts. In this genre, hosts revisit a favourite book or series, inviting listeners to reread alongside them. While the hosts offer their own commentary, they also encourage response and engagement from listeners, framing themselves as both expert commentators and fellow readers – and, usually, fans. This paper considers the unique digital reading communities that have emerged around Harry Potter (HP) reread podcasts, including *Harry Potter and the Sacred Text*, *Potterless Podcast*, and my own podcast, *Witch, Please*. Writing from the perspective of a producer, a reader, a fan, and an academic – a member of this reading community in all ways – I'm interested in how reread podcasts frame the cultural role of the Harry Potter series while encouraging interactive and self-reflexive communities of interpretation. Along the way I will ask: if, as

Paul Booth contends, fandom is 'the classroom of the future,'[1] what kinds of lessons is it teaching us about reading alongside and through digital media?

I'll necessarily be covering a significant amount of terrain in this paper, and so I've structured the paper around seven lessons – a play on both the school setting of the Harry Potter books and the pedagogical structure that I argue most reread podcasts end up taking. The paper begins with a discussion of rereading as a distinct reading practice in which readers deliberately revisit a familiar text, before going on to a brief media history of podcasts in general and fandom podcasts in particular. Next I'll address the unique subset of HP reread podcasts and the history of the genre, before introducing the survey I used to find out how listeners to these various podcasts think about their own engagement with them. The survey of ten questions (**Appendix A**) was built on Simon Fraser University's WebSurvey tool, which stores data entirely within SFU's datacenter, circulated on Twitter, and the results were exported to a spreadsheet, which is included as a link in **Appendix B**. Using quantitative and qualitative approaches to survey responses, I explore what respondents say about their own relationships to these podcasts. I then tie reread podcasts into larger reading norms of the HP fandom, and think through how podcasts function as interactive fan communities. Finally, I consider what is unique about reread podcasts as digital reading communities: how listeners' affective relation to the texts, alongside the organization of these communities around the personalities and concerns of the hosts, ends up situating hosts as community leaders. In turn, hosts shape the rereading experience through how they choose to respond to listener feedback. I briefly conclude by pointing to how reread podcasts provide unique opportunities for engaged, interactive, and self-reflexive communities of passionate readers – communities that are also structured, as this paper is, around the lessons that careful rereading can teach us.

1. On Rereading

Lesson One: Rereading is a transformative practice that, when undertaken collectively, can build communities of self-reflexive interpretation.

The reading practice at the heart of this paper is *re*reading, particularly the kind of ritualistic rereading that characterizes many readers' relationships with books that hold deep meaning in their lives. Rereading clearly intersects with fandom: fandoms built around particular books are likely to include practices of frequent rereading, just as fandoms built around tv shows or movies will involve frequent rewatching. But little scholarship has considered the ritualistic aspects of rereading as they relate to both community-building and the reader's individual relationship with the book. I have often cited Constance Grady's distinction between curative and transformative fandom, the former describing detail- and trivia-oriented fandom while the latter focuses on creative and/or critical engagements (think memorizing the blue prints of every Starship Enterprise versus writing *Star Trek* fan fiction).[2] But rereading seems to lie somewhere in between these practices: it has an element of the curative, since frequent rereaders will pride themselves on their exhaustive knowledge of

the text in question, but it is also transformative in terms of how rereading often charts a shifting relationship between reader and text over time.

In her book *On Rereading*, Patricia Meyer Spacks focuses on these transformations, thinking through the tensions between the comfort of revisiting a familiar book and the way books seem to transform every time we read them. Through rereading, Spacks points out, we may notice new details, or arrive at different interpretations because of how we ourselves have changed. It's in this tension between familiarity and newness that the pleasure of rereading lies: 'the dynamic of stasis and change … calls attention to the intricate processes of exchange between reader and text that mark every act of reading' while also emphasizing that each rereading is an encounter not just with the text but with 'one or more versions of our past selves.'[3] Unsurprisingly, when pointing to the books that are reread most frequently, Spacks tops the list with the Harry Potter series.

In her focus on personal transformation through rereading, though, Spacks doesn't mention how often rereading happens collectively. Of course the obvious example is the collective rereading of sacred texts, and she points out rightly that 'most rereading … is undertaken for reasons other than exegesis [the critical examination of a text, especially scripture], and it doesn't involve conscious purposeful work.'[4] But reread podcasts are definitely an exception. In fact, the exegetical nature of fandom reading practices is central to the popular Harry Potter reread podcast *Harry Potter and the Sacred Text*, in which two divinity scholars apply the reading practices they've learned from working with sacred texts to the Harry Potter series. Producer Ariana Nedelman has pointed out that the reading practices of fandoms are similar to those of religious communities:

> The way that I see fandom, with people coming together to love something, to talk about it in-depth and apply it to their lives … that, to me, seems so similar to the way in which I had thought about my relationship to a religious community.[5]

Reread podcasts draw on what is often a deeply personal experience – revisiting a favourite book – and bring it into a community context where reading approaches become collective and often public. They are thus key examples of self-reflexive reading communities that develop new understandings of familiar texts through collective interpretation. This was certainly the motivation for my collaborator Marcelle and I when we started our own HP reread podcast; what we didn't anticipate was that the genre was about to take off.

2. On Podcasts

Lesson Two: Podcasting is a disruptive technology that, despite its gradual corporate consolidation, still has ample room for amateurism and thus fandom.

Before delving further into this niche genre, a brief history of podcasts may be helpful. Podcasts as a medium can be dated to the early 2000s with the development of RSS feeds (Really Simple Syndication) that allowed users to subscribe to a recurrently updated site. While the use of feed subscriptions has mostly fallen to the wayside (replaced with corporate consolidation around platforms like Facebook and Medium), RSS feeds continue to be central to podcasts, which are hosted by creators even while users generally subscribe to them through platforms like Google Play and Apple Podcasts.[6] The simplicity of the medium – an mp3 file of any length that can be uploaded to a personal website or hosting platform, essentially like an audio version of a blog post – has given it early and ongoing appeal to amateurs. This continues to be the case almost two decades in, even as the top podcasts are now produced by 'more established media personalities and institutions – from Ricky Gervais to NPR.'[7] The consolidation of podcasting around established media was heightened by the post-2014 podcast boom, linked to the unprecedented success of the first season of *Serial*. As Richard Berry has pointed out, this success is not only a result of the podcast's high production values and affiliation with the long-running *This American Life*; it was also a matter of lucky timing, aligning as it did with the rise of smart phone ownership, which made podcast listening easier than ever. As demonstrated in the "2019 Podcast Stats & Facts" report – which compiles reports on podcast usage by Nielsen and Edison published between 2017 and 2019 – podcast listening is driven by smartphone usage (see **Figure 1**).[8] Despite this consolidation, however, there is still a significant place in the podcasting ecosystem for independent and amateur podcast production. Even as the listenership of top podcasts increases, so does the total number of podcasts being produced (according to the most recent Edison data, there were over 550,000 podcasts as of February 2018, compared to the 2013 estimate of 250,000[9]). For all that podcasting has gone mainstream, it still maintains the status of a 'disruptive technology … because it lowers barriers of entry to content production, allowing virtually anyone with access to a computer, microphone, and high-speed Internet connection the ability to create and distribute their own audio content online for free.'[10]

Because of this ongoing space for amateur podcasting, there has been significant uptake of podcasting within fan communities. Scholars of the medium have emphasized the connection between amateurism and fandom. For example, Andrew J. Salvati describes Dan Carlin's amateur history podcast *Hardcore History* as a fan product, comparing it to how *Star Trek* and *Harry Potter* fans 'have turned to fan fiction, digital video production, cosplay, and podcasting to craft transgressive and unauthorized re-interpretations of familiar narratives and characters.'[11] Carlin's explicit acknowledgment of his amateur status renders his historical work another form of 'textual poaching,' Henry Jenkins' term for how audiences 'struggle over the possession and interpretation' of the media products that they do not produce.[12] Podcasting, with its low barrier to entry, is an ideal site for such textual poaching, and the preponderance of fan podcasts drives this point home.
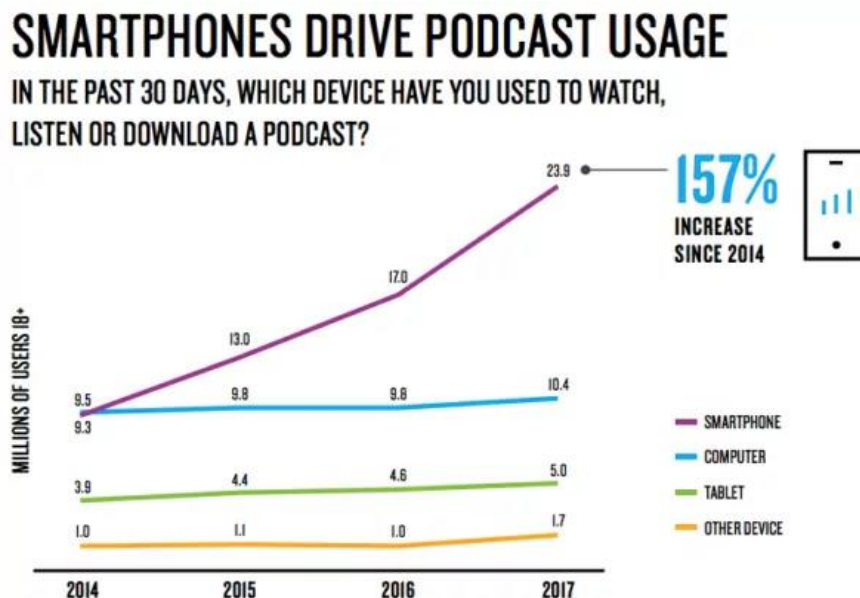
SMARTPHONES DRIVE PODCAST USAGE
IN THE PAST 30 DAYS, WHICH DEVICE HAVE YOU USED TO WATCH,
LISTEN OR DOWNLOAD A PODCAST?

Figure 1: Relationship between smartphone usage and podcast listening, drawing on Nielsen Q1

2018 Podcast Insights (Source: https://www.podcastinsights.com/podcast-statistics/)

A wide range of podcasts could be included in the broad category of fan creation, from *Dan Carlin's Hardcore History* to D&D real-play podcasts like *Critical Role*,[13] but in this paper I'm focusing on the subset of rewatch and reread podcasts (with a focus, of course, on the latter). Culture writer Caroline Crampton groups rewatch podcasts in with episode summary podcasts 'such as *The West Wing Weekly*, *Decoding Westworld*, *The Talking Dead*, *Game of Thrones: The Podcast*, *Gilmore Guys* and many others.'[14] Yet weekly recap podcasts and rewatch podcasts have a significant difference; while the former targets fans of an ongoing show who want to engage deeply with complex television series like *Westworld* or *Game of Thrones*, the latter often operates in a more nostalgic register, exploring both the content of the episodes and the hosts' emotional reactions to revisiting a favourite series (Spacks' description of rereading as an encounter with past selves comes to mind here). *Buffering the Vampire Slayer* is a great example of this genre, charting as it does how the experience of rewatching is changing the series for hosts Jenny Owen Youngs and Kristin Russo.[15] While recap and rewatch podcasts exist for a wide range of television shows, however, reread podcasts seem to be significantly dominated by *Harry Potter* themed shows[16] – most likely because of the unique status Harry Potter holds as the most popular and most-reread book series in publishing history.

3. HP Reread Podcasts

Lesson Three: Following both the golden age of podcasts and the coming-of-age of the first generation of Harry Potter readers, the time is ripe for reread podcasts that let listeners revisit childhood favourite books via a new favourite medium.

In February of 2015, when my collaborator Marcelle Kosman and I decided to start *Witch, Please*, we were disconnected from the Harry Potter fandom and thus entirely unaware of the larger genre of HP reread podcasts, but we certainly did not invent the idea of a reread/rewatch podcast. In fact, we were directly inspired by another rewatch podcast being made by our colleague Neale Barnholden and his friend Breanna, *Save the Date*, which he described as 'two over-educated twenty-somethings … try[ing] to monitor the ending of the last of a vanishing breed' – in this case referring to the final season of popular sitcom *How I Met Your Mother*.[17] The reference to over-education points to another commonality between *Save the Date* and *Witch, Please*: both were projects initiated by emerging scholars interested in applying our critical reading skills to popular culture through conversations with friends, mimicking the kinds of conversations most people with graduate degrees in the humanities have spent hours indulging in. As Marcelle describes it, 'I was going to re-read the books with *WP*'s co-creator, Hannah (you) for fun, and we thought it would be extra fun to turn our conversations about the books into a podcast.' (The complete text of Marcelle's interview is included as **Appendix C**.)

In fact, it wasn't until years into making *Witch, Please* that we realized the number of other reread podcasts that had preceded us and that followed us (**Figure 2**). I have included as **Appendix D** brief descriptions of each of these podcasts. For the sake of this timeline, I am defining an HP reread podcast as any podcast in which hosts read through the Harry Potter series in order to discuss the books, regardless of the amount of material covered per episode or the framing lens of the discussion. What the timeline demonstrates is that Harry Potter reread podcasts emerged in two unique phases. The first phase began in 2005, when the series was not yet completed and the early Internet-based fandom was just taking off; it aligns with dedicated fansites (MuggleNet, est. 1999, and The Leaky Cauldron, est. 2000), early fandom events like *LeakyCon* (a fan convention started in 2009), and other niche fan properties like *A Very Potter Musical* (2009). The second phase of reread podcasts, on which this essay is focusing, took off in 2015 and 2016 in the wake of the above-described 2013 podcasting boom, and continues to thrive. These podcasts capitalize on the fact that early readers of Harry Potter are now the key demographic for podcasts (educated, mid-30s, immersive cultural consumers). They are more likely to specify being spoiler-free than kid-friendly, tend to be less embedded in the deep fandom of the early podcasts, and focus on accessibility for people who have not yet read the series. The common trope of first-time readers and long-time fans talking through the series together emphasizes a desire to attract both audiences. While *Harry Potter and the Sacred Text* is the only one that explicitly frames its reading as exegetical, all these podcasts share a sense that this series is worthy of a slow and careful rereading.
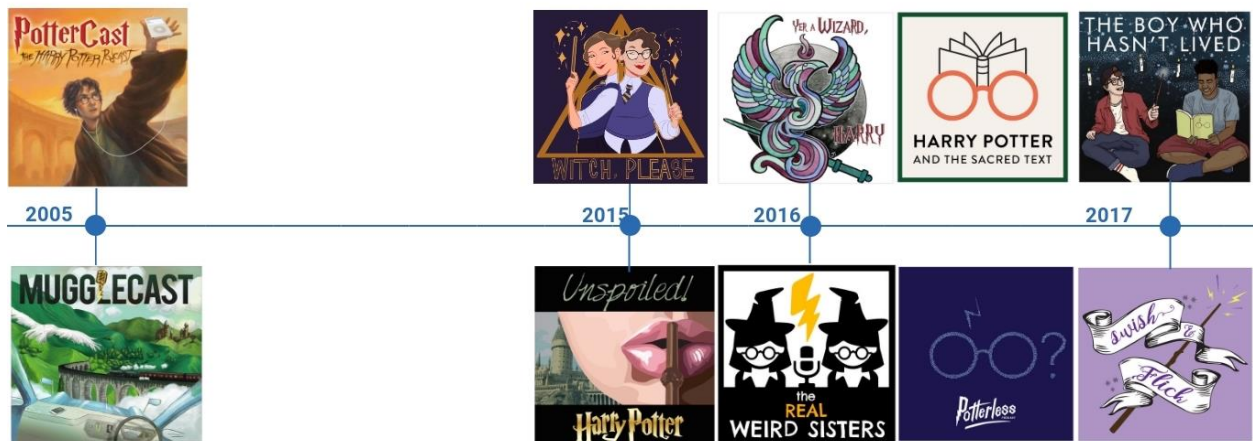
Figure 2: Timeline of Harry Potter Reread Podcasts 2005-2017 (Cover Art from Apple Podcasts)

The question remains: why this preponderance of HP reread podcasts? While the earlier ones can be linked to a fan culture like many others, the post-2015 boom of the genre suggests something else: namely, that Harry Potter's unique cultural status is shifting as the original readers of the series age. The best-selling book series is a touchstone for people who were the target reading age when the first book was published – millennials, who are also a top demographic of podcast-listeners.[18] This still doesn't explain how, though, and why listeners are drawn to and engage with these podcasts. To tackle that question, I decided to ask listeners.

4. Surveying HP Reread Podcast Listeners

Lesson Four: Deeply engaged readers and fans will seek out multiple simultaneous ways to engage with favourite books, including rereading and relistening, and discussing in person and online; these mediated encounters deepen readers' sense of intimacy with favourite books by incorporating the books into everyday activities.

In order to gain a sense of why people both make and listen to HP reread podcasts, I created two surveys: one for podcast creators, and one for listeners. While the survey for creators unfortunately had a low response rate (which I've supplemented using promotional materials for other podcasts as well as Marcelle's and my personal experience), the survey for listeners garnered 556 responses. A significant percentage of these respondents are *Witch, Please* listeners – unsurprising, considering that I circulated the survey through my Twitter account and was thus more likely to get responses from people who already followed me – but the graph below (Figure 2) shows that many listen to a variety of other HP reread podcasts. The 556 respondents indicated that they listened to particular podcasts a total of 989 times, an average of 1.78 podcasts per listener, indicating that many respondents listen to multiple different reread podcasts.
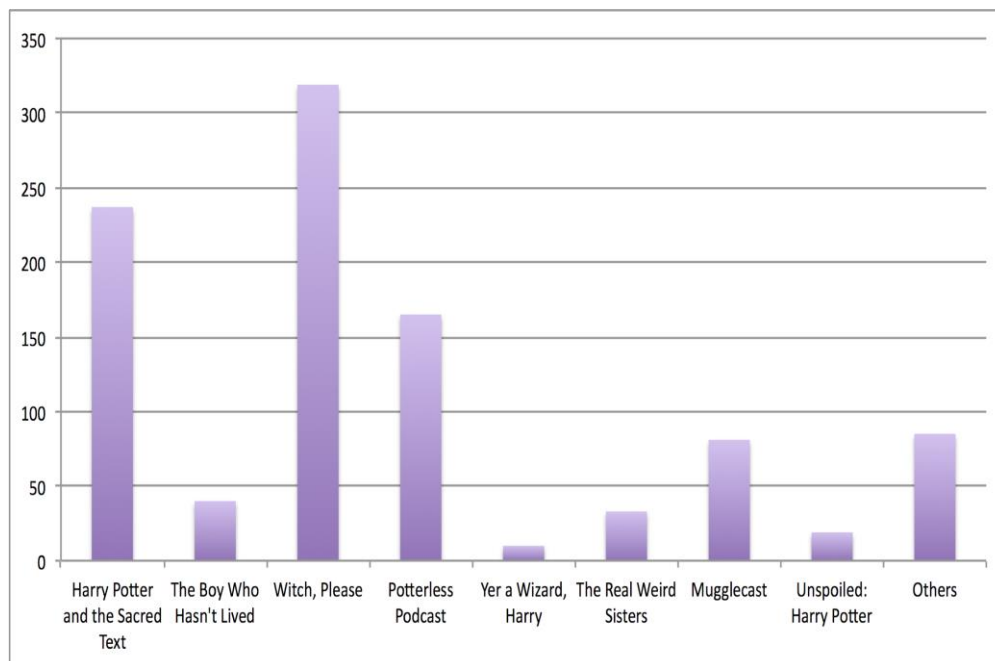
Figure 3: Graph of Responses to Listener Questionnaire Q1: 'What Harry Potter reread podcasts do you listen to?'

In addition to asking respondents what podcasts they listen to, the survey also asked them if they identify as part of the Harry Potter fandom, how often they reread the Harry Potter books, what other fandom practices they participate in, why they listen to reread podcasts, why they think the podcasts are popular, how they interact with podcasters, how they interact with fellow listeners, and what they've learned from the reread podcasts they listen to (if anything).

Some of these responses can be transformed into simple numbers. For example, 498 out of the 556 respondents identify as Harry Potter fans, or 89.5%. Most answers, however, were formatted as text boxes, meaning my first challenge was to figure out how to grapple with all this data. I used the Voyant suite of tools (voyant-tools.org) as a starting point, focusing on word frequencies and words in context to see at a glance what kinds of responses were typical. I then supplemented these visualizations with deeper dives into the text of the answers themselves, often looking for patterns of responses.

For example, the responses to Q3: 'When did you first read the Harry Potter books? How many times have you read them?' (which in retrospect could easily have been formatted as a controlled list of responses, thus saving me a lot of trouble) are of course dominated by the words 'read' (789), 'times' (555), and 'books' (263) (**Figure 3**). The words 'probably' (99) and 'count' (54) show the number of respondents who had to estimate their answers due to a significant number of rereads, while the word 'listened' (50) indicates respondents intervening in the idea of 'rereading' by adding audiobooks into the mix.

Figure 4: Voyant word cloud visualization of responses to Listener Questionnaire Q3: 'When did you first read the Harry Potter books? How many times have you read them?'

Voyant's context tool let me drill down on particular words, perhaps most usefully in this case 'times,' which generally appears with a number indicating how many times the respondent has read or reread the series. What stands out is the enormous rate of rereading; it is common for people to have reread the series three or four times, but many respondents say they've reread them over a dozen times, and some report rereading up to 30 or 40 times. Another notable characteristic is the uniqueness of different people's rereading habits. While some reread the series beginning to end on an annual basis, others reread their favourite books more frequently. As one respondent wrote:

> I haven't kept track of how many times I've read every book in the series, but according to the tally I keep in my copy of Deathly Hallows, I've read the 7th book 32 times. (It's one of the books I reach for most often from the series if I'm not doing a full read-through, so I definitely haven't read them all that many times... the 1st and 5th books are probably the only other two that are on par with that number).

A number of responses emphasized not just the number of times people have reread the books, but also started to discuss why. One respondent described reading the series as 'a coping mechanism': 'I have read them countless times when feeling particularly low.' Another described the almost ritualistic way in which they relisten to the series: 'I have been listening to the audiobooks every night to go to sleep (and other times, but mostly for sleep)

since 2009, I have probably listened all the way through the series probably 30 times?' Still another framed their desire to share the audiobooks in terms of religious fervour:

> They continue to be the greatest (illegal) gifts I give friends and family. 'Oh, you're stressed, or bored or anxious? Do you want to try the word of JK Rowling and Stephen Fry? I have it right here on my USB.' I feel like I might as well hand out pocket bibles.

What's striking about these responses is how central the books are to respondents' lives; rereading is not framed as a recreational activity but as a foundational one, vital to their mental health or relationships.

With many listeners identifying as fans and emphasizing their deep attachment to the Harry Potter books, I found myself curious as to whether their fandom extended beyond rereading. Certainly, by virtue of having responded to this survey, they identified as HP reread podcast listeners, but what other forms did their fandom take? A look at the answers to Q4: 'What other fandom practices or communities do you participate in? (E.g. read or write fanfiction, attend fandom-related events, etc.)' demonstrates that rereading and podcast-listening are not necessarily indications that respondents participated in further aspects of Harry Potter fandom; the word 'none' appeared in responses 88 times. It was significantly outweighed, however, by the next most common form of fandom (after podcasting, with which presumably 100% of respondents engage): fanfiction, which appeared in responses 145 times. By looking at the responses to Q4 in Voyant, I could see that most people *read* fanfiction rather than writing it: 'read' appears 214 times, versus 'write' showing up 65 times. Interestingly, when looking at 'write' in Voyant's context tool I found that most people described writing fanfiction as something they *used* to do, leading me to wonder if podcasts have replaced fanfiction for some fans as they've aged. As I argued above, reread podcasts can be categorized alongside fanfiction as transformative fandom – rather than curative fandom – and participate in similar forms of 'textual poaching' by not just revisiting favourite books and movies but engaging in interpretive acts that lay claim to these stories' meanings. While podcasts may seem more unidirectional than fanfiction, as I'll argue below podcasts are in fact a deeply interactive medium, in which listeners understand themselves as positioned to respond to and contest hosts' interpretations.

In the next section I'll delve deeper into how fans account for their own interest in reread podcasts. In general, however, the prevalence of rereading within the Harry Potter fandom is a key part of what makes reread podcasts so popular: they draw on and publicly enact a practice that is already common within the community. They thus benefit from the pre-existing unique cultural role of the Harry Potter books while also building space for reading communities in different media. To understand these podcasts, then, it is helpful to gain a better sense of what the Harry Potter fandom is like, and why rereading plays such a key role within it.

5. Rereading within the HP Fandom

Lesson Five: While cultural commentators often frame the Harry Potter books as morally improving, fans are more likely to frame collective rereading in terms of the pleasures of community and of re-encountering a familiar book in a new way.

As I've already established, the existence of reread/rewatch podcasts is not unique to the Harry Potter fandom. But the high number of reread podcasts taps into something specific about the Harry Potter fandom – what scholar Beth Driscoll has identified as its middlebrow mediation. While the books themselves are not middlebrow, they are frequently used to emphasize the link between literacy and empathy (a particularly middlebrow understanding of how reading works):

> Many educators who promote the Harry Potter novels link children's enthusiasm for the books with a pedagogical concern for the welfare of the child and the community. This approach to reading strongly recalls the new literary middlebrow practices of Oprah's Book Club … as well as those of … literary festivals.[19]

Driscoll also links Harry Potter to the tradition of ethical readings of fantasy novels; the allegorical nature of J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis's work comes to mind here, as examples of fantasy novels that offer 'an overtly moral world' that can be used for 'discussion of personal and social values.'[20]

Similarly, Laura Marie Fitzpatrick, in her thesis '"The Boy Who Lived": Harry Potter and the Practice of Moral Literacy,' emphasizes how the collective experience of reading Harry Potter can constitute a 'moral education.' Fitzpatrick describes fandoms 'utiliz[ing] their acquired knowledge to engage in interpretive and analytical activities that cement and reinforce the ethical nature of the texts.'[21] This oft-cited sense that reading in general, and reading Harry Potter in particular, makes people better or more ethical was bolstered by a 2014 study that found reading Harry Potter 'is a powerful strategy to improve out-group attitudes' – that is, that people who had read certain passages from the series were more likely to have compassionate perspectives on marginalized people.[22] Studies like these raise the question of whether Harry Potter fans themselves are thinking of rereading the series as an ethical or improving practice.

Three questions in the listener survey attempted to get at this question – Q5: 'Why do you listen to Harry Potter reread podcasts,' Q6: 'Why do you think Harry Potter reread podcasts are popular,' and Q9: 'What, if anything, have you learned from the Harry Potter reread podcast(s) you listen to?' The responses to Q5 reveal, above all, an affective response to the books and to the podcasts about them – 'love' (197) and 'like' (180) were the second and third most frequent words in responses. Listeners described loving not just the books but also the podcasts, the hosts, learning more about the books, exercising critical

thinking skills, and sharing their love of Harry Potter with others, with one listener explaining that 'There's a sense of kinship in that.' Also prominent are words that emphasize how podcasts let listeners re-encounter favourite books: 'new' (164), 'way' (100), 'different' (89), and 'perspective' (51). A closer look at the responses show that they can roughly be divided into three reasons for listening: to get more out of the series (critical perspectives, close analysis, previously unconsidered details, etc.); to share the series with other people, or as one response put it, 'to share enthusiasm virtually'; and to talk about other issues via what another respondent called the 'common cultural background' of the Harry Potter books. Specific responses also indicate the degree to which listeners value the different kinds of conversations enabled by different podcasts. For example, one describes *Harry Potter and the Sacred Text* as particularly resonant:

> [M]y relationship with Harry Potter is in some ways like what I imagine some people's to the Bible used to be/still is: not so much in the sense that I use it as a source of guidance for my life, but that it's a text that I know so well and have read so repeatedly that I can be thrown into any part of it and know exactly what's going on.

In contrast, *Witch, Please* listeners often cite the explicitly political bent of the podcast as its primary appeal. As one listener explained, *Witch, Please* resonated for her because of both the identities of the hosts and the framing of the conversations:

> As a queer POC […] I think my expectations of 'seeing myself' in literature are quite different to white queer people that I know and talk to this stuff about - and I was really struggling to articulate even to myself what I think it means for a book to be 'representative', (or even just lovely!) and how to simultaneously criticise JKR for the things that are sad about the books […] So i suppose what I'm trying to say is that listening to Witch, Please is a way of working through all those feelings about Harry Potter - my real life Harry Potter friends either uncritically adore it and everything JKR does, or no longer like to talk about it except to criticise the latest JKR tweet - so it's reassuring to hear other people loving it and also criticising it.

The final sentiment in this response, referring to the possibility of both loving and critiquing Harry Potter, appears several times in answers to both Q5 and Q9, reflecting a lesson Marcelle and I have worked hard to impart: that it is possible to love something and think critically about it at the same time. But while the specific appeal of the different podcasts may vary, there's a sense across all the responses of how rereading alongside communities of interpretation brings value into respondents' lives. Whether that value is guidance, affirmation, comfort, or critical challenge, there's a shared understanding of collective rereading as an enriching and pleasurable process.

When asked why Harry Potter reread podcasts are so popular (Q6) – a question that invites respondents to abstract from their personal experience and comment on the phenomenon as a whole – respondents focused on the community-building dimensions of podcasts (which I'll tackle in more detail in the next section), with the words 'people,' 'fandom,' and 'community' appearing frequently. A number of responses also emphasized the ease of podcast-listening as a way to infuse your day-to-day life with your fandom; according to one respondent, 'Harry Potter podcasts are popular probably because podcasts are good to listen to while multitasking and everyone loves Harry Potter.' While I often think of reread podcasts as having a pedagogical function, 'learn' only appeared eleven times – though other words, such as 'think' (167), 'engage' (37), 'know' (37), and 'critical' (24) may indicate a similarly kind of pedagogical engagement. Some respondents noted that reread podcasts are popular because they allow people to 'examine the books in a more critical, mature manner' or because 'people like to read deeply and engage in and with literary criticism,' but these kinds of responses are in the minority. More responses focused on how reread podcasts tap into the comfort and familiarity of the Harry Potter series; as one respondent aptly summarized, 'I think nostalgia is a huge contributor to the popularity of the reread podcasts.'

The question of what people have learned from these podcasts (Q9), then, presumably required many respondents to think of the podcasts differently than they did when reflecting on their own use of them. The answers are so widely varied that it's difficult to pull out any trends via a tool like Voyant, which shows a dip between expected words – 'learned' (198) and 'books' (138) – and other words that suggest an answer: 'new' (83), 'critical' (78), 'think' (75), and 'different' (69). Looking at the word 'learned' in context helps to clarify the wide varieties of things respondents have learned: new (often critical) reading strategies; new details about the books (and, as a result, new perspectives on characters); and new things about the world/themselves, such as kindness and empathy, the importance of being an ally, and, as one listener put it, 'That I am not alone.' The final category of response, with its focus on personal transformation, reminded me of Spacks' discussion of rereading as an encounter with 'one or more versions of our past selves.'[23] Indeed, as one response articulates, 'It's really hard to figure out what you've learned from podcasts you've listened to over a long period of time - like, what did I learn from a podcast vs. what did I learn from the rest of my life.' While for some listeners their favourite podcasts have an overtly pedagogical role, for others the books and podcasts are so intimately intertwined in their lives that it's impossible to pull apart what they've learned from listening and rereading and what they've learned simply from being a person in the world.

A key element of all the responses to these three questions, as I've mentioned, is *community*, and how the podcast becomes another means through which Harry Potter fans can relate to one another, and to podcast hosts. Marcelle describes the making of *Witch, Please* as a process through which she developed her understanding of fandom:

> To be clear, I would have said I was a fan (maybe even fanatical) about the Harry Potter series, but I wasn't particularly familiar with the notion of an organized public that interacts with each other through shared passion for a franchise.

While readers may privately reread the books for all manner of reasons, it is clear from responses that the collective experience of podcast listening is central to their appeal. What draws listeners in is the opportunity for participation in a community of readers.

6. Podcasts as Fan Communities

Lesson Six: At the heart of reread podcasts is the interaction between listeners and hosts, who deliberately build in ways for listeners to contribute to their favourite podcasts and thus drive a sense of these communities as interactive and non-hierarchical.

Like most media, podcasts have a whole set of related social practices and use habits that are much more complex than a simple mp3 circulated through an RSS feed. Lisa Gitelman refers to these as media protocols, or the 'vast clutter of normative rules and default conditions, which gather and adhere like a nebulous array around a technological nucleus.'[24] A podcast might include not only the mp3 and RSS feed, but the submission to podcasting apps or 'podcatchers,' listeners' use of smartphones and habits of multitasking while listening, accompanying social media accounts and the established norms of interacting with hosts, live events and meet-ups, the availability of branded merchandise, and more. Thus while reread podcasts exist within an array of fandom practices like writing fan fiction and attending conventions, they also have developed their own secondary fandoms with characteristics that might overlap with or be unique from the larger fandom with which the podcast engages.

Because podcast listeners are, for the most part, assumed to be digitally savvy and comfortable with technology, most forms of podcast interaction happen in digital spaces. For example, Marcelle describes how we interact with *Witch, Please* listeners:

> Together we maintain a fairly active Twitter presence … which involves replying, re-tweeting, polling, and 'quote tweeting.' Occasionally listeners contact us at our university email addresses, too. I find those messages are often a bit more personal, so I try to put more care into these replies than, say, a reply to a tweet. We also have open comments on our blog (where we post the episodes), which Hannah responds to, and I maintain a very low-key *Witch, Please* Instagram account.

In addition to this we have created participatory segments on the podcast using hashtags, including #witchpleasetellme, in which listeners can ask us questions, and the #trywitches

tournament (a play on the Triwizard Tournament from *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*), in which we challenge listeners to take on self-care or social-justice oriented tasks. Born-digital, podcasts are also born-interactive, so to speak. Kyle Wrather describes how podcasts 'offer a particularly resonant example of media convergence' through 'the interactions, relationships and bonding between podcast producers, audiences and communities across many forms of media beyond the episodes themselves.'[25] Podcast fandoms tend to be participatory and interactive, not simply between fans but also between listeners and producers; indeed, most successful podcasts build in these kinds of opportunities for listener engagement and respond directly to fan feedback within the episodes themselves.

Also central to podcast community-building are live and in-person events. We have done meet-ups in London, England; Toronto, Ontario; Calgary, Alberta; and Cambridge, Massachusetts; and we have delivered talks around North America. Because *Witch, Please* has a distinctly scholarly orientation, however, our networks of listener engagement have often overlapped with scholarly communication networks; when we speak at conventions, for example, it is often through a program developed to bring academics into fan spaces, and we have spoken at universities with greater frequency. In contrast, other popular reread podcasts like *Harry Potter and the Sacred Text* and *Potterless* have focused on developing audience engagement through more typical podcasting networks. Both maintain active presences on social media, have merchandise available, and try to build in opportunities for listeners to meet them. Further, both have built elements into their podcasts that encourage listener interaction and draw on the larger Harry Potter fandom to increase listener engagement. *Harry Potter and the Sacred Text* both invites other fans to record 'blessings' for characters in the books and invites listeners, via their website, to 'Tell us a story from your life and how it changed the way you read something that we have discussed on the podcast.'[26] *Potterless* frequently invites guests from other Harry Potter podcasts (including myself and the hosts of *Sacred Text*) and host Mike Schubert takes up opportunities to guest on other podcasts. If we were to visualize the audience outreach strategies of the different HP reread podcasts, we might picture a series of overlapping circles, in which each show fosters its own unique listenership with attention to appropriate circles of communication and media venues (universities, conventions, social media, etc.) while all overlap collectively with the Harry Potter fandom.

One place where these circles overlap is the emerging habit of group listening and discussion. This is certainly not unique to reread podcasts – in the early days of the popular comedy podcast *My Brother, My Brother, and Me*, for example, they encouraged group listening parties through special offers. But the structuring of these shows around systematically rereading and discussing books that are already frequently reread and discussed within the fandom clearly lends itself to discussion groups. Some shows actively encourage this practice: a page on *Harry Potter and the Sacred Text*'s website encourages listeners to join a local discussion group or start their own, listing fifteen existing groups across the U.S. (and one in Australia!) who meet at coffee shops, student centres, book stores, and churches.[27] This practice first came to Marcelle's and my attention when we

learned of a family in Calgary, Alberta who would meet regularly to listen to and discuss episodes of *Witch, Please*; we ended up recording an episode with them about how Harry Potter fandom functions within their family.[28] In that episode, they confirm again how the podcast both facilitates community and offers a new entry point to a familiar series, in turn fostering conversations about topics that range far beyond the texts themselves.

In the listener survey, I asked both whether/how people interact with the hosts of their favourite HP reread podcasts (Q7), and whether they have a community (in person or online) with whom they discuss these podcasts (Q8). The word cloud below (**Figure 4**) speaks quite clearly to how listeners interact with hosts, emphasizing the role of social media. While the subscription numbers of other podcasts are not readily available, I can say that the ratio of Twitter followers to podcast subscribers for *Witch, Please* is roughly 1:3, indicating that a significant minority of listeners take advantage of social media to interact with hosts, while many others prefer to listen to the shows and perhaps discuss with their own communities or simply enjoy them privately. As one listener wrote, 'it's a strictly one-way relationship for me.' Nevertheless, the word 'no' only appears 78 times in response to Q7, whereas it appears 175 times in responses to Q8, making it the most common word in that corpus. [29] That is to say, many more respondents indicated interacting with the hosts than interacting with fellow listeners, thus producing something more like a relationship than an interactive community of listeners.

Figure 5: Voyant word cloud of responses to listen questionnaire Q7: 'Do you interact with the hosts/producers of these podcasts? If so, how?'

The responses to the question of how and with whom listeners discuss the podcasts (Q8) are more varied, though (delightfully) the top word is 'friends' (154). Many respondents refer to texting or chatting in person about new episodes of a favourite show or participating in podcast-specific Facebook or Patreon groups, while others bemoan the fact that they haven't been able to convince friends to listen. As one listener succinctly put it, 'I wish. I am always telling people I know to listen to them so we can talk about it in person.' Collectively, these answers suggest listeners use the podcasts to amplify existing

relationships, often already structured around HP fandom, rather than using the podcasts to develop new communities. Some answers specify that respondents do discuss Harry Potter with their friends – but focus on the books and movies, not podcasts or other fan properties. While a small percentage of respondents discuss forming new communities and friendships through particular podcasts, that experience appears to be less common than listeners using the podcasts to further cement existing fandom-based communities. At first I was surprised by these responses, as I have become friends with many *Witch, Please* listeners. But of course, I am not a fellow listener, I'm one of the hosts, and responses indicate a difference in how listeners engage with hosts versus how they engage with one another.

The emphasis on interaction with hosts rather than with other listeners suggests the degree to which HP reread podcasts rely upon the personality of the hosts as well as their willingness to foster an active relationship with listeners. Marcelle reflects on this experience when asked what she's learned from making *Witch, Please*:

> I've learned that there's a hunger for feminist publics. … And I've learned that being … a public persona impacts others in a very intimate way, even if I don't know them. So learning how to respond when I'm publicly held accountable for ignorant or hurtful things I've said has been really challenging, but helpful (I think) in making me a more compassionate, considerate public speaker. The difference between someone calling you out on a hurtful thing you've said vs trolling you because they hate your identity is huge, but it takes work to learn the difference, especially for those of us whose identities are saturated with power and privilege in our unjust society.

What Marcelle is emphasizing here is the way reread podcasts situate us not only as fellow fans and readers but also as public figures and even experts with a responsibility to our listeners. Thus we return to the idea of rereading as a practice deeply tied to identity – both to personal identity, as Spacks explores, and to collective identity when undertaken within fandoms or religious communities.

7. Conclusion: What are Reread Podcasts For?

Lesson Seven: All reread podcasts are pedagogical, either implicitly or explicitly, because they give hosts the opportunity to frame and guide rereadings through their own understandings of both specific books and reading in general.

HP reread podcasts enact a communal reading experience that is constructed around the identities and personalities of the hosts who both structure the rereading process and choose how to relate and respond to listener feedback. They are unique as digital reading communities, bringing together exegetical readings of beloved texts with the digital community practices and protocols of podcasts, including listener interaction with hosts on

social media. They are at once lateral and hierarchical, centering the voices of the hosts while making the hosts accessible and, ideally, accountable to the community of listeners even while the fandom itself – listeners' personal and collective relationships with the Harry Potter books – remains central.

The deep intimacy of rereading as a practice, one in which readers not only reencounter a favourite text but reencounter past versions of themselves, aligns with the intimacy of podcasting as a medium. Walking around with our favourite podcasts in our headphones while we complete daily tasks, podcast listeners often experience a heightened sense of closeness to podcast hosts, even when they are complete strangers. As podcaster Glen Weldon writes of this phenomenon, it's influenced by both genre and medium:

> Perhaps most crucially, earbuds transmit their voices inside your head – they *roost* there, rubbing shoulders with your own thoughts. No wonder you feel as if you know them; that the sound of their voices comes to fire precisely the same neurons, arouse the same feelings, that the voices of your closest friends do.[30]

This sense of intimacy is increased by hosts' tendency to make themselves available on social media and to encourage listener feedback through interactive segments. Podcasts wouldn't be nearly as well-suited to communal rereading if interactivity weren't so central to them as a medium; otherwise they'd be little more than a recorded lecture.

As *Witch, Please* winds to a close (we are in the process of recording our final season), I have been reflecting on the structural differences between classrooms and podcasts as sites of collective (re)reading. When Paul Booth calls fandom 'the classroom of the future,' he is referring to how fandoms encourage critical thinking and deep discussion in a way that the neoliberal university, with its focus on quantifiable outcomes, seems increasingly averse to. He concludes: 'It is our role as educators to listen to fandom; and it is our responsibility as fans to promote critical fandom in all our work.'[31] There has certainly always been a pedagogical bent to Marcelle's and my work as podcasters, one that Marcelle articulates as part of our podcast's appeal:

> [W]e have very insightful readings of the books because we're really good at interpreting text. I think, too, that we try really hard to explain academic concepts when we use them in our interpretations, so even if someone isn't in university, or isn't in the Humanities or Social Sciences, they might still find what we have to say relevant and interesting.

But this pedagogical function isn't unique to our podcast. All hosts structure and guide the experience of collective rereading within reread podcasts, so we are all playing a pedagogical role, whether or not it's framed as such.

There are a variety of future directions for research that this study invites; by including both the complete spreadsheet of survey responses and the timeline of HP reread podcasts, I hope to encourage further study of this topic. For example, future work might tease out the implicit and explicit pedagogies shaping different podcasts, whether theological, political, or deeply personal. It might also expand the consideration of reread podcasts beyond the specificities of the Harry Potter fandom into the larger genre of SFF, asking why science fiction and fantasy seem to invite the close, repeated engagement in non-professional reading communities that other genres do not. Podcasts, as a site of public and collective reading and rereading, offer a new object of study for scholars of reading studies and audience studies that can potentially tell us a great deal about the relationships between fandom and rereading, about how digital communities form (or fail to form) around the act reading, and about emergent reading practices in the twenty-first century that are facilitated by the unique affordances of new media.

It is clear that HP reread podcasts are popular because they fill a unique cultural niche. They offer a collective and interactive rereading of a massively popular book series that listeners are already primed to think of as worth rereading. Most importantly, by building in opportunities for listener interactions while guiding readings through their own responses, hosts model and facilitate self-conscious and self-reflexive reading habits. Through these rereadings, the podcasts become launch pads for online communities with truly transformative potential.

Biographical Note:

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Appendix A: Complete Listener Questionnaire

1. What Harry Potter reread podcasts do you listen to? (Choices: Harry Potter and the Sacred Text; The Boy Who Hasn't Lived; Witch, Please; Potterless Podcast; Yer a Wizard, Harry; The Real Weird Sisters; Mugglecast; Unspoiled: Harry Potter; Others)
2. Do you identify as a member of the Harry Potter fandom?
3. When did you first read the Harry Potter books? How many times have you read them?
4. What other fandom practices or communities do you participate in? (E.g. read or write fanfiction, attend fandom-related events, etc.)
5. Why do you listen to Harry Potter reread podcasts?
6. Why do you think Harry Potter reread podcasts are popular?

7. Do you interact with the hosts/producers of these podcasts? If so, how?
8. Do you have a community who listen to the same Harry Potter reread podcast(s) as you? If so, do you discuss the podcast with them? Online, in person, or both?
9. What, if anything, have you learned from the Harry Potter reread podcast(s) you listen to?
10. Are there any other comments you would like to add?

Appendix B: Complete Spreadsheet of Listener Responses

Available at http://summit.sfu.ca/item/18394.

Appendix C: Marcelle Kosman's Responses to Creator Questionnaire
"Yer a Reader, Harry": Reread Podcasts as Digital Reading Communities Questionnaire for Podcasters

1. **What is the name of the podcast you produce?** *Witch, Please*

2. **When did you start producing this podcast? How many episodes have you made?** We started in January of 2015. To date we've made over 50, but the exact number is difficult to calculate given our extremely esoteric numbering system.

3. **Describe the format of your podcast.** Conversational; structured into segments.

4. **Did you have any podcasting experience prior to this?** Minimal. I had community radio production experience and the program I produced was also available via podcast; at the time I did not think of myself as producing a podcast.

5. **When did you first read the Harry Potter books? How many times have you read them?** I started reading the books at 19, during the summer before I started University (only the first five were available at the time). I've probably read each of them at least four times, and some of them seven or eight times.

6. **Did you identify as a member of the Harry Potter fandom prior to beginning this podcast? Do you identify as one now?** I'm not sure that fandom was a term on my radar when we started making the podcast. I recall developing my understanding of fandom while making the podcast and interacting with listeners online. To be clear, I would have said I was a fan (maybe even fanatical) about the Harry Potter series, but I wasn't particularly familiar with the notion of an organized public that interacts with each other through shared passion for a franchise. I didn't even know what "shipping" meant until a few months into making *Witch, Please*, but I faked it so as to not lose face in front of my very hip and much more "with-it" co-creator.

7. **What motivated you to start making this podcast?** I was going to re-read the books with *WP'* s co-creator, Hannah (you) for fun, and we thought it would be extra fun to turn our conversations about the books into a podcast.

8.   **Do you interact with listeners? If so, how?** Together we maintain a fairly active Twitter presence (though I took a long hiatus from our Twitter account for mental health reasons in late 2015), which involves replying, re-tweeting, polling, and "quote tweeting." Occasionally listeners contact us at our university email addresses, too. I find those messages are often a bit more personal, so I try to put more care into these replies than, say, a reply to a tweet. We also have open comments on our blog (where we post the episodes), which Hannah responds to, and I maintain a very low-key *Witch, Please* Instagram account.

9.   **What do you think draws listeners to your podcast?** There's no accounting for taste, but I think the podcast maintains a fun and irreverent vibe throughout. Our early conversations are especially funny (maybe because the world didn't yet seem like an exploding tire fire of neo nazi fascist bullshit, and we didn't feel completely threadbare and pummelled by our complicity in countless forms of violence; plus no one had told us our podcast was meaningful to them so we didn't feel the sense of responsibility to our listeners that we feel now) so I imagine those goofier, early episodes draw in and hook people looking for Harry Potter podcasts. Plus we have very insightful readings of the books because we're *really good* at interpreting text. I think, too, that we try really hard to explain academic concepts when we use them in our interpretations, so even if someone isn't in university, or isn't in the Humanities or Social Sciences, they might still find what we have to say relevant and interesting. And then there's our movie episodes, which are a laugh riot because Hannah+Marcelle+Neale is a Holy Trinity of comic genius.

10.   **What, if anything, have you learned from the process of making this podcast?** I've definitely learned what fandom is! I've learned that there's a hunger for feminist publics. I've learned (mostly) how to ignore people who disagree with our politics or interpretations. And I've learned that being having a public persona impacts others in a very intimate way, even if I don't know them. So learning how to respond when I'm publicly held accountable for ignorant or hurtful things I've said has been really challenging, but helpful (I think) in making me a more compassionate, considerate public speaker. The difference between someone calling you out on a hurtful thing you've said vs trolling you because they hate your identity is huge, but it takes work to learn the difference, especially for those of us whose identities are saturated with power and privilege in our unjust society.

Appendix D: Timeline and Descriptions of Harry Potter Reread Podcasts

Note: The starting dates and episode numbers were drawn from Apple Podcasts and were accurate as of January 2019.

   MuggleCast: the Harry Potter podcast (2005): Created by Harry Potter fansite MuggleNet (launched 1999); it has been releasing episodes semi-continuously since then, with a hiatus in 2013. *MuggleCast* is not properly a reread podcast, as its 403 episodes focus more on fandom-related news. In 2012, MuggleNet launched *Alohomora!: A Global Reread of Harry Potter*, which focuses more on carefully rereading the text of the books; it currently has 263 episodes.
   PotterCast: Harry Potter podcasting since 2005 (2005): Like *MuggleCast*, *PotterCast* was started by an existing fansite: *The Leaky Cauldron*, itself launched in 2000. It combines discussion of

the texts with interviews from fans and celebrities. It has currently produced 285 episodes, released roughly once a month.

Witch, Please (2015): Initially conceived of as a reread/rewatch podcast with a strong focus on feminist and anti-oppressive reading strategies, *Witch, Please* began with fortnightly episodes that moved sequentially through the books and movies. Having completed the proposed reread, we expanded to tackle other aspects of the Harry Potter franchise, including games and other adaptations, as well as the fandom in general. It currently has 61 episodes.

Unspoiled!: Harry Potter (2015): The *Unspoiled!* series of podcasts (which includes podcasts dedicated to *Game of Thrones*, *The Walking Dead*, *The Wire*, and many other popular series) advertises itself as offering the pleasure of sharing a favourite property with a friend who hasn't yet read/seen it.[32] It currently has 134 episodes (and has just finished rereading the third book, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*).

Yer a Wizard, Harry: The Harry Potter Bookclub (2016): Produced by the *Geekly Inc* site, along with eight other fandom-related podcasts, this series features weekly episodes in which three hosts (Michael DiMauro, Bijaya Shrestha, and Sarah Tompkins) read sequentially through the series. It advertises itself as being a spoiler-free opportunity for new readers to listen along, while also being appealing to established fans.[33] Thus far they have 130 episodes and have just concluded their reread of the fifth book, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*.

The Real Weird Sisters: A Harry Potter Podcast (2016): This podcast is hosted by two sisters, Alice and Martha, who identify as fans who have reread the books multiple times (Alice claims a tally of 75 rereads).[34] They have produced 180 episodes and are midway through rereading *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*.

Harry Potter and the Sacred Text (2016): Hosted by Vanessa Zoltan and Casper ter Kuile, both academics affiliated with the Harvard Divinity School, this podcast rereads the Harry Potter series as a 'sacred text' – 'reading the text slowly, repeatedly and with concentrated attention,' making the text sacred 'through our rigorous engagement.'[35] They have produced 142 episodes so far, and are midway their reread of *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*. They were recently picked up by the *Night Vale Presents* podcast network.

Potterless Podcast (2016): Hosted by Mike Schubert, this podcast distinguishes itself through the fact that its host is reading the series for the first time. In each episode, he invites a guest who has reread the series to talk through a selection of the text with him. He has produced 64 episodes, and is midway through the final book, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*.

The Boy Who Hasn't Lived (2016): This podcast is hosted by friends CJ and Arlie, one of whom has never read the series and one of whom has reread it multiple times. Once again, the podcast promotes itself as an opportunity for established fans to re-immerse themselves in the books and for new readers to join in the fandom.[36] They release episodes roughly once every two months, and at 20 episodes, are midway through the third book.

Swish and Flick: A Harry Potter Podcast (2017): Hosted by Tiffany O'Malley (Gryffindor), Megan Petras (Slytherin), Katie Petras (Hufflepuff), and Sarah O'Malley (Ravenclaw), this podcast makes clear that it is full of spoilers and not for first-time readers: 'We are rereading the series and putting together all our knowledge from the complete canon as well as adding in what we have learned from Pottermore.'[37] They have produced 78 episodes thus far, and are in the midst of *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*.

Notes:

[1] Paul J. Booth, 'Fandom: The Classroom of the Future.' In 'European Fans and European Fan Objects: Localization and Translation,' edited by Anne Kustritz, special issue, *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 19 (2015). http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2015.0650.

[2] Constance Grady, 'Why we're terrified of fanfiction,' *Vox* 2 June 2016. https://www.vox.com/2016/6/2/11531406/why-were-terrified-fanfiction-teen-girls/.

[3] Patricia Meyer Spacks, *On Rereading* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2013), 8.

[4] Spacks, 70.

[5] Allyson Gronowitz, 'Treating "Harry Potter" like a holy Bible,' *Jewish Journal* 22 Sept 2016. http://jewishjournal.com/current_edition/190038/.

[6] Andrew J. Bottomley, 'Podcasting: A Decade in the Life of a "New" Audio Medium: Introduction,' *Journal of Radio & Audio Media* 22.2 (2015): 164.

[7] Bottomley, 166.

[8] Richard Berry, 'A Golden Age of Podcasting? Evaluating Serial in the Context of Podcast Histories,' *Journal of Radio & Audio Media* 22.2 (2015): 175.

[9] See '2018 Podcast Stats & Facts' (https://www.podcastinsights.com/podcast-statistics/).

[10] Andrew J. Salvati, 'Podcasting the Past: *Hardcore History*, Fandom, and DIY Histories,' *Journal of Radio & Audio Media* 22 (2015): 232. For more on the rise of podcasting as a medium, see Ellen McCracken, ed., *The Serial Podcast and Storytelling in the Digital Age* (London: Routledge, 2017); Dario Linares, Neil Fox, and Richard Berry, eds., *Podcasting: New Aural Cultures and Digital Media* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018); and Martin Spinelli and Lance Dann, *Podcasting: The Audio Media Revolution* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019).

[11] Salvati, 236.

[12] Salvati, 236.

[13] For more on *Critical Role* see Robyn Hope, 'Play, Performance, and Participation: Boundary Negotiation and *Critical Role*' Masters thesis, Concordia University, Montreal, 2017, Spectrum Research Repository.

[14] Caroline Crampton, 'Why we like podcasts that break down TV episode by episode,' *New Statesman* 15 Dec 2016. https://www.newstatesman.com/culture/podcasts/2016/12/why-we-podcasts-break-down-tv-episode-episode.

[15] Rachel, 'Rejoice, For Kristin Russo and Jenny Owen Youngs Have A Podcast About Buffy the Vampire Slayer,' *Autostraddle* 7 Sept 2016. https://www.autostraddle.com/rejoice-for-kristin-russo-and-jenny-owen-youngs-have-a-podcast-about-buffy-the-vampire-slayer-350998/.

[16] This is not to claim the absence of other reread podcasts. For example, the *Unspoiled!* podcast series is dedicated to five other popular book series: George R.R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire*, Stephen King's *The Dark Tower*, Jim Butcher's *The Dresden Files*, Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials*, and Neil Gaiman's *Sandman* (https://www.unspoiledpodcast.com/itunes-podcasts/). Notably, these are all genre series with their own well-established fandoms.

[17] Neale Barnholden, 'Save the Date: Episodes One and Two,' *Overthought* 24 Sept 2013. http://nealpolitan.blogspot.com/2013/09/save-date-episodes-one-and-two.html.

[18] Andrew Arnold, '5 Reasons Why Millennials Lead Other Generations in Podcast Consumption,' *Forbes* 15 Nov 2017. https://www.forbes.com/sites/andrewarnold/2017/11/15/5-reasons-why-millennials-lead-other-generations-in-podcast-consumption/#6ec73e470ad3.

[19] Beth Driscoll, *The New Literary Middlebrow: Tastemakers and Reading in the Twenty-First Century* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 97.

[20] Driscoll, 99.

[21] Laura Marie Fitzpatrick, '"The Boy Who Lived": Harry Potter and the Practice of Moral Literacy,' Master's Thesis, LeHigh University, 2017, 31.

[22] 'The greatest magic of Harry Potter: Reducing prejudice,' *Center for Practical Wisdom* 1 July 2014. http://wisdomresearch.org/blogs/publications/archive/2014/07/01/the-greatest-magic-of-harry-potter-reducing-prejudice.aspx.

[23] Spacks, 8,

[24] Lisa Gitelman, *Always Already New: Media, History, and the Data of Culture* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008), 7.

[25] Kyle Wrather, 'Making "Maximum Fun" for Fans: Examining Podcast Listener Participation Online,' *Radio Journal: International Studies in Broadcast & Audio Media* 14 (2016): 45-6.

[26] 'Contact Us,' *Harry Potter and the Sacred Text* n.d. http://www.harrypottersacredtext.com/pageg/.

[27] 'Local HPST Groups! Start or Join One!' *Harry Potter and the Sacred Text* n.d. http://www.harrypottersacredtext.com/group/.

[28] Marcelle Kosman and Hannah McGregor, 'S2E2: Witch, Please and the Phenomenal Foggos,' *Witch, Please* 3 July 2017. http://ohwitchplease.ca/2017/07/s2e2-witch-please-and-the-phenomenal-foggos/.

[29] On a Voyant-related side-note, when I first looked at the responses to Q8 on the Voyant dashboard, I noticed that 'yes' appeared in the list of top words while 'no' did not. This initially led me to assume that more respondents had answered in the affirmative, but scrolling through the text of responses I realized many had said no, which then led me to realize that 'no' appeared on the stop word list. When I manually removed it, 'no' became the most common word in the responses to Q8.

[30] Glen Weldon, 'It's All In Your Head: The One-Way Intimacy of Podcast Listening,' *NPR: Pop Culture Happy Hour* 2 February 2018. https://www.npr.org/2018/02/02/582105045/its-all-in-your-head-the-one-way-intimacy-of-podcast-listening.

[31] Booth, n.p.

[32] 'Our Methodology,' *Unspoiled! Podcast* 1 May 2018. http://www.unspoiledpodcast.com/methodology/ .

[33] Michael DiMauro, 'Yer a Wizard, Harry – Episode 1: The Boy Who Lived,' *Geekly Inc* 3 Feb 2016. https://geeklyinc.com/yer-a-wizard-harry-episode-1-placeholder/.

[34] 'About Us,' *The Real Weird Sisters* n.d. http://www.realweirdsisters.com/about-us/.

[35] 'Our Methodology,' *Harry Potter and the Sacred Text* n.d. http://www.harrypottersacredtext.com/methodology-1/.

[36] 'About,' *The Boy Who Hasn't Lived* n.d. http://www.theboywhohasntlived.com/about/.

[37] *Swish and Flick Podcast* n.d. https://www.swishflickcast.com/.