

There Aren't Any Rules in Paisley Park: Applying Mark J. P. Wolf's Theory of World-Building, Sub-Creation, and Secondary Belief to the Music and Career of Prince

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Abstract

This study explores how Prince's artistic work demonstrates Mark J.P. Wolf's theory of worldbuilding — the crafting of alternate multimedia realities designed to engage audiences. The paper analyzes how Prince created a distinctive "secondary world" through his lyrics, fashion, audio and visual aesthetics, and business practices. Examination of his work shows how it grants access to an idealized utopia beyond the confines of race, gender, and artistic convention using places like "Uptown" and "Paisley Park" to blend the virtual with the actual. Prince built up his secondary world through intentional use of specific figures including symbols (Cloud Guitar, Love Symbol), alter egos (Camille, Jamie Starr), and the color purple. As a creative practice, the composition of music for other artists (Vanity 6, The Time) increased platforms for the broader expansion and profitability of his stylized artistic universe. Ranging from innovative distribution methods to immersive live shows that amplify fan engagement while also protecting his created world by aggressive intellectual property control, Prince's creative business practices likewise reveal him to be a shrewd administrator of his created world. Unusual tactics like changing his name to an unpronounceable symbol and directly releasing music to fans reinforced his maverick persona influencing the primary world of his daily lived experience. This study holds that a major part of Prince's success rests on his ability to create "secondary belief" — making fans feel a sense of belonging in his alternate world by responding to their desire for freedom, uniqueness, and autonomy.

Keywords

Prince • Prince Rogers Nelson • worldbuilding • subcreation • secondary belief • music industry • fashion

Introduction

Briefly Prince Rogers Nelson

Few artists have achieved Prince's combination of popular success, cultural impact, and musical influence on both contemporary and future generations of musicians. During a career that spanned five decades, Prince broke records and exceeded established norms in music, film, music video, fashion, and business. His life and art were often stormy, unpredictable clashes of duality that, ultimately, produced creative harmony and allowed Prince to transcend many artistic and social boundaries. He was, at the same time, black and white, rock and R&B, masculine and feminine, spiritual and carnal, artist and businessman, student and teacher.

Prince's parents separated when he was around seven years old and later divorced. Subsequently, a young Prince bounced from home to home, living with his mother, father, aunt, friends, and older sister at various times. The lack of formal parental guidance and supervision gave Prince a tremendous

amount of room for self-direction that most teenagers don't have (Touré 2013). During these formative years, he was able to explore, experiment, and express himself with less fear of reprisal than most of his peers. The lack of family time obligations resulted in Prince having considerable free time to learn new instruments, practice performing, and write songs. Although he had time to take lessons, an adolescent Prince once claimed that he didn't stick to a strict schedule of lessons. "I've had about two lessons, but they didn't help much. I think you'll always be able to do what your ear tells you, so just think how great you'd be with lessons also," he told Lisa Crawford of the *Central High Pioneer* (Prince and Willis-Abdurraqib 2018). Prince apparently enjoyed music classes at Central High School because his music teachers allowed him to work alone. From his earliest musical endeavors in high school Prince sought artistic freedom and creative control, which would permit him to craft his own

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narrative and, ultimately, design his own world in which he could find consistency, acceptance, and safety.

These were the driving factors that led a nineteen-year-old Prince to sign with Warner Brothers records in June 1977. Warner agreed to sign the future star to a three-album deal, granting him artistic control production credits on his early albums, although he was required to retain an executive producer until he proved himself (Court 2018). The deal with Warner afforded Prince the same unrestricted creative expression he enjoyed while growing up, now with a major label budget and marketing machine. During the era when Prince entered his deal with Warner, major record labels still allocated considerable time and resources for artist development. This allowed Prince time to experiment and develop a meaningful connection with audiences that would outlast a fad. The artistic control that Warner granted Prince in his recording contract propelled him along his journey toward building an imaginative world that he would share with collaborators, fans, and the world.

The world that Prince created, as expressed through his music, film, video, and fashion, manifested as an idyllic subcreation of the real, or primary, world. Prince's secondary world existed within the primary world and interacted through both physical locations and spiritual states of being. For Prince, this secondary world that sprang from his consciousness was a significant marker of his own identity. As Mark J. P. Wolf states in *Building Imaginary Worlds: The Theory and History of Subcreation*, "Imaginary worlds are sometimes very important to their creators and central to their own lives" (Wolf 2012, 5). In Prince's case, his secondary world often became central to the lives of many of his fans. In many ways, Prince personified a belief system that routinely converted avid fans into conviction-led followers. The committed level of support for Prince's principles is evidenced by the continued symposiums, fan experiences, tributes, and celebrations that have occurred each year since his untimely death in 2016.

Introduction to World Building Theory

Wolf describes world building as the deliberate planning of alternate locations, time periods, and guiding principles that lay the foundation for immersive fan engagement in books, movies, and video games. Imaginary worlds are created complete with new characters, timelines, social orders, languages, etc. to draw fans into continued relationship with the storytelling. He states, "To give oneself over to a painting, novel, movie, television show, or video game is to step vicariously into a new experience, into an imaginary world" (Wolf 2012, 16). The concept of worldbuilding is readily demonstrated by blockbuster serial productions such as

Harry Potter, *Star Wars*, and *Lord of the Rings* where a central cast of characters carry a compelling story across time and distance through imaginary environs.

However, even when an author seeks to create a wholly imaginary world, this new subcreation is still bounded by the primary world since audiences must draw from their own experiences. It is against its own set of natural senses and memories that an audience must evaluate the believability of elements found in the newly created world. From the audience's experiences formed in the primary world, expectations of a secondary world can be derived. As Wolf puts it,

Subcreation, though it relies on Creation, inherently asks us to imagine what possible worlds could exist beyond what is known to exist in the Primary World. It invites invention and experimentation, leading to an examination of the consequences resulting from the various structures and combinations of elements that a subcreator imagines, and perhaps even the difficulty in incarnating them into words, images, objects, sounds, and interactions. In doing so, we are able to suppose what things would be like if they were otherwise, and different from those of existing Creation. (Wolf 2012, 284)

Although the *Star Wars* galaxy imagines strange alien worlds far, far, away, these secondary worlds are still bound by primary world audience experiences such as snow, deserts, jungles, and dense cityscapes. Further, characters are limited by familiar physical attributes such as limbs, eyes, and hair. And they are subjected to forces such as hunger, stress, fear, and elation. There's gravity, there's life, and there's death. There's good and evil, and it's not always easy to decipher which is which.

Objective

In this paper, I will explore and explain how Prince's career and life exemplifies Wolf's theory of worldbuilding. I will discuss musical innovations, lyrical themes, and symbolism that Prince used to lay a foundation for an immersive world where characters he created interacted with fans in a two-way utopian dialog. I will demonstrate how this engagement propelled Prince beyond rock stardom into iconic status. I will also review how Prince utilized the primary world conventions of intellectual property law that provide the protections necessary for secondary worlds to be developed and sustained. As Prince is a well-explored subject of many academic papers, books, and conferences, it is not my objective to uncover any new information about the artist. Rather, I will examine well-known details about the life and music of Prince in a novel context.

Theoretical Framework

For the purposes of this paper, I will evaluate the intent and impact of Prince's work using four major concepts found in Wolf's theory of worldbuilding: primary world, secondary world, subcreation, and secondary belief.

Wolf uses the term primary world to signify the real world in which audiences live. It is the real world which provides familiarity and gives audiences tangible experiences against which they can judge secondary worlds. The term secondary world refers to a newly created imaginary world with which the audience interacts. The secondary world is created through subcreation, a process of reduction or expansion of sensory data derived from the primary world. Wolf writes, "Subcreation, then, involves new combinations of existing concepts, which, in the building of a secondary world, become the inventions that replace or reset primary world defaults (for example, new flora and fauna, new languages, new geography, and so forth)" (Wolf 2012, 24). When subcreation is effectively constructed, it leads audiences to hold what J. R. R. Tolkien refers to as secondary belief. He described it saying, "What really happens is that the story-maker proves a successful subcreator. He makes a secondary world which your mind can enter. Inside it, what he relates is 'true': it accords with the laws of that world. You therefore believe it while you are, as it were, inside" (Tolkien 1981, 412). Wolf says that Tolkien's secondary belief is the "additional belief pertaining to the secondary world in question, rather than merely a suspension of our knowledge as to how that secondary world exists in the Primary World; that is, we imagine what the world would be like if it really existed, instead of simply ignoring the fact that it is only a story told in a book (or in other media)" (Wolf 2012, 25). Prince challenged audiences to not only imagine but to normalize a world of contrasting, and often conflicting, dualities.

Prince's Worldbuilding

Controversy

During the early years of his Warner contract, Prince developed as a prolific songwriter, consummate showman, and a master of shock. Many of his songs were overtly sexual and he frequently paraded around on stage in nothing more than bikini briefs and a trench coat (Court 2018, 37). In many of his earlier works, Prince "courted notoriety by mixing the sacred and the profane" (Till 2010). Earlier, raunchy tunes such as "Head," "Sister," "Jack U Off," and "Darling Nikki" coexisted in sharp contrast to spiritual numbers such as "I Would Die 4 U," "God," "The Ladder," and "The Cross." Prince's high school music business teacher, jazz pianist James Hamilton recounted to author Dave Hill that Prince once claimed, "I'm trying to be as controversial as possible. I have to get people to

buy the records" (Touré 2013, 37). Although Prince did have a few modest urban hits on radio, it took several years before he was able to cross over to mainstream pop radio. Additionally, his flamboyant stage antics did not always translate well with audiences. Prince was famously booed off stage while opening for the Rolling Stones at the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum, twice (Court 2018, 41). Of the incident, Prince told the *Los Angeles Times*, "I'm sure wearing underwear and a trench coat didn't help matters..." (Touré 2013, 17). He later told keyboardist Matt Fink, "Those are people who've grown up with the Rolling Stones and just look at my image in a multiracial group and me in my high heels and thigh-high stockings, bikini briefs, no shirt, and a trench coat. This is enraging them and I'm not going to put up with it" (Touré 2013, 17). For many underground artists, the frustration with being an outsider is that it often takes years before the public begins to take notice of, and appreciate, their works. For many artists, these years of languishing in obscurity are the nascent years of what Robert Greene calls, in his book *Mastery*, the Creative Task. "To make a discovery, to invent something that connects with the public, to fashion a work of art that is meaningful, inevitably requires time and effort. This often entails years of experimentation, various setbacks and failures, and the need to maintain a high level of focus" (Greene 2017, 179). During this era of his career, Prince started iterating a utopia where his juxtaposition of genre and message would become the celebrated norm.

Color Photos of a Black and White World

While Prince's over-the-top antics may have had some bearing on his lukewarm reception by mainstream audiences, blame can also be placed on the racial segregation of the times. Although Prince's early records were released a full fourteen to twenty years after the Civil Rights Act of 1964, many social and industrial segments of the United States remained de facto segregated in the early 1980s. Among the most relevant to Prince's developing career was the business of commercial radio. At the time, most commercial radio stations played largely segregated playlists where black artists were seldom heard on pop and rock stations.

The de facto segregation of radio playlists meant that many R&B, soul, and funk artists were largely obscure to mass audiences. It was possible to be a huge star on black radio but still be invisible on the popular radar. From the outset of his career, Prince intentionally avoided being cast into a particular genre. He blended funk and rock and created a multiracial band that included women. One of his first genre-defying line-ups included Bobby Z who was white, Dez Dickerson who was black with a punk look, André Cymone who was black, and Gayle Chapman who was blonde, blue-eyed, and played funky keyboards (Draper 2016, 15). Prince's aim was to create an ensemble that would allow his music to be presented

equally to diverse audiences. Prince would later state in an interview with *Guitar World*,

I was brought up in a black and white world. I dig black and white, night and day, rich and poor, man and woman. I listen to all kinds of music, and I want to be judged on the quality of my work, not on what I say, nor on what people claim I am, nor on the color of my skin. (Simonart 1998)

Over the course of his first five album releases, Prince crafted a unique sound by not only blending genres but also through intentional auditory design that delivered a “trademark” sound all his own. “Like imagery,” Wolf insists, “sounds often cannot be described in words; for those who have seen the *Star Wars* films, the familiar sounds of a lightsaber’s swooping hums, TIE fighters screaming through space, or Chewbacca’s throaty roar will instantly bring to mind images from the films with a directness that text can only try to suggest” (Wolf 2012, 258). In addition to his signature scream, Prince employed a few mainstay instrument sounds that provided a consistent thread of texture to his work, even during departures from previous soundscapes. This allowed fans to sonically follow Prince as he creatively moved from one aesthetic to another. His approach was very similar to how Lucasfilm uses consistent elements to form a cohesiveness across films and television series with different tones. Although *The Mandalorian* is very different in tone than *The Phantom Menace*, the elements of the force, Beskar armor, and making the jump to light speed connect these *Star Wars* films in immediately recognizable ways. Similarly, although “Something in the Water (Does Not Compute)” is stylistically disparate from “Sticky Like Glue,” Prince’s use of syncopated hi-hat cymbal patterns and the core LinnDrum sounds make these songs quickly associable with his work.

Sound of Things to Come

In *Worldbuilding for Fantasy Fans and Authors*, M. D. Presley writes that one of worldbuilding’s greatest strengths is its ability to “outgrow the initial tales when fans demanded more and more adventures.” He goes on to explain that there tends to be a law of diminishing returns with the enjoyment fans get with most books and movies because, “we cannot be surprised by the plot or characters a second time” (Presley 2020, 15).

Prince radically changed the sound of his music every two to three albums. This provided fans with audible surprises as they had to adjust, and perhaps grow, to appreciate Prince’s new direction. It also allowed Prince to avoid being pigeonholed into one style. To achieve a constantly evolving musical style, Prince often switched band members

and instrumental sounds and techniques. Prince’s first two albums — *For You* and *Prince* — were largely defined by post-disco funk numbers and falsetto-led ballads. By the arrival of *Dirty Mind* and *Controversy*, albums three and four respectively, Prince had shifted towards a punk-funk sound with punctuated rock guitar riffs. Although Prince enjoyed limited commercial success across his first four albums and accompanying tours, his music was still largely relegated to black radio. When Prince delivered his fifth album, *1999*, fans got the earliest look at what would become known as the Love Symbol. The *Rolling Stone Album Guide* suggested that *1999* might be Prince’s most influential album since it prominently featured the programmed LinnDrum LM-1 drum machine and Oberheim OB-Xa synth, which would define the “Minneapolis Sound” that would dominate the mid-1980s (DeCurtis et al. 1992). The LinnDrum LM-1 has been described as Prince’s “most potent weapon” (Soto 2016), delivering his signature drum sound throughout much of his work in the 1980s. The unique sound of the LM-1 remains popular even today. On *1999*, Prince also started using the Oberheim OB-Xa synth, described by new-wave artist Gary Numan as the best analog synthesizer ever made (Vogel 2019, 35). Prince used the OB-Xa to create the brassy patches that substituted for real horns on the title track “1999.”

However, even with the success of *1999*, Prince was still “at the point where he wasn’t yet a superstar, but was right at the point of doing it,” according to producer and founding member of The Time, James “Jimmy Jam” Harris III (Draper 2016, 40). The *1999* album also marks the time when the color purple began to play a prominent role in Prince’s art and mythology. The album cover is purple, and Prince wears a purple trench or jacket in the performance music videos for the album’s singles. Prince also references the color purple in several songs on the album.

The sky was all purple, there were people running everywhere.

(Prince 1982)

Jamie Starr’s a thief
It’s time to fix your clock
Vanity six is so sweet
Now you can all take a bite of my purple rock, can we stop?

(Prince 1982)

Though most casual music fans would not recognize it today, Prince labored through many years of experimentation before attaining superstardom. Prince’s first international crossover hit was from his 1984 semi-biographical motion picture, *Purple Rain*, his sixth studio album.

Underneath the Purple Rain

Writing about the arrival of *Purple Rain*, author Alan Light wrote, "Prior to this release, Prince was nowhere near a household name: while he had established himself in the R&B community, he had just one album that could be considered a mainstream hit, and no singles that had peaked above number six on the pop charts" (Light 2014, 29). Nonetheless, Prince's singular focus on defying definition and ultimately crossing over onto mainstream radio (and burgeoning video) outlets drove him to obsess over every detail of his professional career.

Greene wrote that Mozart's obsession "wasn't simply music, but opera that fully engaged him" (Light 2014, 179). For Prince, it was also about more than "simply music." For him it was also about the look, the persona and the correlating visuals. For Prince, the visual persona was a close second place to the music, and it showed in his approach to music videos and his film. Tour manager, Alan Leeds detailed a time that Prince explained the importance of music video. "And [Prince] says 'Alan, you don't understand. Today, people don't hear music; they see it. It all comes together to me'" (Light 2014, 193). Prince, and the rest of the world, viewed the film *Purple Rain* as a visual long form of the album. Although other artists such as The Beatles, Bob Dylan, and Paul Simon had attempted this sort of album-oriented movie, by 1983, no one had yet convinced Hollywood that the rock movie genre was truly viable (Light 2014).

While movie executives and music critics showed little support for a project that they considered would only muster a cult following, Prince was aware of the cultural shift underway in America that would open the doors for a breakout hit. The timing of *Purple Rain* couldn't have been more perfect. In 1984, black America was coming into mainstream prominence. Oprah debuted on Chicago television, Run-DMC was the first rap act to have a Gold album, Michael Jordan was drafted by the Chicago Bulls, the *Cosby Show* debuted, LL Cool J was Def Jam's first release, *Beverly Hills Cop* made Eddie Murphy a superstar, Jesse Jackson was running for president and the recently launched MTV was opening its programming to black artists, thanks to a little album called *Thriller*, by Michael Jackson (Light 2014). The environment was perfect for Prince's experimental R&B/funk-meets-pop-rock genre blend. As mainstream pop radio stations began to slowly add black artists to their playlists, Prince's music offered a timely bridge between and urban and pop formats.

By providing a mix of complementary tones that was missing from pop radio at the time, Prince carved a unique niche for himself and the progeny of acts he fostered in his creative wake. The "Minneapolis Sound" was the label applied to Prince's funk-infused rock ballads that came to dominate the '80s and can still be heard today in the music of artists such as Alicia Keys, Janelle Monae, Justin Timberlake, and D'Angelo.

Prince's music transcended cultural barriers using a sense-based system of communication with fans.

Music is a form of communication that can convey more emotion than we have words. With or without lyrics, music expresses joy, sadness, fear, trepidation, elation, victory, certainty, and doubt. For Prince, music was existential. Prince said, "Put it like this: When I'm onstage, I'm out of body. That's what the rehearsals, the practicing, the playing is for. You work to a place where you're all out of body. And that's when something happens." He further said, "You reach a plane of creativity and inspiration. A plane where every song that has ever existed and every song that will exist in the future is right there in front of you. And you just go with it for as long as it takes" (Coker 2013, 77). Prince believed in using music to create his own reality, his own dominion. Prince said, "People don't understand real musicians anymore. Jack White is great, he's the real thing, but he isn't having hits. Why aren't Vintage Trouble or Lianne La Havas having hits? The goal is to get beyond the feedback loop (of corporate record labels) and create your own universe, which is what we have done here" (Hodgkinson, n.d., 83). It was creating his own universe that ultimately gave Prince his creative breakthrough.

Disenchanted with the status quo of the music business and unsatisfied with the level of crossover appeal his music had reached to that point, Prince set out on his ambitious \$7 million motion picture with a director who had never helmed a full-length feature and a cast that had never acted before (with the lone exception of Clarence Williams III). Against the odds, *Purple Rain* was a commercial success, taking in \$7.8 million in its first weekend and ultimately making almost \$70 million at the box office (Light 2014, 181). Warner's Bob Merlis explained it this way, "A hit like *Purple Rain* is a phenomenon of its time. The stars aligned. Even if you do put out another record that's just as good, success is so circumstantial, and you really have to build on the possibility of great disappointment" (Light 2014, 254).

In His Own Way

Greene suggests that "Sometimes greater danger comes from success and praise than from criticism. We fail to understand the element of luck that always goes into success—we often depend on being in the right place at the right time. Instead, we come to think that our brilliance has naturally drawn our success and attention, as if it were indeed fated" (Greene 2017, 204). Not long after the stratospheric success of *Purple Rain*, Prince summarily shut down the tour before playing Europe or Asia, put the Revolution (his band) on hiatus, and released the psyche-spiritual album *Around the World in a Day*, which many critics compared to The Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. Defying traditional industry marketing tactics, Prince initially insisted that the album be released without any singles, promotional videos, or

magazine advertisements. "Prince seemed adamant that only 'real fans' find out about the album, which should be seen as the work of a creative artist and not just another commercial product" (Draper 2016, 54). Ultimately, he relented and produced both singles and promotional videos to accompany the album release. The 1960s psychedelic sound of *Around the World in a Day* was a grand departure from the sound of Prince's two immediately preceding album projects *1999* and *Purple Rain*. While Warner Brothers records, many fans, and critics were hoping for *Purple Rain 2*, Prince had already moved on to a new sound. It was his insurance against getting pigeonholed into a particular style, let alone an identifiable genre.

Although he continued to release albums almost every year since 1984, none of his subsequent efforts proved to be as commercially successful as *Purple Rain*. His movies *Sign O' the Times* and *Graffiti Bridge* are sometimes considered the co-sequels to *Purple Rain*, but they were both commercial disappointments at the box office, as Prince assumed not only the music and acting roles, but also declared himself writer and director (Plasse 1996). In spite of these box office setbacks, Prince continued to produce albums and tour at a prolific rate. Transitioning into the 1990s, Prince formed a new band called the New Power Generation (NPG) and headed off into a new creative direction. Although NPG featured an extraordinarily talented lineup, Prince struggled to remain musically relevant in the coming decade. In the late 1980s the sound of urban and, very soon thereafter, pop genres started moving in the direction of highly polished, producer-driven songs created by production teams such as Foster & McElroy, Babyface & L.A. Reid, and Flyte Tyme, the duo of Terry Lewis and Jimmy Jam, founding members of The Time. Within a decade, bands on urban radio and label rosters dwindled to one, Mint Condition. In a landscape now dominated by polished vocal groups and solo artists, Prince tried returning to his R&B roots, but many black fans were no longer listening to him. Prince tried replicating the then-current sound of R&B and hip-hop on several of his albums in the early 1990s to little avail. According to tour manager Alan Leeds, "Prince's music in the 90s suffered because, for the first time, he allowed outside trends to influence his work."

Several of Prince's albums released in the 1990s were considered commercial disappointments. As concertgoers continued to request "Purple Rain," many critics wondered if Prince had passed his creative prime. Greenman wrote, "any artist who makes as many records as Prince did makes bad ones, too" (Greenman 2017, 60). Regardless of critical reception, Prince remained determined to dictate his own terms for success. In the mid 1990s, his attention focused largely on developing, protecting, and recapturing his intellectual property catalog, including copyrights, trademarks, and instrument designs.

Prince Brand Aesthetics

Prince was not only a creative visionary; he also germinated vast amounts of ideas and strategies with regard to the business and legal aspects of his career. Wolf's theory of subcreation deals chiefly with imaginative considerations of world building. However, a complete explanation of how secondary worlds are successfully sustained over time (especially as it applies to Prince) should also examine the primary world protections that allow them to develop while maintaining structural integrity and literary continuity. A complete explanation must also mention the balance achieved between fan freedoms on the one hand and intellectual property law on the other. Prince was notorious for vigilantly protecting his copyrighted works and trademarked properties. He often made headlines for his legal disputes with Warner Bros. Records and the mother of a dancing baby (AP, n.d.). While some may see his dispute over the inadvertent inclusion of his song in a family YouTube video as just another example of Prince's petty obsession with control, it was actually something larger. Prince's close monitoring of unauthorized uses of his intellectual property was akin to the practices of many corporations such as Lucasfilm and DC Comics. These successful entities understand that the continuity ensured by intellectual property law, authorized permissions, and licensing is central to the longevity and significance of their brand identities and the secondary worlds they've worked so hard to create.

Prince was a master at branding. He crafted his secondary world on a palette of vibrant and descriptive song titles and symbols. A sort of sensory expectation ran through many of his songs and provided a consistent current of energy that was identifiable as his signature. Wolf describes this sensory setup like this: "Whether through verbal description, visual design, sound design, or virtual spaces revealed through interaction, it is the world (sometimes referred to as the story world or diegetic world) that supports all the narratives set in it and that is constantly present during the audience's experience" (Wolf 2012, 16). With most franchise productions such as *Star Wars* or *Transformers*, the recognizable elements that comprise the supporting fabric of the secondary world (such as lightsabers and transforming vehicles) are protected in the primary world through copyright, trademark, and unfair competition laws. Additionally, the sounds of lightsabers and the Klingon language from *Star Trek* can be considered audible trade dress that identify the authors of the works.

Prince often penned songs that had unique titles and were difficult for many vocalists to sing convincingly. With titles such as "Paisley Park," "1999," "Purple Rain," "When Doves Cry," "Raspberry Beret," and "Little Red Corvette," it was very unlikely that someone else could write a song with the same title without risking an unfair competition lawsuit. Since Prince sang and performed in such a personal style, it made compulsory mechanical covers (remakes) very difficult to

record for less talented artists. The song “1999,” in particular, proved to be a stroke of genius, whether intentional or not. Released in 1982, the song effectively served as a creative placeholder that allowed Prince to corner the market for the song that would be the most requested sixteen years later on December 31, 1998, and again on December 31, 1999, as almost every club, bar, radio station, and block party on the planet played the song on the hour, every hour, for 24 hours. In addition to writing hard-to-cover songs, Prince also protected his songs through copyright enforcement. Although he could not prevent, say, Tom Jones from covering one of his songs, Prince routinely denied requests from artists who wanted to sample his songs as part of their own compositions. Prince also repeatedly denied requests by Weird Al Yankovic to create parodies of his songs. According to Greenman, “Prince never came around to Weird Al. ...he was too obsessed with controlling the movement of his work thorough the world” (Greenman 2017, 60). Although Prince covered a few songs by other artists on his albums and in concert, he wasn’t generally a fan of cover songs. Prince told George Lopez on *Lopez Tonight*,

I don’t mind fans singing the songs... My problem is when the industry covers the music. See covering the music means that your version doesn’t exist anymore. A lot of times, people think that I’m doing Sinéad O’Connor’s song and Chaka Khan’s song when in fact I wrote those songs. And it’s okay when my friends ask to do them, but there’s this thing called the compulsory license law, which allows artists, through the record companies, to take your music, at will, without your permission. And that doesn’t exist in any other art form, be it books, movies -- there’s only one version of *Law and Order*. There are several versions of “Kiss” and “Purple Rain.” (Prince and Lopez 2011).

Prince was very concerned that the compulsory mechanical licensing provision in the U.S. Copyright Act would result in some songs no longer being associated with the original artist if a more popular version, or simply many alternate versions, were allowed to exist. Prince preferred to marshal his creations into the world on his own terms so whatever he created would remain indelibly linked to him. Prince was so controlling with regard to his intellectual property that he once filed lawsuits against twenty-two individuals for one million dollars each. The defendants were alleged to have uploaded Prince songs and material to fan websites. Prince later dropped the lawsuits but claimed, “Nobody sues their fans. It’s a poor way to phrase it. Sharing music with your friends is cool, but those people are bootleggers” (Hodgkinson, n.d.). While discussing major film studios’ recent approach to dealing with fan films based on properties such as *Star Trek*, entertainment lawyer Christine Cuddy suggests that “The studios put up with this because they don’t want to alienate the fan base” (Rottenberg 2016).

In fact, the owners of some of the most successful fantasy and sci-fi franchises have warmed up to fan fiction and films so long as certain rules and conventions are adhered to. J. K. Rowling has given permission for online Harry Potter sequels so long as they do not contain pornography or racism (Bang 2007). Disney will allow fan films so long as they do not raise money through crowdfunding and do not profit from ticket sales or online advertisements (Philbrick 2021). CBS and Paramount Pictures will allow amateur filmmakers to create *Star Trek* films so long as they keep platform fundraising below \$50,000 and follow detailed guidelines on association and trademarks (startrek.com, n.d.).

Prince was very savvy in his employment of trademark and trade dress. No other artist has ever been so closely linked with a single identifying color. Rupert Till writes, “To further avoid being pigeonholed as either primarily black or white Prince presents himself as purple” (Till 2010). Upon his passing, cities around the world lit buildings, dyed rivers, posted billboards, and painted murals in purple to pay tribute to the late icon (O’Connor 2016). On August 14, 2017, the Pantone Color Institute and Prince estate issued a press release announcing the creation of a custom shade of purple called Love Symbol #2 to honor Prince (Pantone, n.d.). Through the press release, Laurie Pressman, Pantone Vice President, claimed:

We are honored to have worked on the development of Love Symbol #2, a distinctive new purple shade created in memory of Prince, “the purple one.” A musical icon known for his artistic brilliance; Love Symbol #2 is emblematic of Prince’s distinctive style. Long associated with the purple family, Love Symbol #2 enables Prince’s unique purple shade to be consistently replicated and maintain the same iconic status as the man himself. (Pantone, n.d.)

This statement of color distinction in conjunction with consistent use and replication would seemingly set the standard for filing an official trademark application, which the Prince estate did subsequently. Although colors can be federally trademarked under certain circumstances, the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office has denied the application in its initial ruling, finding that the applied-for trademark “fails to function as a trademark because it consists solely of a color used on [Paisley Park’s] goods and services.” According to the USPTO, consumers “will not perceive the color purple as identifying [Prince’s Paisley Park venture] as the source of the goods; rather, [they] will perceive the color as a non-source identifying feature of the goods because they are accustomed to encountering ... goods or packaging for these goods offered in a variety of colors, including purple” (TFL 2019). The trademark board cited several artists who’ve used

purple in packaging and album covers. The denial of a federal trademark, however, does not necessarily invalidate any state or common law trademarks, which may have been granted or earned, nor does it preclude any unfair competition claims, which Prince's estate may seek to bring against perceived infringers.

Although Prince himself is most synonymous with the color purple, he often used colors in his song titles. This served to give his songs a visual aspect aside from music videos and, again, a distinct branding vehicle that could associate the color with Prince. Other than the most famous example, "Purple Rain," Prince also penned songs and albums such as, "Little Red Corvette," "Raspberry Beret," "Under the Cherry Moon," *The Black Album*, "Gold," "Computer Blue," "Pink Cashmere," "Cinnamon Girl," and "Black Sweat," "Cream," and "Lemon Crush." By one estimate, Prince wrote at least fifty-three songs featuring a color in the title (Flavell and Carr 2021).

Prince also had a hand in designing custom guitars for his own use. Although you could see thousands of guitarists play a Fender Stratocaster or a Gibson Les Paul, there was only one artist who played a Cloud Guitar, originally designed by Minneapolis luthier Dave Rusan (Swenson 2021). The Cloud Guitar, Prince's weapon of choice, became synonymous with his identity in similar fashion to the way a Walther PPK is readily associated with the literary character James Bond. And it also played a pivotal role signaling the transformation of Prince's literary character in *Purple Rain*. When The Kid first eyes the guitar through a store window while walking with his love interest, Apollonia, he has yet to confront and conquer his fears of ending up a failed musician like his abusive father. After painfully reconciling with the fact that he is very much like his father, he doesn't have to go down the same path. The Kid debuts the new guitar at his "redemption performance." This is similar to the transformation that occurs after Luke Skywalker painfully confronts his father in *The Empire Strikes Back* and then constructs a new lightsaber in *Return of the Jedi*, as he's on the way to realizing he doesn't have to suffer the same fate as his father. In *Purple Rain*, The Kid doesn't wield the Cloud Guitar on stage until after he makes the decision to honor the talents of his bandmates Wendy and Lisa for their contributions to the repertoire. In this sense, he redeems his character and proves himself worthy of the instrument before he carries it into battle. Here, the Cloud Guitar symbolizes the elixir with which The Kid returns to the ordinary world to share with everyone else. This worthiness demonstration is very much like the worthiness required to wield Thor's Mjölnir. For Prince fans, and many guitar enthusiasts, the Cloud Guitar has mythical appeal.

In 1993, Prince also commissioned Jerry Auerswald to design a guitar in the shape of Prince's Love Symbol. Both guitars remain as enduring symbols of Prince's musicality

and ingenuity. The designs for both guitars are among the ninety-five trademarks which have been filed by or registered to Paisley Park Enterprises at the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO 1994). The Love Symbol guitar design was an adaptation of Prince's signature logo. His logo, which temporarily replaced his legal name in the 1990s, first appeared in the artwork for the 1999 album cover and later it was painted onto the front of Prince's Honda motorcycle that he rode in *Purple Rain*. Comprised of the two symbols that represent man and woman, Prince often used it as an identification mark. The mark went through several designs and eventually settled on an aesthetic based on the alchemical symbol of soapstone (Till 2010). Art director Sotera Tschetter said, "It's called the Love Symbol because everything he did, he did with passion and love. He was into a lot of mythology at the time" (Minutaglio 2016, 60). Prince used his innovative sound and visual aesthetics to create the support system for his secondary utopic world.

Subcreation in Prince's Music and Career

Uptown Utopia

Prince benefitted by growing up in the Midwest and his artistic outlook reflected the community in which he was reared. While Minneapolis did not readily offer the recording and music publishing outlets that were available in New York and Los Angeles, the Midwest did allow Prince to experience greater racial inclusion in the arts and on the airwaves. Through his on-stage representation and lyrics, Prince was determined to create a multiracial utopia where he and his fans could escape to expressive freedom and differences that would not only be tolerated, but would also, in fact, be celebrated. Regarding Utopia, Wolf states, "Throughout the nineteenth century, as the Age of Exploration gradually came to a close, utopias' locations, like those of travelers' tales, moved to other planets, or into the past or the future, where they could remain inaccessible and exotic" (Wolf 2012, 95). Prince considered a utopia that was exotic, but completely accessible. For him, it was simply Uptown or, in the case of Paisley Park, "in your heart." Wolf's theory requires that "To qualify something as a secondary world, then, requires a fictional *place* (that is, one that does not actually appear in the Primary World); but a *place* is not always a *world*" (Wolf 2012, 25). For Prince and his fans, Uptown was emblematic of a socially progressive and freely expressive society that didn't exist in the primary world. The same is true of the original song iteration of Paisley Park, although it eventually became the name of his studio and home.

In his song "Controversy," from his fourth album of the same name, Prince wrote, "I'm not black or white, I'm not straight or gay." It was a bold statement of his desire to escape people's

judgment and classification. The idea of a culturally free Utopia underscores several of Prince's songs such as "Uptown," "Paisley Park," "Graffiti Bridge," and "Rainbow Children." By refusing to let his music, image, or band be easily categorized, Prince controlled his own cultural narrative. Through his lyrics he created an alternate reality of musical and racial harmony that translated well to American youth of the time.

American teens in the 1980s grew up in the wake of the Vietnam War, international hostage crises, gas shortages, and the lingering threat of nuclear annihilation during last vestiges of the Cold War. At the same time, the entire country was gripped by two raging epidemics: AIDS and crack cocaine. These health crises significantly impacted many African American communities. Author Touré describes the social climate of the time by writing, "Where boomers watched the election of JFK and the ascension of MLK, men who inspired us to think of the boundless potential of humanity, Xers grew up with hearing about Watergate and Vietnam and never got the chance to be politically innocent. We had every right to be cynical, skeptical, sarcastic, pessimistic, nihilistic, and distrustful of the world" (Touré 2013, 38).

Prince's music offered an escape to an enlightened society where everyone was equal and free to be themselves without fear of judgment. Prince wrote about idyllic places where weary people could find respite and, if necessary, forgiveness. His lyrics crafted an imaginary utopia where American youth could find belongingness. Prince created a unique mental and emotional space where he, and his listeners, could be free from the social constraints of the time. Prince reimagined America as a utopian haven without any of the societal ills that plagued the 1980s (Caldwell 2017). He used music to paint elaborate pictures of his very own Land of Oz. Adrian Bautista comments on Prince's Oz by writing, "Prince brought listeners and viewers into a purple urban imaginary that was his Minneapolis" (Bautista 2017). His purple imaginary, much like Minneapolis of the time, was multicultural and more tolerant than much of America during that time.

Prince desired to create bands that reflected his and Minneapolis' multicultural heritage and influence. Band member Eric Leeds said of one of Prince's early bands,

There were women in the band who were lesbians. There were whites and Blacks in the band and several of us who were Jewish in the band. There was this image he was trying to present to the world that it's not about the differences in us so let's celebrate diversity. (Touré 2013)

Around the time of *Purple Rain*, Prince began signing off credits and liner notes with "May U Live 2 C the Dawn." Although Prince never expressly defined "the dawn," for years fans and journalists have offered their analyses on

what Prince meant by the phrase. Some interpreted it to be a spiritual reference, especially when considered in light of his apocalyptic and atonement-oriented messages from the 1999 and *Purple Rain* albums. Some thought the dawn was when the Utopia of which Prince dreamed would be achieved. Still, others thought it signified the coming of the Lord that Prince anticipated in the segue following "Darling Nikki," (if you played it backwards, of course).

Hello, how are you?

I'm fine because I know that the Lord is coming soon. Coming, coming soon. (Prince 1984)

Prince's "May U Live 2 C the Dawn" worked as a unifying affirmation among his fans in the same way "May the force be with you" and "May you live long and prosper" works for *Star Wars* and *Star Trek* fans, respectively. It served as a statement of hope. What was clear from reviews of the time was that for the oft-confused teenager sprawled across their bedroom floor reading the *Purple Rain* liner notes, the dawn represented a future time when all the chaos and disorder of adolescence and the 1980s would subside, and the world would make sense. Prince's musical world offered an emotional and spiritual refuge where they could find themselves and rest between the notes. As Touré puts it, "They [Icons] tell us something about who we are and who we want to be" (Touré 2013, 2). Prince's control of his cultural and musical narratives gave a voice to an entire generation that was discovering its individual and collective identities. Prince's messages of artistic freedom and non-labeled identity remained constant even when the sound of his music shifted.

Strange Relationship

Working with other artists provided Prince with an outlet for his ever-creative habits. He often created or used bands and artists as his alter-ego work within a certain genre while not limiting any potential crossovers of his own making (Court 2018, 37). In this way, Prince used primary world collaborators to project characters who inhabited his secondary world. There were protagonists, antagonists, and lots of damsels in distress. This allowed Prince's subcreated narrative to expand beyond his own album projects and take on alternative points of view. In *Hamlet on the Holodeck: The Future of Narrative in Cyberspace*, Janet H. Murray explained the concept of nonlinear, continuing stories which she dubbed hyperserials. She wrote, "In a well-conceived hyperserial, all the minor characters would be potential protagonists of their own stories, thus providing alternate threads within the enlarged story web. The viewer would take pleasure in the ongoing juxtapositions, the intersection of many lives, and the presentation of the same event from multiple sensitivities and perspectives" (Murray 1997).

Prince created The Time, Vanity 6 (and later Apollonia 6) to serve as additional vehicles for his creative productions

and as a controlled form of competition. As he moved from traditional R&B on his own projects, he needed to create an alter-ego as a “funky, flashy, super-tight R&B outfit” (DiPerna 2017, 24). Thus, The Time was born. As far as the public was concerned there was a new band on the scene. “They were funky and they sounded a bit like Prince... The point was it was all Prince from the beginning. Every note, every sound, every choreographed move on stage was controlled by Prince” (Court 2018, 38). Although The Time was comprised of very talented musicians, Prince played all of the instruments on the band’s debut album and credited himself using the pseudonym Jamie Starr (DiPerna 2017, 24). Mere months after creating The Time, Prince curiously told Andy Schwartz in *New York Rocker*, “I don’t believe in any act, really, which has to rely on a producer. What happens if the cat dies? There you go, there goes your sound – you obviously didn’t have one” (Prince and Willis-Abdurraqib 2019).

Prince not only created the sound for his bands, but he also created the looks and personality. Prince’s commitment to becoming a larger-than-life star also included members of his band, who were forbidden to wear street clothes, according to former bandmate Wendy Melvoin (Light 2014). “He used to get upset when anyone would refer to the clothes as costumes,” says Melvoin. “He freaked — ‘Those aren’t costumes, those are clothes!’” (Light 2014, 46). As for The Time, Prince’s vision “was for them to be cool and ultimately very funky. They would be streetwise and wear the best suits and shoes that money could buy” (Court 2018, 38). Prince remained defiantly in control over his own image even as other artists were crafted by their labels (Matthews 2016). Prince controlled every nationally recognized aspect of what became known as the Minneapolis music scene.

The Artist Also Known As

In addition to writing music for other bands he created, Prince also wrote and published under various pseudonyms throughout his career. Much like the real-life artists with whom he collaborated, Prince’s alter egos served to provide creative and critical vehicles through which he could manipulate the narrative that was germane to his secondary world. At various times, Prince used Alexander Nevermind, Camille, Jamie Starr, and Christopher Tracy, to name a few. He was referred to by up to 18 pseudonyms and nicknames (Flavell and Carr 2020, 23). However, one assigned nickname became his most infamous. On Prince’s thirty-fifth birthday, June 7, 1993, the Love Symbol replaced the legal name Prince. Prince adopted the unpronounceable symbol as his name to protest the fact that Warner owned his master recordings and the recording rights to the name Prince (Draper 2016).

By 1993, constant battling over creative freedom and ownership of his master recordings caused Prince’s

relationship with Warner Bros. to deteriorate beyond reconciliation. He decided to drop his legal name and sought to sever his contractual ties with the label. A statement from his website at the time read, in part, “Prince is the name that my mother gave me at birth. Warner Bros. took the name, trademarked it, and used it as the main marketing tool to promote all of the music I wrote” (Rothkopf 2016, 52). He went on to say, “I became merely a pawn used to produce more money for Warner Bros” (Vogel 2019, 19). Many critics felt that Prince changed his name to the Love Symbol as a ploy to get out of his contractual obligations with Warner. Prince never confirmed those rumors (Cerio and Howard 1993, 55). If true, it would have been very unlikely to succeed, since most major record label artist contracts prohibit the artist from changing their professional name without prior, express permission from the label. And, in the event an artist is granted the right to record under a new name or pseudonym, the label will almost always acquire the right to use the new name while retaining rights in the former name as well. Prince’s moniker maneuver would only amount to a moral victory that enabled a new line of marketing. Since his new name was unpronounceable, some media outlets began referring to him as The Artist Formerly Known as Prince (Peoples 2017, 455).

In similar fashion to his literary alter ego, Christopher Tracy, from “Sometimes it Snows in April” or The Kid from “I Would Die 4 U,” Prince had become, himself, a metaphorical sacrificial savior dying on behalf of someone else. This is also a common theme in fantasy worldbuilding. As Wolf explains,

The Bible contains a creation story, covers the rise of a people as they grow into a nation over thousands of years, follows the long struggle between good and evil on both natural and supernatural planes, and depicts an oppressed people looking for a prophesized savior (who is an outsider in some way); it then details the savior’s growing conflict with the authorities which ends up in his self-sacrifice for the people, and through his help, the gaining of freedom or ascendancy as a new era is ushered in by the book’s end. This pattern, or parts of it, can be found in a great many world-based stories (particularly that of a savior figure; for example, Peter Wilkins in *Sass Doorpt Swangeanti*, Dorothy in *Oz*, Aragorn in *Middle-earth*, Paul Atreides in *Arrakis*, Neo in the *Matrix*, Anakin Skywalker in the *Star Wars* galaxy, and so on). (Wolf 2012, 191)

Prince used alter egos to embody ideals that were larger than his physical person and universal in their scope. He often expressed belief in unconditional love, purpose, and sacrifice in his lyrics.

Secondary Belief and Audience Engagement

Cultivation of Dedication

Prince was able to instill secondary belief in his fans through his consistent appeal to their senses of freedom, autonomy, and inalienable uniqueness. He often used adjectives such as funky, sexy, or cool to describe those to whom he referred as the “party people.” His fans were as much his disciples as they were his subjects, and Prince chose to engage them directly and spontaneously in the playful manner in which many of his stage and screen characters behaved. Once he was free from his label contract with Warner Bros., Prince preferred to engage his fans in unconventional ways that created a buzz of scarcity and elevated him to iconic status. Fans scrambled for exclusive online record releases and same-day ticket sales to his live shows. In keeping with his “against the establishment” persona that he’d developed during the late ‘80s and early ‘90s, Prince began a series of tactical maneuvers in the primary world that solidified his reputation as a maverick and savior in his secondary world.

Transmedia storytelling is a concept coined by scholar Henry Jenkins to describe the “process where integral elements of a fiction get dispersed systematically across multiple delivery channels for the purpose of creating a unified and coordinated entertainment experience” (Jenkins, n.d.). Successful franchises like *Star Wars* continually develop their secondary worlds through connected stories in differentiated media such as theatrical movies, television shows, video games, books, comics, and games. This varied distribution approach allows fans to interact with the core story elements in different environments and utilizing different technologies. It also allows for more direct access to fans since the stories aren’t confined to one distribution model and timeframe. Prince’s stories were primarily delivered to fans through music and music-related vehicles such as video and live shows. What he did borrow from transmedia storytelling production were the concepts of alternate fan access and story diffusion. Once Prince left his longtime label Warner Bros. and the traditional music distribution model, he experimented with direct fan access by harnessing emerging technology and embracing alternative dissemination channels for music promotion, placement, and purchases by fans.

Once he became a free agent, Prince formed his own label, NPG Records. His first release was the three-disc set *Emancipation*. Over the following decade, Prince kept the music industry on its heels as his NPG Records challenged traditional music distribution schemes and attempted to master new distribution channels and technologies. Michael Bland said of Prince, “His way of creating music didn’t match the industry... They’ll say, ‘You can’t go out at this time, because Taylor Swift has a record out and your audience is similar to her audience.’ Prince exists in a world beyond that. His success

is of his own doing” (Azhar 2016). Free from the release schedule of a major record label, Prince was empowered to experiment with various distribution techniques.

He launched several websites, which eventually evolved into the NPG Music Club. The new online platform allowed Prince to sell song downloads and a planned \$700 Newfunk Sampling Series that would permit producers and DJs to legally sample Prince songs while he was paid for the uses (Court 2018). Over first few years of the new millennium, NPG Music Club members were able to download albums including *Xpectation*, *C-Note*, *N.E.W.S.*, *The Chocolate Invasion*, and *The Slaughterhouse*. Prince was now in a direct two-way dialog with his most fervent fans without the major label filters or blockades. This deepened the devotion of his fans as many of the recordings from this time became rarities with collectors.

With the arrival of the *Musicology* album, Prince employed a different distribution tactic, one that rankled many industry insiders. Although Sony/NPG distributed the album, Prince retained the rights to sell copies of the album through non-traditional channels (Draper 2016, 166). Prince decided to bundle copies of the CD album with each paid ticket for his upcoming *Musicology* tour. The organization that tracks album sales, Nielsen SoundScan, decided to include copies of *Musicology* given away at concerts in its official sales counts. Many industry executives argued this was unfair since fans couldn’t opt out of receiving the CD if they wanted to see the show. In response to the controversy, *Billboard* changed its policy so that “all future ticket-and-album bundles had to give concertgoers the chance to opt out of buying the album alongside the ticket” (Draper 2016, 168).

Prince further incensed Sony/BMG and record retailers when he decided to give away copies of *Planet Earth* free with the July 15 edition of the *Mail on Sunday* newspaper. Although the move effectively ended his deal with Columbia, it is reported that the newspaper paid Prince between £200,000 and £500,000 (Draper 2016, 182). Several years later, Prince entered a similar deal with The *Daily Mirror* to give away copies of *20Ten*. It is reported that the marketing ploy only lifted the *Daily Mirror* sales by 379,000 copies and the album was widely panned by critics who didn’t work for the *Daily Mirror* (Draper 2016, 191).

Although these moves upset distributors and retailers, many fans were galvanized by Prince’s campaign. Fans engaged in prolonged conversations about B-sides, bootlegs, and rumors of the vault contents at Paisley Park studios. The ease of internet distribution and the relatively low cost of CD replication fueled real-time interactions between Prince and his fans that heightened the compelling nature of his secondary world, and thereby fostered the growth of fans’ secondary belief in that world. As Prince’s catalog of work expanded and access became instantaneous in the early 2000s, fans were invited to

explore connections between newer works and old favorites. For many, this deepened their connection to Prince because of their matured positionality. As Wolf explains, "this is one feature that makes some books, like *The Lord of the Rings*, so popular for re-reading; because at different stages of one's life, one's understanding of the world, and thus its defaults, may differ considerably, so that each time we read the book we fill in the gaps differently, creating a new experience of the world even though the book itself has not changed, but rather because the reader has changed since his or her last reading" (Wolf 2012, 55).

Live Performances and Immersive Experiences

Prince offered fans the ultimate immersive experience of his secondary world through concerts and live performances. His live shows featured sounds and visuals that supported his secondary world constructs and often encouraged fan participation. Prince concerts often resembled fan cosplay events at comic conventions where patrons attend dressed as their favorite character. It was at the live shows where fans could live their own Prince immersions. And for many fans, this was the ultimate experience. Wolf describes this transmedial phenomenon by saying,

Of course, the casual audience member who merely wishes to follow a narrative and discover its outcomes will probably never experience many of the world gestalts available to those for whom a vicarious experience of the world is as important (or more) as the understanding of the narrative. (Likewise, a single viewing or reading is usually enough for someone interested only in story, whereas someone interested in the world and its structures will probably return to a work multiple times in order to focus on details and the various links between world data.) However, for those who do care, the vicarious experience of a world is strengthened through transnarrative and transmedial references, all of which are unified by the world into an overarching experience (provided all the various details are in agreement, of course). (Wolf 2012, 57)

The desire to fully explore the structures of Prince's secondary world drives the superfan and the scholar to continue discovery-oriented engagement with Prince's musical legacy. Beyond enjoying the music, there remains a genuine interest among Prince fans to decode his messages and apply their findings to their own understandings of the primary world around them. Anniversary reissues and new releases of vault recordings will likely mean additional Prince works to interpret and decode in the next several years. As his works are continually discussed and reimagined, Prince's work will approach what James Joyce calls "immortality." Wolf

addresses the concept of immortality by saying, "For a world, this can mean speculation in the areas where extrapolation attempts to reach: mysterious aspects and open-ended questions (not without clues, perhaps) that allow speculation to continue after the works are consumed. Deliberate gaps, enigmas, and unexplained references help keep a work alive in the imagination of its audience, because it is precisely in these areas where audience participation, in the form of speculation, is most encouraged" (Wolf 2012, 60). With prolonged interest in the compelling narratives of Prince's posthumous works, belief in the secondary world he created will likely continue for another generation.

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