Challenging Canonicity Through Technology

The *Arcanum* platform as a fan curated transmedia paratext

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Abstract

This thesis explores the *17th Shard*'s *Arcanum* archival platform in the context of fan engagement with fantasy author Brandon Sanderson's *Cosmere* storyworld. The main research question driving this study is: **How may the affordances of the *17th Shard*'s *Arcanum* archival platform allow for the creation of a fan curated transmedia paratext accompanying the published *Cosmere* works, and for the empowerment of fans as they exert discursive power over Brandon Sanderson?** Through an analysis of the platform's functional and cognitive affordances, two user groups emerged: productive editors expanding the *Cosmere*'s knowledge base, and consumptive readers accessing this collective repository. Various cognitive affordances underscore the site's legitimacy as a transmedia paratext as well as the significance of contributors. A poststructural discourse analysis reveals an ongoing power struggle between Sanderson and fans, with the *Arcanum* platform capturing interactions that highlight a collaborative construction of the *Cosmere*'s canon. Existing theories of transmedia storytelling focus on official works, with fan creations being labelled as 'fanon' (Jenkins 2006; Mittell 2015; Thon 2015; Hills 2018). Conversely, the *Arcanum* platform holds a unique position as a fan curated paratext that is recognized by fans and author as a legitimate part of the transmedial universe. Because of this, the concept of transmedia may be expanded to include fan made works, as long as they are recognized as such by the different parties involved.

The study emphasizes the *Arcanum*'s role in reflecting mutual respect between Sanderson and the *17th Shard*, allowing fan-author interaction to flourish. Unlike other fandoms, the *17th Shard* community focuses on producing new content, creatively expanding the transmedial universe of the *Cosmere*. This creative empowerment, combined with the platform's credibility as a transmedia paratext, showcases the *Arcanum*'s distinctiveness. The platform empowers fans to uncover the intricacies of their favorite book series, forming a dynamic space where fan agency and authorial authority converge. This thesis underscores the evolving landscape of fan-author engagement and the *Arcanum*'s role in enriching the narrative of the *Cosmere* through collaborative efforts between Sanderson and his dedicated fan community.

Keywords: *Arcanum* archival platform, *17th Shard* community, Brandon Sanderson, *Cosmere*, fan curated transmedia paratext, canon construction.

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1 Introduction

> *"The purpose of a storyteller is not to tell you how to think,*
> *but to give you questions to think upon."*
> – Brandon Sanderson, *The Way of Kings* (2010, 806)

The above quote, taken from a relatively early work by fantasy novelist Brandon Sanderson, sheds light on not only the perceived purpose behind his writing, but also on how he expects readers to consume his works. This specific work, *The Way of Kings*, serves as the first entry in a series of books, which in turn takes place in a larger, overarching universe called the *Cosmere* (Sanderson 2018). Most of the author's works, which also include graphic novels and planned movies and television shows (Sanderson 2021), take place in this storyworld; it is up to the readers to dissect all available material and make sense of the whole. To achieve this, the fans of the *Cosmere* across the world united under the name of the *17th Shard*—a reference to a group of "worldhoppers" within the fictional universe (17th Shard 2023a)—in order to celebrate Sanderson's stories by documenting everything there is to know about them. To this purpose, the community launched a discussion board as well as a fan wiki called the *Coppermind*; this fan wiki, in turn, makes use of another platform launched and managed by the *17th Shard*: the *Arcanum* archive. Because of the as of yet incomplete nature of the *Cosmere* storyworld, the community is eager to fill as many gaps in narrative and worldbuilding as possible in order to complete the picture. The *Arcanum* serves as an archive of everything Sanderson has said about his works during interviews and blog posts, also called 'Words of Brandon' (WoBs), and offers a structured and searchable overview of many additional details that are yet to be published in official works (17th Shard 2022b). This thesis seeks to analyze this archive as a source of canonized content as recognized by Sanderson himself, yet not maintained by him. The aim here is to illustrate how a community might create and employ tools on the internet to claim the power of creation from the author of their object of fandom, adding to the fictional world's body of canon through organization and persistence.

  With the story of the *Cosmere* being conveyed over a multitude of media forms, each contributing to the whole, it is safe to say that Sanderson's storyworld can be described as an example of what media scholar Henry Jenkins calls transmedia storytelling. A transmedia story, according to Jenkins (2006), unfolds "across multiple media platforms, with

each new text making a distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole" (97–98)—media scholar Jason Mittell (2015) builds on this idea by distinguishing between balanced and unbalanced transmedia, depending on whether or not a core text can be identified within the storyworld. For the case of the *Cosmere*, the officially published works might be read as these core texts, with the added information on the *Arcanum* being interpreted as additional transmedia paratexts, thus making the *Cosmere* an example of unbalanced transmedia. Of course, this would mean that a text that was created and is maintained by fans should be counted as officially part of the canonical story of the *Cosmere*; this notion of officially recognized fan texts is largely unprecedented. Media scholar Matt Hills (2018) explored the topic of transmedia paratexts, identifying a number of distinct types but never recognizing the productive work fans might do besides unofficial creations like fan fiction. With the *Arcanum*, the *17th Shard* appears to actually be adding to the *Cosmere* canon, thus producing an official transmedia paratext in the process. The relationship between a canonicity in fiction and fandoms surrounding these stories has been explored in the past; for instance, various authors contradicting George Lucas—the creator of *Star Wars*—in their paratextual works sparked discussion in the fandom surrounding the franchise, prompting fans to seize power and decide for themselves what should be counted as the canonical version of the story (Thomas 2018). Yet, this situation concerned a single case, and the fans did not have a hand in the creation of the content. This shows that, although transmedia storytelling (Jenkins 2006; Mittell 2015; Thon 2015; Hills 2018) and paratexts (Genette 1997; Stanitzek 2005; Gray 2010; Hills 2018) are concepts that have been studied thoroughly in the field, the possibility of what is essentially a fan produced and curated transmedia paratext accompanying an established storyworld is something that has thus far not been explored.

The platform has been built in such a way to invite as much participation from fans as possible, breaking up the process of converting full interviews into taggable archive entries into small steps so that anyone can help as much or as little as they desire. Moreover, in their pursuit to expand the *Cosmere*'s canon according to their theories and speculation, fans exert power over Sanderson in order to either reveal details prematurely or to be inspired by the questions asked. For instance, the author might be forced to consider certain aspects of characters that he did not initially intend to explore. The way in which the *Arcanum* is used as a source for the *Coppermind* wiki forces Sanderson to be careful with his words in interviews, lest his words end up effectively canonized in the archive and therefore in a wiki which is used by many fans who may get confused by the complex nature of the *Cosmere*'s storyworld. In this process, fans become empowered as they carve out a piece

of the *Cosmere*'s canon, curating it themselves and allowing others in the community to gain a deeper understanding of the complete storyworld.

It follows that it would be fruitful to study how this platform may afford this degree of participation, as well as how fans manage to exert discursive power over Sanderson with regard to the canonization of details expanding the story of the *Cosmere*. This collaborative act of productive escapism serves as an example of a fan curated transmedia paratext, countering the academic status quo of merely looking at official texts as part of a transmedial universe. Therefore, this thesis contributes to the academic field by answering the following main research question: **How may the affordances of the *17th Shard*'s *Arcanum* archival platform allow for the creation of a fan curated transmedia paratext accompanying the published *Cosmere* works, and for the empowerment of fans as they exert discursive power over Brandon Sanderson?** In order to answer this question, the analysis part of the thesis is conducted according to two sub questions:

1. How do the affordances of the Arcanum archival platform promote or limit fan participation and enable it to be read as a transmedia paratext?

2. In what ways do fans exert discursive power over Brandon Sanderson in the process of canonization of *Cosmere* elements, taking ownership over the story and playing an active role in the creation of the *Arcanum*'s contents?

This thesis has been divided into three sections, excluding this introduction and a final concluding chapter. The following section details the research's theoretical framework, elaborating on the concepts of transmedia storytelling and how it relates to paratexts, as well as how fan communities have historically related themselves to processes of canonization with regard to their objects of fandom. Next, the methodological considerations within this thesis are explored. More specifically, the methods of discursive interface analysis and poststructural discourse analysis and how they are used in the analysis part of the thesis are explained. The next section, forming the bulk of the thesis, is the analysis, in which both sub questions are answered through analyzing the *Arcanum* archival platform by means of the previously mentioned methods, ultimately leading to an answer to the main research question in the conclusion of the thesis.

2 Theoretical Framework

In order to investigate how the *17th Shard* community manages to employ the *Arcanum* platform in order to add their own recognized transmedia paratext to the canonized story of the *Cosmere,* it is important to first establish a number of concepts and their status in the current academic debate. For this purpose, this section explores the concept of transmedia storytelling and how it connects to paratexts, as well as how online fandoms relate themselves to the process of canonization in fictional storyworlds.

2.1 Transmedia paratexts

The idea of transmedia storytelling was conceived by Henry Jenkins (2003) as conveying a story across multiple media platforms—ideally, "each medium does what it does best—so that a story might be introduced in a film, expanded through television, novels, and comics, and its world might be explored and experienced through game play" (par. 10). Building on this, he argues that each text should make "a distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole" (2006, 98)—also called "additive comprehension" (127), in that the inclusion of the text adds to a consumer's comprehension of the whole—and that each text should work as an individual story. Taken together, these texts would then form a world bigger than each individual story, "since fan speculations and elaborations also expand the world in a variety of directions" (116). However, Jenkins' inclusion of fan input should not be overstated—the author also states that "fan fiction can be seen as an unauthorized expansion of these media franchises into new directions which reflect the reader's desire to 'fill in the gaps' they have discovered in the commercially produced material" (2007, par. 11). This suggests that the idea of fan made texts being included among the officially recognized texts in a transmedia franchise is not included in Jenkins' vision of the concept. Furthermore, according to Jenkins' definition, transmedia texts within a franchise should be of equal value, with each text providing additive comprehension and being able to stand on its own as a story.

  This conception of transmedia storytelling was later challenged by Jason Mittell (2015), who proposed a distinction between balanced and unbalanced transmedia. The former satisfies Jenkins' ideal view of transmedia storytelling: all texts add equal value and are, therefore, balanced. Conversely, the latter always includes "a clearly identifiable core text and a number of peripheral transmedia extensions that might be more or less integrated into the narrative whole"; in this view, he describes these extensions as "orienting paratexts that serve to help viewers make sense of a narrative" (294). Paratexts were first

coined by Gérard Genette (1997) as secondary texts that not only surround a given core text, but also provide gateways into that text. Genette distinguishes between peritexts as existing inside the corpus of a core text (e.g., titles or author biographies) and epitexts as surrounding it from outside (Stanitzek 2005, 31); according to this, orienting paratexts within unbalanced transmedia as conceptualized by Mittell are always epitexts, as they surround a core text rather than existing within one. Orienting paratexts, then, provide people with additional gateways into transmedia franchises, allowing new fans to easily dive deeper into the storyworld. Mittell's expansion of the concept to include orienting paratexts as part of transmedia storyworlds provides a basis for the *Arcanum* to potentially be counted as part of the transmedia storyworld of the *Cosmere*. As an archival platform, it would definitely not be able to stand on its own as a story—it merely provides additional details.

Such expansive transmedia storyworlds have also been conceptualized as transmedial universes by Jan-Noël Thon (2015), who argues they might be understood as "complex storyworld compounds" (40), that is, a collection of stories in a shared universe that "does not require that all members of its various author collectives and all members of its . . . audience actually 'share a mental image' of that universe" (33). This notion of co-creation is inspired by Jenkins (2006), who also highlighted how transmedia franchises are often built by multiple people working together. However, Thon implies that these authors can also work without necessarily having a shared vision or purpose; this would allow for parts of the *Cosmere*'s story to be produced by people other than Sanderson, possibly even by his fans.

However, this level of recognized fan involvement in the production of a transmedia franchise definitely has not seen much academic work yet. Building on the earlier mentioned works, Matt Hills (2018) offers an overview of different categories to which transmedia paratexts might belong. Firstly, a fairly common one is informational; here, "paratexts do not simply offer up non-essential narrative supplements which fans can choose to consume (or not); they also catalogue, promote, and identify transmedia narrative extensions" (290). In this sense, fan productions like fan wikis could certainly be described as transmedia paratexts. Furthermore, Hills distinguishes diegetic and auratic paratexts—the former concerns actual additions to the storyworld, while the latter seeks "to lend cultural value to the franchise" (290). The final category, that of commercial paratexts, is largely concerned with maintaining the franchise's brand identity, helping draw more people to the stories the company behind it produces. Contrasting previous works on the concept, Hills places a greater emphasis on the role of fan engagement with transmedia storyworlds,

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acknowledging that "fans and producers can strategically 'non-remember' transmedia paratexts" (291). This demonstrates the substantial role fans can play in determining the value of entries within a transmedia franchise—the following section sheds more light on this. This active role fans play is further exemplified through Hills' discussion of "fanagement"— a company's management of its fans—which currently, via transmedia paratexts, "seems to be more concerned with . . . containing fan criticisms of the official text and its changing format" (292). In other words, Hills contends that fans do play a significant role in the development of transmedia franchises, but more in terms of indirect influence rather than the direct and active role they seem to be playing in the *17th Shard* community. Thus, studying the *Arcanum* platform and how its users manage to take ownership of the *Cosmere* by creating this fan curated transmedia paratext, will help expand the concept of transmedia storytelling to include the even more active role fans might end up playing in our contemporary media landscape.

2.2 Fandom and canonization

As the goal of this thesis is to demonstrate how the *17th Shard* community actively influences the process of 'canonization' of various elements of the *Cosmere* storyworld, it is crucial to first lay out previous academic work on this topic. In the introduction to their book on fan fiction and fan communities, Kristina Busse and Karen Hellekson (2006) distinguish between canon—the "events presented in the media source that provide the universe, setting, and characters" (9)—and fanon, "the events created by the fan community in a particular fandom and repeated pervasively throughout the fan text" (ibid). This clear distinction suggests that for a text to be canonized, it cannot be created by the fandom surrounding the work, as this would mean it should be counted as fanon. Therefore, although works of fan fiction definitely do have an audience, they are not to be counted among canonized works in a media franchise. According to this, fans would never be able to produce a canonized transmedia paratext, as it would always be considered an unauthorized addition to the original storyworld.

Furthermore, in his foundational work on fan studies, Jenkins (2012) also identified the role of fans to be one more of theory and criticism rather than actual influence. In an analysis of how *Star Trek* fans relate themselves to officially published works in the franchise, the author argues that although "fans have little say about what happens to their characters or their programs . . . fans claim the right to protest and protest loudly decisions contradicting their perception of what is desirable or appropriate" (118). Meaning is pro-

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duced through fans' interpretations of the work, and when this produces large disagreement within a fandom, it can lead to fans rising up, wanting to challenge the series' canon. In consuming a piece of media, fans seem to always possess an underlying desire to influence its canon, inserting their theories and speculations about characters and plot events in order to help construct the storyworld.

Jenkins' notion of meaning being produced through fans' interpretations is further explored by Jonathan Gray (2010), who looked into fan-created paratexts such as fan wikis, spoilers for future events, recap videos and more, in order to determine how an audience might add meaning through the production of such texts. Such paratexts, Gray argues "invite different relationships to the associated film or television program, and all stand to recalibrate the text's interpretive trajectory as a result" (162). Media firms recognize this "power to contribute to, augment, and personalize a textual world" (165), leading to many of them to disapprove certain elements of fanon, making sure those cannot be counted among the officially canonized works. Nevertheless, Gray argues that fans' productive input is essential:

> A text is always already a collaboratively created entity, and regardless of how media firms rewrite copyright law to give them power of attorney over a text, the only texts incapacitated enough to be ownable are those that have absolutely no social relevance or audience attention. At the moment that audiences care about a text, it has multiple creators, and that creation is often maintained by paratextual creation and consumption (166).

In short, a fan community's production of paratexts is essential to preserve a text's relevance, helping keep the text's audience engaged with the storyworld. An example of such a fan-created paratext—and one probably most linked to the concerning storyworld's canon—is the fan wiki. A site of participatory fandom, a fan wiki's most common purpose is to "create documentation and analysis" of a storyworld, in order to determine the canonical version of the story. Additionally, the medium might also be used "as a tool for *collaborative creativity*" (Mittell 2013, 41; italics in original)—this way, the community produces fanon works in a dedicated space.

As the fan wiki's primary function is to document the canonical storyworld, it also serves as a space for fan debates concerning canonicity of ambiguous elements of a story. Mittell (2009) looks at these debates in the fan wiki dedicated to the *Lost* storyworld, high-

lighting the often blurred lines between canonical story, fan theories and speculation, and fully uncanonical creative works. The biggest concern of the community was to determine what content counted as part of the official story, with the wiki itself being regarded as "an authoritative documentation of the canonical storyworld" (para. 2.15). However, to facilitate the hosting of fan theories as well as more ambiguous officially released content, strict distinctions were made between official canon and fan produced works, including theories. This way, what is regarded as fanon would never be elevated to canonical status. In the case of the *Lost* fandom, fans help document the canonical story, but the influence stops there.

Another case of fan influence presents itself in the Wikipedia talk page of the *Star Wars* canon—in an ethnographical study, Paul Thomas (2018) investigated fan debates regarding contradicting texts within the franchise, all being of seemingly canonical status. Some of these texts were produced by the franchise's creator, George Lucas, while others were produced by others, albeit still authorized by Lucas himself. Thomas argues that "fan editors are often unified in their belief that the goings-on in a fictional universe can be objectively and encyclopaedically documented . . . but they are often divided as to what they understand a fictional world to be . . . and what they consider to be its 'canon'" (285). In this case, fans took it upon themselves to find out the truth of these texts, with the goal of determining the official canonical story. Although there is certainly a degree of influence here, fans still work with whatever they are given by the company behind the core text. Ultimately, Thomas determines that the winning, canonical version is the one whose author, through arguments made by fans, holds the greatest authority. In this sense, Thomas argues that fans understand that "they are not taking part in the construction of canon . . . but rather aggregating canon that has been set down by the author" (295). Like the *Lost* fandom as explored by Mittell, the *Star Wars* fandom's aim does not seem to be to expand the canon, but rather to make sure the documented canon is as accurate to the published works as possible. This would make the *17th Shard* unique in their endeavor to actively expand the *Cosmere*'s canon through persistent questioning and documenting Sanderson's answers, to the point of the author himself acknowledging the *Arcanum*'s value in the construction of canon of his fictional universe.

3 Methodology

In order to answer the questions posed in the introductory section, the analysis part of this thesis consists of two distinct parts. The first part concerns an affordance analysis of the *Arcanum* platform investigating how it promotes or limits fan participation, while the second part examines the power dynamics between the *17th Shard* community and Sanderson in the process of canonization through a discourse analysis. This section details how these methods are employed specifically, as well as how the data for each part is gathered.

3.1 Discursive interface analysis

To begin, the *Arcanum* platform's affordances will be analyzed using Mel Stanfill's (2015) discursive interface analysis method. The concept of affordances, introduced by James J. Gibson (1979) in the context of ecological psychology, is explained by Donald A. Norman (1988) as the potential interactions between individuals and their environment. Perceivable affordances may function as signifiers, signaling possible actions and how they should be performed. Matthew X. Curinga (2014) links the concept to software—building on Norman's work, he suggests looking at software affordances to uncover meaning-making in interactive systems. To achieve this, Stanfill (2015) proposes their discursive interface analysis method to study interactive systems created through web design. The author argues that, through its affordances, a site's design "makes a normative claim about its purpose and appropriate use" (1060); the goal of the method, then, is to uncover how the site's users are nudged toward certain actions by looking at these affordances. Drawing on Rex Hartson's (2003) earlier work on affordance categories in interaction design, Stanfill (2015) lays out three types of affordances one should look at when conducting a discursive interface analysis. Firstly, functional affordances concern the site's technical functionalities; these produce norms by allowing users to perform certain actions while restricting others. Secondly, cognitive affordances relate to how the site addresses users and gets them to perform these actions; these allow for the processing of information, thus playing a key role in the site's meaning-making. Thirdly, sensory affordances concern the aesthetic choices in site design; how things are made to stand out through these choices can also reveal things about the underlying assumptions and valuations behind a site (1063–64).

By interpreting the *Arcanum*'s functionalities and design features as affordances, one can investigate how the *17th Shard* community constructed the platform in such a way to encourage other fans to fully participate in its operation; not only can fans decide to

merely use it to look up certain WoBs, but they can also choose to help maintain the archive by transcribing new entries or tagging existing ones to make them even more accessible for others. The *Arcanum* harnesses the potential power of the community by allowing each fan to participate according to their own desire and interest, while also providing a database of novel information about the *Cosmere* that cannot be found in currently published works. Using Stanfill's discursive interface analysis, this process may be analyzed through an exploration of the site's affordances. Therefore, this first part of the analysis employs the *Arcanum* platform as a whole as its corpus—all notable functional, cognitive, and sensory affordances are recorded and analyzed in the context of fan participation and authorship. It must be noted, however, that due to the site's relative simplicity as well as the inherent cognitive nature of aesthetic design choices on the front page, sensory affordances are only touched upon lightly. Instead, a greater emphasis is placed on functional and cognitive affordances and the various conclusions that may be drawn from these. This way, the ways in which the *17th Shard* has designed the *Arcanum* in order to function the way that it does may be uncovered properly.

The greatest strengths of the method lie on the more technical side, in that it views fan activity through the lens of an archival platform on the internet. Although much can be said about the ways in which the platform itself functions, this thesis is careful in asserting any intentions to the people behind it. Even if the results do match what members of the *17th Shard* intended, the discursive interface analysis method is still targeted at a technical object—in this case, the *Arcanum*—itself, rather than the community behind it. The second part of the analysis, as described below, looks further into what the fan community is actually doing with the platform.

3.2 Poststructural discourse analysis

After determining the importance of the *Arcanum* platform itself in the process of producing the new transmedia paratext, it is still crucial to assess the active role the fans have played using the platform in expanding the canon storyworld of the *Cosmere*. For this purpose, a poststructural discourse analysis, inspired by Linda Graham's (2011) work on the matter, is conducted on a selected collection of entries from the archival platform. Though Graham mainly works as a medical and educational scholar, the work she has done on this is of much use for the purposes this thesis. In response to the lack of "coherent descriptions of how one might go about 'Foucauldian' discourse analysis" (663), Graham offers an overview of what one should pay attention to when conducting such an analysis. She distin-

guishes this type of discourse analysis from Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as explained by Fairclough (2003); whereas CDA places a large focus on micro aspects of the analyzed text—"the structural, grammatical, linguistic, semiotic figures that *make up* the text"—discourse analysis using Foucault looks more at the macro, or "what is 'made up' by the text itself" (Graham 2011, 671; italics in original). In other words, a poststructural discourse analysis using Foucault involves more than merely examining word choice and what it could mean. Rather, the method's aim is to investigate "the constitutive or political effects of saying this instead of that" (667). For the purposes of this thesis, then, this method is applied in order to look at how both fans' and Sanderson's understanding of the *Cosmere*'s canon is altered through the fans' aims to expand the *Arcanum* platform. In their pursuit to continuously gather more information about the narrative universe, fans expand the notion of canonicity beyond officially published works as Sanderson acknowledges the archive's important place within the fandom. The process of how this happens is examined through the application of a poststructural discourse analysis as explained by Graham.

According to Graham (2011), the goal of a discourse analysis inspired by Foucault's theories is to explain statements that aim to impact their surrounding discourse in a way (667)—applied to the *Arcanum*, the focus should therefore be on fans' and Sanderson's statements that change both parties' perception of what belongs to the canonized story of the *Cosmere*. To achieve this through a poststructural discourse analysis, Graham outlines three ideas that are central to Foucault's work—description, recognition and classification—to keep in mind while examining a text. Each of these ideas explicate ways in which speech, through statements, can construct and define objects (668). In describing, recognizing and classifying an object through speech, the resulting discourse may help construct that object's definition as it is understood by people (669–670). In the case of this thesis, the object that is being investigated is the canonical story, or canon, of the *Cosmere*—thus, the goal is to uncover how statements, by both Sanderson and fans of his work, construct what is understood as the *Cosmere*'s canon through the processes of description, recognition and classification. Usage of this poststructural discourse analysis method allows for uncovering the active role fans are playing in expanding and maintaining the canon of the *Cosmere*, and can therefore show how power is redistributed among the author and his fans as the *Arcanum* platform is being utilized.

In order to stay focused on the important parts of the *Arcanum*'s contents—that is, entries actually discussing canonicity of various *Cosmere* elements—the corpus for this part of the analysis is restricted to any platform entries containing the word 'canon'. Of course,

this includes variations of the word such as 'canonize' and 'canonicity', as these can also offer useful insights into the *Cosmere*'s construction. Additionally, entries to be analyzed must be from after November 8, 2017, as this is the day the *Arcanum* platform as it is used today was first opened to the public (17th Shard 2022a). This restriction of dates was picked not only to make the corpus more manageable, but also because the release of the *Arcanum* marked the moment that WoBs became incredibly easily accessible to anyone with an internet connection, thus allowing a much larger group of people to participate in helping construct the *Cosmere*'s canon. At the moment of writing, this search query into the archive returns 210 entries; these are manually filtered to make sure each entry to be analyzed actually relates to the *Cosmere*—Sanderson has some works that do not take place in the fictional universe—and describes an interaction between Sanderson and a fan, as the platform also contains many entries with mere monologues of the author. By stripping these from the corpus, fifty-four entries are left to be analyzed. In the following section, statements are drawn from this pool of entries and analyzed in order to uncover how people, through their discourse with Sanderson, construct the object that is the canon of the *Cosmere*. A collection of all relevant entries can be found in the appendices.

4 Analysis

The analysis section of this thesis has been divided into two distinct parts, each answering one of the two sub questions as described in the introductory section:

1. How do the affordances of the *Arcanum* archival platform promote or limit fan participation and enable it to be read as a transmedia paratext?
2. In what ways do fans exert discursive power over Brandon Sanderson in the process of canonization of *Cosmere* elements, taking ownership over the story and playing an active role in the creation of the *Arcanum*'s contents?

As explained in the methodology section, each sub question is answered using a different analytical method. The first part, examining the *Arcanum* platform and its affordances, is handled using Stanfill's (2015) discursive interface analysis method. The second part, focusing on how the community exerts power through the process of canonization, makes use of a poststructural discourse analysis inspired by Graham's (2011) work on the matter. The combined answers of these two parts subsequently feed into the answer to the main research question, given in the concluding section of this thesis.

4.1 Analyzing the *Arcanum* platform's affordances

As described in the methodology section, a well-conducted discursive interface analysis based on Stanfill (2015) requires a researcher to distinguish between and look for three distinct types of affordances: functional, cognitive, and sensory (1063–64). For this purpose, this first part of the analysis chapter details how these various types of affordances can be seen in the *Arcanum* platform and how it works. As stated in the previous chapter, due to the inherent cognitive nature of many aesthetic choices on the platform as well as the simplicity of the site, the category of sensory affordances is only touched upon lightly. In doing so, this thesis seeks to demonstrate how, from a number of different perspectives, the platform pushes its users to participate in the process of maintaining the archive, thus helping it function better. Additionally, an analysis of these affordances also illustrates how the *17th Shard* presents the *Arcanum* as a valuable paratext holding unique, canonical information, thus showing how fans of the *Cosmere* might view the platform as part of Sanderson's transmedial universe. The final subsection of this first part of the analysis offers an answer to the first sub question posed in the introductory section of the thesis.

4.1.1 Transcribing, tagging and collections

Firstly, forming the backbone of what the website is meant to achieve, the *Arcanum*'s functional affordances must be investigated. As explained earlier, these concern the site's technical functionalities, which produce norms by allowing users to perform certain actions while restricting others (Stanfill 2015, 1063). The site seems to make a distinction between two types of visitors, namely consumptive readers and productive editors. This distinction
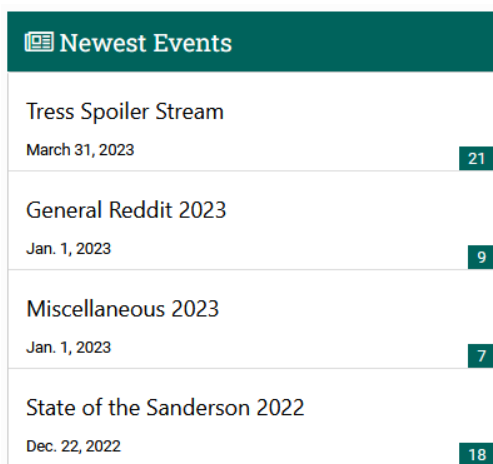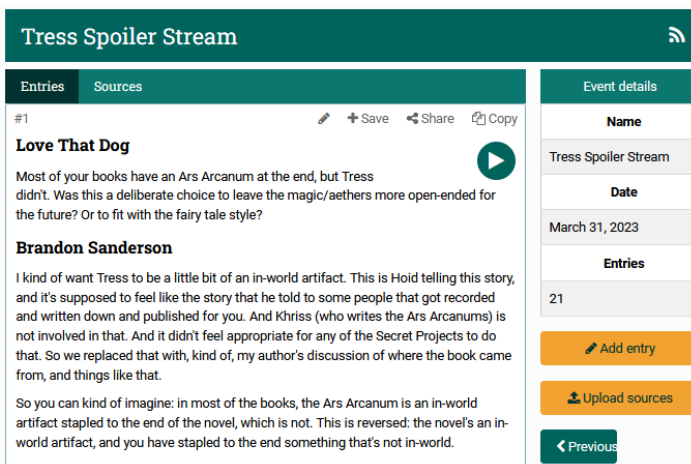

Figure 1: Events on front page

Figure 2: Event page showing WoB entries

illustrates the different functions of the site well: some fans desire to actively help expand the body of knowledge surrounding the *Cosmere*, while others merely want to tap into this knowledge to deepen their own understanding of the fictional universe. Of course, this also leads to two separate ways to look at the *Arcanum*'s functional affordances.

The first group, the ones who are not actively expanding the archive's contents, have their needs met with the options to browse through all entries using a clear layout and to gather specific WoB entries into collections, attached to their account. As can be seen in figure 1, the landing page offers an overview of all events where WoBs have been gathered; a user can browse through any of these, viewing all entries in the order that they have been gathered. Once clicking on one of these events, as demonstrated in figure 2, all entries are listed in the order that they appeared during that specific event. For instance, the "Tress Spoiler Stream" was a livestream event on YouTube during which fans could ask questions regarding one of Sanderson's recent books, *Tress of the Emer-*
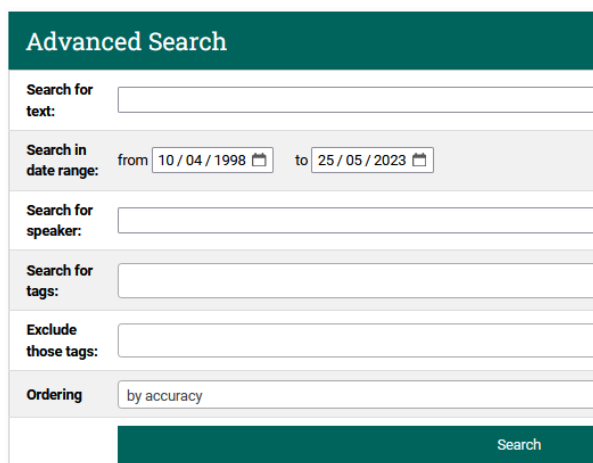

Figure 3: Advanced search for WoB entries

ald Sea (2023)—these questions, including the author's answers, then end up here for all fans who could not attend the livestream. *Arcanum* users can then use the 'save' button, located at the top of each entry, to build collections that help build their theories and speculations about future *Cosmere* works. Additionally, the platform offers an advanced search system that can be used to perform a more focused search, as shown in figure 3. This way, the *Arcanum* platform offers fans of the *Cosmere* an easily navigable archive of new information, allowing them to explore it in a relatively simple, yet extensive manner. These functional affordances, targeted at the reader rather than the editor, demonstrate the *Arcanum*'s paratextual characteristics. With the archive essentially being an easily browsable text, it definitely matches Genette's (1997) definition of paratexts as secondary texts sur-

Figure 4: Options when editing or adding a WoB entry, including tagging

rounding a core text, the core text being the body of officially released *Cosmere* works. More specifically, the *Arcanum* can be categorized as an orienting epitext (Mittell 2015, 294; Stanitzek 2005, 31), as it surrounds Sanderson's works from the outside while offering a way for fans to dive deeper into the constructed storyworld.

The second group of users, the productive editors, receive quite some additional functionalities to play with. The main attraction here is, of course, the adding or editing of

WoB entries, actions that are allowed to be performed by practically anyone. A user can either choose to correct or add to a WoB already in the archive, or to create an entirely new one based on either a recorded event or a response on some online discussion board. The editing screen, which functions the same for new and existing WoBs, can be seen in figure 4. In the case of recorded events, an audio snippet is attached to the entry—the job for the editor, then, is to properly transcribe and, if necessary, tag the entry to make it more easily findable for the previously mentioned more consumptive users. When it comes to constructing the *Arcanum* platform's content, editors get a large amount of freedom; an exception to this is their inability to break up audio recordings of events into shorter snippets, as this is done by *17th Shard* staff members called Arcanists (17th Shard 2022b). Little is explained about how these are appointed, though it appears they are chosen due to their intimate knowledge of the various book series as well as active participation in the fandom throughout the years. Of course, this means that the bulk of the work, actually transcribing and categorizing all gathered quotes from Sanderson, is still done by the editors. In his work on transmedia paratexts, Hills (2018) describes them as being able to offer additional narrative elements, or even cataloguing and promoting previously existing extensions (290)—the *Arcanum*'s functional affordances seem to allow it to do both simultaneously, enabling it to take on the form of both an informational and diegetic transmedia paratext. As a paratext, the archive allows for scattered information to be hosted in a central place, allowing fans to consume new *Cosmere* content while also helping to maintain it.

4.1.2   To-do list, instructions, purpose statement and statistics

Secondly, as it is also important to examine how users end up performing these actions, the *Arcanum*'s cognitive affordances must be investigated. As mentioned previously, these relate to how the site addresses users and gets them to make use of its functionalities; this type of affordance thus allows for the processing of information, and plays a large role in how the platform creates meaning (Stanfill 2015, 1063). Additionally, from these cognitive affordances can also be drawn what the site believes its most important users are (1064), thus revealing more about what the *17th Shard* means to achieve with the *Arcanum* platform. As with the site's functional affordances described above, the *Arcanum*'s cognitive affordances also demonstrate the distinction between users made by the *17th Shard*. In order to prompt users to make use of the platform's functionalities, two notable menu options are included above each and every page on the site: 'discover' and 'contribute'; the former corresponds to the earlier described group of consumptive readers, looking to uncover

more information about various elements in the *Cosmere*, while the latter is targeted to the group of active editors, looking to contribute by helping expand and maintain the archive. Whereas the first group does not receive a lot of notable cognitive affordances—after all, searching and reading through an archive does not require much instruction—the editors do get pushed into certain directions when it comes to contributing.

Figure 5: To-do list detailing snippets yet to be transcribed

A notable cognitive affordance of the *Arcanum* platform is the to-do list, listed under the 'contribute' menu item. Exclusively targeted to the productive editors visiting the site, the list (illustrated in figure 5) offers a quick and simple overview of transcriptions that are yet to be finished. This, of course, pushes editors toward certain actions; more specifically, it makes sure that when editors contribute, they contribute where it is necessary. Furthermore, the 'contribute' menu item also leads to a style guide as well as a tutorial on how to create new entries. These pages are also designed to influence the actions of people editing the site, by instructing them specifically how to contribute in a clean and efficient manner. For instance, the style guide does not only include explanations about how the entries should be formatted, but also about what to include based on notability and how to properly tag entries. The tutorial on how to create new entries makes clear that transcriptions from live events are not the only welcomed source of entries; for example, relevant information in signed books may also be added to the archive. All of these affordances nudge editors' actions to help keep the archive consistent and clean, most likely to preserve the platform's credibility.

Furthermore, two notable elements on the *Arcanum*'s front page—a welcome message concisely explaining the site's purpose (figure 6) and a box displaying site statistics illustrating the expansive nature of the archive (figure 7)—also influence how users perceive and utilize the platform. The decision to include these elements prominently on the front page demonstrates how the *17th Shard* cares very much about how visitors perceive the site. The welcome message makes clear that the goal behind the archive is to collect as much information about the *Cosmere* as possible, while the statistics show that this is actual-
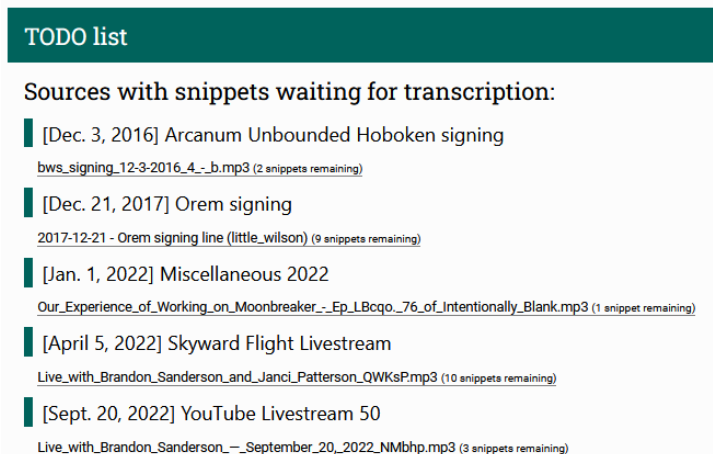
ly a successful endeavor—by showing off its fifteen thousand entries spread across almost five hundred events, the *Arcanum* platform seeks to make clear to visitors that, as a paratext, it is making a valuable contribution to the fictional universe. As this design choice may be seen as an aesthetic one, it might be tempting to read these elements as sensory affordances. However, Stanfill (2015) defines this category as more than merely aesthetic design choices, rather focusing more on underlying assumptions and valuations that might be conveyed through these choices (1064). In the current context, it would be much more fruitful to read these front page elements as designed and placed to guide the platform's users in some way, in this case by implying editors have the power to add great value to the *Cosmere* by helping construct and maintain the archive. Sensory affordances of the *Arcanum* platform might include choices in color design or button placement, but due to the site's simplicity this would not have much impact on how visitors browse make use of it, within the context of the questions this thesis is aiming to answer. Therefore, the focus here will remain with functional and cognitive affordances.

Figure 6: Welcome message

Figure 7: Archive statistics

As previously mentioned, Stanfill (2015) argues that cognitive affordances such as the ones described above can reveal what the site believes its most important users are (1064). The group of consumptive readers, while probably forming a substantial portion of the platform's userbase, does not receive much in terms of cognitive affordances beyond what is already immediately linked to the functional affordances. These are fairly straightforward, since the structure of an archive is a relatively simple one, merely consisting of categorized entries and tags. Conversely, the group of productive editors receives a number of additional cognitive affordances helping focus their energy toward what the team behind the platform deems necessary; with a to-do list and detailed instructions on how to contribute, the sites helps editors on their way to quickly and easily start contributing on the platform. Based on these affordances, then, it can be concluded that in the eyes of the *17th Shard*, editors that help expand and maintain the *Arcanum* platform are its most important users. This further highlights the productive role fans of the *Cosmere* take on when working with the *Arcanum* platform, helping to cleanly expand this transmedia paratext. In addition to this, the site's cognitive affordances also help increase its credibility as a recognized part
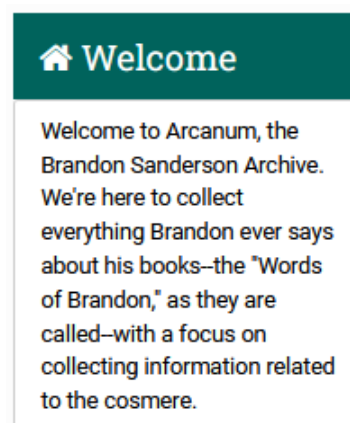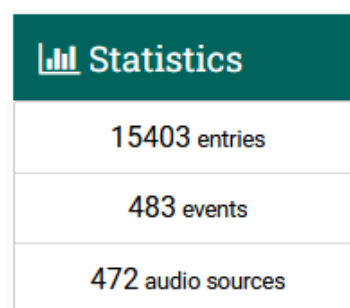
of the *Cosmere*, albeit only by fans. Calling back to Jenkins' notion of transmedia storytelling, who argued that "each medium does what it does best" (2003, par. 10) and that each text should make "a distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole" (2006, 98), it is clear that the *Arcanum*'s front page, containing the discussed welcome message and statistics box, is targeted at carving out the platform's place in the transmedial universe of the *Cosmere*. As an archive, it is doing what archives do best by gathering a lot of information and making it accessible to others—the statistics box conveys this clearly to all visitors of the site. Furthermore, the implication behind the welcome message is that the archive is indeed making a valuable contribution to the whole—by describing Words of Brandon as "everything Brandon ever says about his books," the *17th Shard* shows that the contents of the archive go beyond any published works, instead focusing on other source, some of which may even be influenced by fans. Of course, with Jenkins' (2007) description of fan made content as "an unauthorized expansion of . . . media franchises into new directions" (par. 11), a fan made archive such as the *Arcanum* stands the risk of not being recognized as a legitimate source of *Cosmere* knowledge. In order to combat this, the *17th Shard* makes clear in the *Arcanum*'s welcome message that the archive's entries consist entirely of things that do, in fact, come from the primary source behind the *Cosmere*, namely Sanderson himself. By including this as a sensory affordance, visible to anyone visiting the site, while also illustrating the archive expansive nature by showing off impressive statistics, the *Arcanum* carves out a relevant place in the transmedial universe that is the *Cosmere*.

4.1.3   The *Arcanum* as a transmedia paratext

The purpose of this first part of the analysis was to answer the first sub-question: *How do the affordances of the Arcanum archival platform promote or limit fan participation and enable it to be read as a transmedia paratext?* In short, the *Arcanum* platform's functional affordances, consisting of functionalities such as transcribing audio snippets, editing and tagging archive entries known as Words of Brandon, and searching through the archive to create collections of these entries, can be divided among two groups of site visitors. These groups, each fulfilling an important role on the platform, are productive editors looking to help expand the body of knowledge surrounding the *Cosmere*, and consumptive readers merely wanting to tap into this knowledge. Based on the *Arcanum*'s cognitive affordances throughout the site, the most notable of which are the to-do list and style guide, the former group seems to be the most valuable user in the eyes of the *17th Shard*. Although the platform has things to offer for both groups, it places a greater emphasis on contributing users rather

than discovering ones. Moreover, the site's other cognitive affordances, found on the front page, highlight the community's desire for the platform to be taken seriously in the greater context of the *Cosmere*; not only does the platform's welcome message emphasize Sanderson's involvement in WoBs, the front page also includes a list of statistics in order to present the *Arcanum* as an incredibly vast body of knowledge with thousands of entries. The *17th Shard* understands that the ultimate power lies with the *Cosmere*'s author, and by including him as a primary source for practically all of the archive's contents, they claim credibility as a paratext accompanying the *Cosmere*.

As Thon (2015) writes, expansive transmedia storyworlds may be constructed by multiple authors without necessarily sharing a vision or purpose, instead having each author carve out a part of the universe to work in (33). The *Cosmere*, when taken as a transmedial universe—or a "complex storyworld compound" (40)—definitely includes the *Arcanum*'s contents, even though they are often partially authored by fans; after all, the community sees Sanderson as a co-author for its contents. By placing an emphasis on promoting fan participation through its cognitive affordances to maintain the archive, and claiming credibility by referring to the author as a primary source, the *Arcanum* platform manages to carve out a part of the transmedial universe of the *Cosmere* and establish itself as a transmedia paratext. This is where the *Arcanum* platform and the *17th Shard* community distinguish themselves from other fan communities and their fan-created paratexts; the community seems to continuously emphasize the large size and, more importantly, the sourcing—Sanderson himself—of their archive, which effectively cements the platform's credibility as a transmedial paratext in the larger world of the *Cosmere*. Even though fans do not create the content themselves, they do influence, guide and curate it through inquisitive questions that may or may not prompt the author to reveal new information. What remains now is to examine to what extent the platform's contents—and also the *Cosmere*'s canon as a whole—are actually controlled by fans. This is explored in the next part of the analysis by looking more closely at entries contained in the archive.

4.2 How fans claim power through the process of canonization

As previously mentioned, this second part serves to investigate how the 'object' that is the canon of the *Cosmere* is constructed through discourse between Sanderson and his fans, as seen in the archival entries hosted on the *Arcanum* platform. To achieve this, a poststructural discourse analysis as inspired by Graham (2011) is conducted, who in turn based her work on Foucault's theories of statements and discursive power. Throughout the communi-

ty's questions and the author's answers, discussion about the *Cosmere*'s canon and the process of canonization itself help construct how participants in this discourse perceive and relate themselves to the object. The gathered relevant entries, fifty-four in total (as seen in the appendices), demonstrate the power struggle happening when fans labor to generate additional content for the *Arcanum* archive through inquisitive questioning. In an effort to provide a complete picture of this, this discourse analysis traces the different ways in which the author and his fans construct the object of canon—this ranges from Sanderson pushing back and claiming ultimate canonizing power through his published works, to fans successfully wrestling novel information about future works out of the author. Through analysis of certain statements about the *Cosmere*'s canon displayed in the various archival entries, it becomes clear how this object is constructed by all parties involved. This power struggle between fans and author in constructing the object of canon, visible throughout all gathered data entries, is summarized and assessed in the final subsection, in order to examine the extent to which fans of the *Cosmere* actually hold power in the canonization of story elements, through the maintenance and active expansion of their *Arcanum* platform. This final subsection also serves as an answer to the second sub question posed in the introductory section of the thesis.

4.2.1   Canonization through published works

A sizable portion of the data entries, more specifically the ones contained in appendix A, demonstrate Sanderson's pushback against the *Arcanum* platform as being a relevant source of new, canonized information. Oftentimes in the interviews, the author is careful to make clear statements about why something should not be counted as canonical *Cosmere* content yet, mainly because it has not appeared in any officially published works yet. This way, the author attempts to construct the object of canon in such a way to draw as much of the power toward himself. In other words, these cases display the power struggle surrounding the object of canon in Sanderson's favor, with him keeping the content provided by fans contained under the banner of fanon or different 'types' of canon. He writes that "the books become the canon. Even the wiki is not canon. Until I write it into the books, it's not canon" (entry 1). This answer came as a response to a fan wondering when *Cosmere* content becomes finalized in the author's mind—based on this, it seems clear that Sanderson regards his books as the ultimate judges of canonicity. This sentiment can also be seen in entries 2 through 6, all of which demonstrate the author's viewpoint of books containing the final canon. For instance, when sharing something that he realizes is not set in stone yet, he tells

the audio recorder that "that one is not quite canon yet" (entry 2), immediately discrediting the resulting Word of Brandon. Moreover, he places an emphasis on the flexible nature of the canon as it is being written, telling fans that they "can't count [an answer] quite as canon until [the book] comes out" (entry 4), or that an answer is "not canon until I write it" (entry 5). This shows that even though his fans might ask inquisitive questions regarding the storyworld, the author reserves the right to not divulge information now, but rather merely share his current ideas which might still be subject to change. In this context, the object of canon might be described as a secret to be uncovered by fans, the pace at which is decided by Sanderson. In this view, the distinction between canon and fanon as explored by Busse and Hellekson (2006) can be seen clearly: the canon is written and controlled by the author alone, and anything else that might be produced by fans of the *Cosmere* should be counted as fanon. Even in their effort to collaborate with Sanderson in producing *Arcanum* content, the author makes clear that this collaboration is not on the same canonical level as his published works, devaluing the fans' works into the realm of fanon. This calls to mind Jenkins' (2012) ideas on the role of fans as being one more of theory and criticism rather than influence, as the described perception of canon as an object excludes the fandom in the creative process, opting to only invite them once it is time to consume.

Furthermore, in an effort to solidify this pushback against the community's power, the author seems to have deconstructed the object of canon into smaller parts, some of which are less significant than others. Obviously, this includes the earlier discussed 'final canon', contained solely in the books, but the author has also constructed a form of canon that can be placed in between the ideas of fanon and canon. Entries 7 through 10 demonstrate this constructed halfway point in the struggle to canonize; for instance, when answering a fan's question, he states that "that's book-signing canon on that one" (entry 7) in order to highlight how the shared information is not represented in the books yet. Similarly, Sanderson talks about something called 'Word of Brandon canon' multiple times, stating that he could contradict his answer and that it is merely "Word of Brandon canon until [he contradicts] it" (entry 9) or that he "wouldn't canonize it," but "would call it Word of Brandon canonized" (entry 10). As stated before, this 'book-signing canon' or 'Word of Brandon canon' seems to form a halfway point between fanon and canon, with Sanderson acknowledging that the resulting Words of Brandon on the *Arcanum* platform are at the very least somewhat more canonical than pure fan fiction, written without collaboration with the author. Although the intention behind constructing these halfway points seems to be to underline the power imbalance in the process of canonization between Sanderson and fans of

the *Cosmere*, it has actually resulted in the fans being able to wield more power. Instead of merely being able to produce fanon, the fans' collaboration with Sanderson in filling the *Arcanum* platform can now be regarded as an effort to construct a secondary *Cosmere* canon, filling in the details not covered by the officially published works. As Gray (2010) writes, "a text is always already a collaboratively created entity. . . . At the moment that audiences care about a text, it has multiple creators, and that creation is often maintained by paratextual creation and consumption" (166). By marking some of his answers as secondary canon, Sanderson acknowledges that his fans are fulfilling a vital role in this process.

Ultimately, however, the author is very clear about reserving the right to come back on his answers he gave in interviews in the past. When asked about this very thing, Sanderson answers:

> Yeah, it doesn't happen that often, but I do mention that, on occasion, that Words of Brandon are not as strong as the book continuity. . . . I don't really consider the things that I'm telling you as Words of Brandon to be canon. I consider them insight into the development process of the stories at their current state, and there are things that I will change (entry 11).

Referring to Words of Brandon, he explains that "I do take [them] into consideration, but it's not going to prevent me from writing a better book" (entry 11). This sheds light on why the author felt it was necessary to designate Words of Brandon as a secondary canon, as the fans' input is very valued but should not stand in the way of a good story. Elsewhere, Sanderson states how he is used to this interactive part of being a popular author, having grown up in a different fantasy fandom himself: "It's part of fandom for me. And I would certainly rather have this than the alternative, which is no one paying any attention or caring" (entry 12). Thus, in an effort to meet the *17th Shard* community halfway in the process of constructing the canon of the *Cosmere*, the author has opted to allow the fandom to help construct and maintain a secondary canon—the Words of Brandon—in the paratext known as the *Arcanum* platform; not quite official canon, but not fanon either, instead occupying the liminal space between the two. The following subsection details how fans, aided by the expansive nature of the archive in terms of entries as well as users, wield this power in such a way to force Sanderson to be increasingly careful with his words in interviews.

4.2.2   Acknowledgement of *Arcanum*'s canonical value

Despite Sanderson's efforts to make a clear distinction between official canon and the secondary canon that is supposedly contained in Words of Brandon, the data entries contained in appendix B demonstrate how the author still seems to express some considerable acknowledgement of the *Arcanum*'s power in the canonization process. In other words, these entries illustrate the cases in which fans exert enough power over Sanderson to successfully influence the course of the *Cosmere*'s story, albeit not by much in many cases. This way, fans play an active role in constructing the transmedial universe of the *Cosmere* and how others might perceive it. For instance, when responding to questions he would rather leave unanswered, the author makes statements such as "I'm not going to canonize it right now" (entry 18) and "I'm not gonna name that on stream; I've got it written down somewhere, but let's not canonize that yet" (entry 32). Entries 13 through 37 all contain examples of this, most of them containing answers like these in response to inquisitive questions by fans. As stated earlier, the aim of poststructural discourse analysis is to investigate the "effects of saying this instead of that" (Graham 2011, 667). Based on the author's statements regarding what he sees as canon (as discussed in the previous subsection), it would have been enough for him to respond to these questions by simply stating this information could not be divulged yet. Instead, Sanderson implies that, if he had answered, the novel information would have entered the *Cosmere*'s canon through the *Arcanum* platform.

This is actually something that happens often enough for the author to use a standard response: read and find out (abbreviated as RAFO). In entries 38 and 39 he elaborates on the usage of this standard response:

> Sometimes I don't want to answer because it's too much a spoiler. That's probably the number one reason, is I am planning perhaps—not a promise but perhaps—to address this in the books. Sometimes I don't answer because I don't want to canonize this yet. Sometimes I don't answer because I like the fandom theorizing along a direction because it acts as a nice red herring for what I'm actually planning to do (entry 39).

Again, this explanation of the RAFO highlights how Sanderson perceives given answers to be canonical, with the information either being included in future works or it not even having been considered yet; therefore, the existence of a standard response like the RAFO ac-

tually increases the value of answers that the author does give. After all, a full answer must hold considerable value, having passed the RAFO-check.

Moreover, in their effort to uncover all aspects of the magic systems behind the stories of the *Cosmere*, fans sometimes pose their questions in such a way that even receiving the RAFO response might tell them something new. Entry 37 demonstrates this, as well as Sanderson's frustration with this strategy; the entry shows the fan asking about Adonalsium, a god entity in the *Cosmere* storyworld (17th Shard 2023b), referenced throughout the various book series. Posed with two options about the entity's nature, with it supposedly being either a God Metal or a person, Sanderson stops himself from answering, instead offering the RAFO response. He elaborates that he has "been deliberately cagey." The author expresses his concerns with these types of questions:

> So you should assume that if I ever answer a thing where like they're saying Adonalsium - person and stuff like that, I have NOT canonized this and don't intend to canonize it. I try to take people's questions and deal with them and give them a good answer. But you shouldn't take it like, if they ask "When Adonalsium did this was he this?" and I answer it, be like "oh, he's canonizing the HE!" I have not really canonized other than there are plenty of people who refer to Adonalsium that way in the world (entry 37).

This fan's way of questioning demonstrates the ulterior motives the community might have with their apparently innocent inquiries. Even now, with Sanderson stopping himself before revealing too much, the community has learned new things about Adonalsium and its mysterious nature. Ultimately, as this example shows, allowing fans to ask questions in this manner forces Sanderson to relinquish some power to the community, as it leads to him having to deal with situations like this one. Without engagement like this, he would not have to worry about questions regarding Adonalsium's nature until he felt the story was ready for it—now, it seems to be a constant part of the power struggle of canonization between the author and his fans.

As the discussed entries so far have shown, the power struggle between the author and his fans is very much filtered through Sanderson himself; he holds much sway in the process of canonization, as is also implied by the respect fans show his words in interviews. The very concept of a Word of Brandon relies on the idea that, ultimately, the author decides what is and is not in the *Cosmere*. Furthermore, although the analysis thus far might

suggest Sanderson is always extremely secretive and careful in interviews, he does sometimes share interesting information with his fans. Whereas the entries discussed above demonstrated the author being careful not to share too much for fear of accidentally canonizing new information, entries 40 through 52 show him actually adding onto the existing canon based on fans' questions. At times, Sanderson even explicitly acknowledges a fan's valuable input in expanding the canon—when a fan asks about a trait for a specific character, the author answers: "I'd be happy to canonize this, but I'd be taking too much credit if I said this is what I'd thought of when writing" (entry 45). Here, the process of canonization takes on a collaborative form, with the two parties agreeing it makes sense to add to the canonical traits of the character, but placing the credit for this with the fan instead of the author. Other times, as is clearly demonstrated in entry 44, fans invite Sanderson to make up some information on the spot, settling for 'half-canon' if the author is still unsure; this way, the author still shares information, but makes sure it is recognized as what he elsewhere describes as 'Word of Brandon canon'.

Furthermore, the two final examples show moments where the author explicitly acknowledges a fan's addition to the canon. Entry 53 includes a fan who also writes pages on the *Cosmere* fan wiki, interested in the various types of alcohol in the fictional universe. Sanderson, recognizing the fan's expertise on the subject, invites the fan to advise him on terminology to make sure everything fits. After a short exchange, the author accepts what they discussed as canon and encourages the fan to write the wiki article: "So you can take that all as canon now, and you can write it." Next, entry 54 shows a fan sharing a theory and asking for verification. Sanderson likes the theory, and accepts it as canon: "You can just make that canon now and we will put that on all of the lists that that is what it is." It is important to note that, based on what the author has said elsewhere, all of this could technically be counted as 'Word of Brandon canon'. However, in all of these cases he talks about 'canon', making it so that the object of canon as perceived by the fans is constructed collaboratively, with fans being able to share theories and have them canonized on the spot. This echoes Mittell's (2013) work on fan wikis, which he argued could be used "as a tool for collaborative creativity" (41; italics removed)—what makes the case of the *Arcanum* unique, though, is that it can serve as a place of collaborative creativity between fans and author rather than merely among fans.

4.2.3   Canonization as a power struggle

The purpose of this second part of the analysis was to answer the second sub-question: *In what ways do fans exert discursive power over Brandon Sanderson in the process of canonization of Cosmere elements, taking ownership over the story and playing an active role in the creation of the Arcanum's contents?* In short, the entries contained in the archive demonstrate the constant power struggle between the author and his fans when it comes to canonizing new information. At times, Sanderson appears to insist on a clear separation between officially published works and the *Arcanum*'s contents, reducing the latter to a lower canonical tier known as 'Word of Brandon canon' and devaluing the input that fans might have on the storyworld of the *Cosmere*. However, oftentimes the author chooses to engage with fans and their theories, talking explicitly about canonizing elements in interviews and even encouraging the community to update the fan wiki with new information that is not yet published in any books. The object of 'canon' in this sense seems to be constructed as something that can be uncovered collaboratively; in this process, the *Arcanum* platform plays a significant role as it permanently records all steps made to achieve this.

Constructing the canon might be read as a process of collective intelligence (Lévy 1997), with each person in the *17th Shard* community committing their specific expertise to the cause of building out the *Cosmere*—entry 53 is a great example of this, in which the engaging fan possesses knowledge the author does not, leading to Sanderson accepting the fan's help to expand the canon on the spot. However, it is important to note that, like George Lucas in the *Star Wars* fandom, Sanderson can still be described as an 'author-God'; ultimately, he has final say on what makes it into the canon of the *Cosmere*. This is exemplified by the way in which the entire power struggle described in this section is ultimately filtered through Sanderson himself—fan's input in the gathered data entries is limited to questions, some of which do exercise power, while others do not. When a specific part of the interaction between the two parties is elaborated upon, it usually happens by Sanderson reflecting on it. However, this does not take away from the uniqueness of the *Arcanum* and how it operates as a fan curated transmedia paratext. What distinguishes Sanderson and the *17th Shard* is the way in which the author presents and relates himself to the community. Whereas the *Star Wars* fandom argued about contradicting content from a number of official authors, with the goal of perfecting the canon (Thomas 2018), the *17th Shard*'s main goal with the *Arcanum* platform seems to be to expand it. The way in which the *Arcanum* has solidified itself within the fandom as a credible source of information ensures that Sanderson has to take them seriously, being careful not to go back on his words too often to

preserve his connection with the fans. This mutual respect between author and fans, then, has led to the unique case of the *Arcanum*, a fan curated paratext that is, at least partially, considered by the original author as a part of his transmedial universe. Compared to the other discussed examples of the fan communities surrounding the *Lost* (Mittell 2009) and *Star Wars* (Thomas 2018) franchises, the *17th Shard* community further distinguishes itself with the *Arcanum* archive in that it seeks to produce new content, rather than document and summarize existing elements of the storyworld. Through this process, fans of the *Cosmere* are uniquely empowered as they can effectively help with 'uncovering' the various worlds of their favorite book series.

5 Conclusion

This thesis sought to answer the following research question: **How may the affordances of the *17th Shard*'s *Arcanum* archival platform allow for the creation of a fan curated transmedia paratext accompanying the published *Cosmere* works, and for the empowerment of fans as they exert discursive power over Brandon Sanderson?** To begin, a comprehensive analysis of the *Arcanum*'s functional and cognitive affordances showed the emergence of two active user groups on the platform: the productive editors dedicated to expanding the *Cosmere*'s knowledge base, and the consumptive readers who tap into this collective repository. The discussed cognitive affordances, more specifically the to-do list, the extensive style guide, and front page elements such as a welcome message and statistics box, emphasize the value of contributors and the platform's aspiration for legitimacy within the larger transmedial universe of the *Cosmere*. By emphasizing the archive's expansive nature as well as the importance of the role of editors—a role any fan may choose to embody— the *Arcanum* platform, through its affordances, sets itself up as a credible source of *Cosmere* information, curated by members of the *17th Shard* fan community. Fitting with existing theories of (fan made) paratexts (Gennette 1997; Stanitzek 2005; Gray 2010), the *Arcanum* positions itself as part of the *Cosmere* storyworld, going beyond the published works and providing deeper knowledge to fans. However, as a fan curated paratext within the transmedial universe of the *Cosmere*, it stands in contrast with previous theories of transmedia storytelling (Jenkins 2006; Mittell 2015; Thon 2015; Hills 2018), in which fan made content is not considered as part of transmedial universes, instead labelling it as 'fanon'.

To demonstrate the actual power fans wield in the processes of canonization in the *Cosmere*, and to show that the archive's contents are actually curated by fans, thus expanding the concept of transmedia storytelling as we know it, a poststructural discourse analysis was conducted, using archival entries in which the object of canon was discussed. The content of these entries demonstrates a unique, ongoing power struggle between Sanderson and his fans, with the author mainly attempting to keep his official works and the so-called 'Word of Brandon canon' separated. Yet, the platform's role in capturing these interactions emphasizes the collaborative construction of the *Cosmere*'s canon, indicative of collective intelligence principles. The fan community's engagement—for instance in entry 53— underscores how individual expertise may even contribute to the *Cosmere*'s evolution. It must be noted, though, that Sanderson's status as an 'author-God' remains undeniable, as he retains the ultimate authority over what enters the *Cosmere*'s canon; after all, all WoBs

are based on his words and how he handles fans' questions. However, the *Arcanum*, as a transmedia paratext, encapsulates the author's willingness to engage with fans, forming a unique dynamic between the two parties. The archive, then, serves as a reflection of the mutual respect between Sanderson and the *17th Shard*, which is key in allowing a process such as the one described here to happen. The power struggle between the two parties demonstrates the power fans hold over Sanderson with the *Arcanum* platform, confirming that fans do indeed influence the platform's contents. Again, this does not fit with previous transmedia theories, which largely focused on officially published works—the *Arcanum* illustrates the increasingly active role fan communities play through digital technologies.

Contrasting with examples of other fandoms, the *17th Shard* community uniquely sets itself apart by actively aiming to produce new content, expanding the existing boundaries of the transmedial universe of the *Cosmere* rather than simply documenting existing elements. This creative empowerment of fans, alongside the platform's establishment as a credible transmedia paratext, showcases the *Arcanum* platform's distinctiveness. Through this empowerment, fans gain agency in the 'uncovering' of the intricate worlds that lie within their favorite book series. In essence, the *Arcanum* archival platform stands as a remarkable manifestation of fan-author interaction, embodying a fan curated transmedia paratext that intertwines with the larger *Cosmere* narrative. This dynamic space, where authorial authority and fan agency coalesce, encapsulates the shifting landscape of transmedia engagement. As the *Cosmere* continues to expand, the *Arcanum*'s role as a participatory paratext ensures that the worlds described in the narrative are enriched by the shared efforts of both Brandon Sanderson and his dedicated fan community.

The performed methods—a discursive interface analysis and a poststructural discourse analysis—allowed for a thorough analysis of the *Arcanum* platform itself as well as how people seem to be using it. More specifically, a discourse analysis helped uncover the ongoing power struggle between two parties, highlighting points of both contention and agreement. However, this thesis' methodology was not without its limitations; despite allowing for conclusions to be drawn about how people may use a platform or may interact with one another, both methods lack the capacity to make actual claims about people's feelings and intentions. Especially in the context of fan dynamics, this might be seen as a major shortcoming. Therefore, for future research on Sanderson's *Cosmere* and the *17th Shard* fan community, a good recommendation would be to perform some type of ethnographic research in which the researcher emerges themselves in the community, speaking to fans of the *Cosmere* and how they might perceive the power they wield in the process of canoniza-

tion. As stated before, much of the data gathered for this thesis was filtered through Sanderson, as this is the inherent nature of Words of Brandon—ethnographic research may offer a deeper understanding of fans' side of the described power struggle.

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Appendices

As stated in the methodology section of this thesis, these appendices contain an overview of all *Arcanum* entries deemed relevant to the process of constructing the canon of the *Cosmere*. All entries are from after November 8, 2017, describe an interaction between Sanderson and a fan, and pertain to the *Cosmere* rather than to any other works of the author. The order of the entries corresponds to the order in which they are discussed throughout the analysis in this thesis.

A Entries demonstrating canonization through published works

#1	https://wob.coppermind.net/events/175/#e8361

Questioner

Out of the *Cosmere*, you have your whole plan, I'm assuming you have in your brain or written down... When do you finalize, like, whenever you're writing. Is it all finalized then?

Brandon Sanderson

...The books become the canon. Even the wiki is not canon. Until I write it into the books, it's not canon. For instance, you can go find Oaths of various orders of Knights Radiant in there, but I don't canonize those until I write the books, because I usually tweak some of the words. By the way, sometimes people ask me "Can you write an Oath of a Knights Radiant that we haven't seen yet?" in a book, and I always say no. Number one, like, if at the release party I got asked that, like, 8 times; we'd be out of Oaths by now. That's the same reason why I won't tell you the names of Shards that I haven't canonized, or their intents, or things like that. Until I get to it in the books, it's not canon. Because I need that flexibility going forward as I'm putting the whole thing together, to get all the puzzle pieces to fit.

Oathbringer Houston signing (Nov. 18, 2017)

#2	https://wob.coppermind.net/events/324/#e9294

Questioner

So Hoid has a Cryptic.

Brandon Sanderson

It is heavily implied that Hoid is trying to get this Cryptic to--

Questioner

And Soulcasting in some sense or another transports someone into Shadesmar. So does he no longer need a perpendicularity?

Brandon Sanderson

So, Hoid has been breaking certain rules along those lines for a long while. I guess he's not breaking any actual rules... He has found, by *Stormlight*, to do things in ways that others are not using. How about that?

Questioner

That is excellent.

Brandon Sanderson

He is looking forward to having a spren bond that will make things like this easier...

And, audio recorder, that one is not quite canon yet. The one about Hoid.

Emerald City Comic Con 2018 (March 1, 2018)

#3	https://wob.coppermind.net/events/331/#e9425

Questioner

In [*Shadows for Silence in the Forests of Hell*], when silver turns to dust, is that a Spiritual transformation or a chemical reaction?

Brandon Sanderson

Both, as I have it right now. That one's not canon, but I say not canon because I haven't written it into the books yet and I still have another book to write, there. But I would say both right now.

Orem signing (March 10, 2018)

#4	https://wob.coppermind.net/events/331/#e9430

ElephantEarwax

Are there any Hemalurgic bind points in the mouth or digestive tract?

Brandon Sanderson

Eh. *laughs* Why do you want to know this?

ElephantEarwax

...We're trying to make sure we're doing it right.

Brandon Sanderson

The Hemalurgic table will be released later this year. I have not planned any bind points inside the mouth. But the Hemalurgic table that we will release will comprise the knowledge of the people in-world at a specific point, and it's entirely possible that new bind points could be discovered.

ElephantEarwax

At what point will they be known? Like, when, in-world?

Brandon Sanderson

When will we know what's smaller than a quark and how gravity interacts with subatomic particles?

ElephantEarwax

No, I mean what time in-world, like what knowledge era, for the chart.

Brandon Sanderson

Oh, okay, I get what you are saying. I was answering the wrong question. What technology era. I believe we are setting the table-- *Wax and Wayne* era, is what I told Isaac. But it's weird because it's going in the third *Mistborn* [leatherbound]. But I think our intent is it's what they know by that era.

ElephantEarwax

So it's what Spook found out?

Brandon Sanderson

Yes, basically it's what Spook found out. But you can't count that quite as canon until it comes out, because Isaac's going to be in charge of setting that date.

Footnote: Brandon has since said that he doesn't believe the chart itself was actually designed by Spook and Kel.

Orem signing (March 10, 2018)

#5	https://wob.coppermind.net/events/358/#e10631

Stormlightning

Hoid. Was his hair white from birth?

Brandon Sanderson

Hoid's hair, in the current incarnation, was not white from birth. But that's not canon until I write it. So, his hair was not white in the very first story I wrote about him, but it was white by Dragonsteel, so who knows what I'll do when I really get back to that. But, right now I have it not being natural.

Let's go with, canon answer for Hoid, 'not natural white hair.' But that's got the asterisk of "it's possible I could change that when I actually write it." Who knows what I'll do in 15 years. I think I'm going to have enough trouble making sure all the things that I've put in the books about him are all--stay true. I don't want to pull a Lucas and have the four things we've actually talked about not actually happen in the prequels, but...I'm not going to hold myself to all the Words of Brandon, particularly when I write Dragonsteel.

FanX 2018 (Sept. 6, 2018)

#6	https://wob.coppermind.net/events/482/#e15343

hutonahill

Does a coppercloud affect Lashings?

Brandon Sanderson

As I have designed it right now no, but it is an interaction that I haven't yet had to canonize.

YouTube Spoiler Stream 3 (Dec. 16, 2021)

#7	https://wob.coppermind.net/events/360/#e10895

Questioner

Would a person holding a large amount of Breaths be less influenced by emotional Allomancy?

Brandon Sanderson

Yes. That's book-signing canon on that one, if you understand that phrase.

Legion Release Party (Sept. 19, 2018)

#8	https://wob.coppermind.net/events/360/#e10813

Steeldancer

Taln, did he give in to the torture around the events of *Way of Kings*?

Brandon Sanderson

I'm going to have to look at the...So he should have given in to events in the current version of the book right before...Let's just say around *Way of Kings*. I'm not going to canonize that, though. In the version of *Way of Kings* that I wrote in 2002, he'd been around for a few years before he showed up in the narrative. And in the current outline, I don't have that be the case, but I haven't written his book yet. So for canon, but it's a Word of Brandon canon, I'm going to say, he's only been around for a couple of months before he shows up at the city.

Legion Release Party (Sept. 19, 2018)

#9	https://wob.coppermind.net/events/360/#e10870

ShadowBlaze

If a gold Ferring got electrocuted, would he get paralyzed and/or heal and [react normally]?

Brandon Sanderson

So he gets electrocuted. You're asking does Cosmere healing prevent you from being stunned by a taser?

Huh, what a good question. I'm going to say, and I could contradict this, so this is Word of Brandon canon until I contradict it, you could still stun them with electrical stimulation of muscles, because it's not doing any harm

and it's just how muscles normally work. So I think that's a good workaround.

Legion Release Party (Sept. 19, 2018)

#10	https://wob.coppermind.net/events/367/#e11748

Questioner

Is there a group on Taldain that's tied to Autonomy? Directly, like working for Autonomy? I'm after sand mages versus...

Brandon Sanderson

I would say yes. Though there is some wiggle room in that question, I would say yes. I wouldn't canonize it. I would call it Word of Brandon canonized. Until it appears in the books, it's not super canon.

Skyward release party (Nov. 6, 2018)

#11	https://wob.coppermind.net/events/452/#e14543

Adam Horne

Do you reserve the right when you answer one of these questions, to change your mind later?

Brandon Sanderson

Yeah, it doesn't happen that often, but I do mention that, on occasion, that Words of Brandon are not as strong as the book continuity. You have to understand when I'm answering these things, I'm answering as I feel right now, and there are times where the book demands rewrites to not-yet-canon things in the books. Occasionally it requires rewrites to small canon things. Like when we decided, "When Brandon wrote *Way of Kings*, he used too many metaphors that they just wouldn't use." And we went ahead and tweaked some of those. That's a thing we don't like to do very often, but there are certain times where the book can just genuinely be improved by changing and tweaking a few things. We do sometimes take those steps when we're doing an updated version for the leatherbound or something like that.

But I don't really consider the things that I'm telling you as Words of Brandon to be canon. I consider them insight into the development process of the stories at their current state, and there are things that I will change. This just happens when you're writing a book, where you're like, "Wow, that thing I was planning; that was a bad idea." I can either keep consistent with what I've said and what I was planning and make a worse book, or I can make a stronger book. I try to consider the books as they're written to be canon, revising at that point. Except for ways I have tricked you and things like that (I try to avoid that), but I do not take much into consideration what I've said. I do take it into consideration, but it's not going to prevent me from writing a better book, how about that.

YouTube Spoiler Stream 1 (Dec. 17, 2020)

#12	https://wob.coppermind.net/events/460/#e14617

FeatherWriter

Especially with the livestreams this year, you get lots of questions from the fandom. How do you feel about the culture around Words of Brandon? Do you ever worry that the fandom takes them too seriously?

Brandon Sanderson

Well, yes, I do worry. I try to explain a Word of Brandon is not written in stone, and I think that people know this by now. A Word of Brandon is how I am planning to do it, but it's not canon until it's in the books. And things get changed as books are worked on and better ideas come around.

The thing is, I grew up in the Wheel of Time fandom. I am used to this sort of thing. I'm accustomed to it. It doesn't frighten me. I'm just used to dealing with it. It's part of fandom to me. And I would certainly rather have

this than the alternative, which is no one paying any attention or caring. The opposite is far, far worse. But I do worry that sometimes people take them a little too seriously. Mostly the ones that I give off the cuff while I'm doing a live signing session, like when I'm at a book signing trying to write peoples names and phrases in their books while they're asking me questions. And I flub those way more often than I flub ones on a livestream where I'm not having to track people's names and things like that. But I will often answer the question I think people are asking, rather than the question they actually ask, because something's on my mind I've been thinking about, and they'll ask a question. And then I'll be like, "Oh yeah; bla bla bla bla bla bla bla." And they're like, "That's not what I asked..."And I'm like, "Oh. Sorry."

Shardcast Interview (Jan. 23, 2021)

B Entries demonstrating acknowledgement of *Arcanum*'s canonical value

#13	https://wob.coppermind.net/events/171/#e8323

Questioner

Could a kandra imitating a human have a child with the human?

Brandon Sanderson

So, I kinda go back and forth on this. So-- 'Cause I think about it, then I tweak the magic, and I think "no this isn't possible," and then I go back, and I'm like, "but..." So it kinda comes down to a lot of things, such as, would I want a DNA test to be able to determine if a kandra is real or not. And I haven't canonized that yet, so your answer is, Read And Find Out, once I decide. I go back and forth on that one so much.

Oathbringer release party (Nov. 13, 2017)

#14	https://wob.coppermind.net/events/171/#e8131

Questioner

Would you be able to write the... Second Ideal of the Truthwatchers?

Brandon Sanderson

...It's a RAFO. There's a lot of stuff about the Truthwatchers in [Oathbringer], that's gonna make it complicated to do that, okay? ...Yeah, it's really complicated, and those are things I'm not gonna probably canonize for another couple of books, for reasons that will be very clear by the end of this book.

Oathbringer release party (Nov. 13, 2017)

#15	https://wob.coppermind.net/events/171/#e8251

FeatherWriter

Can you tell me what the Truthwatcher spren are called, like do they have a name? I know it's not in Oathbringer.

Brandon Sanderson

Yeah, I'm not gonna canonize that yet. There're things I am still thinking about.

Footnote: In Rhythm of War they are given the name of mistspren.

Oathbringer release party (Nov. 13, 2017)

#16	https://wob.coppermind.net/events/172/#e8431

Questioner

Someone told me that after the signing last night you said that Soulcast blood has DNA... The question is who?

Brandon Sanderson

That's a good question. That's a RAFO. So, here's... the premises I'm working on. Soulcast blood can be used for transfusion, alright? I'm not saying much more than that. At least I'm not canonizing much more than that right now. And as my understanding, it has blood type, it has-- things. When someone asked me tonight "does that mean it's human blood?" Well, that depends on the definition.

Footnote: The questioner is likely referring to these two exchanges.

Oathbringer San Diego signing (Nov. 14, 2017)

#17	https://wob.coppermind.net/events/173/#e8335

Weltall

Is there anything you'd be willing to tell us about the third empire Khriss mentioned in Arcanum Unbounded?

Brandon Sanderson

Umm, yeah, I have not decided on some canon answers for that yet, I've debated back and forth on what I'm going to do with it so I just won't tell you yet.

Oathbringer San Francisco signing (Nov. 15, 2017)

#18	https://wob.coppermind.net/events/176/#e8483

Questioner

What's this sword's *points at replica of Jezrien's Honorblade* name? Do you have-- have you named Szeth's blade?

Brandon Sanderson

Various people have named the swords various things. I just-- I'm not going to canonize it right now, but it's had many names over the years...

Questioner

Can you give me one of them?

Brandon Sanderson

...I mean-- just "the Assassin's Blade."

Oathbringer Chicago signing (Nov. 21, 2017)

#19	https://wob.coppermind.net/events/176/#e8500

Questioner

I actually wanted to get a tattoo of the Truthwatcher symbol. Are there any-- are there narrative reasons you would go against that?

Brandon Sanderson

Uhh, no.

Questioner

Are they-- would they be an order that's about using knowledge to help people?

Brandon Sanderson

Yes.

Questioner

Could I get an Ideal if possible?

Brandon Sanderson

Of them? I can't do 'em because I don't want to canonize them yet, I have to do that when I actually write the books.

Questioner

But it is broadly speaking knowledge and help?

Brandon Sanderson

Yes.

Oathbringer Chicago signing (Nov. 21, 2017)

#20	https://wob.coppermind.net/events/324/#e9340

Questioner

Dalinar can learn languages with the people he contacts. Venli knows all the languages. Could he learn all the languages? And how long would that last?

Brandon Sanderson

His Connection is going to work-- He has to kind of be active about it, so it needs to be-- let me see if I can get the specific words right...

The mechanics I have in the notes is he has to touch someone and will learn to speak the language of their native country, that they spoke as a young person. He's making a direct Connection to that specific person and their way of speaking. So if you have learned another language and Dalinar shakes your hand and activates his Connection ability, he will Connect not to that language you've learned, but to your native language.

Questioner

How long does it last?

Brandon Sanderson

I have it lasting-- it does need to be renewed, but I have it lasting basically as long as-- days not months. But I didn't actually put a define on it, so I'm going to say that's not canon. I'm not canonizing that. But I didn't want him to have to keep renewing it every couple of hours. But he would have to do it again if he left and came back.

Emerald City Comic Con 2018 (March 1, 2018)

#21	https://wob.coppermind.net/events/324/#e9307

Questioner

Did humans come to Roshar through Shadesmar?

Brandon Sanderson

It is technology or magic closer to how the Oathgates work. But it was like that. It's not canon but right now that's what I have. It's not canon because there are certain things I have to work out before that can work...

By the way I'll just say to the tape recording that I haven't canonized, like for instance if they traveled to Shadesmar to get to Shinovar from Ashyn. Right now I have that not being via Shadesmar, but the mechanics of that might not work out, and I might have to default to Shadesmar. So there's certain things, you'll see, where I say, "This isn't the canon answer, it's where I have things right now."

Overlord Jebus

So Urithiru might end up being a spaceship after all.

Brandon Sanderson

It's not that. Right now I have them using something closer to Oathgating, but it opens up a huge can of worms, when I'm not requiring direct-- When I'm sending through Spiritual Realm it opens up cans of worms, and I have to just make sure the mechanics on that are tight before I do it.

Emerald City Comic Con 2018 (March 1, 2018)

#22	https://wob.coppermind.net/events/331/#e9440

Questioner

I've been going back over *Mistborn* recently, and one thing really stuck out. "I write these words in steel, for anything not set in metal cannot be trusted." I get how Kwaan could've figured out that Ruin was messing around with records, but how could he possibly have known metal was immune?

Brandon Sanderson

That's not as hard to figure out as you think it might be. *laughter* I'm going to RAFO that. Partially because it'll dig into that story that I just don't want to canonize right now. I don't think I'm going to write it. People ask me if I'm going to write it, and I really don't think I'm going to. *But* some of the elements of that are important to things that are coming up, so I don't know. I'm going to RAFO that for now. It's not as hard to figure out as you would think.

Orem signing (March 10, 2018)

#23	https://wob.coppermind.net/events/332/#e9488

Questioner

Could a higher spren manifest on a world other than Roshar in their spren form, not as a Blade?

Brandon Sanderson

Well, they would have to get off first.

Questioner

That doesn't answer my question!

Brandon Sanderson

A lot of these questions I have to be careful because they're presupposing things as foundational assumptions. A lot of time people-- The really sneaky ones will ask me these questions knowing if I answer the question, that there are three steps back assumptions that I am then canonizing, so I'm just going to RAFO that one, because I'm giving you the answer, "They would to have to get off first."

JordanCon 2018 (April 21, 2018)

#24	https://wob.coppermind.net/events/355/#e10462

Questioner

Could you tell us the name of one of the Shards we have not yet seen?

Brandon Sanderson

I cannot. I'm sorry. I get asked that enough that they'd all be done. If I gave you one, I get asked at the next con, and all of them would be gone. Plus, I sometimes tweak them before I canonize them. The actual word I'm going to use. The intent usually stays the same but I tweak which word I'm going to use.

Questioner

I meant the actual name. Like, how Honor was Tanavast.

Brandon Sanderson

No...I won't do that either. But I will give you a RAFO card!

Idaho Falls signing (July 21, 2018)

#25	https://wob.coppermind.net/events/402/#e13436

Questioner

I gotta ask, are you going to give us any sort of backstory prior to *Dragonsteel* coming out? Of Hoid?

Brandon Sanderson

You will get little snippets here and there but really it's when you get his story that you are going to get the fully story of Adonalsium shattering. I have to leave it at snippets until then, because anything I give you is as a snip-

pet now is canonizing something that I'm going to write later on. So I have to leave it at the stuff I know is going to be in there.

Starsight Release Party (Nov. 26, 2019)

#26	https://wob.coppermind.net/events/450/#e14429

Questioner

Are there still six different types of Aethers in current canon? Or has that changed?

Brandon Sanderson

They have expanded. I'm using the Aethers behind the scenes for a lot of space age things. And because I'm doing that, I am adding in a few more Aethers. There's going to be some limits on this. I'm tweaking which Aethers I'm actually making, 'cause some of them didn't work as well as other ones.

There will end up being more, but I won't canonize the number until I have the Aether book ready to release.

Waterstones RoW Release Event (Nov. 18, 2020)

#27	https://wob.coppermind.net/events/454/#e14584

Gary

I was wondering if Dawnshards were created at the same time that Adonalsium was.

Brandon Sanderson

Dawnshards, I'll have to RAFO that, mostly because my timeline for all the Yolen stuff, with the Adonalsium stuff, is going to depend on writing Dragonsteel. And right now, I intend those to be post-Adonalsium but pre-Shattering. But I can't canonize that until I've actually written that mythology and lore. Because the original intent of the Dawnshards, when you read Dragonsteel Prime (which we'll release with the Words of Radiance leatherbound), you will find two Dawnshards in there. And their original intent has changed a great deal as I've canonized things and really, really dug into building the cosmere. And you'll see what my kind of original intent for those was. (Or at least I can talk about it.) And it's changed since then. The way that they were in that book (and have remained so far) is that they are younger than Adonalsium.

Dragonmount Zoom Call (Dec. 10, 2020)

#28	https://wob.coppermind.net/events/460/#e14639

Chaos

In *Oathbringer,* Rayse refers to a group called the "Tisark" that are supposed to secure the Oathgate. What does that term refer to? I thought they were gonna be one of the types of Fused, and so I was just surprised that that was not the case.

Brandon Sanderson

I will canonize that later. It very well may be one of the types of Fused, we'll see... theorize. Go ahead. It doesn't have the right suffix.

Shardcast Interview (Jan. 23, 2021)

#29	https://wob.coppermind.net/events/472/#e14867

Pagerunner

I would like my [cosmere constellations] map to have one more planet on it than everybody else's maps.

Brandon Sanderson

That's a smart idea. I'm on board for that.

adds a new planet and writes "here there be Aethers!"

Pagerunner

But no name on it? Just that there there be Aethers?

Brandon Sanderson

Yeah, I can't canonize the name yet until I write the planet, right?

JordanCon 2021 (July 16, 2021)

#30	https://wob.coppermind.net/events/474/#e15083

SapphireBombay

Is Jasnah left-handed? If so, did that play a role in her perceptions of how women are treated on Roshar?

Brandon Sanderson

Left-handed women become very ambidextrous, kind of are forced to use their non-dominant hand, on Roshar. I will have to give it some thought whether Jasnah was originally left-handed. It seems like it would totally fit her.

And I don't think I've mentioned any lefties; I actually get emails, now and then, from people being like, "Hey, can we know who's a lefty in the Cosmere?" I think that it is something on my radar, to canonize some lefties, but I'm not going to do that now.

YouTube Livestream 35 (Sept. 9, 2021)

#31	https://wob.coppermind.net/events/474/#e15075

Ironeyes52

What noble houses were Kel and Marsh born into? What's their surname?

Brandon Sanderson

I can't canonize that, yet. I've got it somewhere. Let's RAFO that, for now. That's the sort of thing that I need to run past continuity, make sure that I haven't contradicted it in later books. We should release that, though. It does make sense that people would want to know.

YouTube Livestream 35 (Sept. 9, 2021)

#32	https://wob.coppermind.net/events/478/#e15108

Questioner

After the first Everstorm, what form did the parshmen gain?

Brandon Sanderson

You want me to name that form? I'm not gonna name that on stream; I've got it written down somewhere, but let's not canonize that yet, so that's a RAFO. It's a good question. It goes on that list of things that I should canonize, like what Dalinar's name means, and some of these other things that are on the list of "would be really nice if the wikis could actually have a word for this." We'll put that on Karen's list to make sure she grabs out of my notes and canonize.

YouTube Live Fan Mail Opening 1 (Oct. 30, 2021)

#33	https://wob.coppermind.net/events/482/#e15299

Kingsdaughter613

Primary question: Peter recently said something about atium in Era 1 actually being an atium-electrum alloy, which is called nalatium. Is this accurate?

Brandon Sanderson

This is accurate, yes.

You could, by the way, just continue to call it atium. That's what they think atium is in-world. It's very slightly tainted.

Kingsdaughter613

Secondary questions: If the above is yes, did Kelsier get malatium by separating the atium and gold from the silver in nalatium? If so, do atium and gold have similar melting points?

Brandon Sanderson

That's more of a RAFO in that I'm not sure I want to canonize any of that right now.

Footnote: Peter's comment did not give the alloy a name, Adam misread a sentence where the questioner mentioned their own nickname for it.

YouTube Spoiler Stream 3 (Dec. 16, 2021)

#34	https://wob.coppermind.net/events/482/#e15332

-stormlightning-

What happens if you mix Stormlight with a different Light's inverse (like anti-Voidlight)? Would they repel each other because one is a natural Light and one is an anti-Light, or would would just behave like two different Lights? Theoretically, would there be a emulsifier for Light and anti-Light combos?

Brandon Sanderson

Right, we'll RAFO for now. It's a good question, but it's not the sort of mechanics I want to be canonizing in a livestream.

YouTube Spoiler Stream 3 (Dec. 16, 2021)

#35	https://wob.coppermind.net/events/490/#e15451

The Fife

How many planets are in the system of Lumar, and could you give us the name of the system?

Brandon Sanderson

RAFO and no. We need this to go into the star chart, and Isaac to determine what the system looks like, and we need to place it according to my thoughts on how it relates to the aether system. These are not things we can canonize yet. Glad that you're asking these questions, you will get canon answers eventually. But this is a RAFO in a "We are still making sure to figure this out."

Isaac Stewart

Lot of moving pieces there. Every time there's a new planet or new system, it has to fit canonically within everything else.

Brandon Sanderson

And I just threw three of them at Isaac.

Isaac Stewart

We'll get it figured out.

Secret Project #1 Reveal and Livestream (March 8, 2022)

#36	https://wob.coppermind.net/events/515/#e16141

Lotus the Blooming

If you looked at a spore under a microscope, what would it look like? Would it be like an Earth's fungus spore? Or would they look totally different?

Brandon Sanderson

I have imagined, depending on the spore, them being different. We'll go with this as a non-canon answer right

now. But I've imagined verdant looking a lot like a fungal spore that you would see. Some of the weird bacteria shapes and virus shapes, but larger (obviously) than that. But others, I imagine looking like sand, like pieces of sand. And yet others being more, like, perfect little sphere beads. Like, the Midnight Essence ones, just little tiny perfect dots, and things like that. So it really depends on the spore. They all, I think, will be different.

Tress Spoiler Stream (March 31, 2023)

#37	https://wob.coppermind.net/events/509/#e16012

Joseph Sorenson

Is Adonalsium a God Metal and not a person?

Brandon Sanderson

RAFO! Lot of people... I have been deliberately cagey. So you should assume that if I ever answer a thing where like they're saying Adonalsium - person and stuff like that, I have NOT canonized this and don't intend to canonize it. I try to take people's questions and deal with them and give them a good answer. But you shouldn't take it like, if they ask "When Adonalsium did this was he this?" and I answer it, be like "oh, he's canonizing the HE!" I have not really canonized other than there are plenty of people who refer to Adonalsium that way in the world.

YouTube Spoiler Stream 5 (Dec. 2, 2022)

#38	https://wob.coppermind.net/events/332/#e9611

Brandon Sanderson

I will be very liberal with the RAFOs. Just because getting pinned down on things like this-- I always say, I like to answer questions. I like to give you guys the secrets you want to know. But at the same time, I'm a showman. And where I really want it to come out is in the stories. And so there are a lot of things I'm holding.

For those who don't know, RAFO could mean "This is a secret I want to hold for dramatic purposes in the stories." It could mean "I enjoy the fact that the community is discussing this even though the commonly assumed answer is the right answer. I don't want to canonize something 'cause I don't want to kill the looney theories. Because people who love their looney theories really hold on to them tightly for a long time." It could just mean, "You know what, I haven't thought of that," or "I know I wrote it down somewhere, and I don't want to say it right now because I'll contradict myself later."

JordanCon 2018 (April 21, 2018)

#39	https://wob.coppermind.net/events/482/#e15282

Adam Horne

Can you please explain what RAFO means?

Brandon Sanderson

RAFO, yes! For those you don't know, I inherited from Robert Jordan a phrase that he used with fans when they asked a question that he didn't want to answer. It means read and find out. He would not answer for a multitude of reasons. Sometimes it's too much a spoiler. Sometimes he... Well, I'll just answer for myself, since I am not Robert Jordan. Sometimes I don't want to answer because it's too much a spoiler. That's probably the number one reason, is I am planning perhaps—not a promise but perhaps—to address this in the books. Sometimes I don't answer because I don't want to canonize this yet. Sometimes I don't answer because I like the fandom theorizing along a direction because it acts as a nice red herring for what I'm actually planning to do. I will do all of these things, and sometimes it will just be I don't feel like answering that right now.

When I picked up the Wheel of Time and I went to Harriet and Robert Jordans' house for the first time in December of 2007, she handed me some things. One was of course the big pile of the ending of the Wheel of Time.

This is what Robert Jordan had written plus all of his notes for the last book—which was about 200 pages worth of material. Then she also gave me a couple of things. One was one of his pens, which I signed most books on when I was on tour for those books was the pen that she had given me, obviously with ink cartridges that we refilled frequently, but one of his pens—his favorite kind of pen. Then she also handed me a little charm bracelet that said RAFO that a fan had given to Robert Jordan, and she said, "This is yours now," kind of bequeathing the RAFO to me.

Which is kind of funny, that it was bequeathed to me as a physical object, almost. Basically, the ability to be in control of how much information was displayed and basically this was her saying, "The fandom—it's your job now kid to deal with this." I still have the RAFO charm bracelet, my bequeathed RAFO. I started using it judiciously when fans would ask questions and it just started to become a thing that I did with my own fandom as well because it's a very useful tool.

So there you are. I'll have to put that in a shrine and bequeath it to someone else before I pass away and be like, "THE RAFO IS YOURS NOW!"

Footnote: Brandon has previously referred to the RAFO item as a bookmark rather than a charm bracelet: https://wob.coppermind.net/events/243/#e6145

YouTube Spoiler Stream 3 (Dec. 16, 2021)

#40	https://wob.coppermind.net/events/175/#e8400

Pagerunner

Were there always slaveform parshmen between Desolations, or did that only happen after the False Desolation?

Brandon Sanderson

That, I believe only happened after the False Desolation. I have gone back and forth on that, but I think I can canonize it there. You do have to check with Peter. We had a big conversation about this a few years ago. But I'm pretty sure slaveform is a creation of the Last Desolation.

Pagerunner

Of the Last? Or the False one? ...Because, in the epigraphs, they're talking about how that one Unmade was getting in on them--

Brandon Sanderson

Yeah. Oh, the False? No no no...

Pagerunner

So, it was done in the Last Desolation, but it was undone somewhat in the False Desolation, and that's what we saw in the...?

Brandon Sanderson

Uh, no no no-- yeah, it is False. It is False Desolation.

Peter Ahlstrom

Slaveform happened at the False Desolation.

Oathbringer Houston signing (Nov. 18, 2017)

#41	https://wob.coppermind.net/events/314/#e8933

Chaos

Is Uli Da a Sho Del?

Brandon Sanderson

Yeah.

Chaos

Can we post that?

Brandon Sanderson

Yeah you can go ahead and post that. That's fine.

Chaos

I figured that from the...

Brandon Sanderson

Right, the naming convention makes it really obvious.

Chaos

But that's not posted on the *Dragonsteel* sample so...

Brandon Sanderson

Right. But that's canon. It's pretty obvious to me... And so it's fine with me canonizing it. I mean, I've been coy with it for years. But when I say there are Shards that aren't human. There are three races on Yolen... Adding the math together is going to get you a pretty obvious answer.

Salt Lake City signing (Dec. 16, 2017)

#42	https://wob.coppermind.net/events/324/#e9302

Overlord Jebus

Has Eshonai left for the Beyond?

Brandon Sanderson

Yes. I'll canonize this. I'm sorry.

Overlord Jebus

sounds of horror and shock Noooo, nooooo, RAFO it!

Brandon Sanderson

You wanted-- That was a RAFO-bait but, so I never intended that-- If you want to leave this one out there-- But I never intended Timbre to be Eshonai's soul. When people said that in the beta, I'm like, "Oh, I guess you could see that, but I mean that's not how spren work, right?"

Overlord Jebus

I was going to say, so you're saying Timbre is not Eshonai's soul.

Brandon Sanderson

No. I never even thought they would make that connection. Because we saw Timbre in the previous book... I mean, I don't want to kill people's fan theories. But that one kind of blindsided me in the beta. I'm like, "Well I guess we'll go ahead and let people think that but no." No.

You can leave that one off if you want to tease people and things. Some people really want to believe that.

Overlord Jebus

I made a bet that Eshonai was not only still be alive after *Words of Radiance,* but would also become Radiant. And then the bet was if not I had to eat a shoe.

Brandon Sanderson

Oh no!

Overlord Jebus

So I've been trying to get out of it for like--

Brandon Sanderson

Well you could eat a gummy shoe or something like that...

But no, I didn't intend this. No. There are-- Yeah.

Emerald City Comic Con 2018 (March 1, 2018)

#43	**https://wob.coppermind.net/events/324/#e9343**

Questioner

The Sharders have asked if I can find out if the Ars Arcanum for *Elantris* written at any specific time. Like, was it during the events of *Elantris*?

Brandon Sanderson

The Ars Arcanum is around the context of then, yes. It should be around the events of the first book. I would have to look at it and double check that. But you can take that as canon unless I look at it and find--

Emerald City Comic Con 2018 (March 1, 2018)

#44	**https://wob.coppermind.net/events/332/#e9553**

Argent

Do Feruchemical metalminds experience physical change such as wear and tear, due to just being used as Feruchemical metalminds

Brandon Sanderson

Never thought of it.

Argent

Do you want to make up canon?

Brandon Sanderson

Sure...

Argent

Half-canon?

Brandon Sanderson

Let's say half-canon. Wear and tear being used as metalminds, not counting clasping them on and things like that. Simply tapping or taking out? I would say no, but I would really have to think about that. Are we losing any particles to the transfer, the change? I don't think you are, but I don't know. I'd have to really dig into the physics of that. I had not even considered of that. There are ramifications of things-- So I'm going to say no, half-canon.

JordanCon 2018 (April 22, 2018)

#45	**https://wob.coppermind.net/events/315/#e10420**

shookron

Bluefingers is left-handed

Saw the "what inconveniences do left handed people have?"

It seems left-handers get ink all over their hands when writing....or he could be a righty and they write right to left

Not much of a revelation, but wanted to share it.

Brandon Sanderson

I feel the pain of lefties, though I am not one myself. Every time I see them writing, I think of how inconvenient that must be.

I'd be happy to canonize this, but I'd be taking too much credit if I said this is what I'd thought of when writing. I

had simply imagined that he wrote a lot, and was not always as careful about cleaning off his hands as he should have been.

General Reddit 2018 (July 20, 2018)

#46	https://wob.coppermind.net/events/358/#e11123

Questioner

Is there a specific ear that Vin's earring goes in?

Brandon Sanderson

Yes, and we've canonized that, but I can't remember which one it is. If you look online, we have posted it to the fans, and they've put it in the wiki.

Footnote: Peter has since canonized that Vin's earring is in her left ear. See this entry.

FanX 2018 (Sept. 8, 2018)

#47	https://wob.coppermind.net/events/367/#e11591

Questioner

You see, in a few places, Shards that can read people's minds, or send thoughts to people's minds. What, in other settings, would be called telepathy. Do we have, in any Shardworlds, a magic system where ordinary people have telepathy?

Brandon Sanderson

I've actually designed one that I think is interesting, whether I will make that work or not, I'm not sure. But there is a very interesting world, one that i have right now in the Cosmere, that we will see. I try not to canonize these things till I actually write the story. As happened with Silence Divine, where people have been for six years, "When are you going to write this story?" Because I wrote one chapter of it.

But yes, I do have something that works that way.

Skyward release party (Nov. 6, 2018)

#48	https://wob.coppermind.net/events/367/#e11674

Questioner

Would Hoid be able to harm a Herald or a Cognitive Shadow?

Brandon Sanderson

Um, so, he is curious about this too. I don't know if I should canonize this. Let's say: odds are, no. Cosmere scholars would guess no.

Skyward release party (Nov. 6, 2018)

#49	https://wob.coppermind.net/events/377/#e12210

Truthwatcher_17.5

We know that Hoid took a bead of lerasium, but it never specifically says that he consumed it.

Brandon Sanderson

Yes, he did.

Questioner

Alright, so he is a Mistborn?

Brandon Sanderson

Yes, I'll go ahead and canonize that.

Idaho Falls signing (Dec. 29, 2018)

#50	**https://wob.coppermind.net/events/490/#e15439**

Adam Horne

People were looking for a clarification on the spelling of Lumar, if you know the spelling.

Isaac Stewart

L-U-M-A-R. I mean, I guess we've canonized it now, huh.

Brandon Sanderson

Isaac named it, I said "Hey, come up with a good name for this."

Isaac Stewart

I can tell you, kind of, the process if people want to know about that. I put together some different things. "What are things that have resonance with *The Princess Bride?"* was one of the things, and I gave Brandon some options in that direction.

Brandon Sanderson

Which I didn't like many of.

Isaac Stewart

There was maybe one or two that felt like it. It was sort of in a way, not tuckerization, but sort of an homage to the roots of the story. Those weren't working, so we just went to: what are common root words for things in the story that make it feel that way, and that's where we came up with Lumar. It was a little more straightforward and simple than some of the other names of planets in the Cosmere, and we liked that it felt like it worked with the main character.

Brandon Sanderson

And also the fairy tale feel of it. Naming this planet something like Scadrial didn't feel right to me either, because where this planet came from and the story and things like that, plus this is likely to be the name... A lot of these names, like if you translate in world, a lot of the characters would call their planet "the planet," right? They are not going to name their planet. So when a person--in most of the books when I translate them talking about Roshar, I'm translating them referencing the planet or their word for it in their own individual language, which is going to be different in everybody's language, just for convenience sake. And we felt that the root words of this are what people would latch on to in-world, in-universe for calling this planet. The two words mashed together, are very, uh, yeah.

Isaac Stewart

I guess if you're on Roshar, you wouldn't be technically digging in the earth, you'd be digging in the Roshar.

Brandon Sanderson

Yes. Well, they don't have a lot of earth, but you know. If you use the word earthquake, right? I have chosen that I will use the word earthquake on all these planets even though none of them are earth. That's just how I'm translating, just add that filter that someone's translated this into English, and they've chosen the best word for your understanding, and we think that Lumar covers what they in-world would call this and evokes the same feeling.

Secret Project #1 Reveal and Livestream (March 8, 2022)

#51	**https://wob.coppermind.net/events/509/#e15942**

Kitchen_Abrocoma_297

Can you tell us something about Dalinar's parents?

Their names? Why didn't they show up in *Oathbringer* flashbacks? What happened to them?

Brandon Sanderson

Dalinar gets along better with his grandparents—or got along with his grandparents than he did with his parents—let's say that. What else can I canonize? I mean, by that time they're not around. You've probably figured that out. Dalinar wasn't too sad about that. Particularly past Dalinar not being the kind of person who—yeah, let's just say that there is stuff in the Alethi family history that has caused part of Jasnah's consternation on the way she regards how families act towards one another—you know, lighteyed families—and her concerns about it.

YouTube Spoiler Stream 5 (Dec. 2, 2022)

#52 **https://wob.coppermind.net/events/509/#e15951**

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strican

In *The Lost Metal*, it mentions Autonomy having avatars in other worlds. In Shu-Dereth on Sel, Jaddeth speaks directly to Wyrn, who then propagates his will down the hierarchy-

Brandon Sanderson

Yes.

strican

Within the religion, ambition is rewarded, but only if it aligns with the orders of the hierarchy. That sounds similar to the philosophy used in the Set, but replacing Jaddeth with Trell. Is Jaddeth an avatar of Autonomy?

Brandon Sanderson

chuckles and points at screen in very satisfied way RAFO. You're a very smart person.

It's [pronounced] "Yaddeth", by the way. That is also one of the Y-J's. ...

So, I will say this. Here's what I'll canonize. There is something happening, and the people there legitimately believe, and have reason to believe, that their god is going to return. And I have said before, many times, that Book 2 of Elantris begins with the return of their god. 'Cause they've said "God can't come back until everybody converts". But they've found a loophole. They're like "well, except those heretics in Elantris. And also that other little place, that tiny little region that's over in the mountains, where they talk about roses, they don't count either. Because they're, um, not actually part of the planet." Um, so. So that's something to look forward to, if I ever get around to writing Dakhor, is the return of Jaddeth, the god of [Shu-Dereth].

YouTube Spoiler Stream 5 (Dec. 2, 2022)

#53 **https://wob.coppermind.net/events/394/#e12920**

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sciencetor2

I was the one with the weird alcohol question. I'm a brewer so I was trying to complete the article I wrote--I wrote the article on the [Coppermind].

Brandon Sanderson

So really, you're going to have to give *me* advice. What would you think?

sciencetor2

Basically, if they have distillation apparatus? Because they've replaced a lot of technology with Stormlight technology

Brandon Sanderson

They do have distillation apparatus.

sciencetor2

Okay. Then anything above 20% alcohol has to be a distilled spirit. Anything below has to be a brewed spirit.

Brandon Sanderson

Okay, brewed. So a wine can be brewed? You call wine a brewed spirit?

sciencetor2

Technically, you call it fermented, but I'd say brewing process. Otherwise it's a distillation apparatus, and you have to actually distill it and boil off the alcohol.

Brandon Sanderson

That I know about. But the actual terminology...What we don't see a lot of in the *Stormlight Archive* is a beer. The hops, the fermented, the bubbles. You just don't see that. What you see is things we would call a wine, and things we would call a hard alcohol. A spirit, I guess. That spectrum is, to most people there, one spectrum. They do use grains for making things like a Horneater White. So that's probably going to be as close to a..

sciencetor2

Everclear?

Brandon Sanderson

Yeah, there you go. Yeah.

sciencetor2

Pink, by the way, doesn't have any alcohol according to the chart?

Brandon Sanderson

Yeah it's just juice. Just a squeezed juice, I actually kind of imagine that one. And the next one is they squeeze the juice and ferment it. And then at some point during that line, I guess it would be at the 20% mark, they start distilling, and some of them are going to be grains that they made and stuff like that.

So you can take that all as canon now, and you can write it.

sciencetor2

So it's juice, not tea? Because it said tea in the little chart? It said, "I've had tea stronger than this."

Brandon Sanderson

Oh yeah. It's not a tea. "I've had tea stronger than this" is just a joke that it doesn't have any alcohol in it. It is a juice.

DragonCon 2019 (Aug. 29, 2019)

#54	https://wob.coppermind.net/events/402/#e13373

Questioner

I have a theory. Because the center of gravity for a female is naturally lower, but when Vin burns iron or steel, the blue lines come from her chest, does that come from her center of self, rather than the center of gravity?

Brandon Sanderson

Yeah. That's probably a more accurate way to put it.

Questioner

Would it be possible for that to change, then?

Brandon Sanderson

Yes, that is possible. I should say it like that, because it's not going to actually be... Because center of gravity, where you would actually put it, is not where I'm having those lines come from. You came in costume. You can just make that canon now and we will put that on all of the lists that that is what it is.

Starsight Release Party (Nov. 26, 2019)