Acknowledgments

Over my journey of the years it took from my first interest in pop culture and user creativity (hello LA!) to where this study now stands, numerous people have directly or indirectly guided my Second Life.

A standing ovation for Professor Robin Mansell, my wonderful supervisor. She took me in when I was looking for a home. Her knowledge, faith, generosity, kind words, and absolute professionalism have pushed me to go the extra mile. Thank you for travelling with me.

A warm thank you to Professor Sonia Livingstone who kindly shared her intellect and experience showing me that it is ok to walk many paths. For nearly one-third of my life Professor William Uricchio has been my rock. He introduced me to the academic world and set me free. Without him this PhD might never have been written.

I am grateful for my fellowship at the Berkman Center for Internet & Society at Harvard University. The experience has been truly mind-blowing. Thank you John Palfrey and Colin Maclay for quietly accepting my quirky ways and allowing me to work in solitude. With openness and stimulating conversations my fellow fellows have been, all at once, great peers and mentors. A special thank you goes to the DN team and Urs Gasser, who has been a true virtual friend throughout.

I am also indebted to the Hakuhodo Foresight, Research Center for Information Law at the University of St. Gallen, the British Academy, MIT’s Convergence Culture Consortium, Valve Inc., Linden Lab, OpenSim, and many Second Life residents. Thank you for your support.

A special thanks goes to Garrett Cobarr for our conversations and building a database especially for this study. Without Oliver Day the database would have remained empty, thank you.

The support, inspiration and challenges offered by my colleagues across several time zones have helped me tremendously in developing this research. Thank you Yuichi Washida and especially David Nieborg for our unorthodox metal friendship.

Words are not enough to express my gratitude towards my wonderful parents, sister and family, and friends. Thank you for always believing in me and letting me be. With the door always open-wide my dad and mom offer a home-away-from-home-away-from-home-away-from-home... Thank you all for accepting my many periods of absence and true denial and allowing me to multi-task between several lives.

I dedicate this work to Keltin De Los Perros who taught me the meaning of perseverance and strength. I started this journey with him and I ended it with Kingston. May many roads lie ahead.

For me, my Second Life has been a mixture of Kerouac’s On the Road (1955), Fowles’ The
Magus (1965), and Auster’s Travels in the Scriptorium (2006). And the road goes on, and whither it is bound, I do not know.

Ulvenhout, March 2009