

Benjamin Beil, Klaus Sachs-Hombach, Jan-Noël Thon u.a. (Hg.)

IMAGE. Zeitschrift für interdisziplinäre Bildwissenschaft. Themenheft zu Heft 22

2015

<https://doi.org/10.25969/mediarep/16485>

Veröffentlichungsversion / published version

Teil eines Periodikums / periodical part

Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Beil, Benjamin; Sachs-Hombach, Klaus; Thon, Jan-Noël (Hg.): *IMAGE. Zeitschrift für interdisziplinäre Bildwissenschaft. Themenheft zu Heft 22*, Jg. 11 (2015), Nr. 2. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25969/mediarep/16485>.

Erstmalig hier erschienen / Initial publication here:

[http://www.gib.uni-tuebingen.de/index.php?](http://www.gib.uni-tuebingen.de/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=111&Itemid=157&menuitem=miArchive&showIssue=75)

[option=com_content&view=article&id=111&Itemid=157&menuitem=miArchive&showIssue=75](http://www.gib.uni-tuebingen.de/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=111&Itemid=157&menuitem=miArchive&showIssue=75)

Nutzungsbedingungen:

Dieser Text wird unter einer Deposit-Lizenz (Keine Weiterverbreitung - keine Bearbeitung) zur Verfügung gestellt. Gewährt wird ein nicht exklusives, nicht übertragbares, persönliches und beschränktes Recht auf Nutzung dieses Dokuments. Dieses Dokument ist ausschließlich für den persönlichen, nicht-kommerziellen Gebrauch bestimmt. Auf sämtlichen Kopien dieses Dokuments müssen alle Urheberrechtshinweise und sonstigen Hinweise auf gesetzlichen Schutz beibehalten werden. Sie dürfen dieses Dokument nicht in irgendeiner Weise abändern, noch dürfen Sie dieses Dokument für öffentliche oder kommerzielle Zwecke vervielfältigen, öffentlich ausstellen, aufführen, vertreiben oder anderweitig nutzen.

Mit der Verwendung dieses Dokuments erkennen Sie die Nutzungsbedingungen an.

Terms of use:

This document is made available under a Deposit License (No Redistribution - no modifications). We grant a non-exclusive, non-transferable, individual, and limited right for using this document. This document is solely intended for your personal, non-commercial use. All copies of this documents must retain all copyright information and other information regarding legal protection. You are not allowed to alter this document in any way, to copy it for public or commercial purposes, to exhibit the document in public, to perform, distribute, or otherwise use the document in public.

By using this particular document, you accept the conditions of use stated above.

Issue 22, July 2015/Ausgabe 22, Juli 2015

Special Issue/Themenheft

Media Convergence and Transmedial Worlds (Part 3)/ Medienkonvergenz und transmediale Welten (Teil 3)

Editors/Herausgeber: Benjamin Beil,
Klaus Sachs-Hombach, Jan-Noël Thon

Contents/Inhalt

Jan-Noël Thon	3
<u>Introduction.</u>	
<u>Media Convergence and Transmedial Worlds (Part 3)</u>	
Tobias Steiner	4
<u>Under the Macroscopic. Convergence in the US Television Market Between 2000 and 2014</u>	
Amelie Zimmermann	22
<u>Blurring the Line Between Fiction and Reality. Functional Transmedia Storytelling in the German TV Series <i>About:Kate</i></u>	
Robert Baumgartner	36
<u>»In the Grim Darkness of the Far Future there is only War«. <i>Warhammer 40,000</i>, Transmedial Ludology, and the Issues of Change and Stasis in Transmedial Storyworlds</u>	

Nieves Rosendo	54
<u>The Map Is Not the Territory. Bible and Canon in the Transmedial World of <i>Halo</i></u>	
Felix Schröter	65
<u>The Game of <i>Game of Thrones</i>. George R.R. Martin's <i>A Song of Ice and Fire</i> and Its Video Game Adaptations</u>	
Krzysztof M. Maj.....	83
<u>Transmedial World-Building in Fictional Narratives</u>	
<u>Impressum</u>	97

Jan-Noël Thon

Introduction. Media Convergence and Transmedial Worlds (Part 3)

In the past few decades, technical innovations, the increasing mediatization of everyday life, and the economic interests of global media conglomerates have led to a highly interconnected media landscape where intellectual property is often spread across a variety of media platforms. One of the effects of this technological, economic, and cultural media convergence appears to be the increasing visibility and presence of transmedial entertainment franchises which represent—usually, but not necessarily: fictional—stories, characters, and worlds across the borders of conventionally distinct media.

In light of the socio-cultural relevance and the commercial success of transmedial entertainment franchises in contemporary media culture, it will come as no surprise that media studies have started to focus on transmedial phenomena as well, with terms such as ›transmedia(l) storytelling‹ or ›transmedial worlds‹ enjoying ever broader popularity. However, the astonishing heterogeneity of forms that can be observed with regard to transmedial phenomena is usually not quite as present in the discourses of media studies. It is this heterogeneity of forms that will be further examined by the present special issue of *IMAGE*, which is the final installment of a three-part series.

A substantial part of the essays collected in the present as well as the two previously published special issues of *IMAGE* is based on papers presented during the Winter School »Transmedial Worlds in Convergent Media Culture«, which took place from February 24 to February 28, 2014 at the Graduate Academy of the University of Tübingen and was supported by the Institutional Strategy of the University of Tübingen (German Research Foundation, ZUK 63).

[\[Table of Contents\]](#)

Tobias Steiner

Under the Macroscope. Convergence in the US Television Market Between 2000 and 2014

*The future of television is
to stop thinking of television
as television.*
(NEGROPONTE 1995: 48)

Abstract

The paradigms of media change and convergence in relation to the so-called ›new media‹ have kept scholars occupied for more than two decades. In the US and the UK, the switch from analogue to digital television comprises just the most recent step of technological developments offering an unprecedented variety of ways in which national, transnational, and global audiences are able to access television content.

This article's aim is to offer a macroscopic review of these changing ways within the US television market during the past decade. This will be done with a distinct focus on statistical data in order to diachronically substantiate the often-attributed active role that consumers played in the larger transformations that are nowadays subsumed under the term ›convergence‹. Subsequently, the article will provide a short case study of the US premium-cable network HBO in order to exemplify the mechanisms at work within this larger convergence landscape that does not stop at the borders of the United States, but transcends nationalities to form a truly global media setting.

1. Background. Evolving Definitions of Convergence

The television landscape's past two decades have been a highly volatile and eventful timespan. Back in 2004, Lynn Spigel already summarized the advancements of this new technological Millennium as follows:

[T]he demise of the three-network system in the United States, the increasing commercialization of public service/state-run systems, the rise of multichannel cable and global satellite delivery, multinational conglomerates, Internet convergence, changes in regulation policies and ownership rules, the advent of HDTV, technological changes in screen design, the innovation of digital television systems like TiVo, and new forms of media competition all contribute to transformations in the practice we call watching TV. (SPIGEL 2004: 2)

Back in 1996, during the dawn of the Internet, expectations and fears of this digital Brave New World were one of the governing topics within the media landscape. In their prediction of digital transformation processes toward convergence in the communication sector, Baldwin, McVoy, and Steinfeld highlight the need of an objective analysis of the current state of affairs that »will be cautious not to feed the fire that is already somewhat out of control« (BALDWIN/MCVOY/STEINFELD 1996: 2), thus hinting at the unease and fears the new digital world might bring with it.

Based on and motivated by the US Telecommunications Act of 1996, »which opens all communication services to competition, creating a digital ›free-for-all« (BALDWIN/MCVOY/STEINFELD 1996: 1), the authors primarily understand convergence as a technological shift toward what they label ›Integrated Broadband Systems«, i.e., a combination of television, Internet, and telephony infrastructure. In that context, they analyze a variety of different new technologies, services, and delivery systems based on network integration, communication, and compression of digital data.

Looking back, many of their predictions, such as the development of social media platforms and digital fandom, or precursors to what today may be identified as the concept of transmediality (cf. BALDWIN/MCVOY/STEINFELD 1996: 132), have held true. Other prophecies, such as the emergence of alternate interactive electronic game and console designs by Amiga, Commodore, or Sega (cf. BALDWIN/MCVOY/STEINFELD 1996: 135), though, may retrospectively be judged as proven wrong by history: all three companies are by now massively struggling to stay profitable or have ceased to exist. And technologies such as high-definition television and interrelated challenges described by Baldwin, McVoy, and Steinfeld, such as imagined physical size limitations of cathode-ray tube screens (cf. BALDWIN/MCVOY/STEINFELD 1996: 125), have, from a revisionary perspective, been solved by yet completely different technologies such as TFT and LCD displays, the developments of which the authors just had no possibility to foresee. Nonetheless, Baldwin, McVoy, and Steinfeld's analytic outlook into a post-millennial media future is a compelling analysis of the things that were yet to come. As will be shown in the following paragraphs, media convergence has developed into a concept encom-

passing much more than what could have been expected or imagined by the authors at the time of their writing.

Looking at the matter of convergence from a medium-specific television point-of-view, and with an understanding of television as one of the energetic media within the larger media mix that surrounds us, an integrated network approach has been and still is the driving force behind convergence trends. Although pointing out in 1999 that »the Internet is ill suited as a medium for broadcasting video, and broadcasting is ill suited for providing the two-way interactive services of the Internet« (OWEN 1999: 311f.), Bruce Owen describes possibilities of an integration of Internet and television/video/broadcasting. Listing actual experimental approaches that had been realized by different agents at the time, he reports attempts to physically combine TV sets, computers, and telephone lines with alternate data transmission solutions as well as with new delivery systems such as Internet-over-cable and even wireless (cf. OWEN 1999: 312f.).

Comparing Owen's work to more recent articles such as Jeanine Poggie's reveals that, even more than ten years later, the underlying questions remain the same. In her assessment of nowadays' interactive TV market, Poggie states that

[i]nteractive TV enables a participatory experience with content on the TV screen. Converged TV is basically content—whether video or a web page or a Facebook stream—routed to the TV screen from something other than your cable or satellite provider. (POGGIE 2012: n.pag.)

The difference between these assumptions is that the underlying delivery system, the Internet, has grown to performance dimensions that were almost inconceivable at the dawn of the new millennium.

Two years later, and as a response to predictions such as Owen's, Henry Jenkins argued in 2001 that, contrary to earlier approaches, media convergence ought to be perceived as a complex, manifold process that will not lead to a technological merger of all media outlets. According to Jenkins,

[t]here will never be one black box controlling all media. Rather, thanks to the proliferation of channels and the increasingly ubiquitous nature of computing and communications, we are entering an era where media will be everywhere, and we will use all kinds of media in relation to one another. (JENKINS 2001: n.pag.)

Jenkins subsequently introduces five major processes that each address different facets of economic, social, cultural, global, and technical convergence. By doing so, he transcends the limited focus on technological developments alone and adds social, political, and cultural layers that he sees as playing an indispensable part of convergent new media's widespread adaptation by consumers.

Five years later, Jenkins elaborates on these convergence processes in more detail in his now-eminent work *Convergence Culture*. Following Jenkins, convergence processes pose

a paradigm shift—a move from medium-specific content toward content that flows across multiple media channels [...] toward multiple ways of accessing media content, and toward ever more complex relations between top-down corporate media and bottom-up participatory culture. (JENKINS 2006: 243)

This paradigm shift has affected every single medium and means of communication that we were using back in the 1990s—telephony, the rising branch of mobile communications, newspapers, books, a plethora of delivery technologies for music and film (cassettes, LPs, CDs, VHS, LaserDiscs, DVDs, etc.), and, last but not least, television. The media branch of television has arguably been most profoundly transformed by this new media age, and, in the following, I will illustrate how the processes of convergence at work both altered and diversified the technological base of the medium. Through the application of statistical data sets, this part will trace how consumer behavior of American audiences helped push these convergence processes forward.

2. Multi-Screen Television, or How HDTV Killed the VCR

According to the Television Bureau of Advertising's (TVB) statistical compendium *TV Basics*, the overall number of households owning at least one TV set did only marginally rise during the past decade, due to already-high US rates in the 1990s. The 98.2% TV penetration rate of all US households in 2000 (i.e., 102.68m households*) rose to a 2011 rate of 98.9% (i.e., 117.22m households**). And while the total numbers still were on the rise to 118.59m*** households in 2012, the penetration rate has been decreasing for the first time since the 1990s to a rate of 97.1% (cf. TELEVISION BUREAU OF ADVERTISING 2012: 4),¹ continuing its slow decrease to 96% in 2014 (cf. NIELSEN 2014a: 7).

Considering new technological developments, 2008 has been a particularly important year: Nielsen estimates show that the mass market introduction of digital cable and HD television led US consumers to invest heavily in those new technologies. During that year, 14% of US households already owned TV sets plus a HD tuner that would receive at least one HD channel, and 17% owned TV sets and HD-capable tuners that possessed the ability of receiving HD signals, but were not actively used for that purpose (yet). Those rates increased to 67% in 2012 and further rose to 87% in 2014.²

The introduction of digital cable and HDTV also accelerated the demise of the VCR. Interestingly, while DVD players began to rise to prominence during the early 2000s, Nielsen's statistics collectors caught up to that trend as late as 2006, and only then started to account for households with DVD players as a separate statistical category. Although still close to its all-time household penetration peak of 90% from 2000, VCR technology was

¹ Nielsen Media has slightly different numbers, but the trend is the same (cf. NIELSEN 2011a: 12).

*Nielsen: 100.8m—** Nielsen: 115.9m—***Nielsen: 114.7m.

² Cf. NIELSEN 2011a: 8 (estimates for 2012); 2014a: 7.

already on the decrease during the mid-2000s: with 89% in 2006, it would only be present in 57% of all US households in 2012 (cf. NIELSEN 2011a: 8). And, as of 2014, VCRs have now been completely omitted in Nielsen statistics, hinting at a disappearance of VCR technology during the next few years.

But with the rise of digital storage technologies, the trend did not follow a 'one-replaces-the-other'-scheme. At the same time, an estimated 76% of all US households owned a DVD player or recorder in 2006, a trend that slowly but steadily increased to a peak 85% of all households in 2012 (cf. NIELSEN 2011a: 8). By now, further digitization of content, with improving image quality and compression rates, video encoding technology that allows for ever smaller video sizes, also has the DVD and BluRay³ player sector on the downside: with a decrease to 81% of households that own a separate player device in 2014 (cf. NIELSEN 2014a: 7), developments in the long run might point toward a similar fate as that of the VCR.

Simultaneously, the delayed viewing practice of timeshifting grew highly popular and digital video recorders (DVRs) rose to prominence. While 19% of all US households owned a DVR in 2008, this rate rose to 41% in 2012 and reached 49% in 2014. And since digital content nowadays can be saved on a variety of different devices—with DVRs only one among many—the use of the timeshifting feature for TV content has become more and more popular. While, in the second quarter of 2006, only 2% of all prime time TV content was timeshifted, TV audiences made use of their timeshifting abilities for 12.1% of all US prime time TV content in the second quarter of 2011 (cf. NIELSEN 2011b: 10). Nielsen estimates show that, between 2008 and 2011, the number of users watching timeshifted TV has increased by almost 66%. This rapid uptake in the possibility to personalize one's daily television routine through timeshifting can also be seen mirrored in the increase in actual time spent per month watching television content between 2012 and 2014: while, in 2012, the average user spent more than 12 hours/month on timeshifted television content, this number rose to 14 hours and 20 minutes in 2014.⁴

As described in Jenkins' *Convergence Culture*, the new digital technologies also bring about a new way of consuming media in general, and television in particular. The following table sums up results of a global Nielsen survey conducted in August/September 2011. More than 28,000 consumers with traditional online/Internet access from 56 countries throughout the Asia-Pacific, Europe, Latin America, the Middle East, Africa, and North America were asked which devices they use to watch video content. The methodology of this survey might be criticized for various reasons, including the fact that it only includes already-existing Internet users and not those who might be adapting to new convenience technology soon. The results may be perceived as biased in one way or another because they only show the respondents' opinions and self-perception, and do not actually measure their behav-

³ Households owning BluRay players instead of DVD players have been subsumed within the DVD player sector.

⁴ Cf. NIELSEN 2013: 7; 2014b: 13.

ior. Nonetheless, it is useful to illustrate how diversified contemporary TV and video consumption has become. It is important to add that television is, by now, often subsumed under the umbrella term of ›video‹ in many statistics, thus reflecting the variety of video content available—from a whole universe of user-generated material via video content produced and remixed by semi-professional ›prosumers‹⁵ to content generated by the entertainment industries themselves—available on a wide range of video content platforms.

DEVICE	% of answers: »At least once a day«
Computer at home	48
Television at home	46
Online, through the Internet (on any device)	37
Mobile phone	28
Computer at work	28
Handheld multimedia device—not a phone (e.g., iPod Touch, PSP)	11
Portable DVD Player	9
DVR/digital video recorder (e.g., TiVo)	9
Tablet Device (e.g., Apple iPad)	8
Public computer (e.g., library, Internet café, gym)	7
Through an in-home video game system (e.g., PlayStation 3, Xbox 360)	7
E-Book Reader (e.g., Amazon Kindle)	7
TV or DVD player in a car	6

Tab. 1:

Survey: Which devices do you use to watch video content at least once a day? (cf. NIELSEN 2012)

Ultimately, these and the other results presented so far demonstrate the larger shift in consumer focus from the one television set that used to be governing the living room of US-American families for decades, to multiple screens that now are all handled simultaneously by contemporary users in a modern media landscape. Jenkins refers to this change in media use as ›social convergence‹. As a hypothetical aside, if the survey introduced above had been conducted in 1999, the answer options would have included only two or maybe three alternatives: the options of a TV set at home, TV content via a VCR, or via the newly-introduced DVD player.

⁵ ›Prosumers‹ is a term introduced by Alvin Toffler 35 years ago in his book *The Third Wave*, in which he predicts the evolution of the passive consumer toward an empowered individual within a larger participatory culture that, corresponding to the simultaneously-developing mass availability of affordable professional equipment, enables said ›prosumer‹ to generate high-quality, close-to-industry-standards content that subsequently becomes recognized and circulated in the entertainment industry. For more information on Toffler's predictions, cf. TOFFLER 1980.

With video content available on so many screens, the average time spent watching TV has also increased during the past decade. While, during the 1999/2000 TV season, the average US household would spend 28 hours and 44 minutes per week watching TV, this average household's TV consumption rose to 34 hours and 11 minutes per week during the 2010/2011 TV season (cf. NIELSEN 2011a: 16), with a further increase to 35 hours and 20 minutes in 2014 (cf. NIELSEN 2014b: 12).

Like so many of our modern trends, the increase in available TV sets at home started much earlier: back in 1970, Nielsen already measured that 35% of all US households or a total of 20.8m households possessed more than one TV set (cf. NIELSEN 2011a: 4). This rate has steadily increased ever since, reaching an all-time high in 2012, with 85% of all US households, or a total of 97m homes. By 2014, 27% of all US households owned two TV sets, 25% had three sets, and 34% owned four sets or more (cf. NIELSEN 2014a: 7).

The trend toward possession of more than one screen also further diversified with the introduction of affordable computers, laptops, and a plethora of hand-held devices—i.e., tablets of all sizes and the still-expanding universe of smartphones that also allow access to video (and, thus, television) content.

3. Mobile and Wireless

Today, smartphones are almost omnipresent in our everyday lives. According to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC)'s *14th Mobile Competition Report*, 15% of all US consumers owned a smartphone in October 2006. In December 2009, this rate had already reached an astonishing 42% (cf. FCC 2010: 93). Updated information shows that, by the third quarter of 2014, 72% of all US mobile phones are smartphones (cf. FCC 2014: 40).

The FCC reports also show that new delivery technologies such as wireless provide the respective businesses with new ways to generate profit; particularly the mobile wireless industry has profited from the introduction of widespread wireless services and new smartphone models. According to FCC data, the overall industry service revenue has increased from 104.25b US\$ in 2004 to 150.60b US\$ in 2008 (cf. FCC 2010: 116), reaching 189.13b US\$ by the end of 2013 (cf. FCC 2014: 19). Furthermore, and resulting from the technological advances in the field of voice digitization, the mobile sector's main generator of business revenue is increasingly moving away from standard telephony services and the related sales of talk minutes per month to the provision of digital data transfer packages that facilitate speech transfer via voice-over-IP à la Skype as well as data up- and download to make accessible the whole wide universe of the Internet.

Although the average monthly usage of text messages and talk minutes via mobile phones has steadily increased from 255 minutes per

month in 2000 to a peak 708 minutes per month in 2008, the revenue earned per minute shrank from 0.18 US\$/minute to 0.07 US\$/minute. In the same period of time, the percentage of wireless data revenue of total service revenue soared from 0.4% (2000) to 23.2% (2008) (cf. FCC 2010: 118f.). Thus, almost every quarter of a dollar earned in the mobile industry in 2008 was made by providing wireless data transfer service to US customers.

Understanding nowadays' wireless and smartphone markets is intrinsically connected to understanding audiences' television watching behavior. A Nielsen breakdown of changing audience choices regarding where to watch TV and video estimates that the number of users watching TV on a mobile phone increased by more than 200% between 2008 and 2011 (cf. NIELSEN 2011d: 3). Another Nielsen survey suggests that the percentile of TV audiences who own a tablet computer device or a smartphone and watch TV do use their gadgets to simultaneously check their emails (57%), visit social networking sites (44%), and/or surf for unrelated information (44%) during the program. Furthermore, 24% of those smartphone or tablet users would check for sports scores online, and 29% would look up information related to the TV program they were watching (cf. NIELSEN 2011c: 8).

Even more interesting for the advertisement industry might be Nielsen's findings that close to a fifth of all of these smartphone/tablet owners would look up product information for an advertisement that they saw on TV (19%). Moreover, 16% would look up coupons or deals related to an advertisement they saw on TV (cf. NIELSEN 2011c: 10). These numbers indicate how TV audiences, more than ever, engage with TV content and are interested in finding out background information about the programs they are watching and/or the adverts they find appealing—thus also emphasizing Henry Jenkins' depiction of increasing segments of these audiences as ›digital hunters and gatherers‹ (cf. JENKINS 2006).

4. The Internet

The third major sector that plays into the new television landscape is comprised of a variety of technological achievements as well as a multiplicity of cultural practices usually subsumed under the umbrella term of ›the Internet‹. As has briefly been introduced earlier, cyberspace had been deemed too slow and inefficient to facilitate video streaming for many people at the dawn of the new millennium. Nowadays, and fueled by Moore's Law,⁶ the technological advancements helped the evolution toward a state of ›always on‹, an *omni*-connectedness. The backbone of that global connectedness is ›Internet-over-cable‹, which not only connects the end-user with each respective provider through wall sockets and the respective lines from each home to local

⁶ A computational *a priori* that predicts exponential growth in computing power and cost-effectiveness.

hub stations but also streets, cities, regions, and continents with each other through massive optical fiber cables.

Most important for providing video and TV content over the Internet is the bandwidth available in each household. In 2008, the CITI estimated that the typical speed required by standard HDTV streaming over the Internet will amount to at least a 12 megabits per second (Mbps) connection in 2013, which is more than the standard average household's *status quo* (cf. ATKINSON/SCHULTZ 2011: 74). And, as a reaction to the overall slow increase in available bandwidth, the FCC updated its definition of the term ›broadband‹ in January 2015, with its threshold data rates »to be raised from 4 megabits per second (Mbps) to 25Mbps for downloads and [...] to 3Mbps for uploads« (HOLPUCH 2015: n.pag.). With the FCC's status as the United States' regulatory body, this decision might well lead to major repercussions for the cable industry that now is forced to guarantee these minimum data rates if they want to continue selling data plans to US-American homes that use the label ›broadband‹.

Today's connection standard is based on ›always-on‹ flat-rate broadband connections via conventional telephone lines that quickly replaced the dial-up mode, which was very popular during the initial years of mass consumer access to the web and where one had to pay for the actual amount of time spent online. While the US Census Bureau measured only 6.8m subscribers paying for fixed-line broadband access at the beginning of this century, this number rose to 80.7m subscribers in 2009 (cf. UNITED STATES CENSUS BUREAU 2013: 6) and further increased to 93.6m subscribers in 2013 (cf. OECD 2014).

Apart from the traditional mode of accessing the web via telephone lines and xDSL technology,⁷ the second major competitor on the US market is access via cable. This delivery technology does not use a standard telephone- or fiber line, but the TV cable that was installed in an overwhelming majority of US households during the past six decades. In 2000, there were already 66.1m cable TV subscribers in the US, but, although expanded functionality available through this delivery technology (i.e., access to HDTV, broadband access via cable modems, Internet telephony) would have been a motivation to invest in the technology, subscriber rates even slightly decreased to 65.8m subscribers in 2009, and the percentage of cable subscribers who would use the technology not only to access conventional TV but also to get broadband access matured only slowly. It seems as if the share of technology-friendly consumers who were likely to upgrade their Internet connections chose to directly invest in the newer technology of optic fiber connections, which promises the possibility of much faster connections in the future. Although only 23% of all US households have access to fiber technology as of 2012,

⁷ For further information on the developments of xDSL digital transmission technologies, cf., e.g., the xDSL patent (#US4924492 A) by Gitlin and colleagues, »Method and Apparatus for Wideband Transmission of Digital Signals Between, for Example, a Telephone Central Office and Customer Premises« (cf. GITLIN et al. 1990), as well as, in comparison, a recent ITU press release on the most recent technology upgrade G.fast (cf. ITU 2014).

future investments in infrastructure by the US government and private investors⁸ will help increase availability of the fastest of all access methods to the Internet.

Opening up a third standard to access the Internet is the mode of mobile broadband access, which accounted for 52.5m subscribers in 2009 (cf. UNITED STATES CENSUS BUREAU 2013: 6). Only four years later, by the end of 2013, aggressive mobile expansion corresponding with the parallel introduction of affordable smartphone devices⁹ accounted for an incredible soar of +600%, which amounted to 316.4m subscribers by the end of 2013 (cf. OECD 2014). This tremendous increase might be read as the foreshadowing of a two-tier connectedness lived by modern audiences, both through their arsenal of mobile devices and through broadband cable/fiber access at home.

5. The Past Five Years. 2010–2015

Just as cable had radically expanded the array of content that could be found on television, the new distribution windows promise to again rewrite the possibilities for what can be found on television. [...] The true push to change came from other industries—such as consumer electronics—and from viewer uptake of the technologies the consumer electronics industry made available. (LOTZ 2014: 137)

Television companies and audiences alike developed new strategies of distributing and accessing television content. As has already been briefly described, users of DVRs such as the TiVo increasingly tend to circumvent commercial blocks between programs and to take TV scheduling into their own hands. Owners of laptops, desktop computers, and portable viewing devices are able to download complete seasons as well as individual brand-new episodes of the shows they like and watch them whenever and wherever they want. And a steadily-increasing percentage of users either rent whole seasons of television shows on DVD¹⁰ or even access them online through legal (e.g., via subscription video-on-demand [SVOD] portals such as Amazon Prime and Netflix) and illegal sources (e.g., through file distribution via peer-to-peer networks such as Bittorrent).

The television broadcasting industry had to react to these multi-layered developments of both technology and cultural practices. The earlier-introduced multi-channel environment that resulted from the rise of cable and satellite in the 1980s is now even more diversified by narrowcasting and the corresponding availability of virtually thousands of channels that tend to niche markets and often tiny sections of target audiences. On the other end of the spectrum, the US market faced a concentration of most of the media businesses into huge conglomerates, a process that is generally also labeled

⁸ E.g., ventures that have begun as recently as 2014 to provide larger metropolitan areas in the US with access to fiber technology, such as those by Google and Verizon (Google Fiber, Verizon FiOS). For further information, cf., e.g., RUSSO et al. 2014.

⁹ Smartphones have been around since 2005.

¹⁰ On the impact of DVD for audiences and the industry, cf., e.g., HILLS 2007.

»media consolidation«. Each of those conglomerates' goals are to minimize venture risks and maximize synergistic effects by horizontal and vertical integration of companies from different business branches within the media landscape such as film, newspapers, and radio (cf. MIRRLEES 2013: 82f.). Resulting from this horizontal and vertical integration, conglomerates are able to »design synergistic entertainment products [that...] spread across many platforms [and...] generate as much revenue from one hub as possible« (MIRRLEES 2013: 86). Furthermore, these conglomerates aim at keeping up with new challenges posed by emerging new players in the digital video content market such as the earlier-mentioned SVOD providers Netflix or GoogleTV.

Currently, the US media landscape consists of five large conglomerates, which (on an international scale) also act as massive transnational media corporations:¹¹

Media conglomerate	TV market activities	Broadcasting networks	Cable networks	Revenue in TV sector* (in mio.US\$)
Comcast/ General Electric (GE)	<i>Full TV media portfolio incl. cable providers and programming (NBCUniversal is a joint-venture with General Electric)</i>	NBC Telemundo	SyFy CNBC ...	44,140 (2014) NBC Universal: 25,248 (2014)
Disney	<i>All market activities related to programming (broadcast and cable/satellite)</i>	ABC	Disney Channel ESPN ABC Family ...	21,152 (2014)
News Corporation	<i>All market activities related to programming (broadcast and cable/satellite)</i>	Fox MyNetworkTV	Fox National Geographic ...	17,538 (2012)

¹¹ As recent as May 2015 a giant merger between Comcast and Time Warner, which had been proposed by Comcast in January 2014 and would have left the media landscape with an extremely high-profile conglomerate, has finally been cancelled by Comcast due to the outspoken opposition of the regulatory body of the FCC in concert with the United States' Department of Justice and Congress. These regulatory bodies ventured that the resulting Comcast/TWC merger would pose a risk to the industry as a whole. For more information, cf., e.g., SELYUKH 2014 and BRODKIN 2015.

Time Warner	<i>Full TV media portfolio incl. cable providers and programming</i>	The CW joint-venture with Viacom	TBS HBO TNT CNN Time	19,879 (2009, incl. total content revenues)
Viacom/CBS Corporation	<i>Full TV media portfolio incl. cable providers and programming</i>	CBS The CW joint-venture with Time Warner	MTV Nickelodeon VH1 Showtime ...	2,333 (Viacom 2009) 5,224 (CBS 2009, incl. total content)

Tab. 2:

Conglomeration of the US Media Market (cf. WIRTZ 2011: 257, *with updated revenue numbers, where available)¹²

In the following, I am going to exemplify the changes described above in a case study of the premium cable company HBO in order to illustrate how television production and broadcasting companies are adapting to those new challenges, and to contextualize the role of this particular media outlet in the ever-changing field of television.

6. Case Study. HBO—Home Box Office

The US television universe is basically divided into three sectors: public broadcasting, cable, and satellite. Within the cable sector, there exist two types of networks: the ones that only collect the basic cable subscription fee and networks such as Showtime or HBO that are classified as 'premium cable', because they collect additional monthly fees and, in return, promise to deliver premium content. Compared to the rest of the market, which generally follows an advertiser-supported system, the pay cable sector's promise is mirrored in a completely different business model. Since it is dependent on the extra subscription fees paid by its niche audience, the most important goal is to satisfy those audiences by offering them original programming in order to justify the monthly extra payment. As Gary Edgerton argues, the history of Home Box Office (HBO)—a subsidiary of the Time Warner conglomerate since 1990—reflects the advantages of such a system. Since subscription TV is independent from serving advertisers, who, always under pressure by Nielsen ratings, traditionally preferred the least objectionable type of programming that was deemed to please the biggest part of broadcasting audiences, HBO was and is free to experiment with new ways of programming to satisfy its audience (cf. EDGERTON 2008).

¹² Updated revenue numbers taken from IFM 2015.

Particularly with regard to the production of TV drama, this became manifest in the development of complex series such as *Oz* (1997–2003), *The Sopranos* (1999–2007), or *Six Feet Under* (2001–2005)—shows that would cross genre boundaries and both shock and attract viewers by also expanding the established social boundaries of what was deemed acceptable on TV (cf. MCCABE/AKASS 2008).

The eagerness to enable artistic experiments through financial funding quickly attracted those writer-producers who had learned their craft on production sets of the Big Three (ABC, CBS, NBC), but felt the urge to break out of the production cycles of regular TV, thus boosting HBO's inventiveness factor even more. Now-famous showrunners such as Tom Fontana with *Oz*, Matt Weiner with *The Sopranos* and, later, *Mad Men* (2007–), Aaron Sorkin with *The West Wing* (1999–2006) and, later, *The Newsroom* (2012–2014), David Milch with *Deadwood* (2004–2006), David Simon with *The Wire* (2002–2008), and Larry David with *Curb Your Enthusiasm* (1999–) added enormously to the growing reputation of HBO as a harbinger of innovation and quality.¹³ In addition to that, HBO quickly realized that, in order to attract new subscribers, it would have to base its marketing strategies around the attraction of positive attention and a subsequent creation of ›buzz‹, with the goal to ensure that its shows would be talked about. ›Buzz‹ in this context denotes what was long known within the industry as the ›water cooler effect‹, a promotional outcome that would guarantee daily conversation about HBO's shows in offices and elsewhere.¹⁴

With all those means, the network established a fashionable way of watching TV that would motivate its viewers to »build [HBO programming] into their daily schedules« (EDGERTON 2008: 11). As Edgerton points out, HBO's model was so successful that the premium network was able to increase its subscriber numbers despite the fact that, during the first half of the decade, the overall market was increasingly diversifying and offering more channels to select from, thus leaving less shares of the overall audience for each single network. And while HBO was and is operating in the niche market of premium cable, its programs often challenge the big broadcasters with excellent viewer numbers. These broadcasters as well as other premium cable competitors such as Showtime and AMC eventually began imitating and adapting the HBO way, which led to an effect that was labeled by Colin Tait as ›HBO-ification‹ of the entire TV drama universe (cf. TAIT 2008). Chris Albrecht, former CEO of HBO, already stated in 2006:

¹³ It is important to point out that I apply the term ›quality television‹ in the way Newman and Levine understand it, »in reference to those programs that target a narrow, upscale audience and that are widely viewed as high quality by these viewers as well as by many critics and scholars. [They] do not use the term as [their] own designation of value. In this respect, [their] use follows that of Jane Feuer, Paul Kerr, and Tise Vahimagi« (NEWMAN/LEVINE 2012: 172, referring to FEUER/KERR/VAHIMAGI 1984).

¹⁴ Cf., e.g., HBO's own take on the ›water cooler effect‹, an HBO ad that comprised a thank-you message by the fictitious ›Watercooler Association of America‹, culminating in a knowing pun playing with HBO's own slogan: »It's not TV. It's H2O« <http://www.adforum.com/creative-work/ad/player/39657> [accessed March 17, 2015].

We showed what was possible to do on television [...]. I think what that did was to bring more people into the category and to spend more money on original scripted programming. It's good for everybody when the bar gets raised. (Albrecht, quoted in UMSTEAD 2006: n.pag.)

Since HBO had developed a business model that was so different from the usual advertiser-dependent broadcasting model right from its beginnings in 1973, it was also able to react more flexibly to the new demands posed by the onset of digitalization processes as well as the shift in audience behavior with audiences that increasingly used time- and place-shifting practices to form their weekly television routine. During the late 1990s and early 2000s, high-quality shows such as *Sex and the City* (1998–2004) and *The Sopranos* helped the network to build and manifest its reputation of a valuable brand that was able to diversify its reach from a premium cable-only business to a multi-platform content provider that offers different kinds of networks and subscription services (premium cable, HBO Go! streaming services, cooperation with Sky Atlantic as overseas carrier, etc.) as well as other distribution media such as DVD box sales. Parallel to that, HBO has extensively been working with transmedia experts in order to expand its content across a variety of media, thus allowing for the creation of huge transmedia universes (cf. e.g., the transmedia activities around its fantasy show *Game of Thrones* [2011–], which is also discussed in SCHRÖTER 2015).

HBO's particular business model has, over the past three decades, proven highly efficient: with a subscription revenue of 4.9b US\$ and an operating income of 1.68b US\$ (as of 2014, cf. BACHMAN 2014), HBO is still the most profitable and cost-effective premium-cable network in the US television landscape, and a major breadwinner for its parent conglomerate Time Warner. According to *Slate Magazine's* June Thomas, HBO's unique success is mostly due to the fact that the company did resist the trend of outsourcing that was omnipresent during the early 2000s, thus still being in full control of all its media outlets (cf. THOMAS 2012). By doing so, HBO is also able to maintain its reputation of exclusivity, a need that just recently led to controversial discussions about television content privacy and corresponding demands voiced by fans of HBO's current success *Game of Thrones*, who urged the network to open its subscriber-only streaming service to the global web community. *TechCrunch's* Ryan Lawler summarizes arguments stated by fan communities claiming they would be happy to refrain from illegally downloading the show if access to HBO's shows would be made possible without an actual cable subscription (which currently is only available to US citizens—thus excluding international audiences) (cf. LAWLER 2012).

Although being the first network to offer video-on-demand on a variety of platforms as an extra convenience service for regular holders of HBO subscriptions, HBO headquarters long refused to widen HBO's streaming service policy toward web-only customers with no access to the domestic US subscription pool. For international customers, subscription to HBO is usually

only available through third-party packages such as SkyAtlantic for the majority of the European market.

During the past three years, though, newly-emerging rivals such as Netflix and AmazonPrime—with self-produced high-quality shows not rooted in the TV industry—disrupted the market with their innovative approaches to provide television content through online-only portals and corresponding technological enhancements such as Google's Chromecast.¹⁵ The emergence of these competitors, combined with an underlying convenience culture of access to TV content, might be a strong reason why HBO just recently announced a policy change with regard to a planned extension of its service HBOGo toward an online-only portal that might allow a global audience to access HBO content via the Internet (cf. WELCH 2014). And, as a recent *New York Times* article by Emily Steel suggests, HBO just stated that it will be expanding aggressively toward full online streaming, thus opening completely new fields that more and more diverge from ›standard‹ television industry settings, moving into the web market (cf. STEEL 2015).

All in all, audiences and industries alike have experienced enormous changes during these past few years—the major shift toward an online content provider model might well pose a substantial risk to the established practice of television networks. As the example of HBO has shown, networks need to stay on their toes in order not to miss the next evolutionary step within the media landscape. To conclude, as Amanda Lotz notes, current developments might well point toward the demise of television as a single medium (cf. LOTZ 2014: 278), but this does not mean that we will witness the demise of the conglomerate of cultural practices that television has become—both as a unique form of storytelling and as the ever-evolving variety of producing and accessing television content in all its forms.

References

- ATKINSON, ROBERT; IVY E. SCHULTZ: *Broadband in America. Where It Is and Where It Is Going (According to Broadband Service Providers)*. 2011. http://www.gsb.columbia.edu/filemgr_redirect?file_id=738763 [accessed February 8, 2015]
- BACHMAN, JUSTIN: HBO Finally Reveals Profit Numbers. Take That, Netflix. In: *Bloomberg Business*, February 5, 2014. <http://www.bloomberg.com/bw/articles/2014-02-05/hbo-finally-reveals-profit-numbers-dot-take-that-netflix> [accessed June 10, 2015]
- BRODKIN, JON: Comcast Spent \$336 Million on Failed Attempt to Buy Time Warner Cable. In: *Arstechnica*, May 4, 2015. <http://arstechnica.com/>

¹⁵ Chromecast comprises a convenience gadget that promises to make content available via tablets, laptops, or smartphones easily accessible on any HDTV within one's home via wireless protocols and a simple USB stick.

- business/2015/05/comcast-spent-336-million-on-failed-attempt-to-buy-time-warner-cable [accessed June 14, 2015]
- BALDWIN, THOMAS F.; D. STEVENS McVOY; CHARLES STEINFELD: *Convergence. Integrating Media, Information & Communication*. Thousand Oaks [SAGE] 1996
- EDGERTON, GARY R.: Introduction. A Brief History of HBO. In: EDGERTON, GARY R.; JEFFREY P. JONES (eds.): *The Essential HBO Reader*. Lexington [UP of Kentucky] 2008, pp. 1–20
- FCC/FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION: *14th Mobile Wireless Competition Report*. 2010. <http://www.fcc.gov/reports/mobile-wireless-competition-report-14th-annual> [accessed February 8, 2015]
- FCC/FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION: *17th Mobile Wireless Competition Report*. 2014. <http://wireless.fcc.gov/competition-reports/mobile-wireless/mw-17/> [accessed February 12, 2015]
- FEUER, JANE; PAUL KERR; TISE VAHIMAGI (eds.): *MTM. »Quality Television«*. London [British Film Institute] 1984
- GITLIN, RICHARD D.; SAILESH K. RAO; JEAN-JACQUES WERNER; NICHOLAS ZERVOS: Method and Apparatus for Wideband Transmission of Digital Signals Between, for Example, a Telephone Central Office and Customer Premises. In: *United States Patent*, May 8, 1990. <http://www.google.com/patents/US4924492> [accessed June 13, 2015]
- HILLS, MATT: From the Box in the Corner to the Box Set on the Shelf. »TVIII« and the Cultural/Textual Valorisations of DVD. In: *New Review of Film and Television Studies*, 5(1), 2007, pp. 41–60
- HOLPUCH, AMANDA: FCC Raises Threshold for High-Speed Internet as Service Providers Cry Foul. In: *The Guardian*, January 29, 2015. <http://www.theguardian.com/business/2015/jan/29/fcc-increases-broadband-speed-threshold> [accessed March 5, 2015]
- IFM/INSTITUTE OF MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS POLICY: *Media Data Base. International Media Corporations 2015*. May 22, 2015. <http://www.mediadb.eu/en.html> [accessed June 10, 2015]
- ITU/INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATION UNION: *ITU Press Release. G.fast Broadband Standard Approved and on the Market. Compliant Chips and Equipment in the Hands of Service Providers*. December 5, 2014. http://www.itu.int/net/pressoffice/press_releases/2014/70.aspx [accessed June 10, 2015]
- JENKINS, HENRY: Convergence? I Diverge. In: *MIT Technology Review*, June 1, 2001. <http://www.technologyreview.com/article/401042/convergence-i-diverge> [accessed February 23, 2015]
- JENKINS, HENRY: *Convergence Culture. Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York [New York UP] 2006
- LAWLER, RYAN: How Much Would the Average Person Pay for a Standalone HBO GO Subscription? About \$12 a Month. In: *TechCrunch*, June 5, 2012. <http://techcrunch.com/2012/06/05/hbo-go-without-hbo/> [accessed May 19, 2015]

- LOTZ, AMANDA D.: *The Television Will Be Revolutionized*. 2nd edition. New York [New York UP] 2014
- MCCABE, JANET; KIM AKASS: It's Not TV, It's HBO's Original Programming. Producing Quality TV. In: LEVERETTE, MARC; BRIAN L. OTT; CARLA L. BUCKLEY (eds.): *It's not TV. Watching HBO in the Post-Television Era*. New York [Routledge] 2008, pp. 83–94
- MIRRELES, TANNER: *Global Entertainment Media. Between Cultural Imperialism and Cultural Globalization*. New York [Routledge] 2013
- NEGROPONTE, NICHOLAS: *Being Digital*. New York [Knopf] 1995
- NEWMAN, MICHAEL Z.; ELANA LEVINE: *Legitimizing Television. Media Convergence and Cultural Status*. New York [Routledge] 2012
- NIELSEN: *Television Audience Report 2010–2011*. 2011a. <http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/reports/2011/television-audience-report-2010-2011.html> [accessed February 8, 2015]
- NIELSEN: *Cross Platform is the New Norm*. 2011b. <http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/reports/2011/cross-platform-is-the-new-norm.html> [accessed February 8, 2015]
- NIELSEN: *State of the Media. U.S. Digital Consumer Report. Q3–Q4 2011*. 2011c. <http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/reports/2012/us-digital-consumer-report.html> [accessed February 8, 2015]
- NIELSEN: *Cross-Platform Report Q3 2011*. 2011d. <http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/reports/2012/cross-platform-report-q3-2011.html> [accessed February 8, 2015]
- NIELSEN: *Global Online Consumers and Multi-Screen Media. Today and Tomorrow*. May 15, 2012. <http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/reports/2012/global-online-consumers-and-multi-screen-media-today-and-tomorr.html> [accessed February 8, 2015]
- NIELSEN: *The Cross-Platform Report. A Look Across Screens*. June 10, 2013. <http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/reports/2013/the-cross-platform-report--a-look-across-screens.html> [accessed February 8, 2015]
- NIELSEN: *Shifts in Viewing. The Cross-Platform Report Q2 2014*. September 8, 2014a. <http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/reports/2014/shifts-in-viewing-the-cross-platform-report-q2-2014.html> [accessed February 8, 2015]
- NIELSEN: *The Total Audience Report*. December 3, 2014b. <http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/reports/2014/the-total-audience-report.html> [accessed February 08, 2015]
- OECD: *OECD Broadband Statistics*. 2014. <http://www.oecd.org/sti/broadband/1c-TotalBBSubs-bars-2013-12.xls> [accessed February 8, 2015]
- OWEN, BRUCE M.: *The Internet Challenge to Television*. Cambridge, MA [Harvard UP] 1999
- POGGIE, JEANINE: What You Need to Know About Interactive TV. Your Digital Questions Answered. In: *Advertising Age*, 83(9), 2012. <http://adage.com/article/digital/interactive-tv/232996/> [accessed March 3, 2015]

- RUSSO, NICK; ROBERT MORGUS; DANIELLE KEHL; SARAH MORRIS: *The Cost of Connectivity 2014. Data and Analysis on Broadband Offerings in 24 Cities Across the World*. 2014. <http://www.newamerica.org/oti/the-cost-of-connectivity-2014> [accessed February 8, 2015]
- SCHRÖTER, FELIX: The Game of *Game of Thrones*. George R.R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* and Its Video Game Adaptations. In: BEIL, BENJAMIN; KLAUS SACHS-HOMBACH; JAN-NOËL THON (eds.): *Media Convergence and Transmedial Worlds (Part 3)/Medienkonvergenz und transmediale Welten (Teil 3)*. Special issue *IMAGE*, 22, 2015, pp. 65–82
- SELYUKH, ALINA: U.S. FCC Pauses Comcast-Time Warner Merger Review until January 12. In: *Reuters*, December 22, 2014. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/22/us-usa-comcast-timewarnercable-idUSKBN0K01UU20141222> [accessed February 19, 2015]
- SPIGEL, LYNN: Introduction. In: SPIGEL, LYNN; JAN OLSSON (eds.): *Television after TV. Essays on a Medium in Transition*. Durham [Duke UP] 2004, pp. 1–34
- STEEL, EMILY: Netflix, Amazon and Hulu No Longer Find Themselves Upstarts in Online Streaming. In: *The New York Times*, March 24, 2015. <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/25/business/media/netflix-amazon-and-hulu-no-longer-find-themselves-tvs-upstarts.html> [accessed June 13, 2015]
- TAIT, COLIN: The HBO-ification of Genre. In: *Cinephile*, 4, 2008, pp. 50–57
- TELEVISION BUREAU OF ADVERTISING: *TV Basics. A Report on the Growth and Scope of Television*. 2012. http://www.tvb.org/media/file/TV_Basics.pdf [accessed February 8, 2015]
- THOMAS, JUNE: How Much Gold Is *Game of Thrones* Worth? How Does HBO Make Money on Expensive Shows Only 3 Million People Watch? In: *Slate Magazine*, March 29, 2012. http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/culturebox/2012/03/game_of_thrones_how_hbo_and_showtime_make_money_despite_low_ratings_.html [accessed February 19, 2015]
- TOFFLER, ALVIN: *The Third Wave*. New York [Morrow] 1980
- UMSTEAD, THOMAS R.: HBO Looks for Missing Link. In: *Multichannel*, July 7, 2006. <http://www.multichannel.com/news/content/hbo-looks-missing-link/370219> [accessed April 7, 2015]
- UNITED STATES CENSUS BUREAU: *The 2012 Statistical Abstract*. 2013. <https://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/2012edition.html> [accessed February 8, 2015]
- WELCH, CHRIS: HBO Is Finally Going to Let You Watch Its Shows Without Cable. In: *The Verge*, October 15, 2014. <http://www.theverge.com/2014/10/15/6982049/hbo-go-will-offer-standalone-subscription-2015> [accessed June 9, 2015]
- WIRTZ, BERND: *Media and Internet Management*. Wiesbaden [Gabler] 2011

Amelie Zimmermann

Blurring the Line Between Fiction and Reality. Functional Transmedia Storytelling in the German TV Series *About:Kate*

Abstract

New technological innovations offer a range of possibilities not only to tell a story via a single medium, but also to expand the diegetic world of the story via diverse devices. This leads to an expanded story universe (i.e., hyperdiegesis), not only confronting the recipients when they use the story's core medium but also accompanying them in their daily life when using social networks or reading newspapers. This article takes into account the existing definitions of transmedia phenomena and their structures in order to suggest a theoretical approach that uses semiotic and structuralist models applicable not only to individual texts but also to their interdependent constructions. These models are then applied to the ARTE production *About:Kate* (2013). Here, the transmedial way of telling the story (›discours‹) is functional for the content of the series (›histoire‹) and the communication of its overall semantic meaning.

1. Stories Told via More than One Media Device

When discussing stories told by more than one medium, Henry Jenkins should be mentioned first. His was the earliest definition of ›transmedia storytelling‹ in 2003 and, although his definition may not take into account all phe-

nomena in this field, it is the one frequently referred to. In his book *Convergence Culture*, Jenkins describes ›transmedia storytelling‹ as follows:

A transmedia story unfolds across multiple media platforms, with each new text making a distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole. In the ideal form of transmedia storytelling, each medium does what it does best—so that a story might be introduced in a film, expanded through television, novels and comics; its world might be explored through game play or experienced in an amusement park attraction. Each franchise entry needs to be self-contained so you don't need to have seen the film to enjoy the game, and vice versa. (JENKINS 2006: 97–98)

Jenkins' favorite example of the *Matrix* universe composed, of movies, videogames, short animes, comic strips, etc. illustrates his understanding of transmedia storytelling. Not only the overall story arc that is enriched by every text¹ but also the different texts themselves are important. Each different part of this overall story is valued in itself, because it can be received individually from the other texts.

According to Jenkins, every media device functions as a rabbit hole to the story and offers a unique access according to the individual mediality of the specific device: »Each medium does what it does best« (JENKINS 2006: 97). The ›self-contained‹ franchise entries thus stand alone but can be added to one another and then form the overall transmedial story arc.

Nevertheless, the nomination of *storytelling* already puts emphasis on story, on narration, which excludes texts without narrative structures and, therefore, might not be the most useful one for many transmedial phenomena. ›Story‹ itself has a variety of meanings (cf. PRINCE 2003) and must therefore be defined thoroughly when used. In narrotological analysis, we basically speak of story, or ›histoire‹, when the text communicates a transformation process: »[A]s soon as there is an action or event, even a single one, there is a story, because there is a transformation, a transition from an earlier state to a later and resultant state« (GENETTE 1990: 19).

The different states are presented in chronological order and differ distinctly from one another:

state1 -> transformation process -> state2

Jurij M. Lotman substantiated this understanding of narration by defining the change of state as a crucial event which violates the rules and laws of the diegetic world. In the end, this event is always redeemed. Crime stories, for example, tend to start with a murder that must not happen according to the ethical and juridical rules and values in the diegesis. In the end, the murderer is found and punished for the murder—a transformation process is told. Lotman's approach originally concentrates on spatial organizations of narrations and their semantic meaning. Thereby, it enriches theoretical approaches that focus on temporality (cf. LOTMAN 1993: 312).

¹ A ›text‹ is here understood as a syntactically assembled sequence of signs that communicates a semantic meaning through its structure. Cf. KRAH 2011: 22.

While the story—or ›histoire‹—concentrates on what happens, the ›discours‹ focuses on the way of telling the story. Which narrator figure does the text present? From which perspective is it told? In which order are the events of the story presented? Which description modes are used? When speaking about transmedial phenomena, the ›discours‹ level implies more than one media device. An analysis must therefore consist not only of an accurate closer look on the ›discours‹ of the individual texts but also of an examination of the interdependency of the texts as a whole. This certainly belongs to the ›discours‹ of a transmedially told text.

Transmedial projects like *Matrix* consist of individual texts with narrative structures. This is why Jenkins argues for their independence. Nonetheless, there are texts without narrative structures existing in transmedial projects, giving information needed to shape the diegetic world. Especially new media technologies allow connections of different devices, linking them more closely than Jenkins' definition permits. With new technological possibilities the different texts are not that autonomous anymore, they highly correspond and relate to one another. *About:Kate* will serve as an example for this.

Another frequently used term for transmedial phenomena is ›story-world‹ (cf., e.g., HERMAN 2002: 13). Still using the ›story‹ but putting emphasis on the creation of a world at the same time gets closer to the point of transmedial phenomena. However, yet again rejecting the term because of its focus on narration, Christy Dena suggests the term ›transfiction‹ (cf. DENA 2009: 23):

By transfiction I refer to stories that are distributed over more than one text, one medium. Each text, each story on each device or each website *is not* autonomous, unlike Henry Jenkins' transmedia storytelling. In transfiction [...], the story is dependent on all the pieces on each medium, device or site to be read/experienced for it to be understood. Basically, no single segment will be sufficient. (DENA 2006: n.pag., original emphasis)

Dena suggests the term ›transfiction‹ for those phenomena where the individual texts are not autonomous at all, but hold a close connection to one another. They just make sense because of their interdependency with the other texts in the transmedial universe. Accordingly, Dena's description is the opposite of Jenkins' ›transmedia storytelling‹. If the different texts are perceived autonomously without the other texts in the franchise, they cannot be understood.

What both Jenkins and Dena do not pay attention to however, are those transmedia phenomena which have one core text communicated via one media device and other texts accompanying it. While the core text is autonomous, the accompanying texts just make sense in correlation with it. Technically or with regard to content bound to the core text, the additional texts strengthen particular meanings communicated in the latter. They might therefore be considered as what Gérard Genette calls ›paratexts‹:

More than a boundary or a sealed border, the paratext is rather, a *threshold*, or [...] a ›vestibule‹ that offers the world at large the possibility of either stepping inside or turn-

ing back. It is an »undefined zone« between the inside and the outside [...]. Indeed, this fringe, always the conveyor of a commentary that is authorial or more or less legitimated by the author, constitutes a zone between text and off-text, a zone not only of transition but also of *transaction*. (GENETTE 1997: 1f., original emphases)

While Genette has titles, subtitles, prefaces or blurbs in mind that, on the one hand, belong to the core text and on the other hand, do not need to be perceived with it, some texts of transmedial projects might also be considered paratexts. When they function like rabbit holes leading to the diegetic universe by using another media device than the core text, they do not make sense without it and therefore just fit into Genette's definition of being in this particular zone between text and off-text. In addition, the distinction between text and paratext is often made by the analyst, while the recipient himself or herself refers to the whole as »the text itself« (GRAY 2010: 46).

What the different texts in a transmedial project have in common is the creation of a widely spanned universe. The term »storyworld« already indicates the importance of this unifying element. Based on structuralist and semiotic models for analyzing texts, the term shows that those models do not only apply to single texts but also to transmedial phenomena. Lotman, who analyzes texts with regard to their abstract spatial organization, defines them as »secondary modelling systems«. It is the structure of signs on the primary level of the language that creates a syntactic pattern on the second level of an abstract world, when it is organized in a text. So, every text, regardless of the concrete sign system used (movies, art, poetry, videogames, and so forth), presents its own world organized in spatial groups with different semantic meanings (cf. LOTMAN 1993: 312).

The »spatio-temporal universe designated by the narrative« (GENETTE 1990: 17) is called »diegesis« (cf. MARTÍNEZ/SCHÉFFEL 2009: 151–156). It consists of all the information explicitly and implicitly given in the text about the worldness, meaning its geographical shapings, the time and historic background, the acting personae, and, of course, the events that form the narration. The concept of a denoting diegesis incorporates every form of text, whether its sign system consists of linguistic and written signs or, for example, audiovisual or iconic ones. Furthermore, it includes texts with a narrative or descriptive mode or combinations of both and, hence, is a fundamental concept of the theory of interpretation not only in literary criticism but also in film and game studies.

Keeping in mind that every text exposes its own diegesis, one can apply this concept to transmedia phenomena. A transmedia project might come along as a *Matrix* universe consisting of games as well as movies. It might also be a TV series combining television's first with the smartphone's second screen. Whether or not its texts have a narrative structure, they all have an individual diegesis. For the composition of the different diegeses in a trans-

medial project, the term ›hyperdiegesis‹² has been suggested. Elizabeth Evans and Matt Hills use the term to describe a mosaic of texts. The latter concentrates on the fact that a hyperdiegesis can never be fully explored or observed by the recipient. It is a »vast and detailed narrative space, only a fraction of which is ever directly seen or encountered within the text« (HILLS 2002: 104). The term ›hyperdiegesis‹ shows that what is referred to here is not only a diegesis extracted from one text. It is vaster and only entirely to cross if all the texts are perceived.

When moving the attention to the recipient, another characteristic of transmedial hyperdiegeses becomes obvious: a transmedial hyperdiegesis has a flexible structure that does not only depend on the author responsible for the texts but also on the behavior of the recipient. The first text he or she perceives is the kick-off for the universe. The following texts will just add information to the existing diegesis. Hence, a hyperdiegesis is developed and shaped by one or more authors, but at the same time dependent on the recipient. The latter is thus strongly involved in decoding the semantic meanings of the text and its worldness.³ The fact that a transmedial project consists of more than one text empowers the recipient even more, because the hyperdiegesis it composes depends on his or her choice and chronological consuming behavior.

There is one last concept in the context of transmediality that should be mentioned. Starting from the analysis of computer games, Lisbeth Klastrup and Susana Tosca developed their model of ›transmedial worlds‹. They strengthen the approach of a world that is shaped by different texts, an »abstract content system [...] from which a repertoire of fictional stories and characters can be actualized or derived across a variety of media forms« (KLASTRUP/TOSCA 2004: n.pag.). The model of Klastrup and Tosca differentiates transmedial worlds with regard to their mythos, topos, and ethos. Their categories differ from the proposed concept of hyperdiegesis only in their nomination. What the outlined structuralist model of a text (and many texts in a hyperdiegesis) communicates is identical to the proposed information in the transmedial world's model: Mythos, topos, and ethos also correspond to the characters of the world, the existing conflicts, the geographical and historical background, and the moral rules existing in the transmedial world. As has been argued above, transmedial phenomena can be explained very well by structural analysis and semiotic models that do not only work for texts standing alone but also for those forming a franchise.

² The greek ›hyper‹ or latin ›super‹ suggests that the hyperdiegesis accompanies every part of the franchise. It can be estimated as the equivalent to Jenkins' overall story arc, with a focus on the worldness of a transmedia phenomenon.

³ The power of the recipient of literature is, for example, discussed by Umberto Eco (cf. ECO 1987). Eco's concept is at least partly applicable to other media.

2. Structure of *About:Kate*

2.1 TV Series

The German TV series *About:Kate*—directed by Janna Nandzik, produced by Ulmen Television GmbH, and first broadcast on ARTE from April to July 2013—serves as a good example for a transmedial structure functionally used to communicate content. In other words, the ›histoire‹ (what happened) and the ›discours‹ (how what happened is told) are highly dependent on one another in transporting the semantic meaning of the whole project. To understand this creation of meaning on two levels, it is useful to have a closer look at the structure of the project, meaning the ›histoire‹ as well as the ›discours‹.

As already mentioned above, many transmedial projects, especially when the parts are highly bound to one another, consist of a core medium that is accompanied by other texts. In the case of *About:Kate*, the core text is a TV series of 14 episodes, each with a length of 20 to 25 minutes. The TV series tells the story of Katherine Sophie Harff (Kate), who is in her late twenties when she submits herself to a psychiatric hospital. She is not sure about what defines her identity because of a posttraumatic stress disorder resulting from a car accident. In addition, she feels lost in the multitude of ways the new media offer to create different selves. The superficiality of social networks and the ability to recreate and invent oneself over and over again have disoriented Kate. The TV series begins with Kate's arrival in the psychiatric hospital and ends with her release, narrating the process of Kate successively regaining her autonomy through an increasingly reflected use of media. Perception and identity, (mis)interpretation of signs and their meanings, and self-representation via social media are the main topics of the TV series.

With regard to the ›discours‹ level, one can state that the series has a highly fragmented structure with lots of interposed pictures, drawings, short films, and photographs that differ in what they represent as well as in the way they represent it. Kate's experiences in the hospital are ruptured and illustrated by images that form a, presumably Kate's, stream of consciousness and that author Janna Nandzik calls »associative« (TOBESOCIAL 2013: n.pag.). The insertions are directly connected to the core story and thus never shown arbitrarily. Accordingly, the function of signs which create meaning by referring to something else instead of to their own terms (cf. ECO 1989: 27) is emphasized on a higher level. It is the structure that communicates denotative signification, not the different illustrations and images themselves.

Still, there is a high degree of semiotic diversity to be found within the series. The core story of Kate in the hospital, for example, is at one point interrupted by an animation that shows old media (book) crowing over new media (smartphones, computers):

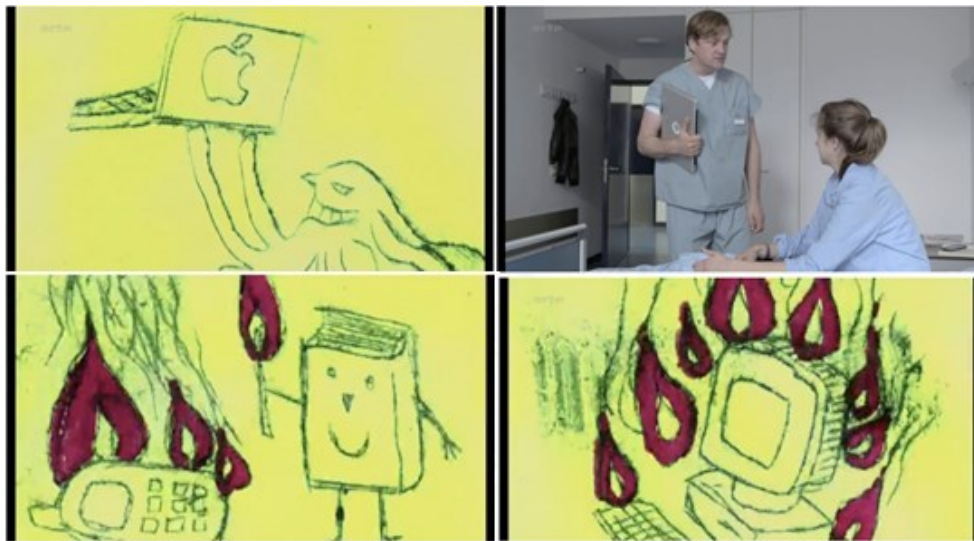


Fig. 1:
Screenshots of episode 6 »Das Tribunal«

With the setting of the animation in between the confiscation of Kate's laptop and her smartphone, the nurse and with him the entire hospital is semanticized as evil and oldfashioned (in opposition to new technological possibilities and the *status quo*). Furthermore, a lot of references to other texts such as music videos (e.g., The Prodigy: *Smack My Bitch Up* [1997]), movies (e.g., Stanley Kubrick: *The Shining* [1980]), literary texts (e.g., Jean-Paul Sartre: *The Flies* [1943]), etc. create the fragmentary structure of the TV series. To decode these references, ›culturally shared knowledge‹ is necessary (cf. TITZMANN 2011: 90). Through the transmedial structure of *About:Kate*, and particularly through the application on the second screen, some of these references are explained, though (see section 2.2).

With breaks and ruptures as the main principle of the TV series' overall structure, orders are continually questioned and repeatedly rejected. The diegesis, for example, is constructed mimetically; geographically and historically orientated in here-and-now Germany. Nevertheless, any assumption of a diegetic reality like our actual reality is steadily rejected, for example, when Kate's 11-year-old Minimé dances through the corridors with her older equivalent, or when the nurse is able to enter rooms through cupboards. *About:Kate* thereby intentionally rejects the logical implications it just created. Leaps in time as well as different versions of the same sequence are characteristics of the ›discours‹, too. The diegesis is consistent in presenting inconsistencies. Thereby, the series states that perception is a playful combination of fiction and reality.

2.2 Second Screening

The application *About:Kate* was programmed by Netzbewegung GmbH to simultaneously accompany the TV series. It was downloaded about 15,000

times during the broadcasting period.⁴ With a special technology utilizing the microphone of the smartphone or tablet, the app remains in-synch with the particular episode via audio signals. The geographical setting of the TV series was picked up for the application as well. Designed as a psychological test, the recipient could answer questions concerning his or her psychological constitution and habits and in the end get his or her own psychological analysis. Main topics of the series' episodes correspond to those of the application. In part, the questions posed by the app directly refer to the sequences in the series, asking for the recipient's interpretation of it. It has already been discussed that the series employs plenty of intertextual references. With the app as a simultaneous second screen, the cross references could be pointed out and explained. Culturally shared knowledge, which is frequently required on the part of the recipient in order to understand references, can thus be provided more explicitly. In other words: the recipient does not need to understand the intertextual connection; if he or she uses the second screen, knowledge gaps are filled up by the app. Another function of the app becomes apparent in this game of signs and references: it provides additional background information and links to websites that in turn inform about related issues. Unsurprisingly, then, some information could also be read as advertisements for movies, newspapers, to-be-released books, etc.

One peculiarity of the app should still be mentioned. The application was programmed in a way, that employed the smartphone's original quality as a bilateral communication medium several times during the broadcasting period. While watching the series and using the app to get additional information or answer the occasional question, the recipient gets a call from Kate. The telephone rings and the recipient has to answer the call. One time, Kate directly addresses the recipient as ›you‹ and asks for his or her support, because she could not explain to herself what just happened. Certainly, this does not constitute an actual two-way communication, because Kate would not answer any directly posed questions, but the situation of an actual phone call is at least simulated. The character of Kate thereby stepped out of the diegesis and gets into contact with the recipient. A parasocial interaction between figure and recipient is simulated (cf. HORTON/WOHL 1956: n.pag.). Narratological theory speaks of metaleptic structures when narrative levels are combined against their logical composition (cf. GENETTE 1972: n.pag.).⁵ In the example analyzed here, Kate, as the protagonist of the story, could not have been aware of an audience that was not part of her represented world. Accordingly, her calling the recipient was a step across the border between diegetic and extra-diegetic world, a breaking of the fourth wall⁶, and, hence, a further blending of the fictional diegesis with the recipient's reality.

⁴ This information results from correspondence with ARTE employees.

⁵ Examples of metaleptical structures in movies are e.g. Woody Allen's *The Purple Rose of Cairo* (1985) or Michel Gondry's *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (2004).

⁶ »The fourth wall convention exemplifies the articulation of traditional screen-based narrative techniques and aesthetics in which the fictional world is kept at a distance from reality, where on-

2.3 Profiles of the Main Characters on Facebook

Facebook is a social network that is used to communicate with others and to inform oneself about the world. Both of these functions were adopted for the transmedial project *About:Kate* during the broadcasting period. On the one hand, the project had its own Facebook page to inform the recipients about its structure or upcoming episodes. This Facebook page can be seen as a marketing tool for the whole project. On the other hand, Facebook also worked as a communication tool. Six of the characters in the series had their own profile on the social network. When creating a Facebook profile, one is able to choose if the profile belongs to a fictional character—a celebrity—or if it is for a real person. One can just ›follow‹ the former and get informed about his or her status news, while it is possible to become ›friends‹ with the latter which opens up the opportunity to chat with the person via Facebook. During the broadcasting period, six character profiles were installed, all as real persons. While they were deleted from Facebook after the last episode was broadcasted, Kate and the other figures posted films, pictures, quotations, or thoughts during the shows initial run:



Fig. 2:
Kate's post on Facebook

Consistent with the overall design of the TV series, Kate's posts differed a lot from one another in style and content. 5,000 friends is the maximum one can have on Facebook, a limit that Kate easily reached. When becoming friends with a person on Facebook, it is possible to write messages and chat with him or her. Similar to Kate's calls via the app, Facebook, too,

screen characters and storytelling processes seemingly ignore the presence of an audience« (ATKINSON 2012: 78).

offered the possibility to »bleed the narrative world [...] into the ›real‹ world of the internet« (EVANS 2011: 24f.). A virtual conversation with the characters was not only possible but frequently took place. According to Janna Nandzik, recipients easily got into a parasocial interaction with the characters, during which they totally forgot about the artificial nature of their chat partners.⁷ Although the characters did not start a conversation in the first place, but rather reacted on opened-up talks, one can also observe a metaleptic structure here. The diegesis and the actual world became indistinct, because the characters could ›bleed‹ into the latter via these virtual conversations.

2.4 The Website

During the broadcasting period, the website of the project functioned as a metasite where it was possible to watch all the episodes after their broadcast on TV, to take a look at the results of the psychological test of the app, and read through some of Kate's posts on Facebook.⁸ Furthermore, the website provided information about the project itself, the characters and places of the diegesis, and comments by the recipients. In addition, during the broadcasting period, the website offered the possibility to hand in user-generated content that was inserted into the episodes.

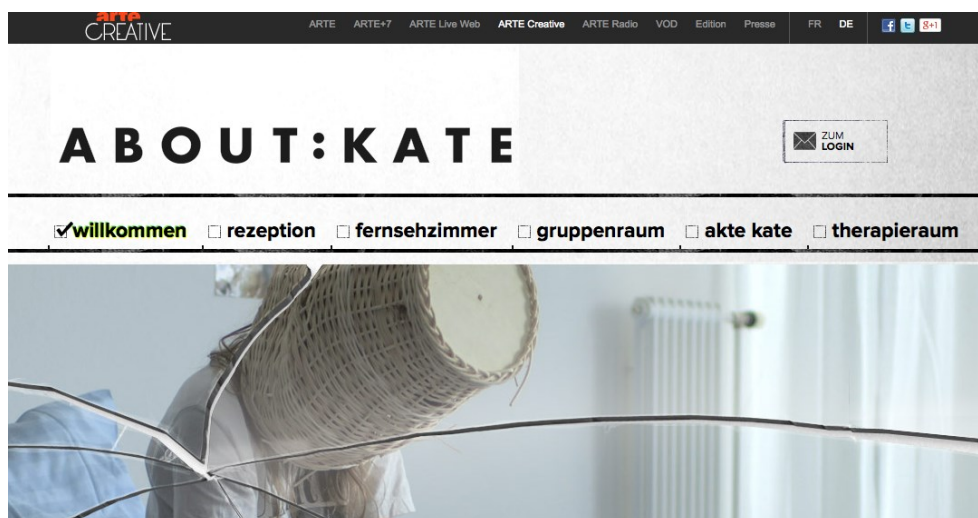


Fig. 3:
Homepage of the project. Screenshot from <http://kate.artetv.de> [accessed January 8, 2014]

The titles of the subpages referred to the spatial layout of a psychiatric hospital. The diegesis of the TV series was thus remediated on the Internet. However, the interrelation between the diegesis of the TV series and the website was not limited to their spatial design. Take, for example, the above

⁷ As Nandzik said in an interview with the author of this paper, the producers even had to involve pastoral care in two cases.

⁸ Whenever this analysis focuses on irretrievable parts of the project, like website or communication via Facebook, past tense is used. Present tense indicates that the text is still available in its original form of the broadcasting period..

photography of the main character Kate who is sitting in her room in the psychiatric hospital with a self-made basket put over her head. As opposed to the original image, this one had streaks on it suggesting damage. Accordingly, the website metareflexively commented on the whole project: what we see here is a photography broken into pieces that need to be put together again. The image as a whole is damaged, just as Kate's perception is not clear. In addition, the importance of the question of Kate's identity⁹ was reaffirmed on every single one of the subpages. Hence, the central topics of the website correspond to the thematic focus of the TV series. What the core text of the TV series transports is closely aligned to what the paratexts website and app as well as the social network Facebook communicate(d). The whole project of *About:Kate* consists of various different parts that together form a consistent image, a consistent hyperdiegesis, transporting the project's meaning.

On the subpage ›group room‹, the users had the opportunity to hand in images or short videos to different topics (e.g., ›stealing food‹). They were asked to produce their own content relating to specific issues during particular periods. This user-generated content was integrated in slots left blank when the series was produced, starting with the third episode. Due to new technological options, interactivity and user participation are parts of many modern transmedial projects (see, e.g., *The Truth About Marika* [2008], *The Spiral* [2012]). The user-generated content in *About:Kate* enriched its fragmentary structure and thus did not appear out of place at all. Also, the producers decided which user-generated content would fit into the series thematically as well as in terms of style. Despite some degree of control by the producers, then, the recipient of *About:Kate* could at least partially occupy the position of a co-author by sending in his or her own reactions to this pre-defined topics.

3. Functional Transmedia Storytelling in *About:Kate*

Like many transmedial projects, *About:Kate* is strongly connected to the time and place of its first broadcast. The experience of the whole project will never be the same again for any recipient, because he or she will never again have the opportunity to connect with the show's characters via Facebook or to submit his or her self-generated content. The character Kate is present in all the different texts. She and the location of the psychiatric hospital indicate a coherent group of texts that form one hyperdiegesis. The diegesis originates from the TV series, which functions as a core text for the transmedial project. The other texts on different media devices do not make sense without the core text, while the latter itself can be received autonomously. Watching the series without visiting the website has the effect that the recipient cannot participate as a co-author; becoming friends with characters on Facebook, in

⁹ »Wer ist Kate Harff?« (Who is Kate Harff?).

contrast, would not make sense without watching the series. Furthermore, the app is technically bound to the series and just does not work without any audio signal from the series. Hence, we may neither speak of ›transmedia storytelling‹ as Jenkins would define it, nor categorize the project as ›transfiction‹.

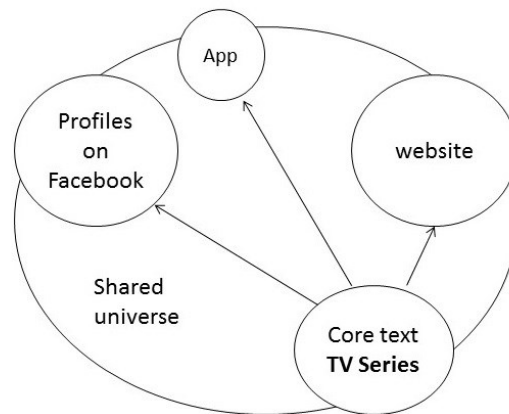


Fig. 4:
The structure of *About:Kate*. Illustration by the author of this article

The diegetic universe of *About:Kate* expanded widely (see fig. 4). It confronted the recipient not only when he or she was watching TV, but also when he or she was using the computer or his or her smartphone. Kate—and, with her, the whole storyworld as well as its topics—accompanied the recipient through his or her daily life. The diegetic world and the recipient's reality did not exist parallel and independently of one another, they intertwined. Furthermore, every text of the transmedial project *About:Kate* presented a metaleptic structure where the separate narrative levels cross against the internal logic of the storyworld. The effect was a blurring of the line between intra- and extradiegetic world, between fiction and reality. Kate does not know who she is or even whether she perceives the world more or less accurately.

On the ›histoire‹ level of the series, Kate's psychiatrist states at one point that perception is a game which can help us to position ourselves if we play it consciously.¹⁰ This advice is not only spoken in the direction of Kate. Moreover, it can be understood as a metareflective indication how to perceive texts in general: as an interdependent game of signs on a micro and, in case of transmedial projects, of texts as combination of signs on a macro level (see fig. 5).

¹⁰ »Aber als Spiel, als bewusstes Spiel kann es uns helfen, uns von außen zu betrachten.« Psychiatriest Dr. Desmarin in episode 14 »Das Feuerwerk«, 5:24–5:29



Fig. 5:
The psychiatrist Dr. Desmarin pointing at the reception of the psychiatric hospital. Episode 14, »Das Feuerwerk«.

Perception and identity are correlated in the transmedial project *About:Kate* and examined via different texts on different media devices.¹¹ On a ›histoire‹ level, the series presents a process of re-gaining autonomy in a mediated world. The narration starts with a disoriented protagonist and ends with her conscious decision against suicide and for a life in this complex world. However, Kate's disorientation is also passed on to the recipient via diverse narrative techniques. Thereby, the forth wall to the audience is frequently broken and reality and fiction are intertwined indistinctly.

References

- ATKINSON, SARAH: The View from the Fourth Wall Window. In: IBRUS, INDREK; CARLOS A. SCOLARI (eds.): *Crossmedia Innovations. Texts, Markets, Institutions*. Frankfurt/M. [Peter Lang] 2012, pp. 77–92
- DENA, CHRISTY: *Writing Predictions for the Next Decade*. 2006. <http://www.christydena.com/2006/01/writing-predictions-for-the-next-decade/> [accessed January 16, 2015]
- DENA, CHRISTY: *Transmedia Practice. Theorising the Practice of Expressing a Fictional World Across Distinct Media and Environments*. Sydney [PhD Thesis, University of Sydney] 2009. https://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/30158/DENA_TransmediaPractice.pdf [accessed January 16, 2015]
- ECO, UMBERTO: *Lector in fabula. Die Mitarbeit der Interpretation in erzählenden Texten*. Translated by Heinz G. Held. Munich [DTV] 1987

¹¹ Another sentence of the psychiatrist is prominently positioned at the end of the last episode: »What we see is not what we see, but what we are « (»Was wir sehen ist nicht, was wir sehen, sondern was wir sind«). Episode 14 »Das Feuerwerk«, 22:59–23:03.

- ECO, UMBERTO: *Im Laybrinth der Vernunft. Texte über Kunst und Zeichen*. Leipzig [Reclam] 1989
- EVANS, ELIZABETH: *Transmedia Television. Audiences, New Media and Daily Life*. New York [Routledge] 2011
- GENETTE, GÉRARD: Discours du récit. In: GENETTE, GÉRARD: *Figures III*. Paris [Seuil] 1972, pp. 67–282
- GENETTE, GÉRARD: *Narrative discourse revisited*. 3rd edition. Ithaca [Cornell UP] 1990
- GENETTE, GÉRARD: *Paratexts. Threshold of Interpretation*. Cambridge [Cambridge UP] 1997
- GRAY, JONATHAN: *Show Sold Separately. Promos, Spoilers, and Other Media Paratexts*. New York [New York UP] 2010
- HERMAN, DAVID: *Story Logic. Problems and Possibilities of Narrative*. Lincoln [U of Nebraska P] 2002
- HILLS, MATT: *Fan Cultures*. London [Routledge] 2002
- HORTON, DONALD; RICHARD R. WOHL: Mass Communication and Para-Social Interaction. Observations on Intimacy at a Distance. In: *Psychiatry*, 19, 1956, pp. 215–229
- JENKINS, HENRY: *Convergence Culture. Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York [New York UP] 2006
- KLAstrup, LISBETH; SUSANA TOSCA: Transmedial Worlds. Rethinking Cyberworld Design. 2004. http://www.itu.dk/people/klastrup/klastruptosca_transworlds.pdf [accessed August 30, 2013]
- KRAH, HANS: Kommunikation und Medien. Semiotische Grundlagen. In: KRAH, HANS; MICHAEL TITZMANN (eds.): *Medien und Kommunikation. Eine interdisziplinäre Einführung*. Passau [Stutz] 2011, pp. 11–30.
- LOTMAN, JURIJ M.: *Die Struktur literarischer Texte*. München [Fink] 1993
- MARTÍNEZ, MATÍAS; MICHAEL SCHEFFEL: *Einführung in die Erzähltheorie*. 8th edition. München [Beck] 2009
- PRINCE, GERALD: *A Dictionary of Narratology*. 2nd edition. Lincoln [U of Nebraska P] 2003
- TOBESOCIAL: Social TV *About:Kate*. Das große Interview über die Serie About:Kate (ARTE) mit Regisseurin Janna Nandzik. In: *ToBeSocial*, May 14, 2013. <http://tobesocial.de/blog/about-kate-social-tv-arte-sendung-second-screen-fernsehen-social-media-app-integration> [accessed March 15, 2014]
- TITZMANN, MICHAEL: Propositionale Analyse – kulturelles Wissen – Interpretation. In: KRAH, HANS; MICHAEL TITZMANN (eds.): *Medien und Kommunikation. Eine interdisziplinäre Einführung*. Passau [Stutz] 2011, pp. 83–108

Robert Baumgartner

**»In the Grim Darkness of the Far
Future there is only War«.
Warhammer 40,000, Transmedial
Ludology, and the Issues of Change
and Stasis in Transmedial
Storyworlds**

Abstract

Warhammer 40,000 (or *Warhammer 40k*) is a science fantasy tabletop war game set in a dystopian vision of the 41st millennium, with a xenophobic and fascist galaxy-spanning »Imperium of Man« fighting in numerous never-ending wars against various inhuman opponents, among them transdimensional demons, ancient robots and swarms of planet-eating bugs. Since its release in 1987, the game has become one of the most successful tabletop brands and has given birth to numerous spinoffs in the form of (more than 120) novels, pen-and-paper role-playing games, comics, and video games. This article acts as an introduction to the complex structure of this particular transmedial franchise, but also explores the consequences of a ludic »mother ship« for further transmedial extensions: as players experience the world by simulative means, they gain a unique »empirical« approach to the facts of the world, which will influence their further dealings with other elements of the storyworld, be it a game, a novel, or a comic. Using a ludological approach, the article then attempts to find the common structural elements shared between the games of the *Warhammer 40,000* brand, thus opening the way for further explorations from the perspective of a transmedial ludology. Further-

more, it sheds light on the franchise's attempts to advance its storyline with the collective help of fans and players of the original tabletop war game »mother ship«, in the process revealing a conflict between the conception of the transmedial storyworld as (mostly) static setting, on the one hand, and as dynamic storyline, on the other.

1. Introduction to a »Grimdark« Future

It is the 41st Millennium. For more than a hundred centuries the Emperor of Mankind has sat immobile on the Golden Throne of Earth. He is the master of mankind by the will of the gods and master of a million worlds by the might of his inexhaustible armies. He is a rotting carcass writhing invisibly with power from the Dark Age of Technology. He is the Carrion Lord of the vast Imperium of Man for whom a thousand souls are sacrificed every day so that he may never truly die. Yet even in his deathless state, the Emperor continues his eternal vigilance. Mighty battlefleets cross the daemon-infested miasma of the Warp, the only route between distant stars, their way lit by the Astronomican, the psychic manifestation of the Emperor's will. Vast armies give battle in His name on uncounted worlds [...]. But for all their multitudes, they are barely enough to hold off the ever-present threat to humanity from aliens, heretics, mutants—and far, far worse. To be a man in such times is to be one amongst untold billions. It is to live in the cruellest and most bloody regime imaginable. These are the tales of those times. Forget the power of technology and science, for so much has been forgotten, never to be relearned. Forget the promise of progress and understanding, for in the grim dark future there is only war. There is no peace amongst the stars, only an eternity of carnage and slaughter, and the laughter of thirsting gods. (FANTASY FLIGHT GAMES 2009: 12)

This quote, taken from the rulebook of the pen-and-paper role-playing game *Warhammer 40,000. Rogue Trader* (2009), serves as a concise introduction to one of the most extensive—and yet most underexplored—transmedial storyworlds around: since its inception in 1987 as a tabletop war game, the *Warhammer 40,000* (shortened *Warhammer 40k* or *WH40K*) franchise has not only become one of the most successful tabletop brands but also gave birth to numerous »satellites« (cf. JENKINS 2009) in the form of interdependent novels, pen-and-paper role-playing games, comics, best-selling video games,¹ and a massive community of fan fiction writers and artists.² The tabletop »mother ship« (cf. JENKINS 2009) and its complex medial hybridity between ludic rule-based gameplay (termed »crunch« by players) and narrative »fluff« is of great interest to both scholars of game studies and narratologists, whereas each of the transmedial branch products would be worthy of investigation in its own right. However, the little existing research that is concerned with *Warhammer 40,000* mostly focuses on design aspects of the original war game: the works of Clim J. de Boer and Maarten H. Lamers (cf. DE BOER/LAMERS 2004) or Steve Hinske and Marc Langheinrich (cf. HINSKE/LANGHEINRICH 2009) use *Warhammer 40,000* as a more or less interchangeable example of a tabletop war game system; their interest lies in the possible augmentation of

¹ Cf. *Warhammer Dawn of War* (I, 2004/II, 2009), *Warhammer 40,000. Space Marine* (2011).

² The most popular online repository for fan fiction, *fanfiction.net*, holds more than 3,200 *Warhammer 40,000* fan stories. Cf. <https://www.fanfiction.net/game/Warhammer/> [accessed March 30, 2015].

non-digital tabletop games with digital tools and thus implicitly excludes most narrative aspects of the game—including the potential conveyance of meaning by iconic or indexical means. However, as the works of Saskia Bakker and colleagues (cf. BAKKER et al. 2007) demonstrated, even a small change in the design of miniatures from abstract to more iconic forms can significantly alter the ways in which players contextualize the relation of these miniatures to each other and understand the game (cf. BAKKER et al. 2007: 163f.). The works of Markus Carter, Martin Gibbs, and Mitchell Harrop (cf. CARTER/GIBBS/HARROP 2013; 2014) acknowledge this fact: their analysis of the possible enjoyment of the tabletop game is not limited to the basic game rules and play pieces, but also examines the possible enjoyment gained from the visual design of miniatures and (tabletop) battlefields, as well as the elaborate narratives about the fictional characters, armies, and locations that are represented by the painted plastic and metal objects.

However, these inquisitive ludological investigations have not been accompanied by narratological approaches—despite the variety of narrative styles, genres, and tropes employed not just in the tabletop war game itself, but in the creation of a complex transmedial universe whose specific ethos has inspired the widely used online neologism ›grimdark‹ (referring to extremely bleak, dark, and nihilistic fictional settings and situations).³ It is my hypothesis that this hesitation can be explained by two central factors: first, the fact that the narrative of *Warhammer 40,000* is deeply rooted in genre literature, primarily ›soft‹ science fiction and heroic fantasy—genres that are still strongly associated with triviality and cannot offer an institutional support network for interested scholars in the humanities. Second, the fact that a large proportion of the narrative content of the transmedial ›storyworld‹ of *Warhammer 40,000* is closely linked to various games (tabletop war games, pen-and-paper role-playing games, video games of various genres). The main way of fully ›unlocking‹ this content is by playing and analyzing these games—an undertaking that not only takes a lot of time but also requires individuals to be competent gamers as well as trained game studies scholars. However, these harsh requirements are offset by the richness of a transmedial franchise that is not only extremely complicated but also strongly based on a ludic component, both in its ›mother ship‹ and its transmedial extensions: as players experience the world by simulative means, they gain a unique ›empirical‹ approach to the facts of the world, which will influence their further dealings with other elements of the storyworld, be it a game, a novel, or a comic. For this reason, the present article is not just intended as an introduction to the transmedial franchise and its unexplored narrative aspects but also as a case study for the productive combination of narratological and ludological approaches in the study of transmedial research objects.

³ Cf. <http://knowyourmeme.com/memes/grimdark> [accessed March 30, 2015].

2. Origin. A Tabletop War Game ›Mother Ship‹

The setting depicts the society of the 41st Millennium (i.e., 39.000 years in the future) as a totalitarian empire that is teetering on the brink of collapse: from the outside, it is challenged by numerous powerful alien species, like the demonic forces of Chaos, planet-eating swarms of insectoid monsters called Tyranids, or the Necrons, ancient mechanoids that have risen from their eon-spanning slumber to reclaim their lost empire. From within, the regressive Imperium is threatened by bureaucratic incompetence, superstition, rebellion, mutation, and subversive Chaos cults. Life is cheap: soldiers die by the billions, whole worlds are swallowed by cosmic storms or ripped apart by demonic forces, and imperial citizens spend their short lives toiling away for the glory of the comatose Emperor—who, before being mortally wounded by his traitorous son in a galactic civil war, attempted to unify mankind in a technologically as well as socially progressive secular civilization. Now, his corpse-like body is venerated as a god by a giant church apparatus (the Ecclesiarchy) and presides over an empire that only survived the ten millennia of his absence as a calcified husk strife with cruelty, ignorance, and religious fervor. However, the game also suggests that a more open and permissive empire might long have fallen to the numerous enemies of mankind: when even sophisticated AIs are easily corrupted by powerful Chaos Gods created and sustained by the collective subconscious, a society tends to get more distrustful of technology.

With most of the conflicts in the setting being fought by irreconcilable factions and ideologies, peace negotiations are unusual events and mostly only temporal breaks that allow the negotiating sides to attack a third faction. The origin of this bleak and nihilistic future, where futuristic technology clashes with archaic beliefs, where »there is only war« (the mantra and ›ethos‹ of *Warhammer 40,000*, cf. FANTASY FLIGHT GAMES 2009: 12) can be traced back to the rulebook of a niche game called *Rogue Trader* (1987). A hybrid of different tabletop game genres, *Rogue Trader* provided both complex rules for small- and medium-scale war games fought with small (28mm scale) plastic/lead miniatures and a rich futuristic setting that established the narrative background for the various involved factions. The British developing company Games Workshop originally envisioned *Rogue Trader/Warhammer 40,000* as a less expensive⁴ and more humoristic science fiction version of their established fantasy war game *Warhammer* (cf. HOARE 2011), but the demand of players for a game that could be played at larger tournaments as well as the positive feedback to the darker elements of the settings led to the development of the *Warhammer 40,000* that we know today.

Players of the tabletop game choose one of the numerous factions—either due to its mechanical characteristics, its narrative background, its visu-

⁴ The game was designed for the use of ›proxies‹, i.e., improvised miniatures that did not have an iconic relation to the referred fictional character, such as sugar cubes as stand-ins for fearsome super soldiers.

al aesthetic, or a combination of these factors (cf. HARROP/CARTER/GIBBS 2014: 5). They then start assembling their army out of the 20 to 40 different units that are included in the ›codex‹ (a 50+-page document combining a mechanical unit and army list with narrative descriptions and characterization) of their faction. Players then purchase miniatures representing individual infantrymen, tanks, or larger units like bipedal war machines, artillery units, or massive demons—with the cost of unassembled and unpainted tanks usually hovering around 60 US\$ and that of even larger models going up to 100 US\$, fielding a whole army can be seen as a considerable investment. Players then paint and modify the miniatures to their individual liking or based on narrative ›fluff‹—another investment, as many players report that painting an army usable for tournaments usually takes up to 100 hours (cf. CARTER/GIBBS/HARROP 2014: 136).

Each miniature or group of miniatures has specific characteristics that define its options and value in battle. An example: a ›Khorne Berserker‹, narratively characterized as a bloodthirsty warrior driven into a rage by his chaos god, receive the following special characteristics: »Fearless, Furious Charge, Rage, Counter Attack, [...] two weapon attacks«⁵—even without grasping the exact mechanical consequences of each rule, players can see that Khorne Berserkers are best used as brutal melee fighters (which is affirmed by the design of their miniatures: every unit wears heavy armor and a horned helmet while wielding a massive axe). Each of the ›stats‹ (i.e., mechanical characteristics) influences the gameplay itself: units with better statistics are more effective, but also have a higher point value (which limits the size of armies), thus making them more expensive to field. For a match involving two or more players, each player will select models from his or her own collection matching a previously agreed upon point value. The battle is then fought on a table space of 6" by 4" (1.82m x 1.22m) that is often decorated with elaborate set pieces and terrain, representing the fictional landscapes of the 41st millennium as much as mechanically relevant topography that defines cover, movement rates, and height levels.

Although the rulebooks and codices usually dedicate a third of their pages to the narrative background and characterization of units and factions (mixing fictional diaries, bureaucratic reports, hagiographies, or songs with evocative images that blend medieval church paintings, romanticist, and Heavy Metal imagery), it has to be noted that this elaborate narrative universe is barely present in the gameplay itself: its ludic pleasures lie, among others (like the painting of miniatures and social interaction with other players, cf. CARTER/GIBBS/HARROP 2014: 123), in the proper planning and execution of strategic actions that will decimate the opponent's army and ensure victory. The fictional universe or ›fluff‹—a term that emphasizes the ornamental character of its referent—is used as inspiration for custom army designs or match environments, but is not functionalized in the gameplay itself: players do not

⁵ http://1d4chan.org/wiki/Warhammer_40,000/Tactics/Chaos_Space_Marines%287E%29#Elites [accessed March 30, 2015].

need to know why their Space Marine army is fighting the mysterious Eldar on an icy moon, but the studies of Carter and colleagues among tournament players indicate that the coherent integration of tabletop matches in the narrative framework of the storyworld can function as another source of enjoyment offered by the pastime (cf. CARTER/GIBBS/HARROP 2014: 139).

3. Charting a Transmedial Universe

3.1 The Storyworld of the 41st Millennium. Narrative Media

In the decades following its original release, *Warhammer 40,000* did not only turn into one of the most successful tabletop brands but also became one of the most expansive transmedial franchises in Western popular culture—both from the perspective of transmedial narratology and from that of an as-of-yet unestablished transmedial ludology.

Let us start, then, with an examination of the well-established concept of the (narrative) storyworld—i.e., a framework that contains the ›existents‹, events, and settings which mark stories among various narrative media as referring to the same fictional world (cf. RYAN 2014: 25). While the rulebook for the first edition of *Warhammer 40,000* had outlined the storyworld of the 41st millennium in broad strokes, the rulebooks for the following editions expanded the world massively, both in breadth (more factions, more units, more sectors of the galaxy) and depth (more nuances and groups within various factions, more historical details). Separately published supplements and expansions not only provided players with more options to customize their armies and battles but also included more background information and new regiments that were tuned to the theme of the expansion (urban warfare, planetary invasions, fortifications, etc.). Between new rulebooks and expansions, more details were gradually added in the form of maps, short stories, and artworks in Games Workshop's own magazines *White Dwarf* (1977–) or *Inferno!* (1997–2004) as well as in established gaming periodicals like *Citadel Journal* (1985–2002).

Soon after the release of the first edition, Games Workshop also started publishing novels set in the *Warhammer 40,000* universe. They depict many of the important events in the 10 millennia following the great civil war that brought the human Imperium to the verge of ruin. While many novels stay close to the most well-known elements of the setting (transhuman elite troops/battle monks called Space Marines fighting an assortment of aliens or heretics), others shed light on the life and experience of marginalized or otherized factions and individuals:

The *Ciaphas Cain* series follows the exploits of an Imperial commissar (a role similar to a Soviet politcommissar) who survives in the grim darkness of future battlefields despite suicidal orders, overwhelming adversaries, and a lack of resources by skill, cowardice, and sheer luck.

The *Gaunt's Ghosts* series depicts the life of a unit of regular Imperial guardsmen (one of the weakest units in the tabletop game, whose powerless laser rifle is nicknamed »flashlight« by players) who do their best to survive their role as cannon fodder in the fight against immortal robots and demonic monstrosities.

The *Night Lords* series of novels is dedicated to a legion of Chaos Space Marines, i.e., a faction of corrupted super soldiers on an eternal crusade against civilization; the novels discuss their motives in some detail, attempting to humanize a faction that is usually depicted as unapologetically amoral.

The *Path of the Eldar* sheds light on the ways of the mysterious Eldar species, whose unpredictable actions are shown to be dictated by ancient prophecies and eon-spanning plans to save their dwindling numbers from extinction.

Ravenor features the heavily disabled psyker⁶ Gideon Ravenor, who, despite being bound to a life support chair, is still sent out into the battlefields of the future with a retinue of (more or less) loyal allies.

Today, the company's publishing branch Black Library provides more than 120 *Warhammer 40,000* novels and novellas, all of which are considered »canon« (i.e., authentic contributions to the storyworld). Events of novellas are referenced in the rulebooks and popular characters from the novels have been offered as miniatures for the tabletop war game.⁷

At the same time, Games Workshop authorized the creation of numerous *Warhammer 40,000* comics and graphic novels, which were published in various British comic magazines and, from 1998 to 2004, in *Warhammer Monthly*, a monthly comic anthology. These comics and graphic novels use their medial potential to enrich the storyworld, by either expanding on the dark gothic imagery of the rulebook illustrations or by experimenting with visual styles adapted from other genres (e.g., the anarchic British *2000 A.D.* comic anthology [1977–] known for the character Judge Dredd, 1990s super hero comics, Japanese manga) or romanticist painting.

The cinematic adaptation of *Warhammer 40,000* seemed to be the next step in the transmedial handbook, but despite numerous attempts (such as the mediocre CGI DVD release *Ultramarines. A Warhammer 40,000 Movie* [2010]⁸), a successful globally-released film with the *Warhammer 40,000* license seems to remain far out of reach.

⁶ An individual with psychic abilities.

⁷ Cf. <http://www.solelegends.com/citblack/> [last accessed March 30, 2015].

⁸ With a 38% rating on [rottentomatoes.com](http://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/ultramarines_a_warhammer_40000_movie/) (cf. http://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/ultramarines_a_warhammer_40000_movie/ [accessed March 30, 2015]).

3.2 A Case Study in Transmedial Ludology. The *Warhammer 40,000* Games

The fact that the *Warhammer 40,000* universe has also been extended by numerous games might not be surprising to attentive observers of transmedial franchises (cf. JENKINS 2003; 2004; 2006). Many of these ludic satellites are following in the footsteps of the original tabletop war game: while the games *Epic Armageddon* (1988–) and *Battlefleet Gothic* (1999–2013) extend the frame of conflicts from company-scaled clashes to mass combat between regiments or even massive space battles between fleets, *Necromunda* (1995–), *Space Hulk* (1989–), and *Inquisitor* (2001–) explore small-scale combat like gang fights in dystopian mega cities or even duels between powerful individuals. Like the main game, each specialist game has its own rulebook(s) with rules and narrative background information (again in various narrative styles) on aspects of the setting that were previously only roughly outlined, but not fully explored. At the same time, this information is added to the »mythos« and »topos« (KLAstrup/TOSCA 2004: n.pag.) of the storyworld and is referenced in new editions of the main game's rulebooks and novels.

Even more information is added by the transmedial integration of a gaming genre that puts an even stronger emphasis on narrative aspects: during the past decade, the gaming company Fantasy Flight Games has published several successful pen-and-paper role-playing games that allow players to explore more aspects of the fictional universe by assuming the roles of Space Marines (in *Deathwatch* [2010]), agents of the Holy Imperial Inquisition (in *Dark Heresy* [2008]), privateering merchant princes (in *Rogue Trader* [2009]), or even corrupted champions of Chaos (in *Black Crusade* [2011]). As with many modern pen-and-paper role-playing games, these games still feature rule-defined combat between characters, but also require players to integrate themselves into the narrative world of the fictional setting in order to solve social challenges—the story is no longer ornamental, but becomes a core element of the game. To this end, the games feature voluminous rulebooks that dedicate even more pages to elaborate explanations of the social and spatial structure of a previously unknown part of the fictional universe than they spend on the combat rules, inventory data, and character building information that make up the »war gaming« parts of these games.⁹

This transmedial enrichment continues in the numerous *Warhammer 40,000* video games that have been published during the past 20 years: they, too, feature visceral combat in all its forms as a central gameplay element—be it in the form of planetary conquest in the real-time strategy series *Dawn Of War* (2004–2010), or personal combat in the first- or third-person shooters *Fire Warrior* (2003), *Space Marine* (2010), and *Kill Team* (2011). These games, too, use their specific mediality (cf., e.g., JUUL 2005; THON 2007a; 2007b) to contribute to the fictional universe: by mixing cinematic visuals and tradition-

⁹ The core rulebook of *Rogue Trader* spends more than 200 of its 400 pages on narrative descriptions of the universe, its mechanics, and the places and people in a specific new sector of space designed for the game (cf. FANTASY FLIGHT GAMES 2009).

al narration with partially or fully explorable virtual worlds and challenging rule-based interaction, they manage to offer players new insights into the world of *Warhammer 40,000*. Their stories do not only elaborate on existing organizations and locations but also introduce new elements such as various previously unmentioned planets, the new Space Marine chapter of the »Blood Ravens« (now featured in several novels), and individual characters (like the Ork Warlord and fan-favorite Gorgutz 'Ead 'Unter). However, specific medial characteristics of video games, such as the potential for nonlinear and multiperspectivic storytelling (cf. DEGLER 2009: 555), can complicate the integration of these new elements into the main storyworld: the *Dawn of War* games *Dark Crusade* (2006), *Soulstorm* (2008), and *Dawn of War II. Retribution* (2011) allow players to choose their protagonists among various factions in these games' singleplayer campaigns. With the main goal of all these games being the termination of all opposing sides, this results in as many endings as there are factions. But in *Warhammer 40,000*, as in most transmedial franchises, there is only one officially recognized »canon«—i.e., only one version of events that will be regarded as (fictionally) factual. In the case of *Dark Crusade* (and its nine different endings), Games Workshop decided on a canonical ending that nullified the eight other outcomes. It declared the Space Marines, the storyworld's trademark faction, the winners of the battle for planet Kronus—however, to players that led other factions to victory after hours of interactive engagement, »their« victory will have seemed just as »real«.¹⁰

3.3 Simulative Contributions

While the application of established concepts of transmedial narratology (e.g., KLAstrup/TOSCA 2004; RYAN 2014) to the analysis of those elements of various game media that can be identified as »narrative«—either in the narrow sense as referring to the use of oral and, to some degree, textual sign systems (cf. GENETTE 1994: 15) or more broadly as referring to the use of audiovisual and spatial sign systems—can produce positive results, its use for the analysis of ludic/simulative elements that are fundamental parts of the specific mediality of games in general and video games in particular is strictly limited. As described by game studies scholars such as Gonzalo Frasca (cf. FRASCA 2003) or Jan-Noël Thon (cf. THON 2006; 2007a; 2007b; 2009), (video) games can convey meaning by various means: Thon lists narrative and ludic immersion as just two ways (together with spatial and social immersion, cf. THON 2006: 126ff.) in which games can engage players. Despite not explicitly »narrating«, the medial elements involved in spatial, ludic or social immersion still use their own sign systems to convey information to players—who will use this information not only to make sense of the game's rules but also of the game's world as a fictional place.

¹⁰ For details about the canonical ending, cf. http://warhammer40k.wikia.com/wiki/Dawn_of_War_-_Dark_Crusade [accessed March 30, 2015].

I will elaborate this thesis by taking a look at the ludic structure of the various *Warhammer 40,000* games: the original *Warhammer 40,000* tabletop war game as well as the various *Warhammer 40,000* video games can be described as ›ludic‹ games (cf. CAILLOIS 2001: 13)—i.e., structured play activities that are based on strict rules, which might be as simple as (virtual) gravity and as complex as the social etiquette of alien nobility. These rules govern every possible action within the »magic circle« (HUIZINGA 1955: 10) of the game—be it the 6" by 4" area of a table or the virtual representations of fictional worlds or galaxies on the screen—and, thus, provide objects and characters with specific features that can be identified by repeated exposition: some objects might have more mass than others, some characters might be faster or harder to vanquish. The original tabletop war game makes this explicit in the ›stats blocks‹ and point values of units: players know with empirical certainty that a Khorne Berserker will almost always defeat an Imperial Guardsman in single combat—because they know the rules that govern the world and can ascertain their validity every time they play the game. This way of establishing empirical world rules is particularly interesting because it might influence the way individuals discover a transmedial universe: it is likely that individuals who start out as players of the tabletop war game will utilize the empirical ›facts‹—i.e., the relative strength and strictly-defined characteristics of units from the game—as the basis for their expectation of all other media products that represent the same transmedial universe. This is especially relevant when such individuals are confronted with other ›satellite‹ games of the universe, such as the real-time strategy series *Dawn of War* or the first-person shooter *Fire Warrior*: they will judge such satellites not only by their narrative fidelity to the »mythos«, »topos«, and »ethos« (KLAstrup/TOSCA 2004: n.pag.) of the universe as established by the *Warhammer 40,000* rulebooks but also by their adherence to the empirical facts and balances of the gameplay itself. From this perspective, *Dawn of War* was positively received by many players of the tabletop war game, because, despite slight alterations due to a different scale of battles, it mostly maintained the balance of power of the original game: the units of the Eldar faction were still mobile and fragile, Orks were still based on a concept of overwhelming melee charges—and an Imperial Guardsman was still helpless against a charging Khorne Berserker.

In contrast, *Fire Warrior* was heavily criticized for the mechanical infidelity to its ludic ›mother ship‹: featuring a Tau Fire Warrior (i.e., the standard infantry unit of the Tau faction with just slightly better stats than an Imperial Guardsman) as its protagonist, it tasked the player and, as such, the humble infantryman with taking on Imperial Guardsmen, insane cultists, and eventually even Chaos Space Marines—corrupted super soldiers with centuries of combat experience and unholy weapons at their disposal—and had him kill dozens if not hundreds of those elite soldiers without (too) much trouble. While the game did not explicitly infringe on the topos, mythos, or ethos of the *Warhammer* universe, then, it still disappointed players by breaking with

facts that they had—to some degree—experienced firsthand while playing the ›mother ship‹.¹¹

And while many players were easily able to tell if a game was diverging from the simulative facts of the universe, they had more significant problems with properly verbalizing this divergence—for many, something simply ›felt‹ strange or wrong. This fall-back on emotional expressions should not be understood as a failing of players, but as a hint at phenomena that are hard to articulate, despite being virtually omnipresent in the activity of structured play—and the key to understanding the distinct contribution of games for transmedial franchises.

Scholars unacquainted with the discipline of game studies might face serious challenges when asked to explain the aforementioned linguistic vagueness, not to mention the task of exploring the specific ludic structures that ›create‹ the emotional quality of various games. However, the discipline of game studies can offer assistance: the fall-back to emotional responses in conversations about gameplay experiences can be attributed to the specific way in which simulative facts are acquired. Players are faced with a seemingly interactive environment that demands their attention in similar ways to the real world: judging distances, direction, and speed of numerous objects, recognizing patterns, and adapting their own reactions, they are involved in a psychomotoric feedback loop that circumvents the more sophisticated cognitive activities that are associated with narrative interpretations in favor of fast motoric (re)actions (cf. THON 2008: 27f). The second point, i.e., the search for the specific ludic structures involved in creating the emotional quality of various games is an ongoing project in the field of game studies and has not yet produced a comprehensive, uncontested theory, which is why I use an improvised list of ludic structures broadly based on the ideas of Roger Caillois (cf. CAILLOIS 2001).

Looking at the breathtaking extent of the various game genres and involved media in the *Warhammer 40,000* ›gameworld‹ (a term meant to refer to the ludic analogue of a primarily narrative storyworld), the search for shared mechanical characteristics between games that feature duels between individuals, platoon-sized battles, and fleet-scaled space combat may seem rather likely to prove futile. Excluding the narrative aspects, at first sight, the only commonalities appear to be certain visual characteristics (gothic and cyberpunk imagery with a plethora of skulls) and the paramedial *Warhammer 40,000* brand on the packaging. However, on closer inspection, one can find several structural-mechanical similarities, as well:

- Agency: Players control one or several units with specific characteristics; these units are mobile and able to interact with other units, either by moving in immediate proximity or by distance. The interaction of

¹¹ A discussion thread on the *Warhammer 40,000* fan forum *Dakkadakka* lists more mechanical problems such as different weapon characteristics or tactical behavior patterns of enemies. Cf. <http://www.dakkadakka.com/dakkaforum/posts/list/587577.page> [accessed March 30, 2015].

units of different sides is influenced both by their characteristics and random chance and eventually results in the removal of one or both involved units from the roster of controllable units.

- Space: Units are influenced by their spatial position on a two or three-dimensional playing field; their characteristics are positively or negatively modified according to their position. Proximity and distance thus result in significantly changed statistical relations. Movement and positioning are tactically/ludically relevant.
- Time: All games use varying means (real-time, turn-based) to simulate the passing of time. Many but not all ludic goals are time-based (i.e., have to be completed in a certain period of time), thus forcing units to move and interact with each other. In order to win, both sides will need to move their entities in such ways that ensure favorable interaction results for their units (i.e., the removal of hostile units from the playing field).
- Victory and Defeat: Victory is achieved when a) one side has no remaining units on the playing field, b) time runs out and one side has a significant advantage in active units (quality or quantity), or c) a tactical goal has been achieved. Due to the way interactions work, a) and b) naturally result in a high percentage of lost units for one or both sides; although c) might theoretically be achieved without losses to either side, the topography of the playing field usually make the interaction of units an unavoidable prerequisite for its completion.

We can see that these characteristics—shared between the original tabletop war game, *Dawn of War*, *Rogue Trader*, *Necromunda*, *Battlefleet Gothic*, *Fire Warrior*, and other *Warhammer 40,000* games—produce games that favor aggressive movement and intense close-quarter battles with a high loss ratio for all involved sides; the addition of randomized events (powerful weapons overheating and exploding, certain units going berserk and being lost to player control) adds unpredictability and can change the odds of battle. The ludic elements of these games seem to share a common »procedural rhetoric« (BOGOST 2008: 125) that conveys the impression of a stressful and dynamic gameplay experience that forces players to use all available options—including the sacrifice of individual units—to achieve their goals and win a costly victory. This fits very well with the established topos, mythos, and ethos of the narrative storyworld of the *Warhammer 40,000* universe, where millions of soldiers are thrown into the endless meat grinder of galaxy-wide wars on a daily basis. As such, players of the games can gain an understanding of the »grimdark« world of the 41st millennium without ever being confronted with an explicit story presented in text.

That is not to say that these shared characteristics form the full ludic inventory of the *Warhammer 40,000* universe. As with the game adaptation *Tales of the Borderlands* (2014), which transforms the world of the vicious and anarchic first-person shooter *Borderlands* (2010) into the background for

a dialogue-based comedic adventure game, it might very well be possible to adapt other aspects of the extensive *Warhammer 40,000* universe into games that are still recognizably part of the whole and ›feel‹ like *Warhammer 40,000*. In fact, the well-received pen-and-paper role-playing games *Rogue Trader* and *Inquisition* do not only provide players with the aforementioned ludic mechanics of unit combat but also feature dialogue-based challenges that task players with negotiating with Imperial officials, gang leaders, decadent nobles, or even aliens—while still being considered adequately ›*Warhammer 40,000*-esque‹ due to the fact that these negotiations can have horrible ludic and narrative results for players (such as the player characters being hunted by the private army of an offended noble, being branded as heretics, or nuked from orbit).

The presented hypothesis—i.e., that (video) games provide significant media specific contributions to recipients' understanding of transmedial storyworlds—entails consequences for the future relationship between transmedia and game studies: if transmedia scholars accept that they can understand the contribution of a medium in the center of contemporary transmedia franchises (cf. KLAstrup/TOSCA 2004) only in full by applying the methodologies and insights of game studies, the integration of at least the basic theories and approaches of game studies into the growing toolbox of transmedia(l) studies becomes a *sine qua non*.

4. Collective Participation and the Specter of Change

The transmedial franchise of *Warhammer 40,000* provides another fascinating case study for an issue that affects most transmedial franchises to various degrees: the dichotomous nature of the storyworld between static setting and dynamic storyline (cf. JENKINS 2007).

As roughly outlined on the previous pages, the whole topos, mythos, and ethos of *Warhammer 40,000* revolves around the concept of an eternal stalemate: during the 28 years of its existence, more than a thousand years have passed in the *Warhammer 40,000* universe—and war still rages on, without any side gaining a substantial advantage against its opponents. Games Workshop, the developing studio of the game, has done its best to safeguard this *status quo*, despite numerous threats, many of them inherent to any expanding narrative: as the fictional universe grows and more events, locations, and characters are introduced, the narrative tends to gain a life of its own. The different novels, comics, and short stories depict new conflicts and wars that are not always resolved in a way that maintains the carefully safeguarded *status quo* of an Imperium that is barely holding up on various fronts; most saliently, the successful novel series of the Black Library (e.g., *Ghaunt's Ghosts* or *Ciaphas Cain*) tend to escalate the threats to their Imperial heroes until the represented conflicts affect planets, systems, and galactic

sectors. And, although many stories usually end with a relatively balanced outcome (for example, an old artifact that empowered a Chaos invasion army is destroyed in a brutal battle that nullifies its prior ›imbancing‹ effects), this process still leaves scars—on the intradiegetic characters and locations as well as on the narrative canon itself. Due to the integration of most events into canon, the individually small changes and consequences of small-scale conflicts eventually add up to the picture of an empire that is no longer able to reliably generate the necessary resources and troops to maintain its army. An example: The repeated and exact documentation of the limited size of every Space Marine Chapter (1000 marines per chapter, 1000 chapters in all) was not a problem—until almost every novel featured the demise of whole platoons or companies of these super soldiers for reasons of plot development. The same happens with the constant raiding or even destruction of planets and whole sectors: many important parts of the fictional universe have been devastated without a chance for short- or medium-term restoration, bringing the Imperium ever closer to its doom.

This problem was intensified by another specific feature of *Warhammer 40,000*: the war game gained popularity for its irregularly scheduled global campaigns, which saw thousands of players participating in special matches, battling for the control of fictional fronts in the *Warhammer 40,000* universe. The results of registered matches between individual opponents were added together and were used to determine the campaign's outcome—and with it the face of the storyworld in future editions. This opportunity for fans to directly affect the future position of their preferred faction in the fictional universe turned out to be very attractive and global campaigns were eagerly anticipated by players all around the world. Global campaigns launched before 2003 were focused on small segments of the fictional universe (i.e., the struggle for an individual planet) and heavily predetermined by the event rules, so their possible consequences would be limited. This changed with the most recent great global campaign, called the 13th Black Crusade: its battlefield was the region around the so-called Eye of Terror, a giant portal to the malicious dimension of the ›Warp‹. As the gateway for a potentially endless invasion force from another dimension, this region is not only a central node for various narrations (almost everybody who enters and leaves the Warp does so through the Eye of Terror), but also of central importance for the balance of power in the *Warhammer 40,000* universe: as long as the forces of the Imperium still control the fortress world of Cadia and its surroundings, the demonic forces of Chaos are held at bay.

During the next eight weeks, more than 40,000 players (separated into two teams) submitted more than a quarter of a million game results on the campaign website, each and every battle minimally influencing the overall result. The campaign's outcome was a massive blow for the Imperium—and for the writers of Games Workshop: due to unexpected global collaboration and success of Chaos players, many sectors and planets around the Eye were lost, only Cadia, the sectors' main fortress world, stayed under Imperial con-

trol. This led to a problem: the massive loss of men, territory, and resources dealt a brutal blow to the Imperium and made it more and more difficult to maintain the fictional balance of power. The extensive documentation of all armies, resources, and events—usually a strength of the setting—now acted as a massive obstacle to maintain the *status quo*: if the ›factual‹ 13th Black Crusade was to be implemented, many established regiments were to be wiped out, resulting in an avalanche of further changes.

With the results published on the campaign website and the pressure to integrate them in the *Warhammer 40,000* canon mounting, Games Workshop was in an unfortunate predicament. For the time being, the designers decided to postpone the implementation: the apocalyptic events and system-threatening consequences of the 13th Black Crusade were not integrated into the history of the 41st millennium—yet. But even without them, the threats to the *status quo* had become too large to ignore. During the past 10 years, the new rulebooks have subtly hinted that the transmedial universe of *Warhammer 40,000* is facing a prophesied ›Time of Ending‹. With the mysterious Necrons waking from their million-years-sleep on their tomb-worlds, the life-sustaining ›Golden Throne‹ of the Emperor finally failing, and a giant extra-galactic Tyranid invasion fleet approaching, the 13th Black Crusade becomes just one apocalyptic rider among many.

It is now increasingly likely that the storyworld of *Warhammer 40,000* will sooner or later follow the example set by its co-existing ›cousin‹ *Warhammer Fantasy*, which, in its 8th edition, officially entered an apocalyptic age. A global campaign similar to the 13th Black Crusade was supposed to usher in a new balance of power in favor of Chaos—but the designers' plans were disrupted because Chaos players were utterly defeated. Still, Games Workshop continued with the realization of an apocalyptic age that saw the death of almost all known characters, the destruction of several factions, and the unexpected fusion of others—until a chaos rift destroyed the whole planet and killed every one that had survived the plagues, the impact of magical asteroids, and gods fighting openly in the mortal world. However, transmedial worlds have a certain immortality of their own—the last book ended with a mysterious figure floating in the void starting the creation of a new world.

Thus, the apocalypse of *Warhammer Fantasy* paved the way for the reboot of a storyworld that had become overly complicated and unwelcoming to newcomers—a description that could very well be applied to *Warhammer 40,000*, as well. Further observation of the background information contained in rulebooks—which, in the 7th edition (2015), also continue to point in the direction of galactic doom—might provide a fascinating case study of the narrative strategies that designers employ to prepare the reboot of a transmedial franchise.

References

- BAKKER, SASKIA; DEBBY VORSTENBOSCH; ELISE VAN DEN HOVEN; GERARD HOLLEMANS; TOM BERGMAN: Tangible Interaction in Tabletop Games. Studying Iconic and Symbolic Play Pieces. In: INAKAGE, MASA; NEWTON LEE; MANFRED TSCHELIGI; REGINA BERNHAUPT; STÉPHANE NATKIN (eds.): *Proceedings of the International Conference on Advances in Computer Entertainment Technology*. New York [ACM Press] 2007, pp. 163–170
- BOGOST, IAN: The Rhetoric of Video Games. In: SALEN, KATIE (ed.): *The Ecology of Games. Connecting Youth, Games, and Learning*. Cambridge, MA [MIT Press] 2008, pp. 117–140
- CAILLOIS, ROGER: *Man, Play and Games*. Chicago [U of Illinois P] 2001
- CARTER, MARKUS; MARTIN GIBBS; MITCHELL HARROP: Drafting an Army. The Playful Pastime of Warhammer 40,000. In: *Games and Culture*, 9(2), 2014, pp. 122–147
- CARTER, MARKUS; MITCHELL HARROP; MARTIN GIBBS: The Roll of the Dice in Warhammer 40,000. In: MÄYRÄ, FRANS; KATRIINA HELJAKKA; ANU SEISTO (eds.): *ToDIGRA. Physical and Digital in Games and Play*. Pittsburgh [ETC Press] 2013. <http://todigra.org/index.php/todigra/article/view/20/75> [accessed March 30, 2015]
- DE BOER, CLIM J.; MAARTEN H. LAMERS: Electronic Augmentation of Traditional Board Games. In: RAUTERBERG, MATTHIAS (ed.): *Entertainment Computing. ICEC 2004*. Berlin [Springer] 2004, pp. 441–444
- DEGLER, FRANK: A Willing Suspension of Misbelief. Fiktionsverträge in Computerspiel und Literatur. In: ANZ, THOMAS; HEINRICH KAULEN (eds.): *Literatur als Spiel. Evolutionsbiologische, ästhetische und pädagogische Konzepte*. Berlin [De Gruyter] 2009, pp. 543–560
- FANTASY FLIGHT GAMES: *Rogue Trader Core Rulebook*. Roseville [Fantasy Flight Games] 2009
- FRASCA, GONZALO: Simulation versus Narrative. Introduction to Ludology. In: WOLF, MARK J.P.; BERNARD PERRON (eds.): *The Video Game Theory Reader*. New York [Routledge] 2003, pp. 221–235
- GENETTE, GÉRARD: *Die Erzählung*. München [Fink] 1994
- HARROP, MITCHELL; MARKUS CARTER; MARTIN GIBBS: Everyone's a Winner at Warhammer 40,000 (or, at Least Not a Loser). In: *DiGRA '13. Proceedings of the 2013 DiGRA International Conference*. <http://marcuscarter.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/harrop-warhammer.pdf> [accessed March 30, 2015]
- HINSKE, STEVE; MARC LANGHEINRICH: W41K. Digitally Augmenting Traditional Game Environments. In: VILLAR, NICOLAS; SHAHRAM IZADI; MIKE FRASER; STEVE BENFORD (eds.): *Proceedings of the 3rd International Conference on Tangible and Embedded Interaction*. New York [ACM PRESS] 2009, pp. 99–106

- HOARE, ANDY: Rick Priestly Interview. In: *Tales from the Maelstrom*, September 25, 2011. <http://talesfromthemaelstrom.blogspot.com.au/2011/09/rick-priestly-interview.html> [accessed March 30, 2015]
- HUIZINGA, JOHAN: *Homo Ludens. A Study of the Play-Element in Culture*. Boston [Beacon] 1955
- JENKINS, HENRY: Transmedia Storytelling. Moving Characters from Books to Films to Video Games Can Make Them Stronger and More Compelling. In: *MIT Technology Review*, 2003. <http://www.technologyreview.com/news/401760/transmedia-storytelling/> [accessed March 30, 2015]
- JENKINS, HENRY: Game Design as Narrative Architecture. In: WARDRIP-FRUIIN, NOAH; PAT HARRIGAN (eds.): *First Person. New Media as Story, Performance, and Game*. Cambridge, MA [MIT Press] 2004, pp. 118–130
- JENKINS, HENRY: *Convergence Culture. Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York [New York UP] 2006
- JENKINS, HENRY: Transmedia Storytelling 101. In: *Confessions of an Aca-Fan*, March 22, 2007. http://henryjenkins.org/2007/03/transmedia_storytelling_101.html [accessed March 30, 2015]
- JENKINS, HENRY: The Revenge of the Origami Unicorn. Seven Principles of Transmedia Storytelling. In: *Confessions of an Aca-Fan*, December 12, 2009. http://henryjenkins.org/2009/12/the_revenge_of_the_origami_uni.html [accessed March 30, 2015]
- JUUL, JESPER: *Half-Real. Video Games Between Real Rules and Fictional Worlds*. Cambridge [MIT Press] 2005
- KLAstrup, LISBETH; SUSANA TOSCA: Transmedial Worlds. Rethinking Cyberworld Design. 2004. http://www.itu.dk/people/klastrup/klastruptosca_transworlds.pdf [accessed August 30, 2013]
- RYAN, MARIE-LAURE: Story/Worlds/Media. Tuning the Instruments of a Media-Conscious Narratology. In: RYAN, MARIE-LAURE; JAN-NOËL THON (eds.): *Storyworlds Across Media. Toward a Media-Conscious Narratology*. Lincoln [U of Nebraska P] 2014, pp. 25–49
- THON, JAN-NOËL: Immersion revisited. Varianten von Immersion im Computerspiel des 21. Jahrhunderts. In: HISSNAUER, CHRISTIAN; ANDREAS JAHN-SUDMANN (eds.): *Medien – Zeit – Zeichen. Beiträge des 19. Film- und Fernsehwissenschaftlichen Kolloquiums*. Marburg [Schüren] 2006, pp. 125–132
- THON, JAN-NOËL: Simulation vs. Narration. Zur Darstellung fiktionaler Welten in neueren Computerspielen. In: BECKER, ANDREAS R.; DOREEN HARTMANN; DON C. LOREY; ANDREA NOLTE (eds.): *Medien – Diskurse – Deutungen. Beiträge des 20. Film- und Fernsehwissenschaftlichen Kolloquiums*. Marburg [Schüren] 2007a, pp. 68–76
- THON, JAN-NOËL: Unendliche Weiten? Schauplätze, fiktionale Welten und soziale Räume heutiger Computerspiele. In: BARTELS, KLAUS; JAN-NOËL THON (eds.): *Computer/Spiel/Räume. Materialien zur Einführung in die Computer Game Studies*. Hamburg [IMK] 2007b, pp. 29–60

Robert Baumgartner: »In the Grim Darkness of the Far Future there is only War«

- THON, JAN-NOËL: Immersion Revisited. On the Value of a Contested Concept.
In: LEINO, OLLI; HANNA WIRMAN; AMYRIS FERNANDEZ (eds.): *Extending Experiences. Structure, Analysis and Design of Computer Game Player Experience*. Rovaniemi [Lapland UP] 2008, pp. 29–43
- THON, JAN-NOËL: Computer Games, Fictional Worlds, and Transmedia Storytelling. A Narratological Perspective. In: SAGENG, JOHN R. (ed.): *Proceedings of the Philosophy of Computer Games Conference*. Oslo [U of Oslo] 2009, pp. 1–6

[\[Table of Contents\]](#)

Nieves Rosendo

The Map Is Not the Territory. Bible and Canon in the Transmedial World of *Halo*

Maps are not only about space, they're also
about time: maps are frozen journeys. [...]
Indeed it would seem that quite a few
writers think cartographically, especially
writers about imaginary places.
(ATWOOD 2011: 70f.)

Abstract

Building on Henry Jenkins' definition of transmedia storytelling as »the art of worldmaking« (JENKINS 2006: 114), which puts the world at the center of storytelling, this article focuses on two tools for the apprehension of a transmedial world from a perspective which takes into account the specificity of media and production: the transmedial »bible« and the »canon«. For this purpose, I use as an example the entertainment franchise *Halo* (343i), which originated in the videogame *Halo. Combat Evolved* (2001).

1. Introduction

Henry Jenkins has refined his definition of transmedia storytelling over the years, but has kept the idea that it is »the art of world making« (JENKINS 2006: 21). Jenkins' already classical definition of transmedia storytelling in *Convergence Culture* is:

Stories that unfold across multiple media platforms, with each medium making distinctive contributions to our understanding of the world, a more integrated approach to franchise development than models based on urtexts and ancillary products. (JENKINS 2006: 293)

This definition allows us to see, on the one hand, the differences between storytelling and the particular case of transmedia storytelling, as the former mainly focuses on the events and the characters, while the latter focuses on the idea of a world. Indeed, one of the key elements of the specificity of transmedia storytelling arises from its focus on the concept of a transmedial world. While details of the diegesis¹ are not absolutely needed in verbal narrative, in transmedia storytelling, the world must be depicted more completely, given that the universe (space-time, characters, actions) needs to be described. On the other hand, while transmedia storytelling is defined as this art of ›world making‹, the concept of world referred to by Jenkins has not yet been clearly defined. In this article, I will examine two ways of materializing this idea of a world: the territory (not just in terms of visualization, but also in terms of space-time, characters, and events), and the map, as a way to organize and structure the materialization of such an idea of a transmedia storytelling world.

The case of the universe of *Halo*, of great interest for many reasons, drew my attention in 2008, when it was announced that an external company, Starlight Runner Entertainment, would advise the company and the developers of 343 Industries regarding *Halo*'s transmedial expansion. The news announcing the creation of a transmedial bible to expand *Halo*'s universe in a coherent manner, avoiding or repairing some inconsistencies that had previously occurred in the crossmedia expansion of *Halo*, implied a distancing from the traditional models of the 1990s and a move toward a new form of franchise. In addition, recent statements by the company's executives clearly indicated their interest in changing the direction of the transmedia storytelling technique theoretically developed by Henry Jenkins (cf. JENKINS 2003; 2006). *Halo* is a science fiction video game franchise that involves video games, books, comics, web series, and much more. The video game was created by Bungie, a video game developer based in the United States, and was originally launched back in 2001 under the title *Halo. Combat Evolved*. It is a first-person shooter in which the player controls the Master Chief, also known as John 117, a super soldier who is part of the ultra-secret Spartan Project fighting in the 26th-century war of mankind against a conglomerate of alien races known as the Covenant. The gameplay of the first video game was located on a ring-shaped alien structure called Halo, a weapon that the aliens tried to control to destroy the universe, but further parts of the series moved its story's location to other planets and even to Earth in the fight of man-

¹ Diegesis as *diégèse*, as used by the French filmic studies since Étienne Souriau (cf. SOURIAU 1951). Here, *diégèse* refers to the world of the filmic work, and it is different from the concept of diegesis in Plato and Aristotle. For Alain Boillat, one filmic work offers a universe made of several diegeses, each one of them defined by an ontological status and a set of laws (cf. BOILLAT 2014: 91).

kind—and, in particular, of the Spartan soldiers—against several aliens. The *Halo* universe continues to expand via new material such as the fifth and latest video game in the franchise, *Halo 5: Guardians* (with an unconfirmed release date of October 2015), which has been supplemented with a comic book series called *Halo: Escalation* (2013–), and a new upcoming game, *Halo: Spartan Strike* (2015), along the lines of *Halo: Spartan Assault* (2013). In addition, a completely new series of books is prepared to move the story of the *Halo* universe forward, including several full-length novels in print and, for the first time, a collection of shorter stories only available in digital form.² Finally, a live-action series to be produced by Steven Spielberg, *The Halo Television Series*, has just been announced.³ The industrial infrastructure of *Halo*, with different developers in the course of its history, is another factor that helps explain the complex evolution of its universe.

2. Transmedial Worlds

The influence of media theorist Henry Jenkins and his concept of transmedia storytelling has played an essential role in the development and transmedial change of the *Halo* franchise universe, which belongs to Microsoft. Likewise, the idea of a world is essential in studies interested in transmedial narratives and transmedia storytelling, as well as in different spheres of transmedial production (cf. BERNARDO 2011; JENKINS 2006; LONG 2007; PRATTEN 2011; RYAN/THON 2014). Using the so-called *Halo* universe as an example of the application of transmedia storytelling, this article is also interested in the perspective provided by Lisbeth Klastrup and Susana Tosca (cf. KLAstrup/TOSCA 2004, 2014), which aims at improving the design of video games based on worlds such as *The Lord of the Rings*. The concept of a transmedial world and its core elements was developed by Klastrup and Tosca as a framework detailing »how to look at transmedial traits in a world« (KLAstrup/TOSCA 2004: n.pag.), particularly focusing on the analysis of what they call cyberworlds.

Transmedial worlds are abstract content systems from which a repertoire of fictional stories and characters can be actualized or derived across a variety of media forms. What characterises a transmedial world is that audience and designers share a mental image of the »worldness« (a number of distinguishing features of its universe). The idea of a specific world's worldness mostly originates from the first version of the world presented, but can be elaborated and changed over time. Quite often the world has a cult (fan) following across media as well. (KLAstrup/TOSCA 2004: n.pag.)

Transmedial worlds are thus »mental constructs shared by both the designers/creators of the world and the audience/participants« (KLAstrup/TOSCA 2014: 297). In consequence, the world is no longer defined by a media

² <https://www.halowaypoint.com/en-us/community/blog-posts/canon-fodder-novel-ideas> [accessed March 15, 2015].

³ <http://www.eurogamer.net/articles/2014-06-16-343s-master-plan-for-halo-5-guardians> [accessed March 15, 2015].

platform, but instead by a shared idea of the world which the authors call »worldness«. For Klastrop and Tosca, the elements of transmedial world worldness are *mythos*, *topos*, and *ethos*. *Mythos* refers to the foundational story of the world, the »defining struggles« (KLASTRUP/TOSCA 2014: 297). It also comprises the legendary characters and the main characters and creatures unique to this world. *Topos* is the setting of the world, in space and time. It also »shows how places have changed and events have unfolded« (KLASTRUP/TOSCA 2014: 297). And lastly, *ethos*, which is the »moral codex of behavior for characters« (KLASTRUP/TOSCA 2014: 297) and, generally, the ethics of the whole world.

Against this background, I would like to briefly consider those transmedial universes or worlds whose origins are found in a video game, as part of an approach that follows the study of intermedial relationships between video games and their film adaptations. I am conscious, though, that this concept—transmedial world—needs to be completed and in time dialogically criticized from the theoretical perspective of intermediality, as, according to Jan Baetens and Dimingo Sánchez-Mesa, the study of transmedial imaginary worlds should not be considered a step beyond intermedial and adaptation studies, but rather a trend that can be better understood precisely from within that paradigm: »[i]ntermediality, in other words, is not only the general term that defines the relationships between autonomous media, it is also the term that identifies the internal plurality of each medium« (BAETENS/SÁNCHEZ-MESA 2015: n.pag.).

However, it is still necessary to consider the materiality of the transmedial world offered by the *Halo* franchise and of the history through which it is articulated. Transmedial worlds such as the *Halo* universe reveal the complexity mentioned above, entailing precision in respect to the settings of their universe, characters, storyline, and events that requires, both on the part of their audience and their producers, a knowledge of those elements that goes beyond a shared mental image, that entails the support of a series of guidelines and tools for the exploration, comprehension, and enjoyment of said worlds, enhancing the importance of the relationships that are established among the different media and their specificities.

Therefore, I will first discuss transmedial bibles, a tool developed for the transmedial production of these worlds, and then focus on the canon of the different works which constitutes, in different media and platforms, a large part of the territory of the transmedial world. Both tools establish a connection between the history, the past, and the future of the *Halo* universe, and the media and platforms in which its characteristics unfold, such as certain events or specific stories of some of its characters, among others.

3. The Transmedial Bible. The Map

From the producers' perspective, bibles were used from the beginning of television series as a way to ensure the coherence of the series. Mark J.P. Wolf argues that bibles are used to preserve the ›narrative thread‹:

Thus, for larger worlds, world databases or »bibles« are often used by world-builders to monitor consistency, and also to standardize world-based facts and history when multiple authors are contributing to the same world. (WOLF 2012: 201)

Particularly in the context of transmedial franchises, authors have leaned on tools such as these bibles to develop their stories. The map that producers have of the transmedial world is a transmedial bible that is well-defined from the beginning in the case of projects initially created as transmedia, but may also be subsequently (re)elaborated, as is the case with *Halo*, on the basis of canonical material and under the influence of other non-canonical material, such as the material elaborated by fans. One way or another, the audience, fans, and researchers of a transmedial world tend to lean on its canon.

The *Halo* bible cannot be accessed by the general public; it is only accessible for persons authorized by 343i and by Microsoft. Thus, some details are only available through statements made by persons who have worked on the bible, some of which I have used in this article. The split of Bungie and the arrival of 343 Industries in 2010 implied that Microsoft hired the services of Starlight Runner Entertainment, a company specialized in transmedial storytelling. In an interview published in the *Official Xbox Magazine* in May 2011, its CEO, Jeff Gómez, explained some details of the task of making the *Halo* transmedial bible. It is worth quoting some of his declarations here:

In general, our mythologies describe what is currently known about the canonical universe. Where there might be speculation, we quote the fact that this may or may not be true. The aim of these bibles is not to dictate to writers, producers and creators what they must write. It is to give them the facts, so that they can invent some new, cool, exciting stuff. So we purposely leave the holes that we find. It is not our job to fill every blank, because in those blanks could be fantastic stories. So they are not hyper-geeky, every blade of grass, every tree, that kind of thing. But where the facts are the facts: what weapons are established, what alien races are established and so forth, what are their personae and so forth. We've got all that in there.⁴

The *Halo* transmedial bible takes into account the mythologies and the canonical universe, and also proposes new ways of expansion, namely the holes or gaps. But it is evident that not everything can be pre-established or written. Just like the universe or world to which it refers, the bible is more a document that bears witness to the past, even though it includes some hints at the future. To Jeff Gómez' comments, we can add those of Armando Troisi, the Narrative Director of 343 Industries, at the Game Developers Conference

⁴ The original address www.oxmononline.com/talking-man-who-assembled-halo-bible-microsoft has been erased and re-directs browsers to another site. »Talking with the man who assembled the ›Halo Bible‹ for Microsoft« is an interview published on May 12, 2011 by Kevin W. Smith in the *Official Xbox Magazine*. Numerous references to this interview, which the author downloaded in PDF format, can be found on the Internet. <https://archive.today/Jcs1b> [accessed March 15, 2015].

in San Francisco in 2012, at which he and Kevin Grace gave a lecture entitled »Building Transmedia Worlds in Halo 4«.⁵ During the question and answer section, Armando Troisi rejected the idea of a bible that provided an end-point, or that could offer a glimpse of a far-away future:

The further you look into the future, the less you know [...]. This idea of the giant story bible, going ten years into the future, and it is three thousand pages long, and all the rest of it, that really doesn't survive. The idea is [...] moving forward, so you have an idea what direction you are going. But as things move further on you have less and less detail. So maybe five years from now we have a paragraph, which describes what we want. (Transcription N.R.)

If the bible of a transmedial production or expansion aims, on the one hand, at being the map of the territory of a transmedial narrative in order to perform future movements, it is obvious that this requires constant updating as a working document that imposes the limits of the idea of a world, but that, by establishing these limits, also specifies the territories to be conquered. It is thus a dynamic working document, like the universe it reflects, a territory in expansion, whose history is not closed, as in the case of the *Halo* franchise. This map has to leave room for future events and discoveries, which will be the expansions of the universe in the form of other games of the series or narrative-type expansions, ranging from novels to series, films, or comics. On the other hand, its usefulness also stems from the fact that, the larger and more detailed a world is, the easier it is for inconsistencies to occur in the canonical material (cf. WOLF 2012), as highlighted above. In consequence, it is also a tool to control and repair said inconsistencies.

When this idea of a world is extremely complex and starts generating problems for its continuity, it is usual to see that the next move is to split into parallel worlds, as has often occurred in television, film, and comics franchises such as *Star Trek*, *Star Wars*, and *X-Men*. These are dynamic worlds with unexplored territories and gaps left for future expansions. The shared image or idea that fans have of such a world can border on material belonging to other companies or other periods, as in the case of *Halo* and Bungie's video game *Marathon* (1994). An image of the border or beyond the border can materialize in fan art, different fan fictions, or the appearance of machinimas that have become historic in the universe of *Halo*, such as the interview program *This Spartan Life* (2005–) or the parodic series *Red vs. Blue* (2003–). Perhaps it is of greater interest to consider what part of *Halo*'s world has been reflected in the bible, rather than give it the value of a prophecy. This is particularly true as the bible is built on the canon of the transmedial world, which is what fans and audiences share with the producers.

Fans are a key element from the perspective of transmedia storytelling. Defined by Jenkins as »hunters« and »gatherers« of information (cf. JENKINS 2006: 129), moved by an encyclopedic desire, they also develop their own maps in the form of wikis, timelines, specific topics in forums, channels in

⁵ <http://www.gdcvault.com/play/1016603/Building-Transmedia-Worlds-in-Halo> [accessed March 15, 2015].

social networks, etc. However, the content generated by these users also includes non-canonical elements.

4. The Canon of *Halo*. The Territory

When we discuss transmedial worlds, the term canon does not refer to the institutional canon of a set of literary or artistic works in connection with a specific author, period, or culture. Rather, it refers to the set of works from the producers of the transmedial franchise, who represent its transmedial world. The canon differs depending on the original medium: in the case of worlds originating from major franchises, it can refer to the set of novels, films, or games that initially represented said worlds. In some cases of major franchises, such as *Star Wars* and *Halo*, the canon is endorsed by the producers of the franchise. The work that is not officially endorsed by the franchise is normally considered outside the canon, although there can be other work that comes from the franchise but is not included either. In the case of *Halo*, this applies to the trailers of the video game promotions in E3 (the trade fair Electronic Entertainment Expo), which do not form part of *Halo's* canon until the contents shown coincide with the video games subsequently launched.

This article is interested in the canon insofar as it represents part of the idea of a world that is accepted by the producers of a franchise. The territory, the materialization of the idea of a transmedial world, is built by the canon, but also by the works that do not belong to the canon. The content generated by users may exert an influence and permeate the canonical content. The canon thus raises two different problems: there can be material generated by the producers that is not canonical and part of the material generated by users can end up influencing future expansions, and thus form part of the canon. For Wolf, whether or not the new material is considered growth depends on its canonicity and authorship (cf. WOLF 2012: 246). Transmedial narratives are often created without an established canon. However, *Star Wars* has an official canon, formerly established by Lucasfilm and now in the hands of the Disney Company. The official canon is kept in the continuity database called ›Holocron‹, with Leland Chee currently in charge.

At present, with the development of the official *Halo* website, *Halo Waypoint*, Microsoft and 343i provide, in the section *Halo Universe*,⁶ all types of details regarding events and characters of the *Halo* universe, together with their history and a list of the media and platforms where they appear. This is very significant, as they use the website not only to give a map to their audience but also to establish the *Halo* universe canon. Moreover, their forums house discussions about the canon and the blog *Cannon Fodder* examines recent additions to the canon. Prior to this improvement, the so-called *Halo* canon was (re)constructed entirely by fans in the forums and also in different

⁶ <https://www.halowaypoint.com/en-us/universe> [accessed March 15, 2015].

wikis, on the basis of conversations and statements of the developers and the producers of the franchise. The canon was compounded based on the official *Halo* products, and the policies about canon were established in at least two of the most important fan pages, *Halo Nation* and *Halopedia*: »Canon« is defined as characters, locations, and details that are considered to be genuine (or official), and those »events, characters, settings, etc., that are considered to have inarguable existence within the Halo Universe.«⁷ This superior canon comprises, in an ascendant manner, the following: current 343 employee statements; *Halo* games, *Halo* literature, *Halo* soundtrack; and other media. It is specifically stated that announcement trailers are not considered canon, as their details usually appear very early in the storyline, and do not necessarily contain content that makes it into the final game, even though they constitute important glimpses of the *Halo* world in their own right.

It can be difficult for a single individual to consider and study all the canon of a transmedial world. *Halo* fans share information through digital media that encompass this world, and their activities, which include building timelines, genealogies, maps, walkthroughs, machinimas, collecting Easter eggs and cinematic fragments, fan art, fan fictions, etc., form part of their perception and construction of the mental image to which Klasturp and Tosca refer. Hence, I believe that the simple classification of »hunters« and »gatherers« proposed by Henry Jenkins in *Convergence Culture* (cf. JENKINS 2006: 129) should be revised and perhaps adapted to the specific case of transmedial worlds that originate in a video game, as the long history of collaboration among players is added to other practices proper of the fans of transmedial worlds that originate in more traditionally narrative media.

5. Maps and Territories

According to Henry Jenkins, transmedia storytelling is the art of building worlds. Klasturp and Tosca indicate that, in designing an expansion of these worlds, it is necessary to bear in mind some of their characteristics, their worldness.

For me, beyond this »mental image«, the territory and the map are materializations of the idea of the world, but the latter organizes and structures the territory's materiality, taking into account the idea of the world. For the producers, the map is the production bible (among other similar working papers) which allows planning and developing canonical expansions, containing both canonical and non-canonical, but potentially important, information. Among the audience, the elaboration of wikis and other shared data documents are also maps, with canonical and non-canonical information.

I am interested in the case of *Halo* due to the movements made in the direction of a conscious strategy of expansion of its characters' history and

⁷ Cf. <http://halo.wikia.com/wiki/Category:Canon> [accessed March 15, 2015].

stories through the use of transmedia storytelling, which became particularly visible during the preparations to launch *Halo 4*, but which started even earlier. Through the use of a transmedial bible, the importance of narrative in the whole universe developed—from the beginning of the Bungie era, *Halo* has been characterized by a concern for history without putting aside the specificity of the video game from which it originates. The transmedial bible, which is a working document, does not entail the absolute determination of the *Halo* universe, but reveals the interest for continuity and consistency that the audience and players demand of the producers. It is a schematic map of this universe which also takes into account the media and platforms used.

The video game origins of a transmedial world are of interest, among many other reasons, due to the former's possibilities as a medium able to hold such a large amount of information, to the behavior of its fans, who come from more participatory environments, and to the gradual change of the relevant model of production due to economic and commercial as well as technical reasons, with new media that increase the possibilities of expansion of the franchise in new, original ways.

All of these details are needed to design video games and can be used again in future narrative expansions, since their worlds, settings, and characters are conceived to be heard and seen—and, in some cases, manipulated. The work devoted to research and design can be used to develop other products of the saga, including the proliferation of sequels that take advantage of all this information, but it also imposes certain constraints. This is why it is simpler to generate narratives that expand rather than reformulate the given universe—although this occurs, of course, in other transmedial expansions of worlds that do not originate in video games, such as television, film, and printed media. Moreover, the specificity of video games entails other important advantages, such as the experiential dimension or capacity to generate emotions, as highlighted by Perron:

Jouer à un jeu vidéo ne consiste pas seulement à comprendre une histoire, mais plutôt à résoudre des problèmes, à triompher d'obstacles, à affronter des adversaires, à explorer un monde virtuel, etc. Les actions du gamer et les réactions de ce monde vont bel et bien susciter des émotions ›d'une autre nature‹, des émotions vidéoludiques [*gameplay emotions*]. (PERRON 2006: 358)

The effect of these aspects of production, the construction and mapping of the world by means of different mechanisms, is also interesting for other reasons, such as the seriality observed not only in the successive deliveries of the game but also in other products of the franchise that seem to aspire to being more than mere satellites and are geared toward attracting other audiences—bearing in mind that *Halo* belongs to Microsoft, a company that seeks to attract many different kinds of audiences. We must also take into account the technical advances of consoles, which allow players to enjoy narrative audiovisual products, as mentioned above.

Transmedial world production mechanisms, ranging from the use of directives to plan its development, such as the bible and other working doc-

uments, via the establishment of a canon by means of recreational products and franchised narratives, to direct contact with the core of the most active fans through different media, including the Xbox Live service or the *Halo Waypoint* site, represent attempts to control the franchise. Within these limits, unexplored or unknown territories, the gaps in the history of the world and of its main and secondary characters, are potential expansions that intensify the audience's interest. However, continuing with the analogy of a map, the canon—the world's legal boundaries—does not have to coincide with its geographical limits. I am referring to the border territories not completely controlled here, such as fan art or fan fictions, or the weight that memories of *Marathon* still have among *Halo* fans, for example. Furthermore, the role of such unique cases as the machinimas *Red vs Blue* or *This Spartan Live*, which have had an influence on certain aspects of successive deliveries of the video game, is not clear either.

The example used is geared at illustrating the interesting change of a major entertainment franchise toward so-called transmedia storytelling, and the attention paid to coherence and continuity inside the *Halo* universe. In line with the questions discussed in this article, other matters of interest for future consideration include the distinction among fans of transmedial worlds that originate in a video game, assessment of the capacity of video games to generate transmedial worlds as compared to the capacity of traditional narrative media, or, to continue with the cartographic analogy, the manner in which the canon's political frontiers are established in respect to the fandom's geographic territories and to the content generated by users.

To sum up, transmedia storytelling, according to Jenkins' definition, focuses on the world, while in a verbal production the world is less important, as quite often diegesis and action are set apart, which is not possible in transmedial storytelling. It is necessary, then, to reformulate this concept taking into account not only the spatio-temporal dimension but also characters and events, what this article has called the territory.⁸ This explains the importance of the production of maps by the producers and the audience of transmedial narratives that are developed around the idea of one specific world.

References

ATWOOD, MARGARET: *In Other Worlds. SF and the Human Imagination*. New York [Anchor] 2011

⁸ »The map is not the territory« (KORZYBSKI 1933: 750) is an expression coined by Alfred Korzybski at a meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. It means that the representation is not the reality, the map therefore is only a way to represent the reality.

- BAETENS, JAN; DOMINGO SÁNCHEZ-MESA: Literature in the Expanded Field. Intermediality at the Crossroads of Literary Theory and Comparative Literature. In: *Interfaces*, 36, 2015/forthcoming
- BERNARDO, NUNO: *The Producer's Guide to Transmedia. How to Develop, Fund, Produce and Distribute Compelling Stories Across Multiple Platforms*. Lisbon [BeActive] 2011
- BOILLAT, ALAIN: *Cinéma, machine à mondes*. Genève [Georg Editeur] 2014
- JENKINS, HENRY: Transmedia Storytelling. Moving Characters from Books to Films to Video Games Can Make Them Stronger and More Compelling. In: *MIT Technology Review*, 2003. <http://www.technologyreview.com/news/401760/transmedia-storytelling/> [accessed March 15, 2015]
- JENKINS, HENRY: *Convergence Culture. Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York [New York UP] 2006
- KLASTRUP, LISBETH; SUSANA TOSCA: Transmedial Worlds. Rethinking Cyberworld Design. 2004. http://www.itu.dk/people/klastrup/klastruptosca_transworlds.pdf [accessed March 15, 2015]
- KLASTRUP, LISBETH; SUSANA TOSCA: *Game of Thrones*. Transmedial Worlds, Fandom, and Social Gaming. In: RYAN, MARIE-LAURE; JAN-NOËL THON (eds.): *Storyworlds Across Media. Toward a Media-Conscious Narratology*. Lincoln [U of Nebraska P] 2014, pp. 295–314
- KORZYBSKI, ALFRED: *Science and Sanity. An Introduction into Non-Aristotelian Systems and General Semantics*. New York [Institute of General Semantics] 1933
- LONG, GEOFFREY A.: *Transmedia Storytelling. Business, Aesthetics and Production at the Jim Henson Company*. Cambridge [PhD Thesis, MIT] 2007. <http://dspace.mit.edu/handle/1721.1/39152> [accessed March 15, 2015]
- PERRON, BERNARD: Jeu vidéo et émotions. In: GENVO, SÉBASTIEN (ed.): *Le game design de jeux vidéo. Approches de l'expression vidéoludique*. Paris [Editions L'Harmattan] 2006, pp. 347–366
- PRATTEN, ROBERT: *Getting Started with Transmedia Storytelling. A Practical Guide for Beginners*. London [CreateSpace] 2011. <http://www.tstoryteller.com/getting-started-in-transmedia-storytelling> [accessed March 15, 2015]
- RYAN, MARIE-LAURE; JAN-NOËL THON (eds.): *Storyworlds Across Media. Toward a Media-Conscious Narratology*. Lincoln [U of Nebraska P] 2014
- SOURIAU, ÉTIENNE: La structure de l'univers filmique et le vocabulaire de la filmologie. In: *Revue internationale de Filmologie*, 7–8, 1951, pp. 231–240
- WOLF, MARK J.P.: *Building Imaginary Worlds. The Theory and History of Subcreation*. New York [Routledge] 2012

Felix Schröter

**The Game of *Game of Thrones*.
George R.R. Martin's
A Song of Ice and Fire and Its Video
Game Adaptations**

Abstract

Video games have not only become an integral part of most transmedial entertainment franchises but also influenced the narrative and aesthetic conventions of other media, especially film. One consequence of this is the growing prominence of ›game-like‹ narratives (and storyworlds) that subordinate characters and storytelling to more abstract principles of narrative organization. In this article, it is argued that this ›game logic‹ leads to some transmedial storyworlds being especially well-suited for an adaptation as a video game, and that the novel-based transmedial world of George R.R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* is such a world. Drawing on transmedial narratology, film studies, and game studies, the relationship between transmedial worlds and games will be discussed with reference to three different *Game of Thrones* video games: the action role-playing game *Game of Thrones* (2012), the browser game *Game of Thrones Ascent* (2013), and the real-time strategy game *A Game of Thrones. Genesis* (2011). As will be shown, all three games follow very different strategies in identifying and implementing the core elements of the respective storyworld, mainly informed by generic conventions and (assumed) player preferences. Thus, the comparison also casts a light on medium-specific strengths and weaknesses regarding video games' contribution to a broader transmedia storytelling context.

1. Introduction

Although not a particularly new phenomenon, the growing cultural, economic, and academic relevance of transmedial entertainment franchises like J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* or George R.R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* has also led to a paradigm shift within media studies and narratology, away from the sole examination of ›narrative‹ in different media toward the discussion of ›transmedial worlds‹ and the way they relate to their medium-specific instantiations. Most prominently, this shift is reflected in the growing popularity of concepts like ›world building‹ (cf. JENKINS 2006: 114), ›storyworlds‹ (cf. HERMAN 2009; RYAN/THON 2014), and ›imaginary worlds‹ (cf. WOLF 2012), which all »extend beyond the stories that occur in them, inviting speculation and exploration« (WOLF 2012: 17).

But however broad the scope of this new paradigm, ›narrativity‹ as a transmedial concept is still regarded as the common center around which different media converge (cf. RYAN/THON 2014); storyworlds are about *stories*, after all. Without trying to dispute this pivotal role of narrative for the representation of transmedial (story)worlds, this article proposes another perspective on the question of how transmedial worlds are organized and represented within individual media. As Wolf notes:

The growth and adaptation of a world, however, goes beyond narrative, and may even have very little to do with narrative. Some degree of a world's aesthetics (the sensory experience of a world) and a world's logic (how a world operates and the reasons behind the way it is structured) must be carried over from one work to another or from one medium to another. (WOLF 2012: 246)

A similar shift has occurred in adaptation studies. In the preface to the 2013 second edition of *A Theory of Adaptation*, Linda Hutcheon admits that adaptation studies' emphasis on narrative might not have been appropriately capturing the nature of all processes of adaptation within transmedial franchises. Especially with regard to video games adaptations, she argues that it is less the story itself than the storyworld that is being adapted: »Thematic and narrative persistence is not the name of the new adaptation game; world building is« (HUTCHEON 2013: xxiv).

With narrative (or, at least, ›narrative persistence‹) seemingly becoming less important, it has to be asked what other organizing principles might govern the design of transmedial storyworlds and how these influence the storyworld's instantiations in different media. In this article, I propose that one especially salient organizing feature of contemporary storyworlds is, indeed, what Wolf calls a world's ›logic‹, i.e., the general idea of how a world operates and how it is structured (cf. WOLF 2012: 246). And while this logic can certainly take many forms, my focus will be on a particular sub-group of storyworlds, namely those which feature a distinctive ›game logic‹—a property that, unsurprisingly, becomes especially relevant for the adaptation of the respective storyworld as a (video) game.

In the following, I will elaborate on this claim by discussing the relationship between games, stories, and storyworlds, illustrating my arguments by examining the transmedial world of George R.R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* and its video game adaptations. Building on the premise that storyworlds adhering to a game logic lend themselves particularly well to an adaptation as a video game, I will compare three different video games: the action role-playing game *Game of Thrones* (2012), the browser game *Game of Thrones Ascent* (2013), and the real-time strategy game *A Game of Thrones: Genesis* (2011). As will be shown, all three games follow very different strategies to identify and implement the core elements of the world of Westeros, but only one actually stays true to what can be identified as the game logic of the novels and the TV series.

2. Narrative and Games

Narrativity has become a key concept in the humanities, with narrative being considered a core pattern for cognition and comprehension (cf. GRODAL 1997; HERMAN 2002), as well as for the construction of identity and (autobiographical) history (cf. RUBIN 1995). However, this predominance of narrative as an explanatory concept is no longer uncontested: in the late 1980s and early 1990s, hypertext theoreticians shifted the focus from prototypical narrative to interactive, computer-based ›database narratives‹ (cf. SIMONS 2007). In his seminal 2001 book *The Language of New Media*, Lev Manovich describes the database as narrative's modern age correlate:

Many new media objects do not tell stories; they don't have beginning or end; in fact, they do not have any development, thematically, formally, or otherwise that would organize their elements into a sequence. Instead, they are collections of individual items, with every item possessing the same significance as any other. (MANOVICH 2001: 218)

While Manovich's strict juxtaposition of narrative and database may well have overstated the case, it still appropriately captures the fact that digital media allow for an organization of narrative sequences that relies to a lesser extent on traditional concepts of narrative continuity than on ›fragmented‹, ›nonlinear‹, and (most often) ›interactive‹ representations of events. Incidentally, it is this same line of reasoning which has significantly contributed to the emergence of (video) game studies as an interdisciplinary field of research, with the so-called ›ludology vs. narratology‹ debate remaining its influential founding myth (cf. THON 2015). While this debate is by and large settled today,¹ in its early days it has brought forward very fruitful examinations

¹ In the late 1990s, a number of scholars advocated for an approach to video game studies that recognized their primary identity as games. Using methodologies from anthropology, philosophy, or game design, they rejected treating video games solely as narrative media that ›happen to be interactive‹ (cf. AARSETH 2004; ESKELINEN 2004). Instead, they stressed ontological questions (What are the essential features and properties of video games *as games*?) and experiential aspects of video game play (How are games experienced as playful and rule-based activities?). By now,

of the ontological properties of games as well as a discussion of ›games‹ (or game-like features) as transmedially valid concepts. In what follows, both aspects will be briefly discussed, as they significantly contribute to the understanding of the relationship between games, narrative, and storyworlds.

In order to distinguish narrative and games from each other, at least a tentative definition of the latter seems to be necessary. For a start, most scholars agree on differentiating between *play* and *game*, with *play* being conceived as a free-form activity, and *game* as its more structured, rule-based counterpart (cf. JUUL 2005: 28). In his 2005 book *Half-Real*, Jesper Juul takes up this distinction and examines seminal game definitions by scholars like Johan Huizinga (cf. HUIZINGA 1938), Roger Caillois (cf. CAILLOIS 1958), Chris Crawford (cf. CRAWFORD 1997), or Katie Salen and Eric Zimmerman (cf. SALEN/ZIMMERMAN 2004) to come up with what he calls the ›classic game model‹ (cf. JUUL 2005: 36–43):

A game is a rule-based [formal] system with a variable and quantifiable outcome, where different outcomes are assigned different values, the player exerts effort in order to influence the outcome, the player feels emotionally attached to the outcome, and the consequences of the activity are negotiable. (JUUL 2005: 36)

Juul's definition certainly makes for a good »compromise between the extremes of generality and specificity« (MÄYRÄ 2008: 35), although his conflation of ontological features (like rules and outcomes) with cultural aspects of games (like player attachment and negotiable consequences) might raise a few structuralist eyebrows. However, it is still general enough to support the idea of games as a transmedial phenomenon: explicitly drawing a parallel to narratology, Juul claims that »games actually move between different media: card games are played on computers, sports continue to be a popular video game genre, and video games occasionally become board games« (JUUL 2005: 48).

Yet, this transmedial nature of games is not what I am concerned with in this article, for there certainly is a world of difference between claiming that a novel, film, or TV series uses game-like principles to organize characters, spaces, and events, and claiming that these media actually *reproduce the entirety of the game* (including, for example, rules, outcomes, and player efforts).² Therefore, my focus will be on the question how specific elements of the classic game model (like rules, outcomes, goals, and conflicts) can be identified as contributing to the structure of certain narratives and their storyworlds.

however, the debate is more or less settled, with most scholars agreeing that (some) video games may be narrative (in some way), but that narrative representation in video games is still subject to a wide range of medium-specific idiosyncrasies (cf. THON 2015).

² One will, for example, have a hard time realizing a game of *Tic Tac Toe* as a film due to the latter's obvious lack of responsivity to the audience's action. However, there exist some hybrids like the (in)famous sub-genre of ›VCR board games‹, which utilize film sequences to give instructions to players or serve as a game clock. Examples include the *Atmosfear* series (1991–2006), *Star Wars. The Interactive Video Board Game* (1996), or—more recently—the *24 DVD Board Game* (2006).

3. Game-Like Narratives and Storyworlds

In order to further clarify the notion of ›game-like‹ narratives or storyworlds, it is worthwhile to turn back to Lev Manovich's discussion of algorithms and narrative in *The Language of New Media*. He states that, while most narratives—unlike games—do not require algorithm-like behavior from their readers, narratives and games *are* similar in that the reader/player, while proceeding through them, must uncover their underlying logic or algorithm: »Just like a game player, a reader of a novel gradually reconstructs the algorithm [...] that the writer used to create the settings, the characters, and the events« (MANOVICH 2001: 225). It is this algorithm of creating (and reconstructing) the building blocks of narrative, which Juul's classic game model can be related to: a narrative can be said to ›be game-like‹ or ›follow a game logic‹, if the algorithm organizing its settings, characters, and events can better be described in terms of rules, outcomes, goals, and conflicts than in terms of, say, narrative continuity, realism, or character psychology.

This line of reasoning has also left a mark on film studies. Marsha Kinder, for example, identifies a game logic in what she calls ›database narratives‹ like *Pulp Fiction* (1993) or *Run, Lola, Run* (1998):

Database narratives refers to narratives whose structure exposes or thematizes the dual processes of selection and combination that lie at the heart of all stories and that are crucial to language: the selection of particular data (characters, images, sounds, events) from a series of databases or paradigms, which are then combined to generate specific tales. (KINDER 2002: 6, original emphasis)

According to Kinder, database narratives differ from other types of narratives in that they (1) rely less on montage than on incongruous objects or *hot spots* as a means of navigating from one scene to another, (2) use *puppet-like avatars* who are not restricted by traditional notions of consistency or narrative logic, and (3) create *narrative fields* that emphasize story possibilities, randomness, repetition, and interruptions instead of narrative continuity. Thus, they »reveal the arbitrariness of the particular choices made, and the possibility of making other combinations which would create alternative stories« (KINDER 2002: 6).

Similarly, German media scholar Jochen Venus describes certain plots and genres as game-like: according to Venus, heist movies like *Ocean's Eleven* (2001) often follow a game logic in that their ensemble cast acts like a group of players participating in a game—in the case of *Ocean's Eleven*, the game of simultaneously robbing three casinos (cf. VENUS 2007). Each single character is assigned a specific role and the viewers' enjoyment results from watching them perform more or less successfully (cf. VENUS 2007: 315). Moreover, acting as a single ›group character‹ (*Gruppenfigur*) rather than a ›group of characters‹ (*Figurengruppe*), these films' protagonists are not created bottom-up from individual character features, but top-down as required by overarching goals, the different settings or ›playgrounds‹ of the film, and the possible integration of further game elements (cf. VENUS 2007: 314). While Venus'

analysis has a strong focus on heist movies, it is also compatible with Kinder's characters-as-avatars and Manovich's algorithmic creation of settings, characters, and events and can be applied to many contemporary films and TV shows with large character casts such as *Lost* (2004–2010), *Heroes* (2006–2010), or—as will be discussed in more detail below—*Game of Thrones* (2011–).

Having established the notion of game-like narratives as following a top-down game logic in creating settings, characters, and events, we can now turn to the relationship between games and storyworlds, keeping in mind this article's initial claim that some contemporary storyworlds (like the transmedial world of *A Song of Ice and Fire*) prominently adhere to a game logic, which proves especially relevant for their adaptation as a video game. In transmedial narratology, the concept of *storyworld* stems from analytical philosophy and cognitive approaches to literature and linguistics, having both a ›text-oriented‹ and a ›recipient-oriented‹ component.³ Narratologist Marie-Laure Ryan, for example, proposes that a storyworld is initially projected by individual texts, but also exists as a recipient's imaginative experience (cf. RYAN 2014: 32–34). Similarly, Lisbeth Klastrup and Susana Tosca define transmedial worlds as both »abstract content systems from which a repertoire of fictional stories [...] can be actualized or derived across a variety of media forms« and »mental constructs shared by both the designers/creators of the world and the audience/participants« (KLASTRUP/TOSCA 2014: 296f.).

Thus, the storyworld concept bears a striking resemblance to the concepts of algorithm and database discussed above. For, as Ryan puts it, a storyworld is »more than a static container for the objects mentioned in a story; it is a dynamic model of evolving situations« (RYAN 2014: 33). To think of storyworlds as dynamic models from which different stories can be derived reveals an important structural analogy between games and storyworlds: both are abstract, rule-based models that map relationships between their constituents. While games can be said to consist of elements like game pieces, rules, goals, and outcomes, storyworlds quite similarly consist of existents, settings, physical laws, social rules and values, as well as physical and mental events (cf. RYAN 2014: 34–36). Thus, storyworlds can, tentatively, be said to be following a game logic when they privilege physical laws, social rules, and values over character psychology or causal event structure.

Moreover, *transmedial* storyworlds seem to be especially prone to exhibit game-like features. Henry Jenkins, for example, speaks of the ›encyclopedic ambitions‹ of transmedia texts, which are often »based not on individual characters or specific plots but rather complex fictional worlds which can sustain multiple interrelated characters and their stories« (JENKINS 2007: n. pag.). Instead of specific plots, Klastrup and Tosca argue, successful transmedial worlds exhibit three defining features: *mythos*, *topos*, and *ethos*. While *mythos* refers to the »establishing story, legend, or narration of the

³ For recent applications of the storyworld concept in the context of transmedial narratology, cf. RYAN/THON 2014. Cf. also HERMAN 2009, WOLF 2012, and RYAN 2013.

world« (KLAstrup/TOSCA 2014: 297), *topos* refers to the general setting of the world, its broad historical period and geography, and *ethos* includes the explicit and implicit ethics of the world and its characters, or—more generally—the principle idea of how the world works and how characters behave in it (cf. KLAstrup/TOSCA 2014: 297). Among these features, it is the world's ethos, in particular, which tends to incorporate game-like aspects as it provides basic rules that define the ›inner workings‹ of the world. Consequently, one would expect simplifying and ›translating‹ the world's ethos into actual game rules to be the most salient strategy of adapting a transmedial world as a video game (cf. WOLF 2012: 260). However, as the subsequent analysis of three *Game of Thrones* video games will show, not every video game adaptation necessarily stays true to the game logic of the storyworld it originates from.

4. The Game of *Game of Thrones*

Both Martin's book series *A Song of Ice and Fire* (1996–) and the critically acclaimed TV show *Game of Thrones* tell an epic high fantasy tale of war, love, deception, and magic, with a very large cast of characters and an exhaustive mythology.⁴ Set in a pseudo-medieval fantasy world, the series' plot revolves around the power struggles of various noble houses for the right to rule the kingdom of Westeros—an ongoing conflict that is addressed (both intra- and extradiegetically) as the ›game of thrones‹.

While this explicit reference should certainly not be taken at face value, the transmedial world of *Game of Thrones* does indeed seem to follow a game logic in that it subordinates narrative continuity to the algorithmic logic of medieval politics and warfare. In the novels, various characters such as Cersei Lannister (›When you play the game of thrones, you win or you die. There is no middle ground‹, *A Game of Thrones*) or Tyrion Lannister (›The wars, the intrigues, the great bloody game, and me in the center of it‹, *A Clash of Kings*) actually comment on the basic ›rules‹ of this game. Likewise, the more cunning characters such as Tyrion (›Too many strange faces, [...] too many new players. The game changed while I lay rotting in my bed, and no one will tell me the rules‹, *A Storm of Swords*) or Petyr Baelish (›I might have to remove her from the game sooner than I'd planned. Provided she does not remove herself first. [...] In the game of thrones, even the humblest pieces can have wills of their own. Sometimes they refuse to make the moves you've planned for them‹, *A Feast for Crows*) recognize their own role as both players and game pieces.

In general, the game of thrones involves the struggle for power and influence by means of warfare, deception, or diplomacy. But at the same time

⁴ While there are certainly a number of differences between the events and characters as represented in the novel and TV series, these differences do not relevantly affect the overall logic of the transmedial world as a whole. I will therefore refer to both, if not stated otherwise.

it is about the abuse and consequences of power, which inevitably corrupts anyone in Westeros, no matter how righteous their cause (cf. SPECTOR 2012: 169). Characters who find themselves as pieces in this game most often face a »painful retributive justice, born of moral absolutism, that lends reality and depth to the medieval society portrayed in the series« (VAUGHT 2012: 91). At the same time, characters like Petyr Baelish, Lord Varys, or Tyrion Lannister manage to »game the system« precisely because they are excluded from it, as author Brent Hartinger observes: »Having suffered dearly under the rules of an unforgiving society, outcasts such as Tyrion and Varys pay keen attention to rules, precisely so they can manipulate them in order to give themselves a fighting chance« (HARTINGER 2012: 162).

But not only the general ethos of the world can be described in terms of (game) rules, the novels' and TV series' narrative itself also exhibits game-like features, as James Lowder (2012) points out:

[The] game of confounded expectations is central to the success of *A Song of Ice and Fire*. [...] It informs the title of the first volume in the series and manifests in the works themselves in interesting ways, from the thematic treatment of games [...] to the story's basic structure, with the tightly focused individual chapters functioning quite like the movement of discrete units in a miniatures battle. (LOWDER 2012: xv–xvi)

According to this reading, Martin's infamous plot twists (like the sudden death of major protagonists) do not invalidate the argument of an overall rule-based, and thus predictable, narrative structure. On the contrary, the randomness and interruptive power of events like Ned Stark's execution or the »Red Wedding« only add to their game-like quality: they subordinate narrative logic to what Kinder describes as a »narrative field« that emphasizes story possibilities, randomness, repetition, and interruptions instead of narrative continuity (cf. KINDER 2002: 8).

In summary, the transmedial world of *A Song of Ice and Fire* can be said to follow a game logic both in thematic and structural terms: while the former aspect emphasizes the »game of thrones« as a game of strategy—gaining influence by manipulating friends and foes, waging war, and forging alliances by securing bloodlines and marrying into powerful families—, the latter points to the algorithmic logic of the narrative itself—stressing randomness, narrative possibilities, and disruptions. So how do the different *Game of Thrones* video games relate to this game logic?

5. Playing the Game of Thrones

5.1 *Game of Thrones*

At the time of this writing, three licensed *Game of Thrones* video games exist, the most ambitious of which is the 2012 single-player 3D role-playing game

Game of Thrones.⁵ Originally a game based solely on the *A Song of Ice and Fire* novels, French developer Cyanide Studios made a deal with HBO to use art assets, music, and voice actors from the TV series, and even involved George R.R. Martin as consultant on the game's script.⁶ The game's events take place simultaneously to those narrated in the first novel, beginning some four months before the death of Jon Arryn and continuing into the early part of the TV show's first season. However, both the game's plot and cast of characters differ significantly from the novel and TV series, with cameo appearances by Cersei Lannister, Lord Varys, and Jeor Mormont being among the few exceptions.

Mimicking the formal structure of the novels, the game's story unfolds in chapters, alternating between playing as the red priest Alester Sarwyck, heir to the town and castle of Riverspring, and the skinchanger Mors Westford, sworn brother of the Night's Watch. Both protagonists are involuntarily involved in a political scheme that revolves around Jeyne Greystone, a young woman who not only bears the bastard child of king Robert Baratheon but who also turns out to be the bastard daughter of the Mad King, Aerys Targaryen, herself. Naturally, this unborn half-Baratheon, half-Targaryen child draws the attention of powerful lords (who try to protect Jeyne and make her son the rightful heir to the Iron Throne) and queen Cersei Lannister (who tries to eliminate this threat to her own son's regency). For the first half of the game, the two player-controlled characters, Alester and Mors, pursue opposite goals: Alester, having returned to Riverspring after years of exile, seeks the help of queen Cersei to put a stop to his sister's marriage to her bastard half-brother Valarr, by which the latter contests Alester's own right to rule Riverspring. In exchange for her help, Cersei asks him to prosecute and eliminate a number of 'enemies of the realm', among them Jeyne Greystone. Meanwhile, in the North, Mors Westford sets out to protect the same girl, following an order by Jon Arryn, the King's Hand. Finally, Alester and Mors meet, uncover the secret that surrounds Jeyne, and help her escape her prosecutors. In the end, though, Jeyne sacrifices herself after giving birth to her child, letting her killers believe that she died while still pregnant. Alester and Mors manage to escape with the baby, head to King's Landing, and use the attention drawn by Eddard Stark's execution to take their vengeance on Valarr.⁷

⁵ One of the challenges academic writing has to face when dealing with transmedial entertainment franchises like *Game of Thrones* is their highly dynamic nature. During the editing process of this article another highly anticipated game, Telltale's episodic point-and-click adventure *Game of Thrones* (2014), has been released. While no detailed analysis can be provided here, the game's adaption of the storyworld adheres to Telltale's established formula of featuring an 'interactive narrative' by combining extensive story-driven cut-scenes with single moments of player choice.

⁶ [http://gameofthrones.wikia.com/wiki/Game_of_Thrones_\(2012_role-playing_game\)](http://gameofthrones.wikia.com/wiki/Game_of_Thrones_(2012_role-playing_game)) [accessed November 25, 2014].

⁷ In another somewhat artificial plot twist, Mors realizes that Alester is actually the murderer of his late wife, which leads to a showdown of both fighting each other to the death. Depending on which character the player chooses to control in this fight and what he or she decides to do with



Fig. 1:
Prerendered cut-scene in *Game of Thrones Ascent*



Fig. 2:
Combat sequence in *Game of Thrones*

In contrast to this quite complicated plot, the gameplay itself sticks to the conventions of the role-playing game genre: the player is mostly engaged in tactical real-time combat and clicks his or her way through cut-scenes and dialogues with other characters. He or she levels up the player-controlled characters by gaining experience points for completing the game's linear main quest or one of the thirteen available side quests. As is typical for con-

Jeyne's child afterwards, the game offers four different endings, each presented through non-interactive cut-scenes.

temporary role-playing games, the player can choose between different »classes« for his or her characters (e.g., hedge knight, sellsword, or archer), which come with certain skills (allowing for game mechanics like shooting a bow or performing special axe attacks). When leveling up, the player not only increases his or her characters' overall attributes (like strength, agility, or intelligence), but also gains additional skills allowing for more complex combat tactics. Consequently, the player's overarching goal to reach the end of the main quest is complemented by the need to improve his or her characters' ludic abilities or obtain more effective weaponry.

Thus, on the level of narrative, the game stays true to the general mythos and ethos of the transmedial world with its complicated plot full of surprising twists and turns revolving around Westeros' political power struggles. But however nicely the game's narrative might capture the game logic of the *Game of Thrones* universe, its game mechanics and system of rules spectacularly fail to do so: for one thing, the fact that the player is spending most of his or her time fighting and completing highly repetitive quests works against the ethos of the transmedial world, which rather focuses on large-scale politics and warfare. Instead, the game isolates only some minor aspects of the storyworld (character growth and armed combat), transforms them into game mechanics, and builds a fairly mediocre role-playing experience around that. Moreover, the game does not stay true to the topos (i.e., the setting) of the transmedial world, as the navigable game spaces are often restricted to quite unremarkable places (like castle ruins or forests), limiting the player's freedom to explore the world to a series of sequentially connected spaces. Thereby, the role-playing game *Game of Thrones* provides a fitting example of the challenges that go with the »interactivation« (WOLF 2012: 260) of a storyworld: while any video game adaptation requires a *simplified model* of the world to be constructed, in order for interaction and exploration to be possible (cf. WOLF 2012: 260), the role-playing game models specifically *those* elements of the transmedial world's mythos, topos, and ethos that are *not* essential features of its distinctive game logic.

5.2 *Game of Thrones Ascent*

My second example, the browser game *Game of Thrones Ascent*, was originally released on Facebook in 2013 and as a mobile app for Android and iOS in 2014. Due to these platforms' constraints in computing power, the game relies solely on pictorial and verbal modes of narration (apart from the musical score and occasional sound effects to provide audio feedback or signal progress). The player takes on the role of a highborn lord or lady, managing their keep and the surrounding lands through a series of operations that can be accessed via the game's main screen. As is typical for this kind of browser game, the emphasis is on resource management realized through the keep's different buildings: the counting house provides silver coins which must be collected at regular intervals; the village center produces goods like stone,

fish, or iron; the smithy transforms raw material into weapons and armor etc. Building new items costs not only money, though, but also a certain (and steadily increasing) amount of time, during which the player has to wait or pursue other in-game activities.



Fig. 3:
Main screen in *Game of Thrones Ascent*

The second major gameplay element is combat: by spending silver coins, the player can hire sworn swords, who can be sent on adventures to gain money, experience points, or building material. These characters possess a number of game-related abilities and attributes that affect their chances of success during adventures—like, for example, an overall rank level, point values for ›battle‹, ›trade‹, and ›intrigue‹, as well as a character class, which comes with certain bonuses when performing battle, trade, or intrigue actions. This is also the case for the player-controlled character itself whose battle, trade, and intrigue stats will be added to the sworn swords' stats on certain quests. In addition, the game also features a rather story-driven ›campaign mode‹, consisting of a series of quests, which are divided into volumes, roughly paralleling the TV series' seasons. The quests tell the story of the player-controlled character's family and how it is intertwined with the *Game of Thrones* plot. What is interesting, though, is the way the game tries to connect both: some quests re-tell important events of the novel, such as Ned Stark's execution or the (in)famous ›Red Wedding‹, with the player-controlled character as a kind of participant-observer who does not influence the main

course of events but can still engage in meaningful interactions with main or support characters before, during, or after such iconic events. Although most of these story quests are solved by simply choosing between different dialogue options and sending sworn swords into battle, they still offer some narrative depth reminiscent of the novels.



Fig. 4:
Sworn sword adventuring in *Game of Thrones Ascent*

With regard to the campaign's narrative, *Game of Thrones Ascent* manages to stay true to the topos, mythos, and ethos of Martin's transmedial world by focusing on politics, deception, and warfare on a thematic level, as well as on randomness, narrative possibilities, and disruptions on a structural level. However, the actual gameplay of leveling up one's characters, collecting resources, and upgrading buildings soon loses its narrative significance: in order to slowly progress toward the end game, the player's sworn swords have to repeat the same nondescript adventures over and over again, later quests and building upgrades require ridiculously high amounts of time to be completed, and the game mechanics labeled ›battle‹, ›trade‹, and ›intrigue‹ turn out to be mere camouflage for the same repetitive player actions of clicking on things to compare numerical values. Thus, the game does—in a way—deliver a quite convincing adaptation of the respective storyworld, but subordinates the game logic of the ur-text to the generic conventions of a prototypical free-to-play Facebook game. In contrast to the role-playing game *Game of Thrones*, the storyworld's ethos is integrated more extensively into the game's system of rules (e.g., by allowing for strategies other than brute force),

but the available options serve merely as gift-wrapping for otherwise identical game mechanics. While this disparity between the rules and fiction of a game is not uncommon for video game adaptations, there also exist more meaningful ways to transform the game logic of a narrative into actual game mechanics. This will become evident in the following and final case study.

5.3 A *Game of Thrones*. *Genesis*

Published in 2011, the real-time strategy game *A Game of Thrones. Genesis* is the first licensed *Game of Thrones* video game and features both a single-player campaign and a multiplayer mode. The campaign spans a thousand years of Westerosi history and allows the player, in a series of different chapters, to reenact major events of the world's mythos, from queen Nymeria's arrival in the Kingdom of Dorne (some 700 years before the novels) via Robert Baratheon fighting during the War of the Usurper to (in the game's final chapter) the wildling attack on the Wall as described in *A Storm of Swords*. However, these events merely serve as a narrative backdrop against which the interactive gameplay takes place. Consequently, narrative representation is limited to textual descriptions at the beginning of each chapter as well as occasional cases of character speech during the levels themselves, providing background information on the historical time period, the setting, and the protagonist's goals and motivations. The game's system of rules, on the other hand, turns out to be a quite faithful reproduction of the story-world's game logic.



Fig. 5:
Examples of units in *A Game of Thrones. Genesis*

In a typical real-time strategy game, players send out ›units‹ (i.e., characters or groups of characters) to gather resources, with which they build an army to crush their opponent. In *A Game of Thrones. Genesis*, players, too, gather resources for hiring mercenaries and recruiting armies, but also deploy more subtle strategies: to gain influence and so-called ›prestige points‹, players can send out envoys who convert the towns spread across the map to their cause. They can also use spies to create secret agreements with their opponent's villages, which then increase their own income while seemingly still belonging to the opponent. They can use assassins to kill merchants carrying resources belonging to another player; they can send rogues to instigate uprisings in unallied towns, or capture opposing units and hold them for ransom. Another particularly cynical game mechanic is connected to the ›noble lady‹ character: after producing this unit, the player can send her to a town or castle where she creates a ›blood pact‹ by marrying the respective lord and giving birth to his child—thereby preventing these castles from being undermined by enemy envoys or spies.⁸



Fig. 6:
›Noble ladies‹ and the ›blood pact‹ mechanic in *A Game of Thrones. Genesis*

Thus, on the level of game mechanics, the game incorporates many aspects that are characteristic for the ethos of the transmedial world: when building a simplified model of the world of Westeros, the designers decided to simulate the entirety of the ›game of thrones‹ as a strategy game, turning the rules of diplomacy, warfare, covert politics, and even social dynamics

⁸ While the ›blood pact‹ game mechanic plays quite an important role within the game's system of rules, it also reinforces the notion of disenfranchised women being used as tradable commodities and ›birth-giving machines‹ within a patriarchal power structure, reminding the players of the more conservative aspect of Martin's *Game of Thrones* universe (cf. SCHRÖTER 2016).

(like marrying and giving birth) into actual game mechanics. In contrast to the Facebook game discussed above, these mechanics not only differ in the way they are fictionalized, but actually comprise very different sets of rules and variables. Also, every action taken by the players has an effect on the overall state of the world: killings, assassinations, imprisonment, and other treacherous actions will lead toward the ›war‹ game state, which, once activated, prevents any further diplomatic efforts. On the other hand, sending messages of peace to enemy castles or freeing captured enemy units will maintain peace and allow for strategies built around diplomacy, trade, and forming alliances. Thus, depending on the player's strategy, both maintaining peace and precipitating war may prove useful in different scenarios—just as in George R.R. Martin's vision of pseudo-medieval politics. However, the observation that *A Game of Thrones. Genesis* (more so than the other games) manages to build upon the storyworld's game logic is not surprising at all, given the fact that the generic conventions of the real-time strategy game obviously fit the logic of the game of thrones particularly well.

6. Conclusion

Processes of adaptation within transmedial entertainment franchises pose challenges not only to media practitioners but also to transmedial narratology and adaptation studies—especially regarding storyworlds that seem to rely less on narrative logic than on more traditional forms of storytelling. In this article, I have stressed structural similarities between storyworlds and games, proposing that a storyworld can be said to ›follow a game logic‹, if the algorithm organizing its settings, characters, and events can better be described in terms of rules, outcomes, goals, and conflicts than in terms of narrative persistence, realism, or character psychology. As I have tried to show, this game logic manifests itself most notably in a transmedial world's ethos and serves as a useful analytical concept to examine video game adaptations of the respective storyworld. The case study of George R.R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire*, however, made clear that different video game adaptations might draw on a storyworld's game logic to a greater or lesser extent. While all three analyzed games integrate at least some aspects of Westeros' mythos, topos, and ethos into their narrative design, only the real-time strategy game *A Game of Thrones. Genesis* turns the game logic of the novels and TV show into actual game mechanics. Thus, the comparison also casts a light on different strategies in video games' contribution to a broader transmedia storytelling context: while the adaption of a storyworld as a video game genre that best suits its game logic is a particularly salient strategy, other factors may also come into play. The role-playing game *Game of Thrones*, for example, tries to concentrate on a fairly linear and ›cinematic‹ experience with some narrative depth (and, thus, hits the franchise's narrative and aesthetic tone);

the Facebook game *Game of Thrones Ascent*, on the other hand, subordinates most of the transmedial world's defining features to the generic and, above all, economic logic of a free-to-play Facebook game. The question which strategy proves the most successful can hardly be answered conclusively, though, as all three games largely failed to satisfy critics and fans of the franchise. But, as has been shown, the different ways in which they failed are what makes them highly relevant test cases for a transmedial narratology.

References

- AARSETH, ESPEN: Quest Games as Post-Narrative Discourse. In: RYAN, MARIE-LAURE (ed.): *Narrative Across Media. The Languages of Storytelling*. Lincoln [U of Nebraska P] 2004, pp. 361–376
- CAILLOIS, ROGER: *Les jeux et les hommes. Le masque et le vertige*. Paris [Gallimard] 1958
- CRAWFORD, CHRIS: *The Art of Computer Game Design. Reflections of a Master Game Designer*. Berkeley [Osborne/McGraw-Hill] 1997
- ESKELINEN, MARKKU: Towards Computer Game Studies. In: WARDRIP-FRUIIN, NOAH; PAT HARRIGAN (eds.): *First Person. New Media as Story, Performance, and Game*. Cambridge, MA [MIT Press] 2004, pp. 36–44
- GRODAL, TORBEN: *Moving Pictures. A New Theory of Film Genres, Feelings, and Cognition*. Oxford [Clarendon Press] 1997
- HARTINGER, BRENT: A Different Kind of Other. The Role of Freaks and Outcasts in *A Song of Ice and Fire*. In: LOWDER, JAMES (ed.): *Beyond the Wall. Exploring George R.R. Martin's A Song of Ice and Fire*. Dallas [BenBella] 2012, pp. 153–167
- HERMAN, DAVID: *Story Logic. Problems and Possibilities of Narrative*. Lincoln [U of Nebraska P] 2002
- HERMAN, DAVID: *Basic Elements of Narrative*. Malden [Wiley-Blackwell] 2009
- HUIZINGA, JOHAN: *Homo ludens. Poeve eener bepaling van het spel-element der cultuur*. Haarlem [Tjeenk Willink] 1938
- HUTCHEON, LINDA; with SIOBHAN O'FLYNN: *A Theory of Adaptation*. 2nd edition. London [Routledge] 2013
- JENKINS, HENRY: *Convergence Culture. Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York [New York UP] 2006
- JENKINS, HENRY: Transmedia Storytelling 101. In: *Confessions of an Aca-Fan*, March 22, 2007. http://henryjenkins.org/2007/03/transmedia_storytelling_101.html [accessed October 10, 2014]
- JUUL, JESPER: *Half-Real. Video Games Between Real Rules and Fictional Worlds*. Cambridge, MA [MIT Press] 2005
- KINDER, MARSHA: Hot Spots, Avatars, and Narrative Fields Forever. Buñuel's Legacy for New Digital Media and Interactive Database Narrative. In: *Film Quarterly*, 55(4), 2002, pp. 2–15

- KLASTRUP, LISBETH; SUSANA TOSCA: *Game of Thrones*. Transmedial Worlds, Fandom, and Social Gaming. In: RYAN, MARIE-LAURE; JAN-NOËL THON (eds.): *Storyworlds Across Media. Toward a Media-Conscious Narratology*. Lincoln [U of Nebraska P] 2014, pp. 295–314
- LOWDER, JAMES: Introduction. In Praise of Living History. In: LOWDER, JAMES (ed.): *Beyond the Wall. Exploring George R.R. Martin's A Song of Ice and Fire*. Dallas [BenBella] 2012, pp. xiii–xviii
- MANOVICH, LEV: *The Language of New Media*. Cambridge, MA [MIT Press] 2001
- MÄYRÄ, FRANS: *An Introduction to Game Studies. Games in Culture*. London [SAGE] 2008
- RUBIN, DAVID C.: *Memory in Oral Traditions. The Cognitive Psychology of Epic, Ballads, and Counting-Out Rhymes*. New York [Oxford UP] 1995
- RYAN, MARIE-LAURE: Transmedial Storytelling and Transfictionality. In: *Poetics Today*, 34(3), 2013, pp. 362–388
- RYAN, MARIE-LAURE: Story/Worlds/Media. Tuning the Instruments of a Media-Conscious Narratology. In: RYAN, MARIE-LAURE; JAN-NOËL THON (eds.): *Storyworlds Across Media. Toward a Media-Conscious Narratology*. Lincoln [U of Nebraska P] 2014, pp. 25–49
- RYAN, MARIE-LAURE; JAN-NOËL THON (eds.): *Storyworlds Across Media. Toward a Media-Conscious Narratology*. Lincoln [U of Nebraska P] 2014
- SALEN, KATIE; ERIC ZIMMERMAN: *Rules of Play. Game Design Fundamentals*. Cambridge, MA [MIT Press] 2004
- SCHRÖTER, FELIX: Sworn Swords and Noble Ladys. Female Characters in *Game of Thrones* Video Games. In: GJELSVIK, ANNE; RIKKE SCHUBART (eds.): *Women of Ice and Fire. Gender, Game of Thrones and Multiple Media Engagements*. London [Bloomsbury] 2016/forthcoming
- SIMONS, JAN: Narrative, Games, and Theory. In: *Game Studies*, 7(1), 2007. <http://gamestudies.org/0701/articles/simons> [accessed September 15, 2014]
- SPECTOR, CAROLINE: Power and Feminism in Westeros. In: LOWDER, JAMES (ed.): *Beyond the Wall. Exploring George R. R. Martin's A Song of Ice and Fire*. Dallas [BenBella] 2012, pp. 169–188
- THON, JAN-NOËL: Game Studies und Narratologie. In: SACHS-HOMBACH, KLAUS; JAN-NOËL THON (eds.): *Game Studies. Aktuelle Ansätze der Computerspielforschung*. Cologne [von Halem] 2015, pp. 104–164
- VAUGHT, SUSAN: The Brutal Cost of Redemption in Westeros. Or, What Moral Ambiguity? In: LOWDER, JAMES (ed.): *Beyond the Wall. Exploring George R. R. Martin's A Song of Ice and Fire*. Dallas [BenBella] 2012, pp. 89–106
- VENUS, JOCHEN: Teamspirit. Zur Morphologie der Gruppenfigur. In: LESCHKE, RAINER; JOCHEN VENUS (eds.): *Spielformen im Spielfilm. Zur Medienmorphologie des Kinos nach der Postmoderne*. Bielefeld [transcript] 2007, pp. 299–327
- WOLF, MARK J.P.: *Building Imaginary Worlds. The Theory and History of Subcreation*. New York [Routledge] 2012

[\[Table of Contents\]](#)

Krzysztof M. Maj

Transmedial World-Building in Fictional Narratives

Abstract

There is no denying that transmedia storytelling has been gaining increasing attention in recent media, literature, and game studies. Introduced in Henry Jenkins' famous (though not aspiring to be groundbreaking) book *Convergence Culture* (cf. JENKINS 2006), the term has already appeared—to recall the most notable contributions—in media (cf. DENA 2009; SCOLARI 2009), game (cf. KLAstrup/TOSCA 2004; THON 2009), literature (cf. WOLF 2012), television (cf. EVANS 2011) and, last but not least, narrative studies (cf. RYAN 2001; 2004; 2006; 2014), becoming, therefore, a hallmark of contemporary participatory culture. This instinctive association of transmedia studies with everything labeled ›new media storytelling‹ may be, however, one of the term's few disadvantages. After all, what was the third edition of Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516), if not transmedial? Indeed, the work entails a fantastic story (the imaginary voyage of Hythloday), fictional world-building (the foundation of the island of Utopia), concept art (the woodcuts by Ambrosius Holbein), metafictional augmentations (fictive poems, dialogues, and letters), and even a facsimile of the imaginary alphabet.¹ This is possibly why more universally attributed transmedia studies could follow the path marked by Richard Saint-Gelais' concept of transfictionality (cf. SAINT-GELAIS 2007; 2011), Marie-Laure Ryan's distinctions between transmediality and transfictionality (cf. RYAN 2013), or even David Herman's notion of the whole transmedial narratology (cf. HERMAN 2004).

¹ Though there is hardly any transmedial interpretation of More's *Libellus vere aureus*, this hypothesis was deeply inspired by a visionary essay on the ›multidisciplinarity‹ (!) of *Utopia*. Cf. SCHOECK 1978: 124–134.

1. Storyworld Before the Storyline

It could be argued that the main flaw of Jenkins' approach to transmedia storytelling is his persistent emphasis on the eponymous act of storytelling and, thereby, story-oriented world-building, both derived from the experience of an aca-fan rather than from the observation of how the narrative shapes imaginary worlds in convergent media culture. It obviously cannot be denied that fans and fandoms do contribute to the expansion of franchised universes and that the narrative flow throughout different media is made possible by their collective stream of consciousness, which merges into a plethora of compossible plots. Such transmedial expansion, however, does not have to be reduced only to participatory aspects of world-building or to mere storytelling, at least as long as we do not perceive storytelling as the *only* means of conveying narrative content. And yet, Henry Jenkins primarily emphasizes the diegetic and, in a sense, horizontal aspect of transmedia practice—especially when associating both convergence and transmedia story with, respectively, »the flow of content across multiple media platforms« (JENKINS 2006: 2) and the way in which »[a] transmedia story unfolds across multiple media platforms, with each new text making a distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole« (JENKINS 2006: 95–96). However, it was also Jenkins who did clearly state that

[t]ransmedia storytelling is the art of world making. To fully experience any fictional world, consumers must assume the role of hunters and gatherers, chasing down bits of the story across media channels, comparing notes with each other via online discussion groups, and collaborating to ensure that everyone who invests time and effort will come away with a richer entertainment experience. (JENKINS 2006: 21)

This »chasing bits of the story across media channels« can mean only one thing: Jenkins believes that any diegetic activity necessarily precedes »the art of world making« since there can be no participatory storytelling without a pre-existing story to unfold. Such a claim is tantamount to stating that a compelling story is a condition for world-building—which is relevant, alas, only for a number of fictional worlds. It is no coincidence that *The Matrix* was chosen to exemplify Jenkins' theory: there are not that many examples of well-thought-out and meticulously prepared franchised universes that evolved almost exactly in accordance with the expectations of their founders.² Usually, the creator of a fictional world is forced to step aside and become the *deus absconditus* figure, as was well depicted in Neal Stephenson's 2011 novel *Reamde*, or as is still visible in the *Star Wars* universe that has expanded way beyond either George Lucas', or any other individual's, imagination and means of control. Jenkins seems, however, to favor the narrative

² Jenkins admits himself that »[t]he Wachowski brothers played the transmedia game very well, putting out the original film first to stimulate interest, offering up a few Web comics to sustain the hard-core fan's hunger for more information, launching the anime in anticipation of the second film, releasing the computer game alongside it to surf the publicity, bringing the whole cycle to a conclusion with *The Matrix Revolutions*, and then turning the whole mythology over to the players of the massively multiplayer online game« (JENKINS 2006: 95, original emphasis).

situation wherein a transmedia franchise is triggered by a mighty world-builder who can decide what is canonical, and what is not—and then only expanded thanks to a combined effort of fans. Still, this is only the very first stage of world-building, one that could be associated with David Herman's and Marie-Laure Ryan's notion of the ›top-down‹ storyworld design that provides certain presuppositions essential for narrative comprehension. It is the further stage that belongs to ›bottom-up‹ activity during which »a given storyworld is [...] being updated, revised, or even abandoned in favour of another with the accretion of textual cues« (HERMAN 2005: 570). Having compared both of those attitudes toward fictional worlds it could be argued that there can also be two different major types of transmedia: (1) transmedia storytelling that allows top-down design of a given storyworld with the highest level of authorial control (cf. RYAN 2015) and (2) transmedia world-building which enables combining the effort of the world's creator with those of all the voluntary contributors who want to support him or her in his or her endeavor (cf. THON 2015). Drawing a fictional map is not an art from the realm of storytelling, whether transmedial or not, but rather a non-diegetic act of enrichment by which the storyworld can expand beyond the borders of a single narrative representation (i.e., a plot in a given story). Tolkien may have »started with a map, and made the story fit« (TOLKIEN 1981: 177)—but this has never meant that there can be no chance to do it the other way around: to make a map not to fit the story, but to augment the world.

Transmedia storytelling and transmedia world-building should not be treated, therefore, as contradicting but rather as complementing each other. Simultaneously, since one cannot predetermine in our empirical reality whether the real world or the narrative that shaped it (for instance in a performative act of God's creation) was first, it seems futile to believe that such a philosophical breakthrough could be achieved with a fictional world, without introducing any paradigmatic, metaphysical discourse that would probably justify such action. For that very reason, contrary to David Herman's idea of a narrative being a »blueprint[] for world-creation« (HERMAN 2009: vii)—which in terms of precedence clearly favors the narrative over the world—a fictional world should be treated as the primal and legitimate field of reference for any kind of transmedial storytelling performed within its borders. Understood in this way, a world could serve as »a matrix for all possible plots« (DUKAJ 2010: n.pag., translation K.M.M.) allowing a variety of narratives throughout different media, thereby becoming a nexus for transmedia practice. This standpoint seems to have been shared by Lisbeth Klastrup and Susana Tosca in developing their notion of ›transmedial worlds‹, which are no longer understood as being a by-product of engaging storytelling but, rather, as

abstract content systems from which a repertoire of fictional stories and characters can be actualized or derived across a variety of media forms. What characterises a transmedial world is that audience and designers share a mental image of the »worldness« (a number of distinguishing features of its universe). The idea of a specific world's worldness mostly originates from the first version of the world presented, but can be elaborated and changed over time. (KLASTRUP/TOSCA 2004: n.pag.)

This approach brings up at least two important factors of transmedial world-building. First and foremost, the world here becomes a reference system or cognitive frame for subsequent storytelling, which means that without such a »repertoire of fictional stories and characters«, there can be no fictional story related to this particular world. Much as any narrative about the actual world calls for an insight into relevant sources of information, knowledge about a certain transmedial world needs to be regarded as a prerequisite for participatory storytelling. The lack of a map or basic sense of orientation impedes navigating in any kind of space and, quite analogously, the lack of knowledge of a world's »worldness« or its »lore« suppresses the development of transmedial narratives. Furthermore, Klastrop and Tosca clearly differentiate a transmedial world from what they call »the first vision of the world presented« (KLASTROP/TOSCA 2004: n.pag.), which is basically the »canonical« imagery of the world that is perpetuated in all its »apocryphal« reinstallments. And so, again, it is not the narrative that keeps being reiterated to describe the world in more detail, but it is the very world that grows and expands throughout a series of transmedial—and not necessarily diegetic—contributions. Worldness is not something acquirable by a mere following of the plot—it requires cross-referencing research, gathering data, exploration, and other strategies that are highly uncommon in »story-centered« (RYAN 2014: 382) narratives. The movement of the content in transmedial worlds differs, therefore, from the one observed in transmedia storytelling: it is no longer linear and centrifugal, but concentric and centripetal (cf. MITTELL 2014). Here the narrative circumscribes the world, defining it as a bottom-up storyworld co-created by the multi-user community, rather than as a top-down storyworld narrated from the authorial font of the omnipotent world-builder.

Aside from bottom-up co-creation that is more of a sociological phenomenon, there is also a narratological argument for the priority of the storyworld over the storyline. Umberto Eco—in a chapter meaningfully entitled »Structure of the world [*Strutture di mondi*]« from his book *Lector in fabula. La cooperazione interpretativa nei testi narrativi*—conducts a narrative experiment to highlight how word-formation may turn into world-formation and then trigger a whole storyline:

These worlds are not constructed, they are simply named. You can assume very well that there can be a world wherein 17 is not a prime number, and so you can also say that there can be a world inhabited by green stone-eaters [*verdoni mangiasassi*]. But to build these two worlds one must, in the first case, provide the rules under which 17 can be divided, with some result, by a number that is not itself, and in the other case describe the individuals named as green stone-eaters by attributing properties to them: for instance, that they lived in the 17th century, were green and dwelled underground to eat all the stones that Father Kircher had dropped into volcanic craters to learn whether they would emerge at the antipodes or would be arrested by gravity at the center of the *Mundus Subterraneus*. As can be seen, in both of these cases individuals were constructed by combining their—no matter how unprecedented—properties *registerable in the matrix of reference W₀*. Such is the question debated in the history of philosophy of whether one can conceive of a golden mountain or, as was pondered by Horace, whether it is possible to imagine a human being with an equine neck. Why not? It is all about combining new things from those already known. (ECO 2011: n.pag., translation and emphasis K.M.M.)

In this passage, Eco not only refers to his own possible worlds theory and the relevant concept of referentiality but also introduces—for purposes of further argumentation—a fictional entity (i.e., the green stone-eater), only to locate it immediately afterwards in a certain space-time (»lived in the 17th century«) and then provide it with a phenotype (»were green«), a dedicated habitat (»dwelled underground«), and a small backstory (»eat all the stones that Father Kircher had dropped into volcanic craters«), full of intertextual references to Athanasius Kircher's geographical treatise *Mundus subterraneus, quo universae denique naturae divitiae* from 1665. Obviously, such an example does sound ridiculous in comparison to the sophisticated model of the transmedial world, but what matters here is the sequence of events: Umberto Eco first draws a portrayal of fictitious green stone-eaters and only then proceeds with storytelling. Thus the reference to a fictional storyworld comes prior to a fictional storyline. Eco's referent does not impose any ›realist imperialism‹, as Linda Hutcheon would say³: the field of reference remains fictional from the moment green stone-eaters are introduced up to when intertextual allusion appears. Of course, it would be an exaggeration to say that Umberto Eco designed a whole ›abstract content system from which a repertoire of fictional stories and characters can be actualized or derived« (KLASTRUP/TOSCA 2004: n.pag.). In this case, it was only a seed, a point of convergence from which a fictional world may start developing into a more advanced form—quite similarly to the point of divergence but with the exclusion of factual reality in favor of the more independent elaboration of its counterfactual counterpart. Consequently, if the fictional world-building in convergent media culture is to remain as immersive and engaging as narratively possible, this will involve severing the link between a fictional representation and a default reality—and establishing a new field of reference to watch it grow until it becomes complex enough to be considered a world.

2. Encyclopedia vs. Xenoencyclopedia

It can be argued that the narratological notion of storyworld—being an offspring of possible worlds theory and cognitive narratology alike (cf. RYAN 2014: 31)—and Klastруп and Tosca's concept of a transmedial world intersect at the point where a true convergence is achieved: i.e., in the encyclopedia. Analyzing world-building narratives is nearly impossible without acknowledging that one of their major constituents is the proliferation of various appendices, additions, expansions, supplements, or paratexts. All these are de-

³ In context: »Metafiction today challenges that reification which made what is essentially a temporally limited period-concept of realism into a definition of the entire novel genre. The result of this realist imperialism had been the implied positing of the referent of fiction as *real*, with the underlying assertion (and apologia for the novel) that if something ›really happened‹, or could be made to seem to, it was therefore its own justification and verification« (HUTCHEON 1987: 4, original emphasis).

signed to serve one purpose: expanding a fictional world beyond the borders of a single diegetic representation, so as to mirror the privileged condition of the empirical world that does not have to be developed simultaneously to the storyline set in the everyday reality—because one can easily refer to it as to an intersubjective construct already stored in the common imagination, memory, or experience. However, as has often been said about massively expanded fictional worlds (such as those of *Star Wars*, *Warcraft*, or *Middle-Earth*), they have begun functioning in the popular culture on such a scale as to make the words ›hobbit‹ or ›lightsaber‹ parts of our common dictionary—right next to words far predating any fictional references like ›chair‹, ›sun‹, or ›stone‹. This is primarily because there is no epistemic difference (despite the plethora of ontological ones) between the real and imaginary world when we define the latter as

a communicative artefact that is constituted through the intersubjective construction of mental representations based on fictional texts. Fictional worlds are systems that include not only characters and their relations, but also spatiotemporal environments, inanimate objects, situations and events, norms and rules. (EDER 2008: 78–79)⁴

It is no coincidence that fictive maps, dictionaries, diagrams, quotations, genealogical trees, illustrations, and many other types of paratexts have already become a hallmark of fantasy and SF novels. World-building has always been regarded as a major part of fantastic narratives and it is no wonder that designing plausible, credible, and relatable universes has become the very first priority of any aspiring writer. Thus, many debuting authors are wont to think about the fictional lore (cf. KRZYWINSKA 2008: 124) of a storyworld even before figuring out the actual beginning of the storyline. And this may lead to serious ramifications—many young writers, like, for instance, Christopher Paolini in his *Inheritance* quadrilogy, decide to introduce explanation-demanding content not because of crucial world-building requirements, but only to honor an obligation bestowed upon them by their revered predecessors. As a result, a prerequisite to world-building gradually becomes a requisite of convention, and now many people believe the extradiegetic content to be supplementary to the diegesis.

And yet, there are many publications that prove the contrary. For instance, the newly published *The World of Ice and Fire* (2014), co-edited by George R.R. Martin and two of his fans, Elio M. García and Linda Antonsson, stands out as a historical compendium to *A Song of Ice and Fire's* (1996–) storyworld (cf. SCHRÖTER 2015). There was no diegetic motivation for such a work to arise—rather it was an urge for coherence, convergence, and world-building that had stirred up fans' imagination and created the need for a standalone encyclopedia reminiscent of the old historical chronicle. However,

⁴ Translation in THON 2009: 2, originally in German: »[j]ede fiktive Welt ist [...] ein kommunikatives Artefakt, das durch die intersubjektive Bildung mentaler Repräsentationen mithilfe fiktionaler Texte entsteht. Fiktive Welten [...] formen einen Gesamtzusammenhang, ein System, das neben Figuren und ihren Beziehungen auch deren verschiedene Kontexte umfasst: eine raumzeitliche Umgebung, unbelebte Gegenstände, Situationen und Ereignisse, Normen und Gesetzmäßigkeiten«.

since *The World of Ice and Fire* and *A Song of Ice and Fire* belong to the same medium of literary fiction, one could reasonably refrain from describing their relationship as transmedial. This is where Richard Saint-Gelais' concept of transfictionality proves particularly useful, as it describes precisely such a branch of intertextuality that »conceals [an] intertextual link« and »neither quotes, nor acknowledges its sources« (SAINT-GELAIS 2005: 612–613)—but allows evoking a different text's setting, characters, or locations in order to create a broader fictional heterocosm. A classic example of transfictionality in new media may be seen in graphic novels, comic books, and superhero movies, all particularly fond of introducing various crossovers that allow protagonists from different storyworlds to meet in a single multiverse, thereby making a whole franchise hyperlinked much like in an Internet encyclopedia (cf. KUKKONEN 2011). And even though transfictionality cannot be identified one-to-one with transmediality, as it usually operates within the very same medium (of a comic book, or a movie, or a literary fiction), transmedia storytelling can be regarded, as it is in Marie-Laure Ryan's important article »Transmedial Storytelling and Transfictionality« as »a special case of transfictionality—a transfictionality that operates across many different media« (RYAN 2013: 366). The difference between transmediality and transfictionality would be, in that regard, not the medium but a type of reference. Crossovers are born spontaneously, as an obvious answer to returning questions of possible worlds semantics: what if (cf. MITTELL 2014). Premises like »what if Superman could have met Sherlock Holmes« or »would it be possible for Batman to kill Darth Sidious and overthrow the Galactic Empire«, are convergence points for transfictional world-building that could be obviously executed in a transmedial manner by engaging different media in the process of top-down or bottom-up storytelling—but not without this transfictional impulse.

Hence, transmedial world-building and transfictionality, the latter understood as a narratively developed and medially independent form of transmediality, both cover »those practices that expand fiction beyond the boundaries of the work« (RYAN 2008: 386). When Orson Scott Card or Dan Simmons decided to use the word *ansibl* for denoting a futuristic device enabling instantaneous superluminal communication in space, they had not simply borrowed it from Ursula Le Guin's *Rocannon's World* (1966; a part of the *Hainish Cycle*). There was no need for acknowledging the source—since it was a transfictional, not intertextual, quotation of a »one-world/many-texts« (RYAN 2013: 365) type that refers not to another text, but to an intersubjective field of reference shared both by authors and their readers. This is something even bigger than a simple reoccurrence of events or reappearance of heroes among a certain shared universe. From this perspective, *ansibl* is not just a crude neologism or even a transfictional crossover, but a deposit in the epistemic repository known as a »cultural encyclopedia« from Umberto Eco's *Lector in fabula, A Theory of Semiotics*, and other writings on semiotics (cf. ECO 1976; 2011).

In Eco's notion, the cultural encyclopedia is a kind of intersubjective foreknowledge that provides a certain level of access to the variety of worlds, no matter whether actual or counterfactual, fictional or factual, empirical or counterempirical, etc. Learning about 20th-century Soviet Russia requires consulting a relevant encyclopedia in a very similar manner to that in which immersing in the *Star Wars* universe often requires getting through countless encyclopedic entries in the *Wookieepedia*. In both of these cases, one can resist referring to such an encyclopedia in favor of deriving the worldview directly from the works that had once contributed to its contents—but that would be obviously more time-consuming and less effective. Disregarding the way in which one chooses to access the world, one will gain a certain level of what Eco calls »encyclopedic competence«—a kind of cognitive framework that is able to »furnish elements of so-called world knowledge« (ECO 1994: 237). Defined as such, encyclopedic competence provides background knowledge, or even foreknowledge, fundamental both for recognizing the »worldness« and for deepening the immersion. Furthermore, Eco's concept adequately corresponds with Janet H. Murray's widely acknowledged notion of the »encyclopedic capacity« of new media:

Like the daylong recitations of the bardic tradition or the three-volume Victorian novel, the limitless expanse of gigabytes presents itself to the storyteller as a vast tabula rasa crying out to be filled with all the matter of life. It offers writers the opportunity to tell stories from multiple vantage points and to offer intersecting stories that form a dense and wide-spreading web. (MURRAY 1997: 84)

There can be no doubt that this »vast tabula rasa« triggers an unquestionable urge for world-building content, resulting in the publication of an unprecedented number of standalone fictional encyclopedias or »encyclopedish« fictions like Philip Pullman's *Lyra's Oxford* (2003), containing not only a map, but also fictionalized leaflets and postcards from the counterfactual Oxford represented in the storyworld of *His Dark Materials* (1995–2000). In a possible response to this wide-spreading tendency, Richard Saint-Gelais, in the book *L'Empire du pseudo. Modernités de la science-fiction* (cf. SAINT-GELAIS 1999), introduced the term xenoencyclopedia to address both the phenomenon of a transfictional usage of speculative or science fiction's neologisms and neonyms (cf. CSICSERY-RONAY 2012: 502) and to denote referential frameworks of the rapidly expanding heterocosms of fiction. When thinking of »xenoencyclopedias«, one will immediately realize that there must be at least two types of them: those which augment and diversify an already represented storyworld, and those which are actively engaged in the process of world-building, expanding alongside the network of compossible storylines.

3. *Deus Ex. Human Revolution*

Quite obviously, transmedial and transfictional world-building will favor the latter of these models—which was, for example, made very clear during the promotional campaign for the *Deus Ex. Human Revolution* action role-playing game. Released in 2011, *Deus Ex. Human Revolution* was advertized in a number of unprecedented ways, including:

- (1) the fictional website of an in-game corporation, Sarif Industries (sarifindustries.com, still operational), designed with a high enough level of fidelity to mislead a journalist from the British tabloid *The Sun*, who took pictures presented in Sarif's portfolio as factual and reprinted them as illustrations to the tabloid's article about actual developments in medical eye implants;⁵
- (2) two antagonistic propaganda movies, one favoring the cybernetic technotopia of Sarif and other companies responsible for human augmentation, and the other one showing the dark side of *Deus Ex. Human Revolution*'s storyworld with the eponymous human revolution shown in mockumentary news reports;⁶
- (3) faked testimonials of people who benefited from augmentation;⁷
- (4) and a simulated hacker attack on the website, performed by Purity First, a humanitarian organization fighting for a total rejection of technology and an ecotopian return to nature.



Fig. 1:
Sarif Industries company website (sarifindustries.com) hijacked by Purity First

⁵ This entertaining discovery—illustrating how transfictionality can conceal an intertextual link—was first described in the *Huffington Post*. Cf. http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2013/10/16/sarif-industries-the-sun_n_4108549.html [accessed April 6, 2015].

⁶ Sarif Industries commercial at https://youtu.be/Fl_Wd_vAQIU and Purity First response at <https://youtu.be/akaos1U8Rto> [accessed April 6, 2015].

⁷ Official Augmentation Testimonies at <https://youtu.be/54B5fm5dQ9E> [accessed April 6, 2015].

Most interesting about this transmedial but transfictionally narrated world built around the *Deus Ex. Human Revolution* gameworld is how it actually preceded the revelation of the storyline. Before players could even learn anything about the plot and follow the game's storyline, they have already been provided with foreknowledge detailed enough to encompass the clash of two discourses shaping the world of *Deus Ex. Human Revolution*, its lore, aesthetics, and even musical scenography—in other words, almost everything that goes beyond the game's diegetic content. In all of this material, there is no indication or clue that it refers to upcoming installment in the *Deus Ex* franchise—on the contrary, Sarif Industries' commercial refers to a fictional website, sarifindustries.com, that delivers another fictionalized response, this time articulated by Purity First and aimed against augmentations and the eponymous ›human revolution‹. So, although the act of ›hacking‹ the website was momentary, it has prevailed as a typical transfictional link, concealing the factual referent and emphasizing a fictional one. Links between transmedial satellites were successfully established, but the link to *Deus Ex. Human Revolution* remained concealed.

Knowledge about the world that was previously acquired is something that predominates in video games, particularly insofar as they are filled with cut-scenes, intros, or pre-scripted narrative sequences that are, as Jan-Noël Thon says, »generally highly determined *before* the game is played« (THON 2009, original emphasis). It could be argued, therefore, that transmediality, transfictionality, and world-building are all genuinely related to a cognitive attitude that, to use Tim Ingold's words, values *wayfaring* over *trail-following*. Trail-following is, as he describes in *Lines. A Brief History*, tantamount to a crude explication of the plot: being deterministic, destination-oriented, and teleologically restrained, it can only offer a narrow insight into the world, and so it resembles the situation of a traveller traversing unknown frontiers along the pre-designed route of their earlier choice (cf. INGOLD 2007: 15–16). Wayfaring, by contrast, is described as more akin to sailing in the open sea with no pre-planned route, navigation devices, or opportunity of anchoring in the harbor of one's choice. Wayfaring allows for »reconstructing the itinerary as one goes along« (INGOLD 2007: 16)—which is reminiscent of the features of worldness and encyclopedic competence that both encouraged narrating multiple storylines in the single fictional world, universe, or multiverse. The conceptual dichotomy between wayfaring and trail-following, as derived from anthropological remarks on the role of the line in shaping Western art and culture, can particularly contribute to transmedia studies since it clarifies why the linearity of the story is so diminishingly valued by those players or readers who put immersion in the storyworld before catching up with the storyline. This is exactly why the world-building narrative needs a concise and coherent xenoencyclopedia rather than an empirical dictionary: for whereas the latter is an explanatorily oriented referential system, the former delivers not only linguistic but also world knowledge (cf. ECO 1984; DESOGUS 2012). And, again, it is not a coincidence that video game guides are divided into

»walkthroughs« that literally walk the player *through* or *across* the world, forcing them to follow a delineated trail, and encyclopedias of the lore, usually established on wikis, that walk the players *into* the world, allowing them to deepen worldness and immersion alike.

4. Closing Remarks

In conclusion, it becomes clear, then, why Jenkins' transmedia storytelling or phenomenon of convergence, defined as a spread of the content *across* the variety of platforms, cannot be identified one-to-one with transmedial worlds or transfictionality. Both of these latter terms encourage the circumscribing of multiple storylines by the storyworld rather than traversing the storyworld alongside a single predetermined linear storyline designed in top-down fashion—and thereby contribute to the kind of world-building that not only favors open worlds but also open works.

Postmodern wanderers in the world of convergent media culture want neither to remember the beginning of their journey nor to realize when their journey has ended—instead, they just want to »imaginatively [...] inhabit a world« (HERMAN 2002: 570), acquire encyclopedic competence, and experience the worldness of the world. Transfictional and transmedial storyworlds undoubtedly belong to world-oriented, immersive, emergent, and wayfaring types of narratives. J.K. Rowling writing the metafictional *Tales of Beedle the Bard* (2007), Square Enix designing the fictional website of Sarif Industries, or George R.R. Martin asking his fan to co-edit his own *GRRmarillion*, as he is wont to call *The World of Ice and Fire*, are led by the very same impulse as readers, gamers, or fan contributors, all adding their own narratives to one transfictional storyworld. Much as walking along The Pattern in Roger Zelazny's *Chronicles of Amber* (1970–1991) granted the wanderer the ability to access a multitude of compossible worlds, the encyclopedia, the worldness, and the narrative strategy of wayfaring constitute a new poetics of reception: not only world-centred but also, and above all, world-sensitive.

References

- CSICSERY-RONAY, ISTVAN: On Enigmas and Xenoencyclopedias. In: *Science Fiction Studies*, 39(3), 2012, pp. 500–511
- DENA, CHRISTY: *Transmedia Practice. Theorising the Practice of Expressing a Fictional World Across Distinct Media and Environments*. Sydney [PhD Thesis, University of Sydney] 2009. https://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/30158/DENA_TransmediaPractice.pdf [accessed April 6, 2015]
- DESOGUS, PAOLO: The Encyclopedia in Umberto Eco's Semiotics. In: *Semiotica*, 192, 2012, pp. 501–521

- DUKAJ, JACEK: Stworzenie świata jako gałąź sztuki [World-Building as the Branch of Art]. In: *Tygodnik Powszechny*, February 2, 2010.
<http://tygodnik.onet.pl/1,40762,druk.html> [accessed April 6, 2015]
- ECO, UMBERTO: *A Theory of Semiotics*. Bloomington [Indiana UP] 1976
- ECO, UMBERTO: Metaphor, Dictionary, and Encyclopedia. In: *New Literary History*, 15(2), 1984, pp. 255–271
- ECO, UMBERTO: *The Limits of Interpretation*. Bloomington [Indiana UP] 1994
- ECO, UMBERTO: *Lector in fabula. La cooperazione interpretativa nei testi narrativi*. Milan [Tascabili Bompiani] 2011
- EDER, JENS: *Die Figur im Film. Grundlagen der Figurenanalyse*. Marburg [Schüren] 2008
- EVANS, ELIZABETH: *Transmedia Television. Audiences, New Media and Daily Life*. London [Routledge] 2011
- HERMAN, DAVID: *Story Logic. Problems and Possibilities of Narrative*. Lincoln [U of Nebraska P] 2002
- HERMAN, DAVID: Toward a Transmedial Narratology. In: RYAN, MARIE-LAURE (ed.): *Narrative Across Media. The Languages of Storytelling*. Lincoln [U of Nebraska P] 2004, pp. 47–75
- HERMAN, DAVID: Storyworld. In: HERMAN, DAVID; MANFRED JAHN, MARIE-LAURE RYAN (eds.): *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*. London [Routledge] 2005, pp. 569–570
- HERMAN, DAVID: Editor's Column. The Scope and Aims of Storyworlds. In: *Storyworlds. A Journal of Narrative Studies*, 1, 2009, pp. vii– x
- HUTCHEON, LINDA: Metafictional Implications for Novelistic Reference. In: WHITESIDE, ANNA; MICHAEL ISSACHAROFF (eds.): *On Referring in Literature*. Bloomington [Indiana UP] 1987, pp. 1–13
- INGOLD, TIMOTHY: *Lines. A Brief History*. London [Routledge] 2007
- JENKINS, HENRY: *Convergence Culture. Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York [New York UP] 2006
- KLAstrup, LISBETH; SUSANA TOSCA: Transmedial Worlds. Rethinking Cyberworld Design. 2004. http://www.itu.dk/people/klastrup/klastruptosca_transworlds.pdf [accessed August 30, 2013]
- KUKKONEN, KARIN: Metalepsis in Comics and Graphic Novels. In: KUKKONEN, KARIN; SONJA KLIMEK (eds.): *Metalepsis in Popular Culture*. Berlin [De Gruyter] 2011, pp. 213–231
- KRZYWINSKA, TANYA: World Creation and Lore. *World of Warcraft* as Rich Text. In: CORNELIUSSEN, HILDE G.; JILL WALKER RETTBERG (eds.): *Digital Culture, Play, and Identity. A World of Warcraft Reader*. Cambridge, MA [MIT Press] 2008, pp. 123–141
- MITTELL, JASON: Strategies of Storytelling on Transmedia Television. In: RYAN, MARIE-LAURE; JAN-NOËL THON (eds.): *Storyworlds Across Media. Toward a Media-Conscious Narratology*. Lincoln [U of Nebraska P] 2014, pp. 253–277
- MURRAY, JANET H.: *Hamlet on the Holodeck. The Future of Narrative in Cyberspaces*. New York [Simon and Schuster] 1997

- RYAN, MARIE-LAURE: *Narrative as Virtual Reality. Immersion and Interactivity in Literature and Electronic Media*. Baltimore [Johns Hopkins UP] 2001
- RYAN, MARIE-LAURE: Introduction. In: RYAN, MARIE-LAURE (ed.): *Narrative Across Media. The Languages of Storytelling*. Lincoln [U of Nebraska P] 2004, pp. 1–40
- RYAN, MARIE-LAURE: *Avatars of Story*. Minneapolis [U of Minnesota P] 2006
- RYAN, MARIE-LAURE: Transfictionality Across Media. In: PIER, JOHN; JOSÉ ÁNGEL GARCÍA LANDA (eds.): *Theorizing Narrativity*. Berlin [De Gruyter] 2008, pp. 385–417
- RYAN, MARIE-LAURE: Transmedial Storytelling and Transfictionality. In: *Poetics Today*, 34(3), 2013, pp. 361–388
- RYAN, MARIE-LAURE: Story/Worlds/Media. Tuning the Instruments of a Media-Conscious Narratology. In: RYAN, MARIE-LAURE; JAN-NOËL THON (eds.): *Storyworlds Across Media. Toward a Media-Conscious Narratology*. Lincoln [U of Nebraska P] 2014, pp. 25–49
- RYAN, MARIE-LAURE: Transmedia Storytelling. Industry Buzzword or New Narrative Experience? In: THON, JAN-NOËL (ed.): *Transmedial Worlds in Convergent Media Culture*. Special Issue *Storyworlds. A Journal of Narrative Studies*, 7(2), 2015/forthcoming
- SAINT-GELAIS, RICHARD: *L'Empire du pseudo. Modernités de la science-fiction*. Québec [Nota Bene] 1999
- SAINT-GELAIS, RICHARD: Transfictionality. In: HERMAN, DAVID; MANFRED JAHN; MARIE-LAURE RYAN (eds.): *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*. Abingdon [Routledge] 2005, pp. 612–613
- SAINT-GELAIS, RICHARD: Contours de la transfictionnalité. In: SAINT-GELAIS, RICHARD; RENÉ AUDET (eds.): *La fiction, suites et variations*. [U of Rennes P] 2007, pp. 5–25
- SAINT-GELAIS, RICHARD: *Fictions transfuges. Transfictionnalité et ses enjeux*. Paris [Seuil] 2011
- SCHOECK, RICHARD J.: The Ironic and the Prophetic. Towards Reading More's »Utopia« as a Multidisciplinary Work. In: *Albion. A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*, 10, 1978, pp. 124–134
- SCHRÖTER, FELIX: The Game of *Game of Thrones*. George R.R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* and Its Video Game Adaptations. In: BEIL, BENJAMIN; KLAUS SACHS-HOMBACH; JAN-NOËL THON (eds.): *Media Convergence and Transmedial Worlds (Part 3)/Medienkonvergenz und transmediale Welten (Teil 3)*. Special issue *IMAGE*, 22, 2015, pp. 65–82
- SCOLARI, CARLOS ALBERTO: Transmedia Storytelling. Implicit Consumers, Narrative Worlds, and Branding in Contemporary Media Production. In: *International Journal of Communication*, 3, 2009, pp. 586–606
- THON JAN-NOËL: Computer Games, Fictional Worlds, and Transmedia Storytelling. A Narratological Perspective. In: SAGENG, JOHN R. (ed.): *Proceedings of the Philosophy of Computer Games Conference 2009*. Oslo [University of Oslo] 2009, pp. 1–6

- THON, JAN-NOËL: Converging Worlds. From Transmedial Storyworlds to Transmedial Universes. In: THON, JAN-NOËL (ed.): *Transmedial Worlds in Convergent Media Culture*. Special issue *Storyworlds. A Journal of Narrative Studies*, 7(2), 2015/forthcoming
- TOLKIEN, J.R.R.: *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*. Selected and edited by Humphrey Carpenter. London [George Allen & Unwin] 1981
- WOLF, MARK J.P.: *Building Imaginary Worlds. The Theory and History of Subcreation*. London [Routledge] 2012

[\[Table of Contents\]](#)

Impressum

IMAGE. Zeitschrift für interdisziplinäre Bildwissenschaft wird herausgegeben von Klaus Sachs-Hombach, Jörg R.J. Schirra, Stephan Schwan und Hans Jürgen Wulff.

Bisherige Ausgaben

IMAGE 21

JÖRG R.J. SCHIRRA: Editorial

MARC BONNER: Architektur als mediales Scharnier. Medialität und Bildlichkeit der raumzeitlichen Erfahrungswelten Architektur, Film und Computerspiel

MIRIAM KIENESBERGER: Schwarze ›Andersheit/weiße Norm. Rassistisch-koloniale Repräsentationsformen in EZA-Spendenaufrufen

ELIZE BISANZ: Notizen zur Phaneroscopy. Charles S. Peirce und die Logik des Sehens

JÖRG R.J. SCHIRRA/MARK A. HALAWA/DIMITRI LIEBSCH: Das bildphilosophische Stichwort. Vorbemerkung

MARK A. HALAWA: Das bildphilosophische Stichwort 1. Bildwissenschaft vs. Bildtheorie

DIMITRI LIEBSCH: Das bildphilosophische Stichwort 2. Replika, Faksimile und Kopie

JÖRG R.J. SCHIRRA: Das bildphilosophische Stichwort 3. Interaktives Bild

IMAGE 21 Themenheft: Media Convergence and Transmedial Worlds (Part 2)

Herausgeber: Benjamin Beil, Klaus Sachs-Hombach, Jan-Noël Thon

JAN-NOËL THON: Introduction. Media Convergence and Transmedial Worlds (Part 2)

JOHANNES FEHRLE: Leading into the Franchise. Remediation as (Simulated) Transmedia World. The Case of *Scott Pilgrim*

MARTIN HENNIG: Why Some Worlds Fail. Observations on the Relationship Between Intertextuality, Intermediality, and Transmediality in the *Resident Evil* and *Silent Hill* Universes

ANNE GANZERT: »We welcome you to your *Heroes* community. Remember, everything is connected«. A Case Study in Transmedia Storytelling

JONAS NESSELHAUF/MARKUS SCHLEICH: A Stream of Medial Consciousness. Transmedia Storytelling in Contemporary German Quality Television

CRISTINA FORMENTI: Expanded Mockworlds. Mockumentary as a Transmedial Narrative Style

LAURA SCHLICHTING: Transmedia Storytelling and the Challenge of Knowledge Transfer in Contemporary Digital Journalism. A Look at the Interactive Documentary *Hollow* (2012–)

IMAGE 20

JÖRG R.J. SCHIRRA: Editorial

MARK A. HALAWA: Angst vor der Sprache. Zur Kritik der sprachkritischen Ikonologie

BARBARA LAIMBÖCK: Heilkunst und Kunst. Ärztinnen und Ärzte in der österreichischen Malerei des 20. Jahrhunderts. Eine sowohl künstlerische als auch tiefenpsychologische Reflexion

MARTINA SAUER: Ästhetik und Pragmatismus. Zur funktionalen Relevanz einer nicht-diskursiven Formauffassung bei Cassirer, Langer und Krois

A. PETER MAASWINKEL: Allsehendes Auge und unsichtbare Hand. Zur Ästhetisierung neoliberaler Ideologie am Beispiel des European Council

MARIA SCHREIBER: Als das Bild aus dem Rahmen fiel. Drei Tagungsberichte aus einem trans- und interdisziplinären Feld

Aus aktuellem Anlass:

FRANZ REITINGER: Der Bredekamp-Effekt

IMAGE 20 Themenheft: Medienkonvergenz und transmediale Welten (Teil 1)

Herausgeber: Benjamin Beil, Klaus Sachs-Hombach, Jan-Noël Thon

JAN-NOËL THON: Einleitung. Medienkonvergenz und transmediale Welten/Introduction. Media Convergence and Transmedial Worlds

HANNS CHRISTIAN SCHMIDT: Origami Unicorn Revisited. »Transmediales Erzählen« und »transmediales Worldbuilding« im *The Walking Dead*-Franchise

ANDREAS RAUSCHER: Modifikationen eines Mythen-Patchworks. Ludonarratives Worldbuilding in den *Star Wars*-Spielen

VERA CUNTZ-LENG: Harry Potter transmedial

RAPHAELA KNIPP: »One day, I would go there...«. Fantouristische Praktiken im Kontext transmedialer Welten in Literatur, Film und Fernsehen

THERESA SCHMIDTKE/MARTIN STOBBE: »With poseable arms & gliding action!«. Jesus-Actionfiguren und die transmediale Storyworld des Neuen Testaments

HANNE DETEL: Nicht-fiktive transmediale Welten. Neue Ansätze für den Journalismus in Zeiten der Medienkonvergenz

IMAGE 19

JÖRG R.J. SCHIRRA: Editorial

SABINA MISOCH: Mediatisierung, Visualisierung und Virtualisierung. Bildgebende Verfahren und 3D-Navigation in der Medizin. Eine bildwissenschaftliche und mediensoziologische Betrachtung

KLAUS H. KIEFER: *Gangnam Style* erklärt. Ein Beitrag zur deutsch-koreanischen Verständigung

EVRIPIDES ZANTIDES/EVANGELOS KOURDIS: Graphism and Intersemiotic Translation. An Old Idea or a New Trend in Advertising?
MARTIN FRICKE: Quantitative Analyse zu Strukturmerkmalen und -veränderung im Medium Comic am Beispiel Action Comic
FRANZ REITINGER: Die ›ultimative‹ Theorie des Bildes

IMAGE 18: Bild und Moderne

Herausgeber: Martin Scholz

MARTIN SCHOLZ: Bild und Moderne
RALF BOHN: Zur soziografischen Darstellung von Selbstbildlichkeit. Von den Bildwissenschaften zur szenologischen Differenz
ALEXANDER GLAS: Lernen mit Bildern. Eine empirische Studie zum Verhältnis von Blickbildung, Imagination und Sprachbildung
PAMELA C. SCORZIN: Über das Unsichtbare im Sichtbaren. Szenografische Visualisierungsstrategien und moderne Identitätskonstruktionen am Beispiel von Jeff Walls »After ›Invisible Man‹ by Ralph Ellison, the Prologue«
HEINER WILHARM: Weltbild und Ursprung. Für eine Wiederbelebung der Künste des öffentlichen Raums. Zu Heideggers Bildauffassung der 30er Jahre
NORBERT M. SCHMITZ: Malewitsch »Letzte futuristische Ausstellung ›0,10‹« in St. Petersburg 1915 oder die Paradoxien des fotografischen Suprematismus. Die medialen Voraussetzungen des autonomen Bildes
ROLF NOHR: Die Tischplatte der Authentizität. Von der kunstvollen Wissenschaft zum Anfassen
ROLF SACHSSE: Medien im Kreisverkehr. Architektur – Fotografie – Buch
SABINE FORAITA: Bilder der Zukunft in der Vergangenheit und Gegenwart. Wie entstehen Bilder der Zukunft? Wer schafft sie und wer nutzt sie? Bilder als designwissenschaftliche Befragungsform
THOMAS HEUN: Die Bilder der Communities. Zur Bedeutung von Bildern in Online-Diskursen

IMAGE 17

Herausgeber/in: Rebecca Borschtschow, Lars C. Grabbe, Patrick Rupert-Kruse

REBECCA BORSCHTSCHOW/LARS C. GRABBE/PATRICK RUPERT-KRUSE: Bewegtbilder. Grenzen und Möglichkeiten einer Bildtheorie des Films
HANS JÜRGEN WULFF: Schwarzbilder. Notizen zu einem filmbildtheoretischen Problem
LARS C. GRABBE/PATRICK RUPERT-KRUSE: Filmische Perspektiven holonisch-mnemonischer Repräsentation. Versuch einer allgemeinen Bildtheorie des Films
MARIJANA ERSTIĆ: Jenseits der Starrheit des Gemäldes. Luchino Viscontis kristalline Filmwelten am Beispiel von *Gruppo di famiglia in un interno* (*Gewalt und Leidenschaft*)
INES MÜLLER: Bildgewaltig! Die Möglichkeiten der Filmästhetik zur Emotionalisierung der Zuschauer
REBECCA BORSCHTSCHOW: Bild im Rahmen, Rahmen im Bild. Überlegungen zu einer bildwissenschaftlichen Frage

- NORBERT M. SCHMITZ:** Arnheim versus Panofsky/Modernismus versus Ikonologie. Eine exemplarische Diskursanalyse zum Verhältnis der Kunstgeschichte zum filmischen Bild
- FLORIAN HÄRLE:** Über filmische Bewegtbilder, die sich wirklich bewegen. Ansatz einer Interpretationsmethode
- DIMITRI LIEBSCH:** Wahrnehmung, Motorik, Affekt. Zum Problem des Körpers in der phänomenologischen und analytischen Filmphilosophie
- TINA HEDWIG KAISER:** Schärfe, Fläche, Tiefe. Wenn die Filmbilder sich der Narration entziehen. Bildnischen des Spielfilms als Verbindungslinien der Bild- und Filmwissenschaft

IMAGE 16

- JÖRG R.J. SCHIRRA:** Editorial
- MATTHIAS MEILER:** Semiologische Überlegungen zu einer Theorie des öffentlichen Raums. Textur und Textwelt am Beispiel der Kommunikationsform Kleinplakat
- CLAUS SCHLABERG:** »Bild«. Eine Explikation auf der Basis von Intentionalität und Bewirken
- ASMAA ABD ELGAWAD ELSEBAE:** Computer Technology and Its Reflection on the Architecture and Internal Space
- JULIAN WANGLER:** Mehr als einfach nur grau. Die visuelle Inszenierung von Alter in Nachrichtenberichterstattung und Werbung

IMAGE 16 Themenheft: Bildtheoretische Ansätze in der Semiotik

- JÖRG R.J. SCHIRRA:** Editorial
- DORIS SCHÖPS:** Semantik und Pragmatik von Körperhaltungen im Spielfilm
- SASCHA DEMARMELS:** Als ob die Sinne erweitert würden... Augmented Reality als Emotionalisierungsstrategie
- CHRISTIAN TRAUTSCH/YIXIN WU:** Die Als-ob-Struktur von Emotikons im WWW und in anderen Medien
- MARTIN SIEFKES:** The Semantics of Artefacts. How We Give Meaning to the Things We Produce and Use
- KLAUS H. KIEFER:** »Le Corancan«. Sprechende Beine

IMAGE 15

- JÖRG R.J. SCHIRRA:** Editorial
- HERIBERT RÜCKER:** Auch Wissenschaften sind nur Bilder ihrer Maler. Eine Hermeneutik der Abbildung
- RAY DAVID:** A Mimetic Psyche
- GEORGE DAMASKINIDIS/ANASTASIA CHRISTODOULOU:** The Press Briefing as an ESP Educational Microworld. An Example of Social Semiotics and Multimodal Analysis
- KATHARINA SCHULZ:** Geschichte, Rezeption und Wandel der Fernsehserie

IMAGE 15 Themenheft: Poster-Vorträge auf der internationalen Fachkonferenz »Ursprünge der Bilder. Anthropologische Diskurse in der Bildwissenschaft«

Herausgeber: Ronny Becker, Jörg R.J. Schirra, Klaus Sachs-Hombach

KLAUS SACHS-HOMBACH: Einleitung

MARCEL HEINZ: Born in the Streets. Meaning by Placing

TOBIAS SCHÖTTLER: The Triangulation of Images. Pictorial Competence and Its Pragmatic Condition of Possibility

MARTINA SAUER: Zwischen Hingabe und Distanz. Ernst Cassirers Beitrag zur Frage nach dem Ursprung der Bilder im Vergleich zu vorausgehenden (Kant), zeitgleichen (Heidegger und Warburg) und aktuellen Positionen

IMAGE 14

Herausgeber: Klaus Sachs-Hombach, Jörg R.J. Schirra, Ronny Becker

RONNY BECKER/KLAUS SACHS-HOMBACH/JÖRG R.J. SCHIRRA: Einleitung

GODA PLAUM: Funktionen des bildnerischen Denkens

CONSTANTIN RAUER: Kleine Kulturgeschichte des Menschenbildes. Ein Essay

JENNIFER DAUBENBERGER: »A Skin Deep Creed«. Tattooing as an Everlasting Visual Language in Relation to Spiritual and Ideological Beliefs

SONJA ZEMAN: »Grammaticalization« Within Pictorial Art? Searching for Diachronic Principles of Change in Picture and Language

LARISSA M. STRAFFON: The Descent of Art. The Evolution of Visual Art as Communication via Material Culture

TONI HILDEBRANDT: Bild, Geste und Hand. Leroi-Gourhans paläontologische Bildtheorie

CLAUDIA HENNING: Tagungsbericht zur internationalen Fachkonferenz »Ursprünge der Bilder« (30. März – 1. April 2011)

IMAGE 14 Themenheft: *Homor pictor und animal symbolicum*

Herausgeber: Mark A. Halawa

MARK A. HALAWA: Editorial. *Homo pictor und animal symbolicum*. Zu den Möglichkeiten und Grenzen einer philosophischen Bildanthropologie

NISAAR ULAMA: Von Bildfreiheit und Geschichtsverlust. Zu Hans Jonas' *homo pictor*

JÖRG R.J. SCHIRRA/KLAUS SACHS-HOMBACH: Kontextbildung als anthropologischer Zweck von Bildkompetenz

ZSUZSANNA KONDOR: Representations and Cognitive Evolution. Towards an Anthropology of Pictorial Representation

JAKOB STEINBRENNER: Was heißt Bildkompetenz? Oder Bemerkungen zu Dominic Lopes' Kompetenzbedingung

IMAGE 13

JÖRG R.J. SCHIRRA: Editorial

MATTHIAS HÄNDLER: Phänomenologie, Semiotik und Bildbegriff. Eine kritische Diskussion

SANDY RÜCKER: McLuhans *global village* und Enzensbergers Netzestadt. Untersuchung und Vergleich der Metaphern

MARTINA SAUER: Affekte und Emotionen als Grundlage von Weltverstehen. Zur Tragfähigkeit des kulturanthropologischen Ansatzes Ernst Cassirers in den Bildwissenschaften

JAKOB SAUERWEIN: Das Bewusstsein im Schlaf. Über die Funktion von Klarträumen

IMAGE 12: Bild und Transformation

Herausgeber: Martin Scholz

MARTIN SCHOLZ: Von Katastrophen und ihren Bildern

STEPHAN RAMMLER: Im Schatten der Utopie. Zur sozialen Wirkungsmacht von Leitbildern kultureller Transformation

KLAUS SACHS-HOMBACH: Zukunftsbilder. Einige begriffliche Anmerkungen

ROLF NOHR: Sternenkind. Vom Transformatorischen, Nützlichen, dem Fötus und dem blauen Planeten

SABINE FORAITA/MARKUS SCHLEGEL: Vom Höhlengleichnis zum Zukunftsszenario oder wie stellt sich Zukunft dar?

ROLF SACHSSE: How to do things with media images. Zur Praxis positiver Transformationen stehender Bilder

HANS JÜRGEN WULFF: Zeitmodi, Prozesszeit. Elementaria der Zeitrepräsentation im Film

ANNA ZIKA: gottseidank: ich muss keine teflon-overalls tragen. mode(fotografie) und zukunft

MARTIN SCHOLZ: Versprechen. Bilder, die Zukunft zeigen

IMAGE 11

JÖRG R.J. SCHIRRA: Editorial

TINA HEDWIG KAISER: Dislokationen des Bildes. Bewegter Bildraum, haptisches Sehen und die Herstellung von Wirklichkeit

GODA PLAUM: Bildnerisches Denken

MARTINA ENGELBRECHT/JULIANE BETZ/CHRISTOPH KLEIN/RAPHAEL ROSENBERG: Dem Auge auf der Spur. Eine historische und empirische Studie zur Blickbewegung beim Betrachten von Gemälden

CHRISTIAN TRAUTSCH: Die Bildphilosophien Ludwig Wittgensteins und Oliver Scholz' im Vergleich

BEATRICE NUNOLD: Landschaft als Topologie des S(ch)eins

IMAGE 10

Herausgeberinnen: Claudia Henning, Katharina Scheiter

- CLAUDIA HENNING/KATHARINA SCHEITER:** Einleitung
ANETA ROSTKOWSKA: Critique of Lambert Wiesing's Phenomenological Theory of Picture
NICOLAS ROMANACCI: Pictorial Ambiguity. Approaching ›Applied Cognitive Aesthetics‹ from a Philosophical Point of View
PETRA BERNHARDT: ›Einbildung‹ und Wandel der Raumkategorie ›Osten‹ seit 1989. Werbebilder als soziale Indikatoren
EVELYN RUNGE: Ästhetik des Elends. Thesen zu sozialengagierter Fotografie und dem Begriff des Mitleids
STEFAN HÖLSCHER: Bildstörung. Zur theoretischen Grundlegung einer experimentell-empirischen Bilddidaktik
KATHARINA LOBINGER: Facing the picture. Blicken wir dem Bild ins Auge! Vorschlag für eine metaanalytische Auseinandersetzung mit visueller Medieninhaltsforschung
BIRGIT IMHOF/HALSZKA JARODZKA/PETER GERJETS: Classifying Instructional Visualizations. A Psychological Approach
PETRA BERNHARDT: Tagungsbericht zur internationalen Fachkonferenz »Bilder – Sehen – Denken« (18. – 20. März 2009)

IMAGE 9

- KLAUS SACHS-HOMBACH:** Editorial
DIETER MAURER/CLAUDIA RIBONI/BIRUTE GUJER: Frühe Bilder in der Ontogenese
DIETER MAURER/CLAUDIA RIBONI/BIRUTE GUJER: Bildgenese und Bildbegriff
MICHAEL HANKE: Text – Bild – Körper. Vilém Flussers medientheoretischer Weg vom Subjekt zum Projekt
STEFAN MEIER: »Pimp your profile«. Fotografie als Mittel visueller Imagekonstruktion im Web 2.0
JULIUS ERDMANN: My body style(s). Formen der bildlichen Identität im Studivz
ANGELA KREWANI: Technische Bilder. Aspekte medizinischer Bildgestaltung
BEATE OCHSNER: Visuelle Subversionen. Zur Inszenierung monströser Körper im Bild

IMAGE 8

Herausgeberin: Dagmar Venohr

- DAGMAR VENOHR:** Einleitung
CHRISTIANE VOSS: Fiktionale Immersion zwischen Ästhetik und Anästhesierung
KATHRIN BUSCH: Kraft der Dinge. Notizen zu einer Kulturtheorie des Designs
RÜDIGER ZILL: Im Schaufenster
PETRA LEUTNER: Leere der Sehnsucht. Die Mode und das Regiment der Dinge
DAGMAR VENOHR: Modehandeln zwischen Bild und Text. Zur Ikonotextualität der Mode in der Zeitschrift

IMAGE 7

JÖRG R.J. SCHIRRA: Editorial

BEATRICE NUNOLD: Sinnlich – konkret. Eine kleine Topologie des S(ch)eins

DAGMAR VENOHR: ModeBilderKunstTexte. Die Kontextualisierung der Modefotografien von F.C. Gundlach zwischen Kunst- und Modesystem

NICOLAS ROMANACCI: »Possession plus reference«. Nelson Goodmans Begriff der Exemplifikation – angewandt auf eine Untersuchung von Beziehungen zwischen Kognition, Kreativität, Jugendkultur und Erziehung

HERMANN KALKOFEN: Sich selbst bezeichnende Zeichen

RAINER GROH: Das Bild des Googelns

IMAGE 6

JÖRG R.J. SCHIRRA: Editorial

SABRINA BAUMGARTNER/JOACHIM TREBBE: Die Konstruktion internationaler Politik in den Bildsequenzen von Fernsehnachrichten. Quantitative und qualitative Inhaltsanalysen zur Darstellung von mediatisierter und inszenierter Politik

HERMANN KALKOFEN: Bilder lesen...

FRANZ REITINGER: Bildtransfers. Der Einsatz visueller Medien in der Indianermission Neufrankreichs

ANDREAS SCHELSKE: Zur Sozialität des nicht-fotorealistischen Renderings. Eine zu kurze, soziologische Skizze für zeitgenössische Bildmaschinen

IMAGE 6 Themenheft: Rezensionen

STEPHAN KORNMESSE rezensiert: Symposium »Signs of Identity—Exploring the Borders«

SILKE EILERS rezensiert: *Bild und Eigensinn*

MARCO A. SORACE rezensiert: *Mit Bildern lügen*

MIRIAM HALWANI rezensiert: *Gottfried Jäger*

SILKE EILERS rezensiert: *Bild/Geschichte*

HANS JÜRGEN WULFF rezensiert: *Visual Culture Revisited*

GABRIELLE DUFOUR-KOWALSKA rezensiert: *Ästhetische Existenz heute*

STEPHANIE HERING rezensiert: *MediaArthistories*

MIHAI NADIN rezensiert: *Computergrafik*

SILKE EILERS rezensiert: *Modernisierung des Sehens*

IMAGE 5

JÖRG R.J. SCHIRRA: Editorial

HERMANN KALKOFEN: Pudowkins Experiment mit Kuleschow

REGULA FANKHAUSER: Visuelle Erkenntnis. Zum Bildverständnis des Hermetismus in der Frühen Neuzeit

BEATRICE NUNOLD: Die Welt im Kopf ist die einzige, die wir kennen! Dalis paranoisch-kritische Methode, Immanuel Kant und die Ergebnisse der neueren Neurowissenschaft

PHILIPP SOLDT: Bildbewusstsein und »willing suspension of disbelief«. Ein psychoanalytischer Beitrag zur Bildrezeption

IMAGE 5 Themenheft: Computational Visualistics and Picture Morphology

Herausgeber: Jörg R.J. Schirra

- JÖRG R.J. SCHIRRA:** Computational Visualistics and Picture Morphology. An Introduction
YURI ENGELHARDT: Syntactic Structures in Graphics
STEFANO BORGO/ROBERTA FERRARIO/CLAUDIO MASOLO/ALESSANDRO OLTRAMARI:
Mereogeometry and Pictorial Morphology
WINFRIED KURTH: Specification of Morphological Models with L-Systems and Relational
Growth Grammars
TOBIAS ISENBERG: A Survey of Image-Morphologic Primitives in Non-Photorealistic
Rendering
HANS DU BUF/JOÃO RODRIGUES: Image Morphology. From Perception to Rendering
THE SVP GROUP: Automatic Generation of Movie Trailers Using Ontologies
JÖRG R.J. SCHIRRA: Conclusive Notes on Computational Picture Morphology

IMAGE 4

- JÖRG R.J. SCHIRRA:** Editorial
BEATRICE NUNOLD: Landschaft als Topologie des Seins
STEPHAN GÜNZEL: Bildtheoretische Analyse von Computerspielen in der Perspektive Erste
Person
MARIO BORILLO/JEAN-PIERRE GOULETTE: Computing Architectural Composition from the
Semantics of the *Vocabulaire de l'architecture*
ALEXANDER GRAU: Daten, Bilder: Weltanschauungen. Über die Rhetorik von Bildern in der
Hirnforschung
ELIZE BISANZ: Zum Erkenntnispotenzial von künstlichen Bildsystemen

IMAGE 4 Themenheft: Rezensionen

- Aus aktuellem Anlass:**
FRANZ REITINGER: Karikaturenstreit
Rezensionen:
FRANZ REITINGER rezensiert: *Geschichtsdeutung auf alten Karten*
FRANZ REITINGER rezensiert: *Auf dem Weg zum Himmel*
FRANZ REITINGER rezensiert: *Bilder sind Schüsse ins Gehirn*
KLAUS SACHS-HOMBACH rezensiert: *Politik im Bild*
SASCHA DEMARMELS rezensiert: *Bilder auf Weltreise*
SASCHA DEMARMELS rezensiert: *Bild und Medium*
THOMAS MEDER rezensiert: *Blicktricks*
THOMAS MEDER rezensiert: *Wege zur Bildwissenschaft*
EVA SCHÜRMANN rezensiert: *Bild-Zeichen und What do pictures want?*

IMAGE 3

- KLAUS SACHS-HOMBACH:** Editorial
HEIKO HECHT: Film as Dynamic Event Perception. Technological Development Forces
Realism to Retreat

HERMANN KALKOFEN: Inversion und Ambiguität. Kapitel aus der psychologischen Optik
KAI BUCHHOLZ: Imitationen. Mehr Schein als Sein?
CLAUDIA GLIEMANN: Bilder in Bildern. Endogramme von Eggs & Bitschin
CHRISTOPH ASMUTH: Die Als-Struktur des Bildes

IMAGE 3 Themenheft: Bild-Stil. Strukturierung der Bildinformation

Herausgeber/in: Martina Plümacher, Klaus Sachs-Hombach

MARTINA PLÜMACHER/KLAUS SACHS-HOMBACH: Einleitung
NINA BISHARA: Bilderrätsel in der Werbung
SASCHA DEMARMELS: Funktion des Bildstils von politischen Plakaten. Eine historische Analyse am Beispiel von Abstimmungsplakaten
DAGMAR SCHMAUKS: Rippchen, Rüssel, Ringelschwanz. Stilisierungen des Schweins in Werbung und Cartoon
BEATRICE NUNOLD: Landschaft als Immersionsraum und Sakralisierung der Landschaft
KLAUS SACHS-HOMBACH/JÖRG R.J. SCHIRRA: Bildstil als rhetorische Kategorie

IMAGE 2: Kunstgeschichtliche Interpretation und bildwissenschaftliche Systematik

Herausgeber: Klaus Sachs-Hombach

KLAUS SACHS-HOMBACH: Einleitung
BENJAMIN DRECHSEL: Die Macht der Bilder als Ohnmacht der Politikwissenschaft. Ein Plädoyer für die transdisziplinäre Erforschung visueller politischer Kommunikation
EMMANUEL ALLOA: Bildökonomie. Von den theologischen Wurzeln eines streitbaren Begriffs
SILVIA SEJA: Das Bild als Handlung? Zum Verhältnis der Begriffe ›Bild‹ und ›Handlung‹
HELGE MEYER: Die Kunst des Handelns und des Leidens. Schmerz als Bild in der Performance Art
STEFAN MEIER-SCHUEGRAF: Rechtsextreme Bannerwerbung im Web. Eine medien spezifische Untersuchung neuer Propagandaformen von rechtsextremen Gruppierungen im Internet

IMAGE 2 Themenheft: Filmforschung und Filmlehre

Herausgeber/in: Eva Fritsch, Rüdiger Steinmetz

EVA FRITSCH/RÜDIGER STEINMETZ: Einleitung
KLAUS KEIL: Filmforschung und Filmlehre in der Hochschullandschaft
EVA FRITSCH: Film in der Lehre. Erfahrungen mit einführenden Seminaren zu Filmgeschichte und Filmanalyse
MANFRED RÜSEL: Film in der Lehrerfortbildung
WINFRIED PAULEIT: Filmlehre im internationalen Vergleich

RÜDIGER STEINMETZ/KAI STEINMANN/SEBASTIAN UHLIG/RENÉ BLÜMEL: Film- und Fernsehästhetik in Theorie und Praxis
DIRK BLOTHNER: Der Film. Ein Drehbuch des Lebens? Zum Verhältnis von Psychologie und Spielfilm
KLAUS SACHS-HOMBACH: Plädoyer für ein Schulfach ›Visuelle Medien‹

IMAGE 1: Bildwissenschaft als interdisziplinäres Unternehmen. Eine Standortbestimmung

KLAUS SACHS-HOMBACH: Editorial
PETER SCHREIBER: Was ist Bildwissenschaft? Versuch einer Standort- und Inhaltsbestimmung
FRANZ REITINGER: Die Einheit der Kunst und die Vielfalt der Bilder
KLAUS SACHS-HOMBACH: Arguments in Favour of a General Image Science
JÖRG R.J. SCHIRRA: Ein Disziplinen-Mandala für die Bildwissenschaft. Kleine Provokation zu einem neuen Fach
KIRSTEN WAGNER: Computergrafik und Informationsvisualisierung als Medien visueller Erkenntnis
DIETER MÜNCH: Zeichentheoretische Grundlagen der Bildwissenschaft
ANDREAS SCHELSKE: Zehn funktionale Leitideen multimedialer Bildpragmatik
HERIBERT RÜCKER: Abbildung als Mutter der Wissenschaften

IMAGE 1 Themenheft: Die schräge Kamera

Herausgeber: Klaus Sachs-Hombach, Hans Jürgen Wulff

KLAUS SACHS-HOMBACH/HANS JÜRGEN WULFF: Vorwort
KLAUS SACHS-HOMBACH/STEPHAN SCHWAN: Was ist ›schräge Kamera‹? Anmerkungen zur Bestandsaufnahme ihrer Formen, Funktionen und Bedeutungen
HANS JÜRGEN WULFF: Die Dramaturgien der schrägen Kamera. Thesen und Perspektiven
THOMAS HENSEL: Aperspektive als symbolische Form. Eine Annäherung
MICHAEL ALBERT ISLINGER: Phänomenologische Betrachtungen im Zeitalter des digitalen Kinos
JÖRG SCHWEINITZ: Ungewöhnliche Perspektive als Exzess und Allusion. Busby Berkeleys »Lullaby of Broadway«
JÜRGEN MÜLLER/JÖRN HETEBRÜGGE: Out of focus. Verkantungen, Unschärfen und Verunsicherungen in Orson Welles' *The Lady from Shanghai* (1947)