

Johannes Fehrle

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

Abstract

In this article, I examine the *Scott Pilgrim* franchise from an adaptation as well as a transmedia franchising angle, setting these approaches off from Henry Jenkins' conceptualization of transmedia storytelling. By focusing mainly on Edgar Wright's film adaptation, I examine how remediation is used in the film as a strategy to link the adaptation to the comic books as well as the simultaneously released video game. I argue that the film both integrates itself into the larger franchise by drawing on the other products, particularly through its visual aesthetics, and opens the door to a larger transmedial world by 'simulating' its existence through references to other products that seem to, but do not in fact, exist in our world.

1. Enter. *Scott Pilgrim*

At the latest since its film adaptation by Edgar Wright in 2010, Korean-French-Canadian artist and writer Bryan Lee O'Malley's comic book series *Scott Pilgrim* (2004–2010) has become firmly lodged in the international nerd canon.¹ Both film and comic book tell the story of video game expert, untalented bass

¹ I would like to thank Stefan Danter as well as the anonymous reviewers for their comments on this article; needless to say, all oversights are mine.

player, and professional slacker Scott Pilgrim, who tries to get over the recent breakup with his ex-girlfriend Natalie ›Envy‹ Adams. While his initial inability to ›move on‹ is expressed in his rebound-dating of an Asian-Canadian high school girl, Knives Chau, things change when the Amazon delivery girl Ramona Flowers shows up in his dream and, shortly thereafter, in reality. Ramona quickly becomes his new love interest. While she revives Scott's life spirit, Ramona comes with the baggage of having seven evil ex-boyfriends (or evil exes in the film, since one of the exes turns out to be an ex-girlfriend) whom Scott has to defeat in fighting-game-inspired battles in order to win or keep Ramona as a girlfriend. Following Jeff Thoss, one can regard the relatively simple plot of love, heart break, music, and game culture as primarily a means for the narratives to draw heavily on the aesthetics and special semiotics of arcade and early console fighting games and beat 'em ups to attempt to imitate or—using Bolter and Grusin's term—remediate them first in the comic and then, with the adaptation, in the film medium (cf. BOLTER/GRUSIN 2000). As Thoss puts it, »the relatively trite and uninspired story of romance and self-realization is used as a mere foil for O'Malley to demonstrate his arguably novel and ingenious skills in impersonating games« (THOSS 2014: 193). As Thoss rightly points out, the comic copies a video game aesthetic; its plot development likewise copies a fighting game's movement from boss battle to boss battle, eventually leading to a fight with a final boss, the American club owner Gideon Graves, which includes a ›replay‹ sequence starting from the beginning of the final ›boss level‹. As the idea of a ›replay‹ suggests, the storyworld's logic, which is mostly oriented toward a somewhat caricatured but ›realistic‹ depiction of late 20th/early 21st century urban Canadian life, breaks radically with real-world laws in the fighting sequences and, like the plot development, functions according to a video game logic: in best fighting game fashion, the characters' kicks and punches are labeled as ›combo‹, ›reversal‹, etc., the combatants can perform physical feats impossible in a realistic storyworld, and Scott's adversaries drop coins, items, and, in one case, an extra life. It is therefore not surprising that the film picks up on and, in fact, exaggerates these references and remediations, or that a beat 'em up console game entitled *Scott Pilgrim vs. the World. The Game* (2010) was released to coincide with the film adaptation's opening in movie theaters. It could even be argued that the game, in some sense, brings the storyworld's orientation on fighting games full circle. Ironically, the game, however, lacks most of the remediations which mark the comic's and film's aesthetics and therefore—from a critical perspective—is the least interesting of the texts.

2. *Scott Pilgrim* and Transmedia Storytelling

Despite the presence of multiple media products unified under the *Scott Pilgrim* label, if we look at the *Scott Pilgrim* franchise from a transmedia per-

spective, we do not see an example of the interlinking of media products which for Henry Jenkins constitutes an instance of transmedia storytelling. As Jenkins has written on various occasions, transmedia storytelling »at its best« functions like a mosaic or puzzle that is assembled by consumers as they »travel« across multiple media. As Jenkins puts it,

[t]ransmedia storytelling represents a process where integral elements of a fiction get dispersed systematically across multiple delivery channels for the purpose of creating a unified and coordinated entertainment experience. Ideally, each medium makes it[s] own unique contribution to the unfolding of the story. [...] Most often, transmedia stories are based not on individual characters or specific plots but rather complex fictional worlds which can sustain multiple interrelated characters and their stories. This process of world-building encourages an encyclopedic impulse in both readers and writers. (JENKINS 2007: n.pag.)

Neither of the two processes which Jenkins describes as typical for transmedia storytelling are particularly pronounced in the *Scott Pilgrim* franchise. All three main texts—comic, movie, and game—aim to tell the »same« story employing the »same« characters; the impossibility of telling the same story in different versions or media notwithstanding. It nevertheless seems safe to say that the plot and characters are recognizable to a reader, player, or viewer, as variants of one version of, e.g., Ramona Flowers not aiming toward radical alterations, despite the difference in versions, interpretations, and media and their necessarily different narrative and ludic strategies and potentials. An adaptation studies perspective would furthermore highlight the various creators and co-creators as well as the different aesthetic effects they achieve, the different consumptive experiences of those who interact with the various texts (cf. Hutcheon's concept of modes of engagement proposed in HUTCHEON 2013), to name only a few, and reach the conclusion that these are, of course, not the same characters in the same story. While these stories and characters therefore are not exact and faithful copies of an original—something that is impossible to achieve whenever an act of recreation is involved, whether in the same medium or a different one—, they clearly aim at recognizability and similarity, if not »sameness«. It seems safe to assume, moreover, that they will be judged accordingly by many readers/viewers/players familiar with other products in the *Scott Pilgrim* franchise.

There is still more to be said about the interconnectedness of these texts from an adaptation studies perspective. If we accept the graphic novel as a »source text«, a common term outside adaptation studies but one laden with problematic connotations and thus avoided within most adaptation theorists' more nuanced perspective, the situation is fairly clear. What Jenkins calls extensions of the fictional universe, a technique he sets off from »mere« adaptations (cf. JENKINS 2007: n.pag.), take place mostly within un-official fan discourse. If we follow the de-hierarchization of so-called »source texts« frequently advocated in adaptation studies, however, we might as well regard the movie as a first point of entry into the fictional universe of *Scott Pilgrim* for many consumers, and thus as a »personal« source text, despite its later time of production. In other words, as Linda Hutcheon sums up, »[m]ultiple

versions [of a text] exist laterally, not vertically» (HUTCHEON 2013: xv). If the movie thus becomes the ›original‹ instantiation of the fictional universe in a viewer's personal consumptive history, the graphic novel, alongside other products such as a promotional animated mini clip *Scott Pilgrim vs. the Animation* (2010), which aired on American cable network Adult Swim to support the film's release, constitute extensions of the film's storyworld.² Finally, if we move away from the narrow view focusing exclusively on plot and narrative, which seems to underlie Jenkins' definition, there are, of course, countless ›extensions‹ of the comic in the filmic version, such as the almost necessarily greater detail of a photographic image, even one that has been simplified and altered through CGI processes, as opposed to a drawn one, creative decisions regarding color, lighting, casting, acting, and so forth, which ›extend‹ as well as ›reduce‹—or, to choose less value-laden terms, transform, reinterpret, and reinvent—the bare-bone aesthetics of O'Malley's rather iconic drawing style.³

To the extent that rudiments exist of a transmedia world-making understood, according to Jenkins' definition, as plot extension rather than the transformation of consumptive experience via the aesthetic as well as the minor narrative transformations I have laid out, they are most clearly found in fan fiction. *Scott Pilgrim* fan fiction ranges from the expected—and, in this case, decidedly genre appropriate—›shipping‹—i.e., matching the characters in different romantic constellations—via stories filling narrative gaps or exploring the characters' past (romantic) relationships—a classic case of extension of the narrative in Jenkins' sense—to crossovers and mash ups with other fictional universes typical of fan fiction, and such mundane, but apparently fetishistically-charged stories as *Scott Pilgrim vs. The Winter* (2010), a narrative in eight installations, in which Scott, his ›cool gay roommate‹ Wallace, and Ramona battle a common cold and nurse each other. The non-official nature of fan fiction, of course, raises its own problems with regard to the concept of transmedia storytelling, since I would claim that the idea of transmedia storytelling usually involves an orchestrated or at least coordinated act on a producer's (or ›author's‹) part—but I cannot go into this aspect here.

3. *Scott Pilgrim* and Transmedia Franchising

Instead, I want to shift the focus of my discussion to an angle suggested by Clare Parody, who examines transmedia products from a marketing rather

² *Scott Pilgrim vs. the Animation* fills in, in animated form, some of the backstory of Scott and Kim as well as that of a minor character called Lisa, who appears at the beginning of the second comic book *Scott Pilgrim vs. the World* (2005) but does not appear in the movie.

³ Cf. Pascal Lefevre's exploration of the different visual ontologies of comic to film adaptation, which serves as a helpful first step despite Lefevre's strong privileging of the source text and the somewhat problematic idea of an adaptation being faithful »to the spirit of the original work« (LEFEVRE 2007: 5). I use the term ›iconic‹ in Scott McCloud's sense (cf. MCCLOUD 1994: 27–57). Through its reduction of mimetic detail, this iconic style carries with it the implication of a greater universality and bigger *Leerstellen* (gaps) in the sense of reader-response criticism.

than a primarily narrative perspective, labeling what she finds as »transmedia franchising« (PARODY 2011: passim). Transmedia franchising involves the distribution of commodities under one label in different media, which certainly applies to the case of *Scott Pilgrim*. While franchising is not exactly a new technique, as Jenkins rightfully notes in a response to critics of his definition of transmedia storytelling on his weblog, transmedia franchising does change in a convergence environment. According to Jenkins, »[m]ost previous media franchises were based on reproduction and redundancy, but transmedia represents a structure based on the further development of the storyworld through each new medium« (JENKINS 2011: n.pag.). As with Jenkins' limited model of adaptation, the idea of franchise as merely reproductive is too reductionist and too much invested with the idea of a freely transferable core, resulting from Jenkins' focus on content, which he seems to understand as clearly separable from form. A critique of Jenkins' understanding of adaptation, such as the one by Christy Dena, which Jenkins addresses on his blog, could be extended to his understanding of franchising. Dena highlights the act of interpretation which is a part of any adaptation. The same could be said for franchising, which also necessarily involves some form of adaptation. Whereas Jenkins attempts to explicate his position by pointing to the model of »additive comprehension« (JENKINS 2011: n.pag.) borrowed from game designer Neil Young, a concept he also employs in *Convergence Culture* (cf. JENKINS 2008: 127–133), he merely restates his contentions when he excludes transmedia adaptations in a concept focusing on »the degree that each new text adds to our understanding of the story as a whole« (JENKINS 2011: n.pag.). Adaptations obviously also add to or change our understanding of a story by, e.g., giving us a clearer (more detailed) image of the storyworld or an actor's face for a character we had previously only imagined. Of the four main functions of transmedia storytelling's additive comprehension which Jenkins' lists in »Transmedia 202« (»[o]ffers backstory, [m]aps the [w]orld, [o]ffers us other character's perspectives on the action, [d]eepens audience engagement« [JENKINS 2011: n.pag.]), two—offering a backstory and offering other character's perspectives—are primarily narrative. Whereas the offering of a backstory is a clear plot extension, offering other characters' perspectives is also a feature of many adaptations (e.g., in the segments in HBO's adaptation *Game of Thrones* [2011–] in which none of the view point characters from Martin's novels are present), while mapping the world (e.g., through added visual interpretation and detail) and attempting to deepen audience engagement are (almost) inescapably features of transmedia adaptations. The reality of transmediation is more complex and richer than Jenkins seems to want to admit in order to keep his model orderly. In other words, adaptations organized within transmedia franchises also exist in complex interactions with each other and in further interactions with the larger forces of convergence culture and, therefore, likewise benefit from an exploration taking their interconnectedness into consideration.

Coming back to the *Scott Pilgrim* franchise, we have three main texts, if we do not count fan fiction for the moment: the comics, the film, and the game. Moreover, there are various paraphernalia, from an adaptation/remediation of the comic for mobile devices to non- or at least less-narrative and more obviously commercial products such as clothing, dolls, wall clocks, iPhone hard cases, and other products. All of these are marketed under the *Scott Pilgrim* label and link back primarily to one of the three main texts, mainly through the use of images from film, comic, or video game. The transmedia franchise rests, as is frequently the case, according to Parody, on the back of an adaptation (cf. PARODY 2011: 211), in this case most often, but not always, the film version, which the producers hoped would reach a larger audience than the comics originally published by the West Coast independent publisher Oni Press.

While it seems fairly non-controversial to group the various merchandise items as part of a transmedia franchise, there is a more intricate (and more controversial) point to be made about transmediality, and an existing transmedial world of *Scott Pilgrim* as well as its link to franchising. As mentioned, there is a real transmedia franchise in place, but there is also a ›simulated‹ transmedia world (for lack of a better term) or, more correctly, a story-world marked as transmedia world in the comic and, to an even greater extent, in the film. This simulation of a world that is transmedial in one medium is closely connected to the strategy of what Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin call ›remediation‹, the representation of one medium in another. Jeff Thoss has discussed many instances of remediation, under the heading of what he calls the comic's and film's attempt to »tell it like a game«, as instances of a »performative media rivalry« (THOSS 2014: 187 and passim) in which one medium attempts to performatively evoke through its discourse the language and specificity of another medium, in this case video games, and show how well it can simulate that media's presence in its own.

4. Remediation, the Simulation of a Transmedia World, and the Interconnectedness of the Franchise

Placing the film at the center of my reading, I want to argue that the film even more than the comics or the video game uses remediation as an aesthetic strategy in order to simulate a transmediality. It consequently creates a seemingly transmedial world in which it not only foregrounds its own filmic nature, but also draws on and plays with the viewers' game and comic encyclopedias.⁴ As my main example, I want to use Scott Pilgrim's fight against Matthew Patel, Ramona's first evil ex. In the fighting sequence we do not only have the remediation of arcade fighting and beat 'em up video games, which Thoss

⁴ I am drawing here on the concept of an encyclopedia used by reader and creator to encode/decode a text as suggested by Eco, e.g., in his *The Role of the Reader* (cf. ECO 1979: passim).

explores in his article, but also a TV aesthetic, the film's foregrounding of its own mediality as well as a play with some iconic film genres, a remediation of the comics medium, and finally a strong link to the theater as a fifth medium thrown into the mix when we see Ramona on a Shakespearean balcony placed at the center of an extremely conspicuous spotlight (cf. THOSS 2014). The scene begins with Sex Bob-omb's performance and employs a split screen, originally a filmic technique employed in early Hollywood films, but—especially in combination with the images of musicians we see—more recently associated primarily with the MTV-aesthetics of 1990s TV. More broadly, a split screen is perceived as an »unnatural« editing technique, foregrounding the mediality of film by making visible the impact of an editor, a role which in the dominant continuity editing system is regarded as one that should be kept hidden in order to not disrupt the audience's engagement and willing suspension of disbelief. If we read the filmic text as an adaptation of a comics source, the side by side of seemingly non-temporally progressing images also recalls the strong spatiality of the comics medium through its panel layout. This view is strengthened by a small black gutter-like division between the three »panels«. A third option for the interpretation of this sequence is through the narrative's link to video games as a split screen typical of console video games' multiplayer modes, in which a part of the screen is reserved for each player's avatar. Coming back to the original interpretation of the split screen as a link to music television, several other references to the music video/dance film genre can be detected in actor Satya Bhabha's parody of a tap dance, which is highlighted by the camera's framing of only his feet, as well as his willfully over-acted *Saturday Night Fever*-inspired pose (see fig. 1).

Apart from its pastiche of various genres and unusual editing choices, Satya Bhabha's campy, non-naturalistic acting is another way in which the film foregrounds its own mediality, if any reminder of its mediality was still necessary given the barrage of other media appearing as remediated bits. An excessive use of generic elements from the spaghetti western-style through-the-legs duel shot which Sergio Leone popularized in his 1960s films (see fig. 2), via martial arts sequences in best non-naturalistic Hong Kong style, to anime-inspired sequences extending time and space and including motion lines, translate the comic's combination of Western and Eastern graphic traditions into the film medium. As Drew Morton argues in his visual essay *From the Panel to the Frame*, the radical manipulation of film speed, which he describes as the »temporal remediation« (MORTON 2013: n.pag.) of speed ramping, to slow narrative time down and in the process make possible almost panel-like freeze frames is a recurring feature in recent film adaptations of comic books such as Zack Snyder's *Watchmen* (2009). The complete disregard for real world physics which make it possible for Scott, e.g., to jump for a long enough time to hit Matthew Patel 64 times and for people to crash through roofs and stone walls without being seriously injured, which the film takes over via the comic from arcade and Eastern martial arts and anime films, comes almost as an afterthought in this firework of remediation.



Fig. 1:
Matthew Patel (Satya Bhabha) strikes a *Saturday Night Fever* pose



Fig. 2:
The battle as duel. A pastiche of a ›duel shot‹ in the style of Sergio Leone's spaghetti westerns



Fig. 3:
Spatial remediation in an attempt to simulate comics spatio-topia

As becomes apparent from these examples, the line between different media and the medial origin of the various instances of remediation is blurred in a style which, with Jay Bolter and Richard Grusin, can be described as ›hypermediated‹. Hypermediacy is a style which arises out of a »fascination with media« (BOLTER/GRUSIN 2000: 31) and aims to foreground the mediality of the various media whose styles and registers are appropriated and simulated as well as the film's own mediality. While it is clear that we are facing hypermediacy, the medial origin of the particular semiotics is not always clear. Some of the instances discussed, for example, could also be understood as crossing over into comics or video game territory. There are clear markers of the semiotics of comics present in the fighting sequence between Scott Pilgrim and Matthew Patel. The most striking example is the overlaying of the photographic image with drawn-in comic sound effects, which are themselves the comic mediums' attempt to represent and remediate aural phenomena. In the case of the film, these involve a playfully unnecessary instance of a re-remediation that is entirely non-naturalistic. The most striking instance of a remediation of comics expressive potential, however, is the film's use of O'Malleys original drawings arranged as animated comic panels on the screen in an act of both graphic and spatial remediation (cf. MORTON 2013) in an attempt to approximate comics' arrangement of its different panels into the spatio-temporal layout (see fig. 3), which comics theoretician Thierry Groensteen sees as defining for comics (cf. GROENSTEEN 2007).⁵

Finally, there are countless video game elements, ranging from auditory to visual. The auditory elements comprise, among others, an 8-bit arcade ›bling‹ sound playing when Patel lands as well as the excessive echo and slight delay on Wallace's voice as he screams »fight«, an effect meant to resemble/appropriate the sound frequently played at the beginning of a round in fighting games such as *Street Fighter* (1987) or *Tekken* (1994). Visual borrowings and remediations from video games include superimposed text, stemming this time not from the semiotic register of comics but from the discourse of fighting games, which dramatically juxtaposes the opponents, instructs the player what to do or explains the (health or energy) status of characters or helps players interpret what is happening beyond the immediately apparent spectacle of two polygon figures engaging in a ›fight‹.

This sequence is exemplary for Wright's style in *Scott Pilgrim*, which rests heavily on the remediation of other media, as well as the highly visible and ironic ›enunciation‹ of the film's own mediality through its hypermediacy. If we read the film through Bolter and Grusin's theory of remediation, we see that the tension at play in remediation between immediacy and hypermediacy, »the transparent presentation of the real and the enjoyment of the opacity of media themselves« (BOLTER/GRUSIN 2000: 21) or, in Jeff Thoss's paraphrase, eradicating vs. foregrounding the signs of mediation (cf. THOSS 2014: 188), the

⁵ Groensteen distinguishes between spatio-topia and arthrology, that is, the importance of space and the placement of panels, borders, and breakdowns on the page, and the relation between individual panels, respectively.

film leans heavily toward a hypermediated remediation. In fact it seems to shun any sense of immediacy which, according to Bolter and Grusin, »dictates that the medium itself should disappear and leave us in the presence of the thing represented« (BOLTER/GRUSIN 2000: 6). This is remarkable considering that, as noted, immediacy is the usual mode films produced within the Hollywood system aim at (cf. BOLTER/GRUSIN 2000: 146–158). The remediation in Wright's film, however, in best postmodern simulacrum fashion, presents us with elements which are themselves merely signifiers pointing at signifiers, images drawn from generic media conventions ultimately uninterested in pointing at any media-external reality. What immediacy is attainable is always already a mediated one. The more »immediate« version of a remediated game is its »original« mediation, the more »immediate« version of the spatially remediated and animated comic panels depicting the backstory of Ramona and Patel in the sequence discussed, for instance, is found in O'Malley's comics. It is this process of pointing at other texts, both existing and non-existing, which most effectively positions the text in a transmedia franchise, both real (there is after all a comic as well as a video game) and simulated. Nevertheless, immediacy attainable by going back to the historically preceding »original« of the comics is nowhere near the »transparent presentation« of an experience even somewhat close to immediate.

Writing about the comic version, Thoss argues that »*Scott Pilgrim* turns its storyworld into a video game storyworld in order to show how comics can performatively simulate the presence of a different medium« (THOSS 2014: 193). The same argument seems applicable for the film adaptation at first glance and, in fact, Thoss makes precisely this argument speaking of a competition between the two texts over which manages to better remediate the medial »language« of video games. I believe, however, that there is a crucial difference at play between the versions, which positions the film within the system of a transmedial *Scott Pilgrim* franchise not present in the comics and only later added as a paratext: rather than merely performatively remediate a generic style of 1980s 8- and 16-bit console video games, as the comic did, the film positions itself within the transmedial *Scott Pilgrim* franchise that was being created while the film was shot. As opposed to the comic, which was written as a stand-alone text remediating only generic bits of video games and other media, most prominently music, the film specifically ties itself to the comic by using O'Malley drawings and animating them for film in Ramona's revelation about her past with Matthew Patel. Its makers similarly connect the two texts in the TV marketing extension *Scott Pilgrim vs. the Animation*, in which characters clearly based on O'Malley's original artwork are animated in more traditionally filmic ways and voiced by the live action film's cast. While this is not entirely unheard of or surprising for an adaptation which after all often tries to cash in, literally as well as culturally, on its source's cultural capital and authenticity, Wright's film employs a similar strategy with regard to the video game by tying in Paul Robertson, the lead game designer for the *Scott Pilgrim* video game, into the filming process. As

Drew Morton explains, the film makers asked Robertson to design the extra life Scott collects. As Morton argues, the visuals of the extra life clash with the film's own not only through its pixelated 8-bit aesthetics, but also by including a Scott Pilgrim who does not look like actor Michael Cera at all, but rather draws on the design for the video game, which oriented itself more toward O'Malley's original art work in order to escape the stigma of being seen merely as a cheap tie-in product promising little value or enjoyment for a customer. The transmedial mixing through remediation aims at a double effect, one aesthetic, creating, in Morton's words, a »transmedia style« (MORTON 2013: n.pag.), the other economic. The film simulates what could be called a »transmedia world« by saturating its own storyworld with highly stylized, hypermediated remediation of other media from games, via drama and film, to comics, in essence blending them into one storyworld in which these various media and their distinctive semiotic registers exist side by side. Through this »simulated« transmediality, achieved through the remediation of multiple media in one, it also leads from the primarily aesthetic or narrative simulation of other media to the economic function underlying the logic of franchising, as it draws attention and guides viewers/customers to the existence of other, similar products. Since, as I have argued, the remediation in *Scott Pilgrim* dwells primarily on the strategy of hypermediacy in Bolter and Grusin's equation, it leaves the consumer longing for both the greater immediacy of the first instantiation of mediation (i.e., the comic, which turns out to be already remediated as well) and for the more immediate—haptic and engaging—ludic experience of the game, in which a consumer can »become« Scott, rather than watching Scott, Knives, Ramona and Co. »become« video game »characters« through their actions. This invitation to participate in a game not only exists implicitly in the game-like fighting sequences, but is made explicit in another instance of self-conscious hypermediacy, when, early in the film, we watch Scott and Knives interact with an arcade game called *Ninja Ninja Revolution*, a parody of the late 1990s Konami game *Dance Dance Revolution* (1998) which looked and functioned similarly. Through such strategies, Wright's film links to both its »source«, the comic, and its »sibling« in the franchise, the simultaneously released video game, in a way that transcends both traditional, pre-convergence culture adaptations, with their frequent attempt to eradicate and replace their sources or play on their cultural significance, and tie-in games, which often come as the tail ends of successful adaptations.

Finally, the comic book itself also joins this transmedia mix, if only retroactively and paratextually—as is frequently the case with other adapted texts which become integrated into a transmedia franchise despite not necessarily being narratively interwoven with other products. The back cover of *Scott Pilgrim's Finest Hour* (2010), the sixth and final volume of the series, completed and released only after the film was shot and the game programmed, includes a design clearly remediating the video game adaptation's aesthetic, at least in the version released by Fourth Estate for the British and

European market. A slip case for the sale of the entire comic book series was likewise designed by Robertson as part of the transmedia marketing campaign following the expectation of renewed attention for the comic by new audiences following the film's release. While there is, ultimately, a sense of a position as part of a larger transmedia franchise in each of the texts, the storytelling itself is—as I have argued—not the additive puzzle or ›quest‹ through different media to get a fuller picture of the narrative and fill in gaps left by the individual texts, which is the hallmark of transmedia storytelling according to Jenkins. It is rather the pleasure of a »repetition without replication« (HUTCHEON 2013: 7), which Linda Hutcheon sees as central to an adaptation's appeal, an aspect which is arguably also central in transmedia storytelling and transmedia franchising. In Drew Morton's opinion, the effect of *Scott Pilgrim*'s avoidance of a ›full-on‹ transmedia narrative approach is that »the *Scott Pilgrim* experience appeases fans of the franchise without alienating the casual consumer with narrative homework« (MORTON 2013: n.pag.).

The double edge of transmedia storytelling, caught between allowing dedicated fans to achieve additive comprehension while not alienating more casual consumers, has also been noted by other critics of transmedia storytelling, even those as enthusiastic about its potentials as Jenkins, who stresses that »going deeper has to remain an option—something readers choose to do—and not the only way to derive pleasure from media franchises« (JENKINS 2008: 134). While the double aim of providing pleasure for fans and new customers alike is the mark of a successful adaptation, *Scott Pilgrim* still manages to place itself more firmly within the context of a transmedia franchise than most traditional novel to film adaptations. In particular through its remediation of both existing sources, such as the comic or the simultaneously released video game, and more generic and less specific bits of pop culture and media-specific semiotics integrated into its storyworld and narrative style, the *Scott Pilgrim* film simulates a transmedia experience that, on the one hand, directs the consumer to the other main products (comic and video game as well as other merchandise articles) and, at the same time, is not upheld by the fairly small number of existing products. Rather, it ›simulates‹ (and, therefore, opens doors to) a franchise much larger than the fairly small one that was eventually produced due to the film's lack of a wider commercial success. While *Scott Pilgrim*'s practices of excessive remediation are central to opening its texts to a transmedia franchise, it seems that they are also what limits both the texts' appeal to a broad audience and its suitability as a formula to be copied by other franchises. What the case of *Scott Pilgrim* serves to show, however, is that there are multiple strategies and avenues into conceptualizing a franchise both for producers and critics of these transmedia texts and that aesthetically successful strategies can complement the nature and style of the text they integrate into the franchise. It also shows that the principle of transmedia should not be constructed in opposition to adaptation, as suggested by Jenkins, but is in fact sympathetic to and shares many aspects with adaptations.

References

- BOLTER, JAY DAVID; RICHARD GRUSIN: *Remediation. Understanding New Media*. Cambridge, MA [MIT Press] 2000
- ECO, UMBERTO: *The Role of the Reader. Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts*. Bloomington [Indiana UP] 1979
- GROENSTEEN, THIERRY: *The System of Comics*. Translated by Bart Beaty and Nick Nguyen. Jackson [UP of Mississippi] 2007
- HUTCHEON, LINDA; with SIOBHAN O'FLYNN: *A Theory of Adaptation*. 2nd edition. London [Routledge] 2013
- JENKINS, HENRY: Transmedia Storytelling 101. In: *Confessions of an Aca-Fan*, March 22, 2007. http://henryjenkins.org/2007/03/transmedia_storytelling_101.html [accessed June 23, 2014]
- JENKINS, HENRY: *Convergence Culture. Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York [New York UP] 2008
- JENKINS, HENRY: Transmedia 202. Further Reflections. In: *Confessions of an Aca-Fan*, August 1, 2011. http://henryjenkins.org/2011/08/defining_transmedia_further_re.html [accessed September 25, 2014]
- LEFÈVRE, PASCAL: Incompatible Visual Ontologies? The Problematic Adaptation of Drawn Images. In: GORDON, IAN; MARK JANCOVICH; MATTHEW P. McALLISTER (eds.): *Film and Comic Books*. Jackson [UP of Mississippi] 2007, pp. 1–12
- MCCLLOUD, SCOTT: *Understanding Comics. The Invisible Art*. New York [Harper Perennial] 1994
- MORTON, DREW: *From the Panel to the Frame. Style and Scott Pilgrim*. February 13, 2013. <http://vimeo.com/59355775> [accessed June 23, 2014]
- PARODY, CLARE: Franchising/Adaptation. In: *Adaptation*, 4(2), 2011, pp. 210–218
- THOSS, JEFF: Tell It Like a Game. *Scott Pilgrim* and Performative Media Rivalry. In: RYAN, MARIE-LAURE; JAN-NOËL THON (eds.): *Storyworlds Across Media. Toward a Media-Conscious Narratology*. Lincoln [U of Nebraska P] 2014, pp. 187–208