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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‹ supresses the development of transmedial narratives. Furthermore, Klastrup and Tosca clearly differentiate a transmedial world from what they call »the first vision of the world presented« (KLASTRUP/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* W_0. 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 say[3]: 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 Klastrup 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 *Wookiepedia*. 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 refer 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.

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