

Claudia Georgi and Brigitte Johanna Glaser (eds.)

# Convergence Culture Reconsidered

Media – Participation – Environments

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Göttinger Schriften zur Englischen Philologie  
Band 9

2015



Universitätsdrucke Göttingen

S | E | P

Seminar für Englische Philologie



Claudia Georgi and Brigitte Johanna Glaser (eds.)  
Convergence Culture Reconsidered

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erschienen als Band 9 in der Reihe „Göttinger Schriften zur Englischen  
Philologie“ in den Universitätsdrucken im Universitätsverlag Göttingen 2015

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## Bibliographische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek

Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliographie; detaillierte bibliographische Daten sind im Internet über <http://dnb.dnb.de> abrufbar.

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Satz und Layout: Anna Bakina

Umschlaggestaltung: Petra Lepschy

Titelabbildung: Jürgen Kader

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<http://univerlag.uni-goettingen.de>

ISBN: 978-3-86395-217-4

ISSN: 1868-3878

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## Foreword

Most of the papers compiled in *Convergence Culture Reconsidered* were originally presented at a conference of the same name organized by the editors at the Georg-August-Universität Göttingen from 17-19 October 2013. The conference was the third in a series of transatlantic conferences initially funded by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD). It thus formed a follow-up to the conferences on *Transmedial Approaches to Space and Gender* (organized by Susan Ingram and Markus Reisenleitner, York University of Toronto, in 2011) and *Mediation and Mediatization* (organized by Jutta Ernst, Johannes-Gutenberg-Universität Mainz/Germersheim, in 2012). As platforms for exchange among (post)doctoral students from all three universities, these conferences have established a network of Canadian and German researchers based in the humanities and have thus initiated a process of interdisciplinary and intercultural convergence in itself.

The present volume attempts to capture some of the many forms convergence may assume and to reevaluate its potential as a category of analysis for the humanities and more specifically for literary, cultural, and media studies. Taking Henry Jenkins's concept of 'convergence culture' as a point of departure, the individual contributions define and refine its scope and discuss what new theoretical and practical insights the proposed framework of 'convergence' may offer when being applied to a variety of research areas. Rather than aiming at a universally valid definition, they also consider divergent facets of convergence and point out inconsistencies.

Claudia Georgi's contribution introduces Jenkins's concept of 'convergence culture' and his related notions of 'participatory culture' and 'transmedia storytelling.' It examines how these terms relate to emerging as well as established phenomena and terminology and how they affect key aspects of literary, cultural, and media studies such as authorship and originality, readership and 'prosumption' –

aspects that all of the contributors address in one way or another. Each of the three main sections of this volume is inspired by one of Jenkins's three central concepts as presented in this introduction.

The first section, "Forms of Convergence," shows the enormous scope of the framework by offering exemplary case studies on art history, ecology, media studies, and translation studies. Gorčin Dizdar employs an art historical perspective in order to illustrate that convergence is by no means only a contemporary phenomenon but instead has a long tradition. He demonstrates that mechanisms of convergence were already prevalent in Renaissance art in the form of a confluence of visual and linguistic discourses in the beholder's brain contemplating Sandro Botticelli's *Primavera*. Robert M.W. Brown relates convergence to divergence as its counterpart. Applying both terms to the context of environmentalism, he argues for considering convergence and divergence as forming a 'reticulated process.' Inga Untiks critically links convergence with standardization in an increasingly globalized art world. In her analysis of performance-based video works by the Estonian artists Kai Kaljo and Jaan Toomik, she identifies processes of aesthetic as well as economic, institutional, and sociological convergence or standardization. The first section closes with Annika Rosbach's interpretation of convergence as a dynamic zone of cultural encounter comparable to Homi Bhabha's 'third space.' Tracing problems with literary dialects in German translations of Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, she makes the case for regarding translations as prime examples of convergence culture.

The contributions of section II, "Participation and Fandom," examine various forms of readers' responses to literary texts as well as their active involvement in the production and proliferation of these. They draw on Jenkins's argument that convergence culture evokes collective processes of consumption and subsequent social interaction triggered by the consumed products. Florian Freitag investigates the issue of participatory culture with regard to a late 19<sup>th</sup>-century American illustrated monthly, thereby focussing on the representation of a particular location. Using the example of 'Scribner's illustrated New Orleans,' he identifies an early version of participatory response in the form of 'amateur' contributions. Jan-Erik Ella's interests in 'neo-Victorian' literature induce him to explore the intertextual layer of Moore and O'Neill's comic book series *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*, with the objective of establishing the authors' approaches to their source material as a kind of fan fiction that sheds new light on and critically (re)evaluates both their cultural past and their present. While also considering 'neo-Victorian' fiction and its appeal to readers, Sabina Fazli places a somewhat different concern at the centre of her attention: her essay explores the ways in which contemporary authors appropriate Victorian discourses and characteristics of Victorian fiction when they draw on and imitate the Victorian combination of fiction and advertising as well as the Victorian practice of serial publication and serial reading to give their texts the semblance of past times. Regarding the impact of fandom, here the output of fans, as an important aspect of convergence culture, Stephanie Kader

explores representative feminist Science Fiction to gather information on the variety of reader-generated creative responses to and productive extensions of the genre.

The third section, “Transmediality,” is concerned with processes that result in the transgression of media boundaries, occasionally generate transmedia(l) worlds, and are probed concerning their validity and implications. The essay by Nicole Gabriel, Bogna Kazur, and Kai Matuszkiewicz charts theoretical territory associated with ‘transmediality’ before introducing three case studies. Clearing the ground for their discussions of the transmedia(l) ‘worlds’ of *Sherlock Holmes*, *Alien*, and *The Legend of Zelda*, the authors juxtapose and deliberate the conceptual entities of ‘transmedia storytelling,’ ‘transmedial worlds,’ and ‘transmedia practice’ before interrogating each of these with regard to their respective terminological intricacies (i.e. ‘transmedia storytelling’ vs. ‘transmedial storytelling’ and ‘intermedial worlds’ vs. ‘transmedial worlds’ vs. ‘transmedia worlds’). Concentrating on Michael Nyman’s composition and subsequent re-use of his soundtrack for a video game as a piece of film music in connection with a medial shift, Andrea C. Valente presents a detailed analysis of an example of convergence culture marked by adaptation and transcoding. Finally, the impact of digital textuality on literary works is highlighted in Lai-Tze Fan’s contribution. The author explores Steven Hall’s *The Raw Shark Texts* as a narrative that draws attention to convergence culture’s significance by employing multimodality to mediate digital media and at the same time question their status.

Compiling the individual contributions into what we hope forms a conclusive whole would not have been possible without the help of Anna Bakina whom we wish to thank for patiently and proficiently formatting the manuscript.

Claudia Georgi and Brigitte Johanna Glaser



# Introduction



# Reconsidering Convergence Culture and Its Consequences for Literary Studies

*Claudia Georgi*

## Introduction

As the wide range of contributions to the present volume illustrates, ‘convergence culture’ is a phenomenon that applies to various areas of contemporary culture. It covers developments in academic disciplines as diverse as literary, cultural, and media studies, digital humanities, translation studies, art history, musicology, and even ecology. While its general applicability may confirm Henry Jenkins’s appraisal of convergence culture as forming a general “paradigm shift” (2006, 243), it may also expose it as a new buzzword that is so vague that it can serve any academic discipline in describing any context.

After a brief investigation of Jenkins’s definition of ‘convergence culture’ and his related notions of ‘participatory culture’ and ‘transmedia storytelling,’ three main questions will be considered in the following in order to shed light on the benefits and limitations of his approach. Firstly, does ‘convergence culture’ describe new phenomena or did they already exist long before the term was coined? Secondly, is ‘transmedia storytelling’ a useful concept that extends beyond the limits of established terms such as ‘adaptation,’ ‘medial transposition,’ or ‘transmediality’? And thirdly, what are the consequences of Jenkins’s observations for the humanities and specifically for literary studies?

## Convergence Culture

In his research and publications on convergence culture, Jenkins combines the more distanced approach of an academic<sup>1</sup> with the insider experience of an active member of various fan communities (2006, 12; 1992, 4-5). He has further tried to bridge the gap between various perspectives via his long-time involvement in communicating research in media and communication studies to the media industry and educational institutions (2006, 12-13).

Especially in his earlier publications such as *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture* (1992) Jenkins admits that his observations with regard to fan communities and their intense engagement with media may not apply to society in general. As he observes, “[f]an culture differs in a qualitative way from the cultural experience of media consumption for the bulk of the population. [...] The fan audience is in no sense representative of the audience at large” (Jenkins 1992, 286). In this sense, these early publications explicitly question the general validity of Jenkins’s findings and assert that he has not “drawn upon fandom as a means of developing a new theory of media consumption” (Jenkins 1992, 286). It is only in his more recent publications that Jenkins has broadened his perspective to consider also more average users and consumers of new media in order to develop in full his theory of ‘convergence culture.’ This is especially true of *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (2006) and of his most recent volume *Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture* (2013), the latter co-authored with Sam Ford and Joshua Green. As opposed to Jenkins’s earlier and more tentative remarks, these studies claim that ‘convergence culture’ is no marginal phenomenon restricted to fan communities but represents a general “paradigm shift” (2006, 243).

But what exactly are these changes or shifts he labels as ‘convergence culture’? According to Jenkins, convergence culture can be described as

the flow of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries, and the migratory behavior of media audiences who will go almost anywhere in search of the kinds of entertainment experiences they want. Convergence is a word that manages to describe technological, industrial, cultural, and social changes depending on who’s speaking and what they think they are talking about. [...] I will argue here against the idea that convergence should be understood primarily as a technological process bringing together multiple media functions within the same devices. [...] Convergence does not occur through media

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<sup>1</sup> Henry Jenkins is the Provost Professor of Communication, Journalism, Cinematic Arts, and Education at the University of Southern California and used to be director of the Comparative Media Studies graduate degree programme and Peter de Florez Professor of Humanities at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (“Henry Jenkins” 2014).



appliances, however sophisticated they may become. Convergence occurs within the brains of individual consumers and through their social interactions with others. (2006, 2-3)

As this quotation explicitly states, convergence culture is not simply determined by the availability of new media appliances and the advance of digitization. Although such technological innovations are prerequisites for media convergence, they do not constitute an imperative for convergence culture, nor do they suffice to explain it (Jenkins 2006, 11; Jenkins, Ford, and Green 2013, 3). Instead, convergence culture figures as a far-reaching and holistic phenomenon that is influenced by a combination of technological, economic, social, cultural, and global conditions (Jenkins 2001, 93).

José van Dijck shares Jenkins's objection to technological determinism and his awareness of other factors when he identifies a 'culture of connectivity' defined as "a sociotechnical ensemble" (van Dijck 2013, 14), an "online ecosystem [that] is embedded in a larger sociocultural and political-economic context where it is inevitably molded by historical circumstances" (9). Some critics, however, simply equate convergence with the mere technological fusion of media via digitization. Hence Anders Fagerjord proclaims:

[...] *convergence* is over. The media have already converged. [...] Convergence as a development must logically end at some point either because media cease to converge, or because all media have converged into one, or have reached a limit where further convergence is impossible. (2010, 188-189; emphasis in the original)

Instead of such reduction of convergence to the merging of technological and specifically digital devices or to the substitution of established media by new hypermedia, Jenkins conceives of convergence as a cooperation and cross-fertilization in which "old and new media collide" (2006, 2). He further elaborates that "[i]f the digital revolution paradigm presumed that new media would displace old media, the emerging convergence paradigm assumes that old and new media will interact in ever more complex ways" (2006, 6; see also 2008, 274, 290). This chimes with Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin's accounts of such medial interaction rather than substitution, an interdependence they describe as a reciprocal process of 'remediation' involving both old and new media. Based on a wealth of examples, they argue convincingly that "[w]hat is new about new media comes from the particular ways in which they refashion older media and the ways in which older media refashion themselves to answer the challenges of new media" (Bolter and Grusin 1999, 15). For Jenkins, too, convergence is a development that affects, but does not replace, established media and that will not end with the invention of a single medium to encompass all other media. Convergence, therefore, "refers to a process, not an endpoint" (Jenkins 2006, 16). What is as important for this process

as the technological conditions of media convergence is the social and cultural potential of convergence culture and the way it affects the mutual relations between media, the media industry, producers, and consumers.

## Participatory Culture

With a view to capturing these social and cultural implications of convergence culture, Jenkins further introduces the idea of a ‘participatory culture.’ It entails a new perception of consumers (readers, viewers, users, etc.) as active participants in cultural production and reception. With this idea, Jenkins builds on Alvin Toffler’s notion of the ‘prosumer’ as a particularly active consumer who is “increasingly being drawn into the production process” (Toffler 1980, 290) so that “conventional distinctions between producer and consumer vanish” (292). Moreover, Jenkins also seizes on Axel Bruns’s related concept of ‘produsage’ that applies specifically to the context of social software and Web 2.0 (Bruns 2008, 5) where “users are always already necessarily also producers of the shared knowledge base, regardless of whether they are aware of this role – they have become a new, hybrid, *produser*” (2; emphasis in the original). Based on these notions, Jenkins similarly highlights the active role of consumers who often figure as (co-)producers at the same time. With specific reference to fan communities, he observes that “fandom does not preserve a radical separation between readers and writers. Fans do not simply consume preproduced stories; they manufacture their own fanzine stories and novels, art prints, songs, videos, performances, etc.” (Jenkins 1992, 45). A brief consideration of collective encyclopaedias such as the *Wikipedia* or social media platforms such as *YouTube* with their user-generated content, however, illustrates that even beyond fan communities a single individual can simultaneously act as both consumer and producer. In their interaction with media content, today’s consumers thus assume and smoothly shift between the roles of ‘translators,’ ‘multipliers,’ ‘appraisers,’ ‘lead users,’ ‘retro curators,’ ‘pop cosmopolitans,’ etc., to name but a few of the functions assigned to them by Jenkins, Ford, and Green (2013, 297).

In addition to the consumers’ increased participation in the production of media content, Jenkins furthermore identifies a trend towards communal reception in temporary knowledge communities and an increased relevance of collective intelligence (2006, 26, 54, 245), a development he describes as a “shift from individualized and personalized media consumption toward consumption as a networked practice” (244). According to Jenkins, the formation of such networks has a democratic potential (2006, 247). At the same time, he also cautions that such democratization is no automatic result of the technological advances associated with convergence and participatory culture but needs to be actively fought for (2008, 293-294). Although convergence culture theoretically allows everyone to participate and facilitates free expression, the ‘digital divide’ and the ‘participation gap’ in access to technology and media literacy impede equal use of communication networks

across and within cultures (Jenkins 2006, 23; 2010b). When speaking of convergence and participatory culture, it is therefore important to bear in mind that these are relative rather than absolute terms (Jenkins, Ford, and Green 2013, 193) to describe a more or less global but not (yet) universal dissemination. Jenkins, Ford, and Green highlight the limits of participation when stating that “not everyone is allowed to participate, not everyone is able to participate, not everyone wants to participate, and not everyone who participates does so on equal terms” (2013, 298). On the other hand, those who have the means to participate often also feel compelled to make use of these for fear of being excluded from social interaction otherwise. This aspect becomes perceptible in José van Dijck’s description of the peer pressure of being part of online sociality, which makes it seem as if “[o]pting out of connective media [wa]s hardly an option” (van Dijck 2013, 174). Yet, as S. Elizabeth Bird correctly points out, opportunities for participation in convergence culture are not limited to “online produsage” (2011, 509) based on digital technology but can also be sought in “offline audience activity” (506) so that being able to participate in convergence culture does not solely depend on having access to the internet.

## Transmedia Storytelling

Whichever form active participation takes, the increased engagement of consumers is the prerequisite and guiding principle for what Jenkins calls the “new aesthetic” of transmedia storytelling that results from media convergence (2006, 20-21). As Jenkins defines it,

[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 [...]. 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. Any given product is a point of entry into the franchise as a whole. (2006, 95-96)

Using *The Matrix* franchise as a prime example of transmedia storytelling, Jenkins illustrates how the consumers can access a storyworld via diverse media channels or “touch points” (2006, 63) such as films, comics, games, websites, etc. By gathering various pieces of information and putting them together like a puzzle, the consumers therefore actively (re)construct the storyworld. Yet, as Marie-Laure Ryan and Jan-Noël Thon remark, they do not need to construct this fictional world from scratch each time but can instantly immerse themselves in a world that already is at least partly familiar to them from related versions that have been circulated via other media channels (Ryan and Thon 2014, 1).

Rather than providing redundant information, each version ideally offers additional perspectives in order to allow for a more intense experience of the storyworld so that “[t]he whole is worth more than the sum of the parts” (Jenkins 2006, 102). Yet, the pieces of information that are scattered across distinct media do not always add up to a coherent and unified storyworld but may sometimes present alternative or even contradictory versions of a fictional universe (Jenkins 2009). In keeping with Jenkins, Marie-Laure Ryan therefore observes that “[t]he various elements of a transmedial system can either expand a storyworld through processes that respect previous content or create logically distinct, though imaginatively related, storyworlds through modifications and transpositions that alter existing content” (Ryan 2014, 42). This difference between coherent and divergent versions of transmedia storyworlds often primarily depends on how strictly a transmedia franchise is controlled by the media industry and how well it is protected from unauthorized extensions or alterations. Whenever fan contributions are encouraged, in other words, this may lead to alternative and sometimes, though not necessarily, contradictory versions of a storyworld. Jenkins himself endorses “a logic of multiplicity” that tolerates alternative versions and values their contribution to a storyworld, irrespective of whether these versions have been authorized or not (Jenkins 2009). On the whole, he not only observes an increased acceptance of transmedia storytelling as a new narrative mode, but he even discerns a rising “transmedia expectation” among the consumers who often take it for granted that narratives spread across distinct media (Jenkins 2009).

From the point of view of the media industry, transmedia storytelling has clear economic motives of finding ever new ways of promoting and expanding a brand across various media as a transmedia franchise (Jenkins 2006, 104). Beyond its narrative function, transmedia storytelling can thus also be seen as an effective marketing strategy. The consumers, on the other hand, are motivated by the desire to fill gaps in the narrative, to immerse themselves more completely in the storyworld, or even to enhance it themselves. Additionally, the mere market and peer pressure on consumers to support certain brands should not be underestimated either. As Mélanie Burdaa concludes, two diametrically opposed processes are at work in transmedia storytelling: while the producers disperse the information across multiple media channels, the consumers reassemble it and piece it back together (2013, 212). Depending on whether we take the perspective of the media industry or the consumers, transmedia storytelling thus actually shifts between divergence and convergence.

In addition to increased consumer commitment, transmedia storytelling demands a certain type of narratives that are ‘spreadable.’ “[I]f it doesn’t spread, it’s dead” is the simple formula Jenkins, Ford, and Green use to summarize this requirement (2013, 1). In other words, content needs to offer various “access points” for the recipients and to be presented in “easy-to-share formats” (6). Spreadability, however, does not necessarily imply a broad distribution of content. Instead, it

may also refer to the possibility for smaller groups of recipients to engage more deeply with this content (22), a phenomenon Jenkins also calls “drillability” in keeping with media scholar Jason Mittell’s terminology (Jenkins 2009).

## Precursors of Convergence Culture

Are convergence culture, participatory culture, and transmedia storytelling really new phenomena or are they related to earlier developments? Jenkins, Ford, and Green actually relativize the alleged degree of novelty when affirming that “[p]articipatory culture is not new – it has, in fact, multiple histories [...] which go back at least to the nineteenth century” (2013, 297). I would even argue that at least in some media the intention of blurring producers and consumers via participation is much older than this. Theatre, for instance, has always lent itself to audience participation due to its simultaneity of production and reception which allows the audience to witness and engage with the *mise-en-scène* and to give direct feedback. This may occur in the form of applause and booing or via more elaborate strategies of participation as in interactive performances where the spectators themselves are asked to perform.

Jenkins, Ford, and Green mention examples from narrative fiction and more specifically refer to 19<sup>th</sup>-century serialized novels by authors like Charles Dickens who, while still in the process of writing, could react to the readers’ responses concerning the already published instalments and could adjust the narratives to their suggestions. The serialized format thus required the readers’ active engagement in putting together the pieces of the narrative from the individual instalments (Jenkins, Ford, and Green 2013, 133-134), while also offering them a certain degree of participation in designing the plot development.

The 19<sup>th</sup> century also witnessed further precursors of participatory culture and transmedia storytelling such as the development of the Newgate novels that were published – often also in serialized form – in England between the late 1820s and the 1840s. Newgate novels such as Edward Bulwer-Lytton’s *Paul Clifford* (1830) or William Harrison Ainsworth’s *Jack Sheppard* (1839-1840) were closely related to their cultural, social, legal, literary, and material contexts and engaged their readers in various ways. These novels exploited and also fuelled a general fascination with violence but, more importantly, they also served as literary responses to legal reforms of capital punishment in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Hollingsworth 1963, 27). They fused distinct literary genres by drawing inspiration from newspaper articles that related actual crimes, from published confessions of criminals, and most of all from the Newgate Calendars, a collection of criminal biographies (Hollingsworth 1963, 5-6). That the public interest in crimes and punishment was not exclusively a literary phenomenon can further be seen in the promotion of related merchandise in other media such as mementos and portraits of criminals or souvenirs such as hangman’s ropes (Hollingsworth 1963, 8). In this sense, the New-

gate novels established an early form of transmedia franchise. By making reference to public debates and actual crimes as access points into their storyworlds, the Newgate novels moreover blurred fictional renderings and actual crimes and in this way allowed the readers more deeply to immerse themselves in the storyworlds by relating to their own realm of experience.

Karen Swallow Prior considers the storm of enthusiasm that followed the publication of Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1740) as an even earlier example of transmedia storytelling because the novel was quickly taken up in parodies or sequels and spread across media in the form of paintings, prints, etc. Moreover, Richardson acknowledged active readership by modifying the novel according to reader feedback in its second edition (Swallow Prior 2013). Going even further back in time, stories from the Bible and figures from ancient Greek mythology can be seen as yet earlier precursors of transmedia storytelling since they could and can still be encountered in distinct media such as oral stories or sermons, written texts, tapescripts, paintings, etc. (Jenkins 2006, 119-120; Ryan and Thon 2014, 3).

Although these examples may not count as participatory culture and transmedia storytelling in a strict sense, they demonstrate that convergence culture has its forerunners and did not suddenly appear out of thin air in the past decades. When looking at contemporary examples by comparison, it becomes clear nonetheless that there is a difference in kind and extent between such earlier forms and current convergence culture because the possibilities of transmedia storytelling and consumer participation have become more elaborate and extensive. As Jenkins, Ford, and Green observe, "what happened in a predigital world now occurs with exponentially greater speed and scope" (2013, 12). One reason for this can be found in the invention of new technologies. They make stories available across a wider range of new media and platforms that are easily accessible and, specifically in the case of Web 2.0, encourage interactive use.

Yet, as mentioned above, the technological progress goes hand in hand with changed cultural, social, economic, and aesthetic practices and expectations. In this sense, a shift can be observed for example in the role of consumers. Their own contributions and reactions are no longer only seen as unsolicited feedback of secondary importance, but are explicitly encouraged and acknowledged by the media industry as integral parts of creative processes that directly shape media content and form. Such changes have gradually led to the emergence of new participatory practices such as 'crowdsourcing,' 'crowdfunding,' and 'crowdsurfing' (Jenkins, Ford, and Green 2013, 246-254) or the sharing of knowledge in collaborative online encyclopaedias such as the *Wikipedia* (Jenkins 2006, 254). What is more, they have also contributed to the formation of new transmedia subgenres with their own aesthetics such as blogs and vlogs, Twitter poetry, spoetry, filk music, vids, eBooks, or e-mail novels, to name but a few examples. Depending on one's perspective, the convergence of media and the collaboration or synergies of those engaged in them could thus also be seen as a divergence or diversification of audiences, practices, and genres.

I would argue, however, that behind the technological innovations, the modified cultural and social practices of participation, and the creation of hitherto unknown transmedia genres and aesthetics lies a basic human need that has merely found a new form or degree of expression: convergence culture caters to the basic desire of bridging the gap between fiction and reality by approximating art and everyday experience. It complies with the wish to immerse oneself in fictional worlds, to gain access to parallel realities, to explore and hold on to them, and to shape them from the inside. It is this need that already in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries made recipients want to influence the further development of stories, to voice approval and disagreement with them, or to appropriate storyworlds via the acquisition of related memorabilia; and it is the same desire that now vents itself in star cult and makes consumers want to share their ideas with other consumers on internet platforms, to leave their imprint on media products via fan activities, or to interact with fictional characters on *Twitter* or *Facebook*.

## Terminological Considerations

If ‘participatory culture’ and ‘transmedia storytelling’ have their precursors and are the expression of a timeless desire to hold on to storyworlds or to shape them from within, is it really necessary to introduce these terms and to proclaim a new ‘convergence culture’ or could the described phenomena not simply be covered by broadening the scope of existing terms such as ‘adaptation,’ ‘medial transposition,’ or ‘transmediality’? Eckart Voigts and Pascal Nicklas pose the question of whether transmedia storytelling is simply “the currently dominant mode of adaptation and appropriation” (Voigts and Nicklas 2013, 140). Without committing themselves to a definite answer, they suggest that participatory culture at least changes the established workings of adaptation as we have known them (140).

Linda Hutcheon’s “Preface to the First Edition” of *A Theory of Adaptation* conveys the impression that participatory culture and transmedia storytelling push the boundaries of her framework of adaptation when she observes that “[a]daptation has run amok” (Hutcheon 2013, xiii). In her “Preface to the Second Edition” she asks where to draw the line between an adaptation and an “on-going, unstable, open-ended ‘multitext’” and demands that theories of adaptation be expanded to cover not only adaptations of a story but also adaptations of entire ‘story worlds’ or literary ‘heterocosms’ (Hutcheon 2013, xxiv). Siobhan O’Flynn’s epilogue to Hutcheon’s book shares this uncertainty with regard to the limits of adaptation and transmedia storytelling when detecting “more overlaps and blurrings than distinctions” between the two and identifying “many projects that resist easy categorization” (O’Flynn 2013, 187). The main difference Hutcheon herself perceives between previous adaptations and the current mode of transmedia storytelling concerns their respective relevance in the sense that transmedia storytelling has

become “the new entertainment norm, not the exception” (Hutcheon 2013, xxiii), an observation that ties in with Jenkins’s assumption of an increasing “transmedia expectation” (Jenkins 2009).

Occasionally, the difference between adaptation and transmedia storytelling is formulated in terms of the respective degree of novelty and ingenuity of distinct versions of a story. As mentioned above, in transmedia storytelling each version should ideally be self-contained, provide a new entry into the storyworld, and make a “distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole” (Jenkins 2006, 95-96). To stick to the previous example, all of the transmedial versions of *The Matrix* provide equally valid yet novel entries into its storyworld and only offer a complete picture when they are pieced together (Jenkins 2006, 101-102). This induces Jenkins to propose a distinction “between adaptation, which reproduces the original narrative with minimum changes into a new medium and is essentially redundant to the original work, and extension, which expands our understanding of the original by introducing new elements into the fiction” (Jenkins 2009). Accordingly, Jenkins considers recent forms of transmedia storytelling to be more integrated, interrelated, and complex than adaptations (2004, 40). Mélanie Burdaa agrees with this assessment in her own judgment that “transmedia storytelling is richer than cross-media adaptations since it develops a whole universe instead of only adapting the same storylines to different platforms” (2013, 205). Unfortunately, such verdicts are not uncommon and O’Flynn therefore deplores that “[a]daptation is (still) positioned consistently as a lesser, more simplistic mode of reworking content” (O’Flynn 2013, 195-196). Such denigration of basic adaptations as being more redundant than instances of transmedia storytelling, however, cannot be upheld given the many cases of adaptations that do not merely transpose identical content into a different medium but themselves offer new approaches, interpretations, and contexts. Even Jenkins has to admit that adaptations often also provide new insights into or interpretations of known stories (Jenkins 2009).

The proposition of the Producers Guild of America to distinguish between adaptations and transmedia storytelling according to the number of involved storylines, media, or platforms proves equally unreliable. As the Guild formulates, a “Transmedia Narrative project or franchise must consist of three (or more) narrative storylines existing within the same fictional universe” (qtd. in Jenkins 2010a). This would imply, however, that what is categorized as an adaptation as long as only two media are involved, would suddenly have to be considered as transmedia storytelling the moment a further adaptation brings a third medium into play.

What could possibly also be seen as a new aspect of transmedia storytelling in comparison to conventional adaptations is the degree to which the respective reworkings of stories are authorized by their original creators. In this context, it could be assumed that the various versions of transmedia storyworlds are developed or at least authorized by the initial authors or producers themselves, whereas adaptations are unauthorized, subsequent reworkings by persons other than the original creators. Applying Werner Wolf’s criteria for the “genesis of intermediali-



ty” to medial transposition or transmedia contexts, one could thus try to draw a line between the “primary,” i.e. initial and authorized conception of transmedia storyworlds, and the “secondary,” i.e. retroactive and unauthorized reworking of stories in the form of adaptations (Wolf 1999, 39). Although this may be a general tendency, the boundaries between both options are fluid when it comes to individual cases. On the one hand, many authors have adapted their own works into other media without thinking of them as forming related transmedia storyworlds as in the case of Dante Gabriel Rossetti’s paintings of *The Blessed Damsel* as visual renderings of his eponymous poem (first published in 1850) or Noël Coward’s screenplay for the *Brief Encounter* film (1945) based on his own play *Still Life* (1936). On the other hand, what is initially considered as an unauthorized or unsolicited transposition into another medium may eventually be accepted as an official part of a transmedia storyworld as in the case of Trevor Truran’s board game “Thud” that was inspired by Terry Pratchett’s *Discworld* novels and in turn lent its name to one of Pratchett’s sequels. In the end, which transpositions are officially accepted by the producers owning the copyrights has little to do with their status as adaptation or transmedia storytelling. It is less a question of authorial intent or authorization than of expectations of economic profit, the wish to control or prohibit unsolicited transpositions, or the desire to increase interest or brand loyalty by demonstratively encouraging fan production and transpositions.

Rather than focussing on questions of authorization in order to distinguish between adaptation and transmedia storytelling, it is more fruitful to consider how transmedia storytelling changes attitudes of reception with regard to related notions of ‘originality.’ Although Hutcheon stresses that adaptations are not necessarily derivative or secondary to an ‘original,’ she complains that they are often perceived as inferior works and judged according to conservative demands of fidelity to their original (2013, xiv-xv). As opposed to this, transmedia storytelling questions the primacy and authority of the original and treats different versions of a story as equally valid. According to Hutcheon, “[i]t obviously becomes harder and harder to think in terms of ‘original’ or ‘source’ stories or even story worlds when dealing with these kinds of adaptations, because here simultaneity, not priority, reigns” (2013, xxiv).

It is reasonable to assume that the difference between originals and their reworkings becomes less relevant and that the notions of ‘source’ or ‘hypotext’ and ‘target’ or ‘hypertext’ are rendered dispensable in transmedia storytelling where content spreads across media in a way that often makes it impossible to identify an original. Jenkins accordingly considers transmedia storytelling as far more than a transformation of one medium into another and proclaims “a move from medium-specific content toward content that flows across multiple media channels” (2006, 243). Many storyworlds are conceived, designed, and marketed as being transmedial from the very beginning. This is true, for instance, of *The Matrix*, a project consisting of movies, animated short films (*The Animatrix* in 2003), a series of comics, and computer games (Jenkins 2006, 101). Where an original source can still be

identified, as in the case of *Star Wars*, its transmedia storyworld is often expanded in a process that is collective and participatory in that it explicitly encourages audience contributions as equally valid parts of the storyworld. The official *Star Wars* fan film contests that are organized on an annual basis serve as only one of many possible examples of such procedures (Jenkins 2006, 131). Whereas adaptation is a case of ‘medial transposition’ that transforms an original work or aspects of it into another medium (Rajewsky 2005, 51), transmedia storytelling thus comes closer to ‘transmediality’ where elements related to content or form occur in distinct media without necessarily having a traceable origin in any of them (Rajewsky 2005, 46).

In addition to the decreased importance of the ‘original,’ transmedia storytelling also levels cultural hierarchies expressed by labels such as ‘high’ versus ‘low’ or ‘popular’ culture because it does not give priority to any medium at the expense of another medium. A novel, film, video game, or vlog, for example, may thus all be equally accepted as valid contributions to a transmedia storyworld. This obviously renders the notion of a universally valid literary canon even more problematic than it has already been so far.

The reduced relevance of originality that makes it possible for fan contributions to figure as equally accepted versions of a transmedia storyworld leads us back once more to the new role of the consumer. Participatory culture implies modes of participation that can no longer be easily controlled by the media industry. It describes multi-directional processes where the roles of producers and consumers, authors and readers can no longer strictly be kept apart and where consumers creatively appropriate stories in forms that may in turn be seized upon and re-appropriated by the media industry (Jenkins 2006, 148). This new appreciation of the creative activity of consumers is not explicitly taken into account by theories of adaptation or medial transposition. With its two main pillars of ‘transmedia storytelling’ and ‘participatory culture,’ convergence culture thus implies two new aspects: the downgrading of the original and the upgrading of the prosumer. It is these two aspects that may, after all, justify the proclamation of a new ‘convergence culture’ for phenomena that in other respects do not differ so much from well-established concepts.

Ultimately, coining new terms is less relevant than understanding the changing conditions of cultural production and reception as such. Furthermore, the choice of terminology will always depend on the respective research focus. For an interdisciplinary approach that takes into consideration aesthetic, cultural, social, and technological aspects, ‘convergence culture’ will therefore be a more useful concept. Yet, for tracing how specific themes and aesthetic or formal aspects travel across media, the frameworks of intermediality and transmediality may be the better tools. Although many of the described phenomena are of global importance, their analysis moreover occurs in different academic contexts so that the notion of ‘convergence culture’ seems to have a stronger ‘fan base’ among American scholars, whereas theories of inter- and transmediality are better established in Europe-

an academic discourse. Rather than substituting one theory by the other and considering them as mutually exclusive, it would thus be more productive to exploit their potential for comparisons and cross-fertilizations.

## Consequences for Literary Studies

Irrespective of the choice of terminology and theoretical frameworks, it cannot be denied that the past decades have seen the emergence of new conditions and practices of literary production, distribution, and reception. Sooner or later, these changes will inevitably affect the focus of teaching and research in the humanities and will call for more interdisciplinary and collaborative approaches that will combine literary, media, and cultural studies with technological, sociological, and other investigations. For literary scholars this also means looking beyond medial boundaries and building on their expertise in literary criticism without hierarchically placing literary versions of storyworlds above their extensions in other media.

What is more, convergence culture will also leave an imprint on core concepts of literary studies such as authorship, readership, originality, or genre conventions. First of all, the increasingly participatory modes of production, distribution, and reception as well as the blurring of the roles of producers and consumers challenge established ideas of authorship and readership since readers may suddenly become authors or co-authors and hence enter into a dialogue with the texts. In this sense, reception turns into a more active and creatively responsive process. Moreover, especially in the context of fandom, acts of reading and interpreting also become increasingly social and interactive (Jenkins 1992, 45, 278). Eckart Voigts therefore calls for a “new reception studies [that] will need to overcome the self-enclosure of merely thinking about audiences as consumers and start to fully grasp the fact that audiences are themselves producers, publishers and distributors of texts” (Voigts 2013, 154). Nonetheless, collective readership and active ‘prosumption’ should not be overestimated either because many readers still opt for more traditional offline reading experiences.

Concomitant with the new modes of production, distribution, and reception, a new aesthetic understanding of cultural artefacts and literary works is called for that no longer considers them as fixed products complete in themselves. Instead, they are now to be seen as interrelated and collaborative projects that are always in process and never finished. Such works in progress invite the recipients to participate in their production from the outset, to create or choose between concurrent versions, and to formulate their individual interpretations and reactions to them. As mentioned above, this poses a challenge to the binary perception of ‘original’ versus ‘reworking.’ It also questions the distinction between ‘high’ and ‘low’ culture and undermines the authority of the canon by placing originals and reworkings, canonical and popular texts on the same level (Jenkins 1992, 17). What is more, the idea of unfinished works in progress even subverts the idea of authorial intention

as a binding, authoritative touchstone of reception. As Jenkins adds for consideration, participatory culture moreover promotes “an understanding of intellectual property as ‘shareware’” (2006, 256) so that it will be necessary in the long run to reconsider copyright laws and redefine what constitutes fair use, plagiarism, and piracy (189-190).

We do not need to see into the future in order to discern that the new modes of production and reception, of authorship and readership also go hand in hand with the formation of new transmedial subgenres and corresponding genre conventions. No matter whether these hybrid subgenres are timeless or short-lived, whether they have stable or shifting characteristics, they demand flexible and versatile genre definitions able to accommodate new formats and they require new reading skills and enhanced media literacy. At the same time, it is also essential to examine the effects such new genres have on the popularity of those established formats that refuse consumer participation or expansion across media. As transmedia storytelling transcends media and genre boundaries, Jenkins observes an “emergence of new story structures, which create complexity by expanding the range of narrative possibility rather than pursuing a single path with a beginning, middle, and end” (2006, 119). To account for this increasing complexity of narrative structures will thus pose a new challenge to narratology.

## Conclusion

Although media convergence, participatory culture, and transmedia storytelling upset cultural hierarchies and modify established notions of authorship, readership, or originality, they are not entirely new phenomena. Media convergence entails the continued existence of and interaction with old media; participatory culture builds on established practices of cultural production, distribution, and reception; and transmedia storytelling has not replaced known genres but blends them across media in order to attain new narrative complexity. Individually, these aspects could also be covered by established concepts such as ‘remediation,’ ‘digitization,’ ‘prosumption,’ ‘adaptation,’ ‘medial transposition,’ or ‘transmediality.’ Convergence culture, however, claims to go beyond the boundaries of any of these individual categories by considering their combined effects and their mutual reinforcement and by straddling technological, aesthetic, social, and cultural dimensions. Jenkins aims high with this extended scope and it is yet to be decided whether his concept can deliver what it promises. Whether we agree with his proclamation of a new ‘convergence culture’ or not, we cannot deny the benefits of his approach in general if only because it raises the awareness of cultural changes and encourages the humanities to accept the challenges they pose. If we do not simply abandon tried concepts and, as Jenkins counsels, do not indulge in either utopian or dystopian discourses (Jenkins 2014, 273), the concept of ‘convergence culture’ may indeed help us deal with new cultural developments.

Let me close with Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford, and Joshua Green's slightly ominous proclamation that we live at "a moment of transition, one in which an old system is shattering without us yet knowing what is going to replace it, one which is ripe in contradictions" (2013, 295). The present volume is meant to be an attempt at building something new out of the alleged ruins of the old system without eschewing these contradictions.

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## Forms of Convergence



# Mediating Meaning in Botticelli's *Primavera*

*Gorčin Dizdār*

## Denotation, Art History, and Language

It is a commonplace to begin a discussion of Sandro Botticelli's *Primavera* (fig. 1) by pointing out that it represents one of the foremost interpretative challenges of art history, having produced a large number of often diametrically opposed understandings of its meaning. The plethora of critical assessments is a testimony not only to the complexity inherent in this Renaissance masterpiece but also to the highly problematic status of art history's methodology. The *Primavera* continues to be seen – to name but a few of the more prominent interpretations – as a mythologically veiled illustration of the circumstances surrounding a wedding in the family of the painting's patron, an allegorical illustration of the arrival of spring, and a symbolical depiction of neo-Platonic ideas about the nature of love. A problem of fundamental methodological importance to any interpretation of a work of art – though one which is usually overlooked or taken for granted in discussions of the *Primavera* – concerns the relationship of word and image or, in other words, the precise way in which the linguistically expressed meaning and the painting are related to each other. The aim of this essay is to deconstruct this complex relationship, arguing that the diversity of interpretations of the *Primavera* is to a large extent a consequence of different implicit assumptions about the relationship between linguistic and pictorial representation.

In addition, the article aims to reflect upon the relevance of the concept of 'convergence culture,' coined in reference to very recent developments in media technologies, for much older artistic and cultural works such as the painting *Prima-*



Figure 1: Sandro Botticelli's 'Primavera'

*vera*. In his article “The Cultural Logic of Media Convergence,” Henry Jenkins argues that “convergence is taking place within the same appliances...within the same franchise...within the same company...within the brain of the consumer” (2004, 34; ellipses in the original). It is particularly this final aspect of convergence culture, namely the convergence within the brain of the consumer, that I would like to focus on. Although we do not usually refer to a Renaissance era viewer or patron of a painting as a ‘consumer,’ what I am essentially arguing is that the final ‘meaning’ of the painting is to be found in a convergence of a variety of discourses – visual and linguistic – occurring in the brain of the painting’s audience. Thus, although contemporary cultural products operate in a universe of infinitely wider technological possibilities, the basic mechanism of convergence culture was utilized as far back as in the Renaissance. Sandro Botticelli’s masterwork combines different media of his time – such as painting, philosophy, astrology, and religion – in order to create a complex cultural product consisting of visual and linguistic interpretative clues.

In the case of the *Primavera*, the problematic nature of the relationship between image and word strikes the interpreter at the fundamental level of the painting’s name: its author is not Botticelli himself, but the artist’s biographer Giorgio Vasari who, around 70 years after the completion of the painting, claimed that it denotes spring. The painting’s name is but the tip of an iceberg of ambiguities surrounding the correlation of discourse and depiction within the *Primavera*. The next challenge is the attempt to identify the nine figures portrayed in the painting. A plenitude of intellectual effort has been invested in linking the figural representations to particular Greco-Roman deities, largely through tracing some of their features to the conventions governing the Humanist cultural context to which the *Primavera* belongs. However, even a basic acquaintance with classical mythology reveals that the names of most deities are linked not to one, but often to several figures and sets of attributes with divergent and sometimes contradictory characteristics, related only through their common name. Which particular features of the identified divinity will be taken into account in the course of the interpretation depends on an act of negotiation between several distinct factors, such as possible textual references from Botticelli’s intellectual environment, the mutual relationships of the characters in the composition, and the presumed overall meaning of the painting. Which one of these factors will be weighed more heavily than the others often depends more on the interpreter’s subjective opinion about the nature of the *Primavera* than any objective features of the painting itself. Thus, the aim of this essay is not to offer an interpretation of the *Primavera*, but, as it were, an interpretation of its interpretations.

## The Three Types of Representation

The hypothesis of this essay is that interpretative efforts implicitly employ three basic ways to conceptualize representation, namely the semantic relationships of identity, metaphor, and symbolism. The example on which the nature of the three types of representational relationships will be elaborated is the famous aphorism of the pre-Socratic Greek philosopher Heraclitus: You cannot step into the same river twice. The crux of Heraclitus's argument lies in the duality of the word 'river' (or the name of a particular river), which always remains the same, and the actual river, which is in constant change as new quantities of water flow past. Another conceptual framework through which identity, metaphor, and symbolism will be considered is Erwin Panofsky's trinity of meanings of a work of art presented in his essay "The History of Art as a Humanistic Discipline" (Panofsky 1940/1982). According to Panofsky, every work of art has three levels of meaning which he terms the primary or natural, the conventional, and the intrinsic. The primary level of meaning relates to a mere identification of actual objects that are visible in a work of art, such as a human being, an animal, or a plant. The conventional meaning refers to certain features of a work of art which can be explained by referring to the culturally ascribed significance of certain objects, combinations of objects, or ways in which they are positioned, such as a handshake or the halo above a person's head. Finally, intrinsic meaning refers to deciphering the so-called content of a work of art, defined as "the basic attitude of a nation, a period, a class, a religious or philosophical persuasion – all this unconsciously qualified by one personality, and condensed into one work" (Panofsky 1921/1982, 56). In the following, Panofsky's terminology will be preserved, although its meaning will be modified to fit into the taxonomy of identity, metaphor, and symbolism.

The central characteristic of the relationship of identity is a denial of the duality of sign and meaning. As its name suggests, this relationship assumes that the word and its meaning are identical or form one indivisible whole. It pays no attention to Heraclitus's remark, enabling one to continue using the word 'river' as though there were no fundamental discrepancy between the constancy of the word and the flux of the actual river. Its response to Heraclitus would be: of course you can step into the same river twice. Identity largely incorporates Panofsky's primary or natural meaning. Thus any interpreter is capable of identifying various elements in the *Primavera* without much hesitation: different kinds of trees, human figures, pieces of clothing, etc. Identity is revealed in most instances by the use of the verb 'to be': e.g. this is a laurel tree, that is a rose ... but also: this is Venus, those are the three Graces, the *Primavera* is an allegory. The latter examples show in which way identity is distinguished from Panofsky's primary meaning. It incorporates not only what Panofsky believed can be determined universally, without recourse to convention or context, but every relationship between sign and meaning which is

claimed to be stable and objective. The usage of the words 'sign' and 'meaning' should not mislead us into thinking that this is a purely linguistic or semiological relationship: identity can occur between two images, between an image and a word, between one word and a group of other words, etc. The only necessary condition is that within the discourse in which the relationship of identity is postulated, one of its elements can be replaced by the second one without obscuring the meaning of the entire structure.

The metaphorical relationship occurs once the linguistic function of meaning is introduced as a link between the two elements of the semantic equation. It is distinguished from identity by the acknowledgment that the link is a matter of conditional convention. The metaphorical response to the Heraclitean paradox is that it is resolved once the role of the word in the discourse is adequately accounted for. The link between the word 'river' and the actual river is not a simple one-to-one relationship, but a specific semantic function whose role is to designate a particular entity consisting of relatively stable (the riverbed) and relatively flexible elements (the water). The relationship is named 'metaphorical' because it is based on a partial and never fully defined correspondence between two or more elements. In terms of the *Primavera*, the metaphor is encountered on the level of the links between one of the portrayed deities and the characteristics it represents within the composition. It is on the level of metaphor that the difficult issue of the relevance of the artist's original intention is faced. If it is possible to create several alternative metaphorical meanings of a painting which are all coherent with the established identities within it, it makes sense to question the relevance of the original intention. Thus one can argue that a multiplicity of possible readings only adds to the significance of a particular work of art. In terms of the Panofskyan categorization of meanings, the metaphor is most closely associated with the conventional meaning. The crucial difference is that rather than linking the visual elements of a painting to a presumed original context of the painting, the metaphorical meaning arises whenever the image is assigned a place in a wider discursive context.

The nature of the symbolic relationship is best explained through a well-known symbol, the yin-yang (fig. 2). The relationship between the two elements of the yin-yang, the black and the white colour, is characterized by a fundamental ambiguity: besides the black and the white side blending into each other, both sides appear to contain an element of each other in their midst. The ambiguity that the symbol does not resolve lies in the question whether the black circle lies on top of the white colour, fills out a hole within the white side, or lies underneath the white colour, visible due to a hole within the white colour itself (and vice versa). Each possibility implies a different relationship between the two elements that make up the whole. The defining characteristic of the symbolic relationship is the fact that it links its constituent elements in more than one way at the same time. This relationship cannot be reduced to a simpler one through a linguistic method, but can only

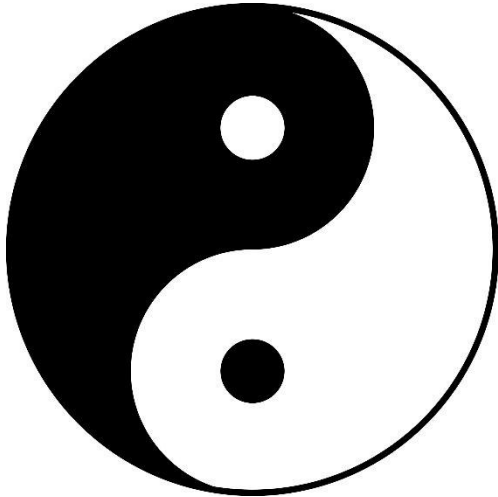


Figure 2: Yin-yang symbol

female. It could indeed be the case that the artist posits this structural relationship unconsciously and that certain analogies can be found with the symbolic structures of other artistic, philosophical, and even political projects of the period or social group to which the artist belongs. But replacing the content with the symbolic relationship enables a much less mysterious and mystical conceptualization of these analogies. There is no need to posit dubious entities such as the collective unconscious: the relative coherence of a period or social group is achieved by the conscious or unconscious emulation of the symbolic relationships of those acts, texts, or works of art which are perceived as great at a certain point in space and time.

## Identity

As previously pointed out, the attempt to establish a relationship of identity between word and image can be made on different levels of the painting's contents and structure. In the following section, three such attempts will be evaluated, leading to a clearer understanding of the appropriateness of identity as a tool for a linguistic evaluation of the *Primavera's* meaning. The first one is a description of the painting's basic constituent elements, corresponding to Panofsky's original primary or natural meaning of a work of art, as well as the fundamental structural relationships between these elements. The second attempt will concern the assignment of identities to the human-like figures in the painting and the determination of the significance of individual plants. Finally, interpretative efforts that aim to establish an identity between discursive and linguistic representation on the level of the painting's overall meaning will be considered.

be shown or pointed to. It can therefore be said that it fully embraces the Heraclitean paradox: in fact, the sentence 'you cannot step into the same river twice' can be seen as a linguistic equivalent of the yin-yang, establishing a paradoxical relationship between the word and the object. The symbolic relationship can be likened to Panofsky's content of a work of art. Its defining feature is not, however, an alleged correspondence with the basic attitude of a nation, but a particular structural relationship of its metaphorical meanings, such as, for example, life and death or male and



The apparently least controversial level at which the relationship of identity can be established is the identification of the objects portrayed in the painting. Thus, first of all, it can be said that the *Primavera* depicts nine human-like figures set against a background of blooming trees and standing on a field covered with flowers. In other words, an identity can be established between certain elements of the *Primavera* and the words 'trees,' 'human figures,' and 'flowers.' It can be safely assumed that for the purposes of an interpretative discussion of the *Primavera*, these identities will not be called into question.

As previously mentioned, it has been possible to identify the majority of the figures appearing in the painting through certain features that were conventionally used to portray Greco-Roman deities. Such markers are the winged shoes of Mercury, the halo of myrtle branches around Venus's head, or the bow and arrow carried by Amor. According to Panofsky's iconological principles, the identification of pictorial elements through reference to conventions constitutes the conventional level of meaning, clearly separated from the basic meaning used to identify a tree or an unnamed human figure. However, from the point of view of the terminology used in this essay, the relationship between the word and the image in the case of a tree on the one hand and Venus on the other is much closer than may appear at first. True, the identification of Venus and the other human figures has required a much greater degree of specialist attention, but the accumulation of sufficient evidence enables the art historian to postulate a link between the word 'Venus' and the central figure of the *Primavera* which is as close as that between the word 'trees' and the background of the painting. In other words, a relationship of identity has been established between the word 'Venus' and the image, which is very unlikely to be questioned.

Despite the establishment of identity between the figures and definite Greco-Roman deities, this relationship is far from simple and transparent and does not immediately provide a definite key to the decipherment of Venus's role in the overall meaning of the painting. That step will already involve the concept of meaning, which is a relationship of metaphor rather than identity. This distinction is exemplified more clearly by the role of the individual plants and flowers shown in the painting. In *Botticelli's Primavera*, Mirella Levi D'Ancona provides an extensive list of every single plant and flower that appears in the painting. Besides giving the English, Latin, and Italian name of each plant, she also provides one or more references to mythological, poetical, symbolical, medical, religious, or other texts in which that plant is assigned a particular meaning. The point that is made in reference to Venus is that her identification is much more akin to the identification of individual plants, rather than the more complex process whereby the precise meaning of the plant in the painting is determined.

However, numerous critics and art historians seem to be convinced that an identity can be established on the level of the overall relationship between the *Primavera* as a whole and its alleged meaning. Jean Seznec, for example, claims that "the artist, unquestionably following a program furnished again by Politian or by

some other humanist in Lorenzo's court, was evidently charged with concealing in this work some momentous secret from the wisdom of the ancients" (1972, 116). Thus it seems as though the painting is merely a concealed version of a 'meaning' which could be expressed more clearly through language. Frank Zöllner sees the *Primavera* as an allegorical illustration of the circumstances surrounding the wedding between Semiramide Appiani and Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco de' Medici, which was mediated by the legal guardian of the groom, Lorenzo the Magnificent, who commissioned this work. According to this view, the true meaning of the painting is thinly veiled behind a rather eclectic mixture of classical references, as for example "Botticelli's depiction of Chloris being taken by force, inspired by Ovid's description, corresponded to the politically-motivated, arranged marriage which took little account of the personal feelings and needs of the bride" (Zöllner 1998, 37). Gombrich adopts a more sophisticated approach, aiming to establish links between the *Primavera* and the neo-Platonic philosophy of Ficino, Lorenzo the Magnificent's mentor, but explicitly acknowledges that his interpretation is based on a fundamental assumption "which may any day be overthrown by a lucky find: the hypothesis that Botticelli's mythologies are not straight illustrations of existing literary passages but that they are based on 'programmes' drawn up ad hoc, by a humanist" (Gombrich 1945, 7). Hence Gombrich sees only two possibilities for the meaning of the *Primavera*: either it is an illustration of a literary passage or the visual expression of a particular philosophical idea.

What all these approaches share is the conviction that an unproblematic relationship of identity can be established not only at the level of the individual word but also between an entire discourse such as poetry or philosophy and a painting with a highly complex content and structure like the *Primavera*. However, such a conviction is undermined by the discrepancy between grammar, poetical modes, and visual artistic conventions and possibilities (as well as other discourses to which the *Primavera* has been linked). The extension of the relationship of identity to the level of the painting as a whole seems to serve a very particular purpose: it is not a conditional replacement of the visual, but its permanent subjection by the linguistic. According to W.J.T. Mitchell

the 'otherness' of visual representation from the standpoint of textuality may be anything from a personal competition (the paragone of poet and painter) to a relation of political, disciplinary, or cultural domination in which the 'self' is understood to be an active, speaking, seeing subject, while the 'other' is projected as a passive, seen and (usually) silent object. (1994, 157)

There is another conspicuous consequence of the establishment of identity between word and image: once it is achieved, the link cannot be broken apart, it becomes permanent. The *Primavera* is assigned a definite and final place in relation to linguistic discourse, dying like the Theban Sphinx once its riddle has been finally resolved.

## Metaphor

The metaphorical interpretation of a painting is a domain defined by a more self-conscious relationship between language and image. Rather than assuming the primacy of language as a transparent medium enabling an unmediated access to a meaning that lies beyond the image conceived as merely a method of expression, it acknowledges that meaning is a linguistic concept that depends on the relationship of identity in order to incorporate the painting and its individual elements into its field of reference. It can be said that the metaphor supervenes upon identity, for it is impossible to speak of meaning in the metaphorical sense without the prior establishment of stably conceived points of reference. The metaphor does not claim that its linguistically expressed meaning is equivalent to the painting itself, but rather to a kind of mirror image of the painting, whose nature is a combination of the painting itself and the characteristics of the medium in which it is reflected, i.e. the language and grammar of interpretation. The following section will explore approaches by which various art historians have attempted to interpret the *Primavera* in ways which could be brought into correspondence with the relationship of metaphor described here.

The initial step towards the metaphorical relationship is established in Gombrich's commentary on the painting when he states that "for the cultured visitors to the Castello the Graces in the *Primavera* must have been surrounded by an aura of potential application and still-to-be-discovered meaning which may be just as essential for their understanding as the significance they had for the initiated" (1945, 39). However, for Gombrich the significance of the "aura of potential application" is still somewhat marginal in relation to the assumed meaning of the painting for the initiated, which is the true subject of his study. An investigation of this aura may be of interest to the field of inquiry named 'Rezeptionsgeschichte' in German, and, with much less prominence, 'reception history' in English, but remains outside of the interpreter's main focus on the assumed true meaning of the work of art.

There are several arguments in favour of a reversal of this hierarchy of meanings. Most fundamentally, it rests on the assumption that the *Primavera* was originally conceived as a transparent visual illustration of a particular idea, a coded message to the initiated that is perhaps aesthetically more pleasing, but semantically equivalent to its linguistic counterpart. But, even assuming that some such coded meaning did exist, most likely in correspondence with Seznev's claim that it was dictated by Politian or another humanist of the Medici circle, its prioritization devalues any subversive or expansive potential of an acknowledged artistic genius such as Botticelli. Finally, even if it is accepted that Botticelli was a talented, but ultimately passive translator of philosophical or poetic ideas into the language of painting, there is no decisive reason for an exclusive concentration on this particular interpretation, rather than other ones which the painter may have produced unconsciously or even coincidentally.

A critical approach that is more closely aligned with the concept of metaphor discussed here can be found in Barbara Gallati's "An Alchemical Interpretation of the Marriage between Mercury and Venus" (1983). As a methodological foundation for her approach, Gallati explicitly refers to a definition of the allegory as "an extended metaphor in which characters, objects, incidents, and descriptions carry one or more sets of fully-developed meanings in addition to the apparent or literal ones" (1983, 104). The way the metaphor is used in this essay can be likened to this definition of the allegory, with the crucial difference that the characters, objects, etc. do not "carry [...] fully-developed meanings," but these are assigned to them within the framework of the critical discourse. Gallati provides another valuable point that may be used to explain the mechanism of metaphor when she attempts to explain the link between Venus and the Virgin Mary in the *Primavera*: "it is evident that Venus is not the Virgin, but the viewer is meant to think of the two simultaneously. What occurs is what may be called a superimposition of mental images" (111). The relationship between the central human figure of the *Primavera*, the name 'Venus,' and the Virgin Mary described here is an instance of the relationship between image, identity, and metaphor. The problematic idea of the "superimposition of mental images" may be somewhat imprecise, but it offers a poignant clue to the way a multiplicity of words and images may form a complex link that is not reducible to a simple one-to-one relationship of identity, but rather incorporates a series of representational modes.

Comparing only three prominent critical approaches to the *Primavera*, it can be deduced that the role of Venus in the painting has been conceptualized in several different representational modes: as one element of a linear astronomical narrative (Dempsey), as one of the two elements, along with Mercury, of an allegory of ideal marriage (Gallati), and as a symbol of the humanist ideal of love (Gombrich). Each reading implies a different interpretation of the representational role of the other characters, being either astronomical signs equivalent to Venus, allegorical representations of aspects of Venus's or Mercury's characters, or narrative equivalents of the central symbolism of Venus. If the idea that there is only one correct reading of the *Primavera* is rejected (i.e. that it stands in a relationship of identity towards language), it becomes possible to conceive of it as a work of art which combines different representational modes. The different modes or interpretations all stand in a metaphorical relationship towards the image and should be considered as its mirror images modified by the characteristics of the discourse in which it is reflected, rather than identity-type readings that are opposed to each other.

In several interpretations of the *Primavera*, there is a tendency to revert to the relationship of identity even after the multiplicity of metaphorical meanings has been taken into account. Gallati, for example, writes that "the understanding of the system of relationships in the *Primavera* requires a viewer who is educated in their various meanings, for the essential nature of the painting is based upon a loosely-structured series of suggestions" (Gallati 1983, 111). Although a significant step forward has been taken from interpretations which may be described as reductive,

seeing only one link between language and the painting, there is a sense in which they have been replaced by one that is more complex, but ultimately of the same kind as the previous ones. Gallati's view implies that rather than illustrating a particular idea, the *Primavera* expresses a series of suggestions, which are nevertheless limited in nature. Similarly, Dempsey writes that "the painting is the sum total of all amorous thoughts – the eternally vernal garden of paradise with its flowers and orange trees, the never-ending dance of Flora and the Graces, the perpetual loosening of Love's flaming arrows, the unceasing abundance of Venus in her plenitude – that gathered together in their fullness create the perfected and ideal portrait of love that is forever painted in every true lover's heart" (Dempsey 1997, 27). It seems that rather than exploring the possible meanings of the painting, describing the variety of links that can be established between its elements and different discourses, the interpreters have returned to the domain of identity, a transparent and uncritical correspondence between word and image. The difference is not merely rhetorical, but reflects the underlying intention to close the semantic circle once and for all, to dissect the *Primavera* and place it in the herbarium of art historical interpretation.

## Symbol

The previous section did not end on a metaphorical comparison with the natural world for merely stylistic purposes. On the contrary, it serves as an appropriate transition to the exploration of the symbolic relationship between image and discourse, which offers a way to conceptualize the deeply rooted identification of culture with a living organism. An organism can be defined as a living entity consisting of several interdependent and specialized constituent parts. The hypothesis that will be explored in this section is that the specific function of artistic creation within the cultural organism is to act as a reservoir of symbolic forms, which can be pointed to through discourse but also emulated within it. The symbolic relationship explored here will be based on a metaphorical interpretation of the *Primavera* derived from the readings of Edgar Wind and Mirella Levi D'Ancona. It can be described as symbolic because it refers to the irreducible interaction of two polar opposites, the masculine and the feminine, expressed through the figures portrayed in the *Primavera*. The analysis of the symbolic relationship will be followed by an interpretation based on its emulation in the critical discourse, demonstrating the function of the symbol within the cultural organism.

Wind's and D'Ancona's readings of the *Primavera* are based on a metaphorical association of the painting with neo-Platonic ideas about love prominent in the humanist circles surrounding Botticelli. D'Ancona sums up the way one of the most prominent of these humanists, Ficino, understood love:

According to Ficino, there are two kinds of love, the terrestrial and the divine. Love cements the union between mortals as well as between man and God. Love originates from God, and all humans tend to return to God when they are inflamed with love. The lower kind of love, which is common to humans as well as beasts and plants, is responsible for the continuation of the species through the generative act. This lower type of love, in turn, induces man to seek the higher kind of love, which links man with God. (D'Ancona 1983, 54)

The two kinds of love are represented by the left and the right side of the painting respectively. While the terrestrial love is associated with Zephyrus's lust expressed in his rape of Chloris, Mercury embodies the idea of divine love: "Mercury turns his back on the other figures [...] to demonstrate that he is engaged in the highest form of love, Divine Contemplation. His handsome young face is radiant, transformed by this form of physical love" (D'Ancona 56). This horizontal dialectic is juxtaposed with the vertical dichotomy of Venus and Cupid alluded to by Wind (1968, 120). Thus, what emerges is a symbolic relationship between the word 'love' and the concept it represents in the painting, consisting as it does of several contradictory elements paradoxically merged into one.

This reading rests on a rejection of D'Ancona's conclusion, seeing the relationship between the different aspects of love as hierarchical rather than symbolic: "When we 'read' the picture from right to left, we have thus the gradual uplifting of the soul, from the basest form of love embodied in the rape of Chloris, to Mercury's enraptured contemplation of God" (D'Ancona 1983, 56). The primary reason for a rejection of this unambiguously linear conception of the painting's structure is its reduction of a metaphorical reading to one of identity, but further support can be gained from a closer analysis of Mercury's possible meanings. Gallati, for example, writes that "Mercurius was conceived as the 'prima material,' the One in which many opposing elements were resolved, e.g. male/female; moist/dry; good/evil; Sol/Luna. Yet, Mercurius could stand for any of its component elements at any given time to fit into the pattern desired at the moment" (Gallati 1983, 119). Wind similarly points out that Zephyrus can be seen as an aspect of Mercury. Thus, structurally speaking, the two sides of masculine love, personified by Mercury and Zephyrus respectively, can be identified and merged into a symbolic unity through Venus in the centre of the painting. But Venus herself is of a contradictory nature: she also incorporates the violent, penetrative Eros as part of her character. What emerges is a symbolic structure: the masculine and the feminine are both paradoxical wholes composed of an irreducible union of opposites.

The equation of the symbolic with an abstract structure of elements is partly based on Lévi-Strauss's idea of the symbolic function. According to Lévi-Strauss, symbols are the unconscious structures governing conscious thought:

the unconscious ceases to be the ultimate heaven of individual peculiarities – the repository of a unique history which makes each of us an irreplaceable being. It is reducible to a function – the symbolic function, which no doubt is specifically human, and which is carried out according to the same laws among all men, and actually corresponds to the aggregate of these laws. (Lévi-Strauss 1963, 120)

The health of individuals depends on the possibility of incorporating their personal experiences into the symbolic structures governing their worldview. A sick individual can be cured of psychological and even physiological diseases through the expansion of the domain of symbolic structures, so as to be capable of incorporating the particular experience causing the malaise. While Lévi-Strauss discusses shamans and psychoanalysts as agents of the expansion of symbolic structures, there is no reason to deny works of art a similar potential. A meditation upon the *Primavera* and the complex structure of mythological associations that arises from its metaphorical meanings leads to an unconscious incorporation of symbolical relationships within and between the male and the female, enabling the beholder to overcome traumatic experiences by structuring them in accordance with the enriched worldview, in which physical intrusions, sudden bursts of passion, and metaphysical speculation all form a higher harmonious union.

## Towards a Symbolic Interpretation

The notion of love and the relationship between male and female explored here should not be seen as the transparent linguistic expression of the symbolic structure of the *Primavera* but only as one of its possible manifestations. If the symbol is an unconscious structure, it can never be fully expressed but only applied to conscious, linguistic content. Taking a clue from Wind's remarks about the nature of Mercury, I will attempt to structure this entire discussion in accordance with the symbolic relationships expressed in the *Primavera*. Wind notes:

Not only was Mercury the shrewdest and swiftest of the gods, the god of eloquence, the skimmer of clouds, the psychopompos, the leader of the Graces, the mediator between mortals and gods bridging the distance between earth and heaven; to humanists Mercury was above all the 'ingenious' god of the probing intellect, sacred to grammarians and metaphysicians, the patron of lettered inquiry and interpretation to which he had lent his very name, the revealer of secret or 'Hermetic' knowledge, of which his magical staff became a symbol. (1968, 122)

Based on this insight, it becomes possible to establish an analogy between Mercury and the interpreter dispersing the clouds surrounding the true meaning of the *Primavera*. Mercury's symbolic nature moreover leads to a correspondence between

the masculine, active interpreter and the feminine, passive visual message waiting to be deciphered. This idea can be expanded further by incorporating a wider context in the form of the opening lines of Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil*:

Supposing truth is a woman – what then? Are there not grounds for the suspicion that all philosophers, insofar as they were dogmatists, have been very inexpert about women? That the gruesome seriousness, the clumsy obtrusiveness with which they have usually approached truth so far have been awkward and very improper methods for winning a woman's heart? (Nietzsche 1886/2006, 5)

Supposing the truth of the *Primavera* is a woman – what does the painting itself tell us about this woman, and man's (i.e. the interpreter's) attempt to acquire it? On the one hand, there is Zephyrus, violently penetrating the horrified virginal truth embodied by Chloris – could this not be compared to the rigid relationship of identity, which does not take into account the fragile and nebulous nature of visual truth? On the other hand, does the disinterested, noble stature of Mercury, the disperser of clouds, not resemble the seeker of metaphorical relationships, a stoic figure intent on unveiling the complexities of the semantic knots tying the *Primavera* to a multiplicity of discourses? In contrast to Nietzsche's seducers of truth, both Zephyrus and Mercury can boast success in the form of the bountiful maid Flora and the longing gaze of one of the Graces. However, neither of these approaches reaches the paradoxical totality of Venus's enlightened gesture: that is reserved for the beholder who emulates the symbolic unity of opposites unfolded before her eyes.

It is precisely this unconscious emulation of symbolic structures that defines the organic nature of art and explains Panofsky's mysterious link between individual works of art and entire societies and epochs. Briefly returning to Lévi-Strauss's notion of the unconscious, I wish to point out that it is the active element of the human psyche, governing the domain of the preconscious, defined as "the individual lexicon where each of us accumulates the vocabulary of his personal history" (Lévi-Strauss 1963, 203). Thus, on the level of society, it is not events such as significant wars, revolutions, or other political events that define a nation's past and determine its future, but the way they are incorporated into an unconscious structure, a symbolic arrangement of polar opposites such as life and death, freedom and captivity, good and evil. It is the so-called great works of art that express the dominant symbolic structures of a particular epoch most clearly – and it is precisely this conscious or unconscious correspondence with the way a period or a society perceives itself that determines their status as great works of art to a large extent.



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**Images**

Botticelli, Sandro. *La Primavera*. c1477-1482. Tempera on panel. Uffizi, Florence.  
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“Yin-yang.” N.d. *Wikimedia Commons*. 7 November 2013. Web. 8 June 2015. Public Domain.

# The Enemy of Environmentalism: Struggles with Divergent Convergence

*Robert M.W. Brown*

Concomitant with Ithiel de Sola Pool's estimation of convergence and divergence (de Sola Pool 1983), environmentalism was beginning to articulate its own struggle with the perception of convergence as synonymous with technological enclosure while attempting to articulate a notion of divergence capable of sustaining holistic alternatives. Convergence is not necessarily foreign to the ecological sciences. In meteorology, convergence describes the confluences or channeling of air streams. In oceanography, convergence occurs when two or more water masses or currents meet. Or, according to the evolutionary sciences, convergence describes the process by which unrelated organisms express parallel adaptations when pressured by similar environmental conditions ("Convergence" 1998). Nor is divergence something entirely new: often used by the ecological sciences to express antithetical phenomena, within meteorology divergence is the loss of air flow, in hydrology divergence is an upwelling or movement away from a central flow, or as conceptualized by the evolutionary sciences, divergence represents the genetic segregation and differentiation that define derivative taxa ("Divergence" 1998). Moreover, even technological convergence and divergence are consistent with developments in scientific and humanistic ecology via cybernetics, thermodynamics, and first order systems theory.

The difficulty for many North American environmentalists was that the threats posed by the biomagnification of DDT, Love Canal, and the partial meltdown of the Three Mile Island nuclear reactor were inseparable from an interpretation of cultural convergence definitive of globalization, technological rationality, scientific

objectivity, and the instrumentalization that was degrading ecosystem functions. A distinction was drawn between ‘natural’ convergence stylized by the pre-war life sciences and ‘unnatural’ or post-war forms of reified divergence as alienated from environmental health and material security.<sup>1</sup> Or rephrased, for an environmental movement that was defined by maintaining a clear set of normative binary extremes oriented by a distinction between Nature and the unnatural, it was difficult to see convergence and divergence as constituting a reticulated process. While biological convergence/divergence was near sacred, technological convergence/divergence was used to define the conditions of enmity. Antithetical difference could not be suspended to allow for a codependent tension that negotiates both the limitations and potentiality that are posited by the work of convergence and the dehiscence that is categorical of divergent acts.

In effect, and here drawing directly from Henry Jenkins, in an attempt to critique the perceived dogma of technocratic civilization, environmentalism repeated the tendency it was organizing against by transcribing the “old authorities” and building up “the institutions being challenged by a more participatory culture” (2006, 198). Environmentalism had failed to realize that convergence is divergence while committing the movement to a logic of enmity *vis-à-vis* a paralyzing attempt to pit friend against foe.

In what follows I will trace the logic of enmity through three movements. First, I will establish the rift between shallow and deep ecology as defined by Arne Naess and elaborated by Neil Evernden to describe the historical foundation of enmity. Second, I will present the attempt to redevelop convergence through the post-environmentalism of American think tank the Breakthrough Institute, to question whether convergence is possible when the underlying logic of the enemy is preserved. And third, I will forward the description of Canadian radical environmentalism as ecological terrorism to display one possible way in which divergence is being used as a forced constitution of enmity. In each case I suggest that the logic of enmity eliminates the potential of convergence/divergence as participatory culture in an attempt to orient and control actors through the maintenance of cultural warfare.

## Fragmented Ecologies

It is of the utmost importance that Jenkins’s interpretation of convergence and divergence begins with the rejection of the singular. Technological convergence will never fulfill the dream of the singular black box any more than culture will ever be universal. While there will be a proliferation of means, this does not foreshadow a proleptic end that will see the fulfillment of a totalized system.

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<sup>1</sup> Examples of the former would include Frederic E. Clements’s development of the ‘climax state’ (1916).

When such a totalized system is divined, it should evoke a deep skepticism that attempts to disclose what the logic of finality conceals. This should have been the case for the environmentalists of the 1970s and 1980s. As environmentalism postured to resist technological convergence as a totalized system that was subsuming marginalized ways of life, this criticism was often a screen for an ulterior mode of organic territoriality as questionable as its presumed antithesis.

Natural or biological convergence and unnatural or technological convergence are extensions of first and second nature. 'First nature,' the radical ideal, defines nature as a set of immutable laws, a heteronomy that when viewed as a total system is thought to maintain the ecological harmony and function of biological systems. 'Second nature' is the work of culture, the active practice or habit of development and construction. 'Second nature' superimposes an ancillary nature over the first as the social construction of the culture industry demands. Not surprisingly, the attempt to maintain this normative boundary or border directly supports the division between hard-line restorative approaches that would see environments returned to or preserved in their original or natural state, over and against adaptive measures like regulative and technological fixes capable of maintaining the status quo. Furthermore, not only were environmentalists maintaining a division between themselves and a social body largely constructed as environmentally destructive, but the move against technological convergence was also a strategic idealization used to systematically differentiate radical and reformist tendencies in an attempt to determine which faction(s) within environmentalism have the right to speak as the 'true' environmentalism.

Idealization begins with Arne Naess, the founder of deep ecology. By Naess's account, environmentalism could be divided between a powerful shallow ecology movement defined by the management and policing of resources for the health and welfare of affluent individuals in the developed world, over and against a marginal deep ecology movement motivated by "principles of diversity, complexity, autonomy, decentralization, symbiosis, egalitarianism and classlessness" (Naess 1995, 3). Or, as cultural ecologist Neil Evernden phrased it, deep ecology had defined a paradox within the identity of environmentalism itself. If shallow ecology was a variation on technological rationality that preserved natural resources to manage or control the processes of monetization, distribution, and consumption, then the attempt to "preserve nature" was little more than a licence to exploit nature (Evernden 1984a, 7). Environmentalism was balanced uneasily between the presupposed "integrity" of a radical environmental movement defined by the advocacy of nature's intrinsic worth against the "co-option" of nature in the hands of what Evernden described as 'resourceism,' or more simply, environmentalism (1984b, 5):

Publicly, it [environmentalism] has seemed profoundly reformist, even radical, and yet its methods have increasingly become those of the institutions it opposed. Many have wondered whether it is possible to adopt the tools

and assumptions of industrial society and still remain significantly different. Hence the concern that there may be a paradox at the heart of modern environmentalism, a misfit between stated intentions and actual, or even potential, accomplishment. (1984b, 5)

The impetus behind Evernden's own articulation of the deep/shallow division was Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962) and her attempt to develop a grassroots base for nature advocacy. Legitimized by the damage to ecosystem function and health evidenced by the pervasive application of DDT, Carson created a generalized sense of concern that was founded on an exceedingly broad interpretation of what constituted environment (Evernden 1984a, 8). Opposed to an anthropocentric defence of human health and welfare, environment was introduced as an ambiguous yet inclusive concept that extended protection beyond both human and non-human forms of life to include the protection of biological systems in general. The importance of this shift was three-fold. First, environment became "endangered." Extending beyond the advocacy and protection of landmarks like charismatic megafauna or the sublime spaces of nature reserves, the evocation of an endangered environment intuited a systemic and persistent environmental threat that was inseparable from quotidian life. Second, the terms of political engagement shifted. Instead of defending environment with humanistic appeals, it was now possible to make a "smart" argument for safeguarding the biotic community as good in and of itself. Third, and most importantly, lowering barriers to involvement created a "new constituent." Environmentalism after Carson was no longer defined by highly specific sites or localized by special interests. Similar to the pervasiveness of DDT, support could now be drawn from virtually "every sector of a society uniformly threatened by environmental decay" (Evernden 1984a, 8).

Though *Silent Spring* may have set out the radical archetype – what Evernden termed the "nature advocate" – it was becoming resoundingly clear that shallow ecology was compromising the programme intuited by Carson and "true" environmentalism was giving way to a tragic reversal that would be the undoing of all environmentalism. The inclusive space opened by the conceptual expansion of environment had become the home for an expanding environmental movement dominated by the concerns of government, industry insiders, and experts practicing "sound environmental management" (Evernden 1984a, 8-9). "Ecological became a prefix for most public activity" – ecological managers, planners, technicians, programme coordinators, assessment specialists, and so on and so forth *ad infinitum* (Evernden 1984a, 9). Too easily, the "smart" argument was becoming the "rational" argument and in doing so, the protection of an ambiguous environment manifested by intrinsic value, affect, and attachment was reduced to a calculable variable to be negotiated by way of externalities, cost-benefit analysis, and the impact assessment that was definitive of technocratic logic. The shift toward the expanded notion of environment had clearly made it possible to attract a larger subset of individuals into the movement while also unifying these actors through a mutual

cause or crisis that was larger than localized concerns. Yet this expansion was also abasing and diluting the idealization of value and meaning (Evernden 1984a, 9) as the constitution of the environmentalist permitted such a wide range of actors that both friend and foe were occupying a shared set of conceptual delineations. Environmentalism had become contradictory; defined not by the “nature advocate” but by the “dispassionate advocate” (Evernden 1984a, 9).

The latent evocations of divergence used to construct deep and shallow ecology cannot be stressed enough. Moving well beyond a political, social, or even epistemological designation, the negotiation of divergence was used to describe a cultural tension central to many within depth ecology. By Evernden’s account, the antinomy between the nature advocate and the dispassionate advocate correlated directly to opposed manifestations of subjectivity and the constitution of existential territory. The dispassionate advocate resubstantiates the boundaries that popular intellectual history has used to situate the subject and instrumentalize the world by way of science and mathematics. Making a point that requires little repetition, by reconstituting the determinative fiction that was set out by the popularization of Cartesianism, the dispassionate advocate perpetuates a style of juxtaposition and binary extreme that is definitive of the distinction between subject and object. Representing what amounts to hackneyed interpretation of Max Weber’s ‘*Entzauberung der Welt*,’ the world is demystified, despiritualized, or disenchanting, while subjectivity is raised to preternatural status.

For the nature advocate, the division between subject and object is an arbitrary expression of dominance. Although the expansion of environment freed of the Cartesian dualism was said to be ambiguous, for many ecologists the critique of objectivity was little more than a means to reintroduce a modified version of subjectivity that endowed environment with the techniques of the self. The most popular version of this tendency recapitulated a logic that had already been established by the deontological ethics of the early animal liberation movement by endowing environment with the rights and obligations that had been previously reserved for humanity. Depth ecology, however, intended something more radical by the reconstitution of the subject. As Evernden argued, when the environment is intuited as not only ambiguous and pervasive but also non-anthropocentric, it is the subject that becomes like an environment. The extensionist imperative doubles whereby the human encapsulates environment and environment encapsulates the human. In its first instance, this reversal entails an epistemological shift that Evernden describes as the “organic thought.” Taking a metaphor from evolutionary biology, subjectivity is a mutualistic, symbiotic, or convergent relationship. Like the co-dependence between humans and domesticated flora and fauna or the relationship between the human body and the various microorganisms therein, Evernden suggests that what constitutes the subject extends well beyond the singular subject. In this regard, it can also be said that what is intersubjective is intercorporeal. The entwinement of subjects extends existence well beyond epidermal borders, and the practice of living through the world radically expands the existential territory of the

subject. Paraphrasing one of Evernden's latently political metaphors, while a fish like the male stickleback is relatively small and insignificant, during breeding season the fish disregards its shortcoming and fiercely defends its territory as if environment were the fish, regardless of a predator's size and status on the food chain (1995, 44). Thinking the subject as an environment means first thinking the subject as inseparable from the territoriality that it defines as itself. Moreover, it is this transition that marks the divestment of the Cartesian logic, and the revelation of the "organic thought" as the embodied mind is reticulated through the zone of habitation. Making the transition from a conceptual epistemology toward a practical philosophy driven by affect, the development of territory manifests a field of concern. The subject as environment undergoes the deeper realization that integrates mere extension into a lived experience or emotional zone of attachment. The territorial field of self becomes the properly environmental field of care. Or, drawing on the emotionally charged language deployed by Evernden, the environment becomes a territory and the territory becomes the home. The occluded principle is that the territory is only recognized in practice when defined through and against the externalization of enmity – when a predatory faction is positioned at the ramparts of ecological civilization.

## Counter Convergence

By the late 1990s it was becoming clear that the North American environmental movement was suffering from stagnation. The hope of Earth Days, hallmark political policies, and drafted climate protocols were beginning to reveal the limitations of resourceism. Moreover, as climate change issues were unresolved by existing actors, the support of the broader social body was giving way to skepticism, apathy, and a deep complacency. Unlike previous environmental concerns such as DDT or the acidification of rain, anthropogenic climate change as a diverse and dispersed event complicates the creation of a binding policy, technological fixes, and an unambiguous cost-benefit analysis. Yet it is also difficult to separate this general malaise from the resistance to change exhibited by the environmental movement over the past several decades. Viewed from even a marginal distance, it was clear that shallow ecology was failing to capture the public imagination while, at the same time, the money being raised by environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGOS) was having little influence on the creation of policy and legislation.

The internal stagnation of environmentalism met a threshold with Ted Nordhaus and Michael Shellenberger's newly founded non-profit Breakthrough Institute (BTI) and the publication of their highly divisive "The Death of Environmentalism: Global Warming Politics in a Post-Environmental World" (2004) and *Break Through: Why We Can't Leave Saving the Planet to Environmentalists* (2007). As Peter Teague summarized in his foreword to "The Death of Environmentalism,"



while the environmental movement was still captivated by the “epic victories” that established the environmental laws and policies of the 1960s and 1970s, after hundreds of millions of dollars have been spent on climate change issues, little has been achieved and environmentalism has failed to “engage Americans as the proud moral people they are, willing to sacrifice for the right cause” (Nordhaus and Shellenberger 2004, 4-5).

The BTI was unwilling to fault climate inaction on the media, politicians, or the fossil fuels lobby, and instead called for a post-environmental movement capable of questioning the foundational logic of environmentalism as such (Nordhaus and Shellenberger 2004, 5). For the BTI the stagnation or death of environmentalism was premeditated by the sectarian concept of environment evoked by depth ecology paired with the formalization of shallow ecology as a special interest group that divested its commitments as a social movement. Yet in both cases environmentalism was being over-determined by a naïve construction of Nature.<sup>2</sup> Being sectarian, the discourse of Nature was silencing the production of creative or divergent narratives in favour of enmity. Or, as the normative foundation of special interests, Nature was prohibiting the creation of a convergence culture capable of realizing the organization and participation of diverse actors needed to combat climate change.

Once again criticism began with the interrogation of environmentalism’s origin and the legacy left by Carson. As much as *Silent Spring* had expanded participation within the movement, the construction of environment as endangered had popularized an eco-tragic framework that would become a definitive model for public relations over the next half century (Nordhaus and Shellenberger 2009, 130). Reaching a climax when climate discourse was blended with millennial anxiety, the eco-tragic narrative involves a systemic evocation of pastoral life, followed by the development of fear through the threat of ecological collapse, and ultimately, the restoration of draconian values aimed at creating an ecological society. The result was a long ecological tragedy from Cartesianism to technocentrism and the judgment that looms at the precipice of eco-apocalypse. The difficulty with the eco-tragic is two-fold. Firstly, there is a great deal of debate over the effectiveness of eco-tragic narratives. While it is widely believed that Carson’s apocalyptic portrayal of DDT shocked the American public into action, recent studies are suggesting that the abysmal magnitude of climate change is being met with either repression and denial or a paradigm of manageable or rationalized fear that orients and legitimizes existing modes of political, economic, and technological control.<sup>3</sup> Secondly, under the conditions of climate change and the proliferation of exceedingly violent weather, it is difficult to suspend the latent violence of the natural even if the un-

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<sup>2</sup> The BTI adopts the capitalization of ‘Nature’ in what appears to be an attempt to displace the inherent naturalization of the concept and express a latent essentialism.

<sup>3</sup> See, for instance, Ulrich Beck’s *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity* (1992) and Naomi Klein’s *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (2007).

derlying cause is anthropogenic. In both cases the harmony of Nature, though ideal, does not represent the real or total conception of the natural world or even the heterogeneous figures that are used to situate the expression of nature in the popular imagination:

The categories of *Nature, the environment, natural* and *unnatural* have long since been deconstructed. And yet they retain their mythic and debilitating hold over most environmentalists. Environmentalists imagine that they are objectively representing scientific facts about what is happening to Nature. But to imagine Nature as essentially harmonious is to ignore the obvious and overwhelming evidence of Nature's disharmony. (Nordhaus and Shellenberger 2009, 133; emphasis in the original)

Instead, Nordhaus and Shellenberger invoke something much closer to the violence of the Hobbesian state of nature as a war of all against all preserved by Nature in the present, complete with the addition of the BTT's own brand of colonial naturalization and essentialism:

But long before there were humans, volcanoes erupted, asteroids hit Earth, and great extinctions occurred. Fires burned through ancient forests, killing undergrowth and creating conditions for new life. And throughout the animal kingdom there was murder and gang rape [...] activities that hardly qualify as harmonious. Indigenous peoples, for their part, cleared forests, set massive fires, and over-hunted, massively altering their environments. And they engaged in agriculture, war, cannibalism, and torture. (2009, 132)

Though verging on the hyperbolic, the categorization of Nature, free from animosity, fails. The constellation set out by the eco-tragic framework does little to motivate or inspire progressive action and ultimately undermines the sense of freedom and autonomy that binds the idealized American social contract. The reality, say Nordhaus and Shellenberger, is that this narrative is little more than a critique of human agency: "Rather than dissolving the distinction between humans and Nature, environmentalists reverse the hierarchy, arguing that humans are still separate from but *subordinate* to Nature" (2009, 134-135; emphasis in the original).

The BTT's solution to essentialist Nature was a self-proclaimed progressive or pragmatic post-environmentalism founded on participatory action and the creation of a right of centre convergence culture. "Our strategy was to create something inspiring," write Nordhaus and Shellenberger. "Something that would remind people of the American dream: that we are a can-do people capable of achieving great things when we put our minds to it." In short, a "patriotic story [...] [that] uses big solutions to frame the problem – not the other way around" (Nordhaus and Shellenberger 2004, 26). To this end, the pragmatic approach was positioned as a "metaphysic of becoming" that adopted narratives that substantiated the affirmative, creative, and participatory culture of everyday America to meet emerging post-material needs such as belonging and fulfillment (Nordhaus and Shellenberger

2009, 219-220). In this case, Malcolm Gladwell and Robert Putnam's appraisal of Reverend Rick Warren and the Saddleback Church provides the model for the BTI's culture of convergence. To sustain any long-term commitment both environmental organizations and evangelical megachurches are faced with a similar contradiction: to develop large memberships they maintain general or low entry barriers while nurturing specific identities that are distinct from their larger culture (Gladwell 2005). For environmentalism, this has resulted in a fragmented membership and watered down political stances as organizations struggle to maintain funding and attract a diverse membership without producing a contradictory or exclusionary mandate. Warren, however, successfully maintained a large membership while developing a participatory community. To lower the barriers of entry Warren crafted a quotidian faith. "[...] Warren started preaching, often in a Hawaiian shirt, about what really matters to people. His speeches were funny and free of fire and brimstone. He preached about things like how to deal with emotionally difficult people, how to be a good spouse, and how to simplify one's life" (Nordhaus and Shellenberger 2009, 199). Not only was Warren able to retain a staggeringly large membership, but he also successfully oriented his members as a heterogeneous community by building a religious network of small groups. Joining exclusive groups of six or seven individuals, members meet in each other's homes to worship and pray: "The small group was an extraordinary vehicle of commitment. It was personal and flexible. It cost nothing. It was convenient, and every worshipper was able to find a small group that precisely matched his or her interests" (Gladwell 2005). The network of small groups solves the problem of retention by creating an intimate and engaged community to represent and develop the divergent concerns of individuals within a much larger convergent community. Where increased anonymity and decreased financial and personal commitment are typical of large memberships, the dedication developed through small groups led to strong financial support capable of funding large outreach programmes to expand the distribution of Warren's brand (Gladwell). While a serious evangelical from a median-income family is likely to donate \$6,000 to his/her local church yearly, a serious environmentalist is likely to donate \$100 yearly (Nordhaus and Shellenberger 2009, 203). Not only had the shallow environmentalism failed to articulate itself as a proper social movement, the lack of community development was also limiting the financial reach of organizations.

If for Evernden the struggle between convergence and divergence was resolved through the creation of territory and the affirmation of a true environmentalism, for the BTI clearing the field and constituting counter convergence and divergence solve the problems of environmentalism. Yet, in doing so, does the BTI itself not commit itself to the logic of enmity? Is the bravado of the American dream not simply a refrain that proclaims the second coming of Western empire and a renewed age of enmity? Can there be any participatory culture of convergence/divergence if this culture is founded on an act of primordial violence that attempts the complete privation of one system in the exultation of another? If

environmentalism ceased to be a social movement through its repulsion of the social body and the creation of enmity, does the BTI not reproduce a similar logic with its attempt to efface environmentalism?

## Forced Divergence

In 2009 Canadian awareness of climate change rose to an astounding 95% (Pelham 2009). Of that, 61% of the population agreed that climate change was being caused by human activities (Pelham), while 74% of the population saw climate change as a threat (Pugliese and Ray 2009). Even if these statistics cannot be correlated with strong support of binding climate change action when prioritized against economic concerns, it was clear that Canadians were siding with the international scientific community. This did not, however, stop Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper from repudiating the Kyoto Accord while quickly mobilizing support and development for the Northern Gateway and the Keystone XL tar sands pipelines. In this regard, a slip of the tongue committed by Canada's former Minister of Environment, Peter Kent, attested to a hesitation that was felt by many Canadians. Fumbling the government's formal withdrawal from Kyoto that stated, "we are invoking our legal right to formally withdraw from Kyoto" (Environment Canada 2011), Kent announced, "we are evoking our legal right to withdraw from Canada" ("Canada" 2011). Where once Canadians had associated nationality with the optics of an environmentally progressive nation and international environmental leadership, this illusion had succumbed to a very different actuality where environmental protection was no longer synonymous with governmentality. Either the Government of Canada had withdrawn from its existing social contract with Canadian citizens, or the Government of Canada had withdrawn from the Canadian nation state.

The extent to which the Government of Canada was willing to defend oil interests became readily apparent after Harper's conservatives had secured a majority government in 2011 and successfully passed the intentionally vague 2012 federal omnibus budget. Among austerity cuts to social welfare programmes like health, welfare, native rights, and immigration, the Harper government made it astoundingly clear that any challenge to the development and distribution of the tar sands would not be tolerated by defunding a series of dissenting intergovernmental actors. This included gutting The Canadian Environmental Assessment Act to 'streamline' assessment that interfered with the economic development and well-being of the country, while defunding research programmes like the Centre for Offshore Oil, Gas and Energy Research which was one of the few agencies capable of offshore environmental assessments, the National Roundtable on Environment and Economy which was a site for open discussion between industry and environmental concerns, the Experimental Lakes Area and their ongoing research on the effects of tar sands pollution on freshwater ecosystems, and the Canadian

Foundation for Climate and Atmospheric Science which resulted in the closure of the Polar Environment Atmospheric Research Laboratory and ended their studies on ozone depletion.

What was being described by most ENGOs as Harper's "war on science" was, however, just one aspect of a much larger strategy for the development of the tar sands. Having eliminated internal sources of opposition, the Government of Canada began an attempt to alter the branding of Canadian ENGOs to eliminate external sources of opposition. In January 2012 Joe Oliver, then Minister of Natural Resources, published an open letter defending the attempt to "diversify" Canada's energy market and "streamline the regulatory process in order to advance Canada's national economic interest" against environmental radicals being funded by foreign interest groups (Natural Resources Canada 2012). This was followed by the February 2013 Public Safety publication "Building Resilience against Terrorism" (Public Safety Canada 2013) which formally extended the definition of domestic terror to include radical environmentalists. As John Bennett, Director of Sierra Club Canada, noted:

We are one of the few segments of Canadian society that has continually stood up to the present Conservative government and been able to be effective at raising issues [...] As a result, they've decided that we're political opponents rather than a part of the democratic dialogue. So this is just the next stage in these attacks. (qtd. in Stoymenoff 2012)

The dilemma that Bennett faced was that any attempt to defend ENGOs against the extended definition of terror had the potential to be considered an admission of guilt simply by voicing resistance against government authority. What followed was a modest media push questioning whether environmentalism was the new face of domestic terror and if so, what measure should be taken. Regardless of whether the evocation of eco-terror was exceptionally vague, by August 2012 the conservative-leaning Sun News Network had funded a poll that concluded 1 in 2 Canadians now believed that the threat of domestic eco-terrorism was high or moderate. As David Akin wrote: "the Conservative government's verbal attacks on 'environmental and other radical groups' have sparked a fear, most prevalent among Conservative voters, of an eco-terrorist attack on Canada's energy infrastructure [...]" Or as pollster David Coletto furthered: "It is clear that the Harper government's framing on issues around energy infrastructure security and 'radical environmental groups' has been successful in dividing the population" (qtd. in Akin 2012).

Even if the outcome of this discourse remains to be seen, this much is clear: by mobilizing an extended definition of terrorism, the Government of Canada is in the process of criminalizing radical environmentalism by extension.<sup>4</sup> Following the

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<sup>4</sup> During the publication of this paper the Government of Canada has launched Bill C-51, the Anti-Terrorism Act, in response to two unrelated domestic 'lone-wolf' attacks that occurred in October 2014. Many critics believe that the ambiguity of the bill and the extended powers described therein

American model as established by Steve Vanderheiden, the Government of Canada is conflating radical tactics that have periodically involved the destruction of private property with the formal definitions of terrorism that threatens human life (Vanderheiden 2008, 300). Making something of an ironic reversal, opposed to extending the rights and values of subjectivity to establish ecological principles to defend environmental concerns, the Government of Canada extends the status of subjectivity to materiality employed in the production of environmental denigration – in this instance oil lines, extraction infrastructure, and equipment. In doing so, the line between the destruction of private property and attacks on human life is blurred as illegal tactics like ecotage or monkey wrenching become the “moral equivalent of mass murder” (Vanderheiden 300). Moreover, by marginalizing relevant public research bodies, the Harper government had eliminated the ability for both research centres and the ENGOs reliant on their data to critique the policies and actions of the federal government. Such attempts at silencing environmentalists often result in renewed radicalization (Vanderheiden 301). Organizations and alliances that have previously divested the destruction of private property often fragment as they debate the relevance of extra-legal activism. The disenfranchised become further radicalized and the Government of Canada’s use of wedge politics could succeed in creating the conditions for illegal forms of activism that can then be labeled as eco-terrorism, thus furthering the divide between the social body and the environmental movement. Yet, perhaps more importantly, the Government of Canada has effectively limited the ability of convergence by attempting to force militant divergence. While illegal tactics are often used to slow the denigration of environmentally sensitive areas, erode industry brands, portray environmental destruction as near criminal offences, and develop community support (Vanderheiden 306-308), it now seems that the divergent practices definitive of radical environmentalism can be easily translated into the propaganda of brutal criminality. Opposed to providing a radical alternative, the production of divergence is employed to erode environmentalism at large. The logic of enmity used to unite the radical movement holds the possibility to end the movement when divergence is turned against itself.

## Ecologism

Despite claims that depth ecology went ‘deeper’ by calling into question the political, social, and cultural norms and values sanctioning ecological degradation, the movement resubstantiates the binary logic it sought to contend by preparing a discourse that is pursuing the production of collective subjectivity through the

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violate the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms by providing the legal means to survey, infiltrate, disrupt, detain, and incarcerate a growing network of First Nations, environmentalists, scientists, and academics engaged in anti-extractivism.

constitution of an enemy. In an attempt to manifest a new convergence culture over and against the perceived failure of both deep and shallow ecology, the BTI defines environmentalism as foe and sets out the constitution of the friend. Or, where radical divergence was used as tactic to reframe corporate brands and develop community support, non-violent tactics are conceptualized as formal acts of terror. In each case, environmentalism is defined through the constitution of an enemy – so much so that it seems questionable whether the environmental movement has ever been more than a negative proof or a regulative principle that forged unity through a shared drive towards annihilation. If so, the claims to participatory action, diversity, pragmatism, and the protection of difference maintained by the idealization of ecological society are severely limited. Ecology becomes ecologism – a border war between self and other or between ‘mere’ environmentalism and ‘true’ environmentalism that undermines the possibility of a reticulated convergence/divergence culture, if not the possibility of the movement itself.

Certainly, the constitution of an enemy is not categorically ecological; enmity is largely the product of Carl Schmitt’s political theology (Lyotard 1993, 96). Yet, it is curious that just as the potential arises for the articulation of a fundamental shift toward convergence, an environmentalism that feigns principles of participatory action demands the constitution of an enemy (Lyotard 96). Between territory and the demarcation of home, ecologism comes remarkably close to the humanism of war in the name of peace. The home defines a border, barrier, or frontier between first nature and second nature. The home, the empire, or the nation each marks the distinction of blood, territory, and juridical and patriarchal right, over and against an alien, an other, an enemy. In stark contrast with idealizations that suggest either the harmony of nature or the profound altruism of human culture, environmentalism is evoked alongside an intrinsic violence. As Schmitt argued, to maintain an enemy is to maintain the possibility of war. “War follows from enmity. War is the existential negation of the enemy. It is the most extreme consequence of enmity. It does not have to be common, normal, something ideal, or desirable. But it must nevertheless remain a real possibility for as long as the concept of the enemy remains valid” (Schmitt 1932/1996, 33).

Though born under the auspice of convergence, the desire for unity through enmity has created environmentalism through the declaration of cultural war. While I will not go so far as to suggest a simple summation that can bridge the divisions that define the ideological differences currently stifling the development of a contemporary social movement capable of addressing climate change, it does seem, as Jenkins suggests, that any such attempt will require a willingness to step outside ideological barriers and speak across differences in an attempt to deliberate together (2006, 238-239). Whether environmentalism is shallow, deep, post-, or radical, the enemy of environmentalism has been environmentalism itself. Nor, however, do I think this is a fatalistic realization that repeats the end or death of

environmentalism. If there is to be a convergent/divergent model beyond the negative definition of environmentalism, convergence/divergence can only begin if environmentalism first understands itself as its own undoing.

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# Performing Identities and Convergent Aesthetics in Contemporary Estonian Video Art

*Inga Untiks*

As the international contemporary art world becomes increasingly globalized, artists have recurrently reflected upon the growing connectivity amongst creative producers and their audiences that has materialized due to the possibilities of travel, communications technology, and the shared reception of words and images. The work by an emergent young art scene in the Estonian capital of Tallinn in the early 1990s began to address this transformation by adapting and integrating discourses recognizable to the international contemporary art world. These discourses present thoughtful reflections on the mobility of artists, the circulation of cultural content, and the locations of contact in the transnational traffic of art. However, the emergence of a perceptible convergence in terms of form, style, and content by Estonian artists is indicative of a more precise convergence of institutionalized art processes that produced a particular brand of standardized, internationally recognizable works. An examination of performance-based video works by Kai Kaljo and Jaan Toomik provides insight into the context of the emergence and the conditions of the use of performance-based video art in Estonia that is indicative of a shift in the cultural logic and implies the role of the audience as being critical to artistic production and interpretation.

The perceptible uniformity of artistic practice that emerged from the former Soviet republics of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania in the Baltic Sea region in the 1990s may be read as a symptom of the new realities of cultural capitalism in a globalized world. Insight into the applicability of media such as video art as a productive approach by contemporary Estonian video artists to address changed no-

tions of spectatorship may be gained by extending Henry Jenkins's notion of 'convergence' as outlined in *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (2006). Jenkins's broad definitions of 'media convergence' and 'participatory culture' are particularly salient when extended to considering the search for personal and collective connectivity by artists and audiences that have been shaped by the mobility of the contemporary art world. As artists and audiences increasingly participate in shared discourses, extensive aesthetic and contextual commonalities become apparent. Yet works resulting from these discourses also reveal the limitations of their applicability to artistic works and reflect broader systematic commonalities and prevailing directives of artistic production and dissemination in the international contemporary art world. When considered in the context of the exhibition structures of the contemporary art world and its institutionalized modes of spectatorship, the video works of both Kaljo's *A Loser* (1997) and Toomik's *Way to Sao Paulo* (1994) provide evidence of a converged aesthetic preference that has affected the ways in which contemporary art is internationally produced and experienced.

While invariably being part of broader processes of personal and collective self-definition in the post-socialist era, for Estonian and indeed most Baltic artists the socio-political changes of the late 1980s and early 1990s were most rapidly and distinctly experienced with regard to the administration and financing of art, which had a far more significant impact on aesthetic developments than commonly acknowledged.<sup>1</sup> Artists such as Kai Kaljo (b. 1959) and Jaan Toomik (b. 1961), born during socialism yet maturing during the early capitalist period of the 1990s, have distinguished themselves from the previous generation of 'unofficial' or 'non-conformist' artists who often espoused a critical distance between their art works and the socio-cultural realm in which they were produced. Instead, they are explicit about the influence of their social, political, and economic circumstances and have accordingly fashioned distinct identities.

The initial interest in the post-socialist art of the 1990s by the contemporary art world and the international art market often depended upon 'Western' assumptions of 'East European-ness,' and to artists from Eastern Europe it quickly became apparent that a particular brand of expression and experience was of interest to international curators and collectors. Undoubtedly the impulse towards 'Westernism' was strong amongst many of this generation of Estonian artists who were influenced by their personal and collective circumstances. Yet the predictable attraction to the 'exotic' or 'otherness' by the Western-based international art world in the 1990s was often framed in international exhibitions either along national boundaries or thematically according to Cold War divisions.

For artists ambitious to participate in the international exhibition network, the interest of the global art world was often in equal parts flattering and frustrating

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<sup>1</sup> While most considerations of Estonian contemporary art of the 1990s acknowledge the administrative and financial challenges faced by artists and the necessity of finding new modes of support, few directly address the aesthetic implications of changed patronage structures (see Helme 2001).

and it was based on limited assumptions, experiences, and particular discourses. Estonian artists themselves were undeniably aware of internationally situated (or more specifically Western) readings of their performative video works and understood that the use of video technology was a central strategy to participate in international contemporary art discourses despite the lack of a regional historical legacy of the medium. While video art today still remains one of the most prominent communication devices for contemporary artists, the form was a particularly effective approach when combined with the accessibility of television in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The struggle for Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian independence from the Soviet Union during the Singing Revolution era of 1987-1991 in the Baltics was captured by television cameras that transmitted powerful images of cultural unity not only across the region but also to the rest of the world. Thus television and video images were made relevant to the general public for the first time, projecting the excitement and uncertainty of social and political change in the making in real-time.<sup>2</sup> As some of the first 'honest' portrayals of the circumstances, such video footage for the local audience was not only of historical value but also significant for its reflective potential.

Although, in the early period of change, many in the region remained skeptical of the accuracy of the filmed material projected by state television networks, the direct impact of the frank images cannot be denied. As Baltic artists began to explore these potentially critical images in their performative video works, the development of new personal and collective identities during the process of mental and physical re-territorialization held a significant claim on the imaginations of both the artists and their publics. The choice of performance-based video as a medium by artists from the former Soviet republics is perhaps surprising since experience with the medium as applied to international art discourses in Estonia was largely limited. News of international art developments during the Soviet period had reached the Baltics only via print media, and a critical lack of the audience's direct sensory experience of art works (in any medium but particularly in the form of video) allowed for little insight into the context of their creation. As the historical trajectory of video works as understood in the West morphed into a more transcultural view of traditional concepts of art history, the ramifications of their use by Estonian artists had very different social and political implications.

Whereas the use of the medium of video by Estonian artists only emerged in the late 1980s as an effective means of artistic communication, body-based performative practice may be identified as a continuous phenomenon in the region

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<sup>2</sup> Latvian film and documentary director Juris Podnieks famously captured the tensions of Baltic independence during an attempted coup by Soviet forces in Riga in January 1991. While filming the clashes, Podnieks was wounded as were two of his crew members (Andris Slapins and Gvido Zvaigzne) who later died of their injuries. Footage from this conflict was subsequently included in a version of his film *Homeland* that focused on the rise of national identity in Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia.

since the 1960s. While video art in other countries during the 1970s was rapidly developing, in Estonia (and the rest of the Baltics) the focus of avant-garde artistic production outside official socialist institutions remained on liberating painting from the influences of a post-impressionist school linked to Pallas, which was achieved with the help of hyperrealism.<sup>3</sup> However, Juri Oka's happenings and land-art objects in the early 1970s were captured on 8mm film and their recording, while secondary, was not unimportant for its potential to document the events and share them with other artists. This trend of using film and video for their documentary potential continued throughout the early 1980s and was of particular importance for happenings at the University of Tartu organized by various collectives whose recorded performances began to cross international borders with the loosening of socialist restrictions in the mid- to late-1980s (see also Helme 2002).

By the 1990s, performative works in their various manifestations dispersed into several different directions and subcultures, losing the common platform of 'unofficial' or 'non-conformist' opposition that had made performance art of previous decades a critical medium. However, this disintegration into interdisciplinary experimentation also expanded the potential of performance by the inclusion of video and other digital technologies for which the region has become internationally acknowledged.<sup>4</sup> Once linked with video technology, performance-based practice quickly developed beyond early experiments in mere documentation to include video as a conceptual extension of the artistic action itself. The ambiguous gestural narratives and oblique significations of performance that had developed as alternative modes of communication during the socialist era continued to undermine representative economies when applied to video art commenting on the contemporary condition. Here, the loss of stability and identity resulting from the socio-political changes of the 1990s was expressed and analyzed by artists in the most basic terms of the human body and then documented on video, thus encouraging Estonian artists to examine their own reflections objectively on screen.

While national museums remain legitimizing forces for unstable national cultures such as the former Soviet republics in the annals of art history, habitual lack of local support for contemporary or avant-garde works required that art and cultural institutions as well as artists be adaptive in the age of global capitalism. The translation of these performative aspects into formats and technologies often at odds with specific 'national' traditions (i.e. the lack of the artistic self) corroborated

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<sup>3</sup> The Art School of the Pallas Arts Association was founded in 1919 in Tartu where a number of avant-garde artistic styles converged. Taking the avant-garde artistic developments occurring in Paris as a source of inspiration, the work of Pallas School members focussed on individuality, spirituality, and treatments of light and colour.

<sup>4</sup> Estonia is acknowledged as having one of the highest internet penetration rates. Internet connections in the country were introduced in 1992 by the universities in Tallinn and Tartu, and subsequently widespread wireless broadband access was developed on new mobile data networks. Due to its geographical location, Estonia also played an important role in mediating internet culture to neighbouring Russia.

the current belief in “otherness and diversity” (Groys 2013, 157) as interpreted by the elite international art world. The end of consistent financing by the Ministry of Culture as well as Artists Unions following the collapse of the Soviet Union left a significant void in the production and exhibition of art at an institutional level, and the lack of an established system of independent private galleries further complicated the situation.<sup>5</sup> The resulting dependence on support by private foundations, most notably by the infamous Soros Centers for Contemporary Art (SCCA), received much criticism that warrants inquiry into the policies of fund allocation which explicitly favoured video art.

The Estonian branch of the foundation, the Soros Center for Contemporary Art-Tallinn, was opened in 1992 as part of the network of Central and East European Open Society Foundations financed by the renowned philanthropist George Soros. The failure of state museums to acclimate both organizationally and financially during the first period of transition away from state-organized infrastructures to the market-oriented system resulted in a disruption in arts administration that the Soros Foundation attempted to address (Helme 2001, 37). Yet the intricacies of the foundation’s policies resulted in a shift that molded the future practice and policy until funding was pulled from the region in the late 1990s.

Initially, Soros emphasized the development of an economic, legal, and media reform in the Baltic countries; however, special recognition was also given to the processes of art and culture. The plans and ideology of the SCCA organizations were clear and uniform, with similar patterns of funding throughout all national chapters, and this strategy proved highly successful in aiding local arts professionals in becoming acquainted with Western artistic practice. The central purpose of the centres was to make it possible for locals to relate to the international art scene through initiatives such as exhibitions, symposia, and archives that were made accessible on multiple media platforms. Yet what qualified as contemporary art was largely limited to particular aesthetic strategies including video art. Furthermore, and importantly, the work of the SCCA was directed towards awarding grants that financially assisted artists, arts professionals, and projects concerned with new technologies and their application in the arts – a highly significant objective that resulted in a very strong bias towards video art, which infused the medium with democratic and capitalistic values and attributes that we are familiar with in the West and that are therefore of interest to the international art world and its markets. Logistically, according to the Open Foundation mandate, all activities were to be based on a firmly constructed plan separated into three divisions, which in turn also contained several subdivisions: grants for supporting new media artists, the documentation of contemporary art, and assistance with the development of and participation in national and international exhibitions. In practice, it was a highly

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<sup>5</sup> These circumstances presented further challenges to those working in the traditional visual arts of painting and sculpture that maintain a strong tradition in the region yet received little interest or support in the early post-Soviet period.

specific mandate that set the foundation for the development of a particular brand of video art.

As a result of this funding structure, annual exhibitions at the SCCA-Tallinn from 1993 to 1997 were strategically limited to introducing new media art to and supporting video art production and theory in the Estonian contemporary art world. Participation in these exhibitions was open to competition and they were curated by the SCCA complete with published catalogues in both English and Estonian, which allowed for the exposure of Estonian art to an international public. While the exhibitions reflected the goals and the ideology of the SCCA, board members consisting mainly of local arts professionals based in Tallinn and interested in Western contemporary art trends took into consideration discourses developing internationally, which in practice placed additional pressure on artists to produce works within the preferred media (Helme 2001, 38).

The presentation of young artists through SCCA-Tallinn exhibitions and catalogues was significant, and there is a direct correlation between participation in Soros-funded activities and the success of a number of Estonian artists in the international mainstream. It may be argued that the predetermined preference for new media technology was simply a matter of encouragement for young artists to produce work that would engage in the convergent discourses of the international contemporary art world. However, the adaptation, appropriation, and/or translation of Western art discourses often differed significantly from the local tradition of art. Hence a significant separation developed between the aesthetic intentions of artists who had followed the Estonian trajectory of traditional art forms and those who desired to participate in global art discourses, thus further subdividing the Estonian art world into disparate groups.

While many museums began to internalize corporate models of activity in the 1990s, biennials and temporary international exhibitions became critical sites of experimentation and vital alternatives to museums and other institutions for Estonian artists who attempted to develop their own style to address specific tensions, conflicts, fears, and expectations. The international biennial exhibition format has become a significant mediator in artistic production and consumption in recent years, and its evolution has had specific implications for artists from the non-Slavic former Soviet republics of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and East Germany. As spectacular arenas where the national and international frequently intersect, biennials attract significant exposure. They create an important interface between artists and their publics in contexts such as the Baltic Sea region where there are few permanent prestigious institutions and they offer a challenge to the hegemony of museums over art history. Yet, as biennials have proliferated across the globe, the expansion of the biennial system has given rise to a network of institutions and curators who seek cultural identity in regional art in order to gain global recognition.



“Hi, my name is Kai Kaljo. I am an Estonian artist.  
My weight is 92kg.  
I am 37 years of age but still living with my mother.  
I am working at the Estonian Academy of Art as a teacher for \$80 a month.  
I think the most important thing about being an artist is freedom.  
I am very happy.”  
(Kai Kaljo, *A Loser*, 1997)

The video artist Kai Kaljo is one of the internationally best-known examples of Estonian performative video work, mainly because of her honest portrayal of the failed post-Soviet condition. Her widely exhibited video *A Loser* has its roots in the first Soros-funded exhibitions and has been widely exhibited internationally.<sup>6</sup> The grotesque picture she creates of the artist’s status in society serves the dual purpose of describing the daily circumstances of practicing Eastern European artists, while also providing a commentary on the precarious financial position of artists. Manipulating the techniques of serial comedy, she stands in front of the camera and cites her personal data: name, age, weight, address, and salary, each accompanied by background laughter. The Estonian artist is the ‘loser’ in the new international capitalist context centred on financial success. Kaljo’s *A Loser* follows the dissident tradition of performance art in Estonia in her use of her own body as her basic medium of expression. There is an inherent subjectivity and performativity in this work. She fulfills audience expectations of ‘East European-ness’ in her presentation of her challenging circumstances, and her detailed revelations are characteristic of the specific context of the Estonian contemporary art world around 1997. Her image carries different meanings in different representational economies: as a location for projected viewer desires, as a consideration of complicated ambivalence and disparate feminist theories, and in the form of psychoanalytic readings rendered visible via her articulation and facial expressions.

Yet perhaps the most relevant aspect of this video are her final words. Kaljo’s CV ends with the statement: “I believe the most important thing about being an artist is freedom.” While this is most commonly read by the international art world in terms of its political implications, the statement also reflects what has been articulated as the expected ‘East European’ condition: the naiveté of the early 1990s, the disillusionment of internationalism, and most of all the aggressive capitalism that became the reality for artists in Estonia and that was linked to the overbearing influence of the Soros foundation. Despite the optimistic mandate of the SCCA, the centres entered the regional cultural environment when the Baltic communities as a whole were experiencing a shocking loss of illusions as documented by Kaljo. The experience of relative isolation of the previous decades had left many artists

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<sup>6</sup> Born in Tallinn, Kaljo studied classical music at a specialized secondary school and then worked in youth theatre as a stage designer. She studied painting at Tallinn Art University from 1983 to 1990 and continued with her postgraduate education at the Swedish Royal Academy of Arts in 1992.

and arts professionals with one-dimensional and utopian understandings of Western art and its systems, in which absolute freedom in creative expression and financial support were believed always to coincide peacefully. Furthermore, understanding of the intricacies of the art market was severely limited and most artists failed to fulfill their dreams of instant riches and independent success. As a result, the mental space between idealized expectations and reality was often filled with bitterness, accusations, pretensions, and oftentimes schizophrenic responses. Kaljo's video commentary thus effectively undermines the legitimacy of Soros's policies by employing the foundation's preferred medium in a way that engages another level of complexity in interpretations of the video as well as of the medium itself.

As the international art world and its funding structures demanded a particular performative 'brand' of East European-ness recognizable in its art works (in form, style, and most importantly philosophy), the functional and conceptual reinterpretation of reality Kaljo achieves or the cultural processes that she reinterprets by exhibiting East European-ness both interfere with the audience's value systems and require a rethinking. Where Kaljo centres the 'self' as subject in an overt commentary on and critique of the material circumstances of the Estonian artists in the contemporary art world, Jaan Toomik's *Way to Sao Paulo* is illustrative of an artist's metaphysical journey to the international art world while employing the deeply historical tradition of landscape in the region. In Estonian, as in most Baltic art, the author or artist's 'self' had traditionally been marginalized in art history (with the exception of non-conformist discourses of performance art), with the focus instead being placed on landscape and scene-based work done in oil paintings following the broader tradition of Nordic art history (see Rosenfeld and Dodge 2002). Furthermore, the subversion of the self as demonstrated by Toomik testifies to a conformity with socialism and a retreat into personal life. It is only in the video art of the 1990s that Estonia saw the clear emergence of the artist as both performer and subject that challenged previous art historical and socio-political traditions through strategies directed towards examining the personal, the meditative, the 'artistic' self.

Born in Tartu, educated at the Estonian Academy of Art, and based in Tallinn, Jaan Toomik works and exhibits around the world. Toomik claims that his wish of being an artist dates as far back as 1976 when he saw an interview with the acclaimed Estonian artist Aili Vint on television. Following his service in the Soviet army in Afghanistan in the 1980s, Toomik's work consisted mostly of traditional paintings that conveyed mythological tropes, locally and universally recognizable narratives that he further developed in his later performances and post-conceptual works. His videos lack the frenetic vibrations customary to video art and are dependent upon repetitive structures that resonate with concentrated meditations on reality in a vein similar to Kaljo's.

Toomik's more established video works of the 1990s show him alone and in motion. In *Dancing Home* (1995) the artist is seen dancing on the rear deck of a passenger ferry during the fifty-mile journey from Helsinki to Tallinn.<sup>7</sup> His journey across the ideological and geographical frontier of the Cold War era functions as a metaphor for the artist's first tentative steps towards the international art world as a participant in an exhibition at the internationally renowned Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art in Helsinki. Toomik's breakthrough in the international contemporary art mainstream provides further clarity on the strategic use of the artistic self by Estonian artists in their internationally oriented works. In 1994 Toomik documented his own personal and physical journey from his modest beginnings in Estonia to the international art world at the Sao Paulo biennial, his first major exhibition abroad. His installation *Way to Sao Paulo* uses documentary footage of a large mirrored cube floating down the rivers of the three cities that led him to the exhibition. The journey of the cube begins on the river Tartu in the town of Toomik's birth. It then proceeds through Prague, the city now often considered to be the geographical centre of Europe. The final segment shows the mirrored cube floating down a river in Sao Paulo, the place of Toomik's arrival in the international art arena. The footage therefore creates a geographical and symbolical path from his childhood to the present.

Because of its physical and metaphorical potential, the use of mirrors was prevalent in the post-conceptualist works produced by artists from the former East in the 1990s. As tokens of narcissism, particularly when reinforced by the medium of video, reflective devices were employed as a strategy to express anything from straightforward interpretations of art as a 'mirror of the world' to complex reflections on how identity is formed and on how word and image interrelate. The curators Peter Weibel and Andrea Buddensieg propose that artists have a "tendency to adopt fictional identities for the purposes of reacting by role-play to every new context in which they become artists. Self-representation is no longer a portrait in the former sense of the meaning, but rather the performance of roles played for a specific audience" (Weibel and Buddensieg 2011). Yet Toomik's physical absence from the reflection of the mirrored cube subverts this notion and instead functions additionally as a commentary on the power dynamics of the gaze in relationships of power. His absence from the image places the onus of interpretation on the viewer, in this case the international art world. By resisting the branding typically associated with commonly accepted, yet false, notions of East European-ness, the mirrored cube's refusal of definition serves as a reminder that identity has been rendered unstable.

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<sup>7</sup> This waterway was also the site of the Estonian ferry disaster of 28 September 1994 in which 852 people perished.

In conclusion, as the number of video installations and museum screenings has continued to increase in recent years, video art has become more frequently discussed within the paradigms of globalization theory. Yet for many artists from the former Soviet socialist republics, their work in the biennial industry is only visible to the extent to which it figures within the limits of the art world's representational economies of 'otherness.' As the interest in works from the region declined in the mid-1990s due to the assumption of a socio-political 'normalization,' commentary on the relatively superficial elements of aesthetic globalization or standardization has distracted us from the more profound convergences on the levels of economic, sociological, and institutional standardization of an international art world that has become neither radically democratic nor geographically inclusive. It may appear that biennials and international exhibitions have contributed to the diminishing importance of traditional art centres and have pluralized or regionalized the art world, which in the European context skews eastward, to the advantage of semi-peripheral areas. Yet as geographical distances seemingly diminish and the international art community reflects on turning into a 'global village' (McLuhan 1962), demonstrations of local specificity remain of predominant interest to art audiences, art professionals, and the art market. These conditions have put pressure on artists emerging from the post-Soviet Baltics to validate and legitimize their artistic origins through demonstrations of locality while simultaneously participating in global discourses.

For artists, this requires a balancing act between the challenge of succeeding in a differentiated art market and making local aesthetic and/or political issues understandable to a global audience at the risk of conforming to, and being overwhelmed by, international standards. While biennials have mobilized and unpacked globalization as an artistic concept in different ways, they have at the same time universalized particular art definitions, artistic practices, audiences, and conceptions of art. At worst, the risk of unique forms of artistic expression being lost to a universalizing standard carries the echo of homogenization of the socialist era as well as imperialism, although the endangerment of originality and authenticity is a situation to which artists from around the globe are privy. Yet the visibility of minor differences in content distracts us from the real convergence of the power dynamics that guide artistic choice. The danger of these broader economic and institutional convergences and their symptomatic aesthetic uniformization lies in the repercussions of catering to aesthetic preferences of specific audiences. This raises critical questions concerning cultural imperialism and the relevance of a postcolonial lens.

As global art communities have continued to expand since the 1990s, biennials and the artists who participate in them remain geographically and politically situated. Biennials have become platforms for grappling with issues of politics, identity, globalization, and diversity and they are places where artistic self-representation

from the periphery becomes politicized in order to question the hierarchies of the art world.<sup>8</sup> Yet the quest for 'local' specificity has paradoxically fallen into the trap of a homogenized international art world aesthetic. Both Kaljo and Toomik have been credited for being catalysts for the rebirth of Estonian contemporary art in the international avant-garde style, but the evidence of their work may perhaps be more interestingly employed in a consideration of an urban mobile art elite that recognizably converged in form, style, and content. As such, the examination of the work of Kaljo, Toomik, and others who communicate and participate in this converged culture of the globalized contemporary art world allows for a deeper insight into our networked contemporary condition.

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## Translation and Convergence Culture: German Renderings of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

*Annika Rosbach*

Rather than being a phenomenon unique to 21<sup>st</sup>-century new media culture, translations have always been the epitome of Jenkins's concept of 'convergence culture' (Jenkins 2006). In translation, cultural content is rendered from one medium, i.e. language, into another and then 'migrates' across national borders to reach new 'consumers.' In this process the binary opposition of 'original' and 'translation' is dissolved, bringing forth an artefact of its own. The new text is not simply the same text in a different language but a contact zone of cultures and languages. Thus, convergence here is not a process of merging but produces a zone of cultural encounter which Homi Bhabha in *The Location of Culture* (1994) has termed a 'third space.' In this space, cultural differences, if not contradictions, are not homogenized but create frictions and need to be 'negotiated.' The translational activity therefore is one of debating the differences in cultures and hence languages. So-called 'translation problems,' then, are those cultural differences which are not easily negotiable or 'convergable' but do nevertheless require some sort of solution in the form of translational strategies. If translations as contact zones "provide the terrain for [...] innovative sites of collaboration and contestation" (Bhabha 1994, 1-2), then it is primarily the translator, as the central actor in this cultural negotiation, who decides which translation strategy wins over other possible solutions.

Mostly ‘invisible’<sup>1</sup> to the reader, the translator, through his linguistic choices, actively and powerfully participates in meaning-making and in preparing the text for reception. To trace these effects of cultural negotiation in translation not only offers new perspectives on the texts under study but also provides insight into the cultures and cultural practices involved. Aiming at revealing these effects, this article investigates translation strategies used in the transformation of the African American vernacular in Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852) into German.

### ***Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, Linguistic Identities, and Racial Stereotypes**

Literary dialects specifically lend themselves to investigations into the effects of translational negotiation because, in both translation theory and practice, they are recognized as ‘problematic’ in terms of their cultural, regional, and social specificity. In the absence of ‘equivalents’<sup>2</sup> in the target language, literary dialects are often deemed untranslatable (House 1973; Landers 2001). *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, first published in 1852, is an interesting case because it is not only considered the internationally best-known and most widely-read literary representation of Black characters and African American English<sup>3</sup> by an American author (Paul 2005, 127) but has also seen an extraordinarily rich (translational) reception in Germany.

In sociolinguistics, the link between language use and both individual and group ethnic identity is a commonly acknowledged fact (Joseph 2004; Edwards 2009; Fishman 2010 and 2011). In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, several sociolinguistic studies in urban and rural African American communities in the United States have confirmed this link for African American English (Wolfram 1969; Labov 1972; Pederson 1983; Morgan 1994; Green 2002). Additionally, in *Language, Discourse and Power in African American Culture* (2002) Morgan describes the value of the Black vernacu-

<sup>1</sup> According to Lawrence Venuti, in the dominating British and American (and no less the German) translation culture the act of translation is concealed through the “reduction of the foreign text to receiving cultural values” (2008, 15). Referring to Friedrich Schleiermacher, he terms this strategy “domestication” (15).

<sup>2</sup> The notion of textual ‘equivalence’ is a highly contested one in translation studies (Snell-Hornby 1995; Bassnett 2002; Pym 2010; Baker 2011). For the purpose of this article, the term is not used to evaluate a translation as being right or wrong, adequate or inadequate, but simply to indicate that there is no German language variety comparable to African American English, either in structure, or genesis, or status.

<sup>3</sup> In this article, the term ‘African American English’ subsumes the different superregional variants of the variety of American English primarily spoken by (i.e. not exclusively and not by all) Americans of African descent in the United States of America which are, both in academic and non-academic discourses, commonly associated with Afro-American ethnic identity and culture. It is understood as a rule-based language system with fixed phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic, and lexical structures (Green 2002, 1-2) – thus expressly not as a deficient deviation from American English.



lar (together with conversational forms of indirectness typical of Afro-American speech) as a 'counterlanguage' in the interaction with Whites. Similarly, in literary studies, dialect in general (Mace 1987; Mpoche and Mbuh 2006; Leech and Short 2007) and the African American English ethnolect<sup>4</sup> in particular (Holton 1984; Minnick 2004) have been recognized as an important communicative as well as semiotic device used in works of fiction not only to create authenticity but also to construct character identity. Accordingly, literary dialect is perceived as being reflective of character behaviour in general and as indicating individual character traits as well as character relations. The role of African American English in the process of claiming or maintaining a decidedly Black identity has come to feature prominently in works by African American authors of the Harlem Renaissance, such as Langston Hughes, Claude McKay, Jane Toomer, Rudolph Fisher, Richard Wright, and Zora Neale Hurston, or more recently in Alice Walker's and Toni Morrison's novels.

A contested piece of literature with regard to its aesthetic value both among its contemporaries and critics in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Gossett 1985; Sundquist 1986), *Uncle Tom's Cabin* has also been criticized for its inauthenticity with regard to language use (McDowell 1931; Holton 1984, 69-71) and its overall stereotypical, even romantic racialist depiction of Black slaves (Cantave 2000; Frederickson 1971). Certainly less authentic in her representation of the Black vernacular spoken in the Southern States in the 19<sup>th</sup> century than for instance Mark Twain in his *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884), Stowe had no profound knowledge of African American English. Born and raised in the non-slave state of Connecticut, she spent most of her adult life in the non-slave state of Maine where the Black community was a very small one. She therefore had to rely on what she had heard from friends and relatives and her extensive reading of novels and abolitionist magazines (Holton 1984, 69). However, based on the understanding of literary representations of dialects in general and African American English in particular as stylistic devices and therefore the author's "suggestions rather than authentic representations of the speech of a particular group of speakers" (Holton 57), for the purpose of this article I will content myself with discussing how Stowe presented Black speech rather than evaluate its authenticity. Also, like most literary representations of African Americans by White authors in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Stowe's Black characters are stereotyped. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* depicts at least four of the seven most widespread pre-Civil-War stereotypes about Blacks in America identified by literary critic Sterling Brown in his 1933 article "Negro Characters as Seen by White Authors": the "Tragic Mulatto" (Eliza and George), the seemingly "Contented Slave" (Uncle

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<sup>4</sup> In accordance with the definition of African American English as a language in its own right, I will refer to the Black vernacular as an ethnolect rather than as a dialect. While the term 'dialect,' in its common usage, implies the status of a variety as a deviation from an existing, superior language, the term 'ethnolect' more adequately reflects linguistic autonomy as well as the identificational dimension of language use.

Tom, Aunt Chloe, Dinah, Mammy), the “Comic Negro” (Topsy), and the “Brute” (Sambo and Quimbo) (qtd. in Holton 59). However, what distinguishes *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* from other works of the time is that this stereotyping is also shown linguistically: while Stowe has the first group speak Standardized<sup>5</sup> American English throughout the entire novel, the last group’s speech is marked by heavy use of the vernacular. In between these two extremes, the vernacularization of other characters’ speech varies in intensity. Even though Stowe’s Black characters may lack individuality, her nuanced linguistic representation is effective in that, on the textual level, it constructs character relations and problematizes the question of ethnic identity and identification under slavery. The following analysis uses excerpts from the English source text which are both symptomatic for the way the characters employ African American English throughout the novel and show how, in their linguistic representation, Stowe moves beyond her stereotypes.

## Speaking Types

Against all critique regarding aesthetic value, Stowe’s depiction of slavery in the Southern States of America in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and especially of its effects on society – Black and White<sup>6</sup> – relies on a complex system of character contrast and interrelation. Within this system, language, albeit stereotyped, functions both as a stylistic and a structural element within the text and with regard to the reader-text relationship, hence reader reception. On the textual level, the degree to which African-American English is used is, on the one hand, an implication of a character’s self-positioning with regard to the Black community and, on the other hand, serves to evoke a contrast between positive and negative Black characters. Moreover, the use of ethnolect features in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* is a marker for the level of education the characters have received, and also a humorous element. Beyond the character level, vernacular usage in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* adds a linguistic dimension to one of the novel’s major strengths, namely to create powerful reader-text-relationships through empathy and alienation. This is most evident when comparing reader perceptions of positive characters like Uncle Tom, whose direct speech is only slightly vernacularized, and negative characters like Sambo and Quimbo, who speak heavily marked African American English.

The first Black character Stowe introduces the reader to right in chapter one is Mrs. Shelby’s maid Eliza. Together with her husband George and, later in the novel, Cassy and Emmeline, she is representative of the narrative’s “Tragic Mulat-

<sup>5</sup> Instead of the commonly used term ‘Standard American English,’ in this article generally accepted language norms will be referred to as ‘Standardized,’ since standardization is a process rather than an inherent fact.

<sup>6</sup> To indicate that ‘Black’ and ‘White’ here do not simply refer to skin colour but to related concepts of ethnic culture, language, and identification, both terms are capitalized.

to[es]” (qtd. in Holton 1984, 59) (and, for that matter, quadroons<sup>7</sup>), who all speak Standardized American English throughout the entire novel. For these characters, indexing Whiteness through language use expresses their strong desire for freedom and acceptance in mainstream, i.e. White society, a desire that all of them give way to by escaping to the Northern States. At the same time, linguistic Whiteness positions these characters as outsiders to the novel's Black community, whereas vernacular use projects a facet of Black identity and ethnic solidarity and thus supports community building and maintenance.

Within the novel's Black communal spaces – the cabin on the Shelby plantation and the kitchen in St. Clare's house – the mostly female house slaves, who like Tom's wife Aunt Chloe on the Shelby plantation, the cook Dinah, or the maid Mammy in St. Clare's house seem 'content' with their work-intensive yet secure lives, are through their language clearly distinguishable from the White characters they interact with. In Aunt Chloe's case, the cabin on the Shelby plantation stands as a symbol for the idyllic, yet fragile family-like community of the Shelby slaves, which Chloe holds together by creating a warm and homely space amidst the bleakness of slavery. For Dinah, the head cook in St. Clare's household, 'her' kitchen represents a space of mental dominance, which she maintains despite Miss Ophelia's attempts to reorganize the kitchen to her taste. The effect of linguistic contrasting of Black and White characters then is that, on the one hand, Whites are all the more outsiders, even intruders into the Black characters' spaces of domesticity, while, on the other hand, the sense of Black community within these spaces is strengthened.

Following the North American humorous dialect tradition, the vernacularized speech of other characters in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* adds to their humorous, comical depiction. The little, wild slave girl Topsy, for instance, is introduced to the reader as a filthy, ragged, “goblin-like” (Stowe 1852/2010, 217) figure with a talent for entertaining her White masters with odd singing and dancing. Her heavily marked speech not only supports her generally comical depiction but evokes a pitiable effect as well: having been raised like a farm animal and denied knowledge of her parents' identity as well as any sort of (Christian) education and personal development – as her language gives proof of (e.g. Stowe 1852/2010, 'Chapter XX') –, the physical abuse she has suffered is multiplied by mental and spiritual abuse. Making a child the symbol of such a crime against humanity supported Stowe's appeal to mothers in particular and women in general, whose responsibility Stowe saw in ensuring that morality and Christian values are lived by within the home and from there are transferred to the public space.

However, Stowe's representation of Black speech is most effective when it is used to reflect individual character traits as in Uncle Tom's case and, particularly,

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<sup>7</sup> The term 'mulatto' refers to a person with one Black and one White parent, 'quadroon' to a person with one-quarter Black ancestry.

when it emphasizes the potential for moral character development as in Sambo and Quimbo's speech. The central characteristics of Stowe's protagonist Uncle Tom are his religiosity and his strength of faith, which allow him to assume the role of a missionary trying to spread God's love and benevolence among the people, Black and White, thereby seeking to alleviate the suffering under slavery and to increase the hope of salvation. In the following direct speech excerpt, after having been cruelly whipped on his third owner Legree's plantation for helping a weaker female slave named Cassy pick cotton, Tom urges Cassy, who in the face of slavery seems to have given up all hope for her own fate as well as her belief in God, not to let the sins of others (i.e. slave owners like Legree) turn her into a sinner herself. The portrayal of Tom submitting to being beaten for his beliefs and acts of religious charity, rather than actively seeking his own freedom, has been criticized as too passive and submissive a representation and has been viewed as an affirmation rather than a rejection of slavery (Cantave 2010). Such a reading neglects both Tom's Christ-like selfless love even in the face of evil and personal trial as well as the fact that, while he himself chooses passive resistance, he does encourage and support others (Eliza, Cassy, and Emmeline) in their attempts to escape. In Tom, the virtue of Christian charity is detached from his minority status and exemplifies a model of behaviour to be adopted by Black *and* White. After all, as Stowe's ubiquitous appeals to her readership's Christian morale imply, she regarded a transformation through Christian love as indispensable for the successful abolishment of slavery. The metaphorical transcendence of race in character behaviour is also reflected in a reduced 'Blackness,' i.e. reduced vernacularization, of Tom's speech:

"Poor critturs!" said Tom, – "what made 'em cruel? – and if I give out, I shall get used to't, and grow, little by little, just like 'em! No, no, Missis! I've lost everything, – wife, and children, and home and a kind Mas'r, – and he would have set me free, if he'd only lived a week longer; I've lost everything in this world, and it's clean gone, forever, – and now I can't lose Heaven, too; no I can't get to be wicked, besides all!" [...]

"Missis," said Tom, after a while, "I can see that, some how, you're quite 'bove me in everything; but there's one thing Missis might learn even from poor Tom. Ye said the Lord took sides against us, because he lets us be 'bused and knocked round; but ye see what come on his own Son, – the blessed Lord of Glory, – wan't he allays poor? And have we, any on us, yet come so low as he come? The Lord han't forgot us, – I'm sartin' o' that ar'. If we suffer with him, we shall also reign, Scripture says; but, if we deny Him, he also will deny us. Didn't they all suffer? – the Lord and all his? It tells how they was stoned and sawn asunder, and wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, and was destitute, afflicted, tormented. Suffer-in' an't no reason to make us think the Lord's turned agin us; but jest the contrary, if only we hold to him, and doesn't give up to sin." (Stowe 1852/2010, 329-330)

The most prominent linguistic feature of Tom – both in this excerpt and in the entire novel – is the dropping of unstressed syllables (*'bused* or *'bove*), consonants (*'em, o', wan't, han't*), vowels (*'t*), and consonant vowel groups (*Mas'r*). Moreover, his speech is marked by forms of so-called eye dialect, i.e. deviations from the standardized spelling that do not necessarily affect pronunciation, as in *critturs* (creatures), *allays* (always), *sartin'* (certain), *jest* (just), and repeatedly in *ye* instead of *you*. The latter is the most characteristic marker of Black speech in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* but does not consistently replace *you*. Aside from eye dialect forms and syllable/sound omissions, there are occasional forms of subject-verb disagreement (e.g. in *they was* and *if we ... doesn't*), nasalized *ing*-endings (*sufferin'*), double negatives (*an't no reason*, with *an't* instead of the more commonly used *ain't* as characteristic negator in African American English), and left-out markers of the past participle *has*, as for instance in “And have we, any on us, yet come so low as *be come?*” and “but ye see *what come* on his own Son.” With “get to be wicked” Tom uses the verbal marker *be*, which today is one of the features most commonly associated with African American English and signals the habitual occurrence of an event or state. Another prominent feature of African American English in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is *ar'*, which most often, as in the example above, replaces *there*.

By having Tom speak more like her positive White characters – i.e. ‘humane’ slave masters like the Shelbys or August St. Clare as opposed to wicked characters like Mr. Haley, who speaks with a strong Southern accent – Stowe reduces the distance and inequality between Tom and these Whites linguistically, thus making it easier for her readers to feel sympathy for Tom. In support of Stowe’s abolitionist stance, this linguistic quasi-equality can be read as a metaphor for the general equality of Black and White. The residual non-standard features in Tom’s speech do not give proof of his racial and/or mental inferiority but provide authenticity by hinting at the limitation, if not total lack of access to education for slaves. Thereby, Tom’s metaphorical linguistic transcendence of race is based in reality where he has a minority status.

In contrast to Tom’s speech, Simon Legree’s principal overseers and themselves slaves Sambo and Quimbo, whom “Legree had trained [...] in savageness and brutality as systematically as he had his bull-dogs” (Stowe 1852/2010, 315), not only use vernacular features with a much higher frequency but also in greater variety than Tom does.<sup>8</sup>

“What the devil’s got into Tom?” Legree said to Sambo. [...]

“Dunno, Mas’r; gwine to run off, mebbe.”

“Like to see him try that,” said Legree, with a savage grin, “wouldn’t we, Sambo?”

<sup>8</sup> The direct speech passage used as an example in this article represents the longest continuous stretch of dialogue of Sambo and Quimbo, who, as minor characters, are given much fewer opportunities for verbal expression than Tom, for instance.

“Guess we would! Haw! haw! ho! [...] Lord, de fun! To see him stickin’ in de mud, – chasin’ and tarin’ through de bushes, dogs a holdin’ on to him! Lord, I laughed fit to split, dat ar time we cotched Molly. I thought they’d a had her all stripped up afore I could get ’em off. She car’s de marks o’ dat ar spree yet.” (Stowe 1852/2010, 358)

Where Tom uses the Standardized American English voiced *th*, Sambo and Quimbo’s speech displays a voiced *d* (e.g. in *de* or *dat*), one of the most prominent phonological features associated with African American English – even though this marker, like others, is not used consistently throughout the novel. Like in Tom’s speech, Stowe uses nasalized *ing*-endings (as in *stickin’*, *chasin’*, or *gwine*), drops unstressed syllables (*’count*), consonants (*o*), and consonant vowel groups as in *car’s* (carries). Most striking is Sambo and Quimbo’s extensive use of eye dialect forms, e.g. in *dunno* (don’t know), *mebbe* (maybe), *sertain’* (certainly), *dreffful* (dreadful), and *ye* (you). On the syntax level Sambo and Quimbo frequently form disagreeing subject-verb constructions (*we’s been*) as well as double negatives, which are not represented in the short excerpt above. A vernacular feature not found in Tom’s direct speech is their use of the reduced auxiliary form *a* for *have* as in “they’d *a* had.”

In keeping with the Black literary stereotypes as proposed by Sterling Brown, Sambo and Quimbo represent the “Brute[s]” (qtd. in Holton 1984, 59) who always and opportunistically side with whoever seems to be most advantageous to them – even if that means allying themselves with brutal slave owners. By engaging with the two in a kind of privileged familiarity, while at the same time playing them off against each other, Legree ensures their dependence on him and hence the maintenance of the slavery microcosm on his plantation. While continuing her portrayal of the physical and emotional sufferings of slaves, with the story on Legree’s plantation Stowe points to the highly demoralizing effect of chattel slavery not only on the White oppressors but also on the oppressed themselves, who like Sambo and Quimbo turn against fellow Blacks. The heavily vernacularized speech of the two then has a double effect: while serving to emphasize the brutality and cruelty of the characters in contrast to Tom’s charitable nature, it also creates a linguistic distance between the fictional world and the reader whose reading pace and ease are disturbed by the natural urge to subvocalize when reading vernacular speech. The use of non-standard language in fiction not only implies “remoteness from the author’s own language, [but also] from the central standards of judgment in a novel” (Leach and Short 2007, 137), thus complicating the reader’s identification with or feelings of sympathy and empathy for Sambo and Quimbo. The supposition that the heightened concentration of markers of the vernacular – among other (non-) linguistic features in the novel – serves as a deliberate strategy to signify the immoral, is supported by the observation that later in the novel, when Sambo and Quimbo repent and thereby find a way towards a more Christian behaviour, their language also suddenly changes into almost unmarked Standardized American

English. Even if the further progress of Sambo and Quimbo's moral development remains unknown to the reader, Stowe points to her characters' potential for moral improvement, thereby moving them beyond their initial stereotyped depiction. With regard to reader reception, alteration in vernacular use here contributes greatly to the reader's awareness of those moral standards Stowe considered worth following. Relieved from the need to decipher heavy vernacular, the reader instantly understands Stowe's plea for a change towards Christian humanity. While the Black vernacular serves various functions in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the following analysis of the novel's translation history in Germany reveals a complete loss of these functions in German translations.

### Silencing Blackness

The great number of German-language versions of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* reflects the initial and continuous success of the novel in Germany as well as the surrounding Germanophone countries of Austria, Switzerland, and Belgium. The first translation was published in 1852, only a few months after the English version's appearance first in Great Britain and then in the USA, under the title *Onkel Tom's Hütte oder Negerleben in den Sklavenstaaten des freien Nordamerika* (Uncle Tom's Cabin or Negro Life in the Slave States of the Free North America; translation mine). Heike Paul counts 29 more editions for the years 1852 until 1854 alone, followed by 18 new editions until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (2005, 128). For the period from the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century until the present day, the online catalogue of the German National Library lists 129 different versions, for the most part produced by publishers based in Germany. However, from the beginning of its translation history in Germany, the novel has mutated into a children's book, abridged and (colourfully) illustrated. Even of those versions not published as 'adaptation for children and youth,' qua number of pages, only around a dozen can claim completeness and translation status. The majority of the German-language versions in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was published as 'abridged,' 'retold,' and 'freely adapted on the basis of the English original' editions. This trend extends well into the 20<sup>th</sup> and the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. According to the data in the online catalogue of the German National Library, only four editions claim to be translations, either newly translated or rendered into German on the basis of an earlier translation, namely the versions by Hildegard Blomeyer (first published in 1949), Werner Buhre (1950), Wieland Herzfelde (1952), and Susanne Althoetmar-Smarczyk (1994). Interestingly, in adding 'bearbeitet von' (adapted by) to the title information, one of the first German-language versions of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* admits adaptation but in its introduction nevertheless claims truthfulness:

The English original [...] is 329 densely printed octavo pages long; and a faithful and complete translation of it would hardly please the German reader; if only because of the many, lengthy conversations in provincial

dialect and Nigger English [...] which to the German reader must be tiring since they introduce him to ideas which can be of no interest to him. [...] It will suffice to give him [the German reader] an overall impression [...] [.] a shortened German adaptation in which, however, nothing essential was left out [...]. (Ungewitter in Stowe 1852, 6-7; translation mine)

The translator, a Dr. Ungewitter, identifies the Black vernacular as the novel's most 'problematic' cultural difference. His solution is to leave out dialogue passages entirely and provide the reader with summarized accounts of Black characters' direct speech. In a reader-oriented approach, he reduces the foreignness of Stowe's text by means of linguistic standardization to make it more accessible for the German readership. Ungewitter justifies this strategy by pointing to the dispensability of the vernacular for plot and meaning – and thus makes a claim that has already been proven wrong by the above analysis of the specific functions of Black ethnolinguistics in the novel. Nevertheless, translators and adapters alike have chosen to follow the translation strategy of Ungewitter and have 'silenced' the African American English by either leaving out direct speech of Black characters altogether, or paraphrasing it in indirect speech, or rendering it in Standardized German. The most recent German translation by Susanne Althoetmar-Smarczyk attempts cautious creative innovation through the occasional use of colloquialisms in the form of contracted verb-object constructions (*ich habs* instead of *ich habe es*) and dropped (end-)vowels (*eins* instead of *eines*, or *wär* instead of *wäre*). However, in German these forms are all absolutely unmarked in terms of region, class, or status. In translation, Uncle Tom is denied linguistic differentiation from the other Black characters altogether, except for Althoetmar-Smarczyk's rendering where the occasional occurrence of subjunctive forms in Tom's speech moves him into the linguistic sphere pertaining to the distinctive vocabulary of the educated class.<sup>9</sup>

In the case of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, linguistic standardization and hence the 'domestication' of African American English in German translations has a positive side effect to it, namely the suspension of linguistic differences between the Black and the White characters. Blacks and Whites are presented as equals in terms of linguistic and mental capacity – certainly an effect that would have served the underlying abolitionist intentions well. However, by deconstructing the functions of the vernacular both on the textual and the reader-response level, the German translations follow a target-culture-oriented approach in which Stowe's characters, who are originally linguistically individualized within the limits of common stereotypes, blur into 'the Blacks' as opposed to 'the Whites.' While this is less problematic in the reception of Tom's character since he is characterized primarily through his actions, the reader's understanding of other characters must rely on the narrator's indirect characterizations, which, due to omissions of whole scenes in some

<sup>9</sup> For example, "Sie haben gesagt, daß Gott gegen uns Partei ergriffen *habe*, weil er uns mißhandeln und schlagen läßt" (Stowe 1994/2009, 417; emphasis added).



translations – even those translations that claim completeness –, sometimes do not even provide enough ground for reader orientation.

The deliberate silencing of African American English as an aspect of Black ethnic identity in the first translations of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* certainly fits into the context of German 19<sup>th</sup>-century racial discourse. After all, through standardization, the language of perceived White superiority – in this case German – was forced upon Black characters, thereby disavowing the eligibility of African American English as a language in its own right and denying racial equality. At the same time, linguistic standardization and hence the relegation of Blackness as ‘the Other’ to the sphere of what was known to the German readership facilitated the replacement processes Heike Paul (2005) describes in her study on the reception of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in Germany: where Stowe wrote about racial inequality, German readers very often constructed a race-class analogy, replacing slavery with class hierarchies and political, social, and economic inequality in post-1848 revolutionary Germany. To readers in Germany Stowe's novel served as a model to explain the negative experiences of German immigrants in America who, allegedly, were not only discriminated against but treated like Blacks<sup>10</sup> by a reputedly xenophobic American society (Paul 133-156). Thus, in the German imagination the American experience of Black slavery stepped back behind identification with the universal experience of the ‘un-free.’

But how does Uncle Tom, whose German voice has hardly changed over the past 160 years, fit into the German literary/translation culture of the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Is standardization of minority languages in translation still a suitable strategy against the backdrop of a multicultural German society? And finally, does the dissolution of cultural difference serve or limit ‘political correctness’ in literature?<sup>11</sup> To approach and answer these very practical questions, Bhabha's notion of cultural translation is helpful: just as cultural contact zones are never static but are instead defined by the historical, political, economic, and social contexts in which they emerge, so negotiations of cultural difference within these ‘third spaces’ need to be in constant flux, adapting to the circumstances that feed these negotiations. Likewise, the negotiation of translational problems, which are greater the wider the cultural gap between the source culture and the receiving culture is, must not rely on past solutions but needs to assume responsibility for the current implications of these problems.

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<sup>10</sup> According to (fictional) travel accounts by German immigrants published in the 1850s and 1860s, there were cases of Germans being sold into slavery. Prominent examples are Franz von Elling's *Des Lebens Wandlungen* (1854) and Theodor Griesinger's *Freiheit und Sklaverei unter dem Sternenbanner* (1862).

<sup>11</sup> In 2013, a public debate was sparked off about the question whether terms like ‘Neger’ (Nigger) and negative depictions of African Americans in German (translations of) children's books written in the 19<sup>th</sup> and the early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries should be replaced by non-discriminatory terms and representations.

## Conclusion

The representation of Black speech in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* conveys meanings relevant to plot on the textual level and has implications for reader reception. Within the text, the nuanced use of the vernacular helps define the relation between Black and White and among slaves. In terms of an ethnic self-image, the vernacular becomes a symbol of the shared, communal identity, while at the same time functioning as a counter-hegemonic sign. Such a linguistic reading of direct speech in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* therefore allows for a more favourable reading than has been presented by many critics – certainly within the limits of legitimate criticism with regard to stereotyped representations. Beyond the textual level, linguistic differentiation in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* serves to stimulate reader response with regard to Blacks and the system of slavery. Through predominant standardization of the vernacular, the examined German translations deconstructed both of these functions in favour of better accessibility and readability for the German readership. At least in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, this resulted in a reading very different from the way Americans understood the novel. These semantic shifts in translation are the product of translation processes, by means of which converging cultures and languages are negotiated and which “carr[y] the burden of meaning” (Bhabha 1994, 38) required to be translated across, or despite, cultural differences. Within this ‘third space,’ translators are key actors because, as translation theorist André Lefevere asserts, they have the power to “manipulate the originals they work with to some extent, usually to make them fit in with the dominant, or one of the dominant ideological and poetological currents of their time” (1992, 8). For the first translators of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* poetological considerations played an important role in their renderings of the novel's ethnolect features – after all German literary realists were only starting to experiment with German dialects around the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. At the same time they were clearly guided by ideological considerations at a time when Germans heavily criticized slavery as practised in the Southern United States as radical and institutionalized oppression, but were themselves far from recognizing Blacks as their equals.

Since translations, as this article has sought to show, are not likenesses of an ‘original’ in a different language but rewritings, and according to Lefevere even “potentially the most influential” ones (1992, 9), any study of the reception of a piece of literature beyond its culture of origin needs to begin with its translation(s) and the factors involved in the translation process. At the same time, translations, as in the case of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, provide new perspectives on the reading of works of literature and thus continue to be worth studying – not as inferior derivatives of an ‘original’ but as rewritings in their own right. For translation practice, analyses like the above can help to find new approaches in dealing with literary language varieties based on a thorough understanding of their functions and effects. While Jenkins's theory of convergence culture may not offer new insights into the study of translations in general, it adds to the vocabulary of existing theo-

ries of culture, in particular Homi Bhabha's concept of the 'third space,' which can be fruitfully applied to describe translations as dynamic zones of cultural encounter.

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## **Participation and Fandom**





## **‘Scribner’s Illustrated New Orleans’: Convergence Culture and Periodical Culture in Late 19<sup>th</sup>-Century America**

*Florian Freitag*

In the conclusion to *The Rise and Fall of Early American Magazine Culture*, Jared Gardner draws parallels between 18<sup>th</sup>-century American magazine culture and what he terms “twenty-first-century Internet culture” (2012, x). Throughout his book, Gardner argues that even if their editors often ended up writing much of the published material themselves, early American magazines routinely attempted to preserve the notion that they were “the natural outgrowth of readers who had been summoned by the periodical to be contributors themselves” (x). In this, he notes in the conclusion, they were like “the internet today, which depends inordinately on amateur contributions and a shared investment in a literary commons in which the distinction between author and reader is necessarily permeable, often even invisible” (173). He asserts that “the desire to write back, to interact, to pick up the pen and become authors themselves is clearly one that has remained intact in the two centuries since the early magazine culture faded into the background of our literary culture and marketplace dynamics” (173).

Gardner’s comparison focusses on an issue that also constitutes a central aspect of Jenkins’s concept of ‘convergence culture’: participatory culture. In fact, convergence culture’s characteristic circulation of media content across different media platforms depends upon a blurring of the strict dividing line between media

producers and media consumers, to the point where the two roles can no longer be clearly distinguished. In convergence culture, consumers routinely become producers and vice versa:

[S]ome ideas spread top down, starting with commercial media and being adopted and appropriated by a range of different publics as they spread outward across the culture. Others emerge bottom up from various sites of participatory culture and getting pulled into the mainstream if the media industries see some way of profiting from it. (Jenkins 2006, 257)

Gardner's locating of structures of participatory culture within 18<sup>th</sup>-century American periodical culture raises the question, however, to what extent convergence culture's purportedly "new forms of participation and collaboration" (Jenkins 245) and "new models of cultural production (participatory culture)" (246) are really *new*. Could the "older notions of passive media spectatorship" that convergence culture's "new" participatory culture supposedly contrasts with (3) perhaps be a relatively recent phenomenon that, in turn, contrasts with early American periodical culture's even older participatory culture? If so, where, or more importantly, *when* could we locate the end of this 'first' participatory culture? And what precisely distinguishes these 'old' and 'new' participatory cultures from each other?

This essay seeks to address these and related questions by locating manifestations of participatory culture in the representation of New Orleans in *Scribner's Monthly* (later *The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine*), a late 19<sup>th</sup>-century American illustrated monthly. More specifically, I employ a periodical studies approach to examine how the various journalistic, literary, and visual narratives about New Orleans that were published in *Scribner's/Century* from the early 1870s to the mid-1890s were all linked by participatory culture, with consumers (readers) turning into producers (writers and artists) and vice versa, and with the magazine thus functioning as a site of convergence. Such an analysis will have to take into account *Scribner's/Century's* practices of manuscript selection and editing – and hence also point to the limits of participatory culture at the magazine. At the same time, however, it offers an opportunity to contrast *Scribner's/Century's* conception of its audience as both consumers and potential producers with that of the first mass magazines which entered the American periodical market in the 1880s and early 1890s and which, as Christopher P. Wilson and Richard Ohmann have shown, conceived of their audience mainly as consumers, as a commodity that could be sold to advertisers (Wilson 1983, 42; Ohmann 1996, 8).

In the following, I will first briefly introduce some of the main concerns and strategies of periodical studies before discussing *Scribner's/Century* and the practices of its editorial and art departments in very general terms. While more archival research needs to be done especially on the workings of the magazine's art department, the published letters and (auto)biographies of editors and writers give us much insight into how manuscripts, whether they were actively solicited by the editors or not, and illustrations made it into the magazine. I will then examine a

selection of *Scribner's/Century's* illustrated articles and stories about New Orleans, including instalments of Edward King and J. Wells Champney's famous travel series "The Great South" as well as the short fiction and essays of George W. Cable and Grace E. King, and discuss how these texts (and the illustrations that accompanied them) are linked through participatory culture. The conclusion will offer some thoughts on the impact of the new mass magazines on participatory culture in late 19<sup>th</sup>-century American periodical culture.

## Periodical Studies

The central premise of periodical studies is that magazines constitute a distinct form of publishing that calls for distinct analytical approaches and methodologies. Following the publication of Frank Luther Mott's seminal five-volume, Pulitzer Prize-winning *History of American Magazines* (1930-1968), periodical studies did not fully establish itself in the US until the early 1990s with the founding of the Research Society for American Periodicals in 1990, the establishment of the journal *American Periodicals* in 1991, the publication of monographs such as Hutton's *The Early Black Press in America, 1827 to 1860* (1993) and G.J. Baldasty's *The Commercialization of News in the Nineteenth Century* (1992), and the first calls for distinct, holistic approaches to periodicals from both journalism scholars (Abrahamson 1995) and cultural critics (Price and Smith 1995). Since then, programmatic articles by scholars such as Judith Yarros Lee (2005), Charles Johanningsmeier (2012), and Sean Latham and Robert Scholes (2006) and the digitization of some major 19<sup>th</sup>-century journals in the "Making of America" project, a collaboration between Cornell University and the University of Michigan started in 1995, have greatly helped to define, theorize, and facilitate periodical studies.

Rejecting a view of magazines as mere "aggregations of otherwise autonomous works" (Latham and Scholes 2006, 521), periodical studies, first and foremost, call for the examination of "linguistic" texts along and in conjunction with all the "bibliographical codes" (McGann 1991, 57) that immediately surround them in periodicals<sup>1</sup> and for investigating the ways in which individual features of a magazine "call and respond" (Noonan 2010, xvi) to other articles in the same or in earlier issues. As Charles Johanningsmeier has argued with respect to the example of periodical fiction,

one cannot formulate an authoritative hypothesis regarding a periodical fiction's cultural work on a version of its text that appeared later in book or anthology form, for this linguistic text, divorced from its original contexts,

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<sup>1</sup> These codes include, as Johanningsmeier has noted, "pre-publication advertising; the headlines for [the printed text]; its placement on the page; its typography; the accompanying illustrations; their captions; and the other printed materials that appeared nearby in the periodical" (2012, 598).

would inevitably produce effects on readers very different than those produced by the text in original contexts. (2012, 597)

In addition, and perhaps even more importantly for this essay, periodical studies also call for a serious exploration of the “means of production” (Lee 2005, 198) that characterize periodical publications. Rather than following the “Great Man [...] school of history” (197) that focusses on the lives and accomplishments of individual editors and authors, periodical scholars should, Judith Yarros Lee maintains, “examine the published periodical as the result of a collaboration among editors, contributors, readers, and other stakeholders of a particular time and place” (198). As evidenced by the recent publication of a special issue of the scholarly journal *American Periodicals* on “Networks and the Nineteenth-Century Periodical” (Fagg, Pethers, and Vandome 2013), this idea of networks (between people, but also between texts), which again links (19<sup>th</sup>-century) periodical culture to (21<sup>st</sup>-century) internet culture, seems to have become more and more important to periodical studies. Ideally, then, in periodical studies the analysis of the interrelations or networks among periodical contents is complemented by an investigation of the interrelations or networks among periodical actors, which is precisely what I will attempt to do in the following.

## Participatory Culture at *Scribner's/Century*

*Scribner's Monthly* was launched as a national illustrated literary monthly magazine in New York City in November 1870 by publisher Charles Scribner, novelist and poet Josiah G. Holland (who acted as editor-in-chief), and Roswell Smith (as business manager). In 1881, after poet Richard Watson Gilder had replaced the ageing Holland and Smith had bought Scribner's share of the publishing company, the magazine was renamed *The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine* and went on to reach its peak in the mid-1880s, with its subscription numbers more than doubling to over 250,000 thanks to the popular “Battles and Leaders of the Civil War” series (Noonan 2010, 155). Starting in the early 1890s, *Century* faced increasing competition from significantly cheaper mass magazines such as *Munsey's* and *McClure's*, and its circulation slowly but steadily declined, although the magazine did not cease publication until 1930.<sup>2</sup>

*Scribner's/Century* offered its intended “genteel” middle-class readership a characteristic mix of what editor L. Frank Tooker has called the typical ingredients of “the traditionally perfect magazine of the day” (1924, 320): fiction (short stories and serialized novels), poetry, essays on such issues as art, science, technology, and travel, and a variety of recurring editorial departments like the “Topics of the

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<sup>2</sup> For general accounts of the history and the impact of *Scribner's/Century*, see Mott (1967), John (1981), and Noonan (2010).

Time” and the entertaining and humorous “Bric-à-Brac.” If from today’s point of view, it is the magazine’s list of contributors of fiction – among them William Dean Howells, Henry James, Mark Twain, and George W. Cable – that seems particularly impressive, *Scribner’s/Century* tried to distinguish itself from its competitors, such as the *Atlantic Monthly* and *Harper’s Monthly*, primarily through its elegant design and the number and quality of its illustrations. Holland wrote in his farewell editorial in 1881: “I suppose that if any one were asked what, more than anything else, had contributed to the success of the magazine, he would answer: Its superb engravings, and the era it introduced of improved illustrative art” (303). Indeed, thanks to lavish spending, the innovativeness and ambition of the long-time head of the magazine’s art department, Alexander W. Drake, and the printing house of Theodore De Vinne, *Scribner’s/Century* significantly contributed to the development of a “New School of American Wood-Engraving” (Scholnik 1991, 54) and to “bring[ing] about a golden age of magazine illustration” (John 1981, 182).

While *Scribner’s/Century* conceived of and advertised itself, as the subtitle of *Scribner’s* proclaimed, “An Illustrated Magazine for the People,” it was also, particularly with respect to the fiction and poetry it published, a magazine *by* the people. Late 19<sup>th</sup>-century cultural and specifically literary trends as well as practices of manuscript acquisition contributed to this. Richard Brodhead has argued that especially through their promotion of American regional fiction, late 19<sup>th</sup>-century magazines such as *Scribner’s/Century* extended the opportunity to become a published author to “groups traditionally distanced from literary lives” (1993, 116):

Regional fiction set as the competence required to produce it the need to know how to write, but it set this entry requirement unusually low: since this form was heavily conventionalized in formulas [...], it did not require the more highly elaborated writerly skills that other forms asked for their successful performance. (116)

The magazines did solicit manuscripts, of course, but, as Christopher P. Wilson notes, they also heavily relied on voluntary submissions: “Articles were not ‘drummed up’ in elaborately planned promotional schemes with specific time lines; they came in irregularly. In fact, older editors had taken pride in the fact that they did not solicit content – in effect, that writers came to them. [...] Horace Scudder of *The Atlantic* boasted about never having invited a submission” (1983, 46). Due to its specific editorial policies, *Scribner’s/Century* made aspiring and hitherto unknown American writers feel especially welcome: in 1875, Holland proudly proposed to no longer print fiction “imported” from England and to “make the magazine specifically American” (123).<sup>3</sup> While Gilder refused to relax his genteel editorial standards (epitomized by his ‘*virginibus maxim,*’ according to which the ma-

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<sup>3</sup> John argues that Holland probably made “a virtue of necessity,” as good foreign material had become unavailable (1981, 61).

gazine should print nothing to offend a virgin; Noonan 2010, 86), maintained that editors sometimes got carried away by their eagerness to discover new talent (Gilder 1896), and insisted on his authority and responsibility as editor-in-chief (see, for instance, his letter to Twain; qtd. in Cyganowski 1988, 216), he always strove to encourage submitters and to treat them with kindness, sympathy, and respect. Herbert F. Smith notes:

*The Century* notified writers on receipt of their manuscripts (a policy not followed by all magazines even today), paid on acceptance, and returned rejected manuscripts in plain envelopes, even to contributors who had neglected to enclose postage. Bill Nye wrote that Gilder “could return rejected manuscripts in such a gentle and caressing way that the disappointed scribblers came to him from hundreds of miles away to thank him for his kindness and stay to dinner with him!” (1970, 26)

Starting in 1882, Gilder also printed authors’ names not only in the tables of contents but directly with their contributions, a policy later also extended to illustrators and even engravers, thus offering them direct recognition by a very large audience (John 1981, 147).

The consequences of this attitude could be observed in the editorial offices (by an increasing flow of incoming manuscripts; John 116), in the magazine itself (according to John, “[o]ne of the *Century*’s two volumes in 1890 listed 123 different contributors; the *Atlantic* in the same period had only fifty-four;” 147), and even in Gilder’s private life: to a friend, Gilder wrote that he was “not very enthusiastic about meeting people, because people I meet usually carry concealed manuscripts. One man waylays me on Broadway with what you may call an airgun. He gets his poem by heart, meets me accidentally when I return to the office from lunch and recites it as we walk along” (Gilder 1916, 115).

In a slightly different form, participatory culture also manifested itself in the magazine’s art department: here, the work of illustrators and engravers regularly turned ‘readers’ into producers. Generally, as with its textual contents, the magazine strove for “variety in subject,” “variety in matter,” and “variety in artist” in its illustrations (Johnson 1923, 139). Once a manuscript was accepted for publication, a specific artist was commissioned to illustrate it (John 1981, 182). There is no evidence that *Scribner’s/Century* accepted unsolicited illustrations or that the magazine had writers provide texts for engravings (that is, had fiction or poetry commissioned to accompany pictures), a practice apparently common in the 1840s (Patterson 2010, 87-118). Artists were free to choose which scene or character they wished to illustrate (Johnson 1923, 383), but their work was at least sometimes sent to authors for approval (383) and was also scrutinized by the editors for factual errors and discrepancies with the text (Tooker 1924, 85-87) – with sometimes the picture and sometimes, especially when deadlines had to be met, the text being changed to avoid incongruities. Editor L. Frank Tooker writes in his *Joys and Tribulations of an Editor* that “times beyond reckoning, when the pictures were received

too late to make alterations, I have changed the text to gloss over the eccentricities of illustrators" (1924, 87).

After the illustrator had read and 'translated' the text into a picture, the latter had to be 'translated,' i.e. engraved, onto a woodblock. Before the widespread use of photoxylography<sup>4</sup> from the late 1870s onward, pictures first had to be redrawn on the woodblock by a mediating office artist, as few artists could or would draw directly on the blocks (Holland 1879, 456; Brown 2002, 298n69). The engraver then etched the image onto the block, although he, too, could add his "own touches; if given a large expanse of sky, for instance, an engraver would often be free to determine the layout and texture of the clouds" (Schulmann 2012, 16). While Drake, as Scholnik notes, generally strove for "the truer and more exact reproduction of the work of the artist,' rather than its 'translation' into the engraver's language" (1991, 54), the entire process was still, Schulmann argues, "a collaborative one that involved both artists and engravers under the 'management' of editors" (2012, 16).

Participatory culture, then, manifested itself in *Scribner's/Century's* editorial and art departments. Though obviously limited by the editor's ultimate power of decision as well as by certain editorial principles, such as editor-in-chief Gilder's '*virginibus maxim*,' editor Tooker's rules of faithful and factually correct illustration, and art superintendent Drake's goal of reproducing artwork as exactly as possible, each issue of *Scribner's/Century* allowed consumers to become producers and vice versa: readers of essays, fiction, and poetry turned into producers of pictorial texts, viewers of images created through various techniques turned into producers of woodcuts, and, though perhaps less frequently, readers of the magazine turned into contributors. The degree of participatory culture involved in the production of the magazine becomes particularly evident when we focus, as I will do in the following section, on the textual and pictorial representation of New Orleans in *Scribner's/Century*. Indeed, the entire history of what I call here 'Scribner's illustrated New Orleans' can be described as one of consumers turning into producers.

### ***Scribner's/Century's* Illustrated New Orleans**

Editorials, essays, fiction, and poetry from or about both the antebellum and the Reconstruction South appeared with an astonishing frequency in *Scribner's/Century*. Smith even argues that "the magazine during the entire period of Gilder's editorship led all northern periodicals in publications by southern writers" (1970, 55) and that in relation to other American regions, the editor-in-chief published "a disproportionate amount of southern fiction" (86). Indeed, in 1890 Gilder wrote in

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<sup>4</sup> A process in which the picture was photographed directly onto the woodblock and which *Scribner's/Century's* art superintendent Alexander W. Drake had helped to perfect (Watrous 1984, 21; Scholnik 1991, 54; Brown 2002, 174, 298n69; Noonan 2010, 16-17).

a letter that a Northern author had asked him “when [he] was going to give the North a chance” (qtd. in Cyganowski 1988, 197).<sup>5</sup> Whence this predilection for Southern themes and writers?

Were there, as Fahs intimates, “cultural and political imperatives” (2002, 219) to give a voice to the recently defeated South, which the magazine simply could not ignore? Did *Scribner’s/Century*, which assumed the role of a cultural steward, custodian, and arbiter on various matters (Noonan 2010, x, 14, 110), consciously conceive of itself as a vehicle for and promoter of the reconciliation of North and South, an active “agent in the process of national integration” (Scholnik 1991, 66n22; see also Noonan 2010, 156, 157)? Was it, as John suggests (1981, 39), the result of a shrewd business decision to win a large, national audience? After all, founded after the end of the Civil War, the magazine “escaped the onus of Abolitionism” (Smith 1970, 55) and “was well positioned to cater to the needs and desires of [...] southerners who had stopped subscribing to *The Nation*, *Harper’s* and *The Atlantic*” (Noonan 2010, xiv). Perhaps the magazine’s focus on the South was the result of a mixture of all of these reasons, yet, as editor-in-chief Gilder himself suggested, participatory culture also played a role. In a letter to James Lane Allen from 1890, Gilder wrote: “Without intending in any way to make a pet of southern literature, it has forced itself upon the attention of the editors of ‘The Century’ to such a degree, that we are supposed to make a specialty of it” (qtd. in Cyganowski 1988, 197). *Scribner’s/Century* focussed on the South, Gilder suggests here, because so many good Southern writers sent in so many good Southern stories.

The role participatory culture played in the dominance of Southern themes in *Scribner’s/Century* can be observed particularly well, as I have already argued, when we focus on the magazine’s features on New Orleans. Bill Hardwig has recently argued that New Orleans, along with Appalachia, played a central role in late 19<sup>th</sup>-century regional fiction and travel writing about the South, both because it served as a “physical point [...] of entry into the South” (2013, 15) and because its distinct cultural make-up could be used synecdochically to express the entire region’s cultural difference from the North: “[d]ue to their geographical roles as ‘ports of entry,’ [New Orleans and Appalachia] become symbols of the South’s cultural disjuncture from the rest of the nation” (15). Yet at least in the case of *Scribner’s/Century*, New Orleans also plays a central role if we wish to illustrate manifestations of participatory culture in late 19<sup>th</sup>-century periodical culture.

The first important piece on the city – the one that, in a way, started it all – was, however, not submitted to the magazine but projected and commissioned by Roswell Smith (Mott 1967, 464): “The Great South” series of travel sketches, written by journalist Edward King and illustrated by James Wells Champney, with its second and third instalments (entitled “Old and New Louisiana” and published in

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<sup>5</sup> Similar charges of regional favouritism in the magazine were, however, also voiced against the East and the North (Cyganowski 1988, 32).



November and December 1873 respectively) focussing on New Orleans.<sup>6</sup> Smith had authorized the considerable sum of \$30,000 to fund King and Champney's travels, but the financial gamble paid off: although "The Great South" was neither the first nor the last travelogue about the South which appeared in a Gilded Age periodical shortly after the Civil War,<sup>7</sup> it has been considered "an extremely lucrative business decision. As it ran, new subscriptions came in by the thousands as, postwar, *Scribner's* was the first northern journal welcomed into southern parlors" (Noonan 2010, 20).

Scholars have examined the series' depiction of the South in general and of New Orleans in particular in great detail (see, amongst others, Rainey 1993 and Greeson 2006), but what interests me here are manifestations of participatory culture in connection with the publication of "The Great South." Although the articles and illustrations had been commissioned by the magazine, there are, I suggest, at least two instances of participatory culture: the editing of Champney's sketches in the offices of *Scribner's* art department and the 'discovery' of George W. Cable by King.

While still in the field in the South, illustrator Champney would send his sketches to New York, where they were redrawn on wood and engraved by in-house artists and engravers, probably, as Sue Rainey claims (1993, 198), to meet publishing deadlines. Rainey shows, however, that although Champney often included details in the margins of his sketches to ensure faithful and accurate representations of the buildings and people he drew (204), the pictures were considerably altered during the production process in New York, particularly in the case of sketches of non-white people and ethnic minorities: "Champney's depictions of these people are frequently sensitive individual portraits. Unfortunately, many of his drawings were distorted either in the redrawing [...] or in the engraving, so that the facial expressions are changed or the individuals become types – even caricatures" (204).

Here and elsewhere, the alterations or even distortions were not the unavoidable and regrettable results of the technical reproduction process, but attest to the participatory culture prevalent at *Scribner's/Century's* art department, which was willfully acknowledged in the printed pictures. For instance, the "The Carnival: Arrival of the King" scene published in the second instalment of "The Great South: Old and New Louisiana" (King 1873, 25), which depicts participants and spectators at a New Orleans carnival parade, bears two signatures that indicate the

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<sup>6</sup> Both Mark J. Noonan and Bill Hardwig maintain that the series opened with these chapters (Noonan 2010, 63; Hardwig 2013, 80), but already in July 1873 the magazine had published an article entitled "The Great South: The New Route to the Gulf," which focussed on Kansas, 'Indian Territory' (Oklahoma), and Texas.

<sup>7</sup> For instance, *The Nation* had published a series of articles called "The South as It Is" in 1865/1866 already, *Harper's Monthly* would print its "The New South" series in 1874, and "Studies in the South" would run in the *Atlantic Monthly* from 1882 to 1883 (Mott 1967, 47-48; Hardwig 2013, 157n4).

collaboration of three artists in the printed picture: “Champney-Sheppard” in the lower left corner identifies Champney as the original artist and W.L. Sheppard as the “redrawer” (Rainey 1993, 197-198), “C Maurand” in the lower right corner of the picture presumably identifies the engraver.

Incidentally, it was during the carnival season of 1873 in New Orleans that Edward King ‘discovered’ George W. Cable (Noonan 2010, 73). King had sought local information on New Orleans from Cable, who had written for a local paper, was interested in local history, and happened to be looking for an opportunity to publish some of the short stories he had written. In a letter to F.L. Pattee from 1914, Cable remembers:

Edward King came to New Orleans almost at the beginning of his tour of the South and we became acquaintances and friends. I asked him where to send some stories – two or three – which I had just written and he himself read and sent two to Dr. Holland [...]. Then Gilder [...] wrote me, and my lifetime acquaintance with both the *Century* and Charles Scribner’s Sons began. (qtd. in Ekström 1966, 49)

Throughout the summer of 1873, King continued to write letters to Cable, praising and encouraging him and telling him about his own efforts to turn the attention of *Scribner’s/Century’s* editors to Cable’s writings (Ekström 49-51), efforts which ultimately proved successful. Cable’s first submission, a story titled “Bibi,” was rejected; in October 1873, however, – a month before King’s first article on New Orleans from “The Great South” series appeared – the magazine printed “Sieur George: A Story of New Orleans,” the first of altogether six stories that were published in *Scribner’s/Century* until 1876 before they were collected as *Old Creole Days* in 1879. Thanks to participatory culture, and with some help and encouragement from King, Cable had turned into a published author of fiction.

*Scribner’s/Century* continued to accept submissions from Cable – sometimes, as in the case of the novel *The Grandissimes* (serialized from November 1879 to October 1880), even soliciting his work (Ekström 54-55) – and throughout the 1880s regularly printed his essays, short stories, novellas, and novels about New Orleans. However, just as King’s work for the magazine had, in a way, prepared the way for Cable, Cable’s writings, in turn, inspired others to write: in October 1874, *Scribner’s* published Cable’s “Tite Poulette,” a story about a quadroon called Madame John in antebellum New Orleans, who confesses that the eponymous title character is only her adopted daughter, which allows the latter to marry a white man. In response to this story, Cable received an anonymous letter from a reader who identified herself as a “poor quadroon[...].” and who urged Cable to

change the story, even yet, and tell the inmost truth of it. Madame John lied! The girl was her own daughter; but like many and many a real quadroon mother, as you surely know, Madame John perjured her own soul to

win for her child a legal and honorable alliance with the love-mate and life-mate of her choice. (qtd. in Cable 1896, vii)

Cable proposed to "answer [the letter] by another story" (viii), namely *Madame Delphine* (serialized in *Scribner's* from May to July 1881 and issued as an independent book by Charles Scribner's Sons in the same year). While in "'Tite Poulette" Cable had, as Alice Hall Petry notes, "effectively skirted the whole issue of miscegenation" (1988, 24), in *Madame Delphine* he uses a very similar ending (see the chapter "By an Oath"), but adds a final chapter entitled "Kyrie Eleison," in which this ending is revealed to be a scheme by the quadroon mother to indeed "win for her child a legal and honorable alliance with the love-mate and life-mate of her choice" (qtd. in Cable 1896, vii).

Since it is only from Cable's "Preface" to the 1896 re-edition of *Madame Delphine* that we learn about the genesis of the story (Payne 2002), we may well question the very existence of the 'poor quadroon' and her letter to Cable. If they did exist, however, we could speculate that, had this 'poor quadroon' written to Gilder instead of Cable, the editor may have encouraged the letter writer to pen the 'true' story herself (instead of leaving this to Cable), for this is precisely what he suggested to another reader of Cable's stories, Grace Elizabeth King.

In her autobiography, *Memories of a Southern Woman of Letters* (published posthumously in 1932), Grace Elizabeth King not only remembers Edward King's visit to New Orleans and his discovery of Cable (1971, 49-50), but also her own meeting with Gilder during the New Orleans Cotton Centennial Exposition in 1884. By that time, Cable had already published *Old Creole Days*, *The Grandissimes*, *Madame Delphine*, and a few essays about New Orleans Creoles in *Scribner's/Century. Dr. Sever*, another novel, had begun serialization in November 1883. Grace Elizabeth King, by contrast, had never published (or written) any fiction in her life. Walking with King after a dinner, Gilder asked her about "the inimical stand taken by the people of New Orleans against George Cable and his works" (King 1971, 60):

[King] hastened to enlighten him to the effect that Cable proclaimed his preference for colored people over white and assumed the inevitable superiority – according to his theories – of the quadroons over the Creoles. He was a native of New Orleans and had been well treated by its people, and yet he stabbed the city in the back, as we felt, in a dastardly way to please the Northern press. (60)<sup>8</sup>

According to King, Gilder simply answered: "Why, [...] if Cable is so false to you, why do some of you not write better?" (60). "The shot," King notes, "told" (60), and the very next day she wrote a story titled "Monsieur Motte." Although first rejected by the *Century*, it was published in the *New Princeton Review* in January 1886.

<sup>8</sup> King's journal entry on Cable confirms that she especially resented Cable's favourable depiction of non-whites (King 2004, 5).

King continued to write and publish, mostly in *Harper's Magazine* (although this magazine was, King writes, “not a welcome visitor to New Orleans since the Confederate War,” 63), but when *Harper's* rejected King's “Balcony Stories” in 1891, King sent them to the offices of the *Century*, which published them from December 1892 to October 1893. The stories were, in Helen Taylor's words, precisely the “antitexts to Cable's” (1989, 48) that in 1884 Gilder had asked her (and her fellow New Orleanians) to write; and King had turned from a (disgusted) reader of Cable into a writer herself – thanks to the magazine's reliance on participatory culture.

## Conclusion

At the time the *Century* serialized King's “Balcony Stories,” beautifully illustrated with woodcuts by such well-known illustrators as Otto H. Bacher and Albert E. Sterner, a new kind of monthly magazine rose to prominence on the American periodical market. *The Ladies' Home Journal* (founded in 1883), *Munsey's* (founded in 1889), and *McClure's* (founded in 1893) were cheap – the latter two sold for 10 and 15 cents an issue, while the *Atlantic*, *Harper's*, and *Century* were priced at a quarter or 35 cents (Ohmann 1996, 25). They contained many advertisements, were heavily illustrated, and spectacularly successful: *Munsey's* reached a circulation of 500,000 in 1894; that of the *Century* had never gone significantly beyond 250,000.

Perhaps most importantly, at least for my purposes here, the editors of these new magazines had a radically new conception of their role in the production of the magazine. Christopher P. Wilson argues that whereas “older” editors – the editors of magazines such as *Scribner's/Century* – considered it their main task “to sift, scrutinize, and select literary manuscripts, always watching over established boundaries of taste and propriety” (1983, 45), the “new” editor “began wholesale bidding for authors, article commissioning, and finally the formation of internal magazine writing staffs. This acceleration involved a basic restructuring of article publication” (48). Wilson quotes from a 1908 editorial in *The Independent*: “The modern editor does not sit in his easy chair, writing essays and sorting over manuscripts that are sent in by contributors. He goes hunting for things” (46).

Both Wilson and Richard Ohmann locate the new magazines with their new anticipatory production systems at the origins of an emerging American mass or consumer culture, in which readers were mainly relegated to the role of passive consumers (Wilson 1983, 42; Ohmann 1996, vii). According to Jenkins, these “notions of passive media spectatorship” (2006, 3) would later be succeeded by convergence culture with its “new models of cultural production (participatory culture)” (246). What I have tried to show in this essay, using the example of ‘Scribner's illustrated New Orleans,’ is that the period of mass or consumer culture was itself preceded by a cultural system that heavily relied on various models of participatory culture. There are, of course, significant differences between 19<sup>th</sup>-century participatory culture on the one hand, and convergence culture's participatory

aspects on the other hand. First, the latter's characteristic "flow of media content across multiple media platforms" (Jenkins 2) simply could not exist in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as apart from the magazines and perhaps the theatre, there were few media systems available across which content could have circulated and which could have encouraged participation. Second, within the realm of the magazines, the editor always had the final word on what made it into the magazine and what did not. Nevertheless, the office doors of *Scribner's/Century* and its competitors were still remarkably more open to 'amateur' contributions than those of the newer magazines. Limited in both scope and degree as it may appear compared to convergence culture's participatory aspects, 19<sup>th</sup>-century participatory culture existed and has offered us, amongst others, the fictional renditions of New Orleans by George W. Cable, Grace E. King, and their illustrators.

And participatory culture eventually returned to the 'new' mass magazines with a vengeance. In 2012, the *Ladies' Home Journal* – the very same magazine that together with *Munsey's*, *McClure's*, and others had ushered in the demise of 19<sup>th</sup>-century participatory culture – announced that it would test a new "reader-produced content model" (Botelho 2012), in which readers interested in publishing their texts could upload them to the magazine's blog and website. "Our editors," publisher Diane Malloy explained, "will then cultivate, curate and edit [them]; and that writer, if chosen, will have the article printed in the magazine and they will get paid" (qtd. in Botelho). Should the *Ladies' Home Journal* ever need advice on how to deal with its readers-turned-writers, they may wish to take a look at the archives of *Scribner's/Century*.

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# Expanding Worlds: Neo-Victorianism, Fan Fiction, and the Death of the Author

*Jan-Erik Ella*

“[W]e know that to give writing its future, it is necessary to overthrow the myth: the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author.”  
(Roland Barthes 1967/1977, 148)

The late 1960s bore witness to a pivotal change in the way literary production and reception were perceived. When Roland Barthes declared traditional notions of authorial control to be null and void, the supposedly one-directional relationship between author and reader had already been challenged.<sup>1</sup> Even before Roland Barthes published his seminal essay “The Death of the Author” in 1967, the notion of a particular work of fiction being the product of a single, creative mind (who also served as the sole arbiter of intended meaning within a text) had started to crumble. In fact, postmodern sentiments had emerged over an extended period of time, and Barthes’s image of the ‘Author’ looked more like an overblown parody than a concept that was actually embraced by anyone. Accordingly, some of Barthes’s critics accused him of using a “straw-man strategy” (Norris 1994, 404), making his own hypothesis look more plausible by contrast.<sup>2</sup> In many ways, the

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<sup>1</sup> Or more precisely, this time period marked a gradual return to a conception of literary production and reception that had persisted throughout most of human history and only became obfuscated by notions of originality and intellectual property.

<sup>2</sup> Barthes most certainly uses exaggeration in his essay; yet I would argue that he employs it to highlight particular aspects of the ‘Author’ as a concept, creating an image that comes close to being a parody, yet in fact only serves to pinpoint specific problems.

reader Barthes envisioned had already emerged, and the boundaries between artist and audience, producer and consumer grew increasingly blurry. Lev Grossman considers the year 1966 to be the starting point for this new (or old) approach to storytelling:

First, Jean Rhys published *Wide Sargasso Sea*, her feverish reimagining of the story of Bertha Mason, Mr. Rochester's first wife, from Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. That same year saw the first performance [...] of Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, which expands upon the brief lives of two hapless supernumeraries from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. The third thing that happened that year was the premiere [...] of *Star Trek*[,] one of the first shows to attract not only an audience but a fan community, [who] began publishing and circulating mimeographed zines [...] containing – along with articles, essays and editorials, and fan art – fanfiction: original, unsanctioned stories about the characters from the show, set in the world of the show. (2013, xi)

Such unofficially – or, in the case of neo-Victorian novels like *Wide Sargasso Sea*, officially – published expansions of pre-existing fictional worlds allow their creators to explore angles that have not been covered by the canonical texts they are adapting. Accordingly, they can give a voice to marginalized minorities or individuals, explore non-normative sexuality or gender, or touch upon conflicts that have not been properly addressed in the source material. In short: they explore the uncharted territory beyond the narrowly defined borders of mainstream culture, constituting what Abigail Derecho refers to as “archontic literature” (2006, 61). She borrowed the term “from Jacques Derrida’s definition of archives as ever expanding and never completely closed” (61), defining pastiches or fan fiction as additions to the literary archive of their respective parent texts. “Rhys’ addition to the [Jane Eyre] archive takes the older contents of the archive – Jane Eyre’s goodness, innocence, and heroine status, Rochester’s position as a tormented but deserving hero, and Bertha’s role as the unreasoning animalistic shadow villainess – and changes them by refracting the elements through a mirror of her own design” (Derecho 70).

Although the concept of intellectual property and the idea of the author as the sole creator of a fictional text persist to this day, more and more people – both professional authors and amateur writers – come to embrace a more collective approach to storytelling. Writers deliberately seize upon fictional settings or characters that have been created by others, not in order to plagiarize but to expand upon the source material, adding new voices to a polyphony of different readings. This trend has only increased since the early 1990s when the spread of the internet gradually allowed more and more people to exchange and share their ideas.

In this essay, I will look at two distinct phenomena that are closely tied to this post-modern awareness of what Julia Kristeva calls intertextuality: fan fiction and neo-Victorianism, both of which took their current shape in the late 1960s and

experienced a veritable boom since the late 1980s. This essay attempts a look at what both of these can achieve. In many ways, it is a defence of a literary approach that is still far too often dismissed as a stale and derivative imitation of supposedly greater artists. I will show how expanding upon pre-existing fictional worlds can add to our understanding of a parent text by drawing attention to aspects of plot or character that have been marginalized or glossed over, thus engaging in an active dialogue with a literary predecessor. Even more than that, such an approach to storytelling can help us gain a better understanding of the cultural content embedded within a certain text, often revealing unconscious material associated with the era in which it was originally conceived and showing its link to controversial present-day issues.

But first it will be necessary to answer two important questions: What *defines* fan fiction and neo-Victorianism respectively? What distinguishes them from other forms of writing? In the case of fan fiction, the answer seems to be fairly obvious – yet matters are not quite as clear-cut as they might appear at first glance. The distinction between a fan writer and a ‘genuine’ author may seem obvious, but as Anne Jamison points out: “Reworking an existing story, telling tales of heroes already known to be heroic, was *the* model of authorship until very recently” (2013, 18; emphasis in the original). Greek dramatists seized upon a well-known body of myths, re-using plots and characters to give a new spin to an old tale: Euripides’s *Medea*, for example, supplies its source material with a new ending that turns the titular character into a deliberate filicide, whereas older versions of the myth portrayed her sons’ deaths as an accident or held the citizens of Corinth responsible for the deed. Likewise, Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* is most likely based on a source text lost to history and a contemporary dramatic adaptation of the Hamlet story.<sup>3</sup>

Furthermore, if we follow Julia Kristeva’s definition of intertextuality, “any text is a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another” (1980, 66). No literary text exists in isolation, but it is only rendered comprehensible by seizing upon an indeterminate number of intertexts that render it accessible to the reader. That is how certain tropes can be used or subverted. But of course, this relationship between different texts exists regardless of the author’s intentions and it does not necessarily take the form of an overt connection between a clearly identifiable parent text and a pastiche, parody, or adaptation. Fan fictions (and commercially produced rewritings) are a special case because they do not merely allude to their literary predecessor, but take place within the same fictional space, employing the same fictional characters. Even in the Victorian period, when the concepts of intellectual ownership and of the author as the sole creator of a work of fiction were most likely at their strongest, forerunners to fan fiction existed: “Fans have been engaging in illicit, unsanctioned interactions with other

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<sup>3</sup> The so-called *Ur-Hamlet* was first mentioned in 1589, at least ten years before Shakespeare’s version appeared on the London stage. Neither the play itself nor the identity of its author are known any longer, yet its existence is fairly well established (Jenkins 2008, 83).

people's characters and stories since at least the nineteenth century. Jane Austen's niece once wrote her a letter addressed to Georgiana Darcy. In 1893, no less a fan than J.M. Barrie wrote a story starring Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson" (Grossman 2013, xii).

Keeping this in mind, it becomes fairly obvious that the distinction between a 'real' author (who supposedly creates a whole fictional world out of thin air) and a fan (who merely revisits somebody else's intellectual property) does not hold: it is a more or less arbitrary dividing line, based upon fallacious notions of how a literary text is created and what 'genuine' literature ought to look like. As such, the term 'fan fiction' simultaneously challenges and perpetuates the notion of a more or less one-directional author-reader-relationship. On the one hand, it subverts the notion of a passive reader by virtue of the fact that the fans become actively involved with specific fictional universes, creating their own stories and adding their voices to the archive. On the other hand, however, the term clearly holds on to a clear-cut distinction between a fan and a 'real' author. It might be tempting to draw the line between these two according to the degree of professionalism and craftsmanship involved, yet the distinction between fan fiction and 'real' literature cannot necessarily be made simply in terms of quality of writing. While many (if not most) fan creations may indeed lack the literary skill that would make them eligible for commercial publication, some of these texts certainly do qualify as genuine art that can easily live up to the standards of 'serious' literature. Simultaneously, some published texts – including commercially successful ones – may not necessarily rise above even the poorer examples of fan fiction. The example of E.L. James's incredibly successful novel *Fifty Shades of Grey* (which started out as a series of fan fiction stories set in Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* universe) should serve as sufficient evidence that these boundaries are permeable and that these distinctions only help to communicate a very general idea about how a specific fiction relates to others. For the purpose of this essay, the defining characteristic that distinguishes fan fiction from traditionally published neo-Victorian rewritings is the fact that the former is not distributed for commercial purposes, but only circulated within the fan community. Professionalism is a defining criterion, but only as far as monetary aspects are concerned. Other than that, a neo-Victorian text like *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* could easily be classified as fan fiction, as it so clearly seizes upon pre-existing characters and settings from 19<sup>th</sup>-century literature.

Far from being merely derivative, fan fiction explores pre-existing fictional universes further than the original authors ever did, thus allowing people to develop "a richer understanding of [themselves] and the culture around [them]" by means of their own "folk culture" and their communal efforts to "share and compare value systems by evaluating fictional dramas" (Jenkins 2008, loc. 3923). The same can be said about most neo-Victorian pastiches or rewritings: they are a form of auto-ethnography, tracing the roots of contentious issues within the present cultural climate back to their supposed historical origin. They give a voice to characters who were once silenced, provide perspectives that were once considered

taboo, and thereby have the potential to transform their readers' perception of the past and present alike. According to Derecho, "the archontic principle seeks to empower and elevate what is subordinate [...]. Fan fiction has a long history of appealing to women and minorities, individuals on the cultural margins who use archontic writing as a means to express not only their narrative creativity, but their criticisms of social and political inequities as well" (2006, 76). This observation can most certainly also be applied to neo-Victorian fiction.

But what does the term 'neo-Victorianism' convey? Like 'intertextuality,' it is a term that is often "underdetermined in meaning and overdetermined in figuration," as Graham Allen put it (2000, 2). More often than not, it is indiscriminately used to refer to any recently published fictional text set in the Victorian period. Even the online *Journal of Neo-Victorian Studies* refused to establish a clear-cut definition of the term in its opening issue, going so far as to apply it to fictional texts set during the Regency period or the Edwardian era:

What this introduction will not, indeed cannot pretend to do, then, is to provide the (still) missing definitions or delineate possible generic, chronological, and aesthetic boundaries – objectives which more properly belong to the project ahead. The same refusal of pre-emption also underlies the editorial board's decision to adopt the widest possible interpretation of "neo-Victorian", so as to include the whole of the nineteenth century, its cultural discourses and products, and their abiding legacies, not just within British and British colonial contexts and not necessarily coinciding with Queen Victoria's realm; that is, to interpret neo-Victorianism outside of the limiting nationalistic and temporal identifications that "Victorian", in itself or in conjunction with "neo-", conjures up for some critics. (Kohlke 2008, 2)

Keeping the term's definition as open as possible has its advantages, especially as it allows for a wider range of critical inquiry and promotes the gradual formation of a scholarly consensus. If the boundaries were drawn too tight in advance, important aspects of the phenomenon as such might be missed by researchers. However, a concise definition of what constitutes a neo-Victorian text and – even more importantly – what does *not*, is clearly desirable. My essay expands upon a definition that has been formulated by Ann Heilmann and Mark Llewellyn: "[T]he 'neo-Victorian' is *more than* historical fiction set in the nineteenth century. To be [considered a part of this genre], texts (literary, filmic, audio/visual) must in some respect be *self-consciously engaged with the act of (re)interpretation, (re)discovery, and (re)vision concerning the Victorians*" (2010, 4; emphases in the original). This meta-fictional awareness is a crucial part of neo-Victorianism, setting it apart from more conventional historical novels set in the Victorian period. These are best classified as 'pseudo-Victorian,' as they tend to emulate Victorian parent texts without casting a new light upon their subject matter. Although such texts sometimes contain interesting subversions and anachronisms, these tend to be predominantly unintention-

tional, owing more to a lack of research than to any conscious effort on the part of the authors. These texts do not aim to challenge clichéd Victorian tropes or stereotypical characters, but merely reproduce them to the best of the writers' ability.

To give an example, the difference between Annabella Bloom's pastiche *Wuthering Heights: The Wild and Wanton Edition* and Peter Carey's novel *Jack Maggs* should be readily apparent. *Jack Maggs* is a rewriting of Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations*, told from a post-colonial vantage point that draws attention to prevalent Victorian prejudices with regard to the penal colonies and their inhabitants. Both the titular protagonist, a stand-in for Dickens's Magwitch, and his young protégé Henry Phipps are portrayed in a fashion that contrasts strongly with the parent text. Whereas Dickens's Magwitch at first appeared as a terrifying figure who embodied every misgiving and prejudice the Victorians had with regard to the inhabitants of their penal colonies, Carey's Jack Maggs appears in a decidedly more positive light. His desire to return to and identify with the land of his birth is portrayed as a tragic flaw, a misjudgment that is embodied in the shape of the unworthy Henry Phipps. The young man is callous and ungrateful and only desires to protect his good name from being associated with a former convict, while disowning his secret benefactor as much as possible. An in-depth analysis of Carey's novel would exceed the scope of this essay, yet, put succinctly, the rewriting directs the readers' attention towards the underlying colonialist ideology embedded in *Great Expectations*, steering their sympathies more clearly towards the exiled convict rather than his unworthy surrogate son. Thus, Carey criticizes Dickens's portrayal of Magwitch as a quasi-demonic figure and redeems the character by giving him a voice of his own. In short, it is a clever inversion of its parent text that emulates and reconfigures its predecessor.

Annabella Bloom, on the other hand, has reduced Emily Brontë's classic *Wuthering Heights* to a truncated romance novel interspersed with semi-pornographic effusions. Her version of Cathy describes: "When his arms surround me, I feel his body harden against me, his staff lengthen and press into my belly" (Bloom 2011, 2). Erotica certainly do have their place in the wider realm of fiction, and female desire in particular has been underrepresented in the past. Yet in this particular case, it is perfectly clear that Bloom's re-telling cannot offer any new insights into Brontë's novel. On the contrary, it reduces its source material to a perfunctory romance whose primary function is to provide sexual stimulation. The best that could be said about this novel is that it reclaims female passion, embracing an ethos that stands in marked contrast to the sinner-saint-dichotomy underlying traditional (Victorian) middle-class conceptions of femininity. By portraying the relationship between Catherine and Heathcliff in primarily erotic terms, Bloom defies and challenges the notion of a predominantly passive and subdued female sexuality. It is highly dubitable whether this subversion of Victorian morality is the result of a deliberate engagement with the past, however; it more likely results from an anachronistic projection of contemporary standards upon the past.

To recapitulate: it is a deliberate engagement with specific historical or cultural blind spots that defines neo-Victorian fiction and distinguishes it from retro-Victorian imitations. This confrontation of the collective Victorian ‘Shadow’ (in the sense of a Jungian archetype embodying the darker aspects of 19<sup>th</sup>-century culture) is a central element of neo-Victorianism – and it can be found in vastly different texts from many different sub-genres, ranging from graphic novels over crime fiction to ‘literary’ novels. “The re-presentation of the Victorian era in [neo-Victorian] novels celebrates the potential of the literary text as an act of memory. Its imaginative re-creation stems from a desire to re-member the period as part of [...] our cultural memory, and asserts both continuities and discontinuities between Victorian culture and our own” (Mitchell 2010, 182). In some cases, it might be difficult to distinguish whether a specific text qualifies as pseudo- or as neo-Victorian, yet such a distinction most certainly helps to establish certain generic criteria.

Literary texts that deliberately seize upon preceding fictions need not be mere imitations. They can be valuable expansions of their source material or even engage in a sort of dialogue with their parent text that challenges some of its assumptions. An excellent example of this approach can be found in Alan Moore and Kevin O’Neill’s comic book series *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*. First published in 1999 by the independent publisher America’s Best Comics,<sup>4</sup> this series is based upon the premise that any fictional text ever published is actually a factual report. As a result, it takes place in an alternative Victorian age where Count Dracula’s invasion of Britain was barely averted, Sherlock Holmes faked his death at the Reichenbach falls, and Martians are invading the planet with gigantic tripods (just to mention a few events). The title *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* evokes a certain Victorian style, yet at the same time links it to contemporary superhero team comics such as DC’s *Justice League* or – in terms of the team members’ status as maligned outcasts and social misfits – Marvel’s *X-Men*. In fact, the first two collected volumes of the series can be read as a meta-fictional meditation on the roots of the superhero genre, highlighting its ties to 19<sup>th</sup>-century literature. This is especially apparent in the case of Dr. Jekyll and his monstrous alter ego, Edward Hyde (from Robert Louis Stevenson’s novella): Hyde, as the embodiment of the isolated, uninhibited darker side of Dr. Jekyll’s original personality, has grown to enormous proportions – a colossal brute that clearly serves as a nod to one of the character’s literary descendants, Marvel Comic’s *Incredible Hulk*.<sup>5</sup> Jekyll/Hyde is but one member of a larger group of protagonists who were created by different authors – like the heroes of the *Justice League* such as Batman (created by Bob Kane and Bill Finger) and Wonder Woman (originally conceived by the psychologist and

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<sup>4</sup> America’s Best Comics was founded by Alan Moore who has spent his entire life in Great Britain; so it is safe to assume that the title is at least partially ironic.

<sup>5</sup> The Hulk’s creator, Stan Lee, freely admits to his source of inspiration: “I decided I might as well borrow from Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde [...] – our protagonist would constantly change from his normal identity to his superhuman alter ego and back again” (1974, 75).

writer William Moulton Marston). They are recruited by the British Secret Service and serve as a covert unit charged with protecting the Empire from unusual threats. Like a late Victorian version of the *X-Men*, they seek to help a world that rejects, fears, or reviles most of them. Moore and O'Neill seized upon a wide range of Victorian literature, ranging from classics to the most obscure 'penny dreadfuls.' In true neo-Victorian fashion, they imbue well-known characters and their original narratives with new layers of meaning. Two protagonists in particular stand in marked contrast to the way they were portrayed in their parent texts – even if they are still clearly identifiable.

Allan Quatermain, originally created by Henry Rider Haggard, would seem to be an ideal candidate for the position of the leader of the Victorian *League* – at least in the hands of writers who sought to perpetuate the message of the parent texts.<sup>6</sup> In the parent texts, Quatermain was the quintessential 'great white hunter,' a personification of the British Empire and its colonial politics. Haggard portrayed him as an unbroken hero who carried the torch of civilization into the 'dark continent' of Africa. As the son of a widowed missionary, born and raised abroad, Allan is all but predestined to bear what Rudyard Kipling famously referred to as "The White Man's Burden." Although Haggard's novels are not entirely unsympathetic with regard to foreign ethnicities, they clearly reflect the dominant views of the Victorian era, including a belief in the superiority of the 'white race' and the perceived need to spread Christianity throughout the world. In *Allan Quatermain*, it is established that the titular hero died in 1885, ending his heroic career as a champion of the British Empire. However, Alan Moore and Kevin O'Neill resurrect the character by portraying the news of his demise as a deliberate misinformation spread by Quatermain in order to retire. In *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*, the "Empire's favourite son" (Moore and O'Neill 2000, 31) is essentially a broken man, not a shining hero: an opium addict who wastes away in the slums of Egypt (Moore and O'Neill 2000, 11ff.). At this point of history, in 1889, the colonialist dream had started to rot from inside, gradually losing its veneer of a noble purpose, and Allan Quatermain reflects this particular change. He is still the personification of the British Empire and its colonial politics, yet now the image is no longer that of a paragon of English virtue. His opium addiction (and his dependency on the Egyptian criminals who provide him with it) may be especially ironic, considering that Britain was openly producing and selling the drug at that time and had even waged two wars in China in order to keep distributing it. A wasted, old man, Quatermain has outlived his glory days, and what remains is a damaged, elderly anti-hero who leaves his retirement only reluctantly.

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<sup>6</sup> And indeed, the film adaptation of *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* – which was very poorly received by audiences and critics alike – places him in the leadership position, which generates some rather problematic subtexts with regard to the role of the British Empire. The fact that he passes his gun on to Tom Sawyer (a character specifically added for the young male American demographic) only adds to this problem.



In sharp contrast to this, Mina Murray (formerly Harker) is a considerably more pro-active character than her previous literary incarnation. While she served as little more than a ‘damsel in distress’ in Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*, she becomes the determined leader of the *League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*. This may appear like a considerable breach of character at first sight, yet Moore and O’Neill have managed to let the transition appear rather smoothly. In Stoker’s novel, Wilhelmina Murray is the epitome of middle-class propriety, a virtuous ‘angel in the house.’ She serves as a foil to the aristocrat Lucy Westenrae, whose upper-class decadence makes her a perfect victim for the erotic reverse colonization of Count Dracula. Mina, on the other hand, is ultimately saved by her rigid bourgeois morality, for even though she is bitten by the count as well, her reaction is to recoil from herself in horror, crying: “Unclean, unclean!” (Stoker 1897/1994, 339). Her particularly Victorian morality is best exemplified by an early scene in *Dracula*: after tracking her sleepwalking friend Lucy through town, Mina escorts her back home, slipping her shoes onto the bare feet of her friend:

As we passed along, the gravel hurt my feet, and Lucy noticed me wince. She stopped and wanted to insist upon taking my shoes; but I would not. However, when we got to the pathway outside the churchyard, where there was a puddle of water remaining from the storm, I daubed my feet with mud, using each foot in turn on the other, so that as we went home no one, in case we should meet anyone, should notice my bare feet. (114)

Considering that the Victorian age viewed exposed ankles in the same way contemporary society views exposed female breasts, Mina’s actions in this scene might become a little more relatable – yet from a 21<sup>st</sup>-century point of view, such dedication to propriety with regard to such a comparatively insignificant detail in the middle of an emergency situation must appear quaint and unintentionally humorous. However, it also bespeaks a considerable strength of character, a strong determination that allows her to survive the hardships to follow.

*Dracula* concludes with an epilogue set seven years after the plot’s resolution. Stoker depicts Mina and Jonathan Harker as a happily married couple, raising a son (named “Quincey” after a friend who died in the final struggle with Count Dracula). But as in the case of Quatermain, Moore and O’Neill change this particular detail by following Victorian morality concerning ‘fallen’ women to its logical conclusion: the Victorians did not look kindly upon women who had ‘lost their honour,’ regardless of whether they had been willing accomplices in their ‘fall,’ or not.<sup>7</sup> With this in mind, it seems highly unlikely that Mina would have been able to retain her social status. Accordingly, *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* portrays her as a disgraced divorcee and an outcast from the British middle class. Deeply trau-

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<sup>7</sup> For example, the titular heroine of Thomas Hardy’s *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* (1891) experienced disgrace and social ostracism on account of having been raped by her lewd cousin.

matized by Count Dracula's attack, Mina hides her scars – which also serve as a symbol of her fallen state – with a red scarf, simultaneously hiding and drawing attention to her mark of shame. She is highly self-conscious with regard to these marks and cannot conceive that anybody might view her disfigurement as anything other than a signifier of her status as a 'fallen woman' (Moore and O'Neill 2003, 102ff.). However, her exclusion from polite society has only fortified the strength of character already present in Stoker's novel. The divorced Mina Murray is a New Woman who challenges the conventions of her days, as reflected by her reversion to her maiden name, a practice that was highly scandalous in the late 1800s (Moore and O'Neill 2000, 12). Society may view her as an outcast, yet she keeps fighting for her home country, becoming the leader and emotional centrepiece of the *League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*. And unlike several other members of the League, she relies solely on her keen mind and courageous determination. As an unlikely protagonist, she has to struggle against the patriarchal mores of the Victorian world that surrounds her, even in relation to her companions. She stands her ground against the monstrous Edward Hyde (Moore and O'Neill 2000, 138) and even manages to keep the invisible psychopath Hawley Griffin in check. The alpha males Quatermain and Nemo occasionally chafe at the notion of receiving orders from a woman (Moore and O'Neill 2000, 44, 118), yet neither of them openly defies her or undermines her command. In fact, it is her very status as a woman that allows her to unite the group, as all the other members would be sure to challenge and second-guess each other.

The repressed sexuality of Mina's character that was present in Stoker's *Dracula* is still there, even if it is gradually disappearing due to the experiences she had to go through: when the League visits a girls' school run by a character who originated in Victorian pornography,<sup>8</sup> Mina coldly refuses the headmistress's job offer (Moore and O'Neill 2000, 49), communicating her disdain for the flagellant with a middle-class haughtiness that is reflected by her facial expression. She decidedly breaks with Victorian morality, however, when she initiates the seduction of Allan Quatermain at a later point of the series, explicitly stating that her expulsion from polite society should suffice to render such decorum superfluous: "Allan, you are **dead**, while I am divorced, disgraced and disregarded by the world. Could **anything** make us **more** wrong, do you suppose?" (Moore and O'Neill 2003, 97; emphases in the original). This determination to make the best of a wretched situation is very much in keeping with Stoker's original depiction of the character, who used the mental link provided by Count Dracula's corruption to help her companions track down and slay the vampire.

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<sup>8</sup> Rosa Coote "first appeared as the supposed author and narrator of Dugdale's *The Convent School, or Early Experiences of a Young Flagellant* (1876), a pornographic novel about flagellation, especially with birch wands" (Nevins 2003, 53).

Nonetheless, Mina Murray was transformed from the very stereotype of a demure Victorian middle-class woman into a self-confident (proto-)feminist, simply by following the source material to its logical conclusion. This character (along with the rest of the protagonists and the setting as such) is a perfect example of what both neo-Victorian pastiches and fan fiction can aspire to: providing voices to underrepresented minorities, re-evaluating ideological discourses hidden within well-known texts, and uncovering the shadows that lurk within our collective cultural unconscious. To conclude: both fan fiction and neo-Victorian fiction have the potential to add new, formerly marginalized, oppressed, or omitted perspectives to the Derridean archives of their parent texts. By doing so, they contribute to a collective auto-ethnographic memory work that allows writers and readers alike to approach abject material buried within a nation's cultural history. Far from being merely derivative, many such rewritings allow for a better understanding of both the past and – even more importantly – the present. Contemporary society's enormous interest in the abject sides of Victorian culture revolves less around a desire to push the Victorians off their pedestal and has more to do with finding the origin of our own society's conflict zones, regardless of whether they revolve around gender, politics, sex, or some other aspect.

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## Aspects of Victorian Serial Publication in Neo-Victorian Fiction: *The Glass Books of the Dream Eaters* and *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*

*Sabina Fazli*

A large number of Victorian novels that readers today encounter as one-volume editions had originally appeared in instalments, either in periodicals or part issues. Additionally, before serial novels were reprinted in three-, two-, or one-volume editions, the texts were often revised and adapted to the new form. Although serialization was not invented by the Victorians, it had an especially prominent place in 19<sup>th</sup>-century print culture in which, Mark Turner observes, “serial reading became pervasive and, arguably, the most significant literary form for much of the century” (2005, 115). Some characteristic features of the Victorian serial are today evoked in postmodern neo-Victorian and steampunk texts.

Serialization was an important aspect of 19<sup>th</sup>-century publishing that shaped both the Victorian readers’ habits and experiences of texts and the texts themselves. Victorian authors had to mold their stories to the serial form, and the prerogative of motivating readers to buy the next number affected the way they conceived their plots. Charles Reade’s formula of “make ’em laugh, make ’em cry,

make 'em wait" encapsulates the strategy of emotional involvement, suspense, and deferral.<sup>1</sup> The context of serial novels was thus markedly different from their later one-volume reincarnations.

The start of Charles Dickens's *The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club* in 1836 is usually taken as the moment when serial publication really took off. The *Pickwick Papers* were published in monthly parts and ran until 1837. They were sold in "distinctive duck-green wrappers" (Law 2000, 18) and framed by pages of advertising, which made up about one third of each number (Williams 2010, 319). The advertising that appeared in these pages mainly consisted of microscopic print and had been written by salesmen themselves rather than specialized agencies (Wicke 1988, 36).

Much more so than in their modern one-volume editions, the fictional world of serialized novels was disrupted by the forced period of waiting for the next instalment. Through the extended temporality of serial reading, the reader's life was entwined with the fictional world in the text. As Linda K. Hughes and Michael Lund have argued, reading fiction in instalments re-enacts Victorian conceptions of history, progress, and personal development as requiring patience and steady work. As such, the serial was embedded in dominant Victorian notions of gradual and long-term change on the level of both individual biography and history (Hughes and Lund 1991, 4-6). In everyday life, reading a narrative stretched over several months with interruptions between instalments means that the intervals can be filled with speculations on the development of the story and the fate of the characters. These discussions with neighbours and family enhance the readers' emotional connection with the protagonists (10). This shared anticipation not only has a private or local but also a national dimension. Unlike the solitary reading of a one-volume edition, serial reading on this scale creates a "community of readers" who share their speculations and collectively engage in the same rituals such as the anticipation of "magazine day" (10).

Victorian writers also self-referentially commented on the genre's success in their own (serialized) texts and depicted the spellbound reader of serial novels. Elizabeth Gaskell's *Cranford* (which ran in Dickens's *Household Words* in 1851) takes up the excitement generated by serial fiction. Captain Brown, a new addition to the mostly female circle of Cranfordians is reading the latest instalment of the *Pickwick Papers* just before he is run over by a train: as a witness to the tragic death reports, Captain Brown was "[a]-reading some new book as he was deep in" (Gaskell 1851/2009, 24). In this episode, Gaskell assembles two striking features of Victo-

<sup>1</sup> This quotation has been variously attributed to Wilkie Collins, Charles Dickens, and Charles Reade. In *Dead Secrets*, for instance, Tamar Heller writes that "'[m]ake 'em cry, make 'em laugh, make 'em wait' was one of his [Collins's] mottoes" (1992, 7). Dahlquist's commentary in *The Guardian* uses the phrase in its title attributing it to Collins, and five days later adds a correction: "The headline quotation 'Make 'em cry, make 'em laugh, make 'em wait' in this article, attributed in the text to Wilkie Collins, is usually ascribed to Charles Reade as 'Make em laugh; make em cry; make em wait.'" (See Webster's Online Dictionary under Em)" (Dahlquist 2007b).

rian modernity: serial publication engendering the avid and immersed reader of serial fiction, and the train as the epitome of progress and changing perceptions of time. Captain Brown has not only longingly waited for the next instalment of the story, he also had to defend his passion for serial literature against allegations of frivolity against Cranford's arbiter of 'high literature,' Deborah Jenkyns, who is a follower of Johnson. The character of Captain Brown in this scene stands for the serial reader who struggles with the blurred line between fictional and real world, which was an enduring concern in reviews of serial literature. In 1845, an anonymous contributor to *The North British Review* complains that

the form of publication of Mr. Dickens' works must be attended with bad consequences. [...] The monthly number comes in so winningly, with methodical punctuality, and with so moderate an amount at a time, that novel-reading becomes a sort of occupation, and not to have seen the last number of Martin Chuzzlewit is about as irregular as not to have balanced your books. (Anon. 85)

The reviewer also notes the anxiety evident in Captain Brown's predicament, the serial reader's dangerous immersion in the text:

It throws us into a state of unreal excitement, a trance, a dream, which we should be allowed to dream out, and then sent back to the atmosphere of reality again, cured by our brief surfeit of the desire to indulge again soon in the same delirium of feverish interest. But now our dreams are mingled with our daily business. (85)

The readers of Gaskell's serial novel experienced the same mingling of "daily business" and "dreams" that preceded Captain Brown's accident. The success of the serial novel in the Victorian period was accompanied by its denigration as a low and commercial form. Serial publication especially highlighted the interaction of writers and the marketplace, and writing in numbers was perceived as reducing art to a 'mechanical' routine. The schedule of producing text for regular instalments seems to be at odds with romantic notions of the inspired genius (Turner 2005, 118-119). Serial fiction, and especially sensation novels which dominated the market in the middle of the century, were suspect to critics because of both their mass appeal and close association with writing as a trade. The anonymous contributor to the 1845 article on Dickens also complains about another effect of the serial novel as part of the market place. Readers' wishes, she or he argues, can directly influence the author: "it is scarcely necessary to add, how very injurious to the novel, as a work of art, this mode of publication must be, and the opportunity it gives to the author to know the sentiments of the public, and to them to interfere with the conduct of the tale" (Anon. 86). The article decries the direct influence of the (mass) reader's taste on the work of art, which compromises its place in high culture.

Through its paratexts, the format of the serial novel not only addressed readers as *readers* but also as *consumers* of services and commodities: part-issued novels, for example, were often accompanied by supplements that carried adverts. Economic concerns were thus not only seen as marring the production of serial novels but also as impinging on the context in which fiction appeared in periodicals which, in turn, contaminated the novel. A review article on sensation novels complained that “[a] periodical, from its very nature, must contain many articles of an ephemeral interest, and of the character of goods made to order,” soliciting “tales of the marketable stamp” (Mansel 1863, 484). Fiction increasingly viewed as a commodity is thus placed alongside advertisements for other, equally ephemeral, products, and both elicit “only a transitory interest” (484) in readers and consumers. Advertising began to boom between 1850 and 1880 due to new illustration techniques, professionalization of publishers and press, and the rise of disposable income among possible consumers, which made advertising worthwhile in the first place. Apart from its appearance in print media, advertising also expanded in the urban space through bill posting (starting in the mid-century), large shop windows (from about the 1830s), and illuminated advertising (in the 1890s) (Eichhammer 2013, 108). Charles Dickens’s *Pickwick Papers*, which blazed the trail for Victorian serial fiction, ran from March 1836 to November 1837. In each number, “The Pickwick Advertiser” precedes the adventures of the Pickwick club and about ten pages of advertising follow after it (Williams 2010, 319). Advertising and illustrations framed fictional narratives both in the format of monthly parts and in magazines. In the latter, fictional texts also appeared alongside journalism and news. The result of reading novels in the context of periodicals or as part-issues together with ‘advertisers’ and wrappers is that the fictional text is not *the* but just *one* text among many. Laurel Brake, for example, calls this “the heteroglossia of these hybrid texts” (2001, 222).

Advertising and fiction often complemented each other, either intentionally or coincidentally. The advertisers that accompanied the individual numbers of *Bleak House* and *Our Mutual Friend*, for example, use the same gothic rhetoric as the novels themselves, which leads to a continuum rather than breaks between the genres (Thornton 2004, 61-64). Laurel Brake points out another such dialogue between fiction and advert in *Daniel Deronda* when the instalment ending with the sentence: “‘She was found in this, crushed on the floor. Such grief seemed natural in a poor lady whose husband had been drowned in her presence’ (Eliot 1871/72, Book VII, r62) is juxtaposed with an advert on the back wrapper recto for the Scottish Widow’s Fund” (Brake 2001, 221-222). A second type of advertising referred to other novels or poems: for example, periodicals usually carried adverts for serial novels that would start in the next number while the last instalments of the previous novel were still running, which would also create interesting overlaps and suggest continuities that might not have been intended as such.



Adverts, news, and journalistic pieces constitute paratexts that materialize the intertwining of fiction and real world that especially troubled Victorian critics of serial novels. Magazines and wrappers that carry advertising, classified ads, and journalism create the space in which such mingling takes place. The term ‘paratext’ has been coined by Gérard Genette to denote “verbal or other productions” that surround the literary text and allow for its publication and ‘presentation’ to the reader (1997, 1). To emphasize the function of the paratext as a permeable boundary between text and off-text, Genette uses spatial metaphors from architecture describing this space as the “threshold” or “‘vestibule’ that offers the world at large the possibility of either stepping inside or turning back” (2). He further differentiates paratexts according to their location. The ‘peritext’ can be found “within the same volume” (4) and is thus defined by its spatial proximity to the text proper. In contrast, the ‘epitext’ consists of the more “distanced elements” that are not part of the volume and may include not only diaries, letters, and reviews but also other media (5). The Victorian serial novel can be described as existing in a rich paratextual frame both inside the periodical or part issue and through communal reading practices in the real world.

## Victorian Reading in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

A new appreciation of the importance of original Victorian publishing formats for novels and other texts has led to attempts of recreating the Victorian experience of reading. However, investigating such planned or accidental matches between fiction and periodical paratext is often hampered by the design of magazines which made sure that the front and back pages carrying ads could easily be removed before being bound in one volume (Lauterbach 1967, 431). But several projects have been dedicated to recuperating – often in an academic context – the temporal aspect of serial reading, such as the “No Name Reading Project” on *Dickens Journals Online* (2006), which has, as yet, completed two novels accompanied by discussions on blogs; Stanford University’s *Discovering Dickens: A Community Reading Project* (2005); and Christopher Hapka’s *Mousehold Words* (n.d.). Hapka writes that through his web page the reader

can experience these great works just as their first readers did. MOUSEHOLD WORDS emails you one serial part at a time, just as Dickens’ or Dumas’ readers would have read them, on a schedule you choose. Our digital serial editions feature the original serial divisions and are professionally edited and formatted for reading on your tablet, mobile device or computer.

To “experience these great works just as their first readers did” implies a desire to understand a different way of reading the often canonized Victorian text helped by “tablet, mobile device or computer.” In a short piece in which he reflects on the

challenge of writing and reading in instalments, Dahlquist compares the Victorian communal reading of numbers in the family circle with the discussion of new instalments in online communities (2007b). In 2012, *The Observer* reported on Amazon's plans to sell e-books in instalments. Although serial fiction by no means ended with the period, the article evokes serial reading as typically Victorian, and its evocation of Victorian seriality and Amazon's reference to the social aspect of serial reading are worth quoting:

In 1841, a British cargo ship caused a riot as it docked in New York harbour. It was carrying the next instalment of Charles Dickens' latest blockbuster *The Old Curiosity Shop*, and the mob was anxious to learn the fate of Little Nell. Serialised fiction has fallen out of fashion since its 19th-century heyday, but that could be about to change with Amazon's Kindle serials range, just launched in America. Using the internet to revive the form that gave us *Middlemarch* and *Anna Karenina* is not a new idea. Stephen King tried it 12 years ago with *The Plant* and, in 2008, the Telegraph website published Alexander McCall Smith's serial novel *Corduroy Mansions*. Where Amazon's venture differs is its convenience: users pay for the story upfront, with new chapters delivered to the Kindle as soon as they are published. Amazon is also playing up the social side. "Join the discussion," implores Jeff Bezos, and you can see how episodic storytelling, with its cliffhangers and multi-stranded plots, might lend itself to virtual water-cooler chat. [...] How exciting would it be if an author were to use this neo-Victorian format to breathe life into the state-of-the-nation novel? (Baddeley 2012)

This new interest in reading Victorian novels in a form that approaches their original shape as well as the reference to serial reading as 'Victorian' dovetail with creative texts that go back to the Victorian period to engage with the Victorian past through texts. Mark Llewellyn describes neo-Victorian texts as "in the main, processes of writing that act out the results of reading the Victorians and their literary productions" (2008, 168). Neo-Victorian fiction as a genre that thematizes the act of reading and the importance of textuality to access the past sometimes references the aspect of Victorian seriality by addressing the 21<sup>st</sup>-century reader as a Victorian consumer of serial novels.

Thus *The Guardian* serialized the first chapter of Michel Faber's *The Crimson Petal and the White* before the book was published. Faber wrote an introduction to the first instalment in which he points out serial reading as an attempt to recapture a Victorian experience in the present:

She [the first reader who read the instalments before publication] told me she understood what Victorian readers must have felt like, waiting on the docks for the arrival of the latest Dickens serial. Now the Guardian is offering you the same experience. My story will be disassembled into bytes,

injected into a website, and, when you download it, the year 1875 will re-constitute itself before your very eyes (Victorian hype). [...] [Y]ou be the judge. I have done my best to offer you a world that feels lived in and characters for whom you can care. Follow the signs to the 19th century; read on. (Faber 2002)

As in the case of *Mousehold Words*, serial reading becomes possible by way of new media, and the internet allows for shared anticipation and speculation among readers. However, in this detour, Faber ironically promises the reader “the same experience” as the Victorian reader of serial fiction. In the same vein, when readers complained about the inconclusive ending of Faber’s *The Crimson Petal and the White*, he answered in the preface to the collection *The Apple: Crimson Petal Stories*: “[I]sn’t it fun, at the end of a book, to be challenged to do what the Victorians were obliged to do between installments of serialized novels: construct what happens next in our imaginations?” (Faber 2011, xvi). In his response, Michel Faber alludes to the re-enactment of Victorian reading for 21<sup>st</sup>-century readers. This is arguably possible by tentatively inhabiting the Victorian reader’s set of expectations about the following instalments, especially the anticipation during the enforced pause between parts of serialized fiction. In Faber’s description, this process relies as much on the imagination of the reader as on the novel’s tentative open ending. It directly involves the reader in the perpetuation of the plot and engenders immersion on more than one level. In these two instances, Victorian seriality seems to be part of the desire to access an authentic “world that feels lived in” (Faber 2002), including instant gratification and the author’s ironic reminder that this would actually have involved waiting for and imagining the next instalment. Both the serial reading projects of Victorian classics and neo-Victorian forays into seriality suggest that serial reading somehow reduces the distance between the 21<sup>st</sup>-century reader and the Victorian period.

In the following, I would like to look at how two neo-Victorian and steampunk texts reference serial publication and periodical paratexts to suggest a Victorian context for their consumption. I will concentrate on the ‘heteroglossia’ of serial fiction and the danger posed by immersion in serial fiction.

### ***The Glass Books of the Dream Eaters: Immersed Readers and Serialization***

In Gordon Dahlquist’s steampunk fantasy *The Glass Books of the Dream Eaters*,<sup>2</sup> serialization is both a marketing strategy and ties in with the diegetic concern about

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<sup>2</sup> *The Glass Books of the Dream Eaters* is Gordon Dahlquist’s first novel, published in 2006, followed by *The Dark Volume* in 2008 and *The Chemickal Marriage* in 2012. The novels constitute the *Glass Books* trilogy.

reading material and readers. Viking published the first edition of the *Glass Books* in weekly part-issues between September 2006 and January 2007, each part ending in a cliffhanger. Interestingly, the decision to publish the novel in parts was taken by Viking to match the format to the novel's Victorian setting (Dahlquist 2007b). Readers could subscribe for the issues on the publisher's website, and in *The Guardian's* column "The Bookseller," Joel Rickett commented that Viking anachronously "resurrect[ed] the faded art of the fiction serial" (2006), a phrase that echoes both Michel Faber and *Mousehold Words*. In a commentary titled "Make 'em cry, make 'em laugh, make 'em wait," Dahlquist reflects on the implications of writing and reading in parts, which brings readers "in touch with another sort of reading altogether." The difference lies in "an appreciation for partial knowledge as a natural state of mind [...] [T]he experience of reading in pieces acclimatizes one to a different sort of satisfaction, more rooted in the present, where events are appreciated without the conventional endings yet to come" (Dahlquist 2007b).

The novel is set in an unnamed place and unidentified period strongly resembling Victorian Britain. The glass books of the title are a fantastic medium to store memories and experiences and make them available for others to read or re-experience. Dr. Svenson, one of the protagonists, describes reading glass books as follows:

It was like entering someone else's dream. After a moment the blue cast of the glass vanished as if he had pierced a veil ... he was staring into a room – a dark comfortable room with a great red sofa and hanging chandeliers and luxurious carpets – and then [...] the image *moved*, as if he was walking, or standing and turning his gaze about the salon – and he saw *people*, people who were looking right at him. He could hear nothing save the sound of his own breath, but his mind had otherwise fully entered the space of these images – *moving* images – like photographs, but not like them also, at once more vivid and less sharp, more fully dimensional and incomprehensibly infused with sensation [...]. (Dahlquist 2007a, 147-148; emphasis in the original)

Another character in the novel compares reading blue glass to swimming, "so immersive were the sensations, so tactile the images" (204). Glass-book reading conveys an extraordinary sense of immediacy and involvement, which echoes the sense of 'immersion' that Janet H. Murray describes in *Hamlet on the Holodeck* as "the sensation of being surrounded by a completely other reality, as different as water is from air, that takes over all our attention, our whole perceptual apparatus" (1997, 98). The glass books open two avenues for interpretation and seem to reference two media scares: contemporary games and new media, and Victorian 'scandalous' literature from sensation fiction to pornography.

*The Glass Books of the Dream Eaters* projects the image of the rapt readers, oblivious to their surroundings, which is familiar from Victorian discourses on harmful reading and its somatic effects on the body and especially registers in the critiques

of serial fiction. The glass books are part of such a negative discourse of addiction and are even labelled “another kind of opium” (Dahlquist 2007a, 222). Immersed readers are mesmerized by the scenes played in front of their eyes, and they are unable to put down the book or crave always to read more: “[T]here must be many, many of them – let me see this one again – *I want to see them all!*” (420; emphasis in the original). Tasting glass books once leads to an unhealthy appetite for more, which makes the medium an effective tool of control exploited by a secret society.

In the character of Miss Temple, the novel’s main protagonist, the interplay of gender, immersed reading, and its effect on the body is spelled out. She is an especially voracious reader of glass books as she inadvertently consumes two whole books that hold the memories of her two most dangerous enemies. She survives both readings (which could have been lethal) but the memories of the seductive and cruel Contessa Rosamonde di Lacquer-Sforza and the mad and dying Conte Orkancz, harvested just before his death, become enmeshed with her own and threaten her identity: “[H]er awareness was subsumed within the immediacies of whichever sensation entrapped her. It felt to Miss Temple that she had plunged into the experience of several lifetimes piled up in delirious succession [...] they threatened the very idea of Celeste Temple as any stable entity” (430). These acquired or grafted memories are corrupting both because of their erotic and lurid character and because they cause bodily symptoms that resemble consumption. This trope of the (immersed) female reader as immediately affected by inappropriate and stirring reading suggests sensation fiction and especially Victorian representations of female reading bodies as a historical layer. Victorian critics condemning the spread of sensational literature consumed by all classes, and especially women, framed this reading in terms of affects and effects of the body. In 1863, H.L. Mansel famously decried sensation fiction as “[p]reaching to the nerves instead of the judgment” (481), by-passing reflection, and working immediately on the body. In the same vein as reading was imagined as bodily corruption, it was also considered addictive: readers consume too much and crave even more (as in the proliferation of serial publications and the institution of magazine day), while the content corrupts the imagination of innocent women. Indeed, as far as Miss Temple is concerned, the book “swallows” her (Dahlquist 2007a, 430), and the memories are so powerful that “Miss Temple wondered if she had become the most thoroughly debauched virgin in all history” (433). The dangers of glass books as immersive media thus evoke the Victorian discourse about sensational, dangerous, and pornographic reading matter for women, yet add a twist because Miss Temple is an empowered consumer of books: she uses the ‘dangerous’ memories that the glass books have implanted in her mind against her enemies and significantly contributes to their downfall through her involuntarily acquired knowledge about their plans and machinations. Therefore, gaining illicit knowledge that would be withheld from women is a step in Miss Temple’s emancipation. The novel thus turns Miss Temple into a consumer who can master the dangerous medium of blue

glass and simultaneously escapes the restricted role of the Victorian female reader. The text may hence be read as constructing the experience of glass book reading as historically multi-layered: as gesturing towards the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when novels and women's reading held the potential for scandal, and towards the present, as implied in the technology's functioning as a portal to a virtual world.

The story of precarious immersive reading is accompanied by a paratext that evokes Victorian serial novels and their advertisers. At the back of the 2007 one-volume edition, six pages are dedicated to lost-and-found ads and other advertising that draw a line from the paratext to the story. After a pastiche Penguin ad, the reader encounters, for instance, the lost-and-found section in which Miss Temple's notebook and mask, which she lost at the beginning of the story, reappear. The aesthetics of the adverts pastiche Victorian patterns of small and copious text and a wild mixture of fonts to attract attention. Rhetorically, exhaustive lists and hyperbolic testimonials parody Victorian print ads. An advert for "Pingmann's Wax," for example, draws on the Victorian trope of selling commodities through reference to the Empire: "Pingmann's kept my whiskers at attention throughout a forced march from Delhi to Calcutta that saw half my men on their backs! Colonel James Blunt, of the 4<sup>th</sup> Dragoon Guards" (Dahlquist 2007a, n.p.). Other adverts refer directly to events in the novel so that the supplement posits the novel as existing within the fictional world it contains. In the last ad, the secret society that controls glass-book production solicits investors for its mining operation to extract the raw material for blue glass. Through the adverts, the *Glass Books* draws attention to the fictionality of the depicted world. At the same time, the initial serialization and ads evoking periodicity tie in with the text's concern with dangerous and corrupting reading matter by evoking Victorian and contemporary discourses of dangerous media.

### ***The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen (I+II): Serialization and Advertising the Empire***

Alan Moore and Kevin O'Neill's graphic novel *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* brings together the protagonists of different popular 19<sup>th</sup>-century novels. In the first volume, the league is called on to retrieve a sample of "cavorite," an anti-gravity substance. In the second volume, the heroes of the league deal with a Martian invasion of Britain. The characters have been drawn from popular 19<sup>th</sup>- and turn-of-the-century texts. The members of the league are Mina Harker, Allan Quatermain, Dr. Jekyll, Captain Nemo, and Hawley Griffin. Of these main characters, the last two have been borrowed from stories that originally appeared in periodicals: *Twenty Thousand Miles under the Sea* ran in the *Magasin d'éducation et de récréation* from 1869-1870 and Wells's *Invisible Man* first appeared in *Pearson's Weekly* in 1897. The first six issues of *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* were published between March 1999 and September 2000, and the second series ran from September 2002

to November 2003. In volume one, among the reproductions of the covers of the different independent issues, one page shows the portraits of the league's members on collectible cigarette cards of the brand "blue dwarf cigarettes."<sup>1</sup> Their characters, "the Empire's finest" (caption with text by S. Smiles, Moore and O'Neill 2000, end of ch. 2), are commodified as promotional material and are themselves turned into parts of a collectible series. The world of *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* is replete with literary and cultural references and creates a web of fictional texts and Victorian allusions that is impossible to disentangle. Moore and O'Neill invite the reader to spot and unravel the often obscure references, which turns reading into an intertextual and metafictional game (Domsch 2012, 100; Sulmicki 2011). In the following, I will point out only some aspects that tie the narrative back to Victorian seriality.

Hughes and Lund (1991) identified the temporality of serial reading as an important feature in its reception. In *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*, at the end of each collected issue, an editorial voice (probably the fictional editor S. Smiles) coaxes the reader to buy the next issue: "Do not fail to reserve the next edition of our illustrated chapbook and thus learn the outcome of this rousing and invigorating narrative!" (Moore and O'Neill 2000, end of ch. 3); "[i]n next month's harrowing conclusion to our splendid serial narrative we shall transcend the very boundaries of human spectacle" (end of ch. 5); and "[b]uy our next issue, lads, and let it be your proof of loyal citizenship! God save the Home Secretary!" (2003, end of ch. 3). The hyperbolic insertions interpellate a young male Victorian reader caught in the loop of serial reading, alternating between rapt reading and the agonizing wait for the next issue. The status of this editorial comment, which belongs to the rhythm of serial reading, changes when the reader encounters it in the one-volume editions. Rather than having to wait for the next issue, the reader can turn the page and read on. As a remnant of the serial publication of the *League* series, S. Smiles's exhortations can be read as a reminder of other publishing formats. Lara Rutherford considers the role of the interpellated reader in Moore and O'Neill's narrative, and she argues that "these features borrow heavily from a staple of Victorian children's literature: the cheap weekly serial printed on a mass scale for working and middle-class juveniles" (2012, 127-128). The conflict concerning appropriate reading, which centres on mass literature and those especially susceptible to its influence, woman and child readers, also appears in the editor's advice that "mothers of sensitive or neurasthenic children may wish to examine the contents before passing it on to their little one" (Moore and O'Neill 2000, end of ch. 5)

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<sup>1</sup> According to Jess Nevins's notes on *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* hardcover edition, "Sapathwa" is better known as the penny dreadful villain The Blue Dwarf. The Dwarf was a penny dreadful character who first appeared in 1861 and was the companion-in-arms (and crime) of Dick Turpin, the archetypal heroic bandit and highwayman of the penny dreadfuls. The Dwarf was a nobleman in disguise whose portrayal varied from being an evil influence over Dick to a faithful friend to him" (2000).

(Rutherford 2012, 128). As in the *Glass Books*, references to Victorian seriality and the paratexts suggesting periodicals evoke the Victorian discourse on the distinction between appropriate, edifying, and corrupting reading material, which centred on serial fiction.

Moore and O'Neill's references to Victorian seriality and its 'heteroglossia' also include advertising both in the paratext and the story. The first issue of volume one starts with a close-up of Champion Bond lighting a cigarette. In the fifth panel, the details of the match box show that this is a branded commodity as the packaging reads "John Bull – Simply no match" by "Bryant & May London" (Moore and O'Neill 2000). The brand logo and text are clearly visible in this close-up panel, while only Champion Bond's fingertip appears at its edges, resembling an advert in which the product is offered to the viewer or reader as the sole focus of the scene. Bryant and May match boxes were famous for adapting their designs to different customers with different images and text for the colonies and elaborate advertising in Britain (Briggs 1990, 200). These close-up panels are followed by a wide-angle shot of the unfinished Channel Causeway, a huge bridge spanning the channel, which was then under construction. The one-page panel of the bridge introduces many themes that underlie the series. Sebastian Domsch reads this panel as establishing *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen's* steampunk perspective on Victorian utopian visions (2012, 110-111). The huge construction is decorated with statues of Britannia and a lion and inscribed with the words "INDUSTRY" and "ALBION REACH" (Moore and O'Neill 2000). The page also carries the title of the first issue, "Empire Dreams," in the bottom left corner, which integrates seamlessly with the text inscribed on the bridge. This affirmative view of Empire and progress ironically contrasts with a small plaque announcing a "revised completion date of February 1902, owing to Mechanical difficulties." The gigantic structure that celebrates and affirms the worth of industry also contrasts with the match box in the close-up on the preceding page, the literal object of industry. Bryant and May's Fairfield works in Bow are famous for the 1888 match workers' strike, largely led by Annie Besant, in which unionized workers demanded better pay and working conditions. The workers' organization and perseverance as well as their backing by women from the middle classes made the match girls a powerful and encouraging example for later strikes (Price Paul 1988, 483; Briggs 1990, 199-205). In terms of publicity, the strike did more to publicize the brand "than any of the many advertisements placed by Bryant and May during the 1870s and early 1880s" (Briggs 202). Much like the ironic plaque on the half-finished bridge, the inclusion of the Bryant and May's match box might be another, more oblique reminder that the stability of industry and Empire was under revision.

In both volumes, two other iconic Victorian brands reappear throughout the story: Pears' Soap and Fry's Cocoa, often present together on one page or even in one panel. The words are sometimes painted in large letters on the walls of buildings but also half obscured by figures or structures in the foreground. In issue three, for instance, the word "FRY'S" is visible, chiselled on the side of a bridge,



and an omnibus passing over the bridge has the word “PEARS” (Moore and O’Neill 2000) painted on its side (which also appears on the wall of a house in the background of the two preceding panels). The two logos appear most prominently when being pasted on the walls of Wildwood train station in the first panel of the last issue in volume II, and in their combination work like a shorthand for an environment permeated by advertising. Pears’ Soap was indeed one of the most prolific marketers of its product with its budget for advertising rising enormously in 1865 under the founder’s grandson, who is said to have quipped that “any fool can make soap, it takes a clever man to sell it” (Briggs 1990, 326). In an article analyzing soap as a Victorian commodity, Sabine Schülting describes how Pears’ “Bubbles” advert famously appropriated Millais’s painting for its campaign (2001, 142). In fact, Pears’ ads were virtually omnipresent at the turn of the century (137) and especially exploited racist images of the Empire to link consumption with nationalism. An 1899 magazine advert, for instance, contains the caption: “Pears’ Soap is a potent factor in brightening the dark corners of the earth as civilisation advances” (qtd. in Schülting 2001, 138). On the important place of soap in Victorian commodity culture, Schülting remarks that “[i]t is thus not an exaggeration to suggest that in the Victorian Age soap had been converted into the epitome of a hedonistic consumer culture” (147). Fry’s cocoa beans were grown as an export crop in West Africa, and the company also produced iconic advertising that harnessed images of Empire, much like Pears’ (Ramamurthy 2003, 88-90). Yet while Pears’ marketing capitalized on the export of civilization to the colonies, cocoa promised the consumption of a colonial commodity at home. In the graphic novels, the pairing of the two products presents the city as a hub of imperial trade and consumption. The still recognizable Victorian brands might also contribute to a sense of the neo-Victorian world as “a world that feels lived in” (Faber 2002) and that mirrors the “contemporary late capitalist and globalised market” on which “the nineteenth century in twentieth- and twenty-first-century culture” is “packaged to appeal to a wide consumer base” (Boehm-Schnitker and Gruss 2011, 1).

But *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* also contains more traditional adverts that might be expected in the paratext of a serial novel. In the first volume, a one-page ad announces the start of a new “serial story” which is “just commencing in ‘THE RIVAL’” (Moore and O’Neill 2000). The second volume features one page of real and pastiche Victorian adverts for corsets, erotic photographs, “Peterson’s bicycle skirt holders,” a cure for “the effects of self-abuse,” and an ad for a “hand’s free Bawdy Browsing Mechanism” which will “surely be required when you peruse the scandalous displays in THE LEAGUE OF EXTRAORDINARY GENTLEMEN” (Moore and O’Neill 2003). The ad with the legend “ANTI-STIFF. To strengthen the Muscles” not only appears on this separate page but can also be seen in a train carriage in issue three of the same volume. As in the *Glass Books*, this detail bridges text and paratext. In volume one of the *League*, two sepia drawings blur the line further. In the first, a sandwich man stands at a street corner with the board advertising the first number of “Alan and the Sundered Veil” (Moore and

O'Neill 2000), a story which starts on the next page. The drawing that follows the short story shows a bill poster in front of a wall plastered with posters, one of them advertising the *League* "Cover Gallery" on the reverse page with an arrow pointing to the edge of the page. This connects navigating the city streets with turning the pages of the book. Both spaces are connected by the ads that appear on the walls of the buildings in the panels and in the paratextual drawings.

Both Dahlquist's novel and Moore and O'Neill's graphic narrative adopt aspects and discourses of Victorian serial fiction and rework them in their neo-Victorian worlds. The scare about inappropriate reading and the dangers of immersion as well as periodical literature's 'heteroglossia' re-appear in neo-Victorian transformations. The notion of serials' 'heteroglossia' especially ties in with steampunk's hybridity, which is one of the genre's constitutive features (Bowser and Croxall 2010, 26) "as a fiction of many ingredients" (Hantke 1999, 248).

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## “When in Rome ...” – Convergence Culture in Science Fiction Fandom

*Stephanie Kader*

“Hello. My name is Henry.

I am a fan.

Somewhere in the late 1980s, I got tired of people telling me to get a life.

I wrote a book instead.”

(Henry Jenkins 2006a, 1)

From Thomas More’s *Utopia* (first published in Latin in 1516) to contemporary Science Fiction (SF) and its many subgenres, from ‘First Fandom’ in the 1920s to today’s fan conventions with thousands of attendees, both SF and its fandom have undergone massive changes in the past decades. What all of the different forms of SF have in common is that all “result from negotiated exchanges between different segments of culture,” i.e. from a negotiation that aims at pinpointing one of several possible versions of the future as the most probable or desirable one (Attebery 2002, 170). In this negotiation process, the most prominent discussions revolve around questions of convergence, gender, and identity. The study of SF fans and fandom in general has also seen a number of paradigm shifts, ranging from the first ethnographic approaches in cultural studies to the current “aca-fan”-phenomenon (Jenkins 2013, viii).

Irrespective of whether one considers Mary Shelley, the first female SF author, or one of the women who contributed to early pulp SF fanzines,<sup>1</sup> like C.L. Moore, Leigh Brackett, Judith Merrill, and Andre Norton (to name but a few authors who sparked off the emergence of women writers in the 1950s), there have always been female authors in SF. While they were not particularly warmly welcomed by the predominantly male readership of SF before the 1960s (Staicar 1982, viii), these authors produced texts that later formed the cornerstone of feminist SF. Organized fandom of SF texts dates back to the 1920s, but enthusiastic readers<sup>2</sup> have always formed the primary audience of every SF author, male or female.

In this paper, I will sketch an outline of the development of feminist SF as a domain rich in cultural texts and will illustrate its influence on fan culture. Moreover, I will take a closer look at the convergence processes that play a vital role in feminist SF fandom. Tracing these developments, I will also discuss SF's often cumbersome interaction with academia in general and fan scholars in particular. In the course of this discussion, I will try to dispel some of the preconceived notions about SF and its fans by focussing on the heterogeneity of the various subcultures within SF fandom and their role in the media industry. Using Ursula Kroeber Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969), Suzette Haden Elgin's *Native Tongue* (1984), and Octavia Estelle Butler's *Dawn: Xenogenesis* (1987) as examples of feminist SF texts, I will show that fans of these novels create a participatory culture that produces new culturally significant texts. These new texts and the readers of both the new and the original texts are often empowered to facilitate social change, which is why my exploration will also consider the role feminist SF as a genre and media outlet may play in the convergence process.

## Definitions

In his study *Convergence Culture*, Henry Jenkins describes convergence as technological, industrial, and cultural change that can be traced in “the flow of content across multiple media platforms” and in “the migratory behavior of media audiences” who will follow that content (Jenkins 2006b, 2-3). The audience, here the fans of feminist SF, is “encouraged to seek out new information and make connections among dispersed media content” (3). In the case of feminist SF, dispersed content can for instance be found in various online and offline sources, both fan-generated

<sup>1</sup> A SF fanzine is “[a]n amateur publication, produced by people interested in SF and Fantasy, distributed by mail or at conventions. The term is a combination of ‘fan’ and ‘magazine’” (Rogow 1991, 112). For an in-depth description of fanzines, see Rogow (112-114). A complete historical overview of fanzine publishing can be found in Moskowitz (1954).

<sup>2</sup> In the context of this article, the term ‘reader’ is understood to mean “consumer of literary content” and will not refer to the fan-speak term ‘reader/passifan,’ which denotes someone who reads SF literature but does not engage in any fan activities (Rogow 1991, 243; 276). The term ‘reader’ is also used as a synonym for ‘fan’ and vice versa, unless otherwise specified.

and originating from within the mass media market. Borrowing French cyber-theorist Pierre Lévy's term 'collective intelligence,' Jenkins argues that convergence culture necessitates a collective consumption process which also entails communication about the consumed product: "convergence occurs within the brains of individual consumers and through their social interactions with others. Each of us constructs our own personal mythology from bits and fragments of information extracted from the media flow" (Jenkins 2006b, 3-4). This participatory nature of convergence in SF culture can best be seen at the conventions held on a regular basis, which serve a variety of purposes, such as providing a contact platform for authors and their readers, serving as a bridge for aspiring authors to transition from amateur to professional writer of SF, and lastly, providing an arena for fans to interact with the literary and media content available (Disch 1998, 140). Conventions are also public arenas where fans have the opportunity to discuss ideas and texts. Conventions are held in almost every major city in the US, and though some travelling may be involved, attending local or regional conventions usually does not require a major investment. Generally, buying a new or used copy of one's favourite book or borrowing it from the local library is all it takes to get involved in fandom. Engaging in discussions about the text online or at fan clubs is also an easily accessible way to participate in fannish activities.

According to the 2013 edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the word 'fan' was first used in 1682 and denotes somebody who is "a keen follower of a specified hobby or amusement, and generally an enthusiast for a particular person or thing" (711). Since the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the word 'fan' has undergone a transformation with regard to its cultural meaning and individual connotation. To define the term precisely is therefore a worthwhile endeavour. As a working definition, Roberta Rogow's interpretation of SF fandom will serve adequately:

[T]he aggregate of SF fans [...] presumably includes anyone interested in reading, writing, producing, or watching Science Fiction. In actuality, SF fandom usually refers to those fans who actively take part in conventions, fan writing, or other fan-ac. It is a diverse group, often split on social and political issues, and a lot harder to stereotype than in past years. (1991, 109)

Generally speaking, fans fulfill a plethora of roles within the SF community. Elaborating on Schmidt-Lux, fans consume novels and gather information about the narratives, they accumulate collective and individual knowledge as well as fan objects, they travel to SF conventions, they produce criticism, fan fiction, fan art, etc., and they protest against discrimination or marginalization, against mass culture, consumerism, or dominant hegemonic structures (2010, 140). Fan culture as such is often understood as "a revitalization of the old folk culture process in response to the content of mass culture" (Jenkins 2006b, 21). According to the media industry and the logic of affective economics, the ideal fan as a consumer of cultural content "is active, emotionally engaged and socially networked" (20). This defini-

tion can also be used to describe fans of literature in the form of printed books, which continue to play a crucial role in the economics of SF culture despite the increasing availability of online and mass media content. At this point, however, an important distinction must be made between literary SF fandom and the media fandom surrounding film and television content. While both have their artistic and cultural values, the following discussion will focus mainly on the consumers of literary content, the so-called ‘book fans’ (Rogow 1991, 39). Based on personal correspondence with Ursula K. Le Guin, Attebery states that ‘SF’ traditionally stands for written Science Fiction, whereas the abbreviation ‘sci-fi’ “is what comes out of Hollywood: both the popular entertainments and the non-SF-reading public’s impression of what the field is all about” (Attebery 2002, 172). In the following discussion, the term ‘SF convention’ – often simply referred to as ‘con’ – will be understood as pertaining to fan cons, which are usually run by SF fans and which “tend to be Ser-Cons,<sup>3</sup> that is, serious and constructive, with an emphasis on SF as literature as opposed to SF as entertainment” (Rogow 1991, 109). These cons are geared towards the authors, readers, and editors of literary SF in its many forms.

To find an accurate definition of ‘Science Fiction’ and its subgenres is a rather daunting task as the genre is in flux and has many subgenres, each with its own take on the general matter of the fantastic. In the context of Henry Jenkins’s convergence theory, however, one could define ‘SF’ as “not only a mode of storytelling but also a niche for writers, a marketing category for publishers, a collection of visual images and styles and a community of like-minded individuals” (Attebery 2003, 32).

### **Convergence No. 1: The Academic as Fan and the Fan as Critic**

In order to bring about cultural convergence and the production of new cultural meaning, feminist SF – like any other SF subgenre – needs its fans, as these tend to be the most dedicated readers. But what makes a fan a good critic and eventually a producer of new cultural content? While the term ‘fan’ is used extensively in today’s popular culture, the study of ‘fandom’ and its cultural repercussions as well as the fans’ roles as cultural audiences are fairly recent research areas. Whereas the fans’ influence on their cultural surroundings is largely undisputed, the reluctance of academia to regard fans as major players in today’s cultural convergences may be due to negative stereotyping, as Lisa Lewis speculates:

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<sup>3</sup> ‘Ser-con’ refers to fans who are considered to be serious and constructive. For a broader discussion of the term, see Joseph L. Sanders, *Science Fiction Fandom* (1994).



For the academy, the answer may reside in its historical propensity to treat media audiences as passive and controlled, its tendency to privilege aesthetic superiority in programming, its reluctance to support consumerism, its belief in media industry manipulation. The popular press, as well, has stigmatized fandom by emphasizing danger, abnormality, and silliness. (1992, 1)

During the ongoing public debate on the value and aesthetics of cultural products, SF as a literary genre has largely remained at the margins of academic interest, although the fandom phenomenon had already been acknowledged as early as in 1954 with Moskowitz’s *The Immortal Storm: A History of Science Fiction Fandom*. While many studies on fandom conducted since then usually included a section or two on SF fandom, the academic community as such has traditionally paid little attention to social criticism being voiced within the fandom culture of SF literature. Academic interest in SF, however, has always been present and in the early years of SF it came from within, not without the fan communities. It appeared in the form of fanzines<sup>4</sup> that published letters sent by readers, of close readings of selected texts that were the subject of fan club meetings, or of letters to the authors written by excited fans who wanted to discuss and critique the literary and cultural content they had just consumed: “organized fandom is, perhaps first and foremost, an institution of theory and criticism, a semistructured space where competing interpretations and evaluations of common texts are proposed, debated, and negotiated” (Jenkins 2013, 86). External criticism, i.e. in-depth studies on SF texts and especially their readers, is significantly more recent. Academic interest in SF fandom emerged only in the 1990s with a number of publications on the subject (see Sanders 1994; Harris and Alexander 1998). At that point, SF as such and feminist SF in particular had long since become cultural ‘aca-fan’ testing grounds, discussing and exploring a plethora of questions and influencing the respective zeitgeist. According to Jenkins, an ‘aca-fan’ is a portmanteau to describe a hybrid scholarly identity and methodological approach adopted from cultural studies (Jenkins 2013, viii). Approaching fandom and the study of its texts from an aca-fan stance also entails an awareness of the inherent subjectivity of the position:

There are at least three things at stake in the use of the aca-fan concept: the acknowledgement of our own personal stakes in the forms of popular culture we study, the accountability of the ethnographer to the community we study, and the sense of membership or affiliation with the populations at the heart of our research. (Jenkins 2013, xiii)

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<sup>4</sup> Fan fiction circulated in self-published newsletters or magazines. These were either written or edited by a single person or were ‘APA’ (Amateur Press Association) collaborative activities (Harris 1998, 8).

One does not have to be a scholar, though, if one wants to engage in criticism of SF content. As mentioned above, critical readings of SF texts date back to the 1920s and to the first fan cons in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The first sizeable fan club was the Science Fiction League formed in 1934, which offered writers, publishers, and fans a platform to discuss ideas, voice criticism, share visions, and produce new content. Since many fans today also engage in literary criticism of the texts they read, two different kinds of critics have emerged: that of the academic as a critic and that of the fan as a critic. These two groups, however, are not mutually exclusive, as many scholars in the field of SF also identify themselves as SF fans to a certain degree. When reading the source texts and producing meaning, “fans bring to their work arrays of expertise beyond the usual mental equipment of literature professors” (Miesel 1994, 240). Yet SF representatives are not universally fond of scholars or non-fans as critics, a fact that makes access to fandom-based research rather cumbersome.<sup>5</sup> However, as Russell Letson points out: “It is not the scholar as such who is the enemy [...]. Nor is it taboo to study or analyse SF [...]. No, it is the practice of academic literary research and publication carried out by those perceived as non-fans that provokes hostility” (1994, 230). Even criticism from within the genre, when voiced by writers who negate their origins in fandom, is perceived negatively: “writers such as Samuel R. Delany, Ursula Le Guin, and Joanna Russ, clinging to their intellectual credentials from academia, are often gracious to fans when they must interact with them, but they do not [...] recognize their origins in fandom” (Zimmer Bradley 1985, 69-70). This in-group versus out-group thinking pervades many aspects of fandom, as it serves to distinguish between the self-perception of the group’s identity and the non-fan ‘other,’ also called “the mundane” in SF fandom (Jenkins 1992, 213). Yet the SF community, with its astounding number of subcultures, can be extremely accommodating to its fans.<sup>6</sup> Entering into fandom and engaging in fannish activities therefore has an impact not only on the group but also on the individual fan and on the authors catering to this particular kind of audience.

Generally speaking, academic interest and the approaches to fandom studies can be traced to three distinct phases. Whereas the first phase was a rather detached ethnographic approach often undertaken either by non-fans or by closeted fans who did not reveal their fannish sensibilities out of fear of losing their academic credibility, the second phase (starting in the 1990s) saw more and more academics approach the field as self-proclaimed fans. The first phase saw an array of attempts to define and study fandom from the standpoint of social sciences and their “active audience approach” (Winter 2010, 164). Tulloch and Jenkins (1995),

<sup>5</sup> An in-depth discussion of the anti-academic sentiment in SF and the debate surrounding the issue would merit a study of its own. For an extensive overview of relevant literature on the subject, see Letson (1994, 234).

<sup>6</sup> It should be noted here that not all subcultures and/or subgroups within SF fandom are equally accepting of each other.

Tulloch (1999), and Bacon-Smith (2000) belong to the second phase of researchers who tried to incorporate their own experiences as fans into their academic work in the field of fandom studies. The current third phase of fandom studies (see Gray, Sandvoss, and Harrington 2007 and Jenkins 2006a) is characterized by approaches in which the author not only takes the fan’s perspective into account but also writes from a fan’s point of view and is accepted by the SF community in that dual role (Winter 2010, 168).<sup>7</sup> Some novels, such as Suzette Haden Elgin’s *Star-Anchored, Star-Angered* (1979), deliberately poke fun at academia, its institutions in general, and universities in particular with acidulous satire (Chapman 1982, 99). Other authors approach the rift between academia and SF with more subtlety, but true convergences between academia and SF remain the exception to the rule. It is slightly paradoxical that Elgin’s departure from academic life, which coincided with her brief straying from SF and her venture into the fantasy genre with the publication of *The Ozark Trilogy* (1981), actually predates the publication of her most acclaimed and most science-based SF series, the *Native Tongue* trilogy (first published between 1984 and 1993). One might argue that this reflects on Elgin’s stance on the perceived incompatibility of academia and SF authorship, but then again many authors of hard SF have a background in science and academia. Similar to other authors such as Le Guin, Elgin also published SF criticism, although most of it was written after she had left her tenured position at the State University of San Diego, again as though being an active academic would preclude one’s ability or right also to publish SF criticism. Although Le Guin’s novels, for instance, have garnered critical acclaim outside of SF fandom as well, feminist SF texts and their criticism are oftentimes still marginalized or trivialized, discredited by what SF fans perceive as the cultural elite of the mundane outside world. Rosi Braidotti, however, sees this disregard as one of the strong suits of feminist SF:

As a “low culture” genre, moreover, it is also mercifully free of grandiose pretensions – of the aesthetic or cognitive kind – and thus ends up providing a more accurate and honest depiction of contemporary culture than other, more self-consciously representative genres [...]. (qtd. in Barr 2003, 150)

It is exactly this kind of honesty that makes the social criticism inherent in feminist SF viable and believable for its readers. Jenkins adds that “fandom is a vehicle for marginalized subcultural groups [...] to pry open space for their cultural concerns within dominant representations; [it is] a way of appropriating [...] texts and re-reading them in a fashion that serves different interests” (Jenkins 1991, 174). Embracing the text, constructing new meaning via its interpretation, and communicating about its messages, fans are in many ways the executive and contemplative

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<sup>7</sup> Jenkins argues that Fiske’s ‘autoethnography’ (a term coined in 1990) could strike a balance between the necessary academic detachment and the fannish involvement that many researchers have to reconcile (see Roose, Schäfer, and Schmidt-Lux 2010).

branch of literature, as they not only consume cultural products such as novels, but also create new material (Attebery 2002, 63). Chris Atton emphasizes the power of fan critics even further: “in effect, fans come to perform their own detailed critiques of their chosen subjects. Such displays of specialized knowledge are common [...] and conspicuously set them apart from the bulk of mainstream criticism” (Atton 2004, 140). This mirrors what Jenkins calls “collective intelligence” (Jenkins 2006b; 2013) gathered in groups and used to produce new interpretations of existing texts or to converge different ideas into new paradigms. While this phenomenon is not limited to SF, both the genre as such and its fandom seem to be perfect venues for the participatory culture that is necessary to create change.

Fandom constitutes a space defined by its refusal of mundane values and practices, its celebration of deeply held emotions and passionately embraced pleasures. Fandom’s very existence represents a critique of conventional forms of consumer culture. Yet fandom also provides a space in which fans may articulate their specific concerns about sexuality, gender, racism, colonialism, militarism, and forced conformity (Jenkins 2013, 283). This means that fans hold the power to dissent, to change and create, and to address issues they hold dear. Most fans, especially female ones, will always opt for these strategies, as the following section will show.

## **Convergence No. 2: Fandom and Power – Beware of those Women!**

In order to understand the position of early SF fans and the role of women within SF fandom, a look at the origins of organized fandom is helpful:

Science fiction began as a subset of and reinforcement for the mainstream patriarchal culture of technological heroism during the 1930s, when the Great Depression had taken from most men their primary source of patriarchal power: their ability to create wealth. (Bacon-Smith 2000, 96)

Thus deprived of fixed and defining social structures, men (and women) who turned to science fiction in the 1920s and 1930s found not only hope for a better future through technology, but they also “found in the world of pulp publishing a future that had the potential to return to them status and financial security that the Great Depression had shattered for most of the middle class” (Bacon-Smith, 96). While strong male characters were numerous, female protagonists or even antagonists were entirely absent from or poorly portrayed in the works of male and early female authors of the time. Mary Brizzi argues that it was only when SF authors and the genre as such began to acknowledge the fact that women also read SF and that one of the strongest appeals of the genre was the reader’s identification with the main characters that writers began to use effective heroines as protagonists (1982, 32).

Le Guin’s *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969) was published in an era in which second-wave feminism was the determining paradigm for female SF authors. Le Guin’s thought experiment presents a far-distant future and society in which individuals are biologically androgynous for most of their life and can choose their gender and sex during specific periods of time. This reflects the social and cultural discourse on gender stability and dualism in identity formation which also played an important role in academia at the time. Elgin’s *Native Tongue* (1984) was published fifteen years later and focusses on the power of language in the struggle for gender equality in a fictional society in which women are once again little more than chattel. Finally, Butler’s *Dawn* (1987) depicts issues that second-wave feminists and post-feminists have continued to argue about to this day: the rights of women concerning their bodies and their reproductive rights. Yet Butler was also the first female African American author to achieve wide-spread commercial success and critical acclaim. Early SF fandom had not only been predominantly male, but it had also been almost exclusively white (Moskowitz 1974, 10). While authors such as Samuel Delaney, early SF’s most successful African American author, made SF attractive for fans of colour, Butler succeeded in including women of colour as well.

Although these three novels discuss different memes and themes, they all aim at influencing the cultural and social discourse concerning the questions they raise: questions about gender, social participation, sexual identity, and many other aspects. Yet in order for these questions to be further discussed, a forum was needed and quickly found: SF conventions. The general willingness of SF fans to congregate and discuss the above-mentioned questions, either in the virtual world via message boards or in real life at the various fan cons, stems from the inherent millenarianist nature of the genre, as “[a]ll through the twentieth century, it had its eye fixed on 2001 and beyond” (Disch 1998, 144). It seems only natural that the readers of SF wished to interact with that future, to influence, and to shape it. Disch goes even further in explaining the appeal of SF as an outlet for fannish fantasies and real-life involvement: “SF is visionary, a map of the future by means of which fans have a private view of the millennium – which fans shall inherit” (140).

With its perception of readers as an audience willing to participate in the above-mentioned discourse,<sup>8</sup> fandom can be seen as empowering, emancipating the individual from mere consumerism, and enabling the fan to deduce new meaning from the consumed text. This effect is facilitated especially through interaction with other media or other fans, as Jenkins observes: “[f]reedom is fostered when

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<sup>8</sup> The term ‘reader’ suggests homogeneity where there is none. Already in 1985, Carter Scholz argued that SF’s readership consisted of only a small core audience, while the rest of the readers fluctuated in and out of the genre, leading to a turnover every four to five years (59). This holds true for writers as well as their readers, as most writers also fluctuate in and out of what Scholz describes as the ‘ghetto’ of SF publishing.

the means of communication are dispersed, decentralized, and easily available” (2006b, 11). By extrapolating and producing new meaning and ultimately also new content (e.g. in the form of fan art or fan fiction) “fans are consumers who also produce, readers who also write, and spectators who also participate” (Jenkins 1992, 208). According to Jenkins, the product in question does not necessarily have to be a material artefact but can also consist of the interpretive activity in which the reader engages. Thus the focus shifts from the media content as such to the reader’s use of the consumed material (209). This conceptual interpretation of fannish activity and the roles of fans in their respective multimedia surroundings is based primarily on Bourdieu’s<sup>9</sup> and de Certeau’s examinations of the relationship between classes in a class system, as Cheryl Harris observes:

In postindustrialist societies becoming more, not less, class divided, one’s subordination may be a source of anomie and despair. Looked at this way, some individuals may seek to express their otherwise silenced identities through a common interest in a symbol, icon or text, and, then, redress their alienation through the social nature of fan practice. (1998, 5)

The readers of Le Guin, Elgin, and Butler often also have recourse to mass media such as the internet or even television and produce content for the mass market. Many SF fans have early on embraced new content and new media formats or platforms and, in the interaction with other fans, have used new developments in delivery technologies creatively and for their own purposes. Again, the participatory element in fan culture is indispensable for the creation of collective intelligence that informs so much of feminist SF fandom. The participation gap, which especially affects older or less tech-savvy fans, has had less of a negative effect on SF fandom than may be assumed. While new modes and methods of content delivery have continued to emerge, VHS tapes and the like never went out of fashion in wide areas of SF fandom. Moreover, conventions have played a vital role in closing the participation gap, as they provide even fans without internet access or TV sets with the opportunity to view their favourite films or shows.<sup>10</sup> Instead of trying to understand the changes of the past decades by applying the digital revolution paradigm, tracing the convergence processes at play provides a much more plausible explanation of SF fandom’s unfettered participation in many new trends. James Tiptree Jr. (aka Alice Hastings Sheldon), for instance, claims that isolation and limited social interaction are generally detrimental to a person’s psyche, sense of self, and personal fulfillment, which is also one of the main themes of her novels (Frisch 1982, 49). By isolation Tiptree does not only mean social reclusiveness

<sup>9</sup> However, Bourdieu’s studies on cultural capital, which in SF fandom mostly translates into the investment in collector’s items and other paraphernalia, are not the subject of this paper.

<sup>10</sup> Visitors who only attend cons for the purpose of watching films or TV shows are called ‘mushrooms.’ They find a variety of venues open to them, such as several film rooms and specialized panels with screenings of films or shows followed by discussions (Rogow 1991, 217).

but also an unwillingness to embrace more than one possible approach to structuring one’s identity around gendered norms, which limits the individual to one and only one mode of expression: male or female. This, in turn, limits the individual’s opportunities of gaining interpersonal experiences. While the individual fan is still largely defined in terms of gender and identity by the texts around which his or her activities are centred, it is the convergence process from reader over fan to producer of new cultural content that is so typical of feminist SF fandom.<sup>11</sup>

Fannish activities include a variety of different ways of expressing one’s opinion and getting into contact with each other. Of course, SF is the genre of new ideas and scientific speculation. Yet when one looks at the various prizes awarded by the SF community, both those voted on by the fans (e.g. the Hugo Award) and those extended by the writers themselves (e.g. the Nebula Award), it becomes obvious that these accolades entail a certain conservatism when it comes to fiction written by women. Although Butler and Le Guin have both received some of these awards, the fans of feminist SF early on organized a special convention focussed on feminist literary SF. WisCon, which was first held in 1977, welcomes fans, writers, editors, publishers, scholars, and artists from around the world to discuss science fiction and fantasy and it places its emphasis on issues of feminism, gender, race, and class.<sup>12</sup> The interactions of fans and their discussions have also led to several interesting cultural convergences. The feminist SF texts inspired the fans not only to establish the James Tiptree Jr. Award (initiated in 1991 by SF authors Pat Murphy and Karen Joy Fowler for SF that challenges preconceived notions of gender),<sup>13</sup> but also to set up the Carl Brandon Society (founded in 1997 to foster dialogue about issues of race, ethnicity, and culture).<sup>14</sup> In 2005, the Carl Brandon Society, in turn, began awarding SF authors of colour, who centred their narratives on issues of ethnicity and race, with the Parallax Award. Also in 2005, the Society began awarding deserving SF authors of any ethnicity with the Kindred Award to honour their engagement with questions of ethnicity. WisCon has thus instigated the diversification of the available awards and leveled out the playing field for many authors who until recently were often marginalized within the SF community. Writing against the grain is now not only acceptable but also desirable. WisCon has proven to be what James Gee calls an “affinity space,” which is an environment that allows people of different backgrounds to socialize, to engage in informal learning, and to share knowledge and expertise based on the voluntary affiliation with an issue, a group, or a text (qtd. in Jenkins 2006b, 280).

<sup>11</sup> Labelling the many subgroups of SF literary fandom simply as ‘fans’ does not reflect the heterogeneity of fandom culture, nor does it adequately describe the many different and sometimes conflicting views on any given text, which exist even within individual subgroups. For an in-depth analysis of different fan groups, see Joseph L. Sanders’s *Science Fiction Fandom* (1994) or Camille Bacon-Smith’s *Science Fiction Culture* (2000).

<sup>12</sup> For more information on WisCon, see <http://www.wiscon.info/>.

<sup>13</sup> For more information on the James Tiptree Jr. Award, see <http://tiptree.org/>.

<sup>14</sup> For more information on the Carl Brandon Society, see <http://www.carlbrandon.org/>.

To those who examine the narrative themes of the above-mentioned novels, it becomes clear that feminist SF writers often construct heroines and heroes who undermine established and widely accepted categories of 'self' and 'other.' During the 1960s, when women writers entered the SF scene,<sup>15</sup> women found that while they constituted the Other in society (a concept shaped by Simone de Beauvoir as early as in 1949), SF fandom embraced them and their ideas, albeit reluctantly at first. This may have been due to the fact that the emergence of female writers in SF coincided with a general gender shift in SF fandom, as more and more women became fans in their own right and not just because their male relatives and friends were involved in fandom. Women also became interested in SF for different reasons than men who originally sought to attain new meaning for their contested egos in turning to SF fandom of the early 1930s. By the 1970s, the gender ratio in SF fandom had almost equalled out and polls taken at SF conventions showed that different subgroups for women had emerged in SF (Coulson 1994, 7). This influx of women into the SF scene also changed practices of publishing, which, just like SF fandom, had previously been almost exclusively male-dominated (Coulson 7). This, in turn, opened the stage for writers like Le Guin and made their ideas available to an audience that would approach their texts without recriminations, while at the same time remaining critical of the texts and their messages (Bester 1964, 34). With female authors being no longer restricted to publishing in SF magazines or fanzines, more and more full-length novels written by women started to arrive on the market, often penned by those who had started out as readers and fans before publishing short fiction in the professional and amateur presses of their day. These emerging authors often focussed on issues that were not limited to technology, science, or other hard science fiction staples. Women writers of the day instead focussed on social injustice, poverty, racial tensions, or other current societal problems. Following a long theatrical tradition in which delicate subjects are presented to the public in a literally playful way, these relatively new authors quickly became the voice of the underprivileged in SF: "like cultural negotiations on the Elizabethan stage, SF's distinctive forms of play exploit the tremendous social energy within troubling concepts" (Attebery 2002, 189).

Just as traditional SF had provided a gateway for readers to explore fantastic new worlds and technologies, the newly emerged feminist SF of the 1960s and 1970s offered new ideas on the dominant cultural and social discourses of the time. Apart from authors such as Frederick Pohl and C.M. Kornbluth who were also writing SF as social criticism, it was feminist SF and its writers that exhibited the greatest potential for social change: "despite the lingering presence of patriarchal privilege and power – the most effective political engagement in the SF

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<sup>15</sup> Of course, there were female authors of SF before the 1960s but their contributions were neither as commercially successful nor as influential for the genre as a whole.



world at this time came from feminist creative and critical work, as feminist SF in general and the critical utopias in particular demonstrate” (Moylan 2000, 36).

Le Guin’s protagonist is a man, but both the auto-image and the hetero-image of his masculinity are under duress, as he is a visitor on a planet whose inhabitants are androgynous and only exhibit a gendered, sexual self during a brief period of their monthly estrous cycle. And even then, they can almost freely choose whether they want to spend the sexual period as a male or a female. This idea of self-determination and fluid gender definitions resonated strongly with the female audiences of the time and mirrored the social discourse of equal opportunity, which also formed the basis for many other novels written by female authors during the second wave of feminism in the US. Following along these lines, Le Guin’s novel examines ideas about what a society could look like in which gender no longer plays an important role. With its genderless inhabitants, the fictional world she creates invites readers to question their own definition of self and identity, as “science fiction is indeed all about displacements, ruptures, and discontinuities” (Barr 2003, 150). Suzette Haden Elgin’s *Native Tongue* is often compared to Margaret Atwood’s *A Handmaid’s Tale* (1985) as both depict a feminist dystopia. While Atwood’s text focusses on the sometimes violent struggle for female self-determination and reproductive rights (much like Butler’s *Dawn*), Elgin’s female protagonists fight for gender equality in a non-violent way by creating a women’s language designed to provide women with the ultimate tool of expressing themselves. The concept of a women’s language in *Native Tongue* reflects the discourse on man-made language (see Spender 1980), which dominated linguistics in the US in the 1980s. Set in a fictional near-future US society, the narrative recounts the many ways in which the female protagonists use language for empowerment and subversion of the dominant misogyny and heterosexism. *Native Tongue* never became a bestseller, which may at least to a certain degree be due to the above-mentioned friction between SF fandom and academia, since Elgin (a trained linguist) wrote the novel with the express purpose of purporting her ideas about feminist language use. This focus on ‘hard,’ i.e. tangible science as the basis for a feminist SF narrative can also be found in Butler’s *Dawn*. Through Lilith’s eyes, the reader is confronted with the ethical, political, and cultural implications of genetic engineering, a field that was highly contested during the time of the novel’s publication.

All three authors visited conventions regularly, made themselves available to their fans, and interacted with the audiences they were trying to reach. Whereas Butler and Le Guin were once invited to WisCon as Guests of Honour (Butler in 1980 and Le Guin in 1996), Elgin was even invited twice (in 1982 and 1986). All three have also embraced convergence in their own ways. Elgin, for instance, released self-recorded cassette tapes to enable fans to learn Láadan, the language she had constructed for the *Native Tongue* trilogy. She even published a teaching grammar as a non-fictional supplement to her SF thought experiment. VHS tapes with recorded interviews about the theoretical background of the novels and the linguis-

tic aspects on which they were centred were also made available. Many of Le Guin's novels have been adapted to the screen, thus making them more readily available, even to audiences outside of SF literary fandom. Such adaptations are not always welcomed, as some members of the SF community think that books are the only true story-telling format. Yet many also believe that in order to reach a wider audience for the sometimes subversive ideas of feminist SF, mass media are a *sine qua non*: "SF gives up control over its inventions; in return it gets to see them circulated beyond the confines of the relatively tiny community of serious readers" (Attebery 2002, 172). Some authors, like Le Guin, whose audience had not been small to begin with, had less trouble with the idea of TV adaptations. Others, like Octavia Butler, were more reserved. Butler can be described as having been a rather private person who only engaged in limited interactions with her fans. Her novels, however, were among the first to be adapted as audiobooks for blind audiences and they are still available today as cassettes, CDs, or mp3-downloads on platforms such as "audible.com." Yet Jenkins aptly points out that "[d]elivery systems are simply and only technologies; media are also cultural systems [...] [which] persist as layers within an ever more complicated information and entertainment stratum" (Jenkins 2012, 467). Apart from these adaptations of the authors' original works, fan-written fiction, fan art, and new forms of mediazines all deal with the different themes in the three novels and beyond, thus creating and distributing new ideas within feminist SF fandom.

### Convergence No. 3: Fans as Authors, Authors as Fans

Having looked at the readers' and fans' perspectives, I will now focus on the authors. In his 1985 essay "Inside the Ghetto and Out," Carter Scholz describes the world of SF publishing as a ghetto with self-enforcing standards of writing style and content that authors are wise to abide by, "as writers cease to write the immediately unsalable" (61). While Suzette Haden Elgin has never denied having initially entered SF writing for commercial reasons, authors like Le Guin and Butler decided on SF as a vehicle for their ideas for artistic reasons. In the most effective, i.e. the most thought-provoking SF, the 'novum' tends to play an important role, both in professional and fan fiction. In order to understand what makes a good author of effective feminist SF, a closer look at this novum is warranted:

In the most effective SF, the disorienting element that Darko Suvin calls a novum, which can be anything from a new invention to an alien invasion, corresponds to something already inherent in these characters [...]. In confronting the novum, characters are forced to rewrite their own stories, [...] – the masterplots – within which they make sense of their lives. The SF writer, then, is not simply a popularizer of scientific ideas, but someone who links those ideas to cultural narratives. (Attebery 2002, 174)

This re-writing of personal and fictional narratives occurs in two major ways in feminist SF fandom. On the one hand, there are the novels with their strong protagonists who challenge the discourse of their time and place and reinvent themselves in the process. After having given up on his male ego, Le Guin’s Genly Ai contends towards the end of the narrative that gender is fluid and unimportant to the definition of ‘self’ and instead puts friendship above all else. Butler’s Lilith not only spawns a whole new generation of human-alien hybrids to populate a new version of Earth, but she also converts violent dissent into politically efficient resistance. She eventually saves humanity by first reluctantly and then enthusiastically embracing her role as mother and political leader. Elgin’s Nazareth, a shy linguist and proficient conference interpreter and translator, grows up in a world in which women are subjugated and denigrated to little more than property. Through her personal trials and tribulations she not only finds her inner strength and assertiveness but also helps free the women of Earth peacefully and without violence by introducing the women’s language Láadan, which she had helped to create.

On the other hand, there is the fan fiction that takes the available narratives and changes them in significant ways, either correcting perceived defects in the story-telling or reinventing and augmenting the narrative to showcase the individual fan’s preferences. One could argue that every kind of literary genre is only as viable as its readership. SF, a genre that often eludes concise definitions of its boundaries and rules, seems more and more entrenched when it comes to its sub-genres. An exploration of the genre’s development from the early years through the Sputnik and post-space-race era reveals that SF literature and the aspirations of its writers, maybe more so than in any other genre, are tied to the state of the market. When the interest in science and space peaked in the US during the well-publicized space race (1955-1972), so did interest in SF. When the market contracted again, many SF readers turned to other genres and sales plummeted. Today’s scientific advances are more earth-bound and lie in the fields of nanotechnology, computing, and bionics but they somehow seem to generate a more stable influx of new ideas into SF (especially in hard SF) and attract a more loyal readership. This may in part be due to the development of education in many countries, as more and more SF readers now understand a great deal more about the underlying scientific details and are thus more critical and attentive readers and fans. For authors and fans alike, these cultural paradigm shifts and the economics of publishing are forces to be reckoned with.

The expansion of the market and the genre over the years has had strong side-effects on authors and audiences alike. As Marion Zimmer Bradley observes, “[f]ewer and fewer fans aspire to become professionals [...] – or if they do, it is harder to get in touch with their fellows. Partly this is a matter of sheer size” (1985, 70). Participatory culture in SF fandom traditionally inspired young writers who, in turn, sold their ideas to their fellow enthusiasts. For women in particular, fan writing was an instrument of self-expression, of dissent, and of empowerment. With an ever-expanding genre that displayed an ever more unclear definition, the above-

mentioned intrinsic restrictions further encumbered fledgling artists in their production of new material. Yet once again, conventions remained the safe havens for many literary SF fans.

Gaining access to the creator of the material one's fandom centres on is another factor in participatory fan culture. In the early days of SF fandom, a limited number of popular and well-known writers faced a fan crowd of no more than several hundred admirers of their craft. When one looks at modern SF conventions, it becomes clear that these numbers have changed. Lines of over a thousand people waiting to get an author's or an actor's autograph are regular phenomena and authors and actors alike have resorted to hiring bodyguards to ward off overly enthusiastic fans. Due to the limited access to the creators of the original SF texts, the majority of fans have recourse to the texts as such. One of the effects of the ever more elusive author-fan relationships has been the emergence of more secondary literature on various issues taken from popular texts or on individual authors. Even before academia began to take an interest in SF fandom in the 1990s, fans in the 1970s already wrote about the discourse in the community and about the authors (Arbur 1982, 1). This is particularly true of feminist SF fans, as fan writing in the feminist SF circles focussed on subversion, otherness, and alienation with regard to the pervasive gender discussions of the time. Rainer Winter explains that through their 'divergent' and 'confrontational' readings and reworkings of SF texts, productive and creative fans undermine dominant paradigms and any hegemonic order (2010, 177). Harlan Ellison (like Carter Scholz) contends that fan culture focussing on an author's text, however, tends to stereotype the writer, as fans usually expect only more of the same, while being highly adverse to any changes made to the source material (Weil and Wolfe 2002, 63-64). Marion Zimmer Bradley, for instance, admits to having been pressured into writing sequels she originally had not planned (1985, 76).

While both writers and fans seem to be lamenting the divide between them, many seem to overlook the many convergences and synergies between the professional and the amateur (i.e. fannish) production of SF material. When being asked which use they see in fandom apart from the most obvious one of the sales of their books, many authors will say that they welcome young followers who start out as fans and eventually become professional writers who thus provide SF with a fresh new perspective (Zimmer Bradley 1985, 77). Beside the tensions in this sometimes troubled relationship between the factions, cross-fertilization between authors and fans writing for fan audiences is considerable and it can be argued that fans may influence authors in many ways. Whether fans demand more of the same or rather different content or style, some authors acknowledge that fan feedback has led them "to go into new areas which have been previously unexplored" (77). SF authors use their own cultural surroundings to create their fiction by either reacting to or interacting with that culture. World events shape these surroundings in many meaningful ways and many seminal works of SF were written as a direct response to world events (Moskowitz 1974, 252), such as the war in Vietnam. During that

particular time, interest in SF grew because more and more readers were looking for an escapist way to reimagine the future. Demand for high-quality SF increased, the market expanded, and the first courses on SF were offered at renowned universities (Scholz 1985, 61).

Authors also influence each other and react to each other’s fictionalized stand-points, which can be seen as early as in female SF of the 1960s. Suzette Haden Elgin’s *Coyote Jones* series (published between 1970 and 1986) with its wannabe macho protagonist, for instance, can arguably be seen as a reply to “the juvenile sexist science fiction (or fantasy) of writers like John Norman, with his Gor series” (Chapman 1982, 97). Chapman goes on to argue that in response to the largely dysfunctional female heroines and patriarchal male protagonists of her time, Elgin’s *Coyote Jones* “belongs to a certain breed of intelligent men who have trouble feeling desire for a woman unless she displays marked intelligence and a challenging personality” (97), which sets him apart from what was perceived as the norm for both female and male subjectivity in society and fiction alike. Author-to-author influences are not always this overtly stated and are sometimes only perceivable when the reader is familiar with the social and cultural discourse in question.

## Conclusion

All types of convergences to be found in SF fandom today impact the way readers consume media and literary contents available to them. While technophiles may blog about their views while sitting in a panel at a SF convention, others may adapt available content to new formats and delivery modes, such as creating filk music to honour or satirize their favourite book, show, or film. Audiences listening to the filkers may then be inspired to consume the original. New discussions may be started with the material created by new authors and fans, thus producing new canons and new ways of defining our understanding of what humanity’s future might look like. This cultural background is also passed on to the children of fans who grow up in fan culture: “Second-generation fans are often encouraged to read and write as soon as possible. Any sign of artistic or scientific talent is fostered by their eager parents” (Rogow 1991, 302).

So the spirit of convergence culture lives on. Convergence is a process, not an endpoint (Jenkins 2006b, 16), which also means that, in a genre in which trans-media storytelling is the key to world-making, a plethora of new and hitherto unexplored avenues await the willing participant. Ultimately, convergence culture in SF and feminist SF fandom will further enhance our openness towards new (and potentially better) ways of understanding “how we learn, work, participate in the political process, and connect with other people around the world” (Jenkins 2006b, 23). This, in turn, will continue to allow generations of fans to live in a world they can change, in which definitions of ‘self’ are in flux, and in which fans dare to be fans, continually evaluating their own position within feminist SF fandom and the

wider SF community: “it can promote an acceptance of the fragility and inadequacy of our own claims to be able to ‘explain’ and ‘justify’ our own most intensely private or personal moments of fandom and media consumption” (Hills 2002, 72). This justification requires a voice, which in turn requires the power to use that voice. Feminist SF fans have made boundaries visible by transgressing them: “Norms that are exceeded lose their invisibility, lose their status as common sense and are brought out into the open agenda” (Fiske 1989, 114). This process has created a platform for discussion of numerous different social and political issues. Jenkins observes that “the political effects of these fan communities come not simply through the production and circulation of new ideas [...] but also through access to new social structures (collective intelligence) and new models of cultural production (participatory culture)” (Jenkins 2006b, 246). Yet there is still a long way to go, as Jenkins concludes:

Nobody regards these fan activities as a magical cure for the social ills of postindustrial capitalism. They are no substitute for meaningful change, but they can be used effectively to build popular support for such change, to challenge the power of the culture industry to construct the common sense of mass society, and to restore a much-needed excitement to the struggle against subordination. (1991, 198)

Fans always have the ‘exit’ or ‘voice’ option (Roose and Schäfer 2010, 372-374), i.e. they can choose to leave fandom and remain entirely passive or to voice their dissent and also their approval with regard to certain trends. They can either engage in changing the status quo or augment trends they wish to see gain more traction. Given the chance, feminist SF fans will always choose to let themselves be heard loudly and clearly.

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# Transmediality



# Reconsidering Transmedia(l) Worlds

*Nicole Gabriel, Bogna Kazur, and Kai Matuszkiewicz*

## 1. Introduction

“Any thoughtful study of contemporary *transmedia* must start with the vital caveat that transmedia is not a new phenomenon, born of the digital age.”

(Jason Mittell 2014, 253; emphasis in the original)

To begin with, we would like to agree with the general sentiment of Mittell’s statement: ‘transmedia,’ which Mittell seems to use as an abbreviation of the term ‘transmediality,’ is not a new phenomenon. But can it really be a mere coincidence that these two terms and other related concepts such as ‘transmedial worlds’ have been introduced and extensively discussed in academic discourses since the early 2000s, less than ten years after the introduction of home computers and the internet to numerous private households, and at about the same time as the Web 2.0 came into existence? We do not think so. Rather, we believe that the increasing research interest of media studies in these phenomena and the various concepts used in this research field are indicators of a fundamental change in (trans)media culture that is a result of the emergence of digital technologies as well as their massive influence on our everyday lives.

The aims of this paper are to take a closer look at the terminology used to describe different phenomena in the field of transmedia studies, to differentiate between these terms and concepts and render them more precise, and to put transmedia(l) worlds into a historical context through the analysis of three case studies: the transmedial universe of *Sherlock Holmes*, the *Alien* saga, and the transmedial world of *The Legend of Zelda*. This diachronic perspective allows us to emphasize the

formation of worlds as the essential criterion that sets transmedia(l) worlds of the digital age apart from earlier transmedial phenomena, such as the general but uncoordinated transmedial representation of content (e.g. the illustration and retellings of ancient myths or biblical stories) or transmedial characters. While we agree with Mittell and others that ‘transmedia,’ used as a synonym for ‘transmediality,’ is not an entirely new phenomenon, we argue that ‘transmedia worlds’ are in fact born of the digital age. On the other hand, not only have the older transmedial worlds become much more expansive, but transmedial world-building has also become one of the most important strategies of media production under the influence of digital technologies.

## 2. Theorizing Transmediality

As Jens Eder and Jan-Noël Thon (2012) have pointed out, there are currently at least three or four academic discourses<sup>1</sup> in which ‘transmediality’<sup>2</sup> is being discussed: firstly, in the field of adaptation studies that, as Eder (2014) observes, is increasingly abandoning “its old focus on fidelity of literature-to-film adaptations” and “is beginning to open towards questions of transmediality” instead; secondly, in a literature, film, and media studies discourse centring on concepts such as ‘intermediality,’ ‘transfictionality,’ and ‘inter-’ or ‘transtextuality,’ which are employed to examine the “intricate relationships between works of art with regard to their media specific aesthetics” (Eder 2014); and thirdly, and of most importance to this paper, a rather new discourse primarily within media studies in which mainly film, series, or digital game franchises are put into a wider conceptual framework. This framework is necessitated by the realities of contemporary media production for which the detailed analysis of individual works seems no longer enough, but for which larger conceptual entities such as ‘transmedia storytelling’ (Jenkins 2007; 2011), ‘transmedial worlds’ (Klastrup and Tosca 2004; 2014), or ‘transmedia practice’ (Dena 2009) are required. Lastly, Eder identifies a discourse in communication studies and economics that “empirically investigates journalism and marketing under the generic concepts of *cross-media* and *convergence*” (Eder 2014; emphasis in the original).

Due to the fact that these discourses have developed largely side by side rather than in exchange with each other, several terms and concepts have been introduced and tend to be confused due to their orthographic similarity and overlapping tendencies. Our own approach is situated on the borders between the second and

<sup>1</sup> Three discourses are mentioned in an extensive footnote in Eder and Thon (2012); four discourses, now including adaptation studies, are identified in Eder (2014).

<sup>2</sup> Eder compiles a number of definitions of ‘transmediality’ with different extensions but suggests “the property of semiotic phenomena to occur in more than one medium” (Eder 2014) as the most useful working definition. For the present paper, we will adopt this rather general definition.

third discourse, though with a stronger emphasis on the third, whose focus we have extended to include novel-based franchises as well. We hope to reduce some of the confusion by drawing on concepts and terminology from both discourses, pointing out connections, and making clearer distinctions between them wherever we consider it necessary or useful. We will begin with the discussion of some central concepts.

In publications in 2001 and even more so in 2006, Henry Jenkins introduced the term ‘transmedia storytelling’<sup>3</sup> to describe a strategy that had emerged in contemporary media culture, i.e. the “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” (Jenkins 2007). He argues that this strategy is a product of “economic convergence,” i.e. “the horizontal integration of the entertainment industry” that makes it particularly interesting for big media corporations to distribute their content across as many of their different media channels as possible in order to exploit lucrative “synergies” of cultural production (Jenkins 2001, 93).

By contrast, narratologist Marie-Laure Ryan’s concept of ‘transmedial storytelling’ – despite looking deceptively similar – denotes a much wider range of multifaceted dynamics spanning various media. Ryan regards transmedial storytelling as “a special case of transfictionality”<sup>4</sup> that “operates across many different media” (2013). Moreover, she points out that these activities do not necessarily have to be preconceived but can develop over time and can be created by several independent ‘producers,’ including fans. Ryan describes this spontaneous and often uncontrollable extension of particularly popular and culturally significant texts across different media as a “‘snowball’ effect” (2013), which she then juxtaposes with a notion that is very similar, if not identical, to Jenkins’s ‘transmedia storytelling.’ Thus she sets up a continuum between the “two poles” of spontaneous versus preconceived medial distribution, with “a variety of shades” in between, all of which she summarizes as ‘transmedial storytelling’ (2013). But while Ryan uses ‘transmedial storytelling’ as an umbrella term that includes ‘transmedia storytelling,’ we would argue for a sharper distinction between these two terms. In other words, we use the term ‘transmedia storytelling’ only to describe preconceived transmedia projects that tell one unified story through different media. ‘Transmedial storytelling,’ in turn, is used for transmedial phenomena that develop(ed) in a spontaneous and unplanned manner, often over a longer period and created by various (independent) producers, both professional and non-professional. If this juxtaposition is taken into

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<sup>3</sup> To our knowledge, the term was first mentioned in Jenkins 2001. However, the concept was first fully developed in Jenkins 2006 and modified in Jenkins 2011, though most of its central ideas remained unchanged, as Eder (2014) points out.

<sup>4</sup> Ryan defines ‘transfictionality’ as “the migration of fictional entities across different texts, but these texts may belong to the same medium, usually written narrative fiction” (2013).

consideration, it becomes problematic to understand these two concepts as part of a continuum, since the question of whether transmedia(l) storytelling is pre-conceived or not is a decisive and unambiguous criterion.

Another related but far less narrative-centred concept has been introduced by Lisbeth Klastrup and Susana Tosca in their seminal paper in which they coined the term ‘transmedial worlds’ to refer to “abstract content systems from which a repertoire of fictional stories and characters can be actualized or derived across a variety of media forms” (2004). One of their central characteristics of transmedial worlds is “that audience and designers share a mental image of the ‘worldness’ (a number of distinguishing features of its universe)” that “mostly originates from the first version of the world presented, but can be elaborated and changed over time” (2004). Thus “a transmedial world is more than a specific story” (Klastrup and Tosca 2004). This notion sets their definition explicitly apart from Jenkins’s ‘transmedia storytelling’ that aims at telling a unified story across several media. Furthermore, they claim that “subjects interacting with the transmedial world in any of its actualizations [...] can recognize the world by its abstract properties,” and they suggest to group these world-defining “core features” into three categories: firstly, a world’s ‘mythos’ – “the establishing story, legend, or narration of the world, with the defining struggles;” secondly, the world’s ‘topos,’ i.e. “the setting of the world in both space (geography) and time (history);” and thirdly, the world’s ‘ethos’ – “the explicit and implicit ethics, or the moral codex of behaviour for characters” (Klastrup and Tosca 2014, 297). Hence transmedial worlds clearly exceed mere storytelling because they incorporate non-narrative fan activities (e.g. on *YouTube* or contributions to fan forums) or merchandising articles (such as action figures or bedclothes) that may evoke a world by employing some of its core features but do not contribute to an overarching narrative (as in Jenkins’s ‘transmedia storytelling’) or may not even contain narrative elements at all (which would be the minimum requirement for Ryan’s ‘transmedial storytelling’). This, however, is not to say that storytelling does not play a role in transmedial worlds at all – even Klastrup and Tosca point out that a world’s “properties are usually communicated through storytelling” (2004) – but it cannot be stressed enough that there are also other important, non-narrative ways of world-building besides storytelling.

When it comes to the technicalities of world-building, Mark J.P. Wolf identifies two main strategies through which a world may be extended: either, and most traditionally, through ‘adaptation’ which he defines as a transposition of an existing story into another medium (2012, 245), or through ‘growth’ which expands the world by offering new canonical material in a different medium (245-246). However, it is important to note that both strategies may also be employed within the same medium.

Two other aspects deserve a little more attention here as well: firstly, the term ‘world’ and secondly, Wolf’s use of the word ‘canonical.’ When Wolf talks about ‘worlds’ he refers to ‘imaginary worlds’ (2012, 14), i.e. fictional worlds or ‘story-worlds’ as Ryan and Thon call them (2014, 1), but not necessarily ‘secondary’



(Wolf 2012, 25-29) or ‘fantasy’ worlds. Even though many, or even most, transmedial worlds can be found in the Fantasy or Science Fiction genres (such as the *Star Wars* universe or Tolkien’s ‘Arda’), storyworlds can also be ‘overlaid worlds’ (Wolf 279), i.e. fictionalized versions of the (‘real’) primary world. For us, though, the term ‘transmedial world’ is not restricted to mean ‘diegesis.’ Instead, we perceive a second level: ‘transmedial world’ can also refer to the entirety of all texts and other instantiations through which a specific fictional world is evoked and fleshed out – not just the ‘intradiegetic world’ in which stories are set, but also the ‘extradiegetic’<sup>5</sup> conglomeration of narrative and non-narrative “media windows” (Wolf 2) or rather ‘media portals’<sup>6</sup> through which we experience and interact with a diegesis. Even so, Wolf’s two central strategies of world-building remain relevant on both levels.

The differentiation between these two levels is also important with regard to the second issue we would like to address – canonicity. Wolf’s definition of ‘growth’ makes it clear that, for him, a transmedial product can only be considered to contribute to a world’s growth if it adds new “canonical” material, i.e. material that presents new pieces of information that are “true” for the fictional world (270). This definition implies not only a certain authority on account of the producer(s) of a specific instantiation – which is, as Wolf argues, usually held only by the original ‘creator’ of a world, his or her estate, or another kind of licence holder – but, as a consequence, it also generally excludes less ‘official’ products and especially fan-created texts and other artefacts. This is arguably true, or even necessary, on the intradiegetic level since it can enable and ensure a storyworld’s consistency. But on the extradiegetic level, canonicity is not a necessary criterion. Any product that associates itself with a transmedial world by incorporating enough of its core features to evoke that specific world can be said to contribute to the (extradiegetic) growth of the transmedial world in question, as long as it is made available to others, for example via the internet or at fan conventions. Through various internal processes of canonization (e.g. views on *YouTube*) some of these ‘unofficial’ extensions of a transmedial world can achieve quasi-canonical or ‘fanonical’<sup>7</sup> status and may spin off their own (inter-/transmedial) subworld (e.g. E.L. James’s *Fifty Shades of Grey*). In a few rare cases and when contributing to what Wolf calls “open

<sup>5</sup> The terms used to refer to these two levels are mere auxiliary designations. Especially the term ‘extradiegetic’ is a somewhat infelicitous appropriation of narratological terminology, where it refers to the level on which a story’s narrator is located. Though we are well aware of this imprecision, we will employ the term ‘extradiegetic’ throughout this paper in the appropriated sense, for want of a better alternative.

<sup>6</sup> Even though we find Wolf’s metaphor of ‘media windows,’ which allow various glimpses at a diegesis, very useful, we propose to use the metaphor of ‘media portals’ instead because it suggests a higher degree of immersion, interactivity, and participation instead of limiting the consumption of a transmedial world’s instantiations to passive observation.

<sup>7</sup> Leavenworth defines “fanon” as “the fan-produced, unsanctioned developments of plot and character that over time acquire legitimacy within the fan community even though they may contest or be incompatible with canon elements” (2014, 315).

worlds” (270), they may even cross over to the intradiegetic level and thus find their way into the official canon. This phenomenon assigns a much more prominent and important role to (unauthorized) fan activities in the process of transmedial world creation, as it may turn storyworlds into transmedial worlds that were never intended to be transmedial by their ‘official’ creators. This will be shown by our case study of *The Legend of Zelda*.

In analogy to our distinction between ‘transmedia storytelling’ and ‘transmedial storytelling’ we further propose to distinguish between ‘transmedial worlds’ and ‘transmedia worlds.’ This means that we understand ‘transmedial worlds’ as worlds that have spread from one ur-medium to a number of different media in a spontaneous and unplanned way (as is the case with *The Lord of the Rings*), whereas ‘transmedia worlds’ are worlds which are preconceived and born in various media (e.g. *The Matrix*). The contemporary circulation of these terms creates the impression that the dynamics described are a relatively new phenomenon. Indeed, our diachronic observations of three different transmedial ‘worlds’ (*Sherlock Holmes*, *Alien*, and *The Legend of Zelda*) suggest that transmedia worlds as preconceived environments are a rather new phenomenon that differs from what is known as ‘transmedial worlds.’ To mark this distinction and to grasp these findings terminologically, we propose the term ‘transmedia worlds,’ analogous to the aforementioned ‘transmedia/l storytelling’ distinction. In the next section, we would like to contribute to the clarification of terminological confusion in (trans)media studies by introducing the triad of intermedial, transmedial, and transmedia worlds.

### 3. Intermedial, Transmedial, and Transmedia Worlds

However convincing Mittell’s statement, which was quoted at the beginning of this paper, might appear at first glance, its substance is highly dependent on how ‘transmedia’ is defined. If the term is understood as a synonym for ‘transmediality,’ then Mittell is quite right. Transmediality is “not a new phenomenon” (Mittell 2014, 253). One can definitely argue for the transmedial nature of century-old characters such as Sherlock Holmes or Dracula. But are transmedial worlds, for example, an equally old phenomenon? Even though some instances of transmedial ‘heritage’ are indisputable, its nature and range have undergone a substantial transformation with the emergence of digital technologies. In order to approach the concept of ‘transmedial worlds,’ we will juxtapose it to ‘intermedial’ and ‘transmedia worlds’ and point out some differences that should not be overlooked.

The observation that connections between media existed before the 1970s is undeniable. Since antiquity artworks have inspired artists all around the world to adapt the content of one artistic medium and transfer it to another. The Greek myths and narratives have induced countless painters, novelists, sculptors, or playwrights to create a vast number of masterpieces. But is it advisable to call these references or worlds ‘transmedial’?

As mentioned above, Mark J.P. Wolf emphasizes that transmedial worlds are characterized by two central strategies – adaptation and growth. Adaptation means to transfer content from one artwork or medium to another without any striking consequences for the world as a whole. Growth means the extension, the expansion of the world by adding something new to it. To be precise, adaptation is primarily a strategy of replicating, while growth is primarily a way of creating new content for the world. The filmization of a novel like *Harry Potter*, for instance, is an adaptation because the novel's substance is translated into another medium without the storyworld being considerably affected. However, the digital game *Star Wars: The Force Unleashed* is an example of growth because it fills the gap between Episodes 3 and 4 and thus feeds the *Star Wars* world with content.

Our suggestion is to call worlds that primarily make use of adaptation strategies 'intermedial.' Here, most references are mere adaptations of the existing artistic content. This might be the result of the canonical status the 'mother ships,' ur-media, or ur-artworks had. The adaptations of the Bible created an intermedial world that dominated art in the Middle Ages in Western Europe and that hardly bore examples of growth. The authority of the Bible as a canonical text of Christianity shaped the social structures as well as the culture and art of the time. Due to their lack of growth, these worlds appear intermedial rather than transmedial.

Of course, there are further aspects that justify the use of the term 'transmedial' over 'intermedial.' Transmedia(l) worlds, for example, tend to exhibit a high frequency of publications. In comparison to contemporary franchises such as *Star Wars* that update their worlds sometimes on a daily basis, the expansion of intermedial worlds (in some cases) even stretched over hundreds or thousands of years. Another aspect concerns the circulation of produced add-ons. The uniqueness of the artwork preceding the age of mechanical reproduction made intermedial worlds less dynamic than transmedial or transmedia worlds. The latter produce content that circulates among millions of people (especially in the case of digital and downloadable content). The high frequency of publications, the (potential) significance of the single object for the whole world, the vast output in a short time, and above all its ubiquity are indicators of transmedial as well as transmedia worlds, which make them quite different from intermedial worlds.

The first challenge to intermedial worlds was the rise of (mechanical) reproducibility. Walter Benjamin's essay "Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit" ["The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction"] (1935) can be read as a glimpse of this change. The subsequent steps of technological development have modified media environments so radically that intermedial worlds are indeed still possible but rare, because most of them have been transformed into transmedial worlds.

The technological framework revolutionized the modes of reception and by this also the role of the reader or viewer. The current fan has much more influence on her favourite world than the followers of intermedial worlds two thousand years before. She is not just a recipient but becomes an emitter, and she also be-

comes a hybrid of producer and consumer, the famous ‘prosumer.’ The progress from recipient to prosumer marks a shift from the omnipotent creator, the genius of the intermedial world that other artists only dare to adapt, to the designer of transmedia(l) worlds who offers the fans many possibilities to participate in the world. But we will see that these designers of transmedia(l) worlds may show a lot of resistance if somebody tries to add unwelcome content. The designers and producers of such worlds are strict licence holders and see themselves as the omnipotent owners of these worlds, similar to the omnipotent creators of the ur-medium of an intermedial world. Nintendo is an example of such a licence holder, but at the same time this case demonstrates that not even the strictest licence holder today can prevent rich (online and offline) fan cultures and their various forms of expressions (e.g. fan fiction, wikis, forums, or conventions). While the prosumer does not signify relief of the recipient’s oppression by the producer, his or her emergence may constitute an important step towards a much more liberal media culture in which people begin to scrutinize the existing standards and laws when they talk about the ownership of such transmedia(l) worlds. Who is the owner? The licence holder or the community? Is the transmedia(l) world commercial or social property?

The high fan activity provides an extensive interaction between the different media of transmedia(l) worlds that intermedial worlds do not have. The fan is a crucial factor for the establishment of transmedia(l) worlds because the activity of the fan increases the frequency of publications and the output in general. The ubiquity of transmedia(l) worlds based on digital technology allows the fan-created object to become potentially significant for the whole transmedia(l) world or at least for a part of this world, a subworld. Fan-supported interactions between various media or media channels of transmedia(l) worlds are part of a feedback loop that ensures the persistence of the system as a kind of ‘autopoiesis.’ Hence a prosumer can neither accept an omnipotent creator and owner nor an immutable canon or mother ship, since her role in the digital age requires much more influence than in times of merely intermedial worlds. In this context, ‘canon,’ ‘mother ship,’ and ‘omnipotent author’ become erosive categories, testimonies of a sweeping change of culture by media during the last decades.

In the section above, we discussed the nature of intermedial worlds and investigated their difference from transmedia(l) worlds. Now we will explore the differences between transmedial and transmedia worlds. We will argue that the three transmedial worlds we examine suggest two paradigm shifts that seem to have arisen around the same time as digital technologies made their way into mainstream culture. The first of these shifts took place in the late 1970s and early 1980s, a time that also saw the arrival of the personal computer, the VCR, and gaming consoles in millions of households. With the digital permeation of the lives and homes of so many people, these technologies reached an unprecedented visibility and ubiquity in everyday life and culture. This kind of heightened awareness was accompanied and furthered by corporate developments such as the evolution of

Hollywood from film business to entertainment business industry, a phenomenon Jenkins describes as “economic convergence” (2001, 93). ‘Economic convergence’ is, on the one hand, a result of the influence of digital technologies on the process of film production, e.g. special effects. On the other hand, it eases the distribution and reception of films beyond cinema via home entertainment devices such as the VCR. The second paradigm shift occurred at the end of the 1990s when millions of households around the world got connected to the internet and established a network that allowed a growing number of fans to participate actively in the transmedia(l) world with which they engaged. These connected digital technologies enabled an important online fan activity, which is a crucial feature of transmedia(l) worlds.

We can see that both paradigm shifts occur not just with the emergence, rise, and progress of digital technology but with the increasing use of these technologies by private households all around the world. The first paradigm shift is the change from intermedial to transmedial worlds and the second is the development from transmedial to transmedia worlds. We are not claiming that newer forms completely replaced the older forms, but the shifts indicate changes in the dominant strategies of media production.

By the end of the 1970s, digital technologies made it possible to enjoy various media like film or digital games at home. Before this time, films were shown only in cinemas and digital games like *Pong* were available exclusively in arcades, which both are public spaces. Digital technologies allowed people to individualize their media consumption so that media reception became an increasingly private affair with only family members and friends participating. For this use, it was inevitable to create new media objects that were reproducible by everyone and to be used everywhere, anytime, and as often as people wanted. Media reception was no longer only a collective and social process like visiting a museum, a theatre, or an opera house; it became also an individual process. The recipient could now consume her favourite medium whenever she wanted to; she, rather than any other social institutions or other group members, was able to set the frames of media reception. In their own home people can individualize their taste without being afraid of being judged by others. This great interest in private media consumption led to new marketing strategies like transmedia marketing so that the emergence of transmedial worlds was perfectly prepared. The output of media products increased to fulfill the requirement of participating in a particular transmedial world like *Star Wars*. In this context, the frequency of publications increased, too, and the first fan movements with (offline) fan activities appeared.

The shift from transmedial to transmedia worlds following the presence of the internet in millions of houses worldwide at the end of the last millennium is rather interesting because it has a high applicability to questions concerning both public and private use. On the one hand, people can use the internet to communicate online in small groups or exchange (self-created) content, and on the other hand, they can take part in large online communities, argue about their favourite trans-

medial world, or extend this world by using the strategy of growth. This is a crucial point. Fan communities existed before the internet emerged, but they never could become networks so easily; this is a new quality and dimension that changes the hierarchy in the relationship between producer and consumer. The internet provides an infrastructure for transmedial worlds that turns them into a well-connected community with a highly interactive structure. Hence it is evident that these structures more and more become networks without centres – they become rhizomatic. In these rhizomes, the notion of an omnipotent creator, a mother ship that is fixed and dominant at all times, is increasingly challenged.

From the perspective of a licence holder, these worlds are very interesting because nearly every participating fan in the internet is a potential consumer of transmedia franchise artefacts. In other words, these worlds with their dedicated fans are an economically substantial factor. The entertainment industry recognized this at the end of the 1990s and started deliberately to develop transmedia worlds as such. This is the difference between a transmedial and a transmedia world. The first one emerges incidentally, whereas the second one is formed and planned from its incipience. In their appearance both worlds are identical, but their origins make them different. So the transmedial world of *The Lord of the Rings* looks like the transmedia world of *The Matrix*, but they developed differently. Tolkien never thought of his work as a transmedial world, whereas the Wachowski siblings, their whole team, and the industry behind them produced *The Matrix* as a transmedia world. This illustrates yet another tendency of transmedia worlds: they tend to be generated by large teams.

At the end of this section we cannot offer an exhaustive definition of transmedia(l) worlds but rather wish to summarize those aspects that condense the most central traits of transmedia(l) worlds. It becomes clear that, unlike intermedial worlds, transmedia(l) worlds feature a high productivity as well as a (potentially) high significance of one single media object for the whole world, that transmedia(l) worlds produce a vast output of media objects in general, and that they have an enormous level of cultural presence. Additionally, transmedia(l) worlds are generated by extensive interactivity between the different media of the transmedial world, and this interactivity is deeply connected to the immense (online and offline) fan activity. But we would like to add further characteristics to these six aforementioned features.

Transmedia(l) worlds emerge when at least three different media (e.g. film, literature, or TV) work together to create an immersive environment. Beside the high frequency and significance as well as the impressive output, the interactivity between different media of transmedia(l) worlds is a very important factor for establishing transmedia(l) worlds. The mutual references and feedback, both simultaneous and delayed, are very important to sustain these environments. Apart from significance and interactivity, the factor of a new media object's (measurable) acceptance ought to be added when the world is investigated. It is of secondary

importance whether this object has been created by the licence holder or by the fan community; of importance, however, is the existence of an ongoing process of ‘autopoiesis.’

Furthermore, especially in media studies, the concept of ‘world’ expands the notion of a world that is only diegetic. This does not mean that these worlds are free of narration and narratives. Rather, transmedia(l) worlds consist in a large part of narratives and storytelling and thereby generate a diegesis or fictional (secondary) world. But transmedia(l) worlds are more than that, and media studies that focus on narratology sometimes run the risk of ignoring this fact. It is important to understand transmedia(l) worlds as transmedia(l) environments.

Occasionally the re-entry into the transmedia(l) world with its social structures is much more important than the plot. This also implies that transmedia(l) worlds are able to integrate into their worlds narrative media (such as literature), performative media (like theatre or enactments), fan-focussed franchise artefacts, and social fan activities. Currently, most transmedia(l) worlds encompass the following media: written narratives, graphic novels, TV, film, and digital games. But this does not mean that further media cannot be added to these worlds, as will be shown in the following case study.

## 4. Case Studies

### 4.1. Sherlock Holmes – A Transmedial Character in a Transmedial Universe

When Ronald B. De Waal’s bibliographical index, *The Universal Sherlock Holmes*, appeared in five volumes in 1994, it listed a total of 25,000 publications in various media (see Watt and Green 2003, 1), which present the Great Detective or at least some other core feature or main constituent of his world in one form or another. By 2012, Sherlock Holmes was awarded the Guinness World Record as the “most portrayed literary human character in film and TV” (Guinness 2012), with 254 depictions being counted. Today, it can only be estimated how many more ‘publications’ have been added since the advent of the internet in the 1990s, since when they have been accumulating steadily in numerous fan fiction forums, on *YouTube*, or elsewhere in the vastness of the World Wide Web.

This section aims at making sense of this mass of products and identifying trends and lineages in the development of this large transmedial world. Therefore, a timeline has been created, which covers the main developments within the (extradiegetic) transmedial world of Sherlock Holmes from 1887 to 2014. Thus the observations and analysis in this section will be based on the more than 350 entries distributed across the media channels of literature, stage, film, radio, television, games, digital games, comics/graphic novels, fan activities, and web-content,

which have been included in this timeline. The selection draws mainly on a number of pre-selections published both in print and online.<sup>8</sup> These sources serve not only as filters but also, especially by comparing their selections wherever possible, as indicators of importance and influence – if not (quasi-)canonicity – within the transmedial world. In the areas of pastiche, parody, and fan products and activities, which are extremely extensive and unmanageable, the selection had to be limited to a few central hallmarks, such as the foundation of important Holmes societies, journals, or fan-databases. Thus it has been possible to downsize the transmedial world to manageable proportions, while still including relevant data to be able to deduce informed, viable theses about trends and lineages in the world's development.

Between 1887 and 1927, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle published four Holmes novels and 56 short stories, mostly as monthly instalments in the *Strand Magazine*. Since the Great Detective was first brought to life in written form, the world's ur-medium, and for the first 40 years also its main medium, has been literature. However, the first Holmes novel, *A Study in Scarlet*, already appeared with four accompanying illustrations by D.H. Friston and from the first short story onwards, Sidney Paget's popular illustrations for the *Strand Magazine* contributed greatly to the way in which the Master Detective should become visualized and portrayed for over a century. This makes Holmes an intermedial, if not transmedial character almost from his very beginning. Notably, Paget is also widely credited with the addition of the deerstalker hat and the Inverness cape, which have become two of the central iconic attributes of Holmes's depiction.

The short stories were a huge, instant success and the newly founded *Strand Magazine* quickly raised its run of copies from 300,000 to 500,000 per month. Doyle became a rich man but soon started to feel curtailed in his creative freedom by having to churn out one Holmes story after the other. After having published the first 24 short stories between July 1891 and December 1893, Doyle decided to have Holmes killed in "The Final Problem" in a fight with his newly-introduced nemesis Professor James Moriarty. Holmes's death was met with a public outcry of unprecedented proportions, including heaps of angry letters sent to Doyle and the editors as well as 20,000 cancelled subscriptions to the *Strand Magazine*. But Doyle remained unimpressed by the public pressure to revive Holmes for almost ten years, until he finally gave in and brought the detective back. Holmes first returned in what was to become Doyle's most famous work, *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (serialized from 1901-1902 and framed as a posthumous Holmes case), then officially in 30 more short stories published between 1903 and 1927, and finally in a fourth novel, *The Valley of Fear* (serialized from 1914-1915).

<sup>8</sup> Bunson's *Encyclopedia Sherlockiana* (1994), Kabatchnik's *Sherlock Holmes on the Stage* (2008), Doyle's *Sherlock Holmes for Dummies* (2010), Barnes's *Sherlock Holmes on Screen* (2011), as well as *The Conan Doyle Encyclopedia* (maintained online by the *Société Sherlock Holmes de France* (SSHF)), the *Baker Street Wiki*, and the website [www.boardgamegeek.com](http://www.boardgamegeek.com).



However, the “Great Hiatus” (Doyle 2010, 297), as the ten years after Holmes’s death are known in Sherlockian studies, saw the emergence of what Watt and Green call “the extraordinary genre of story-telling [...] around Holmes” (2003, 1). It led to the production of Holmes parodies and pastiches that still flourishes not least under the label ‘fan fiction.’ In the first years, parodies predominated – the first having appeared as early as 1892 (Watt and Green 2003, 2) – since it was almost impossible for Doyle to keep people from spoofing Holmes. Over the decades and with Holmes’s transposition to newly emerging media or media channels, a steady transmedial tradition of Holmes parody developed.

With pastiches, the situation was different since copyright enforcement was easier. Nevertheless, the first known pastiche was published already in 1893, written by Doyle’s close friend James M. Barry (Watt and Green 77-78). From 1904 onwards, pastiches became more frequent, but only after Doyle’s death in 1930 did the production of Holmes pastiches really accelerate. Soon, three distinct sub-genres evolved: firstly, “Watson’s unchronicled cases” (1), in which ‘Holmesians’ or ‘Sherlockians’<sup>9</sup> close gaps within the canon by telling stories that were only hinted at in Doyle’s stories; secondly, “period pastiches” (7), which employ Holmes, Watson, and other characters as well as such core features as the Baker Street setting and Victorian or Edwardian London to tell completely new cases; and finally, “non-period pastiches,” in which Holmes was placed “in parts of the world foreign to the spirit of the Canon, while others placed him in later eras. Still others had him operating in alien spheres of time and space” (137). Especially this tradition of an “alternative Holmes” (137) shows how much Holmes has become what Bennett and Woollacott call a “‘popular hero’ who ‘break[s] free from the originating textual conditions’” (qtd. in Evans 2012, 108). Evans then continues:

[Bennett and Woollacott] discuss such figures as transcending their original source materials, with character acting as a central narrative point with more import than events or setting. This sets such adaptations apart from franchises that privilege narrative events and settings, such as *Lord of the Rings* (2001-2003) or *Harry Potter* (2001-2011). (108)

In the context of transmedial worlds, this necessitates a differentiation between character-based, often primarily extradiegetic transmedial worlds (like those that have developed around Dracula, James Bond, or Sherlock Holmes) and world-based transmedial worlds (such as Tolkien’s ‘Middle Earth,’ the *Star Wars* universe, or Terry Pratchett’s ‘Discworld’) in which transmedial world-building plays an equally important role on both the extra- and the intradiegetic level.

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<sup>9</sup> ‘Holmesians’ is the name British Holmes aficionados or fans have given themselves, whereas ‘Sherlockians’ is the term their North American counterparts prefer. In this paper, we shall adopt the American term because it is the one used by the oldest, most exclusive, and prestigious American Holmes Society, the *Baker Street Irregulars*, founded in 1934 (Bunson 1994, xiii).

Another crucial development during the hiatus was the successful transposition of Sherlock Holmes to the stage. Already in 1890, Doyle himself had attempted to write a play featuring the detective, but *Angels of Darkness* was to remain unfinished. Others had similar plans for Holmes and so the first play, *Under the Clock*, was put on stage in 1893. However, the first big theatrical success – and in fact the most successful Holmes play until today – premiered in 1899: *Sherlock Holmes – A Drama in Four Acts* was written by the American actor William Gillette but is sometimes also co-credited to Doyle.

The play was so well-received that Gillette, who also starred in it as Holmes, would be touring the world with it for the next 30 years and would portray the detective in about 1,300 performances. Thus he became the first of a number of actors to be known as “the Sherlock Holmes of his generation” (Doyle 2010, 260). The play freely adapted plot elements and characters from canonical stories but also contributed to the budding tradition of ‘alternative Holmes’ by adding romantic elements.<sup>10</sup> Additionally, Gillette’s Holmes also wore deerstalker and Inverness cape, which further cemented these attributes in the Holmes depiction. Moreover, the play introduced the equally iconic big, curved calabash pipe, as opposed to the canonical straight and short-stemmed clay pipe (Doyle 261). Ultimately, the play’s lasting success made it one of the transmedial world’s cornerstones. Over the decades, it was adapted for the cinema (*Sherlock Holmes* 1916; also starring Gillette) and for the radio (*Sherlock Holmes* 1953) and saw several stage revivals (once in 1974 and three times in 1976), one of which was also televised and came to the small screen in 1981. Thanks to his close association with Holmes, Gillette became a strong transmedial tie himself. The American artist Frederic Dorr Steele used Gillette’s Holmes as a model for his illustrations for the American Holmes publications (Doyle 261), which in turn had a fundamental influence on the Holmes image in the US. What is more, Gillette also appeared as Holmes in several radio productions, a film, and further stage adaptations.

Holmes’s first appearance in motion pictures dates back to the 30-second Mutoscope film *Sherlock Holmes Baffled* (1903). From 1921 to 1923, Holmes became a staple of the silent movie era when Eille Norwood portrayed the Great Detective in 47 silent films as well as one stage play (Doyle 266). *The Return of Sherlock Holmes* (1929) is another filmic hallmark of the transmedial world. It is not only the first Holmes talkie but also the first component of the Holmes world to feature the Great Detective’s catchphrase: “Elementary, my dear Watson!” (*Conan* 2014). Throughout the 1930s, Holmes remained popular in British cinema and became firmly established on US radio. The success of the radio series relied not only on

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<sup>10</sup> There is a famous anecdote according to which Gillette asked Doyle in a telegram while he was writing the play: “May I marry Holmes?” Doyle allegedly replied: “You can marry him, or murder him, or anything you want” (Doyle 2010, 259). This rather relaxed attitude towards the treatment of his (then still deceased) character has certainly contributed to the development of the ‘alternative Holmes’ tradition.

the reappearance of the same voice actors and an introductory guest appearance of Gillette, but it was also promoted by a further constant: Edith Meiser who wrote each US radio play between 1930 and 1943 (Bunson 1994, 202).

In 1939, a new era dawned: when Basil Rathbone and Nigel Bruce appeared in their first two films, they began to dominate the Holmes world for more than ten years. In some aspects their impact on the Holmes world, and especially on the depiction of Watson, can be felt until today. After these first two films from 1939, which are still set in Victorian England, the duo also began starring in a long series of US radio plays that ran continuously from 1939 to 1947. The episodes of the film series from 1942 to 1946 updated the setting to the 1940s and some of them stylized Holmes and Watson as “propagandists for the war effort” (Doyle 2010, 270) who foiled Nazi plans. Rathbone’s Holmes is still one of the most popular depictions among Sherlockians and, like Gillette before him, he became “the Holmes of his generation” (Doyle 260), portraying the Great Detective also on TV (*The Adventures of the Black Baronet* 1953) and on stage (*Sherlock Holmes* 1953). His impact was further enforced by the use of his picture in various advertisements (e.g. for cigarettes) and on the box of the second Holmes game (1956).<sup>11</sup>

Apart from the first Holmes TV series in the US, the 1950s remained a relatively uneventful decade for the transmedial world of the Great Detective. Carleton Hobbs and Norman Shelley made their first appearances as Holmes and Watson on BBC radio in 1952, but it was only towards the end of the decade that they began starring in radio series that were aired throughout the 1960s. In 1959, Hammer Productions, known for their sensationalist horror films, released the first Holmes film in colour. It was a rather free adaptation of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (starring Peter Cushing), which strongly foregrounded the eerie elements.

The 1960s saw the production of a 13-episode TV series (1964-1965) with Douglas Wilmer and Nigel Stock. In 1968, the BBC produced another Holmes series that partnered Hammer’s Peter Cushing with Nigel Stock. Later, Stock moved on to BBC radio where he read original Holmes stories. Besides, the Holmes world of the 1960s was enriched by a number of interesting stage productions. *They Might Be Giants* (1961), a psychological study, was later adapted to film (1971). Holmes also appeared in the form of a successful musical (*Baker Street* 1965) and he was re-envisioned on stage as a woman named Shirley Holmes (*If Sherlock Holmes Were a Woman* 1969).

After two rather quiet decades, the 1970s revived and reinvented the Great Detective once more, with high activity in six different media channels. The first of four returns to the big screen was Billy Wilder’s *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes* (1970). While it was not too great a success at the time of its release, it has since then risen in esteem for its melancholy and humane portrayal of the Master Detective, which remains consciously ambiguous about Holmes’s sexual orientation by

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<sup>11</sup> The first unlicensed card game from Parker Brothers appeared already in 1902 (see “Sherlock”).

insinuating that Holmes is secretly in love with Watson (Barnes 2011, 146). This idea has been extensively explored in slash fan fiction and also became one of the subtexts of Guy Ritchie's *Sherlock Holmes* films (2009 and 2011) and the BBC's *Sherlock* (2010-present).

The second hugely influential instantiation of the decade inverted this process: Nicholas Meyer's pastiche novel *The Seven-Per-Cent Solution* (1974) became such a success that it was immediately turned into a film (1976) and was followed by two sequels (*The West End Horror* 1976 and *The Canary Trainer* 1993). As the title, a reference to the cocaine solution Doyle's Holmes injects himself with,<sup>12</sup> suggests, the film foregrounds Holmes's drug addiction and its consequences by portraying Professor Moriarty as a mere drug-induced hallucination. The novel also tells the story of an encounter between Holmes and Freud, an innovation that launched a flood of pastiches in which Holmes is paired with real-life characters (Doyle 2010, 246).

Additionally, there was a lot of Holmes activity on stage, including three revivals of Gillette's *Sherlock Holmes* in 1976, with one of the productions starring *Star Trek*'s Leonard Nimoy. In 1978, Paul Giovanni's play *The Crucifer of Blood* premiered. A revival of *The Crucifer* with Charlton Heston in 1981 was then reproduced for TV and was shown in 1991. Furthermore, there were several TV productions, including two parodies with *Monty Python*'s John Cleese.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, two more Holmes board games were produced.

While the 1970s had seen a lot of innovation, the 1980s were dominated by the Granada TV series with Jeremy Brett that is famed for its canonical 'accuracy.' It ran from 1984 to 1994. At the same time, there were hardly any new productions on the radio but several on stage, and Sherlock Holmes was transposed to yet another medium: between 1984 and 1988, Holmes had a prolific start in the world of digital gaming by appearing in ten different games.

Another more recent tradition of the Holmes world also flourished in the 1980s: Holmes for children. In 1958, Eve Titus published her first children's novel *Basil of Baker Street* that featured a mouse detective whom she had named in honour of Basil Rathbone. Until 1982, four more *Basil* novels were published, and in 1986, Disney brought Basil to the big screen as the star of an animated feature film called *The Great Mouse Detective*. One year earlier, Paramount had already released *Young Sherlock Holmes*, produced by Steven Spielberg. This, in turn, had been preceded by a short British TV series called *Young Sherlock: The Mystery of the Manor House* (1982) and the animated adaptation *Sherlock Holmes and the Baskerville Curse* (1983). Holmes also became a frequent guest in various children's TV programmes throughout the

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, the exchange in *The Sign of Four*: "Which is it today? Morphine or cocaine? 'It is cocaine. A seven-per-cent solution. Would you like to try it?'" (Doyle 1890/2007a, 97).

<sup>13</sup> *Elementary, my dear Watson!* (1973) and *The Strange Case of the End of the Civilization as We Know It* (1977).

1980s and early 1990s.<sup>14</sup> In 1996, Shirley Holmes made a reappearance, this time as Holmes's grand-niece and protagonist of the Canadian children's show *The Adventures of Shirley Holmes* that ran until 1999. The end of the decade, and for a while also of the 'Holmes for children' tradition, was marked by the animated series *Sherlock Holmes in the 22<sup>nd</sup> Century* (1999-2001), which saw a genetically rejuvenated Holmes solving crimes in "New London" or on the moon.

Apart from the Granada TV series, several stage productions, a number of video games, and the aforementioned children's series, the 1990s were, once again, a rather quiet decade for the transmedial world of Sherlock Holmes. After *Without a Clue* (1988), there were no new Holmes films for more than twenty years until Guy Ritchie's *Sherlock Holmes* (2009) reinvented Doyle's detective as an action hero in a CGI-enhanced Hollywood action blockbuster (starring Robert Downey Jr. and Jude Law), thus stressing Holmes's physicality rather than his mental capacities (Evans 2012, 105-106).

With the exception of Ritchie's film that infused new life into the transmedial world and was followed by a sequel in 2011, the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century was even quieter than the 1990s, with the main activity occurring in the maturing medium of computer games.<sup>15</sup> Several of these games adapted storylines from the 'alternative Holmes' tradition by pitting Holmes against master thief Arsène Lupin (a tradition that dates back to a stage play from 1910) or against Jack the Ripper, which had been one of the most popular face-offs in Holmes pastiche since the 1960s (Doyle 2010, 239-240). These kinds of confrontations or crossovers are also favoured in the latest addition to the transmedial world: graphic novels. Here Holmes fights against zombies or Dracula,<sup>16</sup> which perpetuates a tradition of Holmes pastiche established in the late 1970s.<sup>17</sup>

The 'alternative Holmes' tradition is therefore an excellent historical example of what Jason Mittell calls 'What If?' transmediality: its goal is "to launch off the mother ship into parallel dimensions, with connections foregrounding issues of tone, mood, character, or style more than continuing with canonical plots and storyworlds" (2014, 273). But while Mittell considers this strategy as a type of

<sup>14</sup> Some examples are: *The New Scooby-Doo Mysteries*: "Sherlock Doo" (1984); *Count Duckula*: "All in a Fog" (1988); *Alvin and the Chipmunks*: "Elementary, my dear Simon!" (1988); *Chip and Dale*: "The Pound of the Baskervilles" (1989); *Slimer! And the Real Ghostbusters*: "Elementary, my dear Winston!" (1989); *Garfield and Friends*: "The Hound of the Arbuckles" (1990); and *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*: "Elementary, my dear Turtle" (1992). From the titles alone, some traditional lines of the Holmes world become apparent: adaptations of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*; references to the famous fog of Victorian London that formed a core feature of the earlier canonical Holmes stories; and variations of the non-canonical but iconic catchphrase "Elementary, my dear Watson."

<sup>15</sup> There were six instalments in Frogware's *Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* series between 2002 and 2009.

<sup>16</sup> See Ian Edginton and Davide Fabbri, *Victorian Undead: Sherlock Holmes vs. Zombies* (2010) and *Victorian Undead II: Sherlock Holmes vs. Dracula* (2011).

<sup>17</sup> For example, Fred Saberhagen, *The Holmes-Dracula Files* (1978) or Loren D. Estleman, *Sherlock Holmes vs. Dracula: The Adventure of the Sanguinary Count* (1978) (Doyle 2010, 241).

transmedia practice in contemporary (US) television that is preconceived by the initial author, the ‘What If?’ transmediality of Sherlock Holmes has developed spontaneously and under the influence of both professional and non-professional producers.

At the same time, the BBC series *Sherlock* (2010-present), one of the newest additions to the Holmes world, transposes Holmes and Watson to present-day London and employs Mittell’s second strategy of ‘What Is?’ transmedia practice. It incorporates blogs and websites that are maintained intradiegetically by Watson, Sherlock, and two other characters, while ‘spilling over’ into the real world as “diegetic extensions” (Mittell 2014, 259) created by the BBC. The blog, for example, is Watson’s modern-day way of publishing his accounts of the Holmes cases.<sup>18</sup> It offers additional information on the cases as well as reports of other cases that are not featured in the series but are strongly reminiscent of canonical Holmes cases. On the one hand, the blog thus serves as an updated adaptation of Watson’s publishing practice. On the other hand, it establishes a connection to the canonical Watson’s battered “dispatch box,”<sup>19</sup> in which he kept those cases that could not be published for some reason or other. This box became a treasure trove of unknown Holmes stories that countless writers of Holmes pastiches used to legitimize their writings (Watt and Green 2003, 3). In 2011, Holmes underwent another transposition to the 21<sup>st</sup> century, this time to present-day New York in the CBS show *Elementary* (2011-present). An important change here is the gender bending that Watson and Moriarty undergo: for the first time, both are played by women. This is another tradition of Holmes pastiche, practised especially in fan fiction and fan art of the digital age.

In general, the extradiegetic transmedial world that has developed around Sherlock Holmes, a transmedial character in his own right since his first appearance in 1887, is almost too extensive and diverse to fit the ‘world’ metaphor. Only the term ‘universe’ seems large and complex enough to do justice to the myriad of texts, films, plays, radio productions, games, comics and graphic novels, advertisements, and countless other instantiations that feature the Great Detective, especially the inter- and transmedial connections that exist between a number of these different products. In fact, some adaptations, transformations, or expansions have exerted as much influence on the creation of later Holmes products as the canonized works written by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and therefore constitute inter- and transmedial sub-worlds of their own. In recent years, some new additions have even taken the form of transmedia sub-worlds.

But the Holmes universe has not only been shaped and extended by ‘professional’ text and media production. Fan interest and enthusiasm have always kept the Great Detective alive and even revived him once. Organized fan activities date

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<sup>18</sup> See [www.johnwatsonblog.co.uk](http://www.johnwatsonblog.co.uk).

<sup>19</sup> See Doyle, “The Problem of Thor Bridge” (1922/2007b, 1324).

back to the 1930s, and some fan practices have a history that is almost as old as Holmes himself. Many ‘What If?’ scenarios were first explored in Holmes pastiche, a precursor of today’s fan fiction, before they were taken up by other more visible media forms.

Over the decades, the universe’s main channel has shifted away from its ur-medium of literature towards the audio-visual media of film and television. Beginning in the 1930s and 1940s, cinematic representations exerted the greatest influence on the world for a while, whereas in the 1980s and 1990s, the Granada TV series was most dominant. In the 1970s, Holmes experienced a revival that led to an increased output in almost all media. Stage and radio productions have remained constant contributions with close relations to the productions in the other media throughout, albeit with varying levels of output. Even though most of the quasi-canonical additions to the transmedial universe did not occur in literary forms, there has always been a strong undercurrent of text production in the form of written parodies, pastiches, and “Sherlockian writing”<sup>20</sup> published in fan journals, books, or online. Time and again, individual pastiches such as Nicholas Meyer’s *The Seven-Per-Cent-Solution* provided new input for the universe as a whole.

Since the 1990s, the internet has given rise to new forms of fan practice (esp. on *YouTube*, in wikis, or in online transmedia extensions such as John Watson’s blog). Furthermore, the internet has become a new platform for more traditional fan practices (parodies and pastiches, fan art, Sherlockian reading, or ‘playing the game’), thus uniting the old and the new. As Stein and Busse put it so aptly: “The new BBC Sherlock has reactivated engagement with Sherlock Holmes within digital contexts, and yet Holmes has been with us all along, or at least since he came on the scene in 1887” (2012, 9).

#### 4.2. The *Alien* Saga

In 2012, the ubiquitous image of a giant humanoid head approached by wary astronauts foreshadowed the upcoming release of Ridley Scott’s *Prometheus*. What did the shadowy stone sculpture, featured so prominently in the marketing materials, represent? A place of worship, a picture of god, or even the ruler of an alien planet? For the casual cinema-goer it was probably just another impressive film marketing campaign with a striking poster. For the Science Fiction fan or cinephile, by contrast, the sculpture of a gigantic human face rather conjured up the ‘head’ of

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<sup>20</sup> This strong tradition in Sherlockian fandom dates back to a speech by Ronald Knox from 1911. Following this tradition, Holmes and Watson are treated as real characters, their cases as actual historical events, and Doyle as their ‘literary agent.’ This is sometimes also referred to as ‘playing the game’ – a kind of prototype for ‘alternate reality games.’ Contributors write quasi-scientific analyses, in which they seek to fill in gaps (such as Holmes’s biography) or rectify contradictions and inconsistencies in the canon (e.g. the number of Watson’s wives or the place where he was wounded). Another aim is the establishment of an internal chronology of all the cases by linking canonical events to actual historical events (Cole 2005).

the *Alien* universe or, in other words, the climax of a 33-year-old cult franchise. Even though Ridley Scott's greatly anticipated return to the scary Alien creature he had given birth to in 1979 disappointed fans who had expected an illuminating prequel, the revival forms an important landmark in a continually growing world. After all, Scott's return to *Alien* parallels the world's most significant return to its original medium, film.

Tellingly, the trailer ends with android David, played by Michael Fassbender, saying that "big things have small beginnings" ("Prometheus" 2012), a statement that not only makes the *Alien* fans speculate about the epic plot but also reminds them of the first, relatively isolated *Alien* film. Seen retrospectively, its isolation resulted from its modest dimensions since it was intermedially framed only by a novelization and a comic strip adaptation instead of having been accompanied by a transmedial 'explosion,' as it is common today. Admittedly, Alan Dean Foster's *Alien: The Official Movie Novelization* (2014), based on an earlier draft of Dan O'Bannon's screenplay, slightly departs from the finished film. Yet this modification restricts itself to details concerning the Xenomorph's appearance and behaviour as well as subtleties in the relationships between the crew members. Similarly, the comic adaptation *Alien: The Illustrated Story* (Goodwin 2012) does not aspire to more than what its subtitle suggests. Subsequent sporadic releases in the gaming world, such as the Pac-Man for the Atari 2600 in 1982 and another video game for the Commodore 64 in 1984, completed Ridley Scott's comparatively static intermedial world. But no matter how inhibited the world's growth or continuation was in the early 1980s, in merely filmic terms the story is undoubtedly huge. It unfolds around the crew of the spaceship Nostromo that lands on an unexplored planet and unknowingly takes a deadly, hitherto undetected extraterrestrial aboard. In other words, it seems questionable to speak of a 'small beginning' when one takes into consideration the cinematic milestone *Alien* represented. Promoted by the tagline "in space no one can hear you scream," the film combined the already established Science Fiction genre with an ever-expanding interest in horror. While genre spectacles such as Steven Spielberg's *Jaws* and George Lucas's *Star Wars* had introduced the economic New Hollywood a few years earlier,<sup>21</sup> *Alien* appeared on the verge of a new blockbuster era and paved the way for further box office hits. Heavily armed and dressed in an olive-green overall, Sigourney Weaver starring as Ellen Ripley popularized the so-called "final girl" (Clover 1992, 48), a new kind of heroine as last survivor who provoked an upheaval of horror conventions. The appearance of the meticulously (hand-)crafted antagonist was similarly impressive, earning Swiss artist H.R. Giger and his team the Academy Award for Best Achievement in Visual Effects. In fact, the Xenomorph, known colloquially as 'the Alien,' did not just appear but made the spectator witness each stage of its life

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<sup>21</sup> The so-called 'economic New Hollywood' refers to the New Hollywood era of economically successful blockbusters as opposed to the 'aesthetic New Hollywood' of the New American Cinema.



cycle, from the deceptively harmless-looking ‘Egg’ over the scary ‘Facehugger’ and the memorably bloody ‘Chestburster’ to the full-grown adult. In each of its developmental stages the complex, multi-layered creature features a biology of encyclopaedic detail. Scott created two cinematic icons whom it would have been a great pity to abandon at that point of time. Indeed, *Alien*’s last scene, in which Ripley finally gets rid of the Xenomorph by expelling it into space, did not mark the end but just the beginning of this promising and terrifying rivalry that continued to produce three sequels. In the course of James Cameron’s *Aliens* (1986), David Fincher’s *Alien 3* (1992), and Jean-Pierre Jeunet’s *Alien: Resurrection* (1997), Ripley establishes an increasingly complex and ambivalent relationship to the antagonist. It develops from maternally protecting little Rebecca “Newt” Jordan from the (likewise motherly) Alien Queen over carrying the embryo of an Alien Queen herself to being resurrected as an Alien-loving hybrid in the wake of cloning experiments. In a way, the beginning of the *Alien* saga was both extensive and small in comparison to what was still to come.

Cameron’s *Aliens* marked a significant turning point in the franchise’s world-building that began to encompass more and more transmedial elements. In 1988, two years after the release of *Aliens*, Dark Horse Comics kicked off an extensive comic series, unfolding as a set of mini-series instead of a continuing storyline in order to leave room for new impulses. Thus it remained flexible in perfect accordance with a discontinuous and nonlinear transmediality. Since Lt. Ellen Ripley’s cinematic career had not yet been fully exploited, Twentieth Century Fox protected its most valuable heroine from a comic-based resettlement. Kerry Gough points out how fruitful this decision has proved:

So in denying Dark Horse the right to use Ripley in the initial series, as a result of their protection of the franchise, Twentieth Century Fox actually facilitated an enhanced creative drive on the part of Dark Horse, since without the heroic icon of the series, the team at Dark Horse was forced to work especially creatively to keep both Twentieth Century Fox and the fans happy with this next extension of the *Aliens* narrative. (2007, 52)

As a consequence, *Aliens: Book One* (Verheiden 1989) and *Aliens: Book Two* (Verheiden 1990) directly draw on the fate of secondary characters introduced by Cameron. They deal primarily with “Newt’s Tale,” as the title of one of the issues indicates. The most fundamental extension in the comics, however, is the storyworld’s geographical relocation to Earth, which supposedly became the target of an Alien infestation. In the 1980s and early 1990s, the comic series clearly constituted the powerhouse behind the franchise. Not only did the transmedial world around the *Alien* saga flourish, but the Xenomorph itself proved a viable flagship alternative to the film-bound Ripley and finally even attained a certain degree of ‘transmedial autonomy.’ This apparent contradiction indicates the creature’s crossover potential and results in a creative clash with the Predator, another Twentieth Century Fox product, “a concept first developed in comics and to this day the most successful

comics series ever to be based on a licensed property” (“Exciting” 2008). After its first release in 1990, *Alien vs. Predator* quickly included novelizations, merchandising, and eventually films. The crossover also turned the Alien into a noteworthy protagonist of the gaming world with the 1999 *Alien vs. Predator* first-person shooter computer game that gained a lot of unprecedented praise: “It was the first game to get the Alien to look right and act right, scrambling along walls and ceilings, crawling indignantly towards you if you shot its legs off. For the first time the Alien wasn’t just another bad guy in just another first person shooter. It had character” (Hartup 2014). Being responsible for two franchises, the Xenomorph made the *Alien* world grow to the point at which the world’s expansion to a universe became indisputable.

The franchise’s transmedial appeal and cult status grew so strong that it attracted a considerable number of followers, which culminated in Simon Clarke’s foundation of the Aliens Fan Club in 1991. He provided a forum for numerous fans who could not wait to discuss the creature’s phylogenetic taxonomy, to express their dissatisfaction with the last two *Alien* movies, to produce their own fiction, and to predict the production company’s plans for future instalments (Brooker 1999, 64). Club members received the Facehugger newsletter and gathered at events, such as the 1993 and 1999 Aliens Conventions. Even though the club was soon exclusively run online and offered free membership, it was abandoned in 2000 due to legal issues with Twentieth Century Fox. Of course, this did not keep fans from feeding the Web 2.0 with *Alien* content. Launched in 1997, the “Alien Legend” website has offered the opportunity to join discussion boards on any imaginable topic related to *Alien* and to exchange detailed information about the saga including the so-called “Alien 5: Rumor Control” section, which provides sequel- and prequel-hungry fans with relevant hints, quotations, and news.<sup>22</sup> Another web-based example is the fan wiki “Xenopedia” (2006), a self-professedly “comprehensive collaborative database documenting all information on the Alien, Predator and Alien vs. Predator universe, including Prometheus” in pursuit of “building better worlds.”<sup>23</sup> As these quotations illustrate, there seems to be some confusion about whether to talk of ‘worlds’ or ‘universes.’ The “AvP Galaxy” makes yet another terminological suggestion, in an attempt to grasp the sheer infinity of the Alien’s transmedial life. On its cover page, it moreover identifies itself as the “pulse of the Alien & Predator community” (“AvP Galaxy” 2002), and justifiably so. Since 2002, the website has gathered 1,913,156 posts on 28,643 topics by 18,270 members. Considering this ever-growing fan discourse, the massive excitement over the official announcement of *Prometheus* was no surprise. On “AvP Gal-

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<sup>22</sup> On 7 December 2014 the website featured a total of 208,775 posts, 11,765 topics, and 2,012 members.

<sup>23</sup> First and foremost, the phrase “building better worlds” is a citation of the Weyland Corporation’s company slogan. But in this context, it can also be understood as the fans’ ambition to be part of transmedial world-building dynamics.

axy,” for instance, a forum solely devoted to *Prometheus* already opened in May 2009, three years before the film’s release, and has since then produced almost 2,000 topics and 100,000 posts.

However ubiquitous the Alien has been, the recurrent releases of video games, comics, and novelizations were not yet enough. The fans’ questions raised over the years finally had to be at least partly answered, of course not just anywhere but on the big screen. Undoubtedly, Ridley Scott faced a major challenge when producing the official prequel to a saga that looked back on 33 years of transmedial world-building. In order to live up to expectations and adequately respond to its transmedial heritage, the story around *Prometheus* had to provide not only cinema-goers but all fans with multiple entrances to the storyworld. Returning to the very roots of the *Alien* adventure meant for Twentieth Century Fox that it had to elaborate on Weyland Corporation, the driving force behind all the space missions. A large-scale transmedia event therefore introduced CEO Sir Peter Weyland by having him give a presentation at TED 2023, a futuristic version of existing conferences. After seeing this TED video on the Weyland Industries website, fans are immediately directed to another website centred on “Project Prometheus,” where yet another online video unveils what exactly Weyland had in mind when announcing “cybernetic individuals.” Here, David 8 elaborately introduces himself as an android and offers the audience the opportunity to engage with one of the feature film’s major characters.

The mere fact that the Alien’s cinematic reappearance was so fiercely anticipated highlights how much the saga had emancipated itself from its original medium. As much as the 1979 *Alien* film represented a small yet (in cinematic terms) huge beginning of an encompassing phenomenon, *Prometheus* can be described as a small element with big momentum for an ever-growing transmedial universe. Therefore this popular instance of transmedia storytelling may be regarded from two perspectives. On the one hand, the story’s return to its source medium and its creator definitely represents the climax of a transmedial world that had grown so complex that it seemed to have reached a temporary closure with *Prometheus*. This sense of closure, however, did not last long, in spite of Scott’s ambition to solve the riddle of the infamous Space Jockey. Rather, the majority of the movie audience experienced a downright “voyage into the unknown that conjures more questions than it answers,” which is at least how Ben Walters (2012) describes it. On the other hand, *Prometheus* is indeed rather a ‘project’ than a feature film, developing its own transmedial world from the very outset and thus constituting a franchise of its own. Accordingly, the “AvP Galaxy” cover page does not list *Prometheus* as a subsection of *Alien* but places it on the same level with the other established franchises of *Alien*, *Predator*, and *Alien vs. Predator*. In other words, *Prometheus* is not part of the *Alien* world but of the *Alien* universe. Hence cinema-goers faced the paradox of watching both a prequel and a preconceived emancipation from the storyworld at the same time. In a sense, *Prometheus* does in fact signify a closure, yet not by concluding its cinematic heritage but by introducing a new dimension and awareness

of transmediality. It shows how, over the last three decades, the *Alien* saga has developed from an intermedial world to a transmedial universe, from a cinematic landmark to a digital project, and it thus illustrates how the concept of transmediality itself has changed its shape from an accidental effect to a plan. It was only recently that Ridley Scott announced the sequel of the prequel, namely *Prometheus 2*, as well as a newly designed Xenomorph who will most probably be digital from head to toe (Schmitt 2014). Will Sir Peter Weyland bring this digitally tamed creature to his next TED talk? In any case, the story will be conveyed transmedially.

#### 4.3. The Transmedial World of *The Legend of Zelda*

In the field of digital games, *The Legend of Zelda* is one of the most popular franchises of all times and has delighted millions of fans since its emergence in 1986. It is one of the most significant digital games ever and the mother of the Action Adventure genre, one of the most popular genres in the current industry of digital games and entertainment. So it is not surprising that *The Legend of Zelda* has become a fascinating transmedial world.

The mother ship of this world is the medium of digital games. By now more than 40 digital games have been released. The seventeen games of the main sequence<sup>24</sup> are most influential for the transmedial world of *The Legend of Zelda* and form a kind of canon. Their singular status also shows in their commercial success and in the fact that they have repeatedly been adapted into other media of the transmedial world of *The Legend of Zelda*. Moreover, these games seem to be so important that Nintendo has introduced numerous remakes since 2003. Before this time, only two remakes of games of the main sequence had appeared but subsequently there have been fifteen remakes.<sup>25</sup> This fact suggests a change in the marketing and distribution strategy of Nintendo. Yet it also illustrates the effects of digitalization because nine of the remakes were developed for the Virtual Console, an online market place for the latest Nintendo consoles like Wii U or Nintendo 3DS. The Virtual Console offers the possibility to download many different games (especially Nintendo game classics) that can be played via an emulator. Moreover, in 2003 *The Legend of Zelda: Collector's Edition* appeared as the first special edition in the transmedial world of *The Legend of Zelda*. The second special edition was the

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<sup>24</sup> Nine of these games were originally released for steady consoles like the Nintendo Entertainment System, Nintendo 64, or Wii, and the other eight were published on the so-called handhelds like Gameboy or Nintendo 3DS.

<sup>25</sup> The remakes concern the most important and popular games of *The Legend of Zelda*: “The Legend of Zelda” has been remade three times; “The Adventure of Link,” “A Link to the Past,” “Link’s Awakening,” and “Ocarina of Time” have been remade twice; and “Majora’s Mask,” “Oracle of Ages,” “Oracle of Seasons,” “The Minish Cap,” and “The Wind Waker” have been remade once.

Four Swords Anniversary Edition of 2011 that celebrated the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *The Legend of Zelda*. This anniversary was furthermore celebrated with four remakes as well as a new title for the main sequence.

Hence it becomes clear that since 2003 Nintendo has increasingly adopted popular marketing strategies of the entertainment industry. Thus it is not surprising that the company released spin-off products like “Link’s Crossbow Training” (Shooter), “Battle Quest” (a compendium of (digital) games), and “Hyrule Warriors”<sup>26</sup> (Hack and Slay), which transcend the familiar genre of Action Adventure and extend the marketing strategy of Nintendo to similar genres. The trend towards a transmedial use of the world of *The Legend of Zelda* becomes apparent in this genre shift and in the appearance of Link and Zelda as transmedial characters, a fact that affects different media, genres, and games. An early example of this trend is the *Smash Bros* sequence. Link and Zelda soon became popular avatars in Nintendo’s Beat ‘em up medley of a range of well-known Nintendo games.

From the late 1980s to the mid-1990s, Nintendo had also tried another marketing strategy when it allowed other producers to develop *The Legend of Zelda* games for non-Nintendo platforms. The result of this marketing strategy were six games: three for C-Di and one each for Game & Watch, Satellaview, and Nelsonic. But owing to a lack of success, Nintendo ceased to move in this direction in 1996. Nintendo’s earlier marketing strategies were cleverer. The first game in 1986 was a great success, followed by an equally successful second one the next year. Most companies would use this achievement and publish a game each year, not so Nintendo: “Ordinarily, when you have a 10 million-selling franchise in only two games, you start cranking out some serious sequels, but that’s not Nintendo’s way” (Fahs and Thomas 2012). Therefore “A Link to the Past” was released only in 1991. It thus became clear very early in the history of *The Legend of Zelda* that the quality of the games has always been more important to Nintendo than a short-lived economic success and that this product was intended to remain compelling for a long time.

The reluctance to produce a new title for the main sequence distracts from the fact that in the 1980s Nintendo had tried to establish *The Legend of Zelda* as a transmedial product. In 1989, a TV series based on the plot of the first game was launched. However, it was a flop and the series was ceased after its first season. This has been the only attempt to produce a TV series about *The Legend of Zelda*, and its failure also explains why no filmization of *The Legend of Zelda* exists.<sup>27</sup> Also, only two novels, adaptations of “Ocarina of Time” and “Oracle of Ages” by Jason R. Rich and Craig Wessel, are available.<sup>28</sup> It has become clear that Nintendo al-

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<sup>26</sup> “Hyrule Warriors” is also the first crossover in the transmedial world of *The Legend of Zelda*.

<sup>27</sup> Another reason could be the fiasco of the *Super Mario Bros.* film in 1993.

<sup>28</sup> Jason R. Rich’s *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time* was published in 1998, Craig Wessel’s *The Legend of Zelda: Oracle of Ages* in 2003.

ready tried very early to generate a transmedial world of *The Legend of Zelda*. Since these attempts failed, Nintendo has instead focussed on the medium of digital games in the following years. The mother ship became the ark.

It is an interesting discovery that Nintendo does not use all possible media (such as film, TV, and literature) that make transmedial worlds like *Game of Thrones* so successful but rather seems to be sceptical of narrative media<sup>29</sup> – with the exception of manga and comics. The manga and comics published so far adapt the plot of the most popular games of *The Legend of Zelda*'s main sequence, but there are some differences that make it necessary to distinguish two phases, the first between 1986 and 1996 and the second between 2000 and 2011. In the first phase, seven manga and one comic were published as adaptations of the first four games of the main sequence. Since four of the seven manga were released only in Japan, their impact was very limited.<sup>30</sup> The comic was produced in 1990 and the looks of its characters were adapted from the TV series. Both the comic and the TV series failed in their attempt to conquer the US market. In the second phase after 2000, only nine manga by Akira Himekawa (pseudonym of the female mangaka Honda and Nagano) appeared. They were also adaptations of popular games of the main sequence but, in contrast to the first phase, only one of them, “A Link to the Past,” is an adaptation of an early game. All other manga are adaptations of games of the main sequence after 2000. A likely reason for the publication of manga adaptations therefore seems to be the wish to allow the fans to re-enter and immerse themselves in the transmedial world of *The Legend of Zelda*, while offering only a few insignificant additions. It seems that whereas remakes of Zelda game classics are part of some kind of consolidation of the canon, the manga figured primarily as instruments of marketing.

If we try to apply our reconsideration of transmedia(l) world theory to *The Legend of Zelda*, we have to admit that *The Legend of Zelda* does not seem to be a transmedial world because it only uses two media (digital games and manga) extensively. All other media publications either failed or have not yet been attempted. Moreover, the mother ship is very dominant and the manga are mere adaptations that seem to serve as an associated marketing strategy. This leads us to the question: Why is *The Legend of Zelda* a transmedial world? Because two media or phenomena exist that make *The Legend of Zelda* a vital transmedial world – merchandise and fan activity.

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<sup>29</sup> In the gaming industry as well as in game design and game studies, the possibility of transferring characteristics of game-playing to narrative media has been discussed for decades. Nintendo has found an answer of its own.

<sup>30</sup> The second manga series of 1986/7 is exemplary for the economic failure of these manga because the publisher went bankrupt before publishing the third volume that was then released in a manga magazine.

Nintendo's merchandise activity is hard to examine because of a lack of information on the chronology of its franchise activity. This activity reveals a wide range of different products like clothes, collectable figures, toys, backpacks, key chains, purses, posters, dishes, bedclothes, and special boardgame editions such as a *The Legend of Zelda Monopoly*. These objects seem to be very ordinary but they document how important a transmedial world is for its fans: through merchandise, the transmedial world becomes a part of everyday life, i.e. the 'real' world. Hence transmedial worlds form an integral part of our reality and merchandise items are an evidence of that.

The online and offline fan activities are also very difficult but, with the help of the internet, at least possible to survey. Offline fan activities are very important for fans because they offer moments when the community becomes visible and perceives itself as such. On a micro level, there are game parties with friends or fan sessions in the local comic/game stores. On a macro level, conventions or events during which cosplay or activities like bookfairs are staged are manifestations of fan groups as social phenomena.

The internet and other technologies like digital cameras further support these activities by connecting a large number of separate fan groups with the overarching fan community of *The Legend of Zelda*. Such online fan activities are easier to investigate. If we explore the online fan community of *The Legend of Zelda*, we find numerous phenomena that are quite typical of the online activity of fans of transmedia(l) worlds. There are fan sites like "Zelda Universe" (since 2001) or "Hidden Triforce" (since 2004; after inactivity relaunched in 2009), forums like "Zelda-Forum" (since 2004), wikis like "Zelda Wiki" (since 2005 renamed as "Zelda Universe") and "Zeldapedia" (since 2005), or fan fictions.<sup>31</sup> Fan fictions are traceable from the late 1990s onwards. Hence it is evident that online fan activities in the transmedial world of *The Legend of Zelda* began with the spread of the internet in households around the world and took on their current shape in the following five years.

All these online fan activities like *YouTube* videos,<sup>32</sup> essays, and fan groups in social media like *Facebook* perfectly illustrate the social structure of transmedial worlds and the role of the fan as producer as well as consumer. She can access her favourite world without adding to it, but the possibility to contribute to it is given and is used excessively. Today, the fan is also a prosumer: she consumes and produces fan games or fan art and shares with other fans the experiences of offline events like cosplays by exchanging pictures and reports.

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<sup>31</sup> See, for example, [www.fanfiction.net](http://www.fanfiction.net) (Web. 8 December 2014) and <https://www.fanfiction.net/s/8288452/1/The-Legend-of-Zelda-Ocarina-of-Time-The-Novel> (Web. 8 December 2014).

<sup>32</sup> See, for example, a fan-made history of *The Legend of Zelda* on [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v2iV2\\_MQ7ak](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v2iV2_MQ7ak) (Web. 8 December 2014).

This section could at best offer a glimpse into the transmedial world arisen around this digital game, and yet it suggests some interesting observations concerning this particular transmedial world as well as transmedial worlds in general. To sum it up, the transmedial world of *The Legend of Zelda* consists of four different media or phenomena: digital games, manga or comics, merchandise items, and finally offline and especially online fan activity. Other media popular in many transmedial worlds, such as television, film, or literature, had no impact or never existed. Also, the mother ship is very dominant in this transmedial world and forms the most important medium for extensions, whereas manga are only adaptations that accompany the new digital games. Through merchandise, *The Legend of Zelda* becomes part of the everyday life of its fans, and through these fans and their activity in the internet, *The Legend of Zelda* becomes a transmedial world, mainly because of an interaction between the producer and developer Nintendo and the prosuming fan.

## 5. Conclusion

This essay was an attempt to reconsider existing theories on transmedia(l) worlds and to examine how these phenomena permeate our culture and challenge media and cultural studies. Although transmediality already existed before digitalization, we have argued that digital technologies are catalysts for transmedia(l) phenomena. The case study of the transmedial world of *Sherlock Holmes* has put to the test our thesis of transmedia(l) worlds being closely tied to the digital age because the world of *Sherlock Holmes* is a very specific one compared to other intermedial worlds of its time. Thus *Sherlock Holmes*'s world seems to be a transmedial world *avant la lettre*, although there are some important differences between the early period of *Sherlock Holmes* and current transmedial worlds, especially when it comes to the world's impact and degree of output. Nevertheless, this case study has demonstrated the complexity of these worlds as well as the permeability of the borders between our categories of 'world.' Our exploration of the transmedial world of *Alien*, in turn, has exhibited how far-reaching these worlds can be and to which extent they are able to integrate transmedial (sub-)worlds within a transmedial universe. The relationships between these worlds and sub-worlds as parts of a universe or as connections between various universes are interesting research objects and pose a compelling challenge to transmedia studies. Finally, our study of the transmedial world of *The Legend of Zelda* has shown that transmedia(l) worlds are made jointly by producer and consumer. Not even the strictest licence holder could prevent a rich fan culture and consequently an unintended growth of a transmedia(l) world.

Our aim has also been to clarify the confusing discourse that questions the established paradigms of media studies. The consequences of digitalization form a challenge for academia and have a great impact on our everyday lives and our culture. In this context, it is important that we carefully observe the ongoing process-



es evoked by digitalization and counter the extreme positions of media rejection and media euphoria. While differentiating between ‘intermedial,’ ‘transmedial,’ and ‘transmedia world,’ we do not ignore the continuities in media and art history. But we insist that each of these continuities includes seemingly irrelevant changes that may turn out to be important. The worlds created by referring to the Bible are different from those originating in the context of, for example, *The Lord of the Rings*. The existence of the ur-medium, i.e. the mother ship or the original, is increasingly challenged and the quality and quantity as well as the pace and complexity of transmedia(l) worlds have changed. Transmedia(l) worlds have become the rule and not the exception, and we have to acknowledge them as phenomena of the digital age.

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# **Can *Man with a Movie Camera* Shoot *Enemy Zero*? Convergence and Transcoding in Michael Nyman's Musical Scores**

*Andrea C. Valente*

## **I**

The experimental silent film *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929) directed by Dziga Vertov involved sophisticated montage techniques derived from the constructivist traditions of the Soviet avant-garde, which marked the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In this context, the filmmaker worked as an “engineer” who had the skills to build aesthetically “useful objects” for society (Petrić 1987, 5). In *Man with a Movie Camera*, Vertov created ingenious arrangements of cinematic images that resulted in a ‘visual concert’ film that would subsequently inspire composers to write scores to accompany it. Although Vertov left some guidelines for the musical composition for *Man with a Movie Camera*, they were buried in oblivion for many years in Moscow archives. It was only after the dissolution of the Soviet Union that his musical guidelines were rediscovered and became an inspirational source for film composers such as “The Alloy Orchestra” (1995) and “The Cinematic Orchestra” (2002).

Despite the fact that Vertov’s guidelines were meticulously drafted to complement meanings produced by the cinematic images, not all composers have decided faithfully to follow his guidelines. Among them is the English composer Michael Nyman who in 2003 released Vertov’s film with a new soundtrack licensed by the British Film Institute. In a 2009 interview, Nyman explained that he “deliberately refused to consult Vertov’s musical notes on the film and the reason is that [he]

knew [Vertov] was trained as a composer” (Nyman 2009, 161). As Nyman further explained, he had previously heard orchestras that followed Vertov’s notes, and he did not want to write anything similar. Instead, he “decided to be very unfaithful to Vertov and emphatically to be very instinctive” (161), by which he meant that he would ‘read’ the cinematic images and relate them to his own style. His bold decision neither to follow Vertov’s musical guidelines nor to write a “single note of new music for this movie” (161) may seem provocative. Nyman admits that “the music and the recordings existed in their own right prior to the film. It existed as a soundtrack to a Japanese videogame” (161). Nyman’s audacious approach to the scores for *Man with a Movie Camera* leads to research questions that embrace interdisciplinary perspectives originating in film, media, literary, and cultural studies. My contribution aims to show that Nyman’s soundtrack to *Man with a Movie Camera* represents a perfect example of transcoding, convergence, and adaptation. Furthermore, it argues that convergence culture is part of an intermedial process that calls for a transgenerational approach involving producer, media formats (analogue and digital), and consumers.

## II

Nyman’s biographer Siôn (2007) writes that the composer was born in 1944 into a middle-class Jewish family in London. He began to study music when he was eight years old, influenced by a schoolteacher who identified Nyman’s musical talent at an early age and provided him with an intensive music education until his admission to the Royal Academy of Music in 1961. Later Nyman pursued his graduate studies in musicology at King’s College and had his first book *Experimental Music: Cage and Beyond* published in 1974. By that time, he was already an experienced music reviewer and in 1977 he made his first appearance as a composer with his work for the opera *In Re Don Giovanni*. His first major score was written for the film *The Draughtsman’s Contract* (1982) directed by the British filmmaker Greenaway, and the two became life-long collaborators. A decade later, Nyman achieved international recognition as a music composer with the soundtrack album to Jane Campion’s film *The Piano* (1993).

Despite his influential body of work in the field of experimental music, Nyman’s compositions are mostly ignored by music scholarship. His endeavours to write a film soundtrack for a video game at a time when game music was not accepted as part of popular culture have also been overlooked in media studies (Fritsch 2013, 19). In 1997, Nyman wrote the soundtrack for the Japanese video game *Enemy Zero* which failed to reach an international market and has remained unknown until today. Consequently, the soundtrack for *Enemy Zero* also fell into oblivion, a fact that Nyman later tried to overcome by adapting it as a musical score for Vertov’s *Man with a Movie Camera*. In other words, Nyman transposed and recycled pieces of the original soundtrack into a new score for the Soviet film. The

transposition of the soundtrack across media, that is from a video game to a DVD format to accompany a silent film, works within the paradigms of intermediality (Rajewsky 2005; Wolf 2006) and intertextuality (Barthes 1977; Kristeva 1986) that link Vertov's and Nyman's cinematic concepts. Hence my paper argues that Nyman is one of the most recent successors to Dziga Vertov's legacy, and that a comparative view of these two artists becomes necessary to understand how their work converges in *Man with a Movie Camera*. The synergism between their works, both of which display montage techniques with regard to images and sound, becomes an important aspect of understanding their creative processes. In this context, the common features found in Vertov's and Nyman's works, such as self-borrowing, recycling, adaptation, and remediation, connect these two artists from a transgenerational perspective. For this reason, I will concentrate here on showing how they treat montage as a significant phase in their music and film composition.

### III

Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera* is treated here as a 'text' (Barthes 1977, 126) that invites polysemic readings. In this sense, viewers are interpreters who can translate Vertov's images according to the specificities of their time and space. According to Feldman, "those who have engaged [with Vertov] theoretically, critically, historically have constructed and reconstructed him as no more or less than those meanings that various historical moments have imposed upon him" (2007, 40). In Nyman's case, his readings of the scenes in *Man with a Movie Camera* become a translation of images into a musical score and thus make him a collaborator in the film.

Based on Siôn's account of Nyman's biography, this article notes some similarities between Nyman's and Vertov's creative processes. According to his biographer, Nyman's compositional approach was influenced by childhood memories of witnessing his parents using artisan methods of recycling every single fur material available.<sup>1</sup> Siôn therefore asserts that Nyman's "musical ideas are constantly reused, reworked, recombined and recomposed" (2007, 15). This approach resembles Vertov's film "montage" in which "films beget films" (Vertov 1896-1954/1984, 122) through the use of repetition, reuse, and recombination of images. Vertov's recycling techniques can be observed in some of his main films such as *Man with a Movie Camera*, *One Sixth of the World*, and *Enthusiasm*, in which repetition, reuse, and recombination of images become parts of a laborious process. According to Petrić, "Vertov and Svilova based their editing decisions on graphic and visual features" by gathering bits and pieces of the shots that would "reveal their full meaning within the thematic context" (1987, 27). Yet in Nyman's composition, repetitions of melodic motion, rhythmic patterns, and formal structures

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<sup>1</sup> Nyman's parents worked in the fur trade, cutting and sewing furs to make coats (Siôn 2007, 15).

characterize a ‘minimalist’ style that he developed while studying Cage’s experimental music. In both Vertov’s and Nyman’s creative processes, the practice of recycling an image or a rhythmic pattern and then transposing it to another medium, that is to a new film or to another soundtrack, becomes a clear example of intermediality. While transposing can simply be seen as a shift from one medium into another, intermediality works on the level of meaning-making by which distinct cultures, values, and aesthetics are created across media.

Despite advocating the use of musical quotation in his scores, Nyman observes that “one of the problems with recycling other composers’ music is that it has to be an enrichment, not a diminishing” (transcribed from Nyman 1999). In other words, adding the voices of others to one’s text becomes an example of inclusion and integration that allows dialogism. Moreover, Vertov and Nyman share similar attitudes towards experimental art (image and sound), offering the audience new aesthetic experiences of seeing and listening. In their works, they provide images and sound that overlap through repetition and are multi-layered, which creates a multi-sensory experience.

Apart from similarities in the montage methods, these two artists seem to converge on a political level. For example, Vertov’s anti-bourgeois attitude to cinema is reflected in his manifesto against filmmakers who made use of theatrical and literary artifices to alienate their audience from reality. For this reason, he decided to make films that show ‘life as it is,’ or better, “life caught unawares” (Petrić 1987, 4) by casting real people and shooting in real places. Similarly, Nyman’s decision for a minimalist music style leads him to experimental techniques that keep him away from the classical music tradition. Instead, he chooses an approach that emphasizes repetition of structures, known as ‘serialism,’ which is usually associated with popular music. Moreover, Nyman remarks that experimental music is concerned with the “process of generating action” rather than the prescription of a “defined time-object” (1981, 3), that is being in conformity with the mainstream. Such a position also holds true for Vertov’s documentary films since they focus on the process of editing rather than on the product, as drama films usually do with their ‘attractions’ to alienate the viewer. The notion of generating action by means of experimental artwork matches the revolutionary thoughts defended in Vertov’s 1922 “Manifesto”; however, it did not disavow the realistic illusion Vertov himself created with his Kino-eye.

## IV

*Enemy Zero* is a video game released in 1997 for Sega Saturn consoles, developed by the electronic company WARP, and directed by the Japanese game designer Kenji Eno. *Enemy Zero* was influenced by the bestselling film *Alien* (1979). It is about Laura, an android, who is the only survivor in a spacecraft that has been attacked by invisible enemies. In order to survive, Laura can only rely on her hearing skills



to defend herself from the invisible aliens. When Laura hears certain beeps or tones, she knows that the enemy is close. For example, when the tone is higher, the enemy is ahead of her; when it is lower, it is behind her; and when it is medium, it is either to her right or left. The objective of the game is to have Laura rescue the spaceship, fight against the enemy, and return to Earth. The aural features add information to the images and become essential elements for playing the game successfully. In one of his interviews, Eno explained that the sound feature makes the film challenging and difficult for the player, who needs to rely not only on the usual visual skills but also on audio skills to play the game. Eno believes that the level of difficulty the player faces explains the game's low popularity. Being one of Nyman's fans, Eno insisted on having the composer collaborate on the score for *Enemy Zero*. He explained to his fans in an online interview: "I felt he's the best musician for what I was looking for in *Enemy Zero*."<sup>2</sup> He also stated that it was not an easy task to convince Nyman to write the score for the video game. In the end, they agreed to embark on a joint venture, in which Nyman ended up creating the soundtrack for *Enemy Zero* based on Eno's storyboard and suggestions.

Nyman divided the soundtrack into fourteen pieces that accompany the narrative sequences with titles summarizing the main idea of each track. For example, in scenes that focus on Laura, Nyman wrote specific scores to accompany her movements, actions, and feelings, such as "Laura's Theme" and "Laura's Dream." They are compositions for the piano with melodic movements in *adagio*. Other tracks, such as "Aspects of Love," "Love Theme," "Lamentation," and "The Last Movement," follow similar musical arrangements to accompany scenes featuring flashback, memory, romance, and melancholy. For *moderato tempo* with motion, Nyman wrote the track "Confusion" that sets the pace for undertaking an adventure. To create suspense and excitement when the enemy is around, he composed "Digital Tragedy," "Digital Complex," "Invisible Enemy," and "Malfunction." For the track "Agony," Nyman arranged a hybrid score, in which he used a combination of a soprano singer and orchestra, making the whole piece develop into a *crescendo*. This track accompanies the scenes in which Laura finds out that the enemy has killed the whole crew and she has to escape immediately. The fast tempo to convey speed and action is used to represent Laura's confrontation with the enemy, which is followed by the tracks "Enemy Zero" and "Battle." Nyman's soundtrack enhances the player's aesthetic experience and emotional response as each track takes the player to the next level in the game. In this manner, the story and the musical narratives resemble Freytag's pyramid model of storytelling for classical drama (i.e. exposition, introduction of a conflict, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution; see Herman, Jahn, and Ryan 2005, 189). For example, the tempo in each track signals the game's narrative sequence, which is usually marked

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<sup>2</sup> As Eno suddenly passed away in 2013, the interview from the year 2008 has been removed from the internet. Extracts of the interview, however, were reproduced in *Electronic Gaming Monthly* 232 (2008).

by either a progressively rising pitch to indicate acceleration or a decreasing pitch to indicate deceleration. If it is a progressive tempo, it signals the reaching of the climax in the story; if it is a decreasing one, it signals the resolution. Hence, Nyman's track sequences closely follow the structure of Freytag's dramatic model: the game starts with a gentle piano tune ("Laura's Theme") and progressively accelerates towards the scenes of suspense, horror, death, and invisible attacks ("Digital Complex," "Enemy Zero," and "Battle"). The climax is followed by the track "Agony," and the falling action is accompanied by "The Last Movement." The resolution of the game's story is indicated by the track "Laura's Theme."

Nowadays, media convergence allows an individual to watch *Enemy Zero* as a 'game-film' on *YouTube*, thus transforming the role of the player into that of the viewer. In the film version, the viewer can watch a continuous interaction between images and music, which leads to a 'third composition.' According to Vertov, the third composition is "neither in the sound nor in the image but [...] exists only in the continual interaction of sound recording and image" (1896-1954/1984, 243). From a poststructuralist perspective, the interaction between images and sounds works on the level of two independent elements that are juxtaposed to each other and maintain separate identities. In this regard, the viewer is left with at least the following options: either to turn the volume down and view the film without sound, or to minimize the *YouTube* window and listen to the soundtrack without the images. The latter option relies on the viewers' aural skills and on their mental images of the same or another film. In this case, both images and sound pieces become free-floating entities that can be transcoded into other media. Hence, Nyman's soundtrack for the video game – seen here as the 'source' – is adapted into a DVD format to accompany Vertov's silent film *Man with a Movie Camera*.

In this regard, Michael Nyman's adaptation for Vertov's film soundtrack challenges Adorno and Eisler's modernist ideas as presented in their book *Composing for the Films* (1947). Their composition guidelines, such as "insertion of the music should be planned along with the writing of the script" (Adorno and Eisler 1947/2007, 5) and "the task of the composer is to compose music that fits precisely into the given picture" (47), are based on Eisler's experience in writing scores for Hollywood feature films during the Second World War. In that period, experimental endeavours lacked support and technological assistance for musical scores was in its infancy. Over three decades later, taking advantage of technology and adhering to postmodernist views, Nyman converges old and new media in his work. With the advent of software to enhance musical composition, the term 'database' moves beyond the computer and reaches art forms such as film and music, which become available during montage in order to assist with image and sound cataloguing and storing in diverse formats. The media scholar Lev Manovich opens up discussions on databases, mentioning that pieces of image or sound are seen as independent media elements that can be "assembled into larger-scale objects but continue to maintain their separate identities" (2001, 30). Moreover, editing into different formats becomes only possible due to 'transcoding,' a

term that Linda Hutcheon borrows from Manovich and incorporates in her study on adaptation (2013). According to Manovich, transcoding is a way “to translate [something] into another format” (2001, 47) or in Hutcheon's words, it is “a shift of medium, or genre or a change of frame and therefore context” (2013, 7). From this perspective, Vertov's film *Man with a Movie Camera* and Nyman's soundtrack for *Enemy Zero* seem appropriate examples that support the transcoding principle. For instance, Vertov's film was originally only available in reel format and has only recently been digitally transcoded into DVD format, which offers the viewer the choice to watch the film in a variety of ways that change the audience's habits of watching films. Moreover, Nyman's soundtrack for the video game *Enemy Zero* becomes a ‘platform’ that he can transcode either into a musical score for *Man with a Movie Camera* in a digital version to accompany the film DVD or into a live concert played by Nyman's band in theatres. These two cases are paradigmatic examples of convergence culture defined in Jenkins's work as the “flow of content across multiple media platforms” (2008, 2).

Based on these examples, this paper asserts that transcoding allows more fluidity not only in the contents and/or database but also in the narrative. In contrast to the video game *Enemy Zero*, whose soundtrack follows a story sequence, the music in *Man with a Movie Camera* is remixed, relocated, and re-contextualized in order to “create different interpretations,” as Hutcheon suggests in her theory of adaptation (2013, 8). Taking into account Vertov's introductory intertitle to *Man with a Movie Camera*, which announces that this is a “film without narrative,” this paper similarly argues that Nyman's soundtrack to the silent film follows a Vertovian principle and is a soundtrack without narrative. In this sense, transcoding allows the remixed tracks to interact with different images, which creates a new text with different meanings for *Man with a Movie Camera*.

## V

At first sight, Nyman's explanation for using a recycled composition for *Man with a Movie Camera* may sound disappointing to his fans. Nyman's straightforward comments on self-plagiarism and self-stealing, which destroy the ‘aura’ of his composition for the silent film, are bluntly mentioned in one of his interviews: “I'm not a great inventor from scratch. What I do is to use, steal, acquire, reproduce or recycle music from other musicians” (Nyman 2002).

To gain a better understanding of Nyman's position and intention, this paper takes into account some ideas from New Media theory concerning databases, conversions of data files, compression of file formats, and data transformation. Nyman uses the *Enemy Zero* soundtrack as a platform to depart from. Contrary to the video game, in which the soundtrack follows a narrative sequence as illustrated above with Freytag's pyramid, the remixed tracks in *Man with a Movie Camera* are non-linear, superimposed, and even reduced. Nyman divides the new soundtrack

into nine titles that are recycled and remastered. To illustrate this, the following table (table 1) shows how Nyman's 'original' for *Enemy Zero* corresponds to the titles from the film *Man with a Movie Camera* released in DVD format in 2003.

| TITLES from <i>Man with a Movie Camera</i> | TRACKS from <i>Enemy Zero</i>   |
|--|---|
| Intro                                      | Agony (1:38)<br>Battle (2:03)   |
| Awakening                                  | Laura's Theme (4:28)<br>Digital Tragedy (8:21)                                      |
| Locomotion                                 | Invisible Enemy (13:08)<br>Lamentation (17:00)                                      |
| Assemblage                                 | Enemy Zero (20:21)  |
| Life Goes On                               | Aspects of Love/Love Theme (24:54)<br>Confusion (28:51)<br>Lamentation (33:05)      |
| Manual Labour                              | Confusion (36:33)<br>Invisible Enemy (37:24)<br>Malfunction (39:32)                 |
| Recreation                                 | Aspects of Love (43:48)<br>Laura's Dream/Laura's Theme (47:26)<br>Confusion (51:26) |
| Relaxation                                 | Battle (54:47)  |
| Cinematic I                                | Agony (59:34)<br>Invisible Enemy (1:00:34)<br>Enemy Zero (1:04:49)                  |

Table 1: Titles and tracks

The table is divided into nine sections, each of which is given a title to summarize a narrative sequence. Each title recycled for the film corresponds to at least one track from *Enemy Zero*. Moreover, some tracks are remastered and played again under another title. The table illustrates the principles of 'transcoding' and 'convergence' and shows how tracks interact with different images and how new meanings emerge that bring uniqueness to the scenes. In addition, Nyman's recycling of the *Enemy Zero* soundtrack for the DVD version of *Man with a Movie Camera* produces a new text within a new context. In other words, it includes a process of "recontextualization" (Bauman and Briggs 1990, 75) that suggests new formal and functional implications for both Vertov's film and Nyman's soundtrack. The 'death' of the original soundtrack with its corresponding narrative and dramatic elements resurrects the Soviet film as a visual symphony of a city film that unfolds the everyday life of its city dwellers before the camera, in Vertov's words a "naked eye [...] of visual chaos of fleeting life" (1896-1954/1984, 285). Accordingly, the challenge for Nyman is to have a soundtrack that can "keep pace with life's fleeting phenomena"

(Vertov 1896-1954/1984, 287). It seems that Nyman's minimalist approach produces a soundtrack able to keep pace with the images unfolding on the screen. In other words, the minimalist musical techniques Nyman uses, i.e. repetition, "contrapuntal layering," and "chugging pulse" (Schwartz 1996, 200), converge with Vertov's experimental film.

To express movement in *Man with a Movie Camera*, Vertov uses film techniques that suggest convulsion, ecstasy, and a frenzy of images, such as freeze frames, slow motion, fast motion, reverse motion, and split screens. Hence, to accompany the pace of the frenetic images, it is necessary to have a soundtrack that captures the *Zeitgeist* of the film. To illustrate this, the title "Locomotion" represents the pace of the city expressed through shots of public transportation (e.g. street cars, buses) and pedestrians in a rush to start a working day routine in the metropolis. The accompanying track is "Invisible Enemy," which was originally played in *Enemy Zero* when Laura tries to escape from the enemy; metaphorically, it expresses a 'battle' faced by the ordinary city workers. Still in the same sequence, there is the track "Lamentation" that originally accompanied Laura as she finds out that 'Enemy Zero' has killed the crew. Yet, in *Man with a Movie Camera*, "Lamentation" is translated into a soothing melody to suggest the workers' dull everyday routine, such as getting ready for work, opening a store, delivering early mail, and directing traffic. Although the next scenes still deal with the hustle and bustle of a big city, the slow tempo in the following tracks creates the illusion that life is becoming easier for the workers. The alternation of fast and slow tempos with ascending and descending notes within the scenes becomes a pattern in the soundtrack throughout the film and accompanies the vicissitudes of life (i.e. birth, marriage, divorce, death) as witnessed by the camera eye.

Along with representations of acceleration in *Man with a Movie Camera* and its soundtrack, notions of space are also explored through images and sound. The original soundtrack composed for *Enemy Zero* accompanies indoor scenes in a spacecraft where silence, metallic coldness, and emptiness set the tone for the story. Yet the space in *Man with a Movie Camera* is mostly explored through outdoor shots of an emergent metropolis in the Soviet region in the late 1920s. To provide a perfect match, Nyman's soundtrack needs to take into account the outdoor features in Vertov's film. He is challenged to match the remastered tracks with images and scenes that trigger aural and visual associations, as in the sequences of the traffic controller, the honking of the cars, and the performance of the spoons and bottles (Petrić 1987, 177). These examples imply an intra-diegetic sound naturally emanating from the images, which Nyman's soundtrack has to take up to provide an aural suggestion of loud and intense noise and sound.

Instead of provoking auditory sensations that compete with the images, Nyman's remixed soundtrack creates a new aesthetics by adding another layer to the images. However, one might suspect that Vertov's reaction to Nyman's compositional montage would be far from positive. Tsivian mentions that Vertov instructed the orchestra "to keep silent while the scene of the projectionist was shown"

(1994, 120) during the Prologue sequence (i.e. Intro), with only a ticking sound of the film projector to be heard. However, in Nyman's remixed work, the sequence uses the track "Battle" (2:03) as accompaniment, which offers the viewer the opposite aesthetic experience: instead of a silence that lets the images speak for themselves, a loud noise eclipses the images.

Analyzing *Man with a Movie Camera* through a New Media lens, Manovich identifies three layers in the structure of the film (2001, 241). The first layer concerns the story of a cameraman who shoots the scenes for the film. The second one refers to the audience watching the shots of the finished film in a movie theatre. The third layer is the film itself, which contains the footage recorded in the cities of Moscow, Kiev, and Riga, and which Manovich considers as the text itself (i.e. the raw material). In this context, the first two layers are regarded as 'metatext' (i.e. a language about another language). Since Manovich does not mention the sound material, this paper restores the soundtrack as a medium that occupies a fourth layer, functioning as a metatext as well: here, the musical text is 'plugged in' to augment the visual text. As a consequence, the fourth layer refers to the remixed soundtrack that functions as an 'add-on' to the images. This alternative interpretation challenges the traditionally divided role assigned to film music: that of diegesis (i.e. music as part of the story) and that of non-diegesis (i.e. background music) in the cinematic narration. Nyman's composition is placed neither inside nor outside the narrative. Instead, it overlays the cinematic text as an additional layer, one that can bring ambiguities and tensions to the images. This may explain some of the criticism that Nyman's remixed soundtrack has received in online film reviews.

## VI

As Nyman uses extensive (self-)borrowing in his compositions, his work can become an easy target for criticism that considers originality in the sense of Romantic genius as the highest artistic achievement. However, he defends himself against accusations of being unoriginal:

while I would not deny the accusation of borrowing, only about 20% of my music is based upon reworked material from other composers. I would also strongly contend that I always transform what I take into something totally fresh and musically challenging, in just the same way that Stravinsky might have done. (qtd. in Siôn 2007, 2)

Nyman's affiliation with postmodernist approaches to contemporary art should not be taken as a period-specific attitude. Vertov himself also used montage techniques that included recycling and reusing of film material as part of a collage of his own borrowings from previous shots. Hence it may not be fair to criticize 'borrowing' as a technique that signals one's lack of originality solely on the grounds of traditional perspectives influenced by Romantic aesthetics. As convergence of old

media (e.g. photography, cinema, and TV) and new media (e.g. computer and internet) becomes more frequent, the notion of originality needs to be re-conceptualized. We cannot deny that the creation of databases in computational studies has come to assist artists in cataloguing and storing moving images and sounds as 'independent texts' that become available for reusing in other formats. Siôn explains that Nyman's tendency to borrow musical quotations has been influenced by the malleability allowed in the Baroque style. Siôn emphasizes that "endless adaptability and versatility of musical gestures, phrases, turns and figures belonging to the Baroque and Classical styles" (2007, 6) have greatly contributed to Nyman's style. Although it is possible that Baroque style has influenced Nyman's work, especially with him being a musicologist himself, his remixed soundtrack as analyzed in this article shows that Vertov's montage approach has also served Nyman as an inspirational source that works at the level of intermediality.

Vertov's definition of montage as "organizing film fragments (shots) into a film-object as if one is writing something cinematic with the recorded shots" (1896-1954/1984, 88) resonates with Nyman's approach of re-arranging musical elements (e.g. chord structures) from previous scores into a new composition. This may evoke associations between the 'original' object and the 'recycled' one. Moreover, the creation of an inventory of montage by gathering all "documentary data directly and indirectly" (89) and the "continuous shifting of all the pieces until all are placed in a rhythmical order such that all links of meaning coincide with visual linkage" (90) can be expanded to sound montage. Hence, the process of editing involves some sort of organic and technological work by the artist, whether filmmaker or music composer, which goes beyond simply putting pieces together. Here montage involves 'labour,' a physical effort that goes by the metaphor of a *bricoleur*, a term used by Lévi-Strauss and further elaborated by Genette to refer to the individual who "creates a structure out of a previous structure by rearranging elements which are already arranged within the objects of his or her study" (Allen 2011, 96).

In conclusion, this article acknowledges Nyman as an artist representing Vertov's work, not in the sense of being a follower of Vertov's musical guidelines but in his approach to capturing the essence of Vertov's film montage technique as an 'unfaithful' translator of Vertov's musical guidelines for *Man with a Movie Camera*. Furthermore, it illustrates that convergence and transcoding principles can be understood as intermedial processes that transcend the boundaries between old and new media.

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# **Converging Media and Modes: Digital Textuality and the Dissolution of Media Borders in Steven Hall's *The Raw Shark Texts***

*Lai-Tze Fan*

This paper discusses recent transformations of literature relative to the influence of digital media on culture and communication. Digital media and communication methods, I argue, encourage us to think of textuality in ways that converge media, treating them as dynamic, cross-referential, and interactive. I seek to examine the emergence of a digital textuality and to trace its impact on literary texts in three interrelated areas: first, new comprehensions of 'reading' and 'the text;' second, shifts to our conceptions of 'the literary' in the face of digital poetics and aesthetics; and third, ensuing tensions between posthuman and human agency concerning language, communication, and storytelling.

As a case study, this paper analyzes Steven Hall's *The Raw Shark Texts* (2007) for its formal experimentation and its mediations of medium, mode, and language. I examine how this text utilizes multimodality as a narrational device in order to imitate and explore the presence and implications of digital textuality. Insofar as this novel uses multimodality to mediate digital media, it demonstrates the literary value of converging media and modes of communication and also speaks to ensuing changes to how we define the literary and the future of literature in a digital age.

First of all, what is convergence? Henry Jenkins examines convergence with regard to the frameworks of media, economy, and the consumer audience, considering various treatments of converging information and content (2008, 17, 18).

This paper homes in on the convergence of media and their unique modes of meaning-making, arguing that this convergence establishes new understandings of textuality. Convergence is linked to the computer by Peter Lunenfeld who argues that it offers “the universal solvent into which all difference of media dissolves into a pulsing stream of bits and bytes [...] [The computer] combines the creation, distribution, and spectatorial functions of a vast variety of other media within one box” (2001, 7-8). For example, a text in which media and modes converge could take the form of a webpage on which one may read words while also listening to audio material, watching videos, and viewing pictures.

The examination of media convergence in terms of digital media and specifically the computer finds an antecedent in multimodal studies. Emerging from the field of social semiotics, multimodal studies examine how several modes of meaning-making in a text (such as sight and sound) can create a unique reading experience. Gunther Kress defines a mode as a “socially shaped and culturally given semiotic resource for making meaning” and he discusses the ways in which different modes have different potentials for meaning-making (2010, 79). The ‘stuff’ of sound can give way to such modes as music, film soundtracks, speech, and so forth; modes are therefore methods of communication that appeal to senses, to affect, and also to culturally specific needs (79, 80). A deaf community, for instance, requires a mode of sign language in order to communicate, and this form of cultural specificity is the reason Kress states that modal change tracks social change (82). By tracing the presence and usage of modes, we may also trace the current development and cultural impact of communication technologies and tools.

A society in which digital media are a dominant communication technology will exercise digital communication methods until it is accustomed to these methods and will then rely upon them. Finally, digitally friendly modes will become necessary in this society. It is therefore no coincidence that multimodal research has been taken up by studies of new media. In the case of a culture in which digital media are dominant communication tools, what may be deemed normal in communication practices is the use of multiple modes in the process of meaning-making and the interrelations among different media as a new way of reading. Since the early 2000s, multimodal studies have been anchored towards the study of digital media as well, as scholars have identified that digital media easily enable multimodality (Jewitt and Kress 2003; Unsworth and Clérigh 2009). Current studies have argued that unimodal text-only documents increasingly wane because media have evolved with enhanced capabilities to hold and display texts in various modes, including graphics, pictures, layout techniques, and so forth (Goodman qtd. in Lim, Nekmat, and Nahar 2011, 169). Simply put, digital media do multimodality better and have caused information and thought to undergo conceptual changes in a digital environment. This is what Kress calls a representation revolution (2003, 116).

Literary and cultural studies scholar Alan Liu has identified changes to representation in practice, linking them to the creation of a connective logic that is “expressed geopolitically as *globalism*, technologically as *networking*, and artistically as *intertextuality*, *appropriation*, *sampling*, and so on” (2004, 2; emphasis in the original). While I am wary of loaded terms such as ‘revolution’ to describe technology and its impact on society and culture, Liu’s observations do suggest that a connective system has emerged with new information and aesthetic practices. Alternative methods of how to read and of where to locate information and the reader begin to dissolve the idea of static media borders altogether. Although media forms and formats are often understood to be autonomous, digital media encourage their convergence, initiating shifts to notions of ‘the text’ proper. New conceptions of ‘text’ and ‘textuality’ are confirmed by rapidly emerging scholarship on media convergence in various terms, including media adaptation, intermediality, multimodality, transmediality, and multimediality (Herman 2004; Cranny-Francis 2005; Nørgaard 2009; Grishakova 2010; Gibbons 2010; 2012).

In the consideration of the implications of digital textuality for literature, a critical and cultural examination should not only analyze literary texts that participate in the convergence of media and modes but should also align media convergence with larger shifts to communication as brought on by digital media. To better understand convergence culture as it plays out in literature, it is necessary to discuss the communication methods of digital media and new media.

To date, there is no more informed typology of new media language and logic than Lev Manovich’s *The Language of New Media* (2001). For the purpose of discussing Manovich’s text, I will echo his use of the term ‘new media’ to describe new information and communication technologies that are informed by the computer; however, this paper privileges the term ‘digital media’ in order to identify the computer form by name. Scholars of media archaeology such as Lisa Gitelman (2008) have shown that emerging media are always already perceived as ‘new.’ By cautioning against claims of revolution, the lens of media archaeology encourages researchers to contextualize emerging media and their communication practices regarding their histories and sociocultural and political environments (Chun 2006; Nerone 2006).

Manovich illustrates that new media have their own logic and language of form, production, and meaning-making. He defines his use of the term ‘language’ as an umbrella term for new media conventions to organize data and to structure the user’s experience, and he notes that history has been composed of “a succession of distinct and equally expressive languages, each with its own aesthetic variables, and each closing off some of the possibilities of its predecessor” (Manovich 2001, 7, 8). Manovich describes several principles of computer-based media that are especially pertinent for analyzing practices of media convergence and for describing what is unique about digital media language and communication. The principle of numerical representation explains that new media are composed of digital code and that each new media object is made up of discrete units of data

that are then organized into groups, wherein they have different functions (27-29). The principle of modularity builds on this logic: each unit is stored separately and has independent functions (30). The principle of automation describes the automatic execution of programming commands for media creation, manipulation, and access (32). In high-level automation, the computer can generate data and media through algorithms (32). The principle of variability holds that the semiotic placement of discrete data units into groups, and of the groups into sections, creates a branched structure in new media (38). This network structure is the reason that new media are often interactive, as a user must navigate through a selection of branches in order to operate the new media object (38). These principles have led Manovich to argue for a cultural sensibility in the information age that he calls the “computerization of culture” (9). Through this change, existing formal systems are redefined and new cultural forms begin to emerge (9). The final principle of transcoding describes how such changes begin, as the materiality of the computer affects its aesthetic and cultural possibilities (46, 47).

By fostering an understanding of information and information processing in these terms, new possibilities for aesthetics and composition surface, giving way to the textual elements of multimodality and multilinearity. A digital textuality is established, allowing us to think of reading as interactive and multilinear (Lankshear and Knobel 2008), of the reader as user or worker (Liu 2004), the text as permeable (Landow 2006; Kirschenbaum 2008), and the author as diminished in cultural and textual significance (Aufderheide 2013). In effect, questions arise of how we may define ‘literature’ and ‘the literary’ relative to new forms of literature. Scholars of electronic literature, including Michel Chaouli (2005), Marjorie Perloff (2009), and Marie-Laure Ryan (2004; 2010), have sought to shape a poetics of digital media. In particular, Ryan (2002) attempts to reconcile narrative linearity and digital multilinearity by examining interactive narratives, and Adalaide Morris (2009) argues for the literary value of a digital poetics in its own right. Kenneth Goldsmith (2011) further reshapes conceptions of literature by arguing that digital media language has altered how we view the roles of the writer and reader (15) and that computer code possesses literary value (19).

Shadowing this discourse of digital textuality and poetics is the fear of the “destruction” of a print-based literature in the digital age (Liu 2004, 3). For example, Kathleen Fitzpatrick argues that the computer “diminishes” the print novel by encouraging us to think about textuality and literature in new ways (2002, 522). The re-evaluation of literary texts in these terms has sparked theories of a “post-print” era or culture (Robertson 2013). However, media and literary scholars alike have proposed the possibility of mediating digital textuality vis-à-vis changes to the status of print texts and the literary. For example, in “The Future of Literature: Print Novels and the Mark of the Digital” (2008), N. Katherine Hayles argues that contemporary print literature reveals its being influenced by digital language and textuality by reacting and responding to these (162). She asserts that print literature acknowledges digital textuality through two complementary strategies: first, the

imitation of digital textuality in rhetoric and style, and second, the emphasis of traditional literary devices (162). Liu foregrounds a “peculiarly edgy blend of aesthetics and critique” (2004, 8) as a critical strategy that can subvert the destruction of the literary; this strategy is described as a “future literary” (8).

Liu's and Hayles's works show that altered notions of the text call for studies of the consequences of digital materiality and reception for literary texts. This paper responds by proposing that contemporary print literature may adapt to the threat of literary destruction and a speculated post-print era. I propose that this self-reflexive literature may perform this adaptation by appropriating digital aesthetics and formal features, while also exposing and challenging the digitally informed communication practices and paradigms from which they are wrought.

To provide an example, I will analyze *The Raw Shark Texts*. Following up on Hayles, I will argue that this print novel engages in media convergence by simulating the aesthetics and formal features of digital media and modes. At the same time, it emphasizes traditional literary devices found in print narratives. By experimenting in this way, *The Raw Shark Texts* mediates tensions between digital and print media systems and navigates interrelations between various communication media and modes, including ideas of ‘language’ itself. The novel provides a critical commentary on media convergence and adaptation as having sociocultural effects on language for the human and language for the posthuman.

An unease towards digital textuality may be identified in the larger body of this self-reflexive and adapting literature. Fitzpatrick describes this phenomenon as an “anxiety of obsolescence” (2002, 6), which she analyzes in literary content as a concern of the human writer over posthuman language and agency. Digital media, Manovich shows, function through their own language and may perform this language in an automated way. Many literary writers and scholars have been made anxious by digital automation in generating creative texts, as it can eliminate the human from the process of writing creative literature. In the frame of digital textuality, I am interested in the way in which the “anxiety of obsolescence” is expressed not only in literary content, but also in literary form. I argue that *The Raw Shark Texts* demonstrates Hayles's argument as the novel recognizes digital textuality and culture and responds in two ways: first, by replicating the formal features of digital textuality through multimodality, and second, by mediating the relationship between digital and print media systems in a critical examination of the repercussions of digital textuality, including the phenomenon of a posthuman language.

*The Raw Shark Texts* is the story of Eric Sanderson who wakes up in a house that he does not remember, without recollection of who he is or any of his past. He finds a letter explaining that his ‘self’ has been consumed by a Ludovician, a shark-like organism made out of pure thought, which lives in a conceptual space of information, much like cyberspace. The Ludovician and other conceptual fish are described as parasites that feed on humans for their varied human components, from behavioural features to entire lifetimes of memories. The letter is signed “the First Eric Sanderson” (Hall 2007, 11), making our protagonist the Second Eric

Sanderson. While seeking answers about his former past, Eric 2 learns that his girlfriend Clio died in a scuba diving accident and that Eric 1 released the Ludovician in an attempt to preserve and essentially resurrect Clio in the shark's conceptual space. His plan backfired when the shark instead chose him as a target to hunt. As the Ludovician failed to consume Eric entirely, he was brought back to the material world as Eric 2.

*The Raw Shark Texts* functions as much more than a word-based text. It includes mailed letters, codes to be deciphered with a QWERTY keyboard and Morse code, postcard photos, sections of textbooks, a visualization of an explosion, and pictures of organisms that are made out of letters, numbers, words, and computer code. Perhaps most interesting of all – and most divergent from the medial singularity that we may associate with the novel form – are the negative chapters, which author Steven Hall wrote to accompany each book chapter. These have been hidden online and in the material world as a paratextual scavenger hunt. To date, six chapters have been discovered, one of them taped under a park bench.

While traditional literary narratives unfold across time, *The Raw Shark Texts* calls attention to its materiality by allowing the narrative to transpire over the space of pages – a narratological experiment that exemplifies multimodality. The depictions of movement are generally prefaced by Eric 2's narration just moments before physical movement occurs. For example, when running away from the Ludovician's second attack, the sound and placement of his feet are represented across the printed page: “thud thud thud thud” (156). The sound of his footsteps, the word depiction of the sound through onomatopoeia, and the physical steps themselves are shown to us. When Eric 2 crawls through a tunnel made of print texts, the reader is shown the map and the path that he takes (227). Between the description of Eric 2's looking at the map and the reader's reception of the map exists a temporal moment as narration becomes image, but also a spatial gap between the text and the image. This also occurs when Eric 2 falls into an ocean: textual narration is suspended and slips into a visual representation of the Ludovician coming forward to attack (328-373). The very real time and space between which modes occur and modes are comprehended therefore operate in literature as liminal phenomena between both narrative time and narratological space. These examples establish a relationship between language and image, demonstrating what Carey Jewitt and Gunther Kress call the dominance of visual images in contemporary methods of meaning-making (2003, 16).

*The Raw Shark Texts* invokes a paradigm of media convergence in its imitation of digital code and digital ontologies. Conceptual fish such as the Ludovician live in a world that is compared to water. It is described as an “immense latticework of lakes and flowing streams, [...] [a] waterway paradise of all information and identities and societies and selves” (Hall 2007, 55); like the internet, it is an information highway. This space is directly contrasted with the material world, especially with analogue objects. For example, when the Ludovician attacks Eric 2 for the first time, the narration distinguishes between the concrete ‘hard’ quality of the material



world and the ephemeral, liquid space of information that Eric 2's living room suddenly transforms into (59). When Eric 2 escapes, a tower of books crashes onto his head. That is, print, as an analogue form, smashes into him when he escapes the information water.

This example serves as a comment on the current tensions between print culture and digital media culture, which are here set up as oil and water that can cancel out one another. The novel highlights the concern that we may become overwhelmed by digital media, as when the Ludovician appears on Eric 2's television screen and manages to turn his entire material living room into water (58). As we have invented digital media by injecting them with once-concrete and analogue information, in *The Raw Shark Texts* these media begin to give birth to digital organisms. The image of a mosquito in *The Raw Shark Texts*, for instance, is made of computer code, functioning as a reminder that digital artefacts are composed of computer language (96). Imagining that internet users are not conscious enough of the role of code in creating digital artefacts, Kenneth Goldsmith emphasizes that all things digital, when stripped stark naked and revealed for what they are, take on the overwhelming discourse of code; for example, he shows that the *Wikipedia* favicon, or bookmark icon, is composed of multiple lines of code (2011, 21). Digital artefacts come alive in *The Raw Shark Texts*, but the novel is careful to demonstrate that they are not organic; even their nuclei are composed of information. Eric 1 reflects in a letter to Eric 2 that these organisms are our creation: "The streams, currents, and rivers of human knowledge, experience, and communication which have grown throughout our short history are now a vast, rich, and beautiful environment. Why should we expect these flows to be sterile?" (Hall 2007, 64). Two things are implied in this description: first, anthropomorphism or the furnishing of non-human objects with human attributes, and second, the identification of posthumanism as a consequence of technological determinism.

The idea that our digital information is not sterile and is in fact capable of reproduction, and also that these organisms can attack us, ascribes a consciousness to the organisms. Hayles highlights that posthumanism is in fact not a dystopic theory but a theoretical reality. She argues that the agency of digital technology resides in binary code (2008, 183). Although humans created computer code, no single person can understand it all; so it attains its own 'language' of ones and zeros and slips into what Hayles calls a "sophisticated cognition" (185), its own consciousness. This means that the new media language described by Manovich is not only active, but that it also overwhelms human cognition and management. The meanings that we assign to concepts and signified objects manifest themselves in the conceptual world of the Ludovician. Is this not what already occurs when we input information into the computer? Does the information not produce digital artefacts? The capacity for production is what gives birth to the conceptual fish, which are likened to computers. Eric 1 tells Eric 2: "millions of words and ideas and concepts are constantly evolving. It doesn't seem too implausible that one of them elevated itself above its single cellular cousins in much the same way we did.

The Selfish Meme?” (Hall 2007, 64). Eric 1’s Darwinian understanding of information suggests that our privileging of technology has mutated within our digital media and digital artefacts. These media and artefacts have become stronger, faster, and are generally better at managing and processing information (Goldsmith 2011, 15).

The novel suggests that we may not recognize the potential of our digital media to mutate in this way. While Eric 2 insists that the Ludovician is clever and is strategically playing dead, Dr. Trey Fidorous, a master and medical doctor of language, insists that it is a “big stupid eating machine” (Hall 2007, 384). In fact, the shark, as is the case with many digital media, is *not* a stupid machine. These media do not always do what they are asked, a fact to which anyone who has ever experienced the ‘blue screen of death’ can testify. The autonomy of digital artefacts and media is demonstrated in Eric 1’s own failed attempt to use the Ludovician to preserve and resurrect Clio. Instead, the ‘clever’ shark chooses to attack Eric 1.

His memory is lost, his identity is split into past and present. In effect, Eric 2 cannot locate the limits of his identity that would define who he was or who he is. He cannot find spatial limits, as he fails to control the conceptual space in which he had hoped to preserve Clio. He cannot locate defined and contained limits of language either: the QWERTY code, Morse code, and the organisms made of data overwhelm him because he has lost control over language. That is, his agency concerning human language has been affected by the language of new media. Already in 1979, Jean-François Lyotard identified the capacity of information technologies to alter thought and meaning-making and to aid self-legitimizing information systems that render humans dialectically impotent. Systematic technology, Lyotard notes in *The Postmodern Condition*, impacts our language through the introduction of technologically informed logic such as that of postindustrial efficiency (1984, 46). In the digital age, this efficiency has created what we call a ‘just-in-time’ logic, an instantaneous gratification of information that is only supported by the automated and generative powers of new media (Manovich 2001, 36). Alan Liu has examined in depth how new technologies in a postindustrial, globalized, digitalized, and ‘cool’ world do not honour human memory or human history (2004, 2, 6), and it is the memory and history of Eric 1 that the shark hunts and consumes.

Eric 2 is therefore dialectically impotent and is stripped of his ability to speak about his emotions. When he meets a woman named Scout, who saves him from the Ludovician’s second attack, he finds that he is attracted to her and has an intuitive feeling that he already knows her. When he discovers that she has a tattoo of a smiley face on her big toe, a tattoo that Clio had meant to have done, Eric 2 realizes that Scout fits Eric 1’s descriptions of Clio. Struggling between observations of Scout and representations of Clio, he loses control of language, and both he and Scout often speak in a way that is clipped, garbled, or nonsensical. When his feelings start to bubble up, he often mutters “Erm” to her. In fact, when they are

about to kiss for the first time, Scout looks up at him and whispers romantically, "Erm..." (Hall 2007, 210). "Erm" then becomes a signifier for the lack of language between the two.

In addition, rather than expressing the growing feelings that he has for Scout, Eric 2 says over and over that he feels "something" – something that is beyond his limits and his reach. When he first realizes that he is attracted to Scout, he narrates, "something flared inside me, something distant, different, familiar, alien. A ghost of something" (164). Eric 2 states that he can feel in the back part of his brain and in his heart an uncanny recognition – uncanny in that it is a hauntingly familiar and yet desperately distant feeling, the uncanny presence of Scout as a spectral form of Clio. After they have slept together for the first time, this "something" suggests to him that he and Scout have done this before and that she may in fact be Clio. Engaging in an inner dialogue with himself and that uncanny something, he ponders: "What if I told her about the other thing, the hidden thing, the nonsense thing? The thing that insisted that she was connected to Clio Aames. *Connected? Go on, say it.* The thing that insisted – *go on say it* – she was Clio Aames" (303; emphasis in the original).

When the Ludovician is killed, language comes back to Eric 2. Whether or not this return is a direct cause of the Ludovician's death remains ambiguous, but this is strongly suggested through the digital symbolism and information overload associated with the shark. These uncanny reflections are named when Eric 2 believes that Scout is also dead and mutters out to the sea, "Scout," and then, "Clio" (415). When she appears out of the water, words come rushing to him: "Everything came together then. The whispering nonsense and that huge *something* I hadn't been able to find, all of it focusing into one bright, brilliant realisation" (424; emphasis in the original). Eric 2 says in succession, "Oh God," "Thank you," and finally "I love you" (424). He identifies and vocalizes the "something," giving language to what he feels. This "something," the lost language, returns to him as a language of humanity.

The critical and cultural value of novels such as *The Raw Shark Texts* is that they speak to the implications of digital textuality on how we communicate, especially with regard to increasing anxieties in literary and print cultures about generative creative texts. The very notion that a creative text can be produced by a machine sucks the humanity out of the text and reiterates the argument that new media have attained a consciousness through language. However, Selmer Bringsjord and David A. Ferrucci have stressed vehemently that the machine can never write a text like a human can, simply because it lacks humanity – the ability to reflect and feel in the process of writing (qtd. in Fitzpatrick 2002, 544).

This is something to be stressed: the role of the human in the culture or text of convergence, the role of the human in reflecting and critiquing such culture and such text. As a part of digital and convergence culture, we recognize posthumanism in automated machines that break down borders so that the reader is a user, and the user utilizes the language of digital media. Yet cultural texts such as litera-

ture act as reflections and representations of culture, helping us to keep an acute sense of who it is that speaks, writes, and tells stories; who it is that still understands; and whose stakes are on the line if such borders are to be shifted.

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# **„Göttinger Schriften zur Englischen Philologie“: Zum Konzept der Reihe**

*Frauke Reitemeier*

Die Reihe „Göttinger Schriften zur Englischen Philologie“ umfasst Schriften zur Forschung aus den Disziplinen englische, amerikanische und postkoloniale Literatur- und Kulturwissenschaft, englische Fachdidaktik, englische Sprache, Literatur und Kultur des Mittelalters, Linguistik des Englischen. Veröffentlicht werden können:

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Zusätzlich können in der Reihe Sammelbände beispielsweise mit den Arbeitsergebnissen aus Kolloquien oder Workshops veröffentlicht werden. Die Werke werden auf Deutsch oder Englisch publiziert.

Taking media scholar Henry Jenkins's concept of 'convergence culture' and the related notions of 'participatory culture' and 'transmedia storytelling' as points of departure, the essays compiled in the present volume provide terminological clarification, offer exemplary case studies, and discuss the broader implications of such developments for the humanities. Most of the contributions were originally presented at the transatlantic conference *Convergence Culture Reconsidered* organized by the editors at the Georg-August-Universität Göttingen, Germany, in October 2013. Applying perspectives as diverse as literary, cultural, and media studies, digital humanities, translation studies, art history, musicology, and ecology, they assemble a stimulating wealth of interdisciplinary and innovative approaches that will appeal to students as well as experts in any of these research areas.



ISBN: 978-3-86395-217-4

ISSN: 1868-3878

Universitätsdrucke Göttingen