Transmusical Storytelling:

The Role of Musical Referencing in the Creation of Universes

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Declaration of Authorship

I, Diana-Maria Heidemann, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

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Acknowledgements

Abstract

Spreading content across media is a phenomenon that has grown in popularity over the past couple of decades, a practice that is often dubbed "transmedia storytelling". While transmedia storytelling is often associated with certain franchises within the entertainment industries, it is also a part of today's pop-culture and day-to-day lives. This thesis argues for a broader and more inclusive definition of transmedia storytelling by considering its presence and its use in other, lesser examined areas: the music industry, political campaigns, and advertising, as well as its use in individual self-representation online.

In doing so, this thesis pays particular attention to the role of music in the construction of transmedia storytelling – a feature of transmedia storytelling which has been largely overlooked in relevant literature. I argue that music plays an essential role in how content spreads across media, and that, simultaneously, music itself spreads across media, which is an aspect rarely explored in detail in transmedia studies. In light of this critical gap, this project examines music as an elemental agent and considers its subsequent social and cultural effects and impacts. This includes a consideration of the role of music in the construction and expansion of storyworlds, as well as the subsequent influence said storyworlds and their transmedia expansion have on the music and its public perception.

In this thesis, I develop a theoretical framework of musical referencing in relation to textual and visual cues in order to describe and demonstrate the function that music plays in the construction of transmedia worlds, as well as the broader resonances of music across pop-culture – of transmusical storytelling.

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Introduction: Is Everything Transmedia?

A General Introduction to Transmedia Theories

The textual boundaries of contemporary entertainment industries such as film, TV, music, and games are vastly different from how they were perceived just a few decades ago. Most, if not all feature films, are accompanied by additional materials such as websites, TV-series, making-of documentaries, novels, video games, or countless other merchandising paraphernalia. They are not stand-alone instalments but are intended to develop into large (fictional) constructs that spread across a variety of media, leading to a network of different experiences into which a user can become immersed. In the past few decades, there has been a significant growth in the number of complex fictional worlds and franchises that either centre on an (iconic) character like Batman or Spider-Man, or that describe an extensive imaginary world such as Star Wars or Harry Potter – an aspect that has been researched extensively by scholars such as Henry Jenkins (2006, 2016), Marie-Laure Ryan (2004, 2014) or Mark J. P. Wolf (2012) initially, and many others since. While these worlds are spreading across media and pop-culture in general, and therefore offer a huge variety of entertainment options, they have also become a significant part of everyday pop-culture on a global scale.[1]

The film adaption of J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* in 2001-2003 for example led to not only many new editions of the 1950s and 1960s original print and increased sales of the novels, but also saw the development of numerous spin-off products that have become widely known in pop-culture: Novels and fictional histories of middle earth like *The Simarillion* (1977) saw an increase in new editions and increased sales, various video games relying on the films or further literature were created, as well as LEGO games and sets, action figures, merchandise products such as jewellery, T-Shirts, or prints, as well as user-generated content. This increased pop-culture presence which subsequently led to the film adaption of the prequel *The Hobbit* (2012-2014). The original novels thereby became part of a franchise that has been expanded across media platforms, whilst also being amended and enriched with further information. Fans, on the other hand, took part in gathering information by building digital encyclopaedias or discussing theories and adaptations online. Furthermore, many academic scholars do not only use The Lord of the Rings frequently as an example across transmedia studies, but have engaged with it as a phenomenon across musicology, film studies, cultural studies and many more disciplines (for example Mathijs (ed.), 2006; Donnelly, 2006; White, 2016). While a deep analysis of

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[1] The 2015 instalment *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* for example set plenty of box office records worldwide. Grossing $529 million worldwide on the first weekend, these records do not only include the US market and central Europe, but also China, Australia, Russia, Asia in general, eastern Europe and south America, which demonstrates, that this is not a phenomenon of only the Anglo-American part of the world. (Box Office Mojo, n.d., *All-time Worldwide Openings*).

The Lord of the Rings is beyond the scope of this project, it will be considered as an example frequently. The Lord of the Rings franchise that spawned from Peter Jackson's trilogy thus reached a cult-status within pop-culture comparable with other well-known franchises such as Star Wars, Star Trek, DC and Marvel Comics, Harry Potter, or Pokémon, and is therefore often cited as an example in research on transmedia storytelling (Jenkins, 2006; Ryan, 2004) or world-building (Wolf, 2012).

These popular franchises all have one thing in common: none are bound to only one medium in how they tell their stories. With the aim to reach consumers on as many platforms as possible, franchises like Star Wars and Marvel are spreading content from films to TV-series, audio dramas, fictional websites, merchandise, comic books, graphic novels, video games, and apps. Expanding worlds, and therefore stories, characters, imagery, philosophy, or content in general across an increasing variety of media has become a habit of today's pop-culture and marketing strategists. It is imperative to analyse and approach this expansion of (fictional) worlds from various points such as creative intent from content creators,[2] consumer behaviour, and interpretation as well as commercial and historical aspects. The way content is created and consumed has changed in tandem with technological developments. Particularly, the rise of social media has had a great impact on how and when content is consumed. Multimedia expansion is an omnipresent phenomenon, and a common way of how fictional and non-fictional worlds are presented to an audience through more than one platform. Be it comic book "multiverses" like Marvel and DC, large comprehensive and strategically expanded worlds like the Star Wars Universe, or TV-series like *Lost* (ABC, 2004-2010) and *Heroes* (NBC, 2006-2010): they all use a variety of media to gain status within pop-culture. The diversity of media and how to navigate them thus leads to different ways in which worlds are constructed, dispersed, consumed, and experienced.

Moreover, strategically spreading worlds requires cross-media marketing strategies to advertise upcoming blockbusters or TV-shows. This can range from trailers and featurettes to posters and merchandise. Additionally, more information about characters and backstories, or the creation and "making-of" is provided via social channels such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok, as well as online encyclopaedias or apps that allow the audience to explore the world, while being drawn to consume more content. But this process of offering more information in order to engage consumers

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[2] In this thesis the terms "content creator" and "content provider" will be used to represent professionals in the entertainment industries that created or provide content for consumers, such as filmmakers, showrunners, producers, game developers, novelists, authors, artists, musicians, and so forth. Most recently, these terms have also been used colloquially for semi-professionals or private people creating and spreading homemade content via social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok.

is not necessarily new. For example, the announcement and subsequent reviews of a new play or opera in a newspaper were a common approach centuries ago, suggesting that there is a long traditional model of distribution and marketing across platforms. However, it seems that with the growth of media and global connections during the 20th and early 21st century, there has not only been an increase in the diversity of media (marketing), and how consumers as well as content creators engage with them, but it has also opened the possibility for industries and content creators to strategically plan how to spread content and worlds across media.

Through this process, large, coherent worlds are developed, which are not only presented in one medium, but continue to tell their story across various media. Such phenomena have been branded "transmedia storytelling" by Henry Jenkins in 2006 based on previous academic work in the field, which will be explored in this thesis. It will be incremental for this project to distinguish the usage of specific terminology around transmedia, which will be explored in-depth in Chapter 1 of this thesis. This will include three main definitions of transmedia storytelling, transmedia worlds, and transmedia universes. Being a narratological term, "storytelling" cannot comprehensively describe a transmedia phenomenon. Referring to Marie-Laure Ryan, who stated that 'we cannot define the act of narration without defining the object created through this act' (Ryan, 2004: 5), it becomes clear that these franchises are more than just stories. They have to be seen as worlds that are expanded across media, and therefore are providing the chance for a multi-sensory experience that goes beyond the audio-visual experiences of films or TV-series.

The more common academic term "transmedia worlds" not only includes narratives, but also characters, places, names, (fictional) languages, items, backstories, (fictional) histories or legends, and even tropes such as the fight between good and evil – an idea that will be explored in Chapter 1 of this thesis. These parts of different so-called storyworlds are linked together in a transmedia world through the building of specific connections: recognising a character such as Lt. James Gordon or a place like Gotham clearly connects the TV-series *Gotham* (Fox, 2014-2019) to the Batman Universe and therefore Batman films, comic books, or video games. Connections via familiar places or constellation of characters are essential for transmedia worlds, but they cannot always be guaranteed to be recognisable due to licensing contracts or copyright. For example, the film rights to the character Spider-Man have belonged to Sony since 1999. This made it impossible for Spider-Man to be part of the Avengers films in the Marvel Cinematic Universe,[3] until Sony offered Marvel a deal in 2015 for Spider-Man to appear in upcoming movies of the MCU (anon, 2015). In the comic books, however,

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[3] Hereafter referred to as MCU.

Spider-Man has been a part of the Avengers superhero line-up regularly. Due to legal boundaries, a consideration of transmedia worlds within their respective media franchises would only be able to describe and analyse particular examples. It would exclude the chance to analyse a bigger, content-oriented picture, or even fanfiction, mashups or user-generated content in general.

This research project considers transmedia worlds to be more than an accumulation of stories, characters, and media within a franchise. They are understood as coherent multi-media constructions that aim to be explored and experienced by an audience. In the process of consuming and experiencing content, a personal and emotional bond, if not a relationship is built, which is often described as fandom. Fans build this personal bond through interactivity and user agency by deciding if they want to experience a part of a world or not, in which order, and, furthermore, if that leads them to be creative on their own by producing original content through, for example, YouTube videos or fanfiction. However, the habit of crossing media borders is a phenomenon that can not only be detected in worlds like Star Wars or comic books, but also in various parts of today's pop-culture such as the music industry, politics, and advertising, as well as in self-representation within social networks. Fictional and non- or part-fictional stories and worlds, that are intended to be experienced, are constantly spread across media, and at the same time connected with each other via cross-cultural references. This can be pre-existing music that is used in a film, TV-series or game, iconic lines, logos, or sounds that are used to refer to a specific world and therewith become "acoustic logos"[4], "musical memes"[5], or cameo appearances of characters, icons, or actors. Transmedia worlds, therefore, expand beyond stories, franchises and their storyworld, which is why the term "transmedia universe" will be used throughout this project to refer to a (part-)fictional world that is presented and represented within pop-culture.

Where Music Comes into Play

Considering the vast landscape of scholarship around transmediality and subsequently transmedial or intertextual references, the question arises how music and subsequently the specific term of transmusical storytelling can change the angle of how transmediality is approached and what additional insight this will offer. Many, or maybe even most research projects on transmedia worlds focus on analysing (fictional) worlds and how they expand in relation to their stories, historical context, or marketing strategies, and thereby how they are presented to the audience. In this project, however,

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[4] The term "acoustic logo" is derived from a (visual) logo being a symbol or other small design used by an organisation or media franchise to identify its products. An acoustic logo is used in the same way, however on an aural level.

[5] The term "musical meme" is derived from a meme being an element of culture such as a video, behaviour, quotation, picture, or sound that is spread through repetition and slight variation. This will be further explored in Chapter 4.

I intend to pay particular attention to the personal experience of the consumer, and how that causes a change of perception for the individual as well as within pop-culture. With a focus on music across media, aka transmusical storytelling, this thesis argues that many conceptual models of transmedia storytelling inherit significant limitations in terms of what they might consider crucial. One could argue that narrative and/or world-focussed models do not necessarily include the technical complexity of the way that these universes develop, function, and subsequently create non-fictional-world-related offspring. Considering aspects on how an individual receives, perceives, and experiences worlds, and especially the music within them, illustrates a necessity to include (music) psychology in transmedia studies – and this project – in order to understand the network structure of transmedia universes. The music of a transmedia universe cannot only become an audible identity. It is also often consumed outside the fictional storyworld via platforms such as Spotify, and therefore builds an important bond with the consumer. Not only does the reaction depend on the amount of attention that is invested in the music, but how music is received also relies on the setting, emotional state of mind, and taste of the individual. Music therefore can enrich a film for one person, or even ruin it for another. Others may decide to buy the soundtrack and listen to it on their way to work, making it part of their everyday routine.[6] Every individual creates a personal universe or personal life-soundtrack. This hints towards what makes music within, and also outside transmedia universes special: while buying a merchandise product and displaying it (such as wearing a specific T-Shirt) can be seen as a public statement of fandom, listening to a soundtrack, and therefore showing or even triggering a reaction or affection, often happens in a private space. The act of listening to the music of a film soundtrack at home during, for example, a workout or on the commute to work, can therefore be seen as a process of disconnecting it from the original content and reconnecting it with new content and contexts; a new, private universe.[7] The idea of a private or personal universe here considers a transmedial structure that describes how an individual navigates, consumes, and ultimately uses pop-culture. To further investigate this hypothesis would, however, require excessive sociological research that is not within the scope of this thesis, but should be considered as a separate project going forward.

Music assumes an important and central role in a process that connects content providers (such as film makers, directors, DOPs, show runners, video game creators and so forth), content, product, and fans with each other. A composer for a film score will take into account that the user may not

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[6] The use of music in everyday life relates to and is based on emotion and memory, and has, amongst others, been analysed by Tia DeNora (2000), which I will unfortunately not be able to pay enough attention to due to the limited scope of this project.

[7] However, while this research project and its examples are Anglo-American based, it would be essential to expand the examination of transmedia universes across the multitude of cultures on a global scale.

necessarily pay attention to the music as a musicology scholar would do. This can be linked to what Anahid Kassabian described as ubiquitous listening, meaning that the music is sensed rather than listened to, but still produces affective responses that may be linked to emotions (Kassabian, 2013, xi). Considering music to be experiences on emotional, personal, and partly subconscious levels (something that was also explored by e.g. Sloboda, 2005) requires music to be analysed as both content, and a personal experience. Music initiates and displays a communication that crosses borders from (fictional) universes to the musical memes, user-generated content, and individual use. This project will therefore describe and analyse modes and effects of music being distributed and spread across media platforms. The focus is set to for one understand transmedia franchises such as Star Wars or Game of Thrones on universal levels that extend beyond the fictional world. Furthermore, I will also be considering the musical aspects of these universes as a central part of how fictional universes are constructed, received, and discussed, and subsequently lead to music creating a transmedia universe of its own. Focussing on music within transmedia worlds and universes allows me to explore a new, so far rarely analysed aspect of transmedia worlds and transmediality. Music creates conscious and subconscious connections, layers, and understandings of stories, media, experiences, and transmedia universes that can reach beyond the limitations of specific media, instalments, experiences and so forth. For example, while a novel as a medium does not contain sound, the reader of a Star Wars novel may imagine a lightsaber sound during the process of reading, or decide to listen to the Star Wars soundtracks while reading, which may change the experience of the novel itself. Music also allows me to consider transmedia universes on a scale that reaches beyond storytelling and world-building, beyond franchises and legal aspects, and, most of all, beyond what can be "planned" by content providers. Coming back to reading a novel with specific music in the background, the writer of the novel would not be able to influence what music would be listened to, or what other associations the reader would create based on their personal listening history. But before exploring the approach to this thesis, it is important to lay some groundwork.

Defining Key Terms

Considering this thesis an accumulation of a vast variety of academic studies, it is important to define some basic, academic, and historical terms and their use throughout this project first. This specific methodological approach requires a precise definition of commonly used terms and vocabulary. I therefore will continue to define specific terminology and its (academic) origin throughout the project, while it is necessary to define central terms at the beginning. Dealing with transmedia universes, it is important to distinguish trans- from intermediality. In order to prevent misconceptions, for a start, it

has to be stated that the term 'medium' is often discussed and used with different meanings.[8] The term is often divided into two categories: '(1) Medium as a channel or system of communication, information, or entertainment; (2) Medium as a material or technical means of expression (including artistic expression)' (Ryan, 2014) A film for example is thus a system of communication, information, and entertainment, while the screen and speakers represent the media of its technical means. In this project, the term medium will be used in both meanings.

Building on the prefix "trans" (lat. across, beyond), transmedia and subsequently transmusical refers to the construction of a storyworld, universe, or musical world across boundaries. This is distinguished from intermediality, which, based on the Latin prefix 'inter' (between, among), describes, especially within media studies, the relationship and representation of specific characteristics of one medium in another, for example using comic book aesthetics in a film (Wolf, 2004: 296-297). Transmedia universes thereby inherit and use intermediality by representing structures and characteristics familiar from other media. The already mentioned use of references and quotations, furthermore, builds on high levels of intertextuality, which mostly rely on the premise of the user being familiar with the original text or material in order to recognise the reference or quotation, which will be further explored in Chapter 3. A further mention has to be given to hypertextuality, which is a form of intertextuality, and is often used regarding transmedia worlds. It describes the phenomenon of different texts that cause each other and interfere with each other as in for example fan-initiated online encyclopaedias (Rettberg, 2011: 188). These hypertexts rely on, and are built by, so-called "collective knowledge" and they are mainly characterised by high levels of consumer and fan activity. Fans do not only write articles, but also actively decide which texts they read, and in which order they read them, by clicking through the articles (Bell, 2011: 66). To summarise, transmedia universes are expanded across and beyond media boundaries while they are using intermediality and intertextuality to expand and stay connected. Being forearmed with this base of transmediality, intermediality, and intertextuality, this project will further explore aesthetic, psychology, and cultural aspects of transmedia music.

Transmusical Storytelling – First Thoughts

Before we can explore the specifics of music and transmusical storytelling, it is important to note that my key aim is to analyse the different levels and effects of transmedia music concerning three main approaches which will be explored throughout this thesis. First, music is produced and spread across

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[8] '(a) TV, radio, and the internet (especially the WWW) as the media of mass communication; (b) music, painting, film, the theatre and literature as the media of art; (c) language, the image and sound as the media of expression (and by implication as the media of artistic expression); (d) writing and orality as the media of language; (e) handwriting, painting, the book, and the computer as the media of writing (Ryan, 2014).

platforms within an "original transmedia universe", such as the Star Wars universe in which nearly every audio-visual medium uses John William's soundtrack or at least refers to it, meaning that music connects different stories and worlds within the universe. This process builds a musical brand and identity. Second, music steps out of the universe and can become an autonomous entity, acoustic logo, or musical meme within pop-culture that not only represents a whole universe but also has the potential to develop a transmedia universe by itself, built through means of public perception. The famous shower scene music from Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960) or the theme from *Jaws* (1975) have become instantly recognisable motifs. They allow even those who have never seen the original film to identify a situation as being dangerous or as an homage to cult classic films. The music is not only a part of different universes, for example if a film would use the theme from *Jaws* to reference the original, but it also builds its own universe. The same music can be experienced in different ways, within the original context or film, in another film, series or game, in a concert, listening to it on a playlist, and so forth. Connections from one experience to another and the ability to recognise or make them, however, rely on an individual's listening history, knowledge, and ability to recognise. Third, based on the two previous points, one could argue that music inherits a referential potential that may have the potential to exceed that of – at least some – visual and textual references. With music having the potential to be used across many different universes and experiences, it would be possible to map this development across pop-culture in a separate approach to the music rather than fictional worlds. However, this does not mean that visual and textual references do not have this potential at all. There are different modes of how music, by being autonomous and building its own transmedia universe, bears the capacity to carry a multitude of layered meanings and connections across (pop)-culture. This aspect is highly dependent on an individual's personal listening history and connection that is built with music to be able to recognise said layers and interpret them accordingly. Furthermore, the multi-layered meaning of music, and even a personal emotional connection to music can lead to increased communication about music itself – an aspect I will explore in Chapter 4. Even more so, the personal relationship an individual has with the music often inspires them to create personalised, atmospheric playlists on platforms such as Spotify that are then subsequently shared with other people.
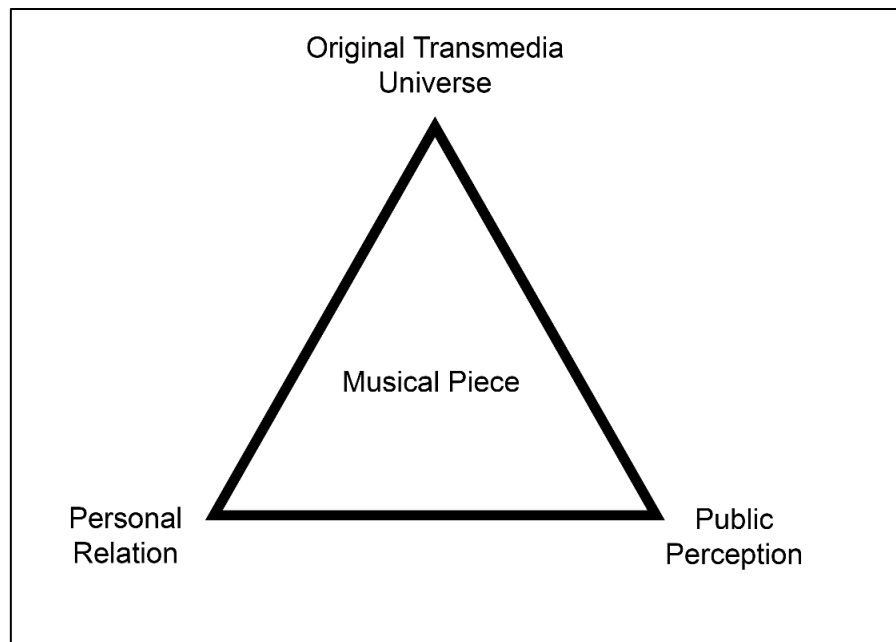
Figure 1: Aspects of Music Across Media[9]

Music can undergo a process in which it is first created with an original intention: for example, to set the mood for a film scene, or a song composed after a romantic breakup as a means of gaining closure. It then evolves within the universe by becoming a musical motif that changes with the storyline, or by being put in relation to a music album, video clip, or live performance. Outside the universe, music evolves by being reused, bringing not only aural qualities but also associations towards another universe. For example, by using *Also Sprach Zarathustra* (1896) by Richard Strauss in *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), the beginning of the film is expanded with not only the first section of the musical composition by Strauss, but also reflects on Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophical novel which the music was based on. To the viewer that is familiar with the original context, the opening scene of the film is enriched with at least two layers of additional information and associations through the use of pre-existing music. Moreover, the film also re-popularised the music, which means that for many now it is known as "the music from *Space Odyssey"* and not as Strauss' original piece. There are even further potential layers of complexity: for example, the composition directly associated with *2001: A Space Odyssey* has subsequently been incorporated in and used within pop-culture more broadly. In *Stargate Universe* (Syfy, 2009-2011) in the episode 'Hope' (S02E14), two of the main characters, Volker and Brody, discuss the public perception of *Also Sprach Zarathustra* and the interrelation to *2001: A Space Odyssey*:

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[9] Copyright note: This figure illustrates the content of my research. Visual Execution by Keagan Harris.

VOLKER: *Also Sprach Zarathustra*. It's the theme from *2001: A Space Odyssey*.

BRODY: So, why didn't you just say that?

VOLKER: Because that's not what it's called. It's called *Also Sprach Zarathustra. Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. It's by Strauss.

BRODY: Yeah, but nobody knows it by that name, so why not just say the name that people know?

VOLKER: Look, you asked me what my favourite piece of music was, and I'm just telling you. That's—

BRODY: Yeah, I'm just saying—

VOLKER: —what it is. It's the one piece that reminds me of the very moment I wanted to be an astrophysicist.

BRODY: Right, when you saw *2001*?

VOLKER: Yes.

BRODY: That's my point, that people know that song only because of the movie.

VOLKER: It's not a song, Brody!

BRODY: Oh, it's not a song now?

This short sequence not only reflects and describe the change of the public perception of *Also Sprach Zarathustra* but it also draws attention towards the personal relationship to both the music (Volker's favourite piece of music), and the film (the music in connection with watching the film reminds him of when and why he chose his career). While at first, this appears to be no more than a humorous moment drawing on pop-culture references, this scene can also be seen as a representation of the importance of music and the personal experience and relationship an individual has with a musical piece, and how this respectively can influence pop-culture – an aspect I will be discussing in the second half of this thesis.

Using pre-existing music, for the literate individual, layers a film scene, game, or TV-series with further meaning, which is a common phenomenon that allows directors like Quentin Tarantino to be known for hand-picked soundtracks full of pre-existing music. It can also trigger nostalgia and therefore increase the popularity of a film due to its strategic use of a soundtrack, as was the case with *Guardians of the Galaxy* (2014), which mainly featured music from the 1980s. Re-using audio material to trigger a certain effect is, however, not exclusive to the film and entertainment industry. It is common in the music industry to use and remix audio material such as famous speeches or audio samples from films in order to set a mood or to become part of the songs' aesthetic. An example of this is the use of dialogue from *Pulp Fiction* (1994) in *Scooby Snacks* by The Fun Lovin' Criminals (Capitol, 1996). In being reused and republished within pop-culture, music becomes autonomous and can stand in for a

universe acoustically. On the other hand, it can also be enriched with new content and associations that become part of a new universe that is built around the music itself.

These enrichments, however, can only be detected by an audience that knows a previous context of the music – whether the original one or a subsequently established context within pop-culture. This means that music here already becomes more personal: how music is received is defined by both the context of the music itself (e.g., part of a film), and the context of the individual experiencing the music. The process of listening to music, understanding, and interpreting it, and then applying the results of this to the following experience with music or something connected to it such as a new story in a (fictional) world, refers back to what Albert Bandura has labelled "social cognitive theory" (1986). The cognitive aspects of music and the connections that are built on psychological and cultural levels will feature throughout this thesis. Understanding music as something that heavily relies on the (cognitive) experience of the individual leads to another important aspect of music and its perception that mostly relies on the receiver and how they choose to integrate music into their personal lives. Music, for example, can be liked and then taken from the original context or the re-published context, and added to a playlist that is used for personal purposes like structuring time, triggering emotions, relaxing, or becoming part of a party. This means that music is used as a tool in situations that are not related to the original context in any way, meaning the composer no longer has any influence on how the music is understood or used. Furthermore, it can even become part of the creation of new content, for instance by being used in a fan video that is uploaded on social media.

In light of the role of music within transmedia universes and throughout pop-culture as well as personal relations as described above, this project examines the psychological, cultural, and social effects of music across media and how music creates connections across seemingly unconnected instalments within pop-culture – and thus creates transmusical storytelling. In order to do so, the project is divided into two main parts, incorporating the three main ideas of music's distribution and evolution across media in today's pop-culture. These main parts will analyse the complexity of interdependencies between all aspects and possible crossovers. Due to the constantly developing nature of pop-culture, it is important to define a timeframe that will be analysed and used for examples. I am therefore mainly incorporating examples and literature up to the cinematic release of the MCUs blockbuster *Avengers: Infinity War* (April 2018). While I will allude to further pop-culture instalments throughout the thesis, they will not be subject to close consideration. Transmedia studies often include a lot of examples chosen from sci-fi and fantasy in order to explicitly examine the creation of fictional worlds and franchises. Following and exploring the development of transmedia scholarship in this thesis to build

upon, this project will also focus on sci-fi and fantasy examples of the same or a similar nature. This will also allow me to draw parallels to non-fictional contexts. In addition to that, the nature of examples chosen will dynamically follow the argument and flow of the thesis meaning that chapters with a heavy focus on music will see more musical examples, while others will be more a more general audio-visual nature.

Part one will focus on how transmedia worlds are not only spread but also connected across their various media iterations. Chapter 1 will summarise and reflect on research and ideas regarding the nature, development, and status of transmedia worlds within (pop-)culture. I will first review the initial academic groundwork of arguments and discussions around transmedia storytelling and worlds by Henry Jenkins (2006, 2007, 2011, 2016), Marie-Laure Ryan (2004, 2014), Mark J. P. Wolf (2012), and Lisbeth Klastrup/ Susana Tosca (2004). Building on these critical accounts, I will argue that transmedia worlds do not only contain stories, but that they are planned and constructed multi-sensory experiences, which are constantly undergoing processes of expansion and change. In doing so, I will introduce a concept and terminology of transmedia universes which includes not only stories and storyworlds, but also includes the value of (personal) experience, non-canonical material, and how worlds are connected and experienced not in terms of content but rather regarding "what they are made of". The consideration of universes rather than fictional worlds that include references or tropes of other fictional worlds thus allows a more extensive and inclusive approach and understanding of how connections are created across pop-culture and how they interact with each other and the consumer alike. Additionally, this concept also allows for a comprehensive historic understanding of transmediality as a phaenomenon that is not exclusively linked to the late 20th and early 21st century, but has inherited culture and society for centuries. This new conceptualisation of transmedia storytelling will therefore encompass music, cinematography, a style of drawing or writing, or overall philosophical concepts. Painting a bigger picture of transmedia universes as interconnected entertainment-networks-in-progress ultimately demonstrates that the term transmedia universe cannot exclusively address fictional story worlds or franchises.

Given the need to consider the industrial and commercial contexts of transmedia universes, I will include a survey of the history of distribution and marketing across media in Chapter 2. The historical aspects of branding, marketing, and franchising across platforms throughout the 20th century as explored by Matthew Freeman (2014, 2016), Derek Johnson (2013), Paul Grainge (2008), Timothy Taylor (2012) and Henry Jenkins (2006, 2016), will give a more corporate-driven perspective to the idea of how transmedia universes are structured. This overview of the evolution and structure of

transmedia universes will be supplemented with a historical survey of the processes of adapting and remediating/ re-imagining material in the last centuries, going back as early as Greek mythology in early opera. Adapting material as well as cross-platform promotion led to what is now known as media franchising, which describes a large network of licensing contracts, and subsequently the creation of transmedia universes. This will be further analysed with a focus on copyright law as well as considering issues arising with the relation between music and copyright.

After establishing the theoretical bases of how transmedia universes are built across media with an emphasis on how music builds brand identity and works as a point of connection within these universes, the second part of the thesis will focus on public perception as well as personal relation of consumers to music across transmedia universes. I will analyse aspects of re-using and re-publishing music by using it as a reference outside a particular universe and creating a new universe around the music itself across industries, thereby turning it into a musical meme. Chapter 3 will closely examine the phenomenon of visual and textual references, and the hidden-in-plain-sight referential phenomenon known as "easter eggs," which have now become part of everyday pop-culture. I will mainly focus on the intricacies and sensitives of how references that quote and refer to other stories, within their own or different universes, build an interrelation with fans who are searching and "hunting" for small details to discuss and display them online. "Insider knowledge" of details, styles, images, or sounds of the fictional world becomes an achievement. This is particularly notable in for example YouTube videos and online articles, which can differ in terms of content, style, or presentation, which subsequently influences clicks, followers, and comments from dedicated fans. This chapter will therefore include a breakdown and analysis of sample data from three different YouTube channels, in order to explore a potential for variety of not only the nature of visual and textual references but also how they trigger user-generated content, discussion, and communication amongst consumers as well as professionals. Three YouTube channels will serve as a small and selective set of data, which will not allow me to draw a general conclusion about the relations and interactions between content, consumer and professionals. However, they have been selected intentionally and specifically to not only be representative, but also to be comparable to a similar set of data relating to music specifically in Chapter 4, and subsequently to create a hypothesis that would have to be investigated further in future research.

In Chapter 4 I will move away from visual, textual, and general references, and focus on the practice of using musical referencing, leading to the basics of transmusical storytelling. This will introduce the idea of a musical meme; a musical structure that through repetition in culture and pop-culture has

become instantly recognisable, and therefore a tool for composers to insert meaning into their musical pieces. This represents a similar approach as previous discussions of musemes (Philip Tagg, 2005) and musical topics (Raymond Monelle, 2006). However, the use of the term musical meme, as briefly defined on page 10 of this thesis, allows for an understanding that encompasses musical structures as well as cultural contexts. This will be explored further in Chapter 4. Moreover, as described via the earlier example of *2001: A Space Odyssey*, pre-existing music is used to enrich films, TV-series, video games, and comic books, radio plays, and sometimes even theatre with additional layers of meaning. The importance of this practice and how bringing a piece of music from another universe into a new one describes a convergence of multiple universes and will be explored in this chapter by reflecting aspects of remediation, remixing, and intertextuality as explored by David Hesmondhalgh (2010, 2013), Eduardo S. Nava/ Owen Gallager (2015), and Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin (2000). Building on these critical ideas, I will establish different aspects of exploring musical referencing and their potential to refer to multiple points of reference at once. Using the multi-layered potential of musical referencing across HBOs *Westworld S1* (2016) as a predominant example, I will argue that musical referencing exceeds the potential of visual and textual references. In its essence, music is not only part of what creates the transmedia universe of for example *Westworld*. Rather, the many layers of musical referencing within the composition as well as a potential reuse of the music of *Westworld* outside of the context of the show itself can be viewed as a point of origin of a separate transmedia universe that has the music at its core. This autonomous transmedia universe of the music then also interacts with the consumer, while its size and the possible number of connection points depend on the individual's knowledge and listening history – which can be understood as transmusical storytelling.

Based on these essential and critical findings, I conclude by describing the effect of transmusical storytelling where music connects to a vast number of referential points at once: from a potential original universe, reconnecting it with another one as well to its overall public perception. Music becomes part of a variety of different universes, the original one it was created for, its presence and repeat across pop-culture. Furthermore, interaction with multiple transmedia universes across pop-culture can also mean that every individual consumer creates a personal/ individual transmedia universe around themselves, which would represent their reception of pop-culture. However, the exploration of this idea, as mentioned above, is beyond the scope of this project. I demonstrate that music's transmedia evolution at this point undergoes a process of constantly disconnecting, connecting, and reconnecting, which creates autonomy and at the same time tells multiple musical stories at once. This leads to the conclusion drawn from the main points regarding how music evolves

inside and outside transmedia universes, how connections are made and how that changes the perception of music. I will show that, even though other attributes of how transmedia universes are experienced can undergo a similar evolution, music holds a unique position here, because it connects with the recipient on a personal, emotional, and non-verbal level. Additionally, musical references and subsequently musical storytelling is capable of creating multiple if not numerous layers of referencing that have the ability to surpass visual and textual referencing. Music such as the *Imperial March* from *Star Wars Episode V: The Empire Strikes Back* (1980) evolves from a specific motif that is used to set the mood of a film scene to an autonomous cultural instance and can now represent or stand-in for the whole Star Wars Universe without the necessity of mentioning this universe in a literal sense. While this music is still connected to its universe of origin, *Also Sprach Zarathustra* has become a musical theme, a meme that represents 20th century classical music composition, Nietzsche, philosophy, *2001: A Space Odyssey*, evolution, beginnings, important or epic moments, and so on. However, the associations that stick to this piece of music are dependent on the individual's listening history.

Moreover, this conclusion of the thesis will look at the most recent trends in pop-culture that have been omitted from the research timeframe of instalments before April 2018. As this thesis considers the active consumer a vital part of how content is chosen, experienced, and subsequently reviewed and discussed, it is essential to consider the rise of new social media such as TikTok or playlisting as well as the effect the COVID-19 pandemic had on both, content creation as well as consumption. It would be beneficial to also pay more attention to the user's personal relation to universes and music by incorporating music psychology and sociology such as Tia DeNora (2000), Eric Clarke (2005, 2010, 2011), Paul du Gay (1996), and John Sloboda (2005). While the personal connection and viewing/ listening history will frequently feature throughout the thesis, I will, due to the scope of this project, not be able to undergo a particular study of the psychology behind it, concepts such as "produsage" (Bruns, 2008)*,* or the means and media of consumption itself, the nature and aesthetics of where we experience music and where we shape taste.

To date, a focus on music within transmedia stories has infrequently been chosen by scholars, meaning there seems to be a limited amount of theoretical framework about transmedia music. This project, therefore, requires interdisciplinary research that focuses on music, but isn't exceptional to a musicological approach, and includes theories and models from various disciplines such as media studies, narratology, psychology, film studies, and so forth. The methodology of this project will mostly be based on qualitative research with a high amount of textual analysis of different discourses and media to allow me to combine and compare. The selected texts and samples will embody a carefully

chosen approach that will be representative of the scholarship across disciplines as well as media examples. However, due to the scope of this project there will be limitations of what can be considered and analysed, which means that further literature, media or data that I will not be able to engage with but am aware of will be flagged throughout the thesis. While I will mostly engage with and synthesize various approaches such as cognitive musicology/ film theory, new musicology, ethnomusicology, music psychology, historical poetics, and so forth, I will also draw from my industry-insider knowledge from working in the post-production industry – as far as non-disclosure agreements allow.[10] Being of a strong theoretical nature, most chapters will include an analysis and review of literature and theories from different academic fields/ disciplines with the goal of developing new, innovative, and interdisciplinary ideas about transmedia universes that do not have a specific academic core point or approach. This method will be based on Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, who introduced the idea of theoretical frameworks being comparable to a rhizome, meaning they are ideally de-centred, non-hierarchic, and non-significant, and thereby do not have a general, central, or most-important aspect (Deleuze/ Guattari, 1976: 35). Transferred to my research, this model describes the chosen interdisciplinary approach for transmedia music and transmusical storytelling, a theoretical field that has rarely been explored. The lack of theory for music across media also means a lack of terminology and theoretical frameworks, which will be built throughout the project on the basis of various other disciplines. Lending theories, terminology, and ideas of how to understand certain phenomena in order to transfer them onto transmedia music will build a rhizome of an interdisciplinary framework.

By focusing on music in the following chapters, this project will not be limited to a musicological approach, but aims to understand music in its structure, effect, and interrelation with other media, the content provider, content, and the individual – an aspect I call transmusical storytelling. One could say transmusical storytelling and transmedia universes require "transdisciplinary" methodologies. This will also include a discussion of a variety of examples from (pop-)culture in order to illustrate and raise questions in the following chapters. It is my goal to neither pick examples that serve my ideas, nor make up a whole theory based on one case study. Overall, the potential music has to refer, point to, and tell stories across composition, instalment, and re-use remains key.

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[10] After two years of producing the versioning of TV spots, I started working for Technicolor in 2018, where I manage a department specialising in the post-production of promotional AV material for high-end Films and TV series, while also working closely on a global scale. In May 2021 Technicolor Post was acquired by Streamland Media. My role has since moved under the brand Picture Head, making me part of the leadership team of the biggest provider or marketing post globally.

Part I: Transmediality in Fictional Worlds and Franchises

Chapter 1 - Transmedia Universes as Multisensory and Multimedia Networks

The study of transmedia stories, worlds, and franchises presents a diverse field that has been approached from different interdisciplinary angles such as media studies, narratology, and fan studies. The reason for this is transmedia worlds not only exist in various media, but they also influence and build pop-culture within and around those worlds. Spreading a story and the fictional world to which it belongs across platforms such as film, video games, comic books, novels, graphic novels, board games and so forth, induces and involves a process of constant review and reflection on the content from creators, users, and even, academics. This doesn't just include online platforms such as communities, encyclopaedias, or fan meetups and conventions. It also comprises a wide-ranging field of information spread by the content creators of fictional worlds, as well as user-generated content such as fan fiction, videos, playlists, or fan art. This chapter aims to expand conceptual frameworks that have been developed to describe transmedia worlds, by considering such worlds as a larger entity – as a universe that not only contains the fictional world itself, but also intertextual connections in its content, and within pop-culture. Building upon and extending key research within the field of transmedia studies, with particular reference to the work of Henry Jenkins (2006, 2007, 2011, 2016), Marie-Laure Ryan (2004, 2014), Mark J. P. Wolf (2012) and Susana Tosca/ Lisbeth Klastrup (2004), I will introduce and develop a concept of transmedia universes as opposed to transmedia storytelling and transmedia worlds. This approach will include not only how stories are told and how worlds are built, but also define how stories and worlds can make use of the unique properties that each medium offers, and how they connect with the user during the act of consumption. I will discuss transmedia universes as multisensory and multimedia experiences resulting from content that is spread across various platforms. In the second half of this thesis, I will relate this approach to music which will allow me to discuss the use of the phrase, "transmusical storytelling". The works mentioned above have been selected to allow a general approach to transmedia studies in order to adapt them to an analysis of (pop)-cultural, social, and particularly musical aspects – which, as I have previously noted, have often been marginalised in the field of transmedia studies. While consumer behaviour and user-generated content are a central part of transmedia universes, this chapter will focus on the theoretical approach towards the content as created by studios, creatives, and content providers. The second half of this thesis will then shift the focus towards active consumer behaviour particularly around referential structures.

Basic Terminology

In order to argue that the concept of transmedia universes as a multi-platform experience rather than just the expansion of stories and worlds across media, it is necessary to first define and describe the terminology that originates in media studies and narratology, as well as theories of transmedia storytelling. Whether or not we follow Jenkins' (2006) more story-oriented approach, or Ryan, Wolf, and Klastrup/ Tosca, who emphasize the world-building aspect, each account distinguishes between different ways of transmedia storytelling and world-building. In these accounts, a distinction is made between top-down and bottom-up structures, which focus mainly on the relationship between author, franchise, consumers, and worlds. In a top-down hierarchy an individual author or production company represents the epicentre of the creative shaping of a fictional world. All decisions, such as the kinds of stories produced, how characters and stories are related, the choice of media and all their individual content, are restricted and controlled by the same entity. At the same time, this entity must also consider industrial and legal restrictions as well as consumer desire. For example, until Star Wars was sold to Disney in 2013, George Lucas and LucasFilm dictated the development of the Star Wars universe, quality-checking every spin-off or project, and this quality-control has been overseen by Disney ever since. This has led to several restrictions, including preventing the creation of content and stories about the "Clone Wars" set between *Episode II* and *III* until the TV-series *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* (Cartoon Network/ Netflix/ Disney+, 2008-2020) was created (Wolf, 2012: 2008). A bottom-up structure for a fictional world on the other hand, creates a collective database with detailed descriptions of the world and its characters, which is subsequently used by multiple authors, production companies and media franchises in order to expand the world (Ryan, 2011: 49-50). Rights to characters or material can be licensed for use, which grants more artistic freedom to the content creators.

Another distinction of transmedia worlds is how they are expanded and spread across media in terms of publishing history. There are two main ways of expansion, the first of which is called the snowball effect. This describes how one original text or instalment such as a film, novel, or game is then utilised as a basis for the creation of new and continuous stories on different platforms. Harry Potter and The Lord of the Rings are often cited as examples of this effect, starting in one medium, created by one author, and then expanding across different platforms through public demand (Ryan, 2014). The second mode/ type of expansion describes a form of transmedia storytelling in which 'a certain story is conceived from the very beginning as a project that develops over many different platforms' (Ryan, 2014), such as *The Matrix* (1999-2003).

Bottom-up worlds that have spread through the snowball effect often show signs of discontinuity regarding the integral timeline, structure, and consistency of the fictional world, thereby undermining the storyworld's "canon". It is interesting to note that, regardless of the content, time, or space, most worlds built through a snowball effect deliver stories and information that strongly resonate with and treat the primary text as centre of the universe. These primary texts often reach a cult-status (Klastrup/ Tosca, 2004), creating a canon that defines the rules of the fictional world (Wolf, 2012: 270). However, this can lead to a tension between what authors add to the canon material and what consumers might or might not accept. The *Star Wars Holiday Special* (1978) for example was produced by the same crew with the same cast as *Star Wars* (1977) but is not considered to be on the same "level" of canon as the primary text or any of the following films (Brooker, 2002: 103). This difference, in the case of Star Wars, led to a development of levels of canonicity, which describe both the centre and the periphery of the Star Wars universe:

> G-canon (the most recent versions of films Episodes I-VI, the scripts, movie novelizations, radio plays, and Lucas' statements), T-canon (the Star Wars: The Clone Wars television show and the live-action Star Wars television series); C-canon (the Expanded Universe elements), S-canon (a secondary canon including the role playing game Star Wars: Galaxies); and N-canon (noncanonical material, such as the Star Wars: Infinities series of stories) (Wolf, 2012: 271).

Defining content as being part of one of the above levels of canonicity can be problematic for both content providers and consumers, as seen in the example of the *Star Wars Holiday Special*. However, the difference between the author-dictated canon and the consumer-accepted canon is equally problematic. Overall, consumers appeared disappointed with the Star Wars prequel trilogy *Episodes I-III*, leading to these films not being seen as equal to *Episodes IV-VI* (Brooker, 2002: XVI). The sequel *Episodes VII-IX*, which were produced/ created by Disney in 2015-2019, were received more positively (initially, at least), but have since been criticised for not adhering to rules established in the canon of the first three films. Furthermore, the sequence of events is predetermined by release, and subsequently the rules of the canon and its levels are too. This can diminish the experience of a new instalment such as a prequel that is set earlier in the universes' timeline but released later. For example, as Obi-Wan Kenobi is alive in Star Wars *Episode IV: A New Hope* (1977), his fight with Anakin at the end of Star Wars *Episode III: Revenge of the Sith* (2005) is predetermined with Obi-Wan surviving and Anakin becoming Darth Vader. While typical techniques of suspense, such as the alleged death of a hero, appear to become less effective, the appeal of origin stories in fictional worlds focuses less on suspense and more on learning new information. Similar to the wildly popular genre of superhero origin stories, backstories of characters in general are 'about transformation, about identity, about difference, and about the tension between psychological rigidity and a flexible and fluid sense of

human nature.' (Hatfield/ Heer/ Worcester, 2013: 3) Focusing on the process of Anakin's struggle and change over the prequel trilogy therewith humanises the character of Darth Vader and allows for viewers to empathise to his arc/ development.

With the exclusion of the larger extended Star Wars universe (such as novels and games), however, Disney intended to avoid being tied down by anything except the G-canon, allowing them to create new timelines post *Episode VI*, similar to the new timeline in the *Star Trek* (2009) reboot. The previously mentioned criticism of Star Wars instalments, particularly criticisms regarding *Episodes VII* and *IX*, was, however, mainly focused on changes of the rules of the world itself. Rather than criticising the omission of storylines laid out in novels about the lives of main protagonists Luke Skywalker, Leia Organa and Han Solo, fans did criticise other deviations from the canon, such as the ability to use the force for healing or force ghosts being able to intervene in action sequences.

One way to obviate the challenges of adhering to a complex top-down canon such as Star Wars is through the practice of "rebooting", which is common in fictional and superhero worlds. Reboots are characterised by strong inconsistencies, particularly in comic book universes such as Batman, which makes a definition of canon almost impossible. While DC and authors explain absurd scenarios and stories as what-if or dream-sequences, this problematic approach towards cohesive universe timelines raises the question: is a canon worth defining for fictional worlds? This argument considers bottom-up fictional worlds as transmedia universes, and therefore multiplatform experiences, rather than continuous stories. Subsequently, it appears to be secondary if and how new experiences are in line with former instalments, or if they give a different perspective and impression of the same characters. This means that:

> No longer can the canon be thought of as series of films with allied multimedia extensions that support and reinforce the brand or that drive consumers toward the cinematic experience. Rather, we see a complex series of narratives and contexts laid out across a sprawling web of interconnected messages and channels, each adding to the audience's experiential opportunities and repertoire (Newman/ Simons, 2011: 251).

Another key feature of these worlds, especially bottom-up worlds, is the process of adaptation and remediation. According to Bolter and Grusin (2000), remediation describes the process of new (digital) media remediating their predecessors such as TV, radio or print journalism, for example by evoking a particular aesthetic or screen ratio. Adaptation, on the other hand, includes bringing a story from one medium into another such as adapting a book into a film (e.g., BBC Ones' adaptation of *His Dark Materials*: Philip Pullman 1995-2000, BBC One/ HBO 2019-present) (Bolter/ Grusin, 2000: 4-5). What Bolter and Grusin defined as adaptation and its meaning as an expansion of the fictional world will be

further explored in Chapter 2. Going forward I will be using the word remediation to describe and analyse technical and aesthetic attributes such as comic book panels on the screen of a feature film or conscious referencing, while adaptation will be related to the content. In the second half of this thesis, where I will take a closer look at references (textual, visual and most of all musical), this terminology will be expanded even further.

However, before we can explore the idea of remediating, repurposing, and reusing music across platforms, culture, and universes, it is important to first lay the groundwork of how transmedia universes need to be understood. This chapter will therefore analyse the theory and differences between transmedia storytelling and world-building in order to develop and describe the concept of transmedia universes. Following this, I will describe how music connects both, cohesive and disrupted/ rebooted worlds while referring to the examples of Star Wars and Batman.

Storytelling and World-Building: The Theory and its Limitations

In 2006 Henry Jenkins devoted much of his book *Convergence Culture* to the phenomena of narrative across media, and in doing so popularised the term 'transmedia storytelling.' (Jenkins, 2006: 97). He cited the marketing of *The Blair Witch Project* (1999) as one of the first occurrences of transmedia storytelling (Jenkins, 2006: 97). This campaign featured a specifically designed website about three students who went missing after entering a Maryland forest, creating a pseudo-history of the story a full year before the film itself was released. Using further examples like *The Matrix* (1999-2003), Jenkins defines transmedia storytelling as the act of spreading a story across different platforms with the intention that most if not all elements must be consumed for the narrative to unfold entirely. This means that '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' (Jenkins, 2006: 95-96).

However, referring to "the story" as the (primary) text that is spread across different platforms, would exclude reinterpretations and adaptations of a story from being considered transmedia storytelling. This would mean that franchises built on adapting material to a new medium like Marvel, DC, The Lord of the Rings, Harry Potter and so forth would not necessarily be considered transmedia storytelling. Focusing on the "storytelling" also emphasizes the necessity of narration, describing unfolding events in space and time (Neumann/ Nünning, 2008: 11), in order to expand on a transmedia level. This would again exclude popular examples of transmedia paratexts such as interactive maps, timelines, character biographies, or any additional information that is beyond the story itself. The term "paratext" as Gérard Genette (1987) defined it describes the framing of a story, such as a book cover, and how it

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influences and is part of the experience of said story. Building on that and within the context of audio-visual media, I will also consider the work of Jonathan Gray (2010). Building on Genette's author-provided frame, Gray expands this term to include most if not any additional material provided by the media, or, in the case of transmedia storytelling, production studio, such as posters, trailers, merchandise, "previously on…" recaps and so forth. This will be explored in further detail in Chapter 3 of this thesis. Considering adaptations and spin-offs, the boundaries of what has to be considered paratext and what is a new text are constantly being blurred by media franchises and transmedia universes. For example, the spin-off *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* (2016-present) is a film series based on an in-world textbook (which was also published as a book of its own) of the same name in the Harry Potter universe. *Fantastic Beasts* represents a mixture of classic paratext (additional framing of the stories within the Harry Potter universe) and expansion of the same by providing additional information about the world: the textbook is a part of the Harry Potter storyworld and also part of the Harry Potter universe, while it is also spawning a new franchise with new stories and characters, which connect to the stories of Harry Potter. However, the film series is set decades before the original series of books, blurring the lines between paratext, expansion, and new text. This project, however, focuses less on narratological definitions, but more on the nature of fictional worlds and their transmediality. As I am approaching transmediality as a phenomenon that reaches beyond media franchises and fictional worlds, and as something that is inextricably tied to pop-culture creating a space for transmusical storytelling, paratexts are relevant but beyond the scope of this thesis.

In order to expand our understanding of transmedia storytelling so that it can include other integral elements, we need to go further and deeper into the theory of narratives. This brings us back to Marie-Laure Ryan's argument that 'we cannot define the act of narration without defining the object created through this act' (Ryan, 2005: 5). Ryan discussed narration across media platforms in the early 2000s, focusing on how narration unfolds in different media, from written text to visual narration and music, and how the interrelations between these have to be seen as a base for the understanding of the term "transmedia world". In 2004 Susana Tosca and Lisbeth Klastrup followed up on Ryan's discussion of fictional worlds beyond the storyline, defining transmedia worlds as follows:

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

With this argument, Klastrup and Tosca are approaching narratives beyond the story itself as well as the act of (transmedia) storytelling, by focusing more on the idea of world-building, which leads to the term "transmedia world". These worlds are described as spreading across media platforms, engaging consumers even beyond the primary text in the means of a story told in a single medium or across platforms. Transmedia world-building therefore involves the construction of fictional worlds across media while using intertextuality to connect those stories.[11] Focussing not only on storytelling, world-building defines transmedia worlds not as a single story that uses different media to be told, but rather as an organic process that unfolds an imaginary world as a network,[12] or even rhizome as previously discussed in the Introduction across various media. Transmedia worlds, therefore, are more than just a story. They are comprehensive networks that use cross-media marketing, the chance of a multimedia experience and/ or intermedial and intertextual references to build a transmedia world.

Through this process, intertextuality and world-building rely on the user to be actively consuming, choosing, and experiencing while connecting stories to a world in a cognitive process with multiple feedback channels and loops. The active consumer generates their personal journey through the transmedia world by deciding which instalment is consumed when and how, and whether they would, for example, return to a film they had already seen in order to re-experience it after gathering more information in a behind-the-scenes documentary. This shows that transmedia worlds are not static constructions, but rather they are a "network in progress", one that is constantly changing and amended by content creators, while actively consumed and interpreted by the user. This points towards an ongoing process in which content is constantly produced, reviewed, and interpreted, which means that both content creator and user can influence each other. While the focus of these theories places an emphasis on the content presented to the consumer and an emphasis on the means of consumption, this excludes creative produsage of user-generated content such as fan art, videos, or fan fiction.

However, consumer behaviour has a significant impact on what is being created by content providers: the vast popularity of the action figure of the Star Wars character Boba Fett, for example, was seen as the main reason to develop him from a side character into a secondary villain in later films (Jenkins, 2007). This was further demonstrated by the return of the character in later instalments such as in *The Mandalorian S2* (2020). Therefore, the user and recipients of transmedia worlds often inherit an

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[11] The use of intertextuality to connect transmedia stories to worlds and universes and the role music plays for this process will be analysed in the second half of this chapter.

[12] The term "network" is used by me in a colloquial sense and not connected to system theory.

influential position in the act of transmedia storytelling and world-building, not only as consumers of the story. Rather, they are inspired and encouraged by the size and possibilities of transmedia worlds to actively experience and shape this fictional world (Schroeder, 2008: 13). Due to the expansion of transmedia worlds, users often feel compelled to inform themselves about and participate in the fictional world across platforms. This leads to the consumption of TV series, films, video games, novels, and online encyclopaedias – or even co-creating the latter as well as further user-generated content.

The act of world-building, which has been explored by Klastrup and Tosca, has further been analysed by Mark J. P. Wolf in his book *Building Imaginary Worlds* (2012), in which he describes how imaginary and fictional worlds and franchises such as The Lord of the Rings, Star Wars or even DC Comics and Marvel are built and connected across media platforms. His account focuses on the fictional world itself, the transmedia world, as it is built by the content providers and creatives and used and consumed by the recipients. However, he also excludes the overall experience and the different ways in which these worlds can be experienced on different platforms as not being a part of the world, by stating that 'words, images, objects, sounds, and interaction [...] [are] the five elements that make up the windows through which we experience imaginary worlds' (Wolf, 2012: 183). This approach considers the active audience in terms of them navigating through the fictional world. However, the cognitive dimension requires further consideration, particularly in regard to music.

The limitations of these accounts can be illustrated by a brief example. The first *Star Wars* film in 1977 was followed by ten feature films (at the time of writing), as well as various novels, radio plays, video games, TV series and films, comic books, LEGO sets, encyclopaedias, websites, a Star Wars TV Holiday Special and numerous merchandise products, which still occupy the shelves of many toy stores. These expansions do not only repeat or retell the story of the films; rather they construct a whole expanded universe with a detailed timeline, descriptions of planets and life forms, mythology, and philosophy. Furthermore, documentaries or books disseminate information about the construction process by showing film sets and crews or interviews with key figures such as creator George Lucas.

According to Wolf, Ryan, or Klastrup/ Tosca, this information about how a world is constructed, created, and distributed would not necessarily have to be considered part of the world itself, as it is rather an add-on that merely influences how the world is experienced. The connections a world has across stories and platforms, which Wolf names an "infrastructure" that is built from maps, timelines, genealogies, nature, culture, language, mythology, and philosophy are part of the fictional world while the way it is experienced is understood as an outside or external factor. In that case a video game like *Star Wars*: *Knights of the Old Republic* (BioWare/ LucasArts, 2003), which is set a few thousand years

before the films on different planets with unknown characters, could, using only said infrastructure, hardly be connected to the universe in another way than by the rather loose point of philosophy, centring on the conflict between Jedi and Sith (as well as simply the name of the game). However, by taking a closer look at the opening sequence of the game, other important aspects can be detected, which situate the game firmly within the fictional world of Star Wars beyond the title:

The game starts in the same way as all nine main Star Wars films: on black screen we see the words "A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away….", followed by the Star Wars logo, the short, iconic introductory screen crawl (which has become a meme by itself having its style imitated across pop-culture) that positions the story on the timeline, and, last but not least, the title music by John Williams. This sequence offers visual and acoustic clues that this game is part of the Star Wars world beyond the simple display of the logo. Therefore, the game is clearly a part of the world even before any aspects of a fictional-world-driven infrastructure are exposed. This can be compared to Genette's interpretation and analysis of framing a story. The opening title and crawl function as both, an "original preface" and a "fictional preface" (Genette, 1987: 196-197). They ensure that the text is read and understood properly, giving it, as Genette described, a sense of novelty and tradition, unity and truthfulness. Every story is connected to the larger world of Star Wars and its canon simply by how it is framed, not only textually but also visually, and of course musically/ sonically.

This short example illustrates that typical and iconic ways of representation, which include music, are a vital aspect of the representation and experience of a fictional world. They not only frame a story as part of a particular fictional world, but can, as in the example of Star Wars, become a ritual of experiencing a world, almost a necessity in order to signify that the following story is part of the world. In 2016 Disney released *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story*, the first cinematic instalment to not include the by then traditional framing. After "A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away…." the film has no crawl and no Star Wars title music but jumps right into action (which, for many fans at the time, caused a significant degree of upset). This was used to signify that the following feature, while part of the wider Star Wars universe, was not part of the main feature films or storyline.

The way that a world is experienced, be it specifications of a medium, narrative style, or musical aspects, influences the cognitive[13] reception of a story and its world. Watching a film like *Memento*

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[13] The term "cognitive" is used here in the sense of how Albert Bandura defined it in 1986 as the process of observing behaviour and its consequences, remembering these, and then using this information to guide subsequent behaviours. In the means of this project this relates to how a text, story or instalment is experienced, which is then transferred and used to guide the following experience of a new text, story, or instalment.

(2000) in a chronological order rather than the way that it was released, in which the story constantly jumps back and forth in time in order to transfer the emotional state of the protagonist onto the viewer, would change the viewer experience completely. The narrative style and the editing play a vital part in how *Memento* is experienced, and how it is received by the audience, meaning they have to be considered part of the whole, even though they're not part of the imaginary world itself. That means that outer structures like editing, imagery, and music (and sound) are basic elements that define the experience and therefore connect the world's network on a higher, more abstract, and technical level.

The influence of how a world is experienced is even more significant when it comes to extensive worlds that are spread across media platforms such as Star Wars or Batman. These are worlds in which users often assume an active position when consuming instalments. The central aspect of this possible active consumption across platforms is the variety of how a single fictional world can be experienced by the user. We are not only informing ourselves about the world, or consuming the stories that build the world, but experience them on a multisensory and multimedia level which includes language, narrative, or visual styles as much as music and sound.

Introducing: Transmedia Universes

Given what I have outlined above, I therefore argue that the terminology of transmedia phenomena has to be expanded and more defined in order to incorporate and distinguish experiences and reception of individual users. As argued before, neither the term transmedia storytelling nor transmedia world is capable of holding and describing the phenomenon beyond the fictional world itself. While storytelling focuses only on the act of spreading a narrative, and therefore events that happen around certain characters in space and time, the term transmedia world also includes the imagined world in which the stories take place. This means everything Wolf branded the infrastructure of the fictional world such as places, philosophy or myths. Coming back to the example of Star Wars, the storytelling in this case would include the tale of the Skywalker family in nine different films, two additional spin-off feature films labelled "Star Wars stories", as well as TV series such as *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* (Cartoon Network/ Netflix/ Disney+, 2008 – 2020) or *The Mandalorian* (Disney+, 2019-present), novels that are set between the films and so forth. The Star Wars world, however, would also include instalments that are set years before the films such as *Knights of the Old Republic* or *Jedi Knights* (LucasArts, 1995-2003) video games, which are not connected to the Skywalker family, but still include central tropes from the Star Wars world such as the fight between good and evil, Jedi and Sith, as well as familiar planets, means of transportation like spaceships, or weapons like the lightsaber. The imaginary world of Star Wars therefore includes tropes and items which are used to signify that a story

is part of the world, enabling the consumer to identify the story as part of Star Wars, even if it's not directly connected to the "original" story which unfolded in the films.

The fictional world of Star Wars in an accumulation of various stories and elements. On the one hand, this world includes tropes that are familiar to us and parallel our reality, such as war, belief systems, family relations, friendships, or good vs. evil. This enables consumers to relate to characters and stories. On the other hand, it uses fantasy and science-fiction elements and genre-typical tropes set in an unfamiliar galaxy with new planets, and also presents fictional weapons, space travel and "the force" as a magical element, all of which clearly frame Star Wars as fiction. This imaginary world has been developed across media platforms since the 1970s and has become a vital part of pop-culture.

Multiple aspects such as music, characters, objects, creatures or in the case of Star Wars even a type font are used across pop-culture as a signifier of Star Wars as a brand outside the fictional texts set within the Star Wars world. These aspects, that in the case of music or the type font are not part of the fictional world, are still vital to its representation: In the Episode, 'Please Homer, Don't Hammer 'Em' (S18E03, 2006) from the sitcom *The Simpsons* (Fox, 1989-present) the music from the final battle sequence from *Star Wars Episode I: The Phantom Menace* (1999) accompanies a fight between Bart Simpson and Principal Skinner. By using the music, the fight is not only intensified by thrilling music as in a common use of film- or TV-music, but tropes, connotations and parallels are drawn between Star Wars and this scene in the Simpsons series. The short scene is enhanced with another layer of good vs. evil, a fight to the death, drama, loss, and suspension simply through the use of one particular piece of music. Here, music transports not only a film or a film scene, but further parts of the fictional world of Star Wars itself into the fictional world of the Simpsons. The music acts as a representation for the world of Star Wars and its infrastructure, without technically being a part of the fictional world itself but rather its construction. Aspects of diegetic and non-diegetic music and how it interrelates with the world of a film or TV-series has been discussed extensively across the studies of film music by scholars such as Winters (2010), Tagg (2005, 2009, 2013), Mera/ Sadoff/ Winters (eds, 2017), Harper/ Eisentraut (2009), Kloppenburg (2017), Kassabian (2013) and many more. However, considering the textual approach transmaedia studies are pursuing, music is not considered part of the fictional world. Rather, it acts in a way that is comparable to a synecdoche in literature, a figure of speech with which a part is made to represent the whole or vice versa, for example saying "strings" in order to refer to "string instruments".

The above example is a starting point from which I intend to expand and broaden the terminologies of transmedia studies. I therefore propose the term transmedia universe in order to incorporate

elements, information and additional material, as well as user-generated content, that would not be included in the term transmedia world. The main hypothesis of this argument, based on the critical review of Jenkins, Klastrup/ Tosca, Ryan and Wolf is that a transmedia universe is more than just an accumulation of stories, and more than the fictional world itself. It is a network in progress that spreads content across media platforms while constantly being amended and updated. This not only includes the fictional world, but also external parts of the discourse like music and style of narratives as well as information given about the worlds' construction such as documentaries, and fan activities.
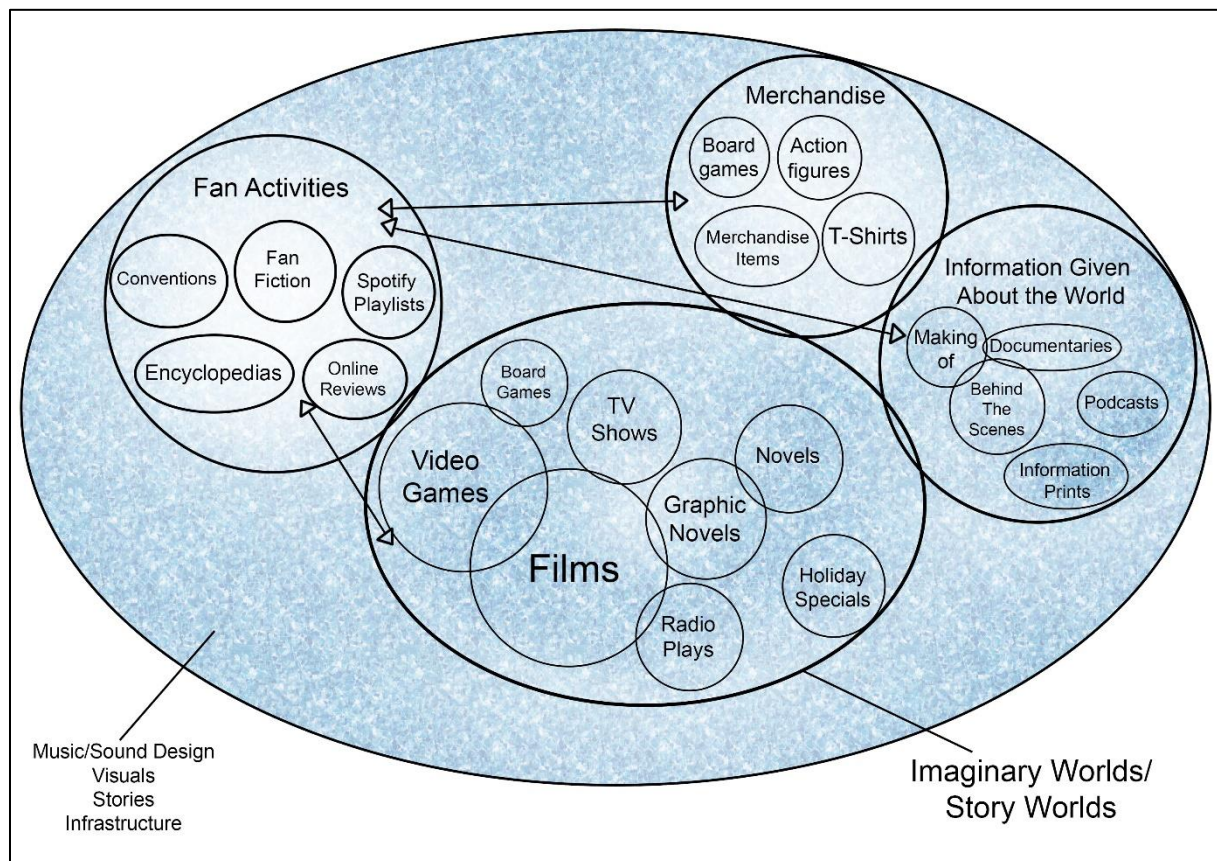
Figure2 Construction Model of a Transmedia Universe[14]

This figure represents a simplified 2D model of a transmedia universe, including various galaxies and worlds. In this figure, overlaps and arrows are a representation of potential links that can be established. However, an accurate representation of every overlap and relation would quickly strain and surpass the boundaries of this model. A third, even fourth temporal dimension would have to be introduced in order to achieve this goal, which represents a necessary next step in developing these ideas of transmedia universes in further research, which would for now surpass the scope of this thesis.

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[14] Copyright note: This figure illustrates the content of my research. Visual Execution by Keagan Harris.

In order to understand the basic concept and ideas of transmedia universes, however, the above simplified 2D model supplies the necessary overview and groundwork.

The worlds are the different specific storyworlds and instalments that can be more or less connected with each other in a galaxy that represents e.g., the fictional/ imaginary world, creating overlaps in the model. An example for that would be the TV-series *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* which is set between *Episode II* and *Episode III* of the feature films, including familiar characters, places and elements, while telling separate stories, only some of which are alluded to in the films. A galaxy includes all media used to tell stories and therefore every single storyworld (like the storyworld of a particular game or novel) is part of the whole construction of the fictional world. These storyworlds can be set in relation to each other with an infrastructure such as timelines, genealogies, places, objects, soundmarks, philosophy and so forth. Other galaxies contain merchandise, information given about the worlds, and user-generated content amongst other things. The addition of galaxies in this figure and hierarchy allows to include aspects such as merchandise, fan activities or information given about the world in the whole of the transmedia universe – something that would be excluded in a world-only model as discussed previously within transmedia storytelling and worldbuilding.

Considering a transmedia universe as a multisensory and multimedia experience requires the inclusion of a discourse level in this image. Therefore, a blue background structure is present in all parts of the universe. It represents four different aspects that make up the basic structure of transmedia universes: music/ sound design, visuals, stories, and the overall infrastructure. The term "stories" here represents an abstract consideration of stories being told as opposed to the various specific storyworlds or the act of storytelling. A transmedia universe includes a variety of stories that are being told through the act of storytelling, creating storyworlds. It is important to keep this abstract aspect separate because not all worlds or galaxies necessarily include them. While a film or TV-series tells a specific fictional story, a making-of documentary tells the (potentially real) story of the making of for example a feature film. However, merchandise items such as T-Shirts do not tell a story, but they do include e.g. visuals like the Star Wars logo connecting them to and incorporating them into the universe. This means that these four bases of transmedia universes can but don't have to be present to indicate that a world is part of a universe. A novel does not contain sounds, but can still be recognised by the story, characters, or philosophy. Therefore, at least one of these basic structures is needed for a world to be recognisable. The connections of transmedia universes are thus not only established through narrative elements but can also be established on an aesthetic level as is the case with music.

The example of how the Star Wars music invokes its universe in the Simpsons episode demonstrates that a single, significant part of a universe can represent it inside other universes and across pop-culture. Using the proposed definition of transmedia universes as a network of content that is spread across media, I argue that pop-culture itself is built on references and cross-references that are made from one transmedia universe to another, overlaying them and even building new transmedia universes. These are then quoted and referred to again, and even used outside pop-culture, for example in political campaigns run by Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton in 2016, who used various pop-cultural references, such as *Pokémon GO* (Niantic, 2016)*,* in order to attract younger generations of voters (anon, 2016).

This non-fiction example points towards the potential of the term transmedia universe: it not only describes pop-cultural phenomena around fictional worlds but can also be applied to spreading content across platforms in relation to non-fictional worlds. This process will be discussed and analysed further in Chapter 2. However, in order to describe transmedia universes on a larger scale, we must first analyse how these networks of shared content connect inside and outside of the fictional world itself.

Mapping Imaginary Worlds vs. Universes

Single worlds and galaxies in a transmedia universe are connected on different levels that include both elements of the inner imaginary world, and outer structures. It is important to delineate the two levels, as they are equally important in order to analyse how transmedia universes connect within themselves. Furthermore, these points are also used to refer to or quote a universe in a different context like another universe, pop-culture in general, and social or political contexts. The complexity and size of transmedia universes such as Star Wars, Game of Thrones or Batman, the latter of which is part of the larger DC Universe (or casually referred to as a multiverse[15]) raises the question: how are the stories connected to each other, building a cohesive fictional world and universe while making sure that single parts can be detected as one of the whole? One possibility is a connection based on time and space that is put in relation to the original story through which the world has been introduced. Many prequels or sequels, whether they are in the same medium or a different one than the previous

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[15] The term "Multiverse" in the context of DC and Marvel is used to include all aspects, dream- and what-if scenarios and reboots, as well as stories that centre different characters, and presents them as connected. The DC multiverse contains heroes like Batman, Superman or Wonder Woman, all of which have their own universe with different stories. Furthermore, they can team up in the Justice League universe, or a villain like Lex Luthor, who primarily fights Superman, can cross borders, and enter the Batman universe. The term "multiverse" therefore describes the entity of all stories, which are set in the same fictional space, which contains different, connected universes centring heroes or team-ups.

material, include a statement of being set years before or after the original events, which can be achieved through written text, a narrator, dialogue, or visual storytelling such as pictures. Recurring characters or places then build a deeper connection. In the opening sequence of *The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey* (2012), which is set approximately 60 years before the events of the Lord of the Rings trilogy, the connections between both movies are established on different levels. The film starts with the appearance of Bilbo Baggins in Hobbiton who addresses Frodo, the main character from the Lord of the Rings trilogy, in a voice over. Bilbo Baggins in the opening sequence is again played by Ian Holmes (recurring), and then by Martin Freeman during the main film as a younger version. The recurrence of a familiar character and actor in a recurring role, as well as a familiar place here acts as a reminder of the previous trilogy set 60 years later in the timeline but released in cinemas eleven years prior. Bilbo then acts as a narrator who tells the story about the rise and fall of the lonely mountain and the dwarf race, thereby introducing the films´ characters before they enter the actual storyline. This is then followed by the reappearance of Frodo and a direct link to the events at the beginning of *The Fellowship of the Ring* (2001): Frodo is shown to put up a sign outside Bag End which is a visual reference to the previous film, and furthermore mentions that he will go to the woods and wait for Gandalf, which is one of the first scenes of *The Fellowship of the Ring*. The connections between both films are made on different levels within the first few minutes: Recurring characters and places operate as visual connections, while recurring actors also act as a pop-cultural connection outside the fictional world. Furthermore, the narration voice over is also used to locate the events of the new instalment on the timeline 60 years prior. Considering an instalment that is set thousands of years before or after events and stories of a world such as *Star Wars*: *Knights of the Old Republic* would, however, struggle to connect to the original story on levels of character, places, or narration. A larger scale of possible points of connecting stories in an imaginary world is the previously mentioned infrastructure as described by Mark J. P. Wolf.

The first category of said infrastructure is the cartography of fictional worlds in order to visualise them while also serving as additional information that helps to envision the fictional world and the journey that is undertaken by the main characters (Wolf, 2012: 156). Fantasy novels like *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-1955) or *A Song of Ice and Fire* (1996-present) include maps in order to picture said world and journey, as travelling is one of the main tropes used in novels of this type. The maps known from the novels have in both cases been translated into a visual medium when being adapted. The map in the Lord of the Rings films is shown regularly as displayed in the books, something recaptured in the opening title sequence in *Game of Thrones* (HBO, 2011-2019), which is an animated journey across the

map that is also actualised throughout the course of events.[16] Furthermore, maps also display places that do not appear in the story, but create a bigger, more cohesive world, and can also hint at future storylines. At the same time, maps and places in fictional worlds are usually meant to be geographically distinct. This helps audiences to differentiate between and recognise these locations instantly, and to suggest the variation of adventures possible in a story. Tatooine as a desert planet in Star Wars is easily distinguishable from the ice planet Hoth or the jungle planet Dagobah, which means that after its introduction in the original instalment, it can be recognised as Tatooine without the necessity of mentioning its name every time. Furthermore, geographic details of a place are often used as a metaphor, like the wasteland of Mordor in The Lord of the Rings which is the home of the enemy Sauron (Wolf, 2012: 158).

The second aspect of the infrastructure is, as already mentioned, timelines which allow for the positioning and relating of events to one another for a better understanding of character motivations or chronology of events (Wolf, 2012: 165). This is comparable to the third aspect, genealogies, which sets characters in relation to each other using family trees or other devices in order to display relationships on a larger scale. Individual figures are thereby augmented regarding their origin and back-story, while they are also connected to other characters, be it as family, lover, friend or enemy (Wolf, 2012: 170-171). This initiates a new narrative around every character that correlates with the narratives around other characters. These three aspects of Wolf's infrastructure describe connections via time, space, and characters, building a basic structure of the imaginary world.

Further connections, however, are made on the level of construction, such as nature, referring to the physical, chemical and geological materiality of a fictional world (Wolf, 2012: 172), which also includes laws of physics or the possible existence of magic and special life forms such as Hobbits, Elves and Ents in The Lord of the Rings universe. Races and species are described in great detail by Tolkien, who not only considers what they look like, but adds history, origins and culture such as music and poetry to them. This complex and detailed creation of the species that populate the fictional world is one of the central characteristics of Tolkien's universe. The culture as well as architecture, art or rituals are the fifth aspect Wolf describes as central to connecting imaginary worlds as it is inherited by nearly every other aspect of the world (Wolf, 2012: 183). Places such as cities are distinguishable due to culture and architecture described as their trademark. In film and TV this is often mirrored in music and sound design, which give places a certain soundscape in order to characterise them. A special part of culture

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[16] For example, after Winterfell has been burned to the ground, the model in the opening is burnt as well until it is rebuilt in the series.

and a further aspect of infrastructure according to Wolf are languages, which, if they are constructed for the imaginary world, can be a main characteristic of said worlds. While most of the time these made-up languages only consist of a few words, some languages like Elvish and Klingon have developed grammar and rules, and are learned and studied by fans, and sometimes even used to create art such as songs sung in Elvish or music groups named after places from the Lord of the Rings world.

According to Wolf the last two aspects of the infrastructure spread mainly on the level of content: On the one hand, mythologies describe the origin, genesis, and back-stories of a fictional world as well as the mythology of certain characters such as Darth Plagueis who supposedly learned how to cheat death, a myth that is told in *Star Wars Episode III: Revenge of the Sith* (2005). On the other hand, imaginary worlds inherit a clear philosophy that is carried out by the characters and positions itself against tropes like good and evil, religion, or the use and abuse of weapons and power.

These aspects build an infrastructure that can be seen as the base of an imaginary world, meaning that many aspects are continuously present throughout any instalment that is placed in the same fictional world. However, coming back to transmedia universes, structures that are not part of the world, but part of the universe can also be used as a point of connection. The previous example of the connection made between *The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey* and The Lord of the Rings trilogy not only happens inside the fictional world itself. The recurring characters are not only recognisable as familiar because they are named the same, but because they are also played by the same actors, which repeats a distinctive, familiar look. Casting the same actor in two film series for the same role is both, part of the inner structure (character) and the outer structure (actor), as the actor is not part of the fictional world, but rather its representation. Furthermore, the first connection in *The Hobbit* is made before Bilbo is even seen or heard: After the production company logos are displayed on the screen, the words "The Hobbit", the name of the full trilogy (the full name of the first part *An Unexpected Journey* is displayed later on) appear in the same type font that was used for the Lord of the Rings films, while the Hobbit-theme, one of the major musical themes throughout the former trilogy, is played. As such, the first instalment in the prequel trilogy is notably connected to the previous films and the transmedia universe even before a single aspect from the imaginary world and its infrastructure is revealed visually and audibly. With the soundtrack being composed by the same composer, Howard Shore was able to develop his own motifs and themes continuously,[17] whereas in other examples, such as Harry Potter,

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[17] For further deep analysis and discourse of the music within the Lord of the Rings franchise see for example Donnelly (2006) or White (2016).

different composers were involved in shaping the musical identity and feeling of a fictional world. The latter example will be further discussed in the following chapters.

The music here acts as an acoustic signifier, placing the film in a bigger context that can only be detected by those who are already familiar with the previous films. The same use of music as a signifier if not an acoustic logo can be found in most Star Wars instalments, as they usually open in the same manner: The words "A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away….", the visual Star Wars logo with Star Wars theme (acoustic logo), introductory text. The Star Wars theme by now has become so popular, that it is recognised as such even by people who have never seen a single Star Wars film.

This recognisability even without familiarity of the original context clearly shows the importance of music for transmedia universes, as it acts as one of the main connecting instances outside the fictional world. However, not every transmedia universe is as coherent as Lord of the Rings or Star Wars, which use only one composer who constantly develops the music for new instalments. For example, character-based universes like Batman or Sherlock Holmes are often shaped by reboots, new adaptations, and reinterpretations on a regular basis, which usually means that visual styles and in-world-characteristics change. At the same time, the way these styles are supposed to be experienced, including music, also changes. However, both kinds of coherent, "closed" systems and rebooted universes are connected by music in different ways. This can be illustrated by a short analysis of the music in the Star Wars (coherent) and Batman (rebooted) universes.

Musical Coherency as Connection

It is important to note here, that music used in transmedia franchises is predominantly music that is connected to a narrative itself. Even though music, like pictures and dance, 'can have narrativity without being [a] narrative in [a] literal sense' (Ryan, 2004: 9) it influences, and is influenced by, the stories in the universe. However, even so-called "absolute music",[18] inherits narrative elements in a broader sense. Interpreting instrumental music without a connection to a story is a highly cognitive process in which the interpretation and experience depends on the prior knowledge, listening history and emotional state of the listener who adds understanding and personalised meanings to the music in the process of consuming it. This is comparable to how a recipient moves through the network of a transmedia universe, constantly adding more knowledge, understanding and interpretation to single instalments based on the viewer's biography and listening history. The background knowledge of music

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[18] "Absolute music" is a term used to describe symphonic and instrumental pieces which are not inspired by programmatic elements or tropes as programmatic music does (a well-known example for programmatic music is Modest Mussorgskys' *Night on a Bald* Mountain (1867)) but are simply aiming for an instrumental and musical expression. (Seidel,1994: column 16).

is not only shaped by previously consumed music, but also certain composition-patterns, which have been established over the last few centuries: The use of certain tempi, instruments, harmonies, or dissonances are connected to specific connotations, such as small drums with the military, which leads to the listener experiencing different emotional states throughout the time they consume a piece of music. However, these musical stereotypes can be different depending on the cultural background of the listener. For example, the sound of bells may have a different connotation depending on the surrounding culture or circumstances.[19] Thus, music inherits a narrative potential, even if it is not connected to a story. It can '*enact stories*; it can *show* even if it cannot *tell*, it can suggest *plots*, for instance in terms of themes and thematic development [emphasis in original]' (Neubauer, 1997: 119).

In transmedia universes, however, music is mostly connected to a narrative or world, while still using certain stereotypes in order to enhance the narrative of, for example, a film scene. At the same time, these stereotypes can also be built throughout the process of consuming different parts of a transmedia universe. For example, the Hobbit-theme in *The Lord of the Rings* is introduced in the first film and thereby connected to the peaceful life of the Hobbits in the Shire. Throughout the first trilogy, the theme changes and is heard with different instrumentation and harmonies, depending on the situation in which the characters find themselves. This is a traditional way of film music composition that works with musical themes. However, even though the theme adapts to the situation, it also brings the associated peaceful mood to a new scene, or even a new medium in which it is used, for example, a video game. Music in transmedia universes therefore narrates and connects on two levels: It layers different scenes with additional (culturally established) meaning, and furthermore develops its own connotations and associations, which are then transferred into different storyworlds and media while becoming part of the universe.

This can be illustrated particularly well by the music of the Star Wars universe. Star Wars has been created and constructed by mostly George Lucas and LucasFilm/ LucasArts and by Disney since 2013, focusing from the beginning on the construction of a detailed, coherent world in order to attract an audience. This is shown in the design of the world itself by beginning the story with the introductory text, and by designing planets, buildings, vehicles or weapons with an old, dirty and used look in order to give them a visual history (Wolf, 2012: 135-136). Furthermore, the attention of the audience was deliberately focused on the creation of the world itself as opposed to marquee-name actors playing

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[19] Ringing a bell has for example been used as a warning sign for fire or attacks as well as it signifies the beginning of a service at church or a celebration such as a wedding. In Asian cultures on the other hand, bells are often connected to spiritual ceremonies.

key characters, as seen in the use of (then) less popular actors (Wolf, 2012: 136). Additionally, this suggests that the world-idea was central from the very beginning, even though it might also have been influenced by budgetary constraints as well.

The first film *Star Wars* (1977) was prefaced by the novel *Star Wars*: *From the Adventures of Luke Skywalker* (1976), and followed quickly by the *Star Wars Holiday Special* (1978), as well as a plethora of paratextual materials (see above). Since then, the name *Star Wars* turned from the title of a film to the title of a film series, a transmedia universe and even a brand that can be used to sell products even if they are not related to the content of the films. Products such as Star Wars apples, carrots, grapes, and oranges (Kircher, 2015) were all available during the marketing campaign of *Star Wars*: *The Force Awakens* (2015). However, the published novel before the first film, the holiday special, and the 1981 published radio play show that Star Wars was, from the very beginning, planned to be spread across as many media platforms as possible. This of course expanded with the growth of media and ways of spreading content available in the past two decades, which has been discussed in media studies and is frequently part of the discourse of transmedia storytelling (such as Jenkins 2006). While these first instalments were all based roughly on the same story, and even the first video game *Star Wars*: *The Empire Strikes Back* (Parker Brothers 1982) is based on the film of the same name from 1980, the first novel to expand the universe beyond the stories of the films was published in 1978 with *Star Wars*: *Splinter of the Mind's Eye*. Besides novels and holiday specials, making-of documentaries were released in-between-films in order to keep fans interested and to show the creation of the world itself. As such, information given about the world became a part of the Star Wars universe right after the fictional world was introduced with the first film and novel.

Throughout this process an extended universe was built, setting every new story in relation to the first film, earlier or later, on the timeline, having characters appear in a younger or older version or having other related people appear such as Leia's and Han Solo's children in the novels and films set after *Episode VI: Return of the Jedi* (1983). In this process, the different instalments were not developed in a chronological order, which posed as a challenge for creators in all aspects of infrastructure and outer structures. For example, by releasing *Episodes I-III* 16 years after *Episodes IV-VI*, the previously named visuals were not only designed to appear old and used, but also had to be reverse-engineered by showing machinery or weapons which, in a chronological order, would become those seen in the older films. The war machines used by clone troopers as seen in *Episode II* (2002) therefore are clearly recognisable as early versions of the AT-AT machines, which are familiar from the battle on the planet Hoth in *Episode V* (1980). The visual design therefore had to be reverse-engineered to a point in the

fictional time of the fictional world at which, if constantly developed forward from there, they would become what they had already been chronologically.

This detailed and planned development can also be detected in the aural elements of the whole Star Wars universe. In 1977, sound designer Ben Burtt was part of a sound design revolution by not using archive or synthesized sounds for a science fiction film but creating sounds from recordings Whittington, 2007: 25). This principle of a so called 'used future' (Flückiger, 2012: 113) contains known sound structures that have been recorded, mixed and rerecorded to create a new form of film sound. For instance, the sound of the Wookie Chewbacca is a mixture of the sounds of a seal, a badger and a bear (Whittington, 2007: 105). At the same time the sound design is also enriched with narrative potential to support, create, and elaborate the imaginary world. For example, while Darth Vader's lightsaber swings in a minor chord, Ben Kenobi's lightsaber swings in a major chord, causing a dissonance during the fight scene in *Episode IV*, and stressing the good vs. evil trope on a new level of acoustic construction (Whittington, 2007: 109). By creating this new sound design for a science fiction or fantasy world, Burtt's sounds became iconic and are now recognised and referred to in everyday pop-culture.

In the same way Burtt's sounds are a part of the imaginary world itself and a narrative element, John Williams' music also participates in both functions. By introducing imaginary space music with the Mos Eisley Cantina scene in *Episode IV*, Williams created futuristic music that, based on a ragtime structure, still contains familiar musical structures for the audience, and therefore can be easily accepted as part of the fictional world (Mulliken, 2010: 91). Furthermore, Williams' "non diegetic" composition for the Star Wars universe mostly uses musical themes that are connected to characters, topics, emotions or objects and moreover can be described in an evolutionary process during the expansion of the universe. Like sound and visual design, the music was also developed forwards and backward to connect to the timeline and to connect single stories with each other and the universe. Again, only those who are familiar with the previously published instalments can detect all these aspects.

To give a short example: when Anakin Skywalker in *Episode II* tells Padme that he killed the tusken raiders in the camp where his mother has been held prisoner, the motif that is known as *Darth Vader's Theme* can be heard for the first time in the prequel trilogy. This theme is subsequently combined with the theme of young Anakin from *Episode I*, the love theme of Padme and Anakin from *Episode II*, the motif of Anakin's struggle between good and bad, and the marching music when he finally attacks the Jedi temple in *Episode III*. All themes "musically fight" each other until they become the *Imperial March* in *Episode V*. Again, as *Episode V* was released much earlier than the prequels, these motifs have been

reverse-engineered to later become what they already were. At the same time, the *Imperial March* as well as the opening theme and the combat music from *Episode I* have become part of today's pop-culture and can be recognised as standalone excerpts without being contextualised by anything else referring to the Star Wars universe. As the previous description of *The Simpsons* episode and the opening of *Knights of the Old Republic* demonstrated, these themes have become independent and are even known by younger generations who have not lived to experience the first exposition of the world or who have not even seen a single Star Wars film.

It is clear that the Star Wars universe is a complex assemblage that must be seen as not only constructed from the films, but also the whole expanded universe, the discourse of experience, all information given about the universe itself, and fan activities outside the actual storyworlds. Music and sound play a part in two aspects: On the one hand, they are part of the imaginary world. On the other hand, they have a narrative function via musical themes or the overall sound design, and therefore they are integral to how the world is experienced and understood. This makes the acoustic aspects one of the most important points of connection and recognition. A video game or film without Williams' music or Burtt's sounds could be recognised as part of the universe by tropes or the infrastructure of the world but would be missing central aesthetic characteristics. Both define a musical and acoustic identity of the whole universe as well as the Star Wars brand. And while recent instalments such as *Rogue One* or *The Mandalorian* had music composed by different composers and in different styles, they still make use of a Williams-esque composition as a trademark. Chapter 2 and particularly Chapter 4 will offer a deeper analysis of composer style and brand identity and its usage to create familiar soundscapes.

It is important that the Star Wars universe has not been constructed chronologically, so that every time a new part is described, sounds, music, timelines, stories, characters, and visuals have to be adapted to the new segment and therefore have to be developed forwards or backward. As such, the Star Wars universe needs to be seen as more of a process than a finished construct. Its borders have been expanded even more after Disney annulled the canonicity of the previously expanded universe in order to create a new timeline set after *Episode VI*, while still relying on the well-known visual, musical, and audio design.

Musical Diversity as Tool of Comparison

While all aspects of the Star Wars universe seem to be subject to precise and controlled intent, therefore giving music and sound the roles of a creation of meaning, narrative functions, aesthetic characteristic and a central point of connection, the Batman universe seems to be far less consistent.

After eight decades worth of expansion (Batman was first introduced in 1939), the Batman universe has experienced various adaptations, new interpretations, and reboots. These include independent comic book series, graphic novels, films and TV-shows, video games and merchandise products, turning Batman into a brand that seems to be omnipresent in today's pop-culture. The universe itself is centred around the billionaire Bruce Wayne fighting crime at night as Batman in the fictional city of Gotham.

Considering the high number and variety in adaptations of this basic structure, Batman himself seems to be the only point where the different worlds of this universe connect. While his origin, if told, stays roughly the same with his parents being murdered and the young hero being trained by a secret assassin organisation to return to Gotham as a vigilante, the origin of his companions or villains are often revised in adaptations. For example, the name Robin is an alias for five different characters in the main DC Comic's multiverse, and further variations in parallel worlds or what-if-scenarios. Likewise, Batman's home Gotham moves around North America, depending on the needs of the story, and its architecture changes. In the same manner, music and sound characterise Gotham, Batman, and the fictional world they belong to in different ways.

Even Batman himself as much as "his world" varies between camp and comical (Adam West TV-series, Joel Schumacher films) to dark, realistic, or violent (Tim Burton, Christopher Nolan, *Arkham* game series). This expands even more in dream scenarios, or parallel world scenarios in the comics which make it possible to introduce more variations of Batman such as 'meeting an English, Argentinean and Sioux version of himself (*The Black Glove*, 2007), losing his mind (*Batman* RIP, 2008) then dying (*Final Crisis*, 2009), to be replaced by his former partner and his newly discovered son (*Batman and Robin*, 2009)' (Brooker, 2012: IX). The last example of Bruce Wayne dying and the identity of Batman being taken over by another person shows that the figure and icon of Batman is the central aspect of this universe that seems to be the only consistent point of connection, while other points include a few characters, places, or items that can but don't have to appear such as Alfred, Gotham, the Batmobile, Robin and also villains such as Catwoman or the Joker.

The practice of reboots, dream sequences, or what-if scenarios allow superhero universes in general to expand beyond one definite timeline or canon, jumping from one scenario to another. This gives the hero/ heroine the chance to respond and adapt to recent changes or conflicts within the real world. Batman and Robin being camp and associated with a homosexual reading is as much a reaction towards homosexual controversies in the 1960s as Nolan's films react to 9/11, presenting a scenario that parallels current developments in which terrorism and counterterrorism are dominant themes (Brooker, 2012: 215).

Outlining the flexibility of Batman and his storyworlds makes it clear that the Batman universe is not comparable to the structures of the Star Wars universe. Batman, and the world he moves in are diverse, which is also reflected in the music and sound design. For example, the music from the series in the 1960s is, in unity with the visuals, goofier and camper than Hans Zimmer's soundtrack for Christopher Nolan's films. However, the different versions of Batman's worlds are constantly actualized and set in relation to each other and the real world where they connect. A "new" Batman is only recognisable as such if he is compared to other/ recent versions before him. If a new adaptation is released, fans automatically look for familiar villain origins and those points in audio, character development, or visual design which are alike or differ from, as well as deemed better, or worse than in other versions they already know. This enhances a dialogue between fans, content creators, and worlds that is based on comparison: Tim Burton's Batman is "darker" than the Batman from the Adam West TV-series, Christopher Nolan's Batman is appreciated for its realism, and the *Arkham* video game series is seen as 'the darkest image of the Bat-world yet' (Brooker, 2012: 127). The sound of Burton's Batmobile has more bass frequencies than Nolan's version, Danny Elfman's music works with themes while Hans Zimmer's soundtrack relies on mood-creating techniques in order to affect the audience. Musical aspects of different iterations of Batman have been engaged with in great detail by scholars such as Halfyard (2004) and Hexel (2016). However, with music being only one aspect of transmediality, a greater discourse of the elements of the composition would divert from the central aspect of the overall connectivity of the different worlds of Batman that are being discussed here. Variety and differences are thereby the connecting aspects as they encourage comparison of these different versions. Therefore, there is not only one fictional world, not only one Batman, he is a combination of many Batmen of many worlds, which are in a continuous dialogue with each other, creators, and fans. The same can be said for nearly any other superhero or character-based universe, typically revolving around one character in different interpretations such as Spider-Man or Sherlock Holmes.

In this chapter I have engaged with an overview of the existing scholarship within transmedia studies in order to introduce the idea of transmedia universes – a term that functions in a more extensive and inclusive sense than the otherwise popular terms of transmedia storytelling and transmedia worldbuilding. Transmedia universes have to be considered networks of experiences that are being actively created as well as consumed. This means elements such as music or visuals that would not necessarily be considered a part of a fictional world need to be considered part of the universe. These elements do provide a frame that allows the consumer of a universe to connect different worlds and galaxies within, as well as new instalments, which I demonstrated on the examples of Star Wars and

Batman. Both examples of Star Wars and Batman have illustrated how music is one aspect that connects transmedia universes in two different ways. Star Wars represents music connecting the transmedia universe through musical coherency by being continuously developed backward and forwards. The music of Batman on the other hand creates a connection by activating creators and fans to engage with each other and previous interpretations. Therewith, the connection happens on a level of discourse rather than the fictional universe itself while remaining transmedia. However, as mentioned before, what, when, and how a universe is consumed not only influences how it is experienced, but also the individual mind-set the consumer has during the experience plays an equally important role. This means that the use of transmedia universes has to be seen as a cognitive process that heavily relies on the individual user experience and interpretation. The reception of music itself is comparable to the one of different kinds of content or "text" that are consumed, interpreted, quoted, and used or re-used. This means that an understanding of transmedia universes as multisensory and as multimedia networks of content spread across platforms can help describe and understand pop-cultural phenomena and can also be adapted to any kind of content spread across platforms, such as music in an understanding of transmusical storytelling. This can even reach as far as political campaigns, the creation of celebrity images, or sport events. In order to make this leap from almost exclusively fictional worlds to a bigger scale of pop-culture, it is necessary to analyse corporate and organisational structures of transmedia universes in the following chapter. I will mainly focus on aspects of franchising, advertising, branding, and the development of cross-platform promotion throughout the 20th century as well as further historical aspects and origins of these practises to describe how creative work and promotion are intertwined in every transmedia process.

Chapter 2 - Transmedia Industries – A Corporate Perspective

Following the theoretical discourse of transmedia universes, it is important to also consider transmediality from a more corporate and historical approach. Only if we examine the origins and historical evolution of cross-referencing and utilising familiar elements in new context, we are able to closely examine their development in the past century, and especially decades. Furthermore, we'll also be able to lay down groundwork to examine future developments. This chapter will therefore take a side-step into the history of and industries behind transmediality by while also considering legal boundaries that influence how transmediality develops. Based on the textual analysis in the previous chapter, it appears that transmedia universes are a pop-cultural phenomenon of the 20th and 21st century, predominantly present in the film, game, and TV industries, generating content across platforms on a daily basis. However, it is incremental to consider the wider context and history in order to understand the most recent developments. Based on the past two decades, at this point, it almost seems to be an obligation to produce an (interactive) website, encyclopaedia, app, video game or tie-in novels attached to a high profile, or even mid-range feature film, TV-series, or video game. These further instalments aim to expand the storyworld by introducing new narratives, activities, and information for consumers to explore. This means mostly additional information and backstories, which do not necessarily have to be consumed in order to be able to understand the original text. Other storyworlds aim towards an experience on multiple channels, sometimes even at the same time. The TV-Series *Da Vinci's Demons* (Starz Inc./ Fox*, 2013-2015) for example was developed with an iPad second screen app, that identified at which point in an episode the consumer was and then simultaneously delivered additional story-relevant information.

Furthermore, I argued that the idea of expanding transmedia universes in terms of cross-platform experiences is neither exclusive to film, TV, or video games, nor to fictional storyworlds. Culture, music, sports, politics, and even everyday activities of representing oneself in social media inherit a form of transmediality, which connects different representations or parts across platforms in order to create a network. Transmedia universes and multiverses, especially since the early 2000s, show how content and experiences are constantly connecting, disconnecting, and reconnecting in pop-culture and everyday life. Trying to conceptualise how pop-culture works across platforms, beyond franchises and legal borders, how it lives on and breaths references, homage, and parody in film, TV, print media, online, social, and articles, or even in a daily conversation, quickly strains the universe or multiverse metaphor as introduced in the previous chapter. In order to understand and describe a network of referencing across pop-culture and its psychological, cultural, and even political effects, it is important to first analyse the borders and boundaries that are being pushed and crossed.

Therefore, the first part of this chapter will focus on a slightly different history of transmedia universes than the previous one by focussing less on aspects of storytelling and world-building related to the content, and more on the act of cross-platform marketing, branding, and franchising as well as adaptation and expansion from a corporate perspective. All these aspects are intertwined, and together represent one of the main, underlying structures that are the network of transmedia universes. To understand how these structures have connected, blurred the boundaries between one another, and become everyday pop-culture, I will introduce a short historical breakdown of how the practices of marketing and branding have changed throughout the 20th century.

According to British media scholar Matthew Freeman (2014), who explores early models and industrial aspects of transmedia storytelling and marketing, the early 20th century marks a central point at which advertising became integral to consumerism. 'Modern advertising was essentially a [...] strikingly visual language, [...] fast permeating the borders of different platforms and media, each blurring into the others' (Freeman, 2014: 2365). Advertising, marketing, and branding quickly took over how different industries operated and which media they used in order to promote and sell products. The breakdown therefore will not only focus on Freeman's analysis of cross-promotion in the Wizard of Oz storyworld but will be extended by the developments of both Hollywood's film industry as a branding industry, as well as the relation between music and marketing. On the last topic, I will be leaning on the work of Timothy Taylor (2012). Coming back to a more content oriented approach towards transmedia universes and intertwining this with cross-promotion, I will then discuss adapting material as an essential part of building and marketing transmedia universes.

Discussing early forms of transmedia world-building and its development through the 20th century in relation to advertising and branding quickly points towards the rise of the media franchise securing copyright and intellectual property to protect fictional worlds. The second part of this chapter "Beyond the Franchise" will therefore describe the concept and use of franchising related to fictional worlds as analysed by Derek Johnson (2013) and Henry Jenkins (2011). Legal regulations and contracts within the practice of franchising are dependent on copyright law, which arises both benefits and disadvantages, which will be discussed with an emphasis on bottom-up multiverses and music. Concluding the chapter, a short case study of the musical brand identity in the Harry Potter universe will discuss complications of copyright as well as shaping a musical identity in relation to individual composer style across different film instalments while relying on familiar motifs and themes. Furthermore, I will argue that it is necessary to consider transmedia universes beyond not only fictional

worlds, but also beyond franchises, legal boundaries, and the content that is connected to the original source material. Transmedia universes create, process, and connect pop-culture.

The History of Transmedia Universes I: Branding in Entertainment Industries

As mentioned, the idea of transmedia universes as multi-channel experiences cannot be considered the same as the idea of transmedia storytelling as Henry Jenkins described it in 2006. In *Convergence Culture* Jenkins names *The Blair Witch Project* and *The Matrix* as two of the first examples of transmedia storytelling, which, at the turn of the 21st century, exemplified his definition: 'stories that unfold across multiple platforms, with each medium making distinctive contributions to our understanding of the storyworld' (Jenkins, 2006: 334). Out of these two, *The Matrix* is a clear example of transmedia storytelling, as audiences who read the comic books and played the online game had much more context and information of the fictional world when consuming the following film instalment. This concept or definition, however, would exclude franchises like Star Wars, Lord of the Rings, Game of Thrones, and many others that are labelled transmedia and used as examples in academia and industry alike. As described in Chapter 1, transmedia universes are not only about the storytelling and the narrative itself but include the act of world-building around it. This would then locate the origins of transmedia universes somewhere at the beginning of the 20th century, illustrated by examples like *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900) by L. Frank Baum. The cross-platform promotion Baum used to expand his novel into a variety of follow-up novels, comic strips, Broadway, and theatre productions, as well as films, marks an important step in the origin of transmedia world-building.

In the late 19th and early 20th century, the social and cultural landscape of the United States transformed 'into an urban-manufacturing economy of industrialized production' (Freeman, 2014: 2364), which had a significant influence on the behaviour of consumers, laying the necessary foundations for transmedia universes to flourish. This was particularly noticeable in advertising with expenditures rising from $50 million after the civil war 1861-1865 to over $500 million by the end of the 19th century (Mizruchi, 2008: 138). The economy boomed alongside a fast technological development that meant new and exciting ways of entertainment. This influenced mainly the production and consumption of culture, 'leading to a transition from an economics of industrial production to an economics of industrialised consumption' (Lacey, 2001: 21). The rules and ways of advertising were expanded, and increased consumerism demanded a more versatile range of products, which together transformed consumption and advertisement into entertainment. The leisure of reading is described by Freeman (2014) as becoming synonymous with the leisure of shopping by directing readers from newspapers into stores, while remaining highly aware of their own commercial

prospects (Freeman, 2014: 2364). This shift meant not only a change in advertising that used a visual language in order to activate readers to consume. But also, it represents a higher self-awareness of consumers about the beginnings of convergences between media, impressions, and their agency in order to participate by deciding which part to consume. This shift can be seen as a kind of trailblazer or precursor for the previously described user agency in transmedia universes, which allows the consumer and user to create an individual path through a transmedia universe by choosing which instalments they want to consume and the order in which these are experienced.

The Marvelous Land of Cross-Platform Promotion

L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900) is used by Freeman (2014) and Mark J. P. Wolf (2012) to describe one of the first fictional worlds that were developed across media platforms. Before publishing his first novel, Baum created content as a promoter, playwright, newspaper publisher, and developer for window dressing, which in itself shows a convergence of written and visual media as well as advertising and promoting content in order to reach consumers. This convergence was demonstrated by his 'illusion window' (Freeman, 2014: 2367), a style of shop window dressing that aimed to transform the window into a stage, and shoppers into an audience. The same kind of convergent media promotion was then later used to advertise the many sequels of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, to create a coherent fictional world across platforms. The advertisements for the second novel *The Marvelous Land of Oz* (1904) heavily relied on a total of 26 newspaper comic strips in which fictional characters were further explored and developed, filling gaps between both stories, and thereby developing the fictional world itself. This 'commercial exploitation of content as promotion' (Freeman, 2014: 2369) served two purposes at once: On the one hand it created content, narrative, and art by filling and exploring the gaps of one medium (novel) with the stories of another (comic strips). It expanded the fictional world itself, added visual material to written material, which was then further explored and expanded through the production of stage shows, musicals, films, and spin-offs. On the other hand, it worked as a tool for commerce with every medium used to present one part of the storyworld immediately advertising and promoting the other existing and yet to be published instalments.

Shifting the focus from a fictional world such as Oz towards entertainment industries, which produced and distributed Baum's creations, implies that these industries work with the same principles and strategies. The Hollywood sign, which was installed as an advertisement in the 1920s and quickly developed into a logo for the industry until it was declared a national landmark in the 1970s (Grainge, 2008: 4), is but one example of the film industries' means of promotion besides company trademarks

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and most of all star names. With the described booming economy and the development from advertising to entertainment, the emerging branding and promotion techniques aimed to differentiate products with an expanding consumer marketplace, which was then adapted and moulded by the film industry. The development of cross-promotion, marketing and branding therefore simultaneously developed not only in a content-driven, but also corporate way, always building a link between content, medium, consumer, and brand.

This relationship between expanding content and promoting it at the same time in a transmedia universe is central to understanding how transmedia universes work with both fictional worlds, and in other industries. Fictional transmedia worlds spread and are consumed via cross-promotion and the process of added different but related experiences. However, this network structure can also be transferred to, and historically detected in not only Hollywood, but also in the music industries. The development of consumption and advertisement into entertainment and the use of cross-promotion as both a tool of advertising, and also for content distribution, was neither limited to the means of world-building, nor visual or print media. As one of the prevailing media, radio as an audio medium was a source for a different form of advertising for which the rules of advertisement as entertainment had to be adapted accordingly. In those early days advertisers usually sponsored entire programs on the radio, which made the choice of music crucial in order to attract the desired audience. The advertising industry was hence 'desperate to discover what Americans wanted to hear, while at the same time offering them what advertisers thought was best suited to sell goods' (Taylor, 2012: 6). Music genre and style were therefore picked, not only to be liked by the audience, but were intended to create a "personality" for a brand such as snappy banjo music for the Clicquot Club Ginger Ale in the 1920s (Taylor, 2012: 6). This process can be seen as an interrelation in which the likes of consumers and the music used and associated with a brand or product can influence each other. Even more important, a musical brand identity was developed, which also related to visual representation and branding. This relationship between audio and visual developed further, which lead to the inception of jingles such as the *Chiquita Banana* song in 1944 (Taylor, 2012: 7).

With the rise of television as an audio-visual medium, music in advertising became more psychologically oriented: 'By the late 1970s, employing music to attempt to manipulate consumers´ emotions in complex ways was a commonplace, having become the norm in the realm of all commercial music to the extent that extremely subtle gradations of mood are common in discussions of commercial music today' (Taylor, 2012: 7). At the same time, with the popularities of jingles, the boundaries between advertising music and music used for entertainment were crossed and blurred,

which allowed for example the Coca Cola song *I'd Like to Teach the World to Sing* by the pop group The Hillside Singers (Metromedia, 1971) to become a popular hit in the charts. These lines blurred even more with the introduction of Musical Television (MTV) in the 1980s (Taylor, 2012: 8), leading to the making of further indistinctions between boundaries or even disappearance of such boundaries altogether. Commercial pop stars are not limited in their work to only produce music for studio albums, but also films, TV, or games. Furthermore, music stars often utilize a multitude of platforms to both promote themselves and augment their creative expression. An example would be the appearance of Ed Sheeran in *Game of Thrones* S07E01 *Dragonstone* (HBO, 2017), or Marilyn Manson who not only provided the title music for *Salem* (WGN America, 2014-2017), but also starred as a recurring character in season 3. The latter example demonstrates how cross-promotion between the TV and music industries can work. While the TV-series promoted Manson's music, at the same time his concurrently released 2014 album *The Pale Emperor* featured the track *Cupid Carries a Gun* which was used in the title sequence and made familiar to consumers of the TV series. In turn, Manson himself, via his music, promoted the series to fans of the star and his music.

The act of cross-promotion can hence be analysed and detected beyond the borders of fictional worlds, through for example the cross-marketing of an album launch by a real pop personality – albeit a highly stylised one in the case of Manson. The first single is promoted via interviews, reviews, and maybe even previews before it is published, while the single then promotes the album. Album, single, and remixes promote the live tour, which then also includes older hits, leading to a retrospective promotion of older albums. The audience can choose how and when they experience the same piece of music in different contexts: as a standalone single on the radio, as a song as part of the overall composed arch of the album, as part of a playlist, the radio edit, or a remix version. Or, they can consume audio-visual material such as the music video, or a live performance/ recorded live performance, and so on. All instalments in this array of offerings, like those in the example of Oz, represent an individual part of the whole transmedia universe whilst simultaneously promoting one another.

This means that, while the idea of transmedia universes may originate from fictional worlds and has been developed over the course of more than a hundred years, it has a further dimension that goes beyond fictional worlds. Exploring the origins of transmedia world-building in connection to cross-promotion and from a more historically corporate point of view, has shown that many different aspects of corporate, industrial, creative, and aesthetic operations as well as interactivity come together in what I describe as a transmedia universe. However, returning to my earlier argument that transmedia universes constitute a network or process of experiences across platforms raises the question: Can the

change and rise in cross-media promotion in the early 20th century be seen as the conception of transmedia world-building as we understand it today?

The History of Transmedia Universes II: Multi-Channel Adaptation as Expansion

Coming back to a more content related approach of understanding transmedia universes, I argue that they do not only consist of cross-promoting stories and instalments that fill gaps in-between each other. Many transmedia universes, including comic book universes like DC and Marvel and especially the film and TV landscape, are partly characterised by the adaptation of existing material. *The Lord of the Rings* (2001-2003/ and later *The Hobbit* film series 2012-2014) and *Harry Potter* (2001-2011) are some of the most successful film franchises based on a series of novels in the first decade of the 21st century. They were followed by a large number of film franchises built around the adaptation of novels such as *The Hunger Games* (2012-2015), *The Twilight Saga* (2008-2012), *The Chronicles of Narnia* (2005-present), *Maze Runner* (2014-2018) or *His Dark Materials* (BBC One/ HBO 2019-present) to name only a few. In television, shows like *Game of Thrones* (HBO, 2011-2019) have developed an enormous fan base, and thereby revived popularity of the source material and spawned comprehensive franchises with cross-promotional tools and transmedia expansions such as video games, merchandise, fashion, hair trends, and so forth.

All examples named above show a trend at the beginning of the 21st century to adapt (young adult) fantasy novels to either film or TV, and sometimes video games such as *The Witcher* series (video games: Atari/ CD Projekt 2007-2018, TV: Netflix 2019-present). However, adapting novels and other material to film, TV or into another medium is not a phenomenon of the 21st century. Since the inception of the Academy Awards in 1929, the "Oscars" have awarded screenwriters for "Best Adapted Screenplay", which illustrates how common the practice of adapting source material from one medium into another is in the film industry. However, this practice goes way beyond the film industry. Jacopo Corsi's *Dafne* (1597), which is considered to be the first opera ever composed, was based on Greek mythology and the story of how the god Apollo falls in love with a Nymphe called Dafne. The use of Greek mythology in theatre is a dominant trope that spans the past 400 years of the developing Western culture and entertainment industries. Many of the most popular operas as well as plays or ballets are based on novels and texts such as Richard Wagner's *Der Ring des Niebelungen* (1869-1876) or Pyotr Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake* (1876). Moreover, paintings, poems, and novels have all regularly been adapted into music (Modest Mussorgsky: *Pictures at an Exhibition*; Robert Schumann: *Liederkreis Op 39*; Richard Strauss: *Also Sprach Zarathustra*), and plays themselves again have relied on old

mythology or urban legends and stories. For example, Sophocles' *Electra* has been actualised or re-imagined as a play alone numerous times as well in literature, opera, films, and comic books.

But why is adapting pre-existing material into a different medium such a common tactic? While Aristotle argues that "Art imitates life", and Oscar Wilde counter-argues that "Life imitates Art", it is also a common idiom that "art imitates art". The process of adaptation does not only mean that one artist is inspired by another artist's work and uses this inspiration to create something new while reimagining and reinterpreting the old. Furthermore, adaptation not only creates a new audience, but also brings an existing audience with it. Consumers interested in Greek mythology, a particular poet, playwright, painter, or composer are likely to want to experience an adaptation of the work they are so familiar with. While adaptation can help to increase the likelihood of financial success and audience interest, adapting material has a third dimension to it that directly influences how an instalment is received and understood.

Adaptation Gateways

I have previously discussed the use of the terminology of intertextuality, paratexts, and hypertexts as they are commonly used within transmedia research. Additionally, I have pointed out that transmediality builds on, amongst other things, remediation on a technological perspective, and adaptation on the level of content creation. Adaptation in particular is a term that can be used in slight variations of meaning, depending on the context. Looking ahead to the second part of this thesis that will discuss referentiality and repurposing of material across transmedia universes, it is important to take a sidestep here into the world of adaptation. Many pop-culture instalments do rely on the adaptation of a novel or game into an audio-visual medium. However, similar to transmedia storytelling, the historical roots of adaptation go deeper, especially when considering music.

Cara Marisa Deleon described in 2010 how familiar sounds and musical structures allow the viewer easier understanding and access to strange and unfamiliar (science fiction) worlds. 'It [the music] allows for the viewer to be in a state of familiarity and open to new elements within such strange worlds' (Deleon, 2010: 14). While Deleon focuses on science fiction narratives that use familiar music to create a more accessible scenario, such as the Ragtime-based Cantina Music in *Star Wars Episode IV*, this requirement for familiarity can be detected with adaptations in general as well as in the basics of storytelling.

Familiar structures and concepts, be it a storyline, character, parts of a fictional word, a melody, or even a belief system, allow the audience to connect with newly presented content, even if this content

itself is abstract, unfamiliar, and otherwise not easily accessible. Fantasy and science fiction worlds are deliberately constructed not to be like the "real world", and this allows for magic, space travel, different physics, and therefore, creating fantastic stories. But at the same time, the storytelling/ world shifts can alienate an audience, as they might not be able to relate to, or connect with the story and its characters. The same can happen if a new medium, a new way of how content can be experienced, is introduced. More recently this has been Virtual Reality, Augmented Reality and 360° video, which have not been as successful as expected or hoped for. This can be explained by the fact that high quality equipment in order to experience the best of VR is still very costly, and that there is a limited amount of content available to consume in VR. On the other hand, the act of consuming VR itself is, at least for most people, is still not familiar, or at least not as familiar as going to the cinema, watching television, or playing video games. Given that opera was at one time a new medium, a new way of experiencing content, it is imaginable that relying on familiar characters and story structures has made, and does make, access to a new medium and a new way of experiencing content easier.

I have illustrated that adapting material from one medium into another is not only a process that can be detected through the history of western (pop-)culture, but comes with the advantages of an existing audience, and increases chances of financial success, and familiarity that helps viewers access a new world or even a new medium. However – keeping ideas of transmedia storytelling and world building in mind – one could argue that an adaptation is not the same as expanding a fictional world with a new instalment, which introduces new and unknown information. In a narrow sense, then, the requirement for further development and elaboration of a fictional world in order to be considered transmedia world-building means that adaptations of a novel, comic book, video game, or any other source material would not necessarily count as transmedia world-building. As such, I would have to exclude all examples based on other source material from this thesis, including Lord of the Rings, Harry Potter, Game of Thrones, and Batman.

An adaptation, however, usually not only involves the process of transferring or copying a story, word-for-word, or panel-for-panel into another medium. Rather, characters, stories, and worlds are reinterpreted/ reimagined while nuances are added, or sub-storylines and characters are removed. The source material can be actualised or varied so that, while staying familiar, it becomes more relatable and maybe even socially, culturally, or politically relevant. Is it often the case that long running franchises or characters such as Batman undergo a regular change reflecting contemporaneous politics or (then) current affairs with every new adaptation of the source material into a new medium: The camp comedy of the 1960s TV-series was as much a reaction towards

homosexual controversies, as Christopher Nolan's realistic approach in the early 2000s is seen as related to the 9/11 terrorist attacks (Brooker, 2012: 215). Furthermore, the transfer of a story into a new medium also comes with the requirement of having to shape the material in terms of content and structure. A story is also often told differently, depending on medium specificities, such as storytelling modes and narrative potential. Fans of a novel are often disappointed if the film adaptation leaves out certain events, changes characters, or morphs others into one, never mind changes in the narrative of how the story is told. While interference with narratives is sometimes a decision led by calculations of broadening the target audience, it is also a requirement of transferring a story from, for example, a textual to an audio-visual medium.

Considering an adaptation as a process of reimagining and reinterpreting a story or material from the arts and entertainment industry, makes it an expansion; a new way how this particular content can be experienced, in a new medium. This is not limited to film adaptations of fantasy novels. In 1874 Modest Mussorgsky composed *Pictures at an Exhibition*, a musical illustration of individual paintings by Viktor Hartmann. As a so-called programmatic composition, which intends to musically tell a story, describe an event or "musicalise" an experience, Mussorgsky introduced a new way of experiencing those pictures, their content, and his interpretations of them. The music reflects his impression of the painting content through his musical depiction of landmarks (movement No. 10 'The Bogatyr Gates'), animals (movement No. 5 'Ballet of the Unhatched Chicks'), or urban legends (movement No. 9 'The Hut on Hen's Legs'). The last example represents even further steps of a transition and adaptation of the legend of Baba-Yaga from an urban mouth-to-mouth bedtime story, to visual painting, to a musical interpretation of both the painting, and the legend. Nicoletta Iacobacci characterised such content in cross-media environments as:

> repurposed, diversified and spread across multiple devices to enhance, engage and reach as many viewers as possible. [...] It is generally the same [content] re-edited for different screens, fragmented content disseminated on different platforms, possibly incorporating extra content and channels to extend the viewers' experience (Iacobacci, 2008).

The adaptation and reinterpretation of Hartmann's paintings hence repurposes and diversifies the content and aesthetics, adding new layers of experience, and even understanding to them. This means that, while the industrialisation and the use of different platforms in order to cross-promote fictional worlds has its origins rooted in the early 20th century, the aesthetic component of reinterpreting material and opening it up to new ways of understanding and experiencing is a practice that is as old as art and entertainment themselves.

To return our attention to contemporary transmedia world-building, it is noticeable that most fictional worlds are connected to a franchise that holds the legal rights to expand those worlds, create new instalments, or negate the importance of old ones. These corporate aspects, which are also connected to legal contracts such as rights of comic book characters belonging to different franchises or conglomerates, as well as user-generated content being taken down from online platforms such as YouTube because they violate copyright, need at least a short analysis.

Beyond the Franchise

Media Franchises

Before we can explore the transmediality of music across media, aka transmusical storytelling, and subsequent pop cultural phenomena and affects, it is important to spend some time with the idea of media franchising and the resulting effects. It is necessary to consider the effect legal boundaries have on how content is spread in the first place. So, what exactly is a (media) franchise? It appears that the term franchise is, at least outside legal and business expert communities, often used in the same way as "immersion" is used by both academics and journalists: Everyone knows what the word means, but most would likely fail to formulate a distinct definition, which means that particular nuances and details of how it is understood can vary dramatically. The Cambridge Dictionary defines "franchise" as 'a right to sell a company's products in a particular area using the company's name' (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d., *franchise*). This basic definition needs to be elaborated using a more corporate focussed terminology, which describes a franchise as an:

> Arrangement where one party (the franchiser) grants another party (the franchisee) the right to use its trademark or trade-name as well as certain business systems and processes, to produce and market a good or service according to certain specifications. The franchisee usually pays a one-time franchise fee plus a percentage of sales revenue as royalty, and gains (1) immediate name recognition, (2) tried and tested products, (3) standard building design and décor, (4) detailed techniques in running and promoting the business, (5) training of employees, and (6) ongoing help in promoting and upgrading of the products (Business Dictionary, n.d., *franchising*).

A franchise therefore is not exactly an institution or entity, but rather a process of ongoing selling and buying rights to use content, products, and trademarks in order to gain consumers, and effectively sell a greater volume and variety of products. From a corporate perspective, this is not unlike the idea of transmedia world-building in which a conglomerate spreads content and cross-promotes in order to reach a large number of consumers. A difference to note here is that within transmedia storytelling different parties – including viewers, fans, consumers-turned-producers – can claim agency as opposed to a simple transactional understanding in the corporate context. However, most scholars researching

transmedia worlds use the term "media franchise", which implies that media franchising as a process differs from other forms of franchising. Derek Johnson (2013) has written a detailed analysis of media franchising with the particular goal of not focusing on corporate aspects in terms of licensing rights, contracts and copyright. Rather, his aim is to develop 'a more complex picture of franchised cultural production that challenges assumptions about self-replication to more effectively account for human agency and social meaning within the industrial institutions that produce culture' (Johnson, 2013: 2). He describes the changes the process of franchising has gone through in the past 30 years. Prior to the 1980s franchising was more concerned with the right to vote and exercise agency as a representative of an institution, or a retail operation such as McDonald's in which 'independent operators in local markets paid a license fee for the right to conduct [...] business under a shared corporate trademark' (Johnson, 2013: 2).

Considering that franchising describes the process of selling the right to use and sell products as long as they are connected to the brand itself, as far as media industries were concerned, the first half of the 20th century was already characterised by character-based franchises such as Felix the Cat, Tarzan, Sherlock Holmes, Batman, Superman or any comic book hero from Marvel and DC as well as Oz as one of the few world-based franchises (Wolf, 2012: 134). These character-based franchises developed via a so-called bottom-up strategy, selling the rights to create a story of a character such as Batman to writers and creators. Wolf (2012) sees the origins of modern media franchising in the inception of Star Wars, which, under the stewardship of George Lucas and LucasFilm/ LucasArts demonstrated that merchandise could be more financially lucrative than box office sales (Wolf, 2012: 136). This not only marked a shift from character-based franchises to world-based franchises, which offer more space to develop a variety of stories and products because they are not bound to the "lifespan" of one character, which has to be exceeded by dream and what-if scenarios or reboots. Furthermore, it also meant the expansion of franchising towards explaining 'the multiplied replication of culture from intellectual property resources' (Johnson, 2013: 6), namely creating cultural entertainment products such as games, spin-offs, novels, merchandise, and so forth from an original intellectual property such as Star Wars.

The shift of focus from purely industrial franchising towards a content driven motivation, which of course was still inspired by sales, meant a rearrangement of the dominating industries. While previously in the 1970s every entertainment medium and industry had its dominating companies (TV: ABC, NBC, CBS/ Film: Warner Bros., Paramount, 20th Century Fox, Universal, Columbia/ Comics: Marvel, DC) (Johnson, 2013: 4), the expansions in the 1980s and 1990s, and even more at the beginning of the

21st century, meant an involvement of one company on multiple channels. 'Between the 1960s and the 1990s Hollywood's importance as a locus of film manufacturing declined, linked to what she [Aida Hozic] calls the "hollowing out" of studios as production centres and the transferral of power to those in corporate hierarchies with responsibility for distribution, financing, and marketing' (Grainge, 2008: 6). Most media empires now make their main profits through the control of royalties, licensing fees, and the rights to brands and characters. For example, in the past years since 2008, Marvel has expanded its influence on multiple platforms with the creation of the MCU, which, while basing stories on the comic books, also includes films, and TV-series produced by Disney+, Netflix, and ABC under its operations. Marvel and MCU related products have furthermore gained a dominant status in the sales of toys and other merchandise, or even other entertainment products such as Avengers LEGO games.

With the rise of the internet and later the World Wide Web at the end of the 20th century and a rapidly increasing number of new platforms online such as social media, video platforms, online streaming, and entertainment systems, the number of platforms and channels that can be used to produce and spread content increased significantly. However, while the number of markets and opportunities to spread content and products grew, the total audience per content niche declined due to higher variety of content in total (Grainge, 2008: 5). Markets shrank quantitatively while the qualitative relationship between audience and media changed. Using social media, fans and audiences could more easily communicate with each other and the content providers of their beloved franchises. This enabled and encouraged participatory responses to popular media (Johnson, 2007: 5).

This shift towards more content and products across multiple channels and closer relationships between content providers and consumers changed the functions of media franchises to value content even more. More rights to characters, products, and parts of large transmedia worlds had to be sold, or more writers and creators had to be hired and contracted in order to meet the higher demands of products. This meant an increase of shared use of cultural resources in industrial contexts, which 'exceed the precise prescriptions of intellectual property law and ownership', meaning that 'we can start theorizing franchising beyond the business terms of contracts to look to the cultural realms of discourse, affect and creativity" (Johnson, 2007: 8).

However, Jenkins has stated a difference between corporate franchising and branding as 'one thing you can do with transmedia' (Jenkins, 2011) and transmedia storytelling and world-building. He notes that franchising is, due to its nature of being based on licensing arrangements, limited in its chances to expand much beyond the primary text on which the franchise is built. Transmedia storytelling on the other hand is built on co-creation and collaboration. This again hints towards a necessity of

analysing and understanding transmedia world-building, and therefore universes beyond the legal boundaries of media franchises. These limitations of media franchises can furthermore be illustrated with two major issues that regularly occur.

The first limitation is the struggle of maintaining a coherent fictional world after rights to parts of said world have been sold. In the 1990s, when Marvel was still exclusively producing comic books and graphic novels, they sold film rights to a number of their characters to 20th Century Fox and Sony, including the X-Men (and any mutant related content), The Fantastic Four, Kang the Conqueror, Spider-Man, and Deadpool. This prohibited Spider-Man to appear in the MCU until the deal Marvel made with Sony in 2015, as described in the previous chapter. Moreover, Marvel and the MCU, which operate under the umbrella of Disney now, had to find a loophole in order to use the characters Quicksilver and Scarlet Witch in 2015's *Avengers: Age of Ultron* and subsequent films and series. According to the comic book origins both are children of Magneto, a mutant and hence property of 20th Century Fox at the time. By changing their backstory, however, so that they were the result of science experiments and not mutants, both characters could appear in *Age of Ultron*. However, this film was released a year after *X-Men: Days of Future Past* (2014), a 20th Century Fox X-Men production which featured another, mutant-origin, Quicksilver, who was cast with a different actor. When Disney acquired 20th Century Fox in 2019, the rights to all previously sold characters were regained by Marvel under the Disney umbrella, which has subsequently led to fan anticipation and speculations as to when the first mutants or other characters will appear within the MCU. Furthermore, the Disney+ series *WandaVision* (2021) featured a cameo by Evan Peters as a fake-Quicksilver, who previously portrayed Quicksilver in Fox property X-Men instalments.

In terms of transmedia storytelling, franchising can on the one hand be seen as a huge disruption to creating a coherent world: different versions of the same character and different storyworlds, which originate in the same fictional universe (Marvel comic books) can contradict each other. Considering that transmedia universes offer a chance to experience content in different ways and media, however, this imbalance simply means that different variations, re-imaginations, and interpretations of the same character and source material are allowed in new spaces.

Copyright vs. User-Generated Content and Music

The second limitation and reason why simply talking about media franchises are not sufficient to analyse the effects and processes of transmedia universes arises with online media and chances for users to spread fan-made content and communicate with each other on social networks and platforms like YouTube, reddit, tumblr, TikTok and so on. While storyworlds across media work through each

medium filling gaps others create. They also create more questions that arise within the audience. At the same time, fantastic worlds and content spread across platforms inspire creativity and trigger the production of new content, often based on already existing material. This includes fan-produced products like reaction videos, fake trailers, mash-up videos, written fan fiction, visual artwork, and fan playlists/ original soundtracks. It furthermore includes the practice of referring to other pop-cultural instalments in means of homage, parody, or pastiche, i.e., elements that exist "outside" the franchise and maybe even outside the fictional world itself. While the second characterisation is not obligatory, it is important to note that the use of characters, stories, and content has probably been done without a licensing agreement. This can lead to a violation of copyright law, which can be seen as an everyday phenomenon, considering the large amount of YouTube videos that are taken down daily for infringement of copyright by using material taken from films/ TV, music, visuals or text. Copyright law in line with the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) protects the expression (not the idea) of any "qualifying work" such as literature, music, film, software programs, and paintings (RightsDirect, n.d., *International Copyright Basics)*.

At the same time, copyright is not all-encompassing in its power. Certain exclusions in regard to "fair use", such as non-commercial research and private study, quotation (on condition), news reporting, parody, and education are in place. However, the number of conditions that come with exceptions are high, and the lines are blurred between what is protected by copyright and what is considered "original enough" new content, or how much copying is allowed under the remit of parody. And while transmedia world-building is supposed to engage the audience, and to inspire them to participate and choose how they experience the world (which in itself can be seen as an act of creativity), limiting the creativity and labour for which fans are willing to create user-generated content by enforcing copyright increases the chance of alienating those same fans. The following Chapter 3 will include a further, more detailed analysis of the relationship between copyright law and user-generated content as well as means of quotation, parody, or pastiche.

Though copyright law might appear to be easily applied when it comes to storyworlds, characters, names, items, visuals, and so forth, the already-blurred lines between what constitutes a copy and what constitutes original/ inspired content become even more unclear when it comes to music. While it would be a violation of copyright law if I filmed myself driving a car, playing the entire track of Black Sabbath's *Supernaut* (Vertigo, 1970) and uploading this clip to YouTube, other shorter or reinterpreted presentations of music cannot be easily identified as congruent with the original, entire copyrighted unit. A musical motif, for example, is defined as a 'small but recognizable musical unit. The motif might

consist merely of a series of pitches or distinctive rhythm, or it might be harmonically conceived' (Encyclopedia.com, n.d., *Motif in Music*). This means that any sequence of tones or sounds, be it rhythmic or harmonic, can be called a motif, as long as it is recognisable. While this seems almost understandable and executable in terms of copyright, the issues of distinguishing copied music from original music or one that is inspired by another composition lays within the conceptualisation of music as a 'work' itself.

The first question that arises, and that still is not explicitly answered amongst musicologists and scholars, is: what exactly is "the musical piece"? Music is not necessarily finished nor fixed the moment the notes that form the score are transcribed or printed on paper. The notation is intended to be read, interpreted, and performed by a musician. The performance is intended to be received, understood, and interpreted again by a consumer – a member of a listening audience or otherwise. Music thereby is hardly something to be called a piece; it is a process that relies on constant interpretation and reinterpretation, performance, reception – and eventual making and remaking of memories. Amongst the multitude of ethnomusicology and new musicology scholars who have discussed the performativity of music beyond the score (also considering music that is not notated), and also its wider socio-political and contextual dimensions, are Christopher Small (1998) and Nicholas Cook (2013). While this thesis does not have the scope to explore the nature of music in detail, it is important to note for my argument that music cannot only be considered based on a written score or even a recorded artefact or a single event of performance, but rather by continuing and evolving acts of reperformance. While copyright protects different aspects of music, the written score, and a distinctive recorded performance (or extracts and versions of) are separate entities. Re-using music in a new context could as well be called a reinterpretation, a new performance of the piece and therefore what it is intended to do. Similar to film, television, literature, or any expression of creativity that at first glance appear to have a "final" or "fixed" version, music is intended to be performed, consumed, and reacted to, blurring the lines of copyright to enforce.

While this discussion of the aesthetics and practice of music interpretation, musical performance, and musical liveness is an interesting and important one, it is beyond the scope of this thesis. Likewise, the longer pieces of literature that have dealt with subjective and intersubjective/ contextual framings of music in politico-cultural contexts (e.g., Harrison, 2016; Nettl, 2010; Post, 2013, to name but a few) are best covered or critiqued in a separate endeavour. However, it is important to bear in mind, as even a cursory overview of the legal complexities of music copyright raises more questions than it answers. As music, and any creative expression in general, is a process of interpretation, reception, and

reinterpretation, it becomes something different for each individual. Music as a creative expression is perceived in different ways, depending on circumstances and the listening histories of the audience. Furthermore, music can play with and on familiar sounds and sound structures in order to remind the audience of something without necessarily actively identifying a/the source, which will be explored in Chapter 4. As much as certain sounds are connected to a certain meaning (depending on the surrounding culture), for example small drums to the military or bells to a church, certain structures in music can do the same. Some of these are known as musical clichés (which I will later rather explore as musical memes), as can be seen for example in the use of drums to signify the military, or the historical use of the Dorian mode to evoke "sad" emotions, both examples of which are also driven from an Anglo-American interpretation already. Musical clichés or memes, via patterned usage, can also become connected to a certain composer and their style of composition. Hans Zimmer, for example, has since *Inception* (2010) become known for the use of repetitive, running quavers and low-pitched horn blasts, now infamously known as 'The Inception BRAAAM' (Davies, 2013), which are also frequently used in trailers. Interestingly enough, the BRAAAM blasts were originally created by composer Mike Zarin for the trailer of *Transformers* (2007) (Jagernauth, 2013), subsequently adapted by Zimmer in *Inception*. Since then, they have frequently been used by other film composers, possibly imitating Zimmer (Zarin), but also using the public association with those blasts in order to remind audiences of the quality of the (Zimmer) film (score), as well as action-thriller loaded connotations. Still, while the blasts are distinctively associated with a particular composer (even if it is the wrong one), and a particular film, they do not fall under the protection of copyright law. This illustrates again the blurred lines between the imitation and evocation of familiar sounds and music, and copying music. A distinction between these appears, especially for musical content, almost impossible.

Hans Zimmer is an example of a composer style that is imitated and used in order to connect certain associations to a different franchise or storyworld, but this is not a phenomenon created by Zimmer. The music of the opening credits of *Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country* (1991) draws very recognisable parallels in terms of composition, musical structure, and instrumentation towards the popular *Mars: Bringer of War* from Gustav Holst's *The Planets* (1916). It becomes obvious, that this is a war film, that this is intended to sound like *Mars* in order to evoke the original composition and the mythology on which it is based.

Both of these are examples of the imitation and evocation of musical styles in order to add connotations and layers of meaning to one film while avoiding copyright conflicts. The case of the Harry Potter film music, however, can illustrate how the right to reuse and reimagine certain themes while

reinterpreting them in an individual style under the umbrella of one franchise can develop the music itself and what it means.

Harry Potter and the Musical Brand Identity

The Harry Potter world is based on seven books by author Joanne K. Rowling but has been expanded to eight films based on the novels, further novels, add-ons and in-world books, video games, the constantly updated, interactive website Pottermore and, most recently, a film series based on the in-world textbook *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* (2016-present). As mentioned earlier, the *Harry Potter* film series (2001-2011) can be seen, together with the *Lord of the Rings* films (2001-2003), as one of the early multi-channel and cross-platform fictional worlds based on books, a practice that quickly became common in the early years of the 21st century. Between 2001 and 2011 eight films were produced: *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (2001), *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (2002), *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (2004), *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* (2005), *Harry Potter and the Order of Phoenix* (2007), *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* (2009) and Harry *Potter and the Deathly Hallows Parts 1* (2010) and *2* (2011), which, for the sake of convenience, will from now on be referred to as "Harry Potter 1-8". While the cast of the films mainly remained the same with only a few roles having to be recast, directors and composers changed frequently, with each and every one of them bringing an individual style to the new instalment in the film series. Similar to the Lord of the Rings franchise, Harry Potter is also frequently visited and used as an example within academic scholarship, leading to excessive and specific research of all aspects of the cultural phenomenon. The music of Harry Potter is one of the aspects that has been analysed in great depth, for example by Webster (2009) across the first five films. In the context of the argument of this chapter, I will, however, focus on only a brief analysis and description of openings of all eight films only in order to stay close to aspects of themes in relation to franchises, licensing and copyright.[20]

John Williams composed the music for the first three films,[21] followed by Patrick Doyle for the fourth film, Nicolas Hooper for the fifth and sixth instalments, and Alexandre Desplat for the last two films. In creating the music for the first three films, Williams provided what we could call the base of the music of the Harry Potter films. He composed the main motifs and themes, which were then later, under the legal umbrella of Warner Bros., reused by the other composers. While each composer interpreted the motifs differently depending on the story and visuals of the film, they also used distinctive, different compositional styles. However, every composition is marked by the same musical motifs, the musical

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[20] For further discourse specifically on music in franchises and opening credits please see Buhler (2016).

[21] Due to scheduling conflicts, William Ross took over from John Williams to adapt the score and themes from the first films and conduct the recordings.

brand of Harry Potter. Countless lists, videos, and articles online try to analyse the music of the Harry Potter films, and a detailed analysis of these would be too much for this project. However, it is worth outlining briefly how the music and some of the themes have developed over time and across composers on the example of one particular musical theme.

As noted above, Williams composed some of the most recognisable and most used themes in the film series, such as *Hedwig's Theme* or *Harry's Wondrous World*. *Hedwig's Theme* is probably one of the most versatile musical themes across the film series. It was not exclusively used in connection with Harry's owl (Hedwig), but rather connected to the concept of the magical world itself, as well as the tropes of hope and friendship. Originally played by a celesta as *Hedwig's Theme*, its first appearance is at the beginning of the first film, actually performed by horns over the Warner Bros. logo. The second film then opens with the celesta version of the theme, and the same in the third instalment. In the fourth film, after Williams left the franchise, the opening title and Warner Bros. logo is for the first time accompanied by a different musical theme consisting of different main motifs Doyle used throughout his composition for the film, which then merges into *Hedwig's Theme* in a different key, performed mainly by strings.

In the fifth film, Hooper then again used *Hedwig's Theme* as the first opening music played by horns as in the first film, but slower, almost dragging, and in a minor key. The music here, as the film series progresses, changes with it, and mirrors the events. With the tone of the films becoming darker around the villain Voldermort's return from the presumed-dead, the musical key changes and the theme sounds less hopeful. This develops further in the sixth film where, set right after the death of Harry's godfather Sirius Black, *Hedwig's Theme* starts to play performed by a celesta, but is interrupted by the voice of secondary villain Bellatrix Lestrange celebrating herself killing Sirius. *Hedwig's Theme* is therewith taken over by a new, darker theme. Throughout the sixth film this new theme ultimately becomes connected to Professor Dumbledore as well as tropes of affection and love and is heard again after Dumbledore's death at the end of the film, and then again in the eighth film during a flashback that shows Snape's affection for Harry's mother. Coming back to *Hedwig's Theme*, it again appears in the opening of the seventh film, performed by a celesta again, but it is disturbed and taken over by a high-pitched sound. It subsequently seems to musically fall apart even quicker than in the film before to be taken over by the dark, repetitive main theme of the seventh film. The last film is the only film that does not feature *Hedwig's Theme* in its opening title at all.

This very short walk-through of the opening credits of the Harry Potter film series illustrates how the musical theme of *Hedwig's Theme* has changed with the story as much as with the composers. The

theme itself, even though it was titled *Hedwig's Theme*, was from the beginning more the theme of the world and the hope and joy within it. With the story progressively developing darker, composers picked up the theme, but merged it with their own compositional style and themes that were matched to the new instalments and the content of the story. The theme became darker, was interrupted, taken over and disappeared altogether. However, it reappeared eventually in 2016 at the beginning of James Newton Howard's composition for the first part of the *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find* them film series, reintroducing the idea of a wondrous, magical world full of hope. The theme itself is clearly connected to the film franchise and certain tropes within it. Independent from the composer and compositional style, it returns and changes with the story and specific musical styles, it is the musical brand identity of the film series, if not the whole transmedia universe, as it is furthermore present in spin-offs, on Pottermore, and used in the Harry Potter theme parks. This illustrates the ability of how music connects on larger scales, which subsequently can leave the border of a franchise and even a fictional world.

Drawing to a conclusion and reviewing the two examples of music that either imitates (Hans Zimmer) and therefore works outside copyright, or of music that reuses a musical theme through a licensing contract (Harry Potter), I come to a third perspective. While the discussion under consideration of either copyright law or a closed, fictional universe only focuses on the production side of the music, it is also important to analyse the pop-cultural aspects and therewith the effects of music crossing story, franchise, and fictional borders. Both, *Hedwig's Theme*, and "Hans Zimmers'" blasts are used in different contexts and adjusted accordingly because they already have a strong connection to a film, a brand, to tropes, to ideas and clichés, to pop-cultural phenomena, a fan base, to people, creators, and maybe even certain circumstances that occurred during the consumption of a film. And these connections can be and effectively are used throughout pop-culture in order to parody, or enrich content, in order to add more layers of meaning, references and easter eggs. They are used to create pop-culture as a cross-referential, and cross-media, cross-franchise, and cross-storyworld process. Transmedia universes mean transmedia pop-culture. Transmedia pop-culture means a constant process of overlapping and cross-referencing universes, becoming multiverses, turning pop-culture itself rather into the structure of a rhizome as discussed by Deleuze/ Guattari, which I paralleled in my theoretical approach to this thesis. And most of all, transmedia pop-culture means transmusical storytelling. With this argument it is now important to leave behind the examination of historical developments and contexts this chapter focused on, and to examine the referential nature of current pop-culture more closely. The second half of this thesis will therefore refocus the examination towards public perception as well as personal relation of consumers across transmedia universes by examining

recent habits of references and their perception across pop-culture. After an introduction into the structure, argument, and research approach of the second half of this thesis, Chapter 3 will focus mainly on visual and textual references, while Chapter 4 will provide a deep analysis into music referencing.

Part II: Outside the Box: The Culture of Referencing and Transmusical Storytelling

Chapter 3) Familiar Structures in a New Context

Introduction 2.0

In the previous chapters, my analysis of theoretical and industrial structures, history, and aesthetics of transmedia universes has demonstrated that transmediality, its connections, and impacts stop neither at the borders of fictional worlds, nor industrial franchises and licensing rights. I have argued that transmedia is not only a phenomenon that dominates the film, TV, and game industries of the entertainment sectors. As such, I am treating transmediality as a theoretical concept (as opposed to simply an industrial practice) and also a model that guides the analysis of ever-changing networks of texts or materials that are being created, (re-)interpreted, and used. Content providers as much as users actively take part in creating and processing material, creating new content, building connections, and reviewing those, which in turn influences creation and connection. Transmedia universes are not static or "closed", they are entities and networks in-progress, they act like rhizomes.

Mapping the basics of transmedia universes, the nature of their process, and the importance of connections, I demonstrated that these characteristics not only affect every transmedia universe internally, but that universes also connect with each other. This means transmedia universes and their material – be it music, visuals, themes, tropes, characters, or items – are not only a part of other universes, but also of everyday pop-culture. They create and become pop-culture.

The second part of this thesis 'Outside the Box' explores how transmedia universes act within, how they create and contribute to pop-culture, and subsequently how transmedia universes influence cultural, social, and even political layers of society. Having explored the history and legal challenges/ frameworks of transmedia universes in Chapter 2, it is now time to take a closer look at the 21st century and the ways in which different pop-culture elements connect to one another through references. While it is important not to forget about the problems that arise with creative content being used by a third party – often without a license – this chapter and the following one will mainly explore the aesthetics, practicalities, and the processes of referencing and cross-referencing.

In this chapter, I will focus on visual and textual references in order to give an overview of both traditional references such as parody or pastiche, and more modern ways of referencing such as easter eggs. Whereas previous chapters required working through and combining a range of critical ideas and research on transmediality in order to establish my theoretical framework, this chapter explores a different area of scholarship. I will therefore work with basic media theories as a framework in order

to offer a theoretical grounding in different parts of this chapter. Focusing on references across pop-culture will allow me to connect them to this thesis' theoretical framework on transmediality. This does not mean that there is no literature on referencing, and particularly the specific expression of intertextuality in the form of 'easter eggs', which I will elaborate on in the second part of this chapter. Rather, most literature around references primarily explores either their textual interrelations (Altman, 1984; Boxman-Shabtai, 2018; Gray, 2010), or how they are implemented (Weinel/ Griffiths/ Cunningham 2014). My approach, however, is more focused on the aesthetics and the nature of the connection that is established. While I am aware that I am not the first to write academic work that addresses easter eggs and pop-cultural references, this chapter aims to go beyond simply analysing the types and the implementation of intertextuality by analysing references in relation to user-generated content and how it appears to consumers. Within pop-culture, references are being integrated into content in order to be identified and discussed in an almost public forum on social media. This represents an aspect of interactivity and shows a cultural and social dimension of references, which appears to be rather unexplored. This groundwork will then allow me in the following Chapter 4 to map these ideas onto the aesthetics and act of musical referencing while demonstrating that musical references have the potential to exceed visual and textual references, communicating multiple layers of meaning and influence on the audience.

In order to do this, I will start by mapping the different types of references that occur across pop-culture, most of which are probably as old as the entertainment industries and arts themselves. The first part will explore the nuances and differences of traditional and well-known references such as parody, pastiche and even the idea of genre will be touched upon. While this thesis does not have the capacity to explore these aspects in depth, they are important in order to demonstrate how the act of embedding and detecting references helps our understanding of new (cultural) experiences. These traditional modes of referencing will be followed by exploring the concept of easter eggs, meaning hidden items in films, TV series, or games that can only be found by users with a keen eye. It is widely believed that the first easter egg appeared in the Atari 2600 game *Adventure* (Atari, 1979), which displayed the programmer's name Warren Robinett if the gamer's avatar of the player was moved over a specific pixel. However, the game *Moonlander* in 1973 already followed the same concept of hidden items by allowing the player to discover and potentially destroy a McDonald's if steering their ship in the right way. Interestingly enough, *Adventure* is continuously assumed to be the first easter egg, potentially because of it being referenced as such by media within pop-culture, such as the 2011 book and subsequent 2018 film adaptation of *Ready Player One* (Willaert, "Critical Kate", 2021). Since then, embedding easter eggs of various kinds in film, TV, and games has become increasingly common,

particularly since the 2000s. Subsequently, YouTube channels such as New Rockstars that are dedicated to detecting and sharing easter eggs found in pop-cultural instalments have grown in popularity. Easter eggs are a very distinct form of referencing that relies on intertextuality. In order to understand differences and similarities between easter eggs and other modes of referencing such as parody, pastiche, and even genre that are embedded within, that help to create pop-culture, I will briefly refer to the aesthetics and characteristics of paratexts as Jonathan Gray (2010) understands them.

As explored in previous chapters, transmediality – and therefore pop-culture – doesn't end with the product that is provided and produced by the industry. The second part of this chapter will therefore take a closer look at the fans, the users of pop-culture, and its products with a focus on how references are received and interpreted. I will analyse the user-producer relationship and produsage (Bruns, 2008), as well as the dynamics of fans, users, content providers and produsers on platforms such as YouTube (Johnson, 2007; Tushnet, 2007). While it would be beyond the boundaries of this thesis to analyse the dynamics between the individual and the groups within online communities, my examination here will allow me to formulate some first thoughts and observations on "expert knowledge" of pop-culture, and how it is displayed. References are not only made and provided by those who create a product. References must be seen and heard, they need to be found, discussed, and analysed by the users. The third part of this chapter will therefore explore the concept of the public display and discussion of pop-cultural expert knowledge, exploring modes of display such as videos, reviews, and wikis as a creation of hypertexts. Besides the many written displays of knowledge such as wikis, blogs, platforms like BuzzFeed, and social media communities, platforms such as YouTube or TikTok also offer an audio-visual display of expert knowledge. The last part of this chapter will therefore analyse and compare a sample data of three channels with videos provided by semi-professionals – i.e., people with an industry background and/or channels that are funded by media franchises and corporations, which allows them to use licensed material, while they maintain a jovial, geeky fan-attitude. I will explore the dynamics of who publishes what kind of videos, the number of clicks, as well as an analysis of their accompanying commentary. This will include not only a close look at data and statistics regarding clicks, subscriptions, and uploads from sample videos, but also an overview of comments posted to these videos. Due to the selection of channels and videos being limited to one platform (YouTube) only as well as the number of channels and videos considered, and all of the chosen examples being English language based with Western culture backgrounds, this analysis will not allow me to come to general conclusions of the dynamics around online fan interactions. However, it will

allow a first impression of the dynamics of fan-treasure-hunt for details, knowledge about (fictional) universes, and the act of displaying this knowledge.

This chapter will ultimately develop a model of how intertextual and paratextual references create networks across pop-culture, across transmedia universes to a degree that influences the everyday life of consumers and fans. This will allow me in the following Chapter 4 to explore how these ideas can be applied to music, and how musical references enable and create rhizomes of cross-referencing. As mentioned, this chapter will mainly develop ideas and theories around visual and textual referencing across pop-culture. I will base these theories on three pillars:

(1) General media studies and fan studies considering and analysing particularly hyptertexts, paratextuality, and produsage.

(2) Data analysis of YouTube videos and their comments for which I picked particular channels: New Rockstars, Every Frame a Painting, and MrSundayMovies.[22]

(3) Example analysis of pop-cultural instalments that have had an impact on pop-culture and which have a considerable amount of analysis videos on YouTube. [*Stranger Things* (Netflix, 2016-present), *Westworld* (HBO, 2016-present), MCU, DCEU, *The Orville* (Fox, 2017-present), *Guardians of the Galaxy (2014)*, the Star Wars franchise, and *Baby Driver* (2017)].

The examples chosen are a selection analysed at a specific time, meaning that since writing this thesis almost all the franchises I have featured for analysis have eventually produced further instalments, which have not been taken into account. The following thoughts and ideas can and should be further explored and developed in tandem with the evolution of the entertainment industries and pop-culture, as they respond to new trends and technological innovations. While pop-culture and transmediality are fluent, constantly changing processes, so is the research that tackles it.

Parody, Pastiche and Genre as Referential Structures

As mentioned previously, a large part of pop-culture is built through a process of referencing and cross-referencing. These references can be made on different levels and with different intents or backgrounds. By using the word "reference" itself, I mean the use of a particular element in order to allude to something else. These elements can be of a different nature, such as a particular item, a

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[22] I will expand on why I picked these examples and what makes them interesting to this discussion in parts three and four of this chapter.

trope, a camera angle, a meme, or a spoken reference, which can stem from the same narrative transmedia universe, or even from another transmedia universe.

It is important to note that pop-culture references function in many different ways and have many different uses. References can build a connection, not only from a film to its source material, such as a sequel, a prequel, or a spin-off. Additionally, they enable transmedia universes to mix and converge through a process of, for example, one director alluding to the work of another director/ genre that has influenced them in the making of their production. One of the most prominent examples at the time of writing would be the Netflix series *Stranger Things*, which contains countless references to popular films in the 1970s and 1980s, including the work of author Stephen King, science fiction, and various horror tropes. While being its own entity – unlike a parody such as 'Family Guy: Blue Harvest' (S06E01, Fox, 2007), a special of the TV series that parodies *Star Wars*, which therefore is outside the usual reality of the show – *Stranger Things* uses visual, textual, and musical elements from a particular time period. These were the elements that influenced the writer-director brothers Matt and Ross Duffer.

Connections across pop-culture are created through different means, depending on how and what original material they connect with. In Chapter 2 I highlighted relations between familiar structures and how they build connections within transmedia universes that aid the user's understanding. Similarly, referencing relies on the viewing and listening history of each user. One has to be familiar with the material that is referenced in order to detect and understand the reference, and in order to notice the additional layers of a text that are embedded through a reference. But what kind of references are to be found across pop-culture? As I will be exploring musical referencing in Chapter 4, this chapter will take a closer look at visual, textual, and narrative references.

One of the maybe most common ways of referencing another text is via parody, which in itself has a long tradition in the entertainment and creative industries and is deeply embedded within the history of the arts. At the same time, the use of parody has increased in the past two decades, especially online with 'tributes, memes, remixes, and parodies' (Boxman-Shabtai, 2018). While numerous scholars have written about and defined parody in particular contexts such as film (Dyer, 2006; Harries, 2000), it is important to view a broad definition of parody that will be able to encompass an aesthetic that goes beyond a specific medium or use. A parody, as defined by the Oxford English Dictionary, is 'an imitation of the style of a particular writer, artist, or genre with deliberate exaggeration for comic effect' (Oxford LEXICO, n.d., *parody*). This, however, does not only mean another work, but can also refer to a person, as well as an occupation or status such as politician, actor, or sports star. While parody is different

from satire, which targets social conventions rather than aesthetic conventions, it also challenges or reinforces social norms. At the same time, parody is highly intertextual by relying on meaning in the structures of other texts (Boxman-Shabtai, 2018). The main aspect of parody is the act of mimicking while at time using satire as a tool, which often includes the over-emphasis on particular features such as clichés (the rebellious gothic teenager), stereotypes (lying politicians), or even the physical features of a person.

Image removed due to copyright

Figure 3 Internet Meme Parodying Donald Trump's Hair

An early example of a parody, that also shows how familiar and traditional the satirical copy of well-known material is, would be the operetta *Orphée aux enfers* (1858) by Jacques Offenbach. In this operetta, Offenbach creates a parody that relates to many different sources of inspiration: the traditional story of Orpheus as it is known in Greek mythology, as well as politics and society in the late 19th century. In Offenbach's version, Orpheus and Eurydice do in fact hate each other, and Orpheus has to be forced by the anthropomorphism Public Opinion to bid the gods to let him try and rescue Eurydice. Before Orpheus arrives, the gods themselves are seen to be sleeping out of boredom, gossiping, and being tempted by Pluto and the pleasures of the underworld – a parody of Napoleon III as an authority and power figure during this time (Hawig, 2010: 47). The impact Offenbach's operetta had can still be seen in today's pop-culture. For example, the Can-can *Infernal Gallop*, while based on a popular music hall dance from the 1840s, is used regularly in film and TV. Jacques Offenbach actually has an IMDb page with (as of November 2017) a total of 544 credits for a/the soundtrack (426), music department (113), composer (four), and writer (one) (IMDb, n.d., *Jacques Offenbach*). The entries on IMDb refer to *Orphée aux enfers* in one way or another: either Can can/ Can-can, *Infernal Gallop*, other specific parts of the operetta, as well as *Orpheus* without any specification. Additionally, there are six opera-films of *Orphée aux enfers*. The Can-can has in itself become present in modern pop-culture ranging from the short film *Fiddlesticks* (1930), the first mention on IMDb, to various episodes of *Monty Python's Flying Circus* (BBC1/ BBC2 1969-1974), and *The Simpsons* (Fox, 1989-present), *Moulin Rouge* (2001) or *Captain Underpants: The First Epic Movie* (2017).

The Can-can has by now become an element of parody itself, being used in order to signify a parody component within a film, TV series, or stage performance. This shows an important aspect of parody:

it is rather to be seen as a tool that is used to obtain a certain comedic effect with a certain layer of meaning than a genre in itself. Parody is a part and a tool of comedy, memes, and the entertainment industry, and therefore pop-culture. A TV series such as *The Orville* for example is a parody of the science fiction genre and the Star Trek franchise in particular by drawing parallels to familiar alien races, as well as characteristics of leaders, personnel, and the contact with alien life. At the same time *The Orville* maintains a humorous tone that allows the characters to swear and curse, joke about substance abuse and sex, as well as having more jovial communication amongst the crew members. For some fans this might even feel closer to reality than the family friendly *Star Trek*. However, at the same time, the show manages to make serious comments about religion, current social, or political issues such as the dangers of social media. For example, S01E07 'Majority Rule' introduces an alien planet on which an "absolute democracy" rules and people are being judged by up and down-votes. A similar concept was also explored in 2016 in the episode 'Nosedive' (S03E01) of the British Sci-Fi Series *Black Mirror*, however in a darker and more dramatic setting. *The Orville* is therefore a conventional sci-fi series while using parodistic at the same time, which is met with appreciation by fans. In contrast, critics mainly rated the first season negatively with (as of May 2021) a Rotten Tomatoes score of 30% (opposed by 100% rating for season 2) (Rotten Tomatoes, n.d., *The Orville: Season 1*) and a Metacritic score of 36 (S1) (Metacritic, n.d., *The Orville*). Fan ratings on the other side are mainly positive with a Metacritic user Score of 8.4 (S1 and 8.1 S2), 94% on Rotten Tomatoes (S1 and 92% S2), and an overall rating of 8.0 on IMDb (IMDb, n.d., *The Orville*). Some fans even go as far in their personal reviews to prefer *The Orville* to the series *Star Trek: Discovery* (CBS, 2017-present), stating at the time that *The Orville* catches the essence of the original *Star Trek* (NBC, 1966-1969) and *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (First-run syndication, 1987-1994) series more than the official new instalment (Couto, 2017).

The parody element of *The Orville* still allows the show to be a science fiction show, which, as I have argued above, proves that parody is both a pop-cultural instance, as well as a tool of reference – in a humorous way. Another form of referencing that works in a similar way by mimicking certain aspects in order to use them as familiar reference points while creating something new, is a pastiche, which in itself presents one way of understanding the well-discussed term "genre".

In general, pastiche is defined as 'an artistic work in a style that imitates that of another work, artist, or period' (Oxford LEXICO, n.d., *pastiche*). While this implies that pastiche can be used in a satirical way, which crosses over with parody, it can also be seen as simply the imitation of an established style. Richard Dyer used Western films as an example of how a pastiche can form a genre (Dyer, 2006). He

describes Westerns as 'instantly recognisable' (Dyer, 2006: 93) by how it looks (landscape, characters, buildings), and how it sounds (gunshots, horses, spurs, and musical score). This means, that simply by the looks and sounds of a film or series such as *The Mandalorian*, the viewer knows that they are consuming a Western or something that is influenced by the genre. The film or series is branded as a Western through its distinct look, which is imitated, hence a pastiche of Western genre clichés. At the same time, the consumer must be familiar with the tropes in order for the pastiche aspect of the text to work. In the same way as a parody or references in general, a pastiche is only functional if the consumer can detect the parallel. What determines the "Westernness" of a film according to Dyer and therefore characterises the genre-specific pastiche, is 'within the world of the narrative and/or in the style of the film itself' (Dyer, 2006: 97). For Westerns this would mean either the implementation of Western dress and behaviour, or the construction of the film itself signalling "this is a Western", for example by using the famous shot that only shows the eyes of two cowboys in a gun-duel. Interestingly enough, some if not many of these do see their origin in Italian Westerns rather than Hollywood. This, however, can easily be transferred to other genres such as science fiction or fantasy in film and TV. Furthermore, the basic outline of repeating structures, be they narrative structures, iconographic or musical, carries into different media such as music or video games, in which genres might also include a certain decade or, in the case of games, a game-mode.

Describing pastiche as one form of genre-characterisation and creation does not ignore the wider field of genre-theory, such as Altman's seminal work on semantic and syntactic genre specifics, which distinguish between primary, linguistic, and secondary, textual elements that can define genre (Altman, 1984: 16). Rather, it is intended to emphasize the referential point of grouping films, books, music, games, or TV series with shared, similar characteristics. Pastiche is a form of imitation and a tool that has a clear retrospective relationship to prior works, which makes it 'always and inescapably historical' (Dyer, 2006: 131). Again, this demands the connection of both, the user, and the material (and content providers) with previous material, in order for a reference to work. It is therefore possible to consider genre as a form of pastiche, of referencing familiar tropes that over time are then grouped as a category.

User, Content Provider and Easter Eggs

The referential aspects of parody, pastiche, and genre primarily refer backward to something that has been established previously, or sideways in instances of parodying actual social or political events. However, references, especially in the form of easter eggs, can also refer forward to upcoming instalments, for example in a cinematic universe. Tony Stark casually shoving Captain America's shield

to support a technological invention in his lab in *Iron Man 2* (2010) was a direct reference, an easter egg to the upcoming film *Captain America* (2011) in the MCU. The easter egg could have been detected but didn't have to be recognised in order to understand the plot of *Iron Man 2*. Furthermore, easter eggs inherit a call to action aimed at fans to actively seek out said easter eggs and analyse them, which needs to be analysed in greater detail going forward.

The term "easter egg" describes an item in a movie, TV series, or any kind of (audio) visual media, that can only be detected by those who watch closely and are familiar with the item itself. It evokes the traditional Easter egg hunt during which hidden eggs are supposed to be found by children. The first assumed easter eggs in video games appeared in *Moonlander*, 1973 and *Adventure*, 1979, as previously mentioned. Since then, the term has become a general label for hidden items in films, TV, games, and so forth that refer to content outside the film itself, but inside the transmedia universe such as items that are in a comic book but not the film adaptation. Furthermore, they can hint towards future instalments in the same universe, as it often occurs in franchises such as the MCU and DCEU. Additionally, easter eggs can be irrelevant or only loosely connected by an overall theme to the instalment in which they can be found. An example of an easter egg irrelevant to the story world or even universe would be a carving of the Star Wars droids R2D2 and C3PO in stone in *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981).

These items rarely have any influence on the plot and/or characters, or the narrative in the instalment, and pose an interesting question: what function do they fulfil besides giving away a little bit of (what some might consider being relatively useless) promotional value for dedicated fans? The name easter egg itself already refers to one of the main aspects and intended things to do: Easter eggs need to be searched for, known where they are most likely to be found. As with an easter egg hunt, fans look for these elements and show off their findings, which are displayed across many different channels such as videos, blogs, wikis, platforms, podcasts, and so forth. On the one side this means easter eggs that are loosely connected to the story world and the transmedia universe it exists within. They refer to for example a character in a comic book that isn't explored in the respective film or TV series. An example for this would be the mentioning of the "staff of living tribunal" in *Doctor Strange* (2016), an item with a rich back story in the Marvel comics but not part of the narrative plot of the film itself. For the user familiar with the comics, mentioning the staff opens the questions whether this may play a part in future instalments.

On the other hand, however, easter eggs can also be hidden within a text, while not being connected to any other text that might have come previously. For example, the final trailer released for the second

season of the TV series *Westworld* (HBO, 2016-present) included a short scene that showed a military operation being set up on a shore. Part of the setup are four boxes, one of which has a pattern on it, while the others are plain. The pattern itself can be translated into a barcode, which when scanned leads to part of a website belonging to the fictional company Delos Inc. As in the original 1973 *Westworld* film, Delos Inc. is the company that builds and manages amusement parks that allow the paying customer to have a vacation in, for example the "wild west", "medieval time" or "ancient Rome". Part of the marketing strategy for the TV series *Westworld* in season 2 included the fake Delos website, to which the easter egg barcode leads. On the website is a sixty-second video with stock footage that looks like a regular promotion for the parks. However, the video starts glitching, with gruesome pictures of people being tortured or dying flashing on-screen. This, as well as the trailers, show that in the second season of the series the life-like robots of the park used in season one reached self-awareness to start a war on humans. This easter egg is more than easily overlooked, as a user who wasn't looking to find it would not consider one box with a pattern in a short scene of a trailer to have meaning. Furthermore, it was only added for the final trailer, while all boxes in the actual episode of season 2 were plain. It demonstrates that easter eggs require more than just background knowledge in order to understand their meaning. They require dedication and skills to be implemented by content creators for marketing campaigns, and subsequently an interactive behaviour on the side of the consumer to be decoded. This 'forensic fandom' has been explored in great detail by academic scholars such as Jason Mittell (2015), but a venture into the depths of fan theory and fan experts is beyond the scope of this thesis. Hunting easter eggs is a treasure hunt, a sport amongst fans that fuels competition of who finds the most easter eggs faster, and who finds those that have been overlooked by others. While it would be essential to analyse the cultural and social dynamic of hunting easter eggs from a fan study perspective, this will not be feasible within the scope of this project. It is, however, important to note here that easter eggs in themselves as well as the action they require on content creators' side (embedding) and fan side (finding and displaying) make up a central part of the dynamics of references and cross-referencing across pop-culture.

Another purpose of easter eggs that creates textual meaning can be seen by applying a theory I have previously touched on. In discussing the basics of world-building, I used Genette's theory of paratexts, a term that describes the framing of a story such as a book cover as a part of how it is experienced. In the context of film and other audio-visual media, I will utilise the work of Jonathan Gray, who has built on Genette's work by exploring modern iterations and examples of paratexts (Gray, 2010). Based on Genette's theory of the author-provided frame, Gray expands this onto additional material provided by the media and entertainment industries. Paratexts that, in the sense of Genette, 'prepare us for

other texts [and therefore form] [...]a "threshold" between the inside and the outside of the text' (Gray, 2010: 25) are therefore a term that summarises any given material outside a narrative world. That includes not only a book cover or film poster, a trailer, dedications or prefaces, but also merchandise, interviews, documentaries, and even the "previously on..." recaps of TV series that transports the viewer back into the narrative of the program.

According to Gray, paratexts 'fill the space between them [text, audience, and industry], conditioning passages and trajectories that criss-cross the mediascape, and variously negotiating or determining interactions among the three' (Gray, 2010: 23). This means, that all these paratexts work as a fluid addition to the "original" text. They frame a film, game, or TV series in order to make them more accessible. Furthermore, they add more layers of meaning to the text by offering an interpretation. For example, the film poster for *Life* (2017) shows a hand reaching inside an astronaut's helmet, and the title presented in a similar font to *Alien* (1979).

Images removed due to copyright

Figure 4 Promotional Posters for Life (2017) and Alien (1979)

As a paratext, this poster already promotes the film as a space-related horror, similar to *Alien*, which might even influence when and how the film would be watched, for example with lights on or off. The term paratext therefore can be used to describe such elements, that are not necessarily part of the story, but frame it at the same time and influence the way it is interpreted and experienced. An extreme example of this would be the paratext overtaking the text (Gray, 2010: 45), for example when children buy Star Wars toys without having seen any of the films, maybe even starting to consider watching the films because of the toy.

Gray states, that 'much of the textuality that exists in the world is paratext-driven' (Gray, 2010: 46), which means that paratexts not only exist outside of the text, but also within them, or can even be considered a text in themselves. This definition brings me back to easter eggs. Captain America's shield in *Iron Man 2* is a paratext that refers to something outside the text of the film (the character of Captain America and his then upcoming film), but inside the text of the MCU and Marvel Comics. At the same time, as it is an item used to stabilise something, it is also part of the text of *Iron Man 2*, it inherits a referential layer of meaning and made the fans who spotted it excited for the upcoming film. Easter

eggs, as much as parody or pastiche and genre, can therefore not only be seen as a reference or stylistic choice that alludes to a specific text or aesthetic. They are also paratexts of different texts (for example a film and a comic alike), filling the gaps between content provider, text, and user, inviting all sides to actively partake in this cross-referential puzzle across pop-culture.

Considering references as paratexts and the aspects of parody and pastiche, we can list the following ways of how references link across pop-culture:

(1) *Visual references*: these include easter eggs (items), which can point forwards, backward and sideways to other texts, furthermore the recreation of famous camera angles or shots, and similar looking items (for example, among the items that can be seen in the Upside Down in *Stranger Things* is an egg-shaped item, which is clearly reminiscent of the face-hugger-eggs in *Alien*).

(2) *Textual references*: this includes similar narrative structures (for example the child-oriented narrative in *Stranger Things* which is similar to *The Goonies* (1985) or *IT* (novel, 1986; TV miniseries, 1990; films, 2017/2019)), as well as actual spoken references such as making jokes about James Bond and spy movies in *Kingsman: The Secret Service* (2014).

(3) *Performance based references*: similar to the recreation of a shot or items being inspired by previous films, the performance of an actor can be inspired by other previous performances of a different actor or even a real-life person (for example Johnny Depp's Captain Jack Sparrow in the Pirates of the Caribbean franchise was based on Keith Richards and the Looney Toons character Pepé Le Pew).

(4) *Musical/ sonic references*: this point includes not only musical references, but also sound effects like for example a lightsaber sound, as well as sound clichés (such as ants on-screen making "insect noises" even though they don't in real life). Musical and sonic references often inherit different characteristics from the reference types mentioned above and will be further examined in Chapter 4.

All of these forms of references not only act as paratexts, but as entities within a narrative text that refer outside of the instalment that is being consumed at the time. Parody and pastiche can be a way of visual referencing, but they are not exclusive to it. Furthermore, those references are only detectable for those who are familiar with the material. Familiarity, therefore, means knowledge and something that inspires discussion and interpretation. References are often embedded into a text to be found and to be discussed, which influences and triggers discussions in fan communities about a film and therefore contributes to its marketing. Looking at for example reddit, tumblr, fan wikis, TikTok

or YouTube shows a high number of threads, videos, blogs, and open-and-ongoing discussions of references, easter eggs and what they might mean. They inspire fan theories and fan (over-) interpretations – aka forensic fandom – which deserves to be examined further in the next parts of this chapter.

Expert Knowledge and Display I: Who, What and Where?

The nature of references as elements that need to be noticed and discussed raises the question: who detects these references? And even more so: what is being done with this discovery? In order to find an answer to these questions, I will first describe a general overview of the (online) interaction of fans and semi-professionals with easter eggs and references, followed by a close analysis of three specific YouTube channels and their content.

I already discussed the first of these questions in different contexts: the main condition for a reference to be detected is familiarity with, and knowledge of the text that is being referenced. How vital knowledge of the context is can be illustrated by a short, personal example. In 2018 I saw my first pantomime in London. A pantomime is a form of theatre that heavily relies on (British) pop-culture references, recurring character-types, plot points, and interactions with the audience, and is not popular in Germany, where I grew up. Expecting a family-friendly musical in the likes of *Mathilda* or *The Lorax*, the first 20 minutes of the pantomime *Dick Whittington* left me quite baffled, speechless, and very lost, as I barely understood what was going on, and why people around me kept laughing hysterically. However, the second half became far more enjoyable, as I started detecting a repetition or parody of certain behaviour, jokes, or characters from the first half, which will also shape my experience of the next pantomime that I will see.

In the same way, I felt lost due to my unfamiliarity with the format and content of the pantomime, critics and fans often describe similar issues with films or TV series s that rely too heavily on other texts. Many successful parodies rely on a large target audience that is familiar with the text that is being referenced. Examples of this include *Family Guy: Blue Harvest* and *Robot Chicken: Star Wars* (Adult Swim, 2007), both being parodies referencing the Star Wars franchise. Other pop-culture instalments, however, often rely on source material that has a smaller following. The film *Warcraft* (2016) for example is part of the franchise *Warcraft* (Blizzard Entertainment, 1994-present) that includes video games and novels. While the MMORPG[23] *World of Warcraft* (Blizzard Entertainment, 2004) is popular, the fan base of the games and novels is, compared to Star Wars, relatively small. One of the main

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[23] Massive Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game

points of critique of the film that (as of July 2021) led to a Metascore of 32 (Metacritic, n.d., *Warcraft*), and Rotten Tomatoes rating of 28% (Rotten Tomatoes, n.d., *Warcraft*) seems to be that knowledge of the fictional world of Warcraft appears to be expected from the consumers, and the film follows the plot line without really establishing rules, history or context. However, fans of the franchise who are familiar with the context seemed to have enjoyed the film, leading to user scores of 8.2 on Metacritic and 76% on Rotten Tomatoes. Furthermore, positive fan reviews mainly reference their fandom of the games, while also criticising the film from a technical perspective when necessary. Metacritic user ROBBIECURTIS1 for example rated the movie with an 8/10 on June 12th 2016:

> As a Warcraft fan this movie was a very fun experience. That is not to say that it is without faults. Sometimes the CGI is a bit off and even for someone who knows the lore, mostly by heart, it was sometimes a bit hard to follow (I'm looking at you dalaran [sic] scene) but over all [sic] it was a lot of fun. Interesting characters from the orc side of the story, less do from the human side, the world and effects look amazing most of the time, the fan service is plentiful yet subtle (ex: a character from the lore in the background) and the music is very enjoyable. If you are a Warcraft fan you must see this film. If you are just a movie fan try to find a warcraft [sic] fan to join you. I wouldn't expect that anyone will regret seeing this film if you go into it with an open mind (Metacritic, n.d., *User ROBBIECURTIS1*).

This short review reflects not only on the personal relationship of the individual with the transmedia universe of Warcraft, but also the awareness of the individual of how important context is in order to understand the references and story of the film.

Context and knowledge of source material, primary, and secondary texts, as well as paratexts is essential to detecting references across pop-culture. But what is being done with the information that is received by detecting a reference and additional layers of meaning? It is clear, that simply embedding references into instalments is only the start of the culture that revolves around easter eggs and references, and merely detecting them is also only another step in the process. The final or maybe most important part of referencing comes with the display and presentation of knowledge – not only that a reference has been spotted, but also that the context is familiar.

On the one hand, this can be seen in the countless YouTube videos or online articles such as '13 Films That Influenced 'Stranger Things'' (Fuller, 2017), or 'Avengers Infinity War Trailer BREAKDOWN - Details You Missed & Infinity Stones EXPLAINED' (New Rockstars, 2017). These are mainly uploaded by what I will call semi-professionals that work within the entertainment industries but are not content providers in the sense I have used this phrase previously – specifically referring to professionals such as Hollywood filmmakers or game developers. On the other hand, this can also be illustrated by looking at fan-based entries such as the user review of *Warcraft* cited above: In the short review

ROBBIECURTIS1 not only mentions that they are a fan of the transmedia universe, they also demonstrate both the exclusiveness of the fandom, and what that means for understanding the film ('If you are just a movie fan try to find a warcraft fan to join you'), as well as how "deep" their knowledge is. By mentioning a 'character from the lore in the background', they demonstrate that they are not only a close observer of the film, but also familiar with the lore or the fictional universe of Warcraft. Furthermore, by reflecting on the connection between film, franchise, and fandom, as they mention for example fan service, as well as aspects of film quality (plotline, CGI), they also validate their opinion as to the opinion of someone who can reflect on a film with multiple levels.

This brings me to an essential point of the demonstration and presentation of detecting references: whether it is a fan writing a review, a professional, or semi-professional YouTube blogger, channel, or a fan in an everyday conversation, showing that a reference has been detected and understood is a demonstration of knowledge, an aspect which has been analysed in great detail by academics such as Jenkins (2006), Altmann (2011), Rettberg (2011), amongst others. In order to tackle the challenge of analysing the demonstration of knowledge online or in a face-to-face setting, let me take a side-step into collective knowledge online communities. In his essay on hypertexts, collective narratives and online collective knowledge communities, Scott Rettberg analyses the nature of online hypertexts (Rettberg, 2011). As laid out in the introduction of this thesis, hypertexts are online texts (often fan-produced) such as fandom wikis, that are open to be edited and amended by any user of the website and their creation is 'based on harnessing collective knowledge' (Rettberg, 2011: 188). While Wikipedia is perhaps the most prominent example, which has spun-off into smaller wikis that are based on a particular franchise or fandom, the main characteristic is that they are collectively written, and as texts are 'a separate entity from the reader's interaction with it [the main text aka fandom]' (Rettberg, 2011: 189). While having a high amount of hypertextuality to them, they also have to be seen as paratexts, as they discuss the original text (pop-cultural instalment or transmedia universe) by referring to them. Jonathan Gray even goes as far as to suggest that 'audience paratextuality occurs anytime two or more people discuss a film or television program, but audience paratextuality also includes criticism and reviews, fan fiction, fan film and video (vids), "filk" (fan song), fan art, spoilers, fan sites, and many other forms' (Gray, 2010: 143).

There is far more to analyse about the textual nature of fan wikis and YouTube videos and how they relate as paratexts, hypertexts, and on intertextual levels. However, I will concentrate on the aesthetic of the display of knowledge and less on the relationship between original text, fan, and fan-produced text. The display of knowledge online, be it in closed collective knowledge spaces such as reddit or

tumblr, or in YouTube videos that count easter eggs, one thing they all have in common is that certain people demonstrate the depth of their knowledge about a certain transmedia universe and pop-culture in general. On the one hand, this challenges copyright issues, as most fans do not have a license to produce paratexts of transmedia universes, which often leads to disclaimers such as "all copyright belongs to…" or "I do not own any of the material". This is, however, mainly directed towards the owner of the respective copyright and not so much at the fans, who consume the fan-produced paratext (Tushnet, 2007: 70).

On the other hand, through the act of demonstrating knowledge, a certain expert community is built (Bruns, 2008: 205) with fans proving themselves as being one of these experts. This can be seen as one of the main points of motivation for fans (and semi-professionals) to demonstrate knowledge online, or in social situations. As illustrated by ROBBIECURTIS1, the heart of the process is not detecting references, but rather it seems the ability to detect and understand the context of a reference and then displaying this to other people. The fan becomes an expert of a field, for example Warcraft and makes a step from consuming and experiencing, to enriching other peoples' experiences, if not almost lecturing them about how to experience a piece of pop-culture. By displaying knowledge in a video or text, the fan and user become what Axel Bruns has called a *produser*, an individual that is able 'to harness the long tail of theoretical and practical knowledge, which extends beyond the conventional disciplinary boundaries of expert communities' (Bruns, 2008: 215). While due to the scope of this thesis I will not be able to go deeper into the details and aesthetics of produsage, it is important to mention here that fan-produsage is at the centre of demonstrating knowledge and establishing one as an expert in a certain field. Additionally, this creates an interrelation between Hollywood and its meta content, such as James Gunn proclaiming that some easter eggs in *Guardians of the Galaxy* (2014) have still not been discovered yet in 2020 (Conway, 2020), which sparked an increase of online communities revisiting the film.

The produser, however, not only demonstrates that they are an expert about the content, but that they also have the knowledge to talk about how it is made.[24] For example, they often comment on the quality of how a film is made in terms of storytelling, acting, camera and CGI, demonstrating expertise in film theory and film making. On a different level, they demonstrate their expertise in creating and producing their material by having a certain style of writing, producing a video, using the latest (free) software (e.g., Lightworks, Hitfilm Express, Audacity, VSDC Free Video Editor), tools (e.g., filters and lenses that can be attached to smartphone cameras) and platforms (e.g., YouTube, Vimeo, Instagram,

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[24] See Jenkins' work on knowledge communities (2006) which builds on the work of Pierre Lévy (1999).

TikTok). Since the first phone with a built-in camera was released in South Korea in June of 2000 (the Samsung SCH-V200 with a 350,000-pixel resolution) smartphone cameras have progressively become more advanced (Hill, 2013). Companies like Samsung, Apple, HTC, Google, and Nokia are competing in how their smartphones perform, of which camera quality marks an important characteristic. This means that in the late 2010s smartphone cameras include features like for example the iPhone X with a twelve-megapixel camera with stabilisers, sensors, and a wide lens.

The quality of these phones has become advanced enough that film festivals such as the Toronto Smartphone Film Festival (TSFF) only allow entries that have been filmed with a smartphone. Produsers and fans therefore have the opportunity and equipment to produce on similar levels as some professional film makers. What is possible to create at high quality seems to, on a technological level, increase with more and better tech being widely available. For example, the film *Unsane* (2018) with a worldwide theatrical release was shot entirely using an iPhone 7 Plus and an independent film budget of 1,5 million USD, utilising technology that is available to fans. This demonstrates how the lines in terms of technology for producing content are steadily blurring, allowing fans to develop skills to create professional looking content.

To summarise, pop-cultural references are a process that requires not only for them to be embedded, but also to be detected (through the means of existing knowledge), and a display of such knowledge by others. The user turns into a produser, into an expert and lecturer of a certain topic, whose content is often consumed and discussed by other fans and produsers. This expertise also generates a certain amount of competition between produsers. Demonstrating how much of an expert one is automatically/ potentially indicating that one is more of an expert than someone else. Many videos or fan wikis are flooded with comments that either prove the author wrong, or add more knowledge to the topic, which will be explored at a later stage.

However, copyright and licensing do limit what a produser can create and display online, as many videos are taken down from YouTube and other social platforms due to the violation of copyright. This creates a market of what I want to call semi-professional YouTube channels. These channels are rarely curated by fans in their own personal space, but by media companies in collaboration with film studios, and their own licensing rights. This allows them to show material from films, to attend press screenings, and to offer what appears to be a deeper insight into the matter. The YouTube channel Screen Junkies, for example, is operated by Defy Media, a digital media company that produces online content and is part of Hollywood's entertainment industry (19% shares allegedly belong for example to Lionsgate, but coverage of the construction of the company itself seems to be unreliable and vague

at best) (Wikipedia, n.d., *Defy Media*). As a brand of Defy Media, Screen Junkies started as a YouTube channel in 2011 that produced "Honest Trailers", movie trailers that display flaws and open questions in films in a humorous way. Since then, other formats have been added in which films and pop-culture are discussed. This is possible due to the licensing contracts Defy Media has with film companies that hold the rights to films. However, not all channels work with the same model. Often, professionals working in the industry have YouTube channels dedicated to pop-culture, but do not have the license to use copyright material.

Expert Knowledge and Display II: Semi-Professional YouTube Channels

To understand the call to action that is an important part of easter eggs and references in modern pop-culture, it is vital to analyse the meta content that is produced by particularly semi-professionals, as well as the interactions these semi-professionals have with the content as well as the fans. In order to tackle the aesthetics and data of semi-professional videos that analyse references, I have chosen three examples of YouTube channels. It is important to note here, that this selection is limited and represents only a small but carefully selected set of representative data that could and should be analysed. While this thesis does not have the scope for quantitative research of larger data sets with more variety, this streamlined look will still be able to provide first thoughts and impressions, which can then be compared to a similar set of data regarding music specifically in Chapter 4. The aim of this analysis, therefore, is not to create general statements, but to demonstrate how visual and textual references are in parts similar and also different to musical references. The data selected considers mostly YouTube only as a platform for display, while it also considers English language based content only, and only within a Anglo-Western setting. Looking forward, a more inclusive and extensive set of data would have to be collected that would not only increase the number of channels and videos, but also include other platforms such as Twitch or TikTok, as well as other language origination and cultural backgrounds. For this representative exercise that is specifically targeting semi-professionals analysing pop-culture and displaying it, though, the selected example channels have the following characteristics: First, they produce online content related to film, TV, and pop-culture. Second, they produce videos that analyse references in films, TV, or trailers, but they might also produce other videos. Third, the curators inherit a certain field of expertise, which is demonstrated throughout the channel. I chose three slightly different channels in terms of structure, background, content focus, and expertise.

The analysis will tackle the number of videos produced in relation to the content they are referring to (when, how many), as well as clicks, subscribers, and comments. I will present an overview of the

different nature of the selected semi-professional channels on YouTube and their relation to fans and users as well as the content they produce.

	New Rockstars	Mr Sunday Movies	Every Frame A Painting
Founded	2011 Joined YouTube on 07 October 2011 ©2014	2013 Joined YouTube on 16 August 2013	2014 Joined YouTube on 16 April 2014 Shut down: December 2017
Clicks **as of 15 June 2021**	1,047,140,007	472,176,279	92,786,635
Subscribers **as of 15 June 2021**	3.01M	1.24M	1.88M
Media Background	New Media Rockstars is an online publication which aims to promote and support the independent new media community	Podcast in collaboration with The Weekly Planet Podcast; both part of the pop-culture podcast provider Planet Broadcasting	Both founders work in the industry as editor or animator
Content focus	Film (MCU, DCEU, Star Wars) TV (Game of Thrones, Rick and Morty) Breakdowns and easter eggs Fan theories Reviews	Marvel DC Star Wars Breakdowns Easter eggs Deleted film scenes Reviews	Filmmaking Visuals Camera techniques Editing Composing Creating certain effects such as humour
Area of expertise	Pop-culture and "What the internet cares about"	Comic book franchises and Star Wars	Hands-on filmmaking

Table 1 Overview of the Chosen YouTube Channels Analysing Primarily Visual and Textual References

The first example above is the channel New Rockstars, which was founded in 2011 and grew from being a YouTube channel to becoming part of the online publishers New Media Rockstars, who expanded the content from Film and TV to Gaming, Tech, Science, YouTubers, and general Internet content such as "Funny Videos", "Viral Videos" and "Weird Stuff". Additionally, they also started selling licensed merchandise in October 2020. While the "About Us" section is kept very short and does not reveal any information that could suggest a professional background of the creators, they do emphasize that their 'mission is to empower, inspire, and promote the independent new media', as stated on their official

website. This can be read as a clear statement that New Media Rockstars see themselves as independent from both the market- dominating film studios, the press and critics such as Empire Magazine or the New York Times. Many of the latter are often rumoured to be paid by film studios to produce positive reviews for their films or negative reviews for others, which is in return discussed by the "independent press" in articles such as 'On Movie Critics, Movie Studios & Bribery' (2016) by Hannah Shaw-Williams on the website ScreenRant (Shaw-Williams, 2016).

The YouTube channel New Rockstars is, of the three examples chosen, the one with the most versatile content. While the focus seems to be on popular film and TV franchises such as Star Wars, Marvel, DC, Jurassic Park, Game of Thrones, the TV series *Rick and Morty* (Adult Swim, 2013-present), Pixar films and so forth, the nature of the videos is vastly different. For one, they produce videos that focus on easter eggs, references, and hidden meanings, often titled as "…everything you missed". These videos such as 'Star Wars LAST JEDI Breakdown – All Easter Eggs & References (FULL MOVIE)' (New Rockstars, 2017a) systematically go through trailers, TV episodes, or films showing easter eggs and references, and explain what they are referencing. The material used in these videos changes: while trailer videos contain the moving pictures from the trailers, videos for TV series or films often only including stills. This shows that the channel most likely has a license to use trailer material while they are not allowed to use actual footage from film and TV. In addition to the focus on references, New Rockstars also publishes videos that discuss plot structures or casting choices of upcoming films, fan theories, rumours, and current public discussions with for example the video 'Star Wars Last Jedi FAN EDIT – Changes Explained!' (New Rockstars, 2018). This video focuses on a fan-edit of *Star Wars: The Last Jedi* (2017) and addresses the critique that the original edit cut out a lot of female-led scenes. Therefore, the team at New Rockstars addresses the discussion that was revived in 2017 about women in Hollywood with allegations of sexual misconduct against Harvey Weinstein and other big names in Hollywood.

The variety of not only the pop-culture films that New Rockstars addresses, but also of the content of what is being said about these instalments, enables the channel to be part of discussions and to inspire them as well. The *Last Jedi* reference video earned 784,000 clicks within the first month of publication (published 24 December 2017) with 1,735 comments of which most discuss both content, and presentation of the video. Three and a half years after publication the video has earned 1.8 million views and 2,521 comments. While showing expertise in certain areas of pop-culture such as comic book films and Star Wars, New Rockstars is versatile and involved in pop-culture, culture, and society

in general, and is also the channel with overall the most clicks with over 1 billion in total as of June 2021.

The second channel, Mr Sunday Movies, was founded in 2013 and acts as a podcast show in collaboration with The Weekly Planet Podcast, both parts of the Australian pop-culture podcast provider Planet Broadcasting. While Planet Broadcasting offers different podcasts across pop-culture including humorous content, general discussions, and analysis of current content, Mr Sunday Movies focuses, as the name suggests, on films. Again, neither the YouTube channel nor the website of Planet Broadcasting provide much background information about the curators of the channels. The content of Mr Sunday Movies shows clear expertise in discussing film content and their status in pop-culture. However, compared to New Rockstars, the content appears to focus mainly on Marvel, DC, and Star Wars with a few detours such as for 2017s *IT* or the Alien franchise. Furthermore, the channel focuses on references and easter eggs featuring 61 videos listed as "Easter Egg Video's" in the playlists of the channel (as of July 2021). In addition to these, Mr Sunday Movies also publishes reviews, trailer breakdowns with "Things You Missed", and reflections on current movies, for example 'How Do Force Projections Work? (with Star Wars Explained)' (Mr Sunday Movies, 2018) or 'What's The Worst Movie Of 2017?' (Mr Sunday Movies, 2017a).

Compared to New Rockstars, Mr Sunday Movies produces similar content but focuses on the niche of comic book films and Star Wars. However, in their videos like for example 'STAR WARS: THE LAST JEDI – All Easter Eggs, Cameos & References' (Mr Sunday Movies, 2017) Mr Sunday Movies shows scenes from not only *The Last Jedi* (2017), but also from previous Star Wars films, leading to the assumption that the collaboration with Planet Broadcasting includes licensing rights to show and use such material. The video has also been published on 17 December 2017, a week before the video with the same content by New Rockstars (24 December 2017), and right after the film was released (domestic release: 15 December 2017). This leads to the assumption that the film was seen by the Mr Sunday Movies team before the official theatrical release. It can be assumed that a combination of the earlier publication of the video together with the scenes from films as well as the 14:52min runtime of the video (compared to 45:42min in the New Rockstars video) leads to the higher number of immediate clicks – 822,000 a month after upload and 1.1 million views after three and a half years – as well as more comments, 4,719 after three and a half years. Interestingly enough, almost all of these comments were added on YouTube within the first month of publication. Similar to other videos, comments here, again, reflect on the content and presentation of the video, as well as additional easter eggs or references, that aren't listed in the video.

However, while the *Star Wars: The Last Jedi* easter eggs/ references video shows a higher amount of social following, comments and clicks, the channel Mr Sunday Movies has the smallest number of subscribers with only 1.24 million (compared to 3.01 million subscribers for New Rockstars and 1.88 million subscribers for Every Frame A Painting). In terms of total clicks for the channel Mr Sunday Movies has the second highest amount with 472 million clicks in total (compared to 1.05 billion for New Rockstars and 93 million for Every Frame A Painting). These numbers suggest that while the content might be more accessible or appreciated by fans, the limited variety of the channel's coverage has an influence on the overall social following on YouTube.

This could mean that covering a broader and more versatile range of content leads to a broader and maybe even more active (number of comments) following. However, the third chosen example Every Frame A Painting displays a different trend. With 1.88 million subscribers, Every Frame A Painting has more subscribers than Mr Sunday Movies but ranks far behind the other two channels with only 93 million clicks in total. As Every Frame A Painting stopped producing content in December 2017 and has the least number of videos uploaded, the comparably low number of total clicks can be easily explained. However, the fact that the number of subscribers is higher than Mr Sunday Movies who are still producing videos once again points towards the content of the videos themselves as being important when it comes to a social following.

The channel Every Frame A Painting are the only channel out of the chosen examples that is not operated or in cooperation with a media or publishing group. Rather, it was curated by two individuals that clearly state their professional expertise as insiders of the industry (one an editor and one an animator) in both videos, and the online statement as to why the channel shut down in December 2017 (Zhou, 2017). The channel, after being founded in 2014, produced only a total of 28 videos between April and September 2016 and officially announced that they had shut down production over a year later in 2017. The content produced in this time span differentiates a lot from the other two channels with a clear focus on industry specific production. This includes videos on camera techniques (shot and reverse shot, tracking shot), how to stage for example action or visual comedy, staging ensemble casts, or even how the MCU connects its many instalments through music.

As explained in the statement upon closing the channel, the intention of Every Frame A Painting was to open a dialogue and to discuss and explain filmmaking, and especially the visuals and not the content as opposed to most channels, with people outside the industry. In this case, the channel proves a particular hands-on expertise of filmmaking, and offers a communication, an almost lecturing structure similar to the portal SkillShare, which for a set price offers tutorials on different fields of

creative work. The examples chosen are less taken from current pop-culture, but focus on well-established content, which is more reminiscent of film schools, than YouTube channels focusing on recent pop-culture. Nevertheless, Every Frame A Painting also offered detailed analysis in the video essay 'The Marvel Symphonic Universe' (Every Frame a Painting, 2016), which focuses on the MCU and earned since its upload in September 2016 7.3 million clicks and 17,034 comments (as of July 2021). These comments, as before, mainly reflect on content and presentation of the video, but also include added information after the release of new MCU films such as *Thor: Ragnarok* (2017), as well as comments on the fact that Every Frame A Painting stopped producing videos. More interestingly though, the publication of this video that criticises the overall composition of the MCU is to not be recognisable enough subsequently influenced Mark Mothersbaugh, composer of *Thor: Ragnarok* (Compendio, 2017). This refers back to the previously mentioned interrelation between Hollywood, semi-professional social media outputs, and fans, which demonstrates the potential for further research in this area that is constantly evolving.

Compared to New Rockstars and Mr Sunday Movies, Every Frame A Painting offers the most niche information and the highest level of expertise displayed. While the content is both the smallest in number and the least related to current pop-culture and references, the channel still has more subscribers than the still-active Mr Sunday Movies. This shows that a social following and engagement is not only determined by the content and popularity of what is being talked about but may also relate to the quality itself. Every Frame A Painting seems to offer more than just an overview of the current geek culture, it offers a chance for industry outsiders to understand the means of filmmaking and to turn themselves into expert film analysts.

The aspect of expertise and demonstration of knowledge therefore is not exclusive to the presenter on the YouTube channel. It is furthermore absorbed by the viewer of the respective knowledge display, and carried into the next conversation, which turns the viewer into a user. Produsage is therefore a cycle, a process, that revolves around knowledge and information being gained, reflected on, displayed, and gained again.

Outside the Box: Easter Eggs and References

This chapter has demonstrated central aspects of references in arts and entertainment as well as the display of knowledge. For one, I have demonstrated how pop-culture spreads and is built through a network of cross-references: visual, textual, performance based, semantic, semiotic, and so forth. I have argued that all these elements, parody, genre, pastiche, and easter eggs, inherit a high amount of intertextuality while also acting as paratext. They furthermore display different content that is being

referred to. Easter eggs in particular have the potential to not only refer to and remind us of something that has already been there in the way parody and pastiche do; they have the capacity to layer different kinds of meaning into the moment they appear on-screen, referring backward and sideways to familiar contexts, as well as forwards to contexts that might be established in the future. In this last case the process of recognising and understanding a reference is almost inverted. Only after the future instalment in, for example, a film series has been released, the easter egg can be seen as what it is: the establishment of another context, an easter egg for something that does not yet exist at the time of first appearance, leading to a requirement of re-watching older material. On the last level easter eggs can also refer to something that is completely disconnected from the original context, as the example of the Star Wars robots in *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981) has shown.

Many pop-culture instalments such as films, TV series, games, and so on nowadays create additional narration to the main story through references, as previously mentioned in the context of *Stranger Things* (Netflix, 2016-present). The structure of children being the centre of the story facing a life-threatening danger refers to a lot of Stephen King's work, especially *IT* (1986). Familiar tropes such as high school scenes and bullies mark the series as a coming-of-age story, the shady military facility that seems to conduct illegal experiences is a familiar science fiction and horror element. Being set in the 1980s the series also inherits countless references to the time through clothes, video game arcades, specific board games, and music. Furthermore, the series is loaded with small easter eggs such as main character Will stating in S02E01 'Chapter One: MADMAX' (Netflix, 2017) his favourite candy is Reese's Pieces, a candy that became popular after *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial* (1982). Another easter egg example that structured the series in itself by pointing forwards can be found in S02E03 'Chapter Three: The Pollywog' (Netflix, 2017): while chasing a small and cute alien creature in the school, which was adopted and named after the Musketeer d'Artagnan by the character Dustin, the word "EVIL" can be seen on the bathroom wall where the creature is cornered. This very early on foreshadows that this creature is in fact not friendly. As the word, however, is positioned on the side of the frame in the dark behind a door, it can be missed easily.

Image removed due to copyright

Figure 5 Screengrab from Stranger Things S02E03 (Netflix, 2017)

Additionally, while traditional acts of referencing, such as parody, refer to something else mainly in order to evoke familiarity and make a connection, easter eggs also have an interactive element to them. First, they can point towards something that has no reference point at the moment the easter egg appears, but rather something that might be coming up later in an instalment, foreshadowing events and instalments in a universe. Second, easter eggs inherit a call to action. They activate the fan to not only look out for easter eggs and find what they are referencing, but to display, communicate and discuss them. Easter eggs, therewith, are a motivator inspiring interaction with the content as well as the medium. Demonstrating the demand for videos circling around easter eggs on YouTube only goes to show that the easter egg hunt and display makes up a large portion of geek pop-culture; an aspect that does require further research and investigation.

It has become clear that visual, textual, and spoken references, and particularly easter eggs, act outside the box: For one they can refer to the text they are inheriting, for instance by foreshadowing events. More often so, however, they point beyond the instalment, fictional world, or transmedia universe, while not necessarily being a part of it. They point backward, sideways, forwards, or even to something completely unrelated through the process of homage. At the same time, they inherit a call to action, so that their potential and meaning carries further and outside the *box of Hollywood content providers* by encouraging fans and semi-professionals to be active in searching, finding, and discussing said references and their meaning/s. Circling back to music across media and particularly musical references, it is important to analyse the (sub)cultural interactions of content providers, semi-professionals, and users with musical references. Setting this interaction in relation to modes of musical referencing enables us to analyse how musical references act outside various boxes by utilising pop-culture, connecting it and creating it at the same time.

What kept connecting the many different aspects of referencing in this chapter were familiarity and reflection of the individual. Both have been previously connected by me with how a user experiences music in and across transmedia universes in an active and cognitive process. The personal, subconscious relationship an individual has with music, which can influence how a film, TV series, game, novel, and so forth is experienced, must be seen as an additional layer on top of other ways music is referential. While visual and textual references, as argued, have the ability to point in different directions and towards different things, while communicating meaning, I propose the idea that music may hold the potential to overtake textual and visual references in terms of complexity and layers of what can be referred to. Considering the layers of music that can be analysed alone – instrument, key, rhythm, repetition in itself and in greater context – it is essential to take a closer look at how musical

references in particular are being constructed, used, layered, detected and displayed across pop-culture. The following chapter will examine similarities and differences musical references have to visual and textual references in order to support this hypothesis.

Chapter 4: Musical References, Cultural Codes and Transmusical Storytelling

After a detailed examination of visual and textual references across media and pop-culture, we now shift our attention back towards the focus of this project: music. The previous chapter has made it clear that pop-culture references exhibit multiple functions to tap into visual, textual, performance based, or musical levels while inheriting various content that is being referred to. Easter eggs and references to elements such as plot-points or camera shots imbue pop-cultural productions such as *Stranger Things* (Netflix, 2016-present) with additional meaning that adds narrative and cultural information.

As already discussed, the references in *Stranger Things* are not only countless but also of a very different nature, relying on the viewer's familiarity with the referred-to material, as well as a keen eye to spot small hints. Additionally, they are establishing specific rules within the TV series. The aspect I have only mentioned once and briefly before, but which is central to the *Stranger Things* series and its perception, is music. The series utilises music from the 1980s not only to make the setting in the time period authentic, but also to add additional meaning to scenes. For example, the song 'Should I Stay or Should I Go' by The Clash (Epic, 1982) establishes a connection between two of the main characters in season one: in a flashback scene we see Jonathan Byers play the song to comfort and distract his younger brother Will from an argument their parents are having. Throughout the rest of the season, the song is used by Will, who is then missing and trapped in the Upside Down (an alternate dimension parallel to the real world) to communicate with his family, showing them that he is still alive. Will is only able to establish this connection while being inside the parallel dimension equivalent of his house. With the monster getting closer to Will, the main lyrics of the song "should I stay or should I go" embody Will's inner conflict between reaching safety and being able to communicate with his family.

The music here fulfils three functions at the same time: First, it establishes a period setting, second, it gives narrative information about what is happening, and third, it establishes a connection between characters while also providing emotional highlighting and resonance. Music has the ability and flexibility to have multiple functions and meanings at the same time, which is what makes musical references important to discuss on their own terms. Through different elements of a composition such as instrumentation, harmonic changes, timbral palettes, or rhythm, music can establish a network of connections. If the music has been composed and used in pop-culture before being used in a film or series, even more connections and layers are established through the cultural associations that are part of the prior mediation process of the music itself and therefore it has potential to become a transmedia universe. This potential has briefly been discussed in the Introduction of this thesis on the

example of *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, and will be explored further in this chapter . In that process, music layered with multiple references engages in an act of transmusical storytelling.

Furthermore, as argued previously, music influences how the user experiences a pop-cultural instalment such as a film, TV series, or game. For example, if a scene is threatening or peaceful, music can trigger certain corresponding emotions and moods. In this process, a layer of emotionality is provided by the music being applied over the scene. Music enables (multi-)referencing at the same time, while also being part of the experience and therewith world-structure. To understand how these complex and sometimes subliminal connections work, musical analysis across the layers is essential. As previously established, literature addressing pop-cultural references is somewhat rare and mainly focuses on textual or industry/ commercial aspects. Worse still, the academic landscape appears to be even more deserted when it comes to material examining musical referencing.

It is important to note that I am not discarding the extensive work that has been produced on film music theory and composition techniques, for example the work of Tagg (2005, 2009, 2013), Harper/ Eisentraut (2009), Kloppenburg (2017), Kassabian (2013), Winters (2010), Mera/ Sadoff/ Winters (eds, 2017), Buhler (2016), Mera (2009), Cenciarelly (ed., 2021), Scheurer (2008), and many more. However, when it comes to film music theory, like academic literature on pop-culture references, it tends to focus merely on techniques and how they connect different parts of a film. This, however, does not pay sufficient attention to the relationship that music establishes with both the user, as well as pop-culture outside the instalment. This chapter therefore will not go into detail on compositional techniques such as mood techniques or mickey-mousing (used to describe tonal and musical mirroring of on-screen events often used in cartoons). Furthermore, I will not expand on how musical motifs are built and developed in film and TV, a technique that has been established in western art music and opera, especially by Richard Wagner in the 19th century. This chapter will instead focus on exploring the different approaches to understanding the experience of music as a reference, as an "easter egg" in an instalment and the various layers of meaning and experience that come with how musical referencing is used. The goal is to highlight the dynamics and the relationships between composer, filmmaker, user, produser, and pop-culture perception, all of which are in a constant flux of experiencing, interpreting, communicating, and understanding.

With this thesis being an intersection of two academic disciplines, I am in a very advantageous but also relatively less-researched area with this project. While media theorists might lack the terminological knowledge to analyse music, musicologists tend to stick to familiar ground such as compositional techniques and motif analysis. However, considering music in video games for a moment, the elements

and composition that make up the music within video games while considering the requirements for adaptability during a gamer-decision based movement through the game come with their own needs, patterns, uses, and a very modular nature – a fascinating academic field that by now has been explored by many scholars such as Timothy Summers/ Melanie Fritsch (2021), Timothy Summers (2016, 2018, 2019), Noah Wardrip-Fruin/ Pat Harrigan (2004). Describing a structure of musical referencing hence represents a challenge for me to marry, at least temporarily, two disciplines. In order to do so, the first part of this chapter will draw a parallel to visual and textual references I discussed in the previous chapter. Understanding the fan- and user-culture around musical referencing is essential to establish the idea of transmusical storytelling. Similar to textual and visual references, musical referencing does not only require references to be implemented. They need to be detected and understood by the (listening) audience. By again choosing three similarly representative channels to compare data such as clicks, subscribers and likes of music-analysis videos on YouTube, I will argue that the niche of music fans within fan-culture is small but also makes an important contribution to people's understanding of these (musical) texts and their referential potential. I will therefore also take a closer look at comments on YouTube videos connected to music analysis and soundtracks in general, in order to outline the relationship that users have with music. Following that, I will compare the YouTube music fan community as represented by the selected channels to the overall fan-culture as discussed across the sample data from the previous chapter by comparing the data for music-analysis centred channels with the ones analysed in Chapter 3. I will argue that even though music is a personal part of people's everyday life and maybe even personality, the communication about music itself seems to be limited at least outside of academic or specialist contexts. Music, therefore, while not discussed technically or analytically, is still ubiquitous, it is a part of people's life and daily routine. It expands from pop-culture to culture to society and politics, back into every individual's headphones like a rhizome.

This analysis will allow me in the following parts of this chapter to transition into modes of musical referencing and interrogate how musical references create a multi-layered form of transmusical storytelling. While taking a sidestep into film music theory and the different approaches towards referencing I propose, I will furthermore come back to and rework the ideas of remediation (Bolter/ Grusin, 2000) as done in Chapter 3. This will allow me to expand the heart of this chapter in which I will lay out four different types of approaching musical references in pop-culture: (1) Culturally Established Musical Memes such as the use of drums to represent the military; (2) Newly Established, Medium-Specific Musical Memes such as genre typical music or the use of a particular kind of editing for trailers; (3) Composer Brand Identity; (4) The Re-Use of Pre-Existing Music. This will allow me to conclude how musical referencing creates transmusical storytelling by merging different ways of

musical referencing. Overlaps between modes of musical referencing are imperative to the nature of musical referencing, allowing for multiple points of context to be layered upon each other. While including musical references and easter eggs into compositions has a long tradition that can be detected in composers such as Mozart or Wagner quoting themselves or others, it is important to examine the layers currently used in franchises and pop-culture for their narrative potential. This will allow me to draw up a conclusion about how music in today's pop-culture interacts with its history, users, and itself: transmedia universes utilise transmusical storytelling while simultaneously creating transmedia universes around music.

Expert Knowledge and Display III: (Semi-)Professional YouTube Channels and Music Analysis

Before we can examine ways to understand musical referencing, it is essential to draw a parallel from the consumer and user side first. As pointed out previously and analysed by scholars such as Tia DeNora (2000), music is a part of people's everyday life and habits. However, the complexity of understanding music from a psychological and musicological approach requires years of study and training. Subsequently, a high number of consumers might not necessarily be able to understand or analyse musical referencing. Based on this observation the following questions arises: do audiences actually detect these multi-layered references? And do they discuss these in the same manner and to the same extent that visual or textual references and easter eggs are being discussed? In order to find an answer to these questions, it is important to understand the base of what I am for now calling the "musical user". Tim Anderson stated in his 2014 book *Digital Music Economy*, that in the 21st century the audience has been 'replaced with a new actor called the end user, an actor that is essential to the formation, operation, and sustenance of digital information networks' (Anderson, 2014: 15). Similar to Bruns' examinations of produsage as discussed in Chapter 3, Anderson points out that people are not passively consuming anymore, they are not even actively consuming. The user takes on information received in order to produce, fabricate personal stories, connections and networks through user-subjectivity (Anderson, 2014: 15). Anderson's "musical user" overlaps with Bruns' notion of "produsage": user communities are independent in how they work and what they create from the work of content providers in the big (or small) studios. They exist in order to take on, use, and reproduce as produsers, while communicating the act of produsage amongst each other.

However, reconsidering a more subconscious and emotional connection as discussed by Kassabian (2013) and others, it may be that users turning produsers could potentially have an experience that functions differently on the personal and emotional level. Of course, it should be noted that fandom seems to result from a very personal and emotional connection with the material, which can be seen

in the many examples of fans not accepting or trying to negate decisions or whole instalments in their favourite franchise. One example of this would be the petition to remove *Star Wars: The Last Jedi* (2017) from the Star Wars canon after the film was released. While this deserves a more sustained analysis and exploration, my aim in this part of Chapter 4 is to compare music-oriented displays of knowledge online with those of other references.

First, the chosen channels that display musical knowledge and expertise on YouTube are not as prevalent as channels specialising in visual analysis such as easter eggs, pop-culture, or "everything you missed" style videos. While some of the channels I analysed previously do feature some videos that focus on musical aspects, I will for now take a closer look at three channels that specialise in musical expertise across pop-culture.

	bradfrey	Ashton Gleckman	SoundWorks Collection
Founded	2015 Joined YouTube: 15 June 2015	2015 Joined YouTube: 30 March 2015	2009 Joined YouTube: 09 June 2016
Clicks **as on 15 June 2021**	3,722,726	1,948,597	605,617
Subscribers **as on 15 June 2021**	59.9K	22.6K	7.72K
Media Background	Not publically displayed	Not publically displayed	© 2018 Colemanfilm Media Group LLC
Content focus	Film score Analysis and Video Essays Founder and creator Brad Frey also founded a Facebook group for people to discuss film scores	Film scores: Behind the Score Analysis Tutorials Conversations with in-Industry people	Film Sound Soundtrack Sound Awards Video Games Artists
Area of expertise	Composer	Composer and filmmaker	Collective of filmmakers and composers

Table 2 Overview of the Chosen YouTube Channels Analysing Primarily Musical References

The first of these three channels, bradfrey, joined YouTube in 2015 as FilmScoreAnalysis. Creator and curator Brad Frey does not provide or state any disclaimers regarding licensing rights/ copyright on either YouTube or the Facebook page that is linked to the channel. While fair use laws might offer copyright exemption, it is not clear if he holds the rights to produce his videos. While videos of older films show a scene and play the respective music, newer content is not shown, and original recordings are often not played. Rather, videos replicate music through a music score programme. The channel bradfrey, as the original name FilmScoreAnalysis suggests, specialises in film music, particularly the

score analysis of single musical themes and compositions of popular films. The videos are usually very short, between two and four minutes long with a few exceptions, and most of them follow the same layout and structure: a particular film scene is presented, for example 'Christmas Morning' from the first *Harry Potter* film (Bradfrey, 2017). While the scene itself (if it is an older film) plays out in a small window at the bottom of the frame, a reduced score representing the main melodies and accompaniment is shown at the top. The main melody is marked yellow, and the score is amended with two different kinds of comments: basic music analysis, short descriptions of action, and dialogue in the scene.

Image removed due to copyright

Figure 6 Full Screen Grab of bradfrey Video

Image removed due to copyright

Figure 7 Detail from The Screen Grab

In most of his videos Frey does not offer a spoken analysis, but simply points out via written text what seems to be a musicological score analysis. He focuses not so much on how the music interrelates with the film scene and the whole film, but on what is going on in the composition itself. Furthermore, the channel presents videos that show famous scenes without the music playing to demonstrate the importance of film scores. Identifying himself as a film score composer, Frey mainly encourages the discussion of film scores, which is why he refers to his Facebook group and other social media channels in every video. In the description for the "study group" categorised Facebook group he states that he 'created this group to facilitate discussion about film scores, and to provide a forum for analysis. Discussion is highly encouraged!'

The aim of the channel therefore seems to be a music-concentrated analysis and discussion of film scores. Curator Brad Frey, as a composer himself, leaves interpretations to his viewers and seems to see his channel more from a study-like, almost communal and research-driven perspective. However, users seem less interested in discussing the content and tend to either compliment Frey on his video or describe how much they like the music or film scene themselves, at least on YouTube. For example, the video above from *Harry Potter* by bradfrey had, three and a half years after being published (1

December 2017), a total of 21,278 clicks and comments had been disabled. At an earlier point, 2 months after publishing, the video had a total of 4,745 clicks and fourteen comments. While the number of comments overall is small, potentially due to the function being disabled, they still show an indication of engagement from the viewers. The comments can be divided into the following categories: three comments suggesting further content for the channel; three comments expressing love for the music from the video; two comments drawing parallels to other work from the same composer; four people commenting on the structure and quality of the video and channel; one person promoting his own composition; and one comment was unrelated to the video. While this is not necessarily a representative of the content of regular comments on YouTube, it shows quite a range of different views and viewers. It is worth noting here that comments on music videos appear to deviate from comments on easter egg and reference videos, particularly considering the fact that they had subsequently been disabled, whereas other videos of the same channel do not.

The second chosen channel was also founded in 2015 and is curated by Ashton Gleckman (channel named after Gleckman himself), who, on his website, describes himself as a composer and filmmaker. On his website, Gleckman does not state if he holds any rights to the music he analyses online, so this is, again, open for speculation. As the creators of the channel Every Frame A Painting stated in their closing-down essay, they did not hold any rights to use the content. However, they detected a "loophole" in the American copyright system called "fair use", that allowed them through trial and error to find out how much material can be shown without it being taken down by YouTube (Zhou, 2017). It is likely that both bradfrey and Gleckman build their channels on the same premise.

Coming back to Gleckman's channel, he curates videos of different content, dividing them into series. These are three so-called seasons of *Behind The Score*, a format in which Gleckman analyses film scores in lengthy videos (between 45 and 75min). He describes not only how they are composed, but also how they connect to the content of the film, and sometimes even other films of the same series, or by the same composer. The videos mainly show the software (Cubase) Gleckman is using to represent the different layers of the composition as well as a small frame of him recording the video, and occasional film scenes that he is analysing.

Figure 8 Screen Grab of Ashton Gleckman Video (Ashton Gleckman, 2018)

Other video series from Gleckman include interviews with filmmakers, tutorials, and lessons on instruments or composition strategies, which, like Every Frame A Painting, is presented as more of a lecture. Compared to bradfrey, comments for this YouTube channel seem have the same kind of content. The video 'Behind the Score: Wonder Woman (Ft. Marianne Croft)' (Ashton Gleckman, 2017) had, three and a half years after its publication on 04 November 2017, a total of 10,568 clicks and 68 comments, the majority of which were during the first three months of publication with a total of 3,068 clicks and 52 comments. Again, comments featured suggestions of new content for the channel, comments on the content and quality of the video and channel, as well as an appreciation of the soundtrack itself. Gleckman presents his work in both parts, the content of what he talks about and how he does it, as well as the visual presentation with a professional expertise and deep industry insight.

The last example for a music-focused channel to be examined here is the 2016 founded YouTube channel SoundWorks Collection. SoundWorks Collection is a community founded in 2009, which state on their website that they advertise themselves as professionals within the industry that produce content for college school programs as well as the worldwide sound community. Besides film scores, they also consider games as well as sound design and audio post-production of feature films. The structure of SoundWorks Collection allows them to perform deep analysis of even recent films, such as *Blade Runner 2049* (2017) at the time, a video published on 20 October 2017, only two weeks after the worldwide release of the film (SoundWorks Collection, 2017). The video shows scenes from the film trailer as well as interviews with the filmmakers such as the director Denis Villeneuve, composers Hans Zimmer and Benjamin Wallfish, soundmixers, and lead actor Ryan Gosling.

Compared to the other two channels, this display of direct contact with the Hollywood filmmakers differentiates SoundWorks Collection from both bradfrey and Ashton Gleckman. While the other two demonstrate an almost personal desire to share, teach about, and discuss film music, SoundWorks Collection appear to offer behind-the-scenes type of content produced by the makers of a film.

When comparing all three music-focused YouTube channels, it is clear that all of them are presented with a clear statement of expertise and knowledge. Musical score analysis for all three is balanced between technique and effect, including the idea of referential characteristics. Bradfrey appears to be

the least industry-led channel, but, at the same time, has the most subscribers, 3.7million, followed by Gleckman with 1.9 million. SoundWorks Collection, as the most in-industry expert channel, only has 605K subscribers. This lower subscription could be ascribed to the channel being founded later than the others (in 2016), but the difference is only a year. Based on the examination of the chosen samples, It can be hypothesised that, while deep industry insight at first glance seems to be desirable, it might also alienate potential subscribers. Both other channels openly encourage a discussion with the opinions of the users. Bradfrey in particular seeks to involve subscribers and solicit their opinions in the discussion and encourages a display of (expert) knowledge. SoundWorks Collection, on the other hand, appear to have the character of a DVD commentary that provides the viewer with additional information, but doesn't encourage them to become a user of the content. Furthermore, considering a relatively low number of subscribers and interaction via comments on these music-focussed channels in general, the previously mentioned gap between using/ consuming music and discussing music becomes prominent once again. This becomes even clearer when analysing channels that are focused on music compared to channels that mainly focus on visual and textual references.

Expert Knowledge and Display IV: Music Compared to Visual and Textual References

The interaction of fans with the content of a transmedia universe, as well as semi-professionals and content providers through media such as YouTube channels as well as tumblr, TikTok, reddit and so forth is a central aspect of how franchises and transmedia universes expand and evolve across pop-culture. Before we can analyse how musical references have the potential to surpass and overtake textual and visual references, it is central to take one last look at the active consumption and reflection of such by cross-examining the chosen music-focussed channels YouTube channels with the visual and textual focussed channels from the previous chapter. Considering music as not only a multi-layered part of pop-culture, but also something that is experienced differently by every individual, makes its experience almost emotional, and maybe even something one might think everyone can discuss and talk about. However, compared to the previous channels examined in Chapter 3, New Rockstars, Mr Sunday Movies, and Every Frame A Painting, it is clear that the community that is interested in expert knowledge or the discussion of music is much smaller. The number of subscribers of the references and easter eggs or filmmaking-focused channels ranks between 1.24M and 3.01M, while the film score channels rank between 59.9K and 7.72K only. The total number of clicks on videos overall for film-making channels ranks between 92.7M and 1.05B, while the music channels have between 605K and 3.7M clicks in total. The activity of users of the channels also diverges drastically, comparing for example, 14 comments in two months for the *Harry Potter* score analysis with 4,922 comments in one month for Mr Sunday Movie's *The Last Jedi* reference video.

Considering that all channels chosen joined YouTube within 6 years (which means that a higher number of subscriptions and clicks cannot be put into direct relation), I can summarise the following: First, it appears to be an increasing trend to present and display knowledge as well as expertise in video form (almost overtaking the "traditional" text wiki). This does not only include YouTube, but also considers increasing output on other audio-visual social platforms such as Twitch or TikTok – an aspect that will require further research that is beyond the scope of this thesis. As mentioned previously, this might be connected to the fact that hardware and software required for produsage is more easily accessible for everyone than it used to be. Furthermore, based on the chosen samples, it appears that the demand of inside-industry expert knowledge that is presented in a more jovial style, has a higher demand or number of subscribers. This can be reasoned by the timeframe during which these channels and many others have been founded. At the same time, the fan-attitude seems to be essential to the behaviour of consumers. Within the analysed sample data of six channels in this project it appears that the channels with the most jovial tone and a clear statement of personal interest and fandom tend to have more subscribers and clicks than those channels that are more focused on lecturing and industry insight.

Second, the channels that focus on visual references and easter eggs generate a broader spectrum of available content and do have essentially more subscribers and clicks than the music-focused channels. While this does not take into consideration an overall online representation across other platforms such as Twitch or TikTok, which could indicate overall popularity and therewith number of subscribers, it does indicate a difference of who engages how with the analysis of visual/ textual vs. musical references. In order to determine a potential difference in engagement, we'd have to compare videos that focus on music specifically. Some of the visual/ easter egg focussed channels also produce videos on music, such as the MCU symphonic universe video by Every Frame A Painting, or videos by New Rockstars on *The Last Jedi* (2017) music, *Wonder Woman* (2017) music, and a soundtrack analysis of *Baby Driver* (2017). Interestingly enough, these videos published by the more popular channels also show higher amounts of clicks and comments:

Video/ Channel	Date of Upload	Clicks (as of 15 June 2021)	Comments (as of 15 June 2021)
The Marvel Symphonic Universe Every Frame A Painting	12 September 2016	7,359,642	17,019
Star Wars MUSIC – Hidden Meanings of Last Jedi's Score	16 January 2018	106,251	530

New Rockstars			
Wonder Woman Theme – Why It Evokes Intense Power New Rockstars	09 June 2017	1,222,990	1,832
Baby Driver SOUNDTRACK ANALYSIS – How Edgar Wright Created An Action Musical New Rockstars	03 July 2017	604,555	496
The Sound of Blade Runner 2049 SoundWorks Collection	20 October 2017	61,399	87
Behind the Score: Wonder Woman Ashton Gleckman	04 November 2017	10,586	68
"Christmas Morning" – Harry Potter and the Sorcere's Stone (Score Reduction & Analysis) bradfrey	01 December 2017	21,278	(Disabled)

Table 3 Data of Music-Related Videos Across Visual/ Textual and Musical Channels

The most popular video amongst the ones chosen is the MCU music analysis by Every Frame A Painting, which can not only be explained by the channel having a high number of subscribers even three and a half years after they shut down, but also by the fact that the MCU is one of the most popular franchises in the 21st century. The smaller number of clicks and comments for the *Baby Driver* video by New Rockstars with the highest number of subscribers of 3.01M can therefore be explained in relation to the fact that the film itself is, unlike many others on the list, the least well-known. Nevertheless, it still has far more clicks and comments than the *Wonder Woman* score analysis by Gleckman. With only 10.5K clicks, this video has the least number of clicks in the list above, which is especially noticeable compared to the New Rockstars *Wonder Woman* video with 1.2 million clicks.

Within the chosen sample size, the few music-related videos by channels that are mainly focused on references and filmmaking have a significantly higher amount of clicks as well as comments than the ones from the dedicated music channels. This can not only be explained by those channels having more subscribers, but is also alludes to a potential connection to the levels of expertise that are both displayed by the video creators as well as those of the viewer. Music-analysis and theory is quite a

niche skill to possess. While many people have a very strong relationship to (film) music, they often lack the terminology and understanding as to why music functions as it does. Watching a video by a music expert, composer and/or industry professional might appear rather intimidating to the fans, especially if the first thing they see of a video might be the actual musical score or scoring software (as with bradfrey and Gleckman's videos). New Rockstars and Every Frame A Painting on the other hand offer videos that very early on demonstrate they will include scenes from the film, creating a direct connection for the user to the content. Furthermore, a channel that focuses on easter eggs gives the impression of a familiar fan-attitude. The viewer feels more connected to "the other fan that made this video", creating a suspension of disbelief that the presenters of the video are mainly fans like the users themselves and not, in fact, people that work in the industry.

The display of fandom in film and film music analysis videos therefore appears essential for the viewers to become users, to become inspired to discuss the content of the video and to carry on this knowledge. But how does this connect to the overall topic of this project? And, most of all, how does it connect to musical referencing and transmusical storytelling itself? As previously mentioned, musical references have the potential to be more layered, while they are constantly presented throughout film, TV series, games, and pop-culture in general. The analysis of music related videos has shown that easter eggs, visual, and textual references are vividly displayed and discussed, however, it is now also important to examine how this process translates to music specifically. While users often have a personal relationship with music and "use" it for different purposes, there is not much public display of an analysis of references. Music across media and pop-culture acts autonomously from an original text, accumulating increasingly deep and complex connections and contexts. The act of accumulating also means that the music does not, as previously assumed in part one of this project, disconnect from its original context. Rather the nature of the connection changes while music evolves. At the same time, as with musical references, the perception of the musical piece and how it is seen and used by fans changes every time a musical piece is adapted, remediated, and repurposed in a new context, creating a transmedia universe around the music itself. To understand the motions of musical connections across franchises, media, and pop-culture, we need to take a close look at how musical referring works in terms of the context that is being layered to create transmusical storytelling.

Considering Music in Pop-Culture Differently

While music is all around in everyday life and pop-culture (Bull, 2007; DeNora, 2000; Juslin/ Sloboda, 2009, and others), literature on how music connects and works across platforms, and especially musical references, with an outlook beyond techniques or functionality seems to gain more awareness

only recently in the academic field. While one might find some mentions of pop music in film intending to embed a cultural code (Kloppenburg, 2017: 413-450), and the likes of film-music composition methods that develop over the duration of a film (series), those examinations often stay within the realms of either film studies or musicology. The handbook to film music by Kloppenburg (2017), for example, distinguishes between different techniques such as mood, motif, or mickey-mousing. Philip Tagg, on the other hand, as one of the main film music theorists, approaches film music in terms of functionality. Based on the ideas of the Polish musicologist Zofia Lissa in 1965, Tagg establishes 10 functions of film music: Emphasis of movement and real sound, representation of location, source music, comment, expression of actor's or audience's emotion, symbol, the anticipation of subsequent action, and the enhancement of the film's structure aka leitmotifs (Tagg, n.d.).

My goal in this analysis is not so much to reinvent a way to categorise or analyse film music in a musicological way. Instead, I aim towards a different understanding that covers the aesthetics and nature of musical references (different to musical themes or motifs) in their interrelation with the user, as well as the perception in pop-culture. Giving musical references, structures, and easter eggs the attention they deserve will enable me to open the analysis of music in modern AV culture by considering transmusical storytelling in which meaning goes beyond functionality.

As argued in Chapter 3, visual and textual references can be of a different nature, depending on how (directly or indirectly) they refer to particular elements (items, tropes, stereotypes, etc.), and the direction of the relationship between the primary text and the secondary, referred-to text (within the same universe, forwards, backward, sideways). I have established that references and easter eggs, like parody and pastiche, work by recreating and embedding information that can be detected by the literate user, and in that process add meaning. Leaving the demonstration of knowledge aside for now, it can easily be argued that musical references are likely to do the same. The use of 'Come and Get Your Love' by Redbone (Epic, 1974) at the beginning of *Guardians of the Galaxy* (2014) refers to a certain time period, and thus anchors the film on Earth in a certain time after the release of the song. The return of Darth Vader's 9-tone motif at any point within the Star Wars franchise refers to the sinister character, as well as the military force behind him. In other words, the process is very straight forward.

Or is this the case? As established previously in this thesis, music is a vital part of transmedia universes. It is one of the main pillars on which they are built, and it enables universes to connect across platforms, instalments, and reboots. Furthermore, I have argued that music builds a connection with the users of a universe on a more subconscious level that is generated by individual and personal

emotions being either triggered by music, such as increased heartbeat, or emotions being connected to specific music through repeat listening across a variety of experiences not connected to the original text. Subsequently, this influences how an entire instalment, the transmedia universe and pop-culture as a whole, are experienced. While personal emotions can be connected to a film, for example a specific movie that makes us think of a former partner, the music of that film would be able to trigger the same emotions in a new context, like if it was to appear on a Spotify Soundtrack playlist curated by someone else or even an algorithm. 'Come and Get Your Love' not only refers to a time period, it sets the beginning of the film in the 1980s, and therewith the plot of the film roughly 30 years later (embodied by a grown-up protagonist). The jovial, upbeat nature of the song establishes a comical tone for the whole film. Furthermore, through the previous introduction of central protagonist Peter Quill receiving the song on a mixtape from his dying mother, the music establishes an emotional connection between Peter, his mother, the music, and the user by evoking compassion and emotion that relates to family and death. Darth Vader's theme, on the other hand, evolves through repetition and changes ever so slightly with every new iteration in succeeding instalments and each film: sometimes loud or quiet, subtly implemented in another theme such as a love theme, performed with a full orchestra or just played by a single instrument. The theme changes along with the characters and the plot development of the film series, and in interaction with other themes, constantly adapting, reflecting, and communicating this to the listener. As established in Chapter 2, music introduces more layers of meaning to a pop-cultural instalment, which turns the music through repetition and the change of the nature of the connection into an autonomous instance within pop-culture. Musical references are therefore the core of how music connects and evolves across pop-culture. Moreover, music is an integral, if often overlooked, aspect of transmedia universes. It creates and connects spaces that act both in a way of building and signposting, as well as personal emotional connections. These multiple layers of connections and meanings that interrelate within a specific fictional universe and outside of it creates transmusical storytelling.

In order to go deeper into the nature of different forms of musical references, let me refer back to the concept of remediation, which was explored previously. Remediation in a technical understanding is focused on the process of new (digital) media remediating their predecessors such as analogue TV, radio or print journalism. However, most of these acts of remediation, and the awareness of a remediated instalment such as a novel, usually happens in a subtle way, which crosses the lines into adaptation on the level of content. The film adaptation of *The Lord of the Rings* books (1954-1955) at no point explicitly exclaims "we are remediating the novel". Rather, the 'content has been borrowed, but the medium has not been appropriated or quoted' (Bolter/ Grusin, 2000: 44) This process of

borrowing content, which I have previously called a reinterpretation or reimagining, can also be seen as a form of repurposing (Bolter/ Grusin, 2000: 45).

This understanding of repurposing and reimagining is central to analysing how a musical reference works. Going forward, I will use the word repurposing to describe the action of taking a musical piece, motif, theme, or element, which has connotational value to it, and re-using it in a different context.[25] Through this act, the original connotation serves the purpose to be transported into the new context. The music is furnished with a new purpose. For example, while 'Come and Get Your Love' was originally a pop song in the 1970s connected to a certain band, music genre, and youth culture, it was repurposed to transfer these associations into *Guardians of the Galaxy* (while also setting the tone for the film and connecting it to the characters). As the main characteristic of (digital) media of the 21st century, reimagined and repurposed content, plus the new medium, however, 'remains dependent on the older one in acknowledged or unacknowledged ways' (Bolter/ Grusin, 2000: 47). One can detect repurposed content by being familiar with the predeceasing medium or context. For example, S04E01 of the TV series *Black Mirror* (Channel 4, 2011-2014; Netflix, 2016-present) 'USS Callister' uses familiar elements from the *Star Trek: The Original Series* (NBC, 1966-1969) through visual structures and stereotyped characters, as well as a 4:3 screen ratio at the beginning of the episode. The old TV series and its familiar elements were repurposed to evoke familiarity and connection between the two.

Similar to needing familiarity of content in order to detect and understand references in a film, game, book or in music, repurposing will always allude to the original text. It is up to the user to detect, understand and maybe even communicate that the repurposing is understood, which gives the process of repurposing a social, if not economic dimension.

In terms of references, repurposing adds another level of understanding. While Captain America's shield in *Iron Man 2* is a paratext (in this specific context) that refers to the text of the (then upcoming) *Captain America: The First Avenger* film as well as comic books, it also repurposes the item itself, if not a specific comic, as the shield has had different designs over the years. This point might feel debatable and maybe slightly stretched for easter eggs and references. However, a musical reference can be seen as both: a repurposing (of the song, theme, sound structure) and a paratext referring to both the original text, and maybe even a different text unrelated to either instalment (considering that many musical references are used more than once). 'Come and Get Your Love' in *Guardians of the Galaxy* is a repurposing of the song and the 70s music culture, while it is also a paratext that refers to the original

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[25] This differs from how Caldwell used the word in e.g., Caldwell (2006).

artist Redbone and album *Wovoka* it was published through. Moreover, it is also a paratext that refers to pop-culture instalments, that used the music but are not connected to the MCU such as the TV series *Swingtown* (CBS, 2008) or the film *Dick* (1999).

Approaching Musical References

But what exactly can we classify as a musical reference? And where are the borders, similarities, and differences between these? In order to categorise different approaches towards the understanding of musical references, I, as mentioned above, deliberately distance myself from common music theories and musicological approaches. It is important to note that music in film and TV has been excessively researched across a vast variety of approaches and specific aspects. This ranges from approaches considering composition, culture, or consumer habits such as Cenciarelli (ed., 2021), Mera/ Sadoff/ Winters (eds, 2017), Godsall (2021), Scheurer (2008), Tagg (2009, 2013), Harper/ Eisentraut (2009), Kloppenburg (2017), or Kassabian (2013), to very specific analysis of for example music in franchises and opening titles by Buhler (2016), aspects of pre-existing music by Godsall (2018), and the adaptation and re-invention of music by Mera (2009). Additionally, I have previously engaged with approaches to diegetic music by Winters (2010) as well as the discourse of musemes by Tagg (2005), and musical topics as discussed by Monelle (2006). However, in order to engage with musical references, it is important to not limit this discourse to specific aspects or approaches, which could exclude certain important aspects in an analysis. To understand musical referencing we have to approach music the same way as we have approached transmedia with a concept of universes that can encompass all aspects that would not be considered essential, or even a part of the discourse if we narrow our approach to certain (e.g., musicological or cultural) aspects. The intention here is not to focus on the actual composition technique or functionality, but to grasp the aesthetic of how references build connections by concentrating on what is being referenced. Musical referencing goes beyond harmonies or chords, common techniques, and connections to the plot. Furthermore, we cannot establish clear modes of musical referencing as they continuously overlap and work hand in hand. The below breakdown is created to understand layers and capacities as well as how they work together at the same time in order to create transmusical storytelling. I am therefore proposing four modes of approaching musical referencing:

(1) Culturally Established Musical Memes

(2) Newly Established, Medium-Specific Musical Memes

(3) Composer Brand Identity

(4) The Re-Use of Pre-Existing Music

These different (overlapping) approaches will enable me to describe the idea of transmusical storytelling though musical references.

The term musical meme here is derived from the understanding of a meme as an element of culture such as a video, behaviour, quotation, picture, or sound/ music that is spread via repetition and slight variation to become distinguishable. I will be referring to musical structures as well as musical memes. Structures refer to the composition itself, whereas memes refer to the specific use of those structures and their pop-cultural context(s).

The distinguished use of this particular terminology allows a comprehensive understanding of the complexity of musical referencing that, while entailing elements of, does represent a slightly different focus compared to the use of terms such as musemes (Tagg, 2005) or musical topics (Monelle, 2006). Musemes are, as discussed by Tagg, heavily connected to musical structures and at their core describe 'minimal units of musical "code"' (Tagg, 2005: 2), such as specific chords that are used and reused across various compositions to signify specific meaning. Tagg signals that this approach does rely heavily on literature and linguistic theories, meaning that it is limited in what it can encompass, but still 'focuses attention on musical-structured detail and on the relation of such detail to life "outside" music' (Tagg, 2005: 19). Subsequently, using the term museme in context of this thesis would limit what can be described. Similar to that, a musical topic, as discussed by Raymond Monelle, would also lead to restrictions in encompassing what this project is focusing on. Musical topics consider the correlation of musical structures that include both a signifier a signified, as well as their repetition across culture. Drawing yet again a parallel to linguistic terminology, Monelle states musical topics can be of various complexity and stylistic traits, similar to literary genres (Monelle, 2006: 7).

Both topics, and musemes are terms that could be used to analyse musical referencing. However, the approach to musical references in this project is deliberately broad considering aspects beyond a relationship between specific musical structures, their repetition in specific contexts, and culture. By considering the ever-changing nature of memes, which are frequently being reused, updated, and repeated to establish themselves as iconic, this term adds a temporal dimension, which embodies the processual nature of musical referencing, constantly in flux and ever-changing.

(1) Culturally Established Musical Memes

The first mode, culturally established musical memes, might be the oldest and at the same time maybe least-layered way of musical referencing. Most of these memes have (in the western art world) been established and built throughout centuries of music and composition. The Can-can in *Orphée aux enfers*, which in its musical structure was based on a common dance in the 19th century, evokes a

certain familiarity and connection to the cultural event of dancing. It transports a feeling of fun and leisure activities into the opera. In the history of western music, many commonly known folksongs or dances have been integrated into musical pieces to incorporate a certain "feeling" into them. Furthermore, due to the evolution of musical instruments, many associations have been established as well, such as small drums, which stem from the military, often used for this distinctive connection. This refers back to what I discussed in Chapter 1, namely that particular instruments carry a culturally evolved/ dependent connotation with them, for example, bells (church, festivity, danger) or horns (hunting). This is, however, very reliant on the user's cultural context. For example, bells have different connotations in some Asian cultures compared to Anglo-Western cultures. Most of these instruments have made their way from everyday use into art or concert music. Other instruments have been developed and are still regularly being used to imitate animal sounds such as flutes imitating birds.

The referential nature of these structures lies in the way they were inserted into music: in the first instance, a dance or a horn is used in an opera or composition in order to remind the audience of, and to refer to, the cultural activities of dancing, hunting, and so forth. Through the repetitive use of this structure as a reference, they become a culturally established musical meme that, even though most people do not regularly go hunting, can be immediately detected, and understood. These established connections are then often used in modern media music – for example the use of small drums and trumpets in 'The Imperial March' to signify the military structure of the empire and its soldiers (Stormtroopers). These musical memes are not only used in orchestral compositions in Western art music but can also be heard in pop music such as 'Stop the Cavalry' by Jona Lewie (Morgan Studios, 1980). The use of trumpets and drums, as well as the anti-war message, clearly marks the song as related to war and military, while it was subsequently turned into one of the most popular Christmas songs due to its release in early December 1980.

Culturally established musical memes repurpose and adapt, if not remediate their original cultural connection, transferring the meaning into a new culture, which might not even have the same traditions anymore. Still, they have been used and established over such a long time that the musical reference serves as a paratext that offers additional information to the new text. Cultural memes offer an interpretation of how the text is supposed to be understood. Moreover, they almost seem to direct it. The listener who is familiar with the background of the musical reference here – again, this relies on a particular cultural background and might not necessarily be understood by people with different music-cultural backgrounds – almost automatically deciphers what the user experiences and adds the additional meaning to the experience subconsciously.

(2) Newly Established, Medium-Specific Musical Memes

Compared to the previous approach, the second identity of musical referencing, newly established and medium-specific memes, brings a more complex musical structure to musical referencing that has been established through repetition in recent years. The main characteristic here is that – unlike the first approach – these memes did not emerge from common use in cultural practices. Rather, they have been established within a specific medium such as film, videogames, or television. In order to develop a clearer understanding of this complex characteristic, we can divide it into four sub-categories: (1) Story mode memes; (2) Plot point memes; (3) Genre memes; and (4) Trailer memes.

Story Mode Memes

For a start, story mode memes, are detectable in such moments in a film, TV series, or game during which a particular kind of music is used in order to achieve a certain effect, and which are frequently used across pop-culture. For example, the TV series *Hannibal* (NBC, 2013-2015) regularly shows the titular character, Hannibal, at his home cooking what appears to be delicious dinners. It is, however, clear that the ingredients he uses are human body parts, mainly because the viewer has seen him kill his victims. In the very first episode 'Apéritif' (S01E01) we see Hannibal enjoying a home-cooked dinner as character introduction. This directly follows a scene in which the other main character Will Graham realises that the episodes' unknown killer actually consumes his victims.

It is clear to not only those who are familiar with the source novels for the *Hannibal* series, or even the previous films, but through the edit from Will Graham saying "he eats them" to a direct cut to the dinner-scene, that Hannibal, is in fact, consuming human flesh. The scene is set to the music of Johann Sebastian Bach's *Goldberg Variations* (BWV 988, 1741), a peaceful piano tune. The use of this musical references, links, and connects to different tropes and serves as a paratext on various levels: For one, the same music was used in *The Silence of The Lambs* (1991), another film based on the same source material in a scene where Hannibal attacks and murders two officers in his prison cell. At the same time, the use of classical music here, together with the eloquently cooked meal and fancy attire, establishes the character in the very first scene as an intellectual, sophisticated figure. While the use of classical and pre-existing music in itself is another point on the musical references list, the trope of the highly functional, intelligent and intellectual psychopath that listens to classical music is a trope, if not at times a meme, that can be found across film, TV, and games. The music is repurposed, it creates a paratext to characterise a figure on-screen and establish a certain profile. At the same time, it highlights how intense the scene is by combining something gruesome with something beautiful and peaceful, counterpointing the visuals.

Plot Point Memes

The second newly established musical meme I want to examine is the plot point meme. Most people will have found themselves, subconsciously at least, recognising a familiar moment in a romantic comedy where the main characters break up. On the one hand, this is justified by the three-act structure (originally described by Aelius Donatus in the fourth century A.D. and adapted by Syd Field in 1979) employed by many films as well as TV series, games, or even in theatre, opera, and novels. Stories often follow the structure of setup, confrontation, and resolution. As with culturally established musical memes, the three acts of storytelling are a cultural artefact that not only serves as a basic principle of storytelling, but also of story understanding. The user navigates their experience along with the familiar narrative structure. This mode is often accompanied and heightened by a specific type of music that boosts the understanding of the plot point. When it seems like the romantic couple will break up, a sad (pop)song is played while they both depart and "go on with their lives separately". In an adventure film, when all seems lost, the task appears unachievable, and the hero almost dies, the music tones down from a full orchestra to only a few instruments, often violins, that emphasize the isolated feeling of the hero. With their last ounce of strength, the hero grabs a sword and defeats the villain, the orchestra rises to a high and plays the main theme of heroism as good eventually prevails. This feels and sounds familiar. The musical meme that goes along with familiar plot points serves as a musical reference to communicate the weight of the situation. Furthermore, in many cases the sound editing isolates the music and mutes all or most other sounds: background sound effects and dialogue disappear, and the user is left alone with the heroes' (or couples') despair and feelings of hopelessness. In this way, the music itself, as a reference and as a composition, is both an established plot-device as well as an emotional connection and trigger.[26]

Genre Memes

While the first two modes of newly established memes are directly connected to the story and the narrative, the third point, genre-specific music, relates to the overall atmosphere and experience of a film, series, or game. As mentioned before when I discussed pastiche as a way of understanding genre, it is again important to note that genres are often established and recognised through repetition of certain stylistic or structural features. These characteristics have been used and re-used to refer to previous instalments until a genre is formed. I have already mentioned visual or textual features in relation to western or science fiction. More interestingly, videogame genres are often not only discussed via visuals and content, but also gaming modes such as a first-person shooter, MMORPG,

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[26] This aspect has been discussed in more depth in genre-theory, specifically revolving around music, by scholars such as Negus (1999) or Scheurer (2008).

action role play, and so forth. The music and compositional requirements to accommodate and even create an agency of the user over the music and sound structure in itself are, again, a huge part of the study of video game music as explored by e.g., Timothy Summers and Melanie Fritsch (2021). Building on the previously argued close connection music has with its transmedia universes and users, it is only implicit that certain genres have a certain style of music. Coming back to western films, this seems rather easy to detect: repetitive percussions in the rhythm of one quaver and two semiquavers generate a basic beat.

Image removed due to copyright

Figure 9 Example of Basic Western Percussion

For the quieter moments, it is common to have a single trumpet, guitar, or violin playing, whilst gun-duels are often accompanied by Native American flute and/or a harmonica. This may sound very stereotypical, but it describes an established genre music structure, if not a meme.[27] After decades of Western films, it appears as if the "typical soundtrack" has been culturally established, especially through composers who pioneered in these genres such as Ennio Morricone and Max Steiner. This now offers a chance for composers to have a film or series instantly recognised as what it is, or to play with these expectations by ignoring the musical genre structure or meme. Furthermore, it allows composers to reference this cultural code by using, for example, the western meme in a different genre film to insert a western film characteristic into it. However, while the western genre music meme is very distinctive, other genres have less precise established musical memes. Romantic comedies, for example, often include contemporary pop-songs. Due to changing trends in the pop-music industry and various pop-genres, however, it would not be possible to identify basic musical structures such as rhythm or instruments as it is for westerns. At the same time, certain music is often linked to certain feelings that are transferred into the film through an established plot point meme: a drama or romance often involves violin or piano music, fantasy and adventure films are mainly accompanied by a large orchestral score. The genre of horror films comes with its own set of musical structures and memes including a vibrant base with high-pitched, dissonant strings to establish a scene is not as peaceful as

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[27] For further discourse of style and genre created through musical specifically, see Scheurer (2008).

it looks, or the sudden percussion stroke that accompanies a jump scare to emphasize or even create the shock of such a moment.

As the last example shows, many musical genre memes are intertwined with story mode and plot point memes, a mixture of which forms medium-specific memes. These are called "medium specific", as some musical memes are not transferable from one medium to another. Music develops alongside, is part of, and sometimes even creates the narrative arc across a specific instalment, meaning that certain plot points or story modes within the narrative drive the arc and the development of the composed music itself. However, these arcs develop differently depending on the medium they are composed for. Music across a 90-120min film reflects and intertwines with the act-based structure of the narrative of the film itself while also being self-contained and concluded by the end. A film trilogy, however, and even more so a TV series inherits both, self-contained stories, and a wider arc, which is reflected in the music as well. While a single film would likely have one main climax, a TV series can contain multiple (comparatively smaller) episode-climaxes as well as the (grand) season finale climax.

Trailer Memes

The fourth aspect of newly established, medium specific memes is one that changes frequently, and might even have started to develop most recently. The many elements of trailers and how they act as a/the herald of upcoming film and series events have been analysed in detail by Lisa Kernan (2004) and others, while for example James Deaville/ Agnes Malkinson (2014) focus on music in trailers specifically. While this thesis does not have the capacity to go deep into trailer analysis, and the cognition between what is seen and heard, and how it puts the user in a physical state of excitement, this specific music is worth considering briefly. In the 20th century, many films and TV trailers were more focused on narration, which introduced plots, characters, and suspension, such as the trailer for *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan* (1982). However, in the past two decades the role of the narrator seems to have significantly declined. Film trailers have become an introduction for the main cast as well as establishing shots of the visuals of the film and the overall "feel". This feel is, of course, connected to the genre, which means depending on the film or TV genre, the trailer will be edited in a particular way – and accompanied by a specific type of music. On the one hand, some of the musical genre memes can bleed into the musical trailer memes. For example, the trailer to *Manchester by the Sea* (2016), a modern English drama, opens with melancholic piano music, automatically establishing the genre and feel of the film. 2017s *The Big Sick*, a romantic comedy with dramatic elements, opens with a rhythmic, indie-pop song that sets the light, and humorous tone of the film which establishes it as a comedy from the beginning.

However, the reason trailer memes deserve their own separate entry, is that they not only lend and use other medium-specific musical memes, but that they have also developed their own structures and memes. These are visual, textual, and musical structures, which can be found in many trailers of the 2010s. A YouTube video intended as a parody and uploaded by Auralnauts on 14 August 2017 reflects on these with a detailed breakdown, a transcript of which can be found in the appendix of this thesis.

This display and execution of a meta deconstruction of trailers not only tackles the narrative and visual structure of trailers (as in what kind of shots are being used), but it also comments on them with remarks such as 'mind blowing revelation'. Furthermore, musical trailer memes play a significant role in parody as much as they do in trailers: Musical structures such as the pop-music cover and the already in Chapter 2 mentioned Hans Zimmer/ Mike Zarin blasts (in the transcript called BWAAA) can indeed regularly be found in film trailers. These structures are not only established via repetition but are also key characteristics of the trailer as a medium itself: a trailer, usually between 60 and 150 seconds, aims to catch the viewers' attention and provide information about the upcoming film within a short time span. Moreover, they are mainly a promotion tool that is supposed to get the audience excited to see the film or series. Music plays a major part here not only due to the emotional connection audiences might have with a certain piece of music (be it instrumental or pop-cover), but also through the ability to simply raise a heartbeat through music and get the audience physically excited.

Additionally, the picture and sound effect editing of trailers often very heavily connects to the music used, for example in the first teaser for 2016's *Suicide Squad*, which was edited rhythmically to the music of Queen's *Bohemian Rhapsody* (EMI, 1975). While the film in the end was met with mixed reviews, the trailer had a positive reception and got fans excited for the movie. Moreover, the positive reaction to the teaser induced reshoots and a re-edit of the final feature in a studio-driven attempt for the feature to meet the fun expectations the teaser raised. The studio went as far as requesting the editing support of the creative trailer house Trailer Park (Masters, 2016). The final mixed reviews for the feature can be seen as a result of this switch, as trailer editing, not only in terms of content and picture, but also music, is a very different process compared to film editing. In the trailer, actions, dialogue, and narrative are edited to fit the pace of *Bohemian Rhapsody*, which combines both the familiarity of a popular song, as well as an emphasis on action that increases the excitement. While this style of editing can work for particular scenes in a feature and is often used for action sequences, it does not work for longform editing projects. Since this teaser, the number of trailers that are edited to the rhythm of music has increased and will probably do so in the future. Trailer structures and

memes, while they are using other established memes as a gateway, are nevertheless unique. However, they do not belong in one category with genre memes, as a trailer in itself is a separate medium, a paratext of the film that is filled with more musical paratexts, adding more layers of meaning. While scholars such as Strobin et al. (2015) or Scott Murphy (2014) have provided a great detailed analysis of music and musical trends in recent Hollywood trailers, in connection to musical referencing it is mostly important to note that, again, repetition, re-use, and interpretation stand at the forefront of creating musical memes.

All four sub categories (Story Mode, Plot Point, Genre, Trailers) of (2) Newly Established, Medium Specific Musical Memes have shown both similarities, and differences to the previously described (1) Culturally Established Musical Memes. They also rely on repetition and are not only used to refer to something that has already been there, but they also turn a certain instalment into something particular, for example, a "westernesque" film. However, newly established musical memes have not necessarily developed through a long standing, traditional cultural establishment, but within their specific medium – film, TV series, kids' series, trailer, game, and so forth. By now, they are a cultural artefact that can be used as a reference with a specific, established meaning. They all, through repetition, have constantly repurposed musical structures and memes up to the point where they have become autonomous enough to stand by themselves in order to not only refer to, but rather establish content.

(3) Composer Brand Identity

The third aspect to examine musical referencing and composer brand identity, has already been analysed in Chapter 2 in reference to Hans Zimmer, *Harry Potter*, and copyright law. As mentioned then, most composers have a specific style that makes them recognisable to the familiar user, whether they are "classical" composers or composers for other media such as film, TV, and videogames. While there have been countless work on composer styles throughout musicological research in this directed analysis of approaching musical references and their ability to layer meaning, a musicological examination becomes secondary. Even though most consumers would not be able to put a musicological finger on it, and whilst a detailed score analysis is beyond the scope of this project, it is generally accepted that composers are recognisable by their style. Previously, I looked at this from the perspective of legal rights, tackling the question of whether imitating a style violates copyright law, and if we can determine differences between copying a motif and a style. I also analysed how the different composers working on the *Harry Potter* film series managed to do both: connect the different films musically by re-using and sometimes repurposing motifs and give their films a particular musical

style that works within their musical brand. In the case of the Harry Potter franchise, those films were a crossover of two musical brand identities: one of the film series, and one of the composers. For musical referencing, it is furthermore important that with these specific compositional styles comes a tactic or option of musical cross-referencing.

Most mainstream or famous film music composers have a distinct and easily identifiable musical style. John Williams, for example, is best known for his classical, big orchestra compositions for films such as those in the Star Wars or Jurassic Park franchises. Hans Zimmer is more known for his percussion-heavy, rhythmic compositions and, of course, his trademark horn blasts. Hiring a composer with a certain profile can therefore determine the musical profile of a film, always depending, of course, on the genre as well as storyline and tone of the film. The musical reference, in this case, is less a precise composition practice, but rather connected to the profile of the composer, their previous work, and at times is even related to previous collaborations with the same director (such as Zimmer and Nolan who have worked together on numerous films). Furthermore, imitating a composer's style can also transport the referential character of their profile into a different piece. I have already alluded to this in Chapter 2 where I described Hans Zimmer's running notes as well as the blasts established by trailer composer Mike Zarin. A film or TV series that uses styles that have become famous in films like *Inception* (2007) refer to said well-known film and any connotation that might come with it (genre, mood, tone). A particular compositional style, like an established structure, therefore, works as a repurposing of that style, of the associations that come with it and adds additional meaning to an instalment. Many of these styles have become instantly recognisable for the familiar listener, and therefore inherit great referential potential.

(4) The Re-Use of Pre-Existing Music

The fourth mode of musical referencing, the use of pre-existing music, has already been touched upon in previous chapters, and briefly above. While it is important to recognise the academic scholarship on pre-existing music by for example Godsall (2018), it is important to review it again within the context of musical referencing specifically. I have pointed out that pre-existing music comes with a range of (pop-)cultural codes and previously acquired connotations that are brought into the new instalment. Let's return to the scene of Peter Quill dancing to 'Come and Get Your Love' at the beginning of *Guardians of the Galaxy*. The pop-song here is used as a reference on multiple levels: 1) It sets the mood for the scene, and the whole film, with more fun and humorous tones, compared to previous instalments in the MCU. 2) It establishes the connection the main character has to the music: the mixtape was handed to him by his dying mother on the day he was abducted from Earth. It remains

his only connection to his heritage, humanity, Earth, and his family. 3) The song therefore characterises Peter Quill. Not only does he have this connection to the music but showing him dancing to the beat into a tomb-like cave, casually kicking alien creatures out of the way and avoiding dangers, presents him as an almost Han Solo-like stereotype character – someone who is a good guy but is a little rough around the edges, a joker who doesn't take things too seriously. 4) The feeling of the song and its culturally established context from the 1970s, a period often connected with the "hippie culture", is a cultural code transported into the film. It is, in 2014, clearly set as a counterpoint to the futuristic design of the film set in space with very few elements connecting to earth as we know it from both our reality as consumers, and the MCU reality. The 70s cultural code from the past is mixed with the futuristic elements of the film. 5) This brings me to the fifth level, familiarity. As stated before, fantasy and sci-fi films in particular require familiar elements for the audience to be able to connect to the story and the phantastic characters. 6) Another level of reference 'Come and Get Your Love' offers is the song lyrics themselves, which are about taking initiative and finding (getting) love. This can even be interpreted as a subliminal foreshadowing of Peter Quill's character developing from a loner to the leader of a team of outcasts, who, in the team, finds love. 7) Last but not least, the song offers a reference, that is, however, not inclusive for all audience members. A personal level of reference opens up, but only for those who have heard the song before, perhaps because they grew up with the music, have heard it on the radio before, or in any other context. This ultimately enables them to connect their personal memories to the film, subsequently influencing the experience.

All seven levels of reference for 'Come and Get Your Love' can be seen as a base of understanding that almost every pre-existing music brings to any film, TV series, video game, or other pop-cultural instalments. While not all of them have to occur in every example (not every time that pre-existing music is used do the characters have a personal relationship to it, they often don't even hear it in the scene itself), it is important to note, that pre-existing music acts as a multi-layered reference. This counts for classical and instrumental music as well as pop-music. The music is adapted, remediated, and repurposed in order to add layers to the new context with which it is connected, bringing in all previous connections. Some pre-existing musical pieces are not only used once in a film or series, but multiple times, across platforms, genres, and with different intents (seriously or as a parody). They span across pop-culture and develop a transmedia universe around themselves through repetition and by being connected to a new context constantly.

For example, the initial fanfare *Introduction, or Sunrise* from Richard Strass' *Also Sprach Zarathustra* (1896) was used repeatedly and amongst other pre-existing instrumental music in Stanley Kubrick's

2001: A Space Odyssey (1968). The music is used during the opening sequence of the film as well as a signifier between evolutionary steps: when an ape first learns how to use a tool, and when Bowman is transformed into the Star-Child towards the end of the film. *Sunrise* here sets the tone of the film at the very beginning and subsequently, showing and exploring evolution on an almost philosophical level from homo sapiens to mankind going into space, and subsequently exploring the boundaries of what's possible and imaginable. *2001: A Space Odyssey* is not only enriched with the epic musical composition by Strauss, but also by the tropes the music relates to: *Also Sprach Zarathustra* (1883-1885) is originally a philosophical novel by Friedrich Nietzsche in four parts. Referring to the ancient Persian religion Zoroastrianism, Nietsche's work considers and discusses concepts such as "the eternal recurrence of the same", the "Death of God" and the prophecy of the "overman" (Übermensch), a self-mastered individual that has achieved full power. By using *Sunrise* in *2001: A Space Odyssey* Kubrick transports not only connotations to Strauss' music into the film, but also the ideas and thoughts on the Übermensch, empowerment, the death of God, and even Zoroastrianism itself.

Since the music was used in the film, it has gained significant popularity across pop-culture and is continuously being quoted, paid homage to, re-enacted, and parodied across a multitude of pop-cultural instalments. Not all of these references are necessarily towards the music, but they also include the first section of the film "The Dawn on Men", the Monoloth and HAL 9000. Examples range from Anime and Manga series such as *DragonBall Z* (Fuji TV, 1989-1996), to films such as *Zoolander* (2001), TV series such as *The Simpsons* of *My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic* (Discovery Family, 2010-2019), as well as video games like *Portal* (Valve, 2007). Furthermore, advertising for a live performance of Strauss' composition often refers to "The Music from Space Odyssey", which reinforces if not intensifies the strong connection that has developed across pop-culture between the music and the film. The music itself is therewith spread across media platforms, strongly connected to *2001: A Space Odyssey*, and has subsequently influenced how an individual perceives the music, depending on personal listening- and viewing-history. The public perception of a classical composition has been changed by it being re-used in a different medium, connected to a new, different storyworld. At the same time, a transmedia universe has grown around the musical piece itself, meaning it can now be experienced in many different ways, demonstrating the complexity of musical referencing by using pre-existing music: While a pre-existing musical piece transports additional layers of meaning to a scene or instalment, this can subsequently also disconnect and create a transmedia universe around the music itself that develops independently from the original reference.

Musical References: Transmusical Storytelling

The last but most important approach to musical referencing is considering the layers of the different ways explored above. It could be argued that, as seen in the discussion of memes, most of these reference options overlap more than occasionally. However, it is important to distinguish between overlaps of, for example, genre and cultural meme (like military trumpets in a western film), and such instances in which different referential characteristics are combined, maximising the referential effect of a musical piece. The previous points have been a different approach to functionality and techniques of music in audio visual media that discussed them from a different angle, more oriented towards what is being referred to and how that establishes a relationship. Merging these different ways and memes, however, will explore the full potential approach of musical references. It will lead me to not only the analysis of how interwoven music in audio-visual media can be, but also enable me to define transmusical storytelling while reflecting on the effects this has beyond pop-culture in my conclusion. In order to challenge this, I will look at one specific example that crosses many of the ways of musical referencing discussed above.

The TV series *Westworld* (HBO, 2016-present) is loaded with references on all levels: visual, textual, and musical. This is particularly the case in the first season of the series, which is based on the 1973 film of the same name and roughly adheres to the same plot: in a futuristic world, amusement parks are built with life-like robots called hosts that offer people with the right financial means a chance to act in a way that ordinary society wouldn't allow. The hosts are designed to be companions and lovers, or to be killed by patrons of the park only to be refurbished with memories wiped and then used again. However, the hosts start malfunctioning, questioning their existence, and subsequently killing the humans in the amusement park Westworld. While the 1973 film is more of a survival action film, the TV series takes a more dramatic and nuanced approach to the material. In its first and following seasons, it explores the process of the hosts becoming self-aware, questioning the borders between humanity and artificial intelligence, a common science fiction trope. As the plot of the series has become more detached from the film since the second season, and even more so during the third season, I will focus on the musical composition of season 1 for this exercise.

Taking inspiration from the *Westworld* film, many visual and textual references can be identified in the series, from familiar characters or story arcs to similarly designed places and so forth. This is also reflected in the soundtrack that occasionally transitions from a melodic, theme-heavy score of a 2010s TV series into a dark, atmospheric, cluster- and bass-led sound-accumulation with electronic elements. This has been a typical soundtrack style for 70s and 80s sci-fi and can be heard in several tracks from

the series, including 'Violent Delights', 'Freeze All Motor Functions', and 'MIB' (Water Tower Music, 2016). Composer Ramin Djawadi clearly draws a parallel to the source material, and the primary text, by re-imagining the compositional style of both decade-typical music, and the composition for the film by Fred Karlin (MGM Records, 1973). Comparing 'Freeze All Motor Functions' from the TV series with 'The Gunslinger' from the 70s film clearly shows similarities: A bass-heavy, slow pacing, threatening atmosphere, layered with and interrupted by higher-pitched synthesized sounds.

At the same time, TV series composer Djawadi not only imitates the composition by Karlin but updates it. Like Karlin, Djawadi uses western genre music memes such as the previously mentioned beat, guitars, and a piano style that in terms of both music and aural quality sounds like what the audience would expect a player piano in a saloon to sound like. However, Djawadi mixes these with his compositional style and composer brand identity, thus making his music distinguishable from other compositions. Mainly known as the composer for the TV series *Game of Thrones* (HBO, 2011-2019) (as well as other major films such as *Iron Man* (2008) and *Pacific Rim* (2013)), some parts of the *Westworld* composition sound familiar. For example, the beginning of the *Westworld* Track 'Bicameral Mind' sounds very similar to the *Game of Thrones* 'Winterfell Theme'. They both begin with long notes played on string instruments (Violin and Viola) with a tritone but are in a different key.

This demonstrates the complex web of aural references in Djawadi's music for *Westworld*: The references to the music of the film by at times imitating a certain compositional style (here the one of Karlin), references via musical genre memes (including cultural references), as well as references to his work and his compositional style. However, this becomes even more layered in certain tracks of the series soundtrack, in which Djawadi covers pop-songs from different decades. 12 of the 34 songs of the season 1 series soundtrack are arranged covers from artists such as Radiohead, The Rolling Stones, The Cure, The Animals, Amy Winehouse, Nine Inch Nails and Claude Debussy. Seven of these songs are covered by piano only, often accompanied by an electric piano shown on-screen with the sheets, as well as automatically moving keys, establishing them as part of the narrative.

Image removed due to copyright

Figure 10 Example Screengrab of Player Piano as Visible in Series

These are also the first images of the cover of 'Exit Music (For A Film)' (originally by Radiohead, Capitol, 1997), which marks the end of the first season and the scene right before the hosts start attacking humans in the park. While other covers have a player piano sound to them, 'Exit Music (For A Film)' is played by a full piano, accompanied by strings. The piano itself can be seen as the central instrument in Djawadi's composition for *Westworld*, which is not only established by it being dominant in all music that is inherent to the narrative while also commenting. The opening credits of the series show, besides stylized close-ups of how the hosts are created, skeleton-like hands of an unfinished host playing the piano-dominated theme on-screen the first time the main motif sounds. The time the main motif is repeated in the opening credits, the hands move away from the piano, which keeps playing. The piano thus represents the connection between the created host and their master, as well as the hosts' journey towards independence, which is one of the main themes of season 1 in the series. In the series, the player piano in the saloon often repeats the main theme/ motif in tandem with the hosts repeating their scripted dialogue in their narrative loops, creating a web of connections between theme, visuals, and sounds.

The piano as a central piece is musically and visually connected to covers of modern music, the use of which showrunner Jonathan Nolan addressed in an interview with Vulture, specifically connecting it to the aesthetics of the series itself: 'The show has an anachronistic feel to it. It's a Western theme park, and yet it has robots in it, so why not have modern songs? And that's a metaphor in itself, wrapped up in the overall theme of the show' (Vineyard, 2016). The modern music elements serve as a reminder that this series is both western and science fiction, it is retrospect and futuristic, it has familiar elements to it as well as unfamiliar ones. However, the use of modern music not only works as a metaphor for the theme of the show, but also serves as a familiar element that adds layers of meaning through a motion of musical referencing.

The first cover arrangement that appears in the series is 'Paint It Black' in S01E01, performed by a full orchestra, including the above-described western meme basic rhythm. It accompanies a shoot-out involving some of the main characters of the series and a group of outlaw hosts. This arrangement does multiple things at the same time and combines almost all ways of approaching musical referencing mentioned above: First, the fast-paced, rhythmic, and percussion-heavy composition refers to culturally established memes such as excitement or a chase. Second, it establishes the later reoccurring and re-use of pop-music covers as a story mode in the series. As the music accompanies a shoot-out and showdown, a plot point meme is served additionally through the exciting and fast-paced music, linking this to the first understanding of musical referencing. Furthermore, the composition uses

western genre instruments and rhythmic structures that are similar to, for example, Ennio Morricone's composition for *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* (1966). The western beat and orchestration signify that this scene is a typical shoot-out showdown as the user is familiar with by genre-default

On the third level, the composition is furthermore enriched with Djawadi's individualised, composer brand identity. The composition evolves from a few instruments only (piano accompanied by strings) to a full orchestra that emphasizes and doubles the sounds of gunshots and horses in this scene, and subsequently reduces the score again to only one instrument (piano). This structure has previously been used by Djawadi for dramatic moments and epic scenes in *Game of Thrones* such as *Light of the Seven* (S06E10, 2016) and *The Night King* (S08E03, 2019). In this case, the composer brand identity and personal style influence the composition and construction of the musical piece itself. Last but not least, on the fourth level, this track covers the song 'Paint it Black' from The Rolling Stones and repurposes the connotations that come with it: it sets the mood to not only being an action showdown, but also has rebellious elements to it due to the original context of the song, characterising the protagonists of the scene with that trope. 'Paint it Black' was originally written in the context of, and opposing to, the Vietnam war, an underlining trope that, if familiar, the consumer of Westworld can connect to ideas of questioning and undermining authority. These tropes do not only connect to the robbery scene (outlaws vs. the law in a western context), but also interviewees with the broader theme of the series itself motivating the audience to side with the underdog (i.e., the hosts and guests that do not buy into the corporate idea of the park's use) while emphasising questions about authority, humanity, and conflict. These connotations, as well as the band image of The Rolling Stones are transported into the scene as a cultural code due to the familiarity most users have with the song and band, which also makes it instantly recognisable for many. While the lyrics are not to be heard, to the familiar user they are also reminiscent in memory. On a last level, depending on the user, further personal connections to the song individual users have, are implemented in the scene as well.

This composition provides the audience not only with a typical adventure western score, but it also uses pre-existing pop-music as commentary and thus adds an additional layer(s). It transports the rebellious tone of the lyrics of the songs as well as the image The Rolling Stones had as a rock band in the 1970s into the scene. Djawadi repurposes the genre typical beat and orchestration to create a full-on cowboy and gangster scene while providing additional commentary with the 70s song. The park Westworld is, for the main human characters, not a real scenario, but more a game of rebelling and being able to do things they would not be able to do in real life.

The overview of the composition by Djawadi for the first season of the TV series *Westworld* has shown how he uses many multiple layers of musical referencing mentioned above in order to imbue the music to the series with more than one level of meaning. Subsequently, 'Paint it Black' is again covered in season 2 (S02E05, 2018), but in a different style that connects to the plot. The musical style chosen is reminiscent of traditional Japanese music, reflecting the fact that the scene plays out in a different park, Shogunworld, but the in-narrative scripted scene is a repeat. While characters in the scene only slowly start to realise that they are watching the same narrative heist as they had been playing out themselves as hosts so many times, the avid viewer is able to make this connection through the music from the very beginning of the track.

This shows that musical referencing can be considered more complex than visual or textual references, as examined in the previous chapter. While an item or a textual/ narrative reference has the power to repurpose a certain source material in order to refer to another text, musical references have the possibilities to refer to multiple texts of multiple natures at once. Musical references not only make a connection to a source material or an upcoming new text, but they also transport tone, mode, and meaning from one text into another, they influence how a text is being experienced. Musical references as paratexts are already full of different paratexts and references that have different meanings. They create layers of aural storytelling, they create transmusical storytelling. Furthermore, by considering the personal relationship that comes with familiar and pre-existing music, another layer of musical referencing is added, that can only be detected and decoded by the individual. Still, interestingly enough, the first part and close examination of three carefully selected, music-focussed YouTube (fan)channels show a significantly lower rate of engagement compared to interactive communication between users, semi-professionals, and content providers when it comes to visual and textual references. While musical references have the potential to be more layered, more detailed, and more encompassing, the detection of such and a subsequent discussion seems to be not very common. With the rise of more and more online educational platforms and channels it will be interesting to see whether this is something that might change in the years going forward. Music, and subsequently musical referencing, has become more complex over the past few years, or maybe it has become more detectable due to an increased variety of options to observe and discuss. It will be essential to keep observing this space in the years and decades to come.

Conclusion

Why Transmedia Means Transmusical Storytelling

Throughout this thesis, I have utilized and combined a variety of academic disciplines, critical and/or theoretical approaches as well as some of my first-hand experience as a full-time professional working in the media industry. Combining all these perspectives has, in the first part of this thesis, enabled me to analyse transmedia storytelling and transmedia worldbuilding in a way that moves beyond some of the earliest and most popular approaches [Jenkins (2006 2007, 2011, 2016), Klastrup/ Tosca, 2004), Ryan, (2004, 2014), Ryan/ Thon (2014), Wolf (2012)]. I have argued that transmediality goes beyond storytelling and worldbuilding. Transmedia universes are networks of experiences that heavily rely on two factors: On the one hand, they are built and created by content providers, including the stories and fictional worlds themselves, but also cross-platform promotion, corporate/ legal factors, and additional informative tie-in content such as merchandise, documentaries, or expanded universes (that are not directly connected to the original canon). On the other hand, transmedia universes at the core build on familiarity and references, a factor that immediately encourages an active consumer to not only navigate their way through the consumption of the universe, but also implies active discussion about specific details such as connecting or deriving stories, and references.

Expanding the idea of transmedia beyond storytelling and fictional worlds means shifting the focus from the content itself towards a focus on the creation and consumption of experiences, and subsequently discussing them in (semi)public forums – a practice that in itself has always been inherent in the arts, and which has particularly increased with evolving technology and global connectivity since the early 20th century (Freeman, 2014, 2014a, 2016). Central to the idea of expanding transmedia phenomena into universes is the active user and consumer who navigates their way through the experiences offered and are at the same time invited to make detailed connections between different contents. These include knowing the "behind the scenes story" and "making of" of a particular film, and how this knowledge changes the way they consume repeated viewings. For example, being aware that actor Viggo Mortensen broke his foot kicking a helmet during the filming of *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers* (2002) and being aware that this particular take was kept in the final cut of the film, will change the perception of the scene on a repeat watch; particularly when one is sharing the experience of watching the film alongside someone who is not aware of this fact.

I have pointed out that, within the realms of transmediality, familiarity and prior knowledge are key. Shifting the focus again in the second part of this thesis I have discussed that familiarity and a keen eye play a considerable part within transmedia universes. Content providers such as filmmakers,

showrunners, or content creators integrate subtle references into their creations. The range of where these references point to is unlimited: they can be connected or not connected to the immediate instalment (such as the story in a film itself) or a wider expanded fictional world (such as comic book universes). They can pay homage to a genre, actor, trope, director, or style of filmmaking. They can even connect to, at first glance, unrelated sources, such as the use of *Also Sprach Zarathustra* (1896) in *Zoolander* (2001).

Furthermore, this immense network of referencing automatically includes a call to action for the consumers. References are being integrated and embedded to be noticed, and subsequently discussed. To that end, in Chapter 3 I described not only the potential that visual and textual references have but also the culture that has evolved around them. Online platforms and social media are subsequently utilised by both fans, and semi-professionals (people who work in the industry and have exclusive insight and legal rights but do not necessarily actively work as e.g., directors, writers, or producers for transmedia universes themselves) to showcase identification of references as well as interpretation. The particular social culture that has evolved across social media and fandom is an aspect that deserves attention, which it has received from scholars such as Booth (2010), Bruns (2008), Caldwell (2011), Gray/ Sandvoss (2007) or Lévy (1999) to name but a few.

But what role does music play in all of this, and how does it build what I have coined "transmusical storytelling"? Transmediality is more than stories, more than words. Shifting the focus towards the connections that are built by both content providers and consumers rather than single stories or worlds, transmediality can be understood as a network, if not a rhizome (Deleuze/ Guatarri, 1976) of communication that is prepared, presented, received, and discussed – an artform as old as the arts themselves. Music in its nature itself exists as an interactive process as pointed out in Chapter 2, consisting of composition, interpretation, performance, consumption, and feedback – an interactive cycle that requires active content providers and audiences at the same time. Mapping this onto the idea of transmedia, I have pointed out that music, and particularly musical references – compared to visual and textual references – inherit a large amount of referential potential, and therefore a more complex need for interpretation and reflection. While musical references are all around us in our everyday lives, the average user might not detect them, at least not consciously. Musical referencing can tell many stories at once utilising instrumentation, composition, (traditional) culturally established musical memes, story mode memes, plot point memes, genre memes, trailer memes, composer brand identity, and pre-existing music, and, at the same time, can combine all the above. But how exactly does this approach of considering musical referencing and the subsequently built connections across

compositions as well as with the user – as described in Chapter 4 – build the concept of "transmusical storytelling"?

While I did not discard any of the already explored approaches to analysing music in film and TV in Chapter 4, I did shift the focus towards the multiple layers of referential structures music inherits similarly as – but more complex than – visual or textual references such as easter-eggs. Music has the capacity – and uses it across (pop-)culture – to tell multiple stories all at once, utilising the "old", reinterpreting it, combining it with recent trends of composing and popular music, while hinting towards future developments that could happen in an intertwined manor with the textual canon, for example of a film franchise such as the MCU. For the familiar and keen ear, music in current pop-culture opens an exclusive (and rich) aural way of storytelling that expands the world of AV storytelling. While it might feel natural to consider music in the AV culture as an aural device to serve visuals (and often enough film and TV music is composed to the picture), the underlying references and material encompass a far bigger variety across culture, pop-culture, memes, composer identities, and a purely "functional" use of music in film, TV and so forth all-together. Considering music within the established realms of transmedia universes that do not rely on stories and worlds, music becomes autonomous and creates its own transmedia universe around a musical piece itself, as discussed in relation to *Also Sprach Zarathustra* (1896) and its complex historical development as well as current reception of it as "the music from *Space Odyssey*". Considering the layers of meaning that music inherits, we cannot speak of "music across media" or "transmedia storytelling utilising music". The complexity that music builds across old, semi-new, new, person-related, or personal references creates a complex construct that – if analysed with the correct tools and knowledge – showcases music across all borders. In other words: Transmusical Storytelling.

Looking Above and Beyond

Considering the nature of the content of this project and the continued rapid evolution of pop-culture, it is difficult to capture and analyse the creation and impact of most recent instalments with justified amounts of analysis, as well as keeping up to date with the most recent trends. This project has captured a specific moment in time whilst also considering its relationship to long-standing practices within the media industries. It is imperative to expand this research by considering the most recent as well as forthcoming scholarly research and developments, particularly the impact of COVID-19 and the extent to which it has changed the transmedia/ transmusical practices described in this thesis. The way content has been and is still released changed: due to cinemas closing around the world, many films formerly scheduled for theatrical release have switched to streaming releases, such as Disney's *Mulan*

(2020). Even so, since cinemas tentatively opened again in 2021 a lot of Hollywood blockbusters have been released both theatrically, and on streaming services at the same time. Such developments could ultimately lead to a shift of distribution and subsequently agreed contracts with e.g., actors within the industry altogether. *Black Widow* (2021) for example was originally scheduled for a theatrical-only release in May 2020, which was postponed by the global pandemic. Eventually, it was simultaneously released theatrically and on Disney+ in June 2021. However, the main actress Scarlett Johansson has since filed a lawsuit against Disney for (potentially deliberately) postponing the release, and offering a streaming availability at the same time, impacting her box-office-based pay for the film (Stolworthy, 2021).

While the whole impact of COVID-19 on, particularly, the film and TV industry is still yet to be determined, it is clear that during lockdown periods consumer behaviours have changed: the way, when, where, and how instalments such as films, TV series, and documentaries as well as easter-eggs or any other semi-professional content such as YouTube videos are consumed has shifted. Content of any kind is being consumed in a more private and controlled space: watching a film in the cinema, one is not able to pause or even repeat scenes and frames to catch details of references and interpretations of a first viewing – and it usually took some time for these options to be available in the first place – unless connected to a media corporation that is tied to the industry and filmmakers itself. However, with a film like *Black Widow* (2021) or *Zack Snyder's Justice League* (2021), consumers have become acquainted with being able to pause, revert, and analyse during the first watch. The impact this will have on the transmedia culture and transmusical storytelling is yet to be determined.

Appendix

Auralnauts (2017) *How To Make A Blockbuster Movie Trailer* - TRANSCRIPT

Transcript removed due to copyright

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