Boundless Storytelling:
An Investigation of the Transmedial Expansion of George R. R. Martin’s *A Song of Ice and Fire*

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George Martin has woven for us the tapestry of Westeros, filled with resonating characters who see the world through a different and sometimes magical prism. And still we empathize, we sympathize, we live with and live through these exotic beings. We see enough truth of the human condition in each of them to fall in love or to spit with hate. Classify it anyway you’d like; call it fantasy, or low fantasy, or high fantasy, or allegory. Feel free to assign the label of your choice.

I’m sure those labels won’t bother George, however they’re applied or defined. Because what he knows, [...] and his millions of fans certainly know, is that what he really writes are damned great books, for this night and all the nights to come. (Salvatore xi-xii)
Preface

In the course of my academic career at UGhent, I have encountered several Monty Pythonesque “and now for something completely different” moments. After reading The Picture of Dorian Gray during the summer holidays of 2013, I was intensely intrigued by the flamboyant, yet tragic Oscar Wilde. As a result, I decided to peruse his bibliography in order to find a suitable topic for my bachelor paper. That topic would turn out to be “Aestheticism in Oscar Wilde’s Fairy Tales”, a topic that allowed me to completely immerse myself in tales with elegant, sensorily overwhelming phrases, and bittersweet endings. However, in order to expand my horizon, I was resolved to research something completely different for my master’s dissertation in 2014-2015. This time, the search led to “American Poetry Contemporary American Poetry and Globalization.” I am still grateful to Sarah Posman for introducing me to the work of Ben Lerner and Juliana Spahr, and perhaps contemporary poetry in general. And now we arrive at this year’s topic. Again, I wanted to find something entirely new to learn about. And seeing that it was my last chance to do so, I really wanted to make it count and pick something a little bit extraordinary. Which brings me to the first “thank you” of this dissertation, as I would like to thank my supervisor dr. Jasper Schelstraete for allowing me to pursue the topic of A Song of Ice and Fire for my master’s dissertation. In addition, I would like to thank him for the feedback and the advise I needed to keep me on the right path.

A second wave of gratitude is directed at my parents, who had to put up with me and my academic-related stress for yet another year. And let’s not forget the dog, on whom I can always rely for hairy hugs and is always eager to go on a walk with me when I need to empty my head.

Another big thanks goes to my friends, with whom I can always be myself. You guys can always bring a smile to my mouth.

Lastly, my appreciation goes out to George R. R. Martin. He was the architect of the vast and rich world we are about to explore. And, most of all, I am grateful to him for writing the following phrase, which pretty much sums up the reason why I started studying literature in the first place: “‘A reader lives a thousand lives before he dies,’ said Jojen. ‘The man who never reads lives only one.’” (Martin, DD 495)
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List of Abbreviations

*SIF*  
*A Song of Ice and Fire* by George R. R. Martin.

Consisting of:

*GT*  
*A Game of Thrones* (1996)

*CK*  
*A Clash of Kings* (1998)

*SS*  
*A Storm of Swords* (2000)

*FC*  
*A Feast for Crows* (2005)

*DD*  
*A Dance with Dragons* (2011)

*KSK*  

*WIF*  
*The World of Ice and Fire* by George R. R. Martin, Elio García and Linda Antonsson (2014)

*GOT*  
*Game of Thrones* (2011-present), the HBO television series. When the show is cited, the reference will consist of the name of the cited episode.
0. Introduction

0.1. Overview

Different media are all around us. Now more than ever before people face and explore the potential of different ways of getting information across. Messages can reach their addressee in the blink of an eye, regardless of geographical distance. We post comments on social media platforms or under online videos for the world to see. To a previously unseen extent, the modern or digital media, such as the Internet and smartphones, have irrevocably changed the way we live. Additionally, this modern media boom – and people increasingly becoming acquainted with a great number of media – has made the adaptation industry boom.

Adaptation has been a regular practice since the Greek and Roman era, but now more than ever the possibilities seem endless: film, radio or graphic novel adaptations, novelisations, video games, YouTube videos, apps, and so on (cf. Evans 173). On the other hand, one finds that the media and adaptation boom also brought on a new approach to storytelling, namely transmedia storytelling – a phenomenon that only really started to prosper in the beginning of the twenty-first century (cf. Evans 173). Increasingly, fictional worlds and stories are explored not just via one medium but via several (cf. Scolari, Handbook 166). Yet, instead of just adapting or remediating the story to a different medium or multiple media, transmedia storytelling aspires to a whole that is greater than the sum of the parts, with each transmedia storytelling element aiming to enrich and expand the storyworld (cf. Jenkins, Convergence 5).

However, as I will discuss in the first chapter of this dissertation, the distinction between an adaptation and a transmedia storytelling element – also known as an extension – can at times be questionable to make. The Shakespearian “What’s in a name?” can also be said to apply to the above-mentioned processes. To simplify matters somewhat, I will make use of the term transmedium (transmedial, when used as an adjective) to refer to both adaptations and extensions. Transmedia, according to i.a. Jenkins, functions as an umbrella term for these processes, because it refers to products that reform or revisit a certain work, content- and/or medium-wise, regardless of how much they add to the storyworld (cf. “Aesthetics” n.pag.).

A well-known example of a transmedia franchise is the one surrounding George R. R. Martin’s A Song of Ice and Fire epic fantasy novels. The commercial success of Martin’s work is undeniable. Apart from the well-received SIF novels and their prequels (such as The Tales of Dunk and Egg series), there are the popular TV-series Game of Thrones, comics, smartphone...

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1 The entire text of this dissertation is written in British English. However, when authors using the General American spelling are quoted, the American spelling will not be changed to British English.

2 Which is also the literal meaning of transmedia: trans media or across, in between media.

3 Hereafter referred to as SIF.
apps, fan fiction, board and role-playing games, and even cookbooks (both ‘official’ and ‘non-official’) that collect recipes mentioned in or inspired by Martin’s fantasy world.

The franchise has been the topic of multiple transmedia and transmedial storytelling analyses, however, these tended to focus on one particular (trans)medium or aspect, for instance the analysis of social gaming and *The Maester’s Path* by Klastrup and Tosca. Other research examined the storyworld from a marketing or economic perspective, for example the examination of how authorship ties in with the *Game of Thrones* marketing strategies by Steiner. This dissertation, however, aims to examine the effect of the transmedial expansion of Martin’s work across these different platforms, the whole of which will from now on be referred to as the SIF storyworld. Since I am a literary scholar and not an economist, the focus of my research will be the narratological aspects of the transmedial storyworld, rather than the potential economic effects of various choices made within the transmedial storyworld.

**0.2. Methodology and Aim**

With this dissertation, I primarily wish to investigate three aspects in regard to the SIF storyworld. Firstly, I wish to analyse the transmedia storytelling construct, concretely focussing on whether or not the SIF storyworld is a good example of transmedia storytelling. Secondly, my research will examine how the SIF storyworld is organised, and how the different transmedia interact with one another and with the storyworld as a whole, i.e. to what extent do the different transmedia add content to the created storyworld? Lastly, I will also look into the concrete effects of the transmedial expansion on the storyworld.

In order to investigate these elements, it is vital to first construct a theoretical framework. This will be outlined in the first chapter of this dissertation, in which I will elaborate on media and adaptation studies and transmedia storytelling. Theoretically, I will mostly rely on the writings of i.a. Henry Jenkins, Marie-Laure Ryan, Carlos Alberto Scolari, Linda Hutcheon, Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin. Practically, I will approach the SIF storyworld both semiotically and narratologically, two approaches that are often used in adaptation and multimodal studies, and which Scolari also uses in his research on transmedial storyworlds (cf. 586-7). On the other hand, my research will also draw on a close reading of the textual sources and a ‘close watching’, as it were, of the visual sources.

The subsequent chapters of this dissertation will then focus on the SIF storyworld. More specifically, the second chapter will be devoted to an analysis of how the SIF storyworld is structured and whether or not it qualifies as a transmedia storytelling structure. The third and final chapter will then take a closer look at some concrete effects of the transmedial expansion on the storyworld.

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4 Hereafter abbreviated as *GOT*.
0.3. The Corpus and the Selected Media

This dissertation consists of a comparative study of the various transmedia within the *SIF* transmedial storyworld. Because this storyworld is so extensive, not all transmedia can be discussed in the limited space of this dissertation. There are two transmedia, X and Y, which I believe to be central within the storyworld, so they will feature more prominently than others. I will discuss them briefly in this section.

A first central element evidently is George R. R. Martin’s *A Song of Ice and Fire* series. *SIF* is a fantasy novel series at present consisting of five novels: *A Game of Thrones* (1996), *A Clash of Kings* (1998), *A Storm of Swords* (2000), *A Feast for Crows* (2005), and *A Dance with Dragons* (2011). However, there are – at least – two more books planned to complete the series, announced as *The Winds of Winter* and *A Dream of Spring*. *SIF* can be categorised as high fantasy because it is set in a fictional and magical world (cf. Stableford 198). In contrast, stories are said to be low fantasy when they take place in our own, real world, into which a certain number of magical elements are introduced (cf. Stableford 256).

The setting of *SIF* is a medieval-like world that consists of multiple continents, seas, islands, etc. The world has its own history, religions, folklore, medicine and science. Although magic plays a part in Martin’s fantasy series, it is mostly human conduct and desires that fuel the plot. Additionally, *SIF* is not a series that only captivates readers who usually pick up fantasy novels, but it is “extremely popular beyond the genre niche” (Klastrup and Tosca 295).

The second key element within this dissertation is the television show, which is produced by HBO with David Benioff and Daniel Brett Weiss as its screenwriters and executive producers. *GOT*, which aired for the first time in 2011, is named after the first novel in the *SIF* series. The subsequent seasons, though adapting different novels of the *SIF* series, kept this title. As of today, there are six seasons made, each with ten episodes, and at least two more seasons are planned. *GOT* is a relatively uncommon adaptation in the sense that it is being produced while its source material is yet to be finished (cf. Martin, “Last Year” n.pag.). Additionally, the show sometimes deviates from said material (cf. infra). Even more interesting is the fact that by season five, and especially in season six, the show actually caught up with its initial source material (cf. Martin, ”Last Year“ n.pag.). This creates a quite unique situation, seeing that when novels are adapted to film or television shows, the readers usually are in the know about what is going to happen. This was the case with *GOT* and *SIF* as well, but since Martin postponed the publication date of the sixth novel, the show has caught up with the plot. Although the books’ plot will be “spoiled” by some elements in the show, Martin has promised certain “surprises” for

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5 See the list included in the appendix, under “Overview of the SIF Storyworld”.
6 Hereafter abbreviated as *SIF*.
7 Hereafter abbreviated as *GT*, *CK*, *SS*, *FC*, and *DD*, respectively.
8 See the map included in the appendix under “The ’Known World’ of *SIF*.”
the readers. Certain elements have not been introduced in the show (yet), and specific characters have already died or are still alive when the opposite is true for their novel counterparts (cf. Martin, “Last Year” n.pag.). Martin has already stated that the books will probably differ – plot-wise – from the show, stating that “the show and the books have diverged, and will continue to do so” (Martin, “Last Year” n.pag.).

Furthermore, my research will also draw heavily on Martin’s *A Knight of the Seven Kingdoms*9 (2015), *The World of Ice and Fire: The Untold History of Westeros and the Game of Thrones*10 (2014) – written by Martin, Elio García and Linda Antonsson – and the *A Game of Thrones* graphic novel11 (2011-2015) – scripted by Daniel Abraham and illustrated by Tommy Patterson. In comparison to the *SIF* novels and *GOT*, these media, in my opinion, take up less pivotal positions, but nonetheless are significant elements within the *SIF* storyworld. My research, however, is not limited to the media listed above. Other media will be involved in my analysis, but they will be introduced when relevant.

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9 Hereafter abbreviated as *KSK*.
10 Hereafter abbreviated as *WIF*.
11 So far, only *GT* was adapted to a graphic novel.
1. Transmedia and Transmedia Storytelling

In this chapter I will develop the theoretical framework that I will use for my analysis.

1.1. Overview: Media Analyses

In this section I wish to discuss some key media studies concepts that will concretely help me analyse the SIF storyworld. Firstly, it is important to keep in mind that different media have different semiotic systems and thus different ways of communicating a meaning or narrative (cf. Forman 2-3). In other words, each medium has its specific affordances and constraints, respectively, that which a medium can do and what it cannot do (cf. Bolter & Grusin 231-2). These elements determine whether a specific medium is either appropriate or unhelpful for a certain type of message or narrative to be communicated. For instance, a comic is not an ideal medium to deal with music, as it is constrained by the fact that it is a two-dimensional paper medium that cannot convey sounds directly. However, sometimes artists play around with the medium's affordances and constraints, in order to be innovative.12

Each medium is received differently by the audience. Novels, for instance, require readers to imaginatively recreate the author's words in their minds and make them come to life. Film, on the other hand, visualises the narrative and in addition, adds sounds as well. The sounds in films, radio plays, theatre, games, etc., can be divided into two categories: intradiegetic and extradiegetic (cf. Hayward 102-3). Intradiegetic are those sounds that are part of the narrative world, for example the voices of characters. Sounds are extradiegetic when they stand outside the narrative world, for example the opening theme song to a television show.

Sound, however, is only one of the various modes by which the affordances and constraints of a medium can be determined. A mode, according to Günther Kress, is a socially and culturally developed way of dispersing meaning, or in other words, a sort of semiotic system (cf. 1-3). All media consist of multiple modes and never are monomodal (cf. Baldry & Thibault 19). A text, for example, consists of i.a. the following modes: font, letters, language, layout, colour, white space, etc. Specific media are better suited for different modes, which affects how they convey their message.13 Especially because all modes contribute to the process of meaning-making. For instance, a text's layout and use of white space can immediately hint at its genre – e.g. an academic article vs. a fairy tale. Similarly, a letter in handwritten cursive conveys a different meaning than a typed one.

When attempting to employ media to their full potential, two additional concepts may be of use to describe certain techniques, namely immediacy and hypermediacy. These concepts,

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12 Consider for instance Dadaist poetry, which rebelled against poetry's constraints of being language-based and soundless, and countered that by creating lyric that attempted to capture and convey sounds.

13 Comparable to McLuhan's famous statement: “The medium is the message”, i.e. how a medium conveys meaning, directly influences the meaning.
originating from Bolter and Grusin, refer to the tendency of new media to either present themselves as authentic, familiar and improved versions of existing media (immediacy) or as proudly demonstrating all of their “modern” capabilities (hypermediacy) (cf. Bolter & Grusin 5-8). For instance, when computers were introduced as a new medium to a bigger audience, the creators added elements and terminology such as the “desktop”, “folders”, “trash can”, etc.; all examples of immediacy and all of which carried a sense of familiarity and authenticity with them (cf. Bolter & Grusin 23). On the other hand, the combined use of sound, vision, graphics, animation, images and video made computers an awe-inspiring medium unlike any other (cf. Bolter & Grusin 31).

Especially nowadays, with the modern media boom, there is a firm belief in constant renewal, reinvention and remediation. New media automatically are expected to be better than the previous, and existing media should always be improving themselves (cf. Bolter & Grusin 59, cf. Scolari, Handbook 166). According to Bolter and Grusin, we constantly compare the affordances and constraints of various in order to understand them better (cf. 231-2). These comparisons can be between old and new media, but also between two contemporaries (cf. Bolter & Grusin 231-2). This insight has interesting implications on adaptations, as it implies that the adaptation is somehow never free from the other media (cf. Bolter & Grusin 231-2).

Jenkins also points out that the modern media boom has also given rise to what he refers to as convergence culture. This phenomenon, according to Jenkins, is associated with three major developments, namely media convergence, participatory culture and collective intelligence (cf. Convergence 2). The first concept is similar to his own definition of transmedia storytelling, as it refers to the fact that nowadays stories and advertisements often are spread over several media (cf. Jenkins, Convergence 3). A second development is the increased importance of the audience in regard to the circulation and success of media and information (cf. Jenkins, Convergence 3). The audience has evolved from mere spectator to participant in finding, dispersing and connecting media, i.a. via social media (cf. Jenkins, Convergence 3-4). Lastly, with convergence culture, knowledge becomes progressively more collective. Modern media allow for each of us to easily share our partial amount of knowledge with others, thus creating collective knowledge (cf. Jenkins, Convergence 4-5). Similar to what is the case with transmedia storytelling (cf. also infra), the whole is more than the sum of the parts.

1.2. Adaptation

As I already mentioned, adaptation – in the sense of a remediation – is not a recent phenomenon. The Greeks adapted their myths to plays; in the Middle Ages Bible stories were remediad as stained glass windows, plays or bas-reliefs for the illiterate worshipers; the Victorians adapted and readapted all sorts of works, etc. (cf. Hutcheon XI). In addition, it is an established topic in academic discourse – which, due to its recentness as a phenomenon – is not the case for
transmedia storytelling. Nevertheless, there is still no complete consensus on a definition. For instance, is the length a decisive trait, i.e. can a four-line text or a ten-seconds long video qualify as adaptations? Does the medium necessarily have to change? A definition which Linda Hutcheon proposes, describes an adaptation as a “deliberate, announced revisitation of a particular work of art”, with the inclusion of same-medium works (remakes) and regardless of length (170).

And though it is sometimes stated that adaptations simply retell an existing story, this does not hold true for every adaptation. Generally, retelling is a basic element of adaptations. However, some may see the source material as more malleable than others. Cinematographer and professor Gaston Roberge stated that with a novel adaptation, the narrative must remain unchanged, only its structure is allowed to change, and that merely because a changed structure in unavoidable considering that one is dealing with “different means of expression” (qt. in Behura 177). By contrast, Deborah Cartmell believes that faithfulness to the source is not the main concern of adaptations, instead the focus should be on how they create dialogue with the source, and how they generate meaning surpluses and intertextuality (cf. in Hunter 155). Bolter and Grusin remark that the “interplay” between adaptation and original only affects those who know both versions, only they can really appreciate the interaction of the different products (cf. 44-5).

Nonetheless, too many changes are not desirable (cf. Hutcheon 9). Familiarity and continuity are important for the audience’s satisfaction, or, to put it in Linda Hutcheon’s words, “[w]ith adaptations, we seem to desire the repetition as much as the change.” (9) To Hutcheon, the “appeal of adaptations for audiences” ultimately “lies in their mixture of repetition and difference, of familiarity and novelty”, in other words, there should be an even balance between old and new (114). Yet, she observes that even highly faithful adaptations will contain alterations, seeing that an adaptation – though repeating a story – is not a replica, but a transformation and/or remediation (cf. Hutcheon xvi). The new product is bound to have an influence on the original; and in the case where the medium is not changed, the so-called remakes, other elements do: for instance, newer adaptations often feature more advanced technological equipment, cultural adaptations that reinterpret the story to be more relatable to a different cultural situation, adaptations that feature a different language than the original, etc.

Hutcheon also connects the changes between adaptations and their source material to their method of conveying information and engaging with the audience (cf. xiv, 22-3). Media such as novels and short stories\textsuperscript{14} rely on what she calls telling, as here the storyworld is told about, explained or described by a narrator to the audience (cf. Hutcheon 12-3). Performance

\textsuperscript{14} Hutcheon terms these media narrative media, a term which I will not use so as to avoid confusion with the use of “narrative” (i.e. media containing a plot or story) in this dissertation (cf. 12-3).
media, on the other hand, like film, plays, and opera, *show* the story to the audience in direct and often visual manner (cf. Hutcheon 12-3). The last method Hutcheon lists, allows the audience to be more of a participant, as it focuses on *interacting* with the audience (cf. 12-3). Examples of this are virtual reality experiences, video games and theme parks, with or in which the audience engages with the story physically and kinaesthetically (cf. Hutcheon 12-3, 22). The type of medium influences how the audience experience and learn about the storyworld, as well as how the source material gets adapted to a new medium (cf. Hutcheon 12-3).

1.3. **Transmedia storytelling**

It is important to consider that since transmedia storytelling itself – especially the use of the practice as a coherent communicative and narrative strategy – is quite new, the academic discourse on the topic is also still developing and its methodology is yet to be precisely determined (cf. Gambarato 81; cf. Saldre & Torop 25). The transmedia storyworld is a complex, coherent construct, as opposed to a collection of separate adaptations or remakes (Jenkins, *Convergence* 102). To Jenkins, transmedia storytelling is a process in which one narrative or storyworld is told across separate transmedia (cf. “Revenge Seven Principles” n.pag.). In contrast to a set of adaptations, which according to Jenkins merely retell one and the same story, with transmedia storytelling, each transmedium aims to add something new and/or unique to the overarching storyworld (cf. “Revenge Seven Principles” n.pag.). This ultimately leads to a “whole” that “is worth more than the sum of the parts.” (Jenkins, *Convergence* 102).

For transmedia storytelling to be successful and engaging, it is important to find a balance between repetition and change, respectively between retelling and adding new information. In addition, the individual elements aim to contribute to the transmedial storyworld by adding something new and unique to the overarching narrative, e.g. by highlighting or elaborating on a different part of said narrative (cf. *Convergence*, 95-6). It is possible that the various elements serve different purposes\(^{15}\), and that specific media might appeal more to specific target audiences, which might broaden the general audience (cf. Jenkins, “Transmedia storytelling 101”). For instance, a fervent gamer’s interest in the storyworld might be sparked by playing a specific game, after which he or she might decide to pick up the book as well. As Scolari notes, a “single text” or “single media consumer” may become a “transmedia consumer” over time (cf. “Transmedia” 597). Ideally, the different transmedia complement one another and offer a wide variety of (trans)media to choose from.

In his early writings, Jenkins stressed the fact that a person can choose with which element to start, regardless of which transmedium was created first, and that the different

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15 Jenkins here refers to the *Doctor Who* radio show, which was aired in a period when no new television series were being made. This kind of extension would be referred to as an interstitial microstory by Scolari, as it intends to keep fans interested in the story, when another medium is currently on hiatus or between seasons (cf. “Transmedia” 598).
transmedia can be consumed separately (cf. “Transmedia” 597). Similarly, Jason Mittell states, “transmedia extensions from a serial franchise must reward those who partake in them but cannot punish those who do not” (262) However, in his more recent work, Jenkins mentions that it is also possible for transmedia storyworlds to be created with a sense of linearity built into them (cf. “Revenge Remaining” n.pag.). For instance, some transmedia storytelling element might be released as a foretaste for another, bigger element (cf. Jenkins, “Revenge Remaining” n.pag.). Klastrup and Tosca refer to this phenomenon as the degrees of independence of transmedia storytelling extensions (cf. 309). Certain extensions are completely independent or autonomous, for instance the SIF novels, whereas more dependent ones require that the reader or viewer has consumed other extensions in order for the dependent extension to make (more) sense.

As a guideline, Henry Jenkins has listed seven main principles of transmedia storytelling: spreadability vs. drillability; continuity vs. multiplicity; immersion vs. extractability; world-building; seriality; subjectivity; and performance (cf. “Revenge Seven Principles” n.pag.). Spreadability refers to the storyworld’s potential to circulate in social networks, and the power this circulation might have in regard to the storyworld’s economic and cultural value (cf. “Revenge Seven Principles” n.pag.). Drillability, a term he himself has borrowed from Jason Mittell, refers to the storyworld’s power to create a desire for immersion, i.e. urging its viewers or readers to want to engage with the storyworld and learn more about it (cf. Jenkins, “Revenge Seven Principles” n.pag.). The reason why Jenkins formulates the above as opposites, is because he sees the two as moving in different directions: spreadability stimulates horizontal expansion (the audience ideally keeps expanding and growing), whereas drillability is a vertical movement (the viewers or readers continually burrowing deeper down into the storyworld)(cf. Jenkins, “Revenge Seven Principles” n.pag.). However, in another article, “Transmedia Education: the 7 Principles Revisited”, published about half a year later, Jenkins uses the pair more or less complementary when describing how they might apply to education. He here states that “[a] good educational practice, then, encompasses both, allowing students to search out information […] across the broadest possible terrain, while also allowing students to drill deep into something […].” (“Transmedia Education” n.pag.) It is more logical to formulate these elements as potentially complementary, instead of necessarily opposing forces. For instance, it is possible for a fan to both spread and “share” the storyworld, and, in the meantime, to dig him- or herself deeper into the storyworld. Therefore, I will refer to them as “spreadability and drillability.”

The second pair consists of “continuity vs. multiplicity”. Continuity is important for transmedia storytelling as it makes the audience view the storytelling as coherent and gives them a feeling of satisfaction (cf. Jenkins, “Revenge Seven Principles” n.pag.). Continuity can be
accomplished in several ways, for instance via coherent world-building\textsuperscript{16}, reoccurring characters, etc. This principle can be compared to Scolari’s \textit{branding}, a semiotic and/or narrative principle that refers to an amalgam of distinctive semiotic and/or narrative traits that are inherent to a certain transmedia storyworld (cf. “Transmedia” 599-600; cf. Scolari, \textit{Handbook} 155-6). A \textit{brand} is “expressed by the characters, topics, […] an aesthetic, a series of textures, colors, materials, and styles that create a difference with respect to other brands” (Scolari, “Transmedia” 600). In other words, brands are recognisable features, both narrative and semiotic, – appearing across the various transmedia – which make transmedial storyworlds coherent and recognisable (cf. Scolari, “Transmedia” 600). Concrete examples are for instance the fragmentation in Fox’s \textit{24}; or the lightning bolt scar and round glasses of \textit{Harry Potter}’s eponymous protagonist (cf. Scolari, “Transmedia” 600). Branding plays an important role in keeping the storyworld coherent seeing that the brands occur throughout the different transmedia (cf. Scolari, “Transmedia” 600). Multiplicity, on the other hand, is the possibility to offer “separate mini-franchises” or “alternative retellings” (Scolari, “Transmedia” 600). An example would be a transmedium following the same set of characters, but in a different setting or with another outcome than originally was the case. Although some creators – favouring coherence and continuity – can be wary of this second strategy, multiplicity, can have an invigorating effect on the transmedia storytelling, as it offers something that is both new and familiar (cf. Scolari, “Transmedia” 600). It is under this principle that one can file many fan fiction stories. In general, though it is unauthorised and not created by the original producers, fan fiction can “enhance fan engagement and expand [fans’] understanding of the original” (Scolari, “Transmedia” 600). Like the first principle, this one too is formulated as an opposing pair. Unlike with the first pair, in this case it seems to make more sense to formulate them as such. Though again, one might object by saying that, for instance, a fan fiction story can both be multiplex – i.e. by changing the original outcome – and continuous – e.g. by staying within the coherent worldview and with existing characters. As with the previous pair, I will refer to these principles as “continuity and multiplicity”.

The third principle is again formulated as a pair, “immersion vs. extractability.” Immersion is the ability to “enter” the (fictional) transmedia storyworld, for example via virtual reality games, theme parks or cosplay (cf. Jenkins, “Revenge Remaining” n.pag.\textsuperscript{17}). Extractability, in contrast, refers to being able to take elements from the transmedia storyworld and incorporate them in everyday life, for instance mimicking a prop a character has to use in real

\textsuperscript{16} Coherent world-building is especially important in the fantasy genre, seeing that the fantasy world has its own rules, religions, economy, etc., all of which have to coherent in a world if it wants to come across as a plausible, realistic storyworld (cf. Card 88-90).

\textsuperscript{17} Cosplay is the act of dressing up as and acting like a character from graphic novels, television shows, novels, video games, etc.
life (cf. Jenkins, “Revenge Remaining” n.pag.). Similarly to the other pairs, immersion and extractability can also be seen as complementary, rather than mutually exclusive. For example, cosplaying fans are simultaneously immersing themselves as well as wearing extractible objects. Likewise, when visiting a theme park, fans might buy extractable items. These can range from sweaters to real-world renderings of storyworld items, such as Lord of the Rings’ Evenstar necklace or Harry Potter’s butterbeer drink. Seeing that they are not contrasting principles, these concepts will from now on be referred to as “immersion and extractability.”

A fourth principle is world-building, since transmedia storytelling tends to focus on creating an entire world, with “its own logic, practices, and institutions” (Jenkins, “Revenge Remaining” n.pag.). The more detailed a world is, the more realistic and engaging it is for fans: geography, history, background information on certain events and characters, etc. This tendency of transmedia storytelling to enliven an entire storyworld, rather than being one single story adapted repeatedly, was also commented upon by Marie-Laure Ryan. For this reason Ryan argues that transmedia storytelling is actually a misnomer, stating that transmedia world-building would actually be more fitting (cf. “Transmedia” 4-5; cf. “Interview” n.pag.). Although her argument is valid, at this moment the phenomenon is most commonly referred to as transmedia storytelling – which she herself uses too – therefore this dissertation will also refer to it thus.

Fifthly, there is seriality, the breaking up of the whole into meaningful parts or instalments and dispersing them over a period of time (cf. Jenkins, “Revenge Remaining” n.pag.). Typically, these instalments are released on a regular basis, and often end with a cliff-hanger, which increases the urge of the fan to want to see or read the next one (cf. Jenkins, “Revenge Remaining” n.pag.). The transmedia storytelling from this perspective, consists of many separate segments of story, this can be within one transmedium but also in the overall system (cf. Jenkins, "Revenge Remaining” n.pag.).

A penultimate principle is subjectivity or, to be more accurate, multiple subjectivities (cf. Jenkins, “Revenge Remaining” n.pag.). The transmedia storyworld is often made up from multiple subjectivities, i.e. throughout the different transmedia rephrase the world through the perspective of multiple characters – both primary and secondary – or particular groups (cf. Jenkins, “Revenge Remaining” n.pag.). At times the newly introduced subjectivity of a secondary character is used to shed a light on a main character, showing his or her backstory or allowing the audience to see the main character’s actions through another subjectivity’s eyes (cf. Jenkins, “Revenge Remaining” n.pag.). In addition, secondary characters are often used in order to reduce the costs, seeing that the primary actors often are too expensive to work with on smaller projects (cf. Jenkins, “Revenge Remaining” n.pag.).
The seventh and final principle is performance, which is based on two concepts Jenkins introduced in *Convergence Culture*, namely *cultural attractors* and *cultural activators*.\(^\text{18}\) The former are those who attract a potential target audience, the latter activate them to be motivated and engage with the storyworld (cf. Jenkins, "Revenge Remaining" n.pag.). Both the attractors and activators have to perform in order for a transmedia storytelling complex to be truly successful. The creators have to first spark an audience’s and then developing things to keep them busy: a mystery to solve, extra content to discover, previews to unlock, etc. In this sense, it is not only the creators, but also the fans that are performing. They are the ones “sharing” elements on their social networks, writing fan fiction or wiki entries; they are the ones who keep the storyworld alive by staying interested and wishing to know more. In their works, Jenkins, Ryan and Scolari et al. do stress the importance of audience participation (cf. Jenkins, "Revenge Remaining" n.pag.; cf. Ryan, "Transmedia" 11; cf. Scolari et al., "Introduction" 3).\(^\text{19}\) In *Transmedia Archaeology*, transmedia storytelling is defined as the following formula: “Media Industry (canon) + Collaborative Culture (fandom) = Transmedia Storytelling” (Scolari et al., "Introduction" 3). Scolari et al. point out that the transmedia storyworld does not solely depend on the interaction of the different canon media, but also on the creations and audience participation (cf. Scolari et al., "Introduction" 3-5).

It has to be said that many of Jenkins’ principles are not necessarily limited to transmedia storytelling. For instance, many novels of the nineteenth century were published serially. Furthermore, an example which Jenkins also refers to, is epistolary novels. These feature multiple subjectivities as well, seeing that often a certain character would claim to have found certain texts – letters or notes – and to have collected them together, additionally adding his or her own view on the matter (cf. "Revenge Remaining" n.pag.). However, it is as a combination of the above principles that transmedia storytelling distinguishes itself as a separate method of storytelling. Some transmedia may fit certain principles better than others, but if the storyworld as a whole is represented in all seven principles, it can be called a transmedia storytelling construct (cf. Jenkins, "Revenge Remaining" n.pag.).

In his article on transmedia storytelling, Scolari points out the fact that due to the variety of media – each with its own strengths and weaknesses – transmedia storytelling can be a highly rich experience, combining many semiotic systems and senses (cf. "Transmedia" 588). And because of the array of semiotic systems involved, the storyworld can, according to Scolari, also be referred to as a *multimodal narrative world* expressed (cf. "Transmedia" 589). The focus of multimodality analyses is the narrative that is being communicated over the various modes or semiotic systems, e.g. text, sound, colours, music, etc. And because the transmedia storytelling

\(^{18}\) Jenkins borrowed the former concept of Pierre Levy.
\(^{19}\) Which is why I will include it in my analysis in the subsequent chapter.
world is so rich in terms of modes, Scolari opts for a methodology that involves both narratology and semiotics, which is not unlike many adaptation studies, and focuses on the different semiotic affordances, constraints and ways of meaning-making (cf. Baldry and Thibault xv-xvi).

In his analysis Scolari also formulates a classification system to analyse the different elements within a transmedia storyworld. He distinguishes the following types of stories: the macrostory or the core narrative; interstitial microstories, which are created to keep the audience interested in between published books or television show seasons; parallel stories, which take place at the same time as the macrostory, but relate a parallel set of events or follow different characters; peripheral stories, which are "satellites of the macrostory" and not so closely connected to it; and user-generated content platforms like blogs, fan fiction, wikis and forums, which usually are beyond the original producers’ control (Scolari, “Transmedia” 598). This classification system allows the researcher to get an overview on the transmedia storyworld which otherwise might seem somewhat chaotic. Yet at the same time, as often is the problem with categorisation systems and as I will point out in the second chapter of this dissertation, some elements do not seem to fit into the categories. The system, therefore, should be used with some fluidity in regard to the different boundaries.

1.4. Critical Remarks

There is still quite a lot of scepticism and uncertainty surrounding transmedia storytelling. How different is, for example, a collection of adaptations from transmedia storytelling? According to Jenkins, the difference lies in two key aspects. Firstly, as mentioned before, Jenkins sees transmedia storytelling as an intentional process (cf. “Aesthetics” n.pag.; cf. Ryan, “Transmedia” 2). However, some researchers are quite apprehensive of the deliberateness of the transmedia storyworld, for instance Ryan finds that storyworlds often evolved bottom-up – starting with one element and then steadily adding transmedia to that –, instead of top-down – i.e. the sequence of different transmedia is meticulously coordinated –, which would be expected of this intentional process (cf. “Transmedia” 4-5; cf. “Interview” n.pag.). The franchises often only became transmedia storyworlds because the first element was or first couple transmedia were so successful that it merely was an interesting marketing strategy to keep building on the existing transmedia (cf. “Transmedia” 5). Therefore, one might question the nature of transmedia storytelling, i.e. is it really a new way of storytelling or is it a clever and trendy marketing strategy (cf. Ryan, “Transmedia” 17)? Scolari similarly remarks that – considering how advertisement evolved from traditionally being mostly product-centric, over user-centric in the second half of the twentieth century, to a narrative-centric approach today – transmedia storytelling might just be a new step in the development of advertisement (cf. Handbook 166). Considering that economic or marketing analyses are not the goal of this dissertation – yet without being oblivious to the economic motivations that might drive the SIF storyworld – I will
alternatively attempt to investigate the extent to which there is such a thing as a bigger “whole” in the SIF storyworld, i.e. is there such a thing as do the different media really enrich the storyworld?

A second key aspect for Jenkins, is that fact that with transmedia storytelling, each new addition or extension aims to enrich the whole (by completing the storyworld and interacting with the other media), in contrast to different adaptations’ intention of retelling the same story (cf. “Aesthetics” n.pag.). However, not all researchers see adaptations and transmedia storytelling as irreconcilable. Scolari, for instance, remarks how many researchers question whether or not intersemiotic translations, as he refers to adaptations, can be considered as extensions, seeing that they too can add something to the main narrative, e.g. a new insight (cf. Handbook 154). This potential effect of adaptations to lead to new insights or a better understanding of the original is something that Jenkins also acknowledges, and to which he refers as additive comprehension (cf. “Aesthetics” n.pag.). Yet whereas Jenkins stresses the fact that, in order to be seen as parts of transmedia storytelling, adaptations miss the characteristic of adding a new narrative to the overarching storyworld, Scolari opts for a flexible interpretation of transmedia storyworld extensions that includes adaptations (cf. Jenkins, Aesthetics” n.pag.; cf. Scolari, Handbook 154). In addition he argues that both fully autonomous extensions as well as those with a low degree of independence are legitimate elements of the transmedia storytelling storyworld (cf. Handbook 154).

Interestingly, some researchers’ views on adaptation are actually not that different from what usually is understood as transmedia storytelling extensions. In A Theory of Adaptation, Hutcheon discusses how the adaptation industry wishes to create a limitless experience, combining all sorts of media and adaptations to offer the audience new material every day (cf. 88). This seems to resemble the objective of transmedia storytelling to create a coherent, expansive storyworld to satiate fans’ cravings. Arguably, transmedia storytelling might focus more on the coherency of the project, but the differences could at times be hard to distinguish. In addition, Hutcheon finds that there is a continuum on which adaptations can be located, ranging from really faithful adaptations, over bowdlerizations, over retellings and revisions (in which “stories are both reinterpreted and rerelated”), to spin-offs such as sequels and prequels (171-2). Her vision of adaptations is very broad, so broad that it contains certain elements that typically would be deemed transmedia elements. In the eyes of Jenkins, for instance, spin-offs, would sooner be considered extensions, seeing that they intentionally add new information to the original storyworld.

To counteract the high amount of disagreement in regard to the definitions of extensions and adaptations, I suggest to use a combination of Hutcheon’s, Jenkin’s and Scolari’s definitions as an all-encompassing compromise, i.e. defining an adaptation as a transmedium that
intentionally revisits a specific story, and has the intention of reproducing – either by altering the medium or using the same medium, i.e. a remake – that story’s plot with only few alterations (cf. Hutcheon xvi, 170; cf. Scolari, *Handbook* 145; cf. Jenkins, "Aesthetics" n.pag.). Extensions then are those transmedia that deliberately expand the storyworld by adding new narratives, subjectivities and plots (cf. Jenkins, *Convergence* 5).
2. The SIF Transmedial Storyworld, a Transmedia Storytelling Analysis

2.1. Overview

And so, after having mapped out the academic discourse surrounding transmedia and transmedia storytelling, we come to the main focus of this dissertation, the SIF transmedial storyworld. The SIF storyworld is not a prototypical transmedia storytelling complex in the sense that Martin never intended to create a multi-platform narrative (cf. Shacklock 265). It expanded bottom-up, as Ryan refers to it, with new media gradually attaching themselves to the macrostory, the SIF novels (cf. “Transmedia” 4-5). According to Ryan, the fact that only few transmedia storyworlds actually are top-down constructs implies that transmedia storytelling could be nothing more than a trendy marketing trick (cf. “Interview” n.pag.). In the case of the SIF storyworld, her critique is partly justified. The SIF storyworld is a true hype. It originally started with the SIF novels and some short stories (i.a. the tales from KSK). By the time the SIF novels already were bestsellers, collections of SIF-inspired artwork were published. Somewhat later, Martin accepted the offer of Benioff and Weiss, who would adapt the novels for HBO (cf. Itskoff n.pag.). And then other transmedia also came to be, for instance several video games, WIF, a lot of merchandise, KSK (an illustrated collection of the previously separately published tales of Dunk and Egg), etc. The SIF storyworld can easily be called an extensive transmedia construct. In the subsequent sections, I will analyse the current SIF storyworld structure by using Jenkins’ seven principles as a guideline to not only analyse transmedia storytelling in the SIF storyworld, but also gain a general insight in the roles the different transmedia play.

2.2. Spreadability and Drillability

According to Klastrup and Tosca’s research, many of the SIF storyworld fans were introduced to the storyworld via dissemination, a concept they use that is analogous to Jenkins’ spreadability (cf. 303). In other words, they were introduced to the storyworld via friends, peers or online communities, such as internet fora (cf. Klastrup and Tosca 303). And it is true that the SIF storyworld is highly popular and very present in the internet. The SIF novels and written transmedia are popular topics on online fora and blogs, where fans discuss and hypothesise about mysterious elements, and speculate on the potential outcome of the series.

More interesting in terms of spreadability on social media, are the video games. There are numerous “walkthroughs” (videos or tips that guide gamers through a game) on YouTube or fora that are being shared on social media. The Telltale game can be played on smartphones or tablets, with the possibility of effortlessly sharing progress and achievements on social media. And the Game of Thrones Ascent game is actually made to be played on Facebook and smartphone apps (with shortcuts for sharing achievements on social media).
However, it is *GOT* that leaves the others far behind in terms of spreadability. The highly popular HBO show has been the most illegally downloaded show for several years in a row, and even though that means short-term profit loss, it might have a positive effect in the long run: the “buzz” that the show creates by being downloaded so often, attracts new fans who initially only want to see what the “buzz” is about, but might keep watching if they like it (cf. MacNeill 13). Additionally, it is not uncommon for fans to start as illegal viewers, but later switch to paid HBO subscriptions (cf. MacNeill 13). Furthermore, *GOT* is widely present on social media and the internet in general. There are countless memes on the show which can be found on almost every platform. One phrase that has spread far beyond the *SIF*-dedicated websites and videos, is the Stark’s motto “Winter is coming”, which nowadays can also be found in non-*SIF* related articles or everyday conversations.

In addition to being the most illegally downloaded show, *GOT* is also one of the most discussed shows on the internet. During and immediately after the airing of a new episode, fora and social media are already full of comments regarding said episode. The (almost unavoidable) abundance of *GOT* related comments on social media has given rise to the “the internet is dark and full of spoilers”-meme (after the character Melisandre’s catchphrase “the night is dark and full of terrors”), which refers to the fact that these comments often contain “spoilers” and should be avoided by those who have yet to see the episode.

HBO’s *The Maester’s Path*, a game released in order to raise awareness to the first season of *GOT* in 2011, added to both spreadability and drillability of the *SIF* storyworld. The game encouraged fans to work together to unlock new content, to share their progress on social networks and to draw in others (cf. Campfire n.pag.; cf. Klastrup and Tosca 306-7). The more “novices” the players could “recruit”, the more content they would unlock. The drillability lies in the exclusive, new content that allowed the “novices” to get acquainted with the storyworld and offered the fans of the novel to dig deeper into the world they were already familiar with (cf. Hovious 6-7).

In addition, the storyworld’s drillability is also increased by its high amount of continuity (cf. infra). The fact that different transmedia overlap in terms of narrative, historical events, and characters, allows viewers or readers to dig deeper and learn more about the storyworld. Every transmedium aims to add interesting, complementary information, which automatically causes readers or viewers to expand the knowledge they already have. Then fans can then drill even deeper by reading about this historical event and others in *WIF*, an elaborate encyclopaedic

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20 Parodied images, phrases or videos that are spread online, often coming in several versions.

21 Nowadays, Twitter is an especially popular medium for commenting on television shows as they are being aired, even more so than Facebook (cf. Harington et al. 13). The social platforms are used as a way of engaging with the program, as well as a means to connect with friends and fellow-viewers (cf. Harington et al. 13).

22 Spoilers reveal information about cliff-hangers, conclusions to novels or films, etc.
book that covers the history of the "Known World", i.e. the dynasties, wars, important sites, etc. This work is a good example of a "drilling" medium with – to use Klastrup and Tosca's concept – a relatively low degree of independence (cf. 309): WIF only is an enriching experience when the readers are familiar with the SIF storyworld, otherwise they would just be reading small texts about fictional historical figures and events with whom and which they do not really have a connection.

2.3. Continuity and Multiplicity

The continuity in the SIF storyworld manifests itself in many forms. A detail which adds to the continuity of the storyworld in a minor but consistent way, is the almost identical fonts that are used for the (newer editions of) SIF novels, the covers of the graphic novel, KSK, WIF and the GOT logo (the latter with some minor changes). The font in this case can be considered both a coherent mode and a semiotic brand, seeing that it becomes a meaningful feature that adds to the consistency and recognisability of the storyworld.

Apart from this detail, it has to be said that most of the storyworld’s continuity is due to its strong sense of world-building (cf. infra). Throughout the different transmedia, the world itself – with its own facts, history, cultural habits, religions, etc. – remains consistent and connects the transmedia, instead of them being mere separate elements. The novellas, for instance, provide an insight in events and characters that are considered historical by the characters of the SIF novels. “The Princess and the Queen, or, the Blacks and the Greens” (2013) and “The Rogue Prince, or, A King's Brother” (2014) respectively recount the battle of the Dance of the Dragons and the life of Prince Daemon Targaryen. Furthermore, the “The Rogue Prince, or, A King's Brother” (2014) – though published later – serves as a sort of prequel to the other novella, as it relates the events leading up to the Dance of the Dragons, which is narrated in the first novella.

Another example is KSK, which at first sight seems to be a comical, light-hearted set of prequels to the SIF novels. And yet, these short stories are in fact intricately interwoven with many other transmedia as well. KSK is compiled of three short stories – “The Hedge Knight”, “The Sworn Sword” and “The Mystery Knight” – following Ser Duncan “Dunk” the Tall and his squire, Prince Aegon “Egg” Targaryen. In KSK, Ser Duncan is a young hedge knight (a knight with no lands of his own and without a lord or master) who, on his way to a tournament, encounters the bald Egg, who poses as a commoner, and proposes to be Dunk’s squire. Even though Egg’s true identity quickly gets revealed, this does not stop him from continuing to be Dunk’s squire. “The Mystery Knight” is to this day the last story of the Tales of Dunk and Egg, however, their tale does not end here, in contrast, in WIF readers find out that Egg later would sit on the Iron

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23 The “newer versions” of the novels are those that were printed after GOT was first aired. Some examples of the fonts can be found in the appendix under “Fonts”.
Throne as Aegon V “the Unlikely” and would even name one of his sons after Dunk (cf. Martin et al. 108). In addition, they learn that Dunk becomes a member and even the captain of the Kingsguard under Aegon V, which was prophesied or dreamt by Daemon II Blackfyre in the “The Mystery Knight” (cf. Martin et al., WIF 228-9): “[Daemon] put a hand on Dunk's shoulder. 'You have dreamed the same dream, I know you have.' He had, it was true. The first time the old man let me hold his sword. 'Every boy dreams of serving in the Kingsguard.'” (Martin, KSK 282) At this point in the tales, this prospect seems quite unlikely. In KSK, Dunk is highly insecure about his intellect [which is reflected in the phrase with which he constantly chides himself: “Dunk the lunk, thick as a castle wall.” (Martin, “The Hedge Knight” 46)] and questions his worth as a knight, this is for instance visible in the following excerpt: “I am a knight now in truth? he remembered wondering. Am I a champion?” (Martin, “The Hedge Knight” 108)

However, in the SIF novels readers learn about Ser Duncan's later vocation and find that the prophecy did come true after all. In fact, in the SIF novels his name is always mentioned with a certain amount of prestige attached to it, as is the case in the following excerpt:

The chair behind the table was old black oak, with cushions of blanched cowhide, the leather worn thin. Worn by the bony arse of Barristan the Bold and Ser Gerold Hightower before him, by Prince Aemon the Dragonknight, Ser Ryam Redwyne, and the Demon of Darry, by Ser Duncan the Tall and the Pale Griffin Alyn Connington.

How could the Kingslayer belong in such exalted company? (Martin, SS 913)

In the above excerpt Jaime Lannister – at that point the Lord Commander of the Kingsguard – is plagued by self-doubt, and does not consider himself worthy enough of stepping in the footsteps of the previous Lord Commanders. Readers of the novels know these men – especially Ser Barristan, Prince Aemon and Ser Ryam – to be heroes, as they often are mentioned as such or have songs and ballads dedicated to their valour.24

Allowing the readers to find out more about Dunk's and Egg's futures can satisfy their cravings for a closed ending, however, putting the information of the three sources together can also yield more insights in the total. For instance, there is the mysterious and interesting character called Brynden Rivers, a.k.a. the Bloodraven, who appears or is mentioned in all of these texts. In WIF it is mentioned that Brynden Rivers was the King's Hand25, but was arrested by King Aegon V (Egg) in 233 AC (after Aegon I's Conquest)(cf. Martin et al. 107). Instead of being imprisoned, Rivers chose “to take the black” (a phrase to say that he became a member of the Night's Watch) and was sent there together with Aegon brother, Maester Aemon (cf. Martin 107). In WIF we also learn that he became the Watch's Lord Commander (in 239 AC), but later mysteriously disappeared beyond the Wall 252 AC (cf. Martin et al. 107).

24 In the SIF storyworld, many characters refer to these songs and ultimately aspire to be in one, as the ultimate sign of their heroism, skill or of them being memorable (cf. infra: e.g. Sansa Stark).
25 The king's chief advisor and a highly powerful position.
The events of *KSK* obviously take place before this, but even here he is a mysterious character and said to be a sorcerer (cf. Martin 194-5). In “The Mystery Knight” the readers find the following description: “His hair fell to his shoulders, long and white and straight, brushed forward so as to conceal his missing eye [...]. The eye that remained was very red. *How many eyes has Bloodraven? A thousand eyes, and one.*” (Martin 352)

The information we receive in *WIF* and *KSK* is highly compatible to what is found in the *SIF* novels. In *FC* Maester Aemon relates how he and Brynden Rivers came to the Wall, escorted by Ser Duncan (cf. Martin 308). A member of the Night’s Watch immediately adds: “‘Bloodraven?’ said Dareon. ‘I know a song about him. ‘A Thousand Eyes, and One,’ it’s called. But I thought he lived a hundred years ago.’” (Martin 308) However, in *DD* when Brandon Stark meets the mysterious three-eyed crow beyond the Wall, the readers get some clues as to what happened to Brynden Rivers after he disappeared on a ranging mission:

*His white hair* was fine and thin as root hair and long enough to brush against the earthen floor. [...] *A three-eyed crow should have three eyes. *He has only one, and that one red.* [*] [...]

“I wore many names when I was quick, but even I once had a mother, and the name she gave me at her breast was *Brynden.*” [*] [...]

“Most of him has gone into the tree,” explained the singer Meera called Leaf. “[...] He has a *thousand eyes and one,* but there is much to watch. One day you will know.” (Emphasis EDB; Martin, *DD* 194; 490)

His description matches with the one in “The Mystery Knight” (see emphasis), his birth name matches the Bloodraven’s and even the riddle is being hinted at. In the show, it is the three-eyed crow (in the show renamed as three-eyed raven) who hints at the riddle, by welcoming Bran and his companions with the following words: “I’ve been watching you. All of you. All of your lives. With a thousand eyes and one. Now you’ve come to me at last, Brandon Stark.” (*GOT*, “The Children”)

Additionally, the linking together of certain transmedia can also evoke discussion and hypotheses for the fans to wrap their minds around. For instance, in *SS*, Brienne of Tarth needs to get a shield repainted and describes the shield she wants the painter to recreate:

“Your door reminded me of an old shield I once saw in my father’s armory.” She described the arms as best she could recall them. [...]”

“You did beautifully,” she said [...] It was more a picture than a proper coat of arms, and the sight of it took her back through the long years, to the cool dark of her father’s armory. She remembered [...] *the green leaves of the tree, and along the path of the falling star.*” (Emphasis by me EDB; *FF* 187, 199)

This shield is almost identical to the one Dunk is said to have in "The Hedge Knight":
“The field should be the color of sunset,” [Dunk] said suddenly. “The old man liked sunsets. And the device...”

“An elm tree,” said Egg. “A big elm tree, like the one by the pool, with a brown trunk and green branches.”

“Yes,” Dunk said. “That would serve. An elm tree... but with a shooting star above.” (Emphasis EDB; KSK 50)

This seemingly minor detail caused many readers to start searching for clues and other elements that might link these two characters together. For instance, their similar appearances and behavioural patterns have led many to hypothesise that Brienne might be a descendent of Dunk - who, as a member of the Kingsguard actually should have been celibate. At this point, considering that there still are two more SIF novels to be published, it is impossible to say whether or not the readers are correct or whether any information about Brienne and Dunk will ever be revealed, but the lively theories show that combining multiple coherent transmedia or stories can incite reflection and a more complex whole.

Cyanide's Game of Thrones, The Telltale game and Game of Thrones Ascent evoke continuity by combining plot elements and characters from the SIF novels and GOT with new characters and story developments. The first game takes place during the events of GOT's first season, but explores them from the point of view of two new characters, Alester Sarwyck and Mors Westford. The Game of Thrones Ascent game is even more closely connected to the show, as it releases new content in correspondence to the airings of new episodes. For instance, the gamers can partake, via their own in-universe character (cf. infra), in quests that are linked to what has happened in that week's episode. The six instalments of the Telltale game take place in the timespan of GOT's seasons three to five. Alongside new events and characters, the gamers also get to experience events from the novels and show (such as the Red Wedding) from different points of view (see also infra). Interestingly, the recurring characters were designed to resemble the respective GOT actors, six of which also voiced their characters.26 This was also the case for the Cyanide game, in which two actors from the show (James Cosmo and Conleth Hill) also voiced their game counterparts. Here, too, the makers strived to design the recurring characters (Jeor Mormont, Varys and Cersei Lannister) so as to make them resemble the actors.27 Such accordance connects these the different transmedia more closely to one another and heightens the continuity considerably.

In contrast, the graphic novel characters were not designed to resemble the actors, seeing that the makers were only licensed to adapt the book and not the show (cf. Ignite New

Mexico n.pag.). According to Abraham, who scripted the graphic novel, the two transmedia were created autonomously, both taking the novels as the main source (cf. n.pag.). It could be said that this is a missed opportunity in a storyworld that as a whole features so much continuity.

Nonetheless, the graphic novel generally tends to stick closer to the novels than the show. In fact, _GOT_ increasingly diverges from them: certain plotlines were changed (e.g. Sansa marrying Ramsay Bolton, instead of Jeyne Poole, who in the novels poses as Arya Stark), characters were cut from the show (e.g. Coldhands), several characters have died in the series, but are as yet alive in the novels (e.g. Myrcella Baratheon, Stannis Baratheon), etc. And as of seasons five and six, the show has in fact caught up with the novels, creating the unique situation of an adaptation progressing at a faster pace than its source material. Arguably, _GOT_ progressively transforms itself into a multiplex retelling, than a continuity element. As I already mentioned in my introduction, Martin himself has already stated that two different endings are not ruled out (cf. “Last Year” n.pag.).

Another source of multiplicity is the parody _A Game of Groans_ (2012), which, by warping and distorting specific world-building elements and characters, creates an alternative retelling of Martin’s _SIF_ novels. A last multiplex element that is worth mentioning, is fan fiction. Not all fan fiction is multiplex, some stories solely wish to explore specific events or characters in greater depth. But a considerable share of the _SIF_ fan fiction does engage with alternate retellings, such as those in which certain actions have different outcomes or “alternate universe” stories, in which the characters are placed in a different world (for instance in our reality).

### 2.4. Immersion and Extractability

According to Linda Hutcheon, all video games offer an immersive experience to the gamers, because they get to “inhabit a [...] fictional” and “visual world of digital animation” (13). To her, it is the interactional aspect of games that turn them into immersive actions: gamers get to engage with the storyworld and are confronted with problems which they have to solve, it is their actions that drive the plot forward (cf. 13; 22). From this point of view, it can be said that the _SIF_ video games are immersive, some more so than others. The best example of an immersive experience in the _SIF_ storyworld is the 2014 online game _19 Reinos_ that was released in Spain by Canal+ in order to spark people’s attentions for the upcoming fourth season of _GOT_. The audience could create a profile, choose fealty to a house (similar to the _Ascent_ game) and based on their geographic location, would try to win the crown for their house. All of the actions (battles, betrayal, swearing fealty, seduction, etc.) took place via Twitter in the form of tweets. The game concluded with an actual real-world event, during which the winner – and thus the new king – was crowned. The game can be called immersive for several reasons. Firstly, it allowed gamers to be interactive with the _SIF_ fictional world. Secondly, the game immersed people in the storyworld by connecting the real world with the fictional one, i.e. allowing
characters to live in the storyworld via alter egos, having the virtual battle take place on an everyday social media platform, and organising non-virtual events.

Immersive to a lesser degree, yet still allowing fans to get involved in a virtual world, are the *Ascent* game as well as the card, board and card role-playing games. All of these games allow gamers to become part of the *SIF* storyworld via a virtual alter ego. In general, it can be said that role-playing games (e.g. *Ascent* game, *19 Reinos* or the *Blood of Dragons* games on *Westeros*) allow for immersion, because the gamers can put a little bit of themselves into their virtual alter egos.

Extractability is mostly achieved via merchandise, which the *SIF* storyworld does not lack (cf. Steiner 188). Merchandise comes in many forms and shapes, both from official and non-official (or fan-created) channels: from key-chains, over scented-candles with smells inspired by the storyworld, over jewellery (often modelled after jewellery worn by actors on the show), to complete cosplay outfits. Nonetheless, some of the extractable objects can also increase the sense of immersion, e.g. wearing a cosplay outfit can make the fan feel more involved with the storyworld. The *A Feast of Ice* (2012) and *The Unofficial Game of Thrones Cookbook* (2012) cookbooks are other examples of extractability. These cookbooks collect recipes of dishes, that either featured in or were inspired by the *SIF* novels. In this case, fans are able to extract dishes from the fictional world to the real world.

However, non-material elements also found their way into everyday life. I already mentioned how certain quotes (both from the novels and *GOT*) developed into well-known catchphrases that spread beyond *SIF*-related contexts. Similarly, certain songs also got a life of their own. In the novels songs play an important role in entertainment (i.e. bawdy or love songs) and folklore (e.g. songs that recount the tales of great battles, losses, feuds and heroic acts), however, here readers only get to experience them as texts. The show (or games) have the affordance of the modes of sounds and music, both of which can be either intra- or extradiegetic, respectively e.g. songs played examples of each would be a song that is played during an episode, or the tune of the opening credits. Both the intra- and extradiegetic sounds or music can become extractable: people can listen to the show's soundtrack or sing songs that feature in the show, people can hum the – now highly well-known – opening credits’ tune, etc. Interestingly, some real-world artists have also covered songs that feature in *GOT*, for instance Sigur Rós’ version of the infamous “The Rains of Castamere”. Moreover, it can also be said that these sounds and this music also heightens the effect of immersion. The additions of an opening sequence and intradiegetic noises, make the experience a lot more profound and intense, and make the storyworld come alive, thus allowing the viewer to completely surround himself (auditorily) with the storyworld. This shows that these two principles can be two sides of the same coin, instead of mutually exclusive. Similarly, writing fan fiction can also be said to both encourage
immersion – the writer enters the storyworld and the characters’ minds in order to create a new story – and extractability – seeing that writing fan fiction incorporates the storyworld into the writer's everyday life.

2.5. **World-building**

The *SIF* storyworld can be categorised as what Marie-Laure Ryan refers to as a *world-dominated* narrative, since the imagined world is very rich and its plot functions like “a path through the storyworld that reveals the diversity of its landscapes, the variety of its biological species, and the particularities of its social system.” ("Transmedia" 5) In contrast, the worlds of *plot-dominated* narratives are mostly seen as “containers” for the characters to move around in, the plot could more easily be relocated or *transpositioned*, to put it in Ryan's words (cf. "Transmedia" 5). According to her, world-dominated narratives make for more interesting subjects of transmedia storytelling, seeing that different transmedia have more material to work with: a new story can be told about a new or different character, a new – yet undiscovered or relatively untouched – part of the world. This holds true for the *SIF* world, seeing that it is nothing if not elaborately constructed. The world has been provided with a detailed history, its own chronology and timeline, with folklore, different languages, a variety of religions, politics, geography, climate and economic system (in which the geographical areas have their own typical products of trade). In other words, the *SIF* storyworld is a complete world.

*WIF* is a fine example of world-building, the book presents itself not as written by *SIF* experts of our world, like for instance the essay collections *Beyond the Wall* and *Mastering the Game of Thrones*, but as composed by in-universe Maester Yandel, a maester of the Citadel (cf. Martin, *WIF* viii-ix). The book is supposedly written during or after SS as the dedication on page viii mentions it was a gift for King Tommen Baratheon. However, when seen up close, the reader can see traces of both Robert’s and Joffrey’s names, which have been erased and overwritten with Tommen’s (cf. Martin, *WIF* viii). The traces remain, as is the case with real parchment palimpsests. This, as well as the general outlook – the paper is printed to look like parchment, with a light brown, off-white colour and stains – can be said to show the book's claim to immediacy, as it is defined by Bolter and Grusin: the book mimics the characteristics of medieval, authentic manuscripts, rather than striving for a modern look (cf. 5-6).

The fact that the history presents itself as being written by an in-universe character also has its influences on the work's contents and on its veracity claim. Firstly, there is no omniscient narrator, Yandel’s knowledge of historic events is limited and biased (cf. Garcia n.pag.). Yandel based his work on his own perceptions and experiences, or on written accounts of others before him, which at times might even contradict each other (cf. Garcia n.pag.). History is a relative, subjective construct, written mainly by victors and survivors, and if recent events might be misrepresented or biased (cf. infra), objectivity can definitely not be guaranteed for his entries
on events that date to thousands of years ago. Especially considering that many of these events never were recorded in written accounts (cf. Martin et al, WIF 5).

Furthermore, as I mentioned before, WIF was written as a gift to a Baratheon king, regardless of it being Robert or one of his heirs, therefore, it likely is written so as to favour the Baratheons. There are no entries which mention Joffrey or Tommen, however, those that feature Robert are brimming with flattery. This is visible in the following excerpt:

Lord Robert’s wounds prevented him from taking up the pursuit [of the Targaryen royalists], so he gave that into the hands of Lord Eddard Stark. But Robert proved his chivalry when he refused to allow the gravely wounded Ser Barristan to be killed. Instead, he sent his own maester to tend the great knight. In such fashion did the future king win the fierce devotion of his friends and allies—for few men were ever so openhanded and merciful as Robert Baratheon.

(Martin et al, WIF 129)

Robert is here described as a valiant, yet merciful hero in laudatory phrases. In contrast, characters with uncertain or disreputable reputations (at the time that he writes WIF), or those whom the powerful Lannisters no longer are on good terms with, are either left out as much as possible or are depicted unfavourably (cf. García n.pag.). This is discernible in, for instance, the following excerpt:

[...] [T]he triumphant Prince of Dragonstone named Lyanna Stark, daughter of the Lord of Winterfell, the queen of love and beauty [...] Why would the prince have thus given insult to his own wife, [...] unless it was to help him gain the Iron Throne? The crowning of the Stark girl, who was by all reports a wild and boyish young thing with none of the Princess Elia’s delicate beauty, could only have been meant to win the allegiance of Winterfell to Prince Rhaegar’s cause [...]. (Martin et al, WIF 126)

Neither Prince Rhaegar Targaryen – the heir of the king Robert would dethrone, and whom Robert later killed – nor Lyanna Stark are depicted positively in this passage, the former being described as an unfaithful opportunist, and the latter simply as a means to an end. Especially the description of Lyanna Stark can be suspected of being biased, seeing that we find a completely different portrayal of her in the SIF novels. For instance, in GT, Ned Stark describes her as follows: "Lyanna had only been sixteen, a child-woman of surpassing loveliness." (Martin 42) Ned could also be unreliable, seeing that he is describing his beloved dead sister, yet the contrast between Ned’s account and Yandel’s is still striking. In this aspect, WIF is an ambiguous transmedium. On the one hand it presents itself as a history, full of facts and data, yet it simultaneously shows itself to be potentially unreliable, as it is biased and might contain false information (e.g. with the ancient historic events).
The uncertainty we experience with WIF, might give readers a reason to be alert when reading the novellas "The Princess and the Queen, or, the Blacks and the Greens" and "The Rogue Prince, or, a King's Brother", which respectively offer insights into the Dance of the Dragons and Prince Daemon Targaryen. Both novellas present themselves as being written by Archmaester Gyldayn. These stories add to the world-building on two levels. Firstly, they add new information about events and characters that are considered as historical by the characters of the SIF novels and GOT. Though, the texts' veracity can once more be questioned, due to their author being an involved participant: Gyldayn was the maester at Summerhall, the summer castle of the Targaryens. Secondly, they add to the storyworld's continuity by forging further links between the transmedia: Gyldayn is used as a source by Yandel in WIF, and the topics he treats are also mentioned in i.a. the SIF novels, GOT and WIF.

As a final element, I would like to discuss the visual world-building in GOT by means of two aspects. Firstly, there the title sequence which is shown at the beginning of each episode. The title sequence features an armillary sphere or a spherical astrolabe with in its centre a fiery sun around which orbit the sigils of the different houses. Then a virtual camera swoops over a hollow map of Westeros and Essos and zooms in on the specific and important locations that will feature in that episode. The presented locations are displayed as being constructed, with gears churning and walls rising from the ground. Here the audience literally becomes a witness of the process of world-building. In contrast to the static maps that are included in the novels (drawn up by James Sinclair) or those of The Lands of Ice and Fire (created by Jonathan Roberts), the opening credits reflect the world as it is: constantly in motion and in the process of being built and rebuilt. In addition, the world keeps getting bigger and more extensive as new locations are introduced.

Secondly, in the show itself, the diversity of different geographical regions is amplified by means of colour temperature adjustments which intuitively makes readers perceive a location as warmer or colder. From beyond the Wall and the North, over the Riverlands, over King's Landing, to Dorne and South Essos, viewers can see the hues of the images change from a cold, greyish tone to a warm, heavily saturated one. The different colour temperatures can be said add to the world-building because they reflect the regions' climates: the North is harsh and cold; the Riverlands are fertile, agricultural regions with a moderate climate; King's Landing in Central Westeros has a warmer climate; and Dorne has a warm, southern climate, etc. It is via these colour temperatures, in combination with the diversity in regard to costumes, that the show is able to convey this kind of information, which, in the novels, is communicated via exposition and

28 Archmaesters, in the SIF storyworld, are maesters that are experts of a specific area of study.
29 See appendix for stills under "Title Sequence Stills and Illustrations".
30 See the map included in the appendix under "The 'Known World' of SIF".
31 See appendix under "HBO's Game of Thrones Colour Temperature".
backstory. Both these elements reflect how *GOT*, due to its being a television show, relies more on showing, than on telling to construct a worldview (cf. Hutcheon 22-3).

### 2.6. **Seriality**

From Jenkins point of view, we can distinguish two types of seriality (cf. “Revenge Remaining” n.pag.). On the one hand, there is the general interpretation, which interprets seriality as the dispersion of the central storyworld over several different transmedia (cf. Jenkins, “Revenge Remaining” n.pag.). Examples of such transmedia would be *WIF*, *KSK*, the novellas, the Cyanide games, etc., which together narrate the history of a world, rather than a set of different plots.\(^3\)\(^2\) (cf. infra). A more narrow interpretation sees seriality as an inherent characteristic, i.e. the transmedia themselves are released in different instalments (cf. Jenkins, “Revenge Remaining” n.pag.). And in fact, most of the transmedia of the *SIF* storyworld are inherently bound to seriality. As of this moment, five of the *SIF* novels have been published over a timespan of over a decade, and two more novels have been announced. Martin's other *SIF* writing also is segmented, with the novellas and *The Tales of Dunk and Egg* originally all published separately in anthologies. However, in 2015, *The Tales* were published collectively in *KSK*. Moreover, longer fan fictions also tend to be released serially, i.e. one chapter at a time (von Veh n.pag.).

The HBO show is divided into different seasons, each consisting of ten episodes. Typically, there are some minor cliff-hangers at the end of each episode, but the greater ones usually take place in the last episode, the season’s finale. In addition *GOT*'s episode airings are also linked to new content and challenges in the *Game of Thrones Ascent* game (cf. supra). This increases the urge in fans to go and check the game for new content once the show is over.

The Telltale game is another example of seriality, as its different “episodes” or sequences were released over a specific period of time. The graphic novel was originally released in twenty-four separate issues. In his novels, Martin spreads cliff-hangers throughout the novels. The novels are large enough and contain sufficient storylines as to have several cliff-hangers in them, some even occurring near the middle of a novel. The latter is made possible by his viewpoint narration, as it enables Martin to add a cliff-hanger in, for instance, Bran's chapter, and then switch to, for example, Daenerys’ point of view, who is in a completely different region and does not know Bran. In the subsequent chapters, Martin can manipulate the suspense by not picking Bran as a viewpoint character, or by not choosing those viewpoint characters that know where Bran is or what he is doing. In contrast, the graphic novel's cliff-hangers tend to be situated at the end of the issue. To assure this is the case, the order of the novel chapters is often altered so as to let the ending of the graphic novel coincide with a cliff-hanger in a novel chapter. A similar process can also be found in *GOT*, which also tends to adapt the original order so as to position cliff-hangers at the end of an episode.

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\(^3\)\(^2\) See also 3.1.2. Plot and Characterisation.
In regard to non-fictional SIF transmedia, such as the wikis, fora and Martin's blog, can be said to be inherently serial. The wikis and fora spread their information across different entries and threads. Whereas, on his blog, Martin periodically answers questions, releases new information or preview chapters from upcoming (SIF) work. The preview chapters especially help to increase the audience's desire for more.

2.7. Subjectivity

I already mentioned that the SIF storyworld contains several narratives, which explore multiple subjectivities. The examples are numerous: KSK introduces two new protagonists, Dunk and Egg, the former being the stories' focalizer. WIF explores the history of the "Known World" via a subjective in-universe character, Maester Yandel. "The Princess and the Queen, or, the Blacks and the Greens" and "The Rogue Prince, or, a King's Brother" similarly explore characters and events via in-universe character Archmaester Gyldayn. The Cyanide and Telltale games combine characters known from the novels or show with a new set of characters. However, only the latter function as point of views for the gamer, therefore these games can be said to add new subjectivities to the storyworld. Fan fiction also often chooses to delve into the storyworld from the points of view of different or new characters.

The SIF novels themselves also feature a wide variety of subjectivities. Martin combines an extradiegetic narrator with a different intradiegetic focalizer for each chapter, so that the reader gets to see the story through the eyes of an array of characters. This "tight viewpoint structure", as Martin himself refers to it, has three main effects (cf. "Talks" n.pag.). A first one is that it offers the readers variety and some alternation, both in regard to the characters (in case a reader finds a specific character tedious or enervating) and the locations, as the different viewpoint characters are relatively spread out over the "Known World".

Secondly, it encourages the readers to empathise with the viewpoint characters. Martin allows the readers to see the world through their eyes and experience their thoughts or frame of reference, therefore making it more likely that the readers connect with these characters. In addition, Martin's viewpoint characters have distinctive styles and ways of phrasing things, which lends each of them a unique voice. This is noticeable in the following two excerpts:

*He looks unchanged,* Victarion thought. [...] His hair was still black as a midnight sea, with never a whitecap to be seen, and his face was still smooth and pale beneath his neat dark beard. [...] (Bold emphasis EDB; Martin, DD 372)

Balon Greyjoy had always been thin [...]. His eyes were flinty too, black and sharp, but the years and the salt winds had turned his hair the grey of a winter sea, flecked with whitecaps. (Bold emphasis EDB; Martin, CK 185)

33 As to DD, there have been thirty-one different viewpoint characters.
Both these excerpts were written from the viewpoints of characters originally from the Iron Islands, respectively Victarion and Theon Greyjoy. The Iron Islands are known for their harsh living circumstances and tough inhabitants, but first and foremost, they are characterised by their dependence on and respect for the sea. They are sailors and conquerors by sea, and this is visible in their viewpoint chapters, even in Theon, who has spent the last nine years away from his home. When they respectively describe Euron and Balon Greyjoy, they refer back to sea metaphors to do so. They fit within their frame of reference, and are not used by any other character in the entire series.

Thirdly, Martin’s viewpoint narration adds to the mystery and uncertainty in his work. The readers only “experience” those events at which the viewpoint character was present. Alternatively, readers only know what the viewpoint character has learned from hearsay. In both cases, the information the reader gets, can be biased, limited, untrue or distorted (cf. Whitehead 48). Seeing the world through different eyes makes everything in the storyworld more multifaceted and less black-and-white, with the downside that it sometimes seems nearly impossible to separate true from false. Furthermore, the characters might also remember things incorrectly. This is, for instance, the case in some Sansa’s viewpoint chapters. In CK, we find the following passage in which Sandor Clegane enters Sansa’s bedroom during the Battle of the Blackwater: “[Sandor Clegane] yanked her closer, and for a moment she thought he meant to kiss her. He was too strong to fight. She closed her eyes, wanting it to be over, but nothing happened.” (Martin 861) However, in SS, she remembers the events differently: “Sansa wondered what Megga would think about kissing the Hound, as she had. He’d come to her the night of the battle stinking of wine and blood. He kissed me and threatened to kill me, and made me sing him a song.” (Martin 226) This example shows us that even the focalizers’ inner thoughts and memories are unreliable, which is similar to what is the case with WIF’s Yandel (cf. supra).

GOT features roughly the same characters as the novels – though some characters were altered or not included in the show’s plotline (cf. infra) – but explores their perspectives quite differently. In the show, viewers mostly become onlookers and no longer see the world focalised through the eyes of a viewpoint character. This both has disadvantages and merits. A possible disadvantage, on the one hand, is that viewers do not get a direct insight into the different characters’ minds and thus miss a lot of information. The only way via which the viewers might notice such frames of reference, is via the characters’ dialogues, direct actions and facial expressions, i.e. when they verbalise or physically act out their thoughts. Yet, even though this showing of information is less rich than the telling kind, it can be said to be more objective, as the camera focalisation is more neutral than the subjective outlook of the viewpoint characters. Furthermore, stepping away from the viewpoint focalisation also allows for GOT to show interactions or actions that in the book remained “off-screen”. The camera is not limited to the
experiences of the viewpoint characters. An example of this is the romance between Renly Baratheon and Loras Tyrell. A romance that is merely hinted at in the novels, but gets a lot of “on-screen” scenes in the show (cf. infra). In i.a. this case, it can be said that the show offers to explore previously uncharted subjectivities, thus enriching the storyworld.

In contrast, the graphic novel, does allow some viewpoint narration by adding clearly focalised excerpts from the novel in square frames. Moreover, the graphic novel uses different colours for these frames depending on which character is focalising the events, mimicking the novels viewpoint chapters even though the visual representation of the plot is more closely related to *GOT*. By combining text – mostly direct copies from the novel – and illustrations, the graphic novel can be said to hover somewhere between showing and telling, whereas *GOT* mainly uses showing to inform the audience.

At times, the graphic novel shows readers more, than the novel told them. For instance, in *GT*, one day on the road to King’s Landing, Sansa – at that moment still completely enamoured of Prince Joffrey, who will soon afterwards show his cruel, sadistic nature – and Joffrey spend a day together. In the novels, we find the following account of her day: “They explored the caves by the riverbank, and tracked a shadowcat to its lair, and when they grew hungry, Joffrey found a holdfast by its smoke and told them to fetch food and wine for their prince and his lady. They dined on trout fresh from the river, and Sansa drank more wine than she had ever drunk before.” (Martin, *GT* 151) Sansa’s account is relatively neutral in regard to the holdfast where they have their lunch. In contrast, the graphic novel clearly depicts Sansa smiling at her prince, while the two commoners in the background look at Joffrey with fear and/or displeasure in their eyes. The looks in their eyes could even imply that Joffrey threatened them to offer them food and wine, rather than merely “telling” them to do so. The visual rendering of this scene can be said to accentuate the fact that Sansa is an unreliable focalizer: whereas the commoners distrust Joffrey, Sansa is too infatuated with him to see anything but her charming prince. This scene then can make both novel and graphic novel readers aware of the fact that they should take Sansa’s observations with a grain of salt, and that Joffrey’s apparent valour might only have been part of Sansa’s imagination. Consequently, this example shows how even faithful adaptations can spark a new interpretation.

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34 See examples in the appendix under “Viewpoint Narration Example Eddard Stark” and “Viewpoint Narration Example Jon Snow.”

35 See example in the appendix under “Added Information Via Visualisation.”
2.8. Performance

2.8.1. Cultural Attractors and Cultural Activators

The main cultural attractors for *GOT* are its advertisement campaigns, which consist of many diverse aspects; such as posters, trailers, previews, etc. Some transmedia actually combine the roles of cultural attractor and cultural activator. This is for instance the case with *The Maester’s Path*, an immersive game that was launched by HBO right before the first season of *GOT*. Initially, audiences were attracted to the game via advertisement.\[36\] The game itself was an activator in the sense that, via gameplay, fans would be able to unlock new content and previews for the upcoming show. Furthermore, the game encouraged the players to share their progress on social media and “recruit” others, which turned fans into attractors themselves (cf. Campfire n.pag.; cf. Klastrup and Tosca 306-7). The game had a double purpose: firstly, it raised awareness of the upcoming show and increased the anticipation of the *SIF* novel fans, and secondly, it functioned as an introduction to the storyworld to those who were not familiar with it up to that point (cf. Steiner 187-8).

After the show was aired, HBO launched the “Viewer’s Guide” on the *GOT* website. On this online platform, fans can read more about the episodes, watch commentary clips from the actors, and look at a dynamic map to see where each main character is as of a particular episode. The “Viewer’s Guide” functions as an activator, which encourages fans to learn more about the show and yet increases the appetite for a new episode (cf. Steiner 187).

To Jenkins, attractors are those elements that draw new fans into the storyworld. Nonetheless, it can be said that a successful transmedia storytelling construct also requires a second type of attractor, namely those elements that keep attracting current fans to new transmedia. An example of this would be Martin’s blog, on which entries often draw attention to the releases of new transmedia. In addition, this blog also plays an activating role by encouraging fans to leave a comment, go to certain events, etc.

2.8.2. Audience Participation

When it comes to audience participation, the *SIF* storyworld offers various possible ways for the audience to get involved. Firstly, video games enable the audience to actively engage with the storyworld: they are the ones that are literally pushing the buttons (cf. Hutcheon 22). A good example of this is the *19 Reinos* game, in which single gamers could affect the progress of the entire game (cf. Pratten n.pag.).

A second way is fan fiction, a transmedium par excellence for fans to actively participate in the fictional world, instead of being limited to passive consumption (Ryan, “Interview” n.pag.). The *SIF* fan fiction explores numerous topics, and offers both continuous and multiplex

\[36\] The creators even sent themed packages to some influential bloggers and YouTubers, so as to encourage them to play the game and show it to their audiences.
extensions. The former focus on canon\textsuperscript{37} topics and events, but choose to drill deeper into them, retelling them with more detail. The multiplex fan fiction either aims to revisit and alter canon events – e.g. exploring events that are merely mentioned in the canon transmedia, changing the outcome, adding a new character, etc. – or it explores placing the existing characters in alternate universes – e.g. placing the characters in a different world. In both cases, fans themselves can create an immersive experience and drill deeper into the storyworld. The unauthorised parody \textit{A Game of Groans} explores the SIF world in a similar way as the multiplex fan fictions, as it inverts \textit{GT} entirely; Tyrion, for instance, no longer is a dwarf, but a giant.

Many fans actively participate in discussing the \textit{SIF} world on websites, blogs or online fora. The discussions can be found on websites such as \textit{Westeros} (westeros.org), or the \textit{GOT} (gameofthrones.wikia.com) and \textit{SIF} (awoiaf.wikia.com) wikis, which are dedicated to the \textit{SIF} world or \textit{GOT}, but have also spread to general websites and fora such as \textit{YouTube}, \textit{Reddit}, \textit{Quora} and \textit{Yahoo Answers}. On these platforms, the fans get to engage with the story and other fans. They can ponder mysterious elements, exchange hypotheses and opinions; especially since the \textit{SIF} world is characterised by a lot of uncertainty and contains a lot of gaps in terms of backstory and explanation (cf. Whitehead 51-2, cf. infra).

Fans can write fan fiction or wiki entries, but they can also write essays and even cookbooks. Three examples of the former are \textit{Beyond the Wall} (2012), \textit{Mastering the Game of Thrones} (2015) and \textit{Women of Ice and Fire} (2016), three essay collections written by fans that profoundly explore specific topics, such as femininity, war, etc. Most of the contributors are novelists, but some are scholarly writers, e.g. Gary Westfahl from \textit{Beyond the Wall}. On the other hand, we find the cookbooks \textit{A Feast of Ice and Fire} and \textit{The Unofficial Game of Thrones Cookbook}\textsuperscript{38}, both of which are fan-created. In fact, the recipes collected in \textit{A Feast of Ice and Fire} started off as leisure blog posts on \textit{The Inn at the Crossroads}, written by two fans purely for the pleasure of immersing themselves in the \textit{SIF} world.

\textsuperscript{37} I.e. that which belongs to the official storyworld and plotline (cf. Scolari et al., “Introduction” 3-5).
\textsuperscript{38} Unauthorised by Martin, his publishers or HBO.
2.9. Evaluation

Based on my analysis of the SIF storyworld, with Scolari’s classification of transmedia storytelling elements as a guideline, the following overview of the SIF transmedial expansion can be made:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Examples</th>
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| Macrostory                      | *SIF* novels (“Blood of the Dragon”, “Arms of the Kraken” and “Path of the Dragon”)
| Parallel stories                | Cyanide’s *Game of Thrones* (2012), *Ascent* and *Telltale* games       |
| Peripheral stories              | *KSK*; “The Princess and the Queen”; “The Rogue Prince”;
| User-generated content          | *WIF*; Cyanide’s *Genesis*                                               |
| Interstitial microstories       | *The Maester’s Path*; *19 Reinos*                                        |
| Adapations                      | *GOT* (HBO); *Game of Thrones* (graphic novel)                           |
| Non-narrative or non-fictional transmedia | *Not A Blog* (Martin’s blog); essays on *SIF: Beyond the Wall*,
| Transmedia branding             | *Mastering the Game of Thrones* and *Women of Ice and Fire*             |
| For instance clothes, pins, jewellery, etc. | |

The following diagram applies Scolari’s transmedia classification to the SIF transmedial world, with the addition of three new categories which I added. Applied to the SIF storyworld, Scolari’s categorisation proved to be inadequate to cover all of its elements, which is why I added adaptations, non-narrative or non-fictional transmedia and transmedia branding as additional categories. The only narrative transmedia that categorise as adaptations are *GOT* and the graphic novel. In fact, the graphic novel is the only prototypical adaptation, in the sense that it adapts the SIF novels faithfully with few alterations. In contrast, *GOT* originally could be called a prototypical adaption, considering that the macrostory initially was not altered much. However, since season five and six, the show contained an increasing amount of departures from

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39 These novellas are comprised of chapters from the *SIF* novels.
40 A fan-made, text-based online game.
41 These media were bracketed as they are not so much stories, but visualise (parts of) the macrostory or allow for an immersive experience (cf. infra).
42 The graphic novel takes most of its texts directly from the novels, as can be seen in the examples “Viewpoint Narration Example Eddard Stark” and “Viewpoint Narration Example Jon Snow” in the appendix.
the SIF novels. Therefore, it can now be said to hover somewhere in between an adaptation and a multiplex retelling: on the one hand, it still is based on the macrostory. But, on the other hand, the show also gives its own twist to its source material, at times considerably altering plotlines and characters (cf. supra and infra). However, even the graphic novel can be said to add new information to a storyworld. The visualising or showing, rather than telling, the story, can at times evoke a new interpretation – e.g. the commoners’ looks at Joffrey already hinting at his true nature (cf. supra).

The non-narrative or non-fictional transmedia are those transmedia that comment upon or analyse some of the other transmedia without belonging to the fictional universe. Lastly, the transmedia branding elements were included for the sake of completeness. The term itself is borrowed from Jenkins, and refers to those elements that contribute little to the storyworld (cf. Jenkins, “Revenge Remaining” n.pag.). They most often are no media, but mere objects – such as merchandise – that neither contain a narrative nor interact with the storyworld (cf. Jenkins, “Revenge Remaining” n.pag.). The above overview clearly reflects that the SIF transmedia storytelling construct is relatively well-balanced and varied. And even though the storyworld also contains non-fictional and material elements, the majority of the transmedia contribute to the storyworld by adding different sorts of “stories” to the storyworld.

In general it can be said that the SIF storyworld embodies convergence culture. Seeing that the SIT storyworld is a transmedial construct, it can definitely be said to exemplify media convergence. Secondly, the world offers a lot of possibilities for fans to participate. Lastly, the wikis and fora are places where a collective intelligence is cherished and evermore developed. Fans help one another solve questions, participate in improving the collected information.

In regard to Jenkins’ seven principles, the SIF storyworld has the characteristics to qualify as a successful transmedia storytelling structure. Overall, the seven principles offer a practical starting point for a storyworld analysis as it shows that specific transmedia can fulfil multiple roles within the transmedia storytelling construct. For instance, the fact that the narrator of WIF is an in-universe character, both contributes to the storyworlds continuity as well as offers another subjectivity, with his biases and background that influence the transmedium. Similarly, fan fiction can be said to encourage drillability, immersion, the exploration of new subjectivities and audience participation. Arguably, it can even be said to heighten extractability, seeing that its writers now integrate the SIF storyworld into their daily lives and actions. These overlaps can be said to demonstrate the fact that transmedia storytelling really is an interwoven construct.

Additionally, it reveals how specific transmedia relate to one another. By investigating the storyworld’s continuity, drillability, world-building, etc., we learn that specific transmedia complement each other. All principles seem to be
The analysis reveals how much the storyworld is benefited by modern media. There are the video games, *19 Reinos* (that was played via social media), the fora and wikis (which respectively offer a room for discussion and function as a vault of all the storyworld's information), the social media and *YouTube* (on which previews and trailers can be showed to attract attention to the storyworld), etc. In general, the modern media make transmedia storytelling easier to engage with, spread, drill deeper into and engage with other fans.
3. Effects of Transmedial Expansion on the SIF Storyworld

After having established in the previous chapter that the SIF storyworld is a transmedia storytelling construct, this final chapter will focus on some concrete effects of the transmedial expansion on the SIF storyworld. I distinguished two main types of effects on the storyworld: internal and external effects. The former refer to those effects that affect the storyworld itself, whereas the latter refer to those that affect how fans perceive and engage with it.

3.1. Internal Effects of Transmedial Expansion

3.1.1. A Richer Storyworld

I already mentioned that the seven principles at times overlap, this is also true for the effect they have. Drillability, continuity, immersion, subjectivities, seriality and world-building, etc., rather than being completely separate elements, all collaborate together create an intense and absorbing experience. By allowing fans to both drill deeper into a coherent and well-constructed storyworld (in which almost every medium builds on or adds new elements to another), they obtain a fuller and richer experience that is more than the sum of the parts. The SIF storyworld is a storyworld in which the fans can lose themselves.

Every medium has its affordances and constraints, yet by creating this entire web of connected transmedia, the different transmedia can complement one another, both content-wise and in regard to the variety of modes. The SIF novels are relatively constrained in regards to the available modes, but have the affordances of being able to easily convey a lot of exposition and of not being limited in time or number of pages (cf. Card 88-9). WIF is another main source for the world’s world-building, and combines its texts with illustrations, similar to KSK, which is also illustrated. Cyanide’s Genesis shows fans what the past looked like, whereas the graphic novel, GOT and i.a. the Telltale game visualise the “present”.

GOT especially enriches the storyworld in regard to visualisation and sound. Not only characters are now visualised, but viewers get to see an entire world. They can the Dothraki Sea, or the rough wilderness beyond the Wall, the Slaver’s Bay, the warm lands of Dorne, etc. Although many of these are also illustrated in WIF, GOT shows them as dynamic locations, full of people and background noises. The same goes for the songs, which, as I already mention, now transform in actual songs, in contrast to mere lyrics in the SIF novels.

However, the most prominent example of how GOT enriched the storyworld via sound, is its treatment of language. In the novels there is not so much variation when it comes to language. The people of Westeros all speak the Common Tongue and the one contrast that can be noted here, is the one between the highborn and the lowborn. The latter being a little bit rougher and less polished when it comes to pronunciation. This contrast is visible in the following excerpt, in which Arya Stark, who is of noble birth, interacts with a stableboy in
Harrenhal: “[Arya:] ‘Lord Bolton requires three horses saddled and bridled.’ The [stableboy] got to his feet, pushing straw from his hair. ‘Wha, at this hour? Horses, you say? [...] What he want horses for, in the dark?’” This contrast is also present in **GOT**, and is also explicitly pointed out in a scene (which does not take place in the novels) in which Tywin Lannister interacts with Arya Stark (pretending to be someone else). He points out to her that it is only the highborn who say “milord”, in contrast to the commoners’ “m’lord” (“A Man Without Honor”).

The show, however, explores accents and languages and offers more variety than just the highborn-lowborn contrast. For instance, in **GOT**, the different regions from Westeros feature their own accent. The pronunciation generally is British English, but the accents differ based on where the characters come from: from the Northerners, who speak with a Northern English accent; over King’s Landing, which is more neutral-sounding; to the Spanish accent we find in Dorne. Secondly, the **SIF** storyworld also features some fictional languages: for instance Dothraki, (High) Valyrian, the Old Tongue, the speech of the Others or White Walkers, etc. Both the **SIF** novels and the graphic novel deal with these languages in a minimalistic way. In the **SIF** novels, the extent of these languages are limited to a few words, whereas the graphic novel replaces the words for symbols. In contrast, **GOT** enlisted the help of linguist David Peterson to turn those languages that feature most prominently in the first novels into full-fledged languages (cf. Peterson 20-1). In the **SIF** novels, it is possible to say: “Drogo touched her hair lightly [...] murmuring softly in Dothraki. Dany did not understand the words [...]” (Martin, **GT** 109). However, in the show, the characters would actually be speaking these unspecified “words”.

Here it was the affordance of the television show medium – which has the mode of sound at its disposal – that forced them to find a way to fill up these gaps (cf. Peterson 20-1). By further exploring different accents and developing these languages, the show actually complemented and enriched the storyworld.44

**3.1.2. Plot and Characterisation**

What counts for the general storyworld, can also be said to count for the plots and characterisation: the whole is bigger than the sum of the parts. With traditional adaptations, we encounter a repetition of the same plot, but differently constructed. In contrast, with transmedia storytelling we find a collection of plots, all taking place in the same storyworld, that are dispersed serially across the different transmedia. In fact, it can be stated that the overarching storyline has become a world history, from which the different transmedia single out different moments. **WIF** takes readers back to the “Dawn Age”, supposedly some forty thousand years back from the point of view of the **SIF** novels. In the Cyanide **Genisis** game, players work their

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43 See examples in appendix under “Fictional Languages in the Graphic Novel”.
44 This example also proves how adaptations – because at that point, the show still was a faithful rendering of the macrostory – can also extend the storyworld.
way through thousand years of Westerosi history. The novellas and *KSK* take place some hundred years before the *SIF* novels. And then there is the rich “present” of the *SIF* novels themselves, simultaneously explored in the Cyanide *Game of Thrones*, Telltale and *Ascent* games. A present thus explored by means of many different, subjective viewpoints. At times, for instance with the *Ascent* game, even the fans own alter egos, via which they too become part of the storyworld.

And although many of these narratives initially might seem unrelated but for them belonging to the same storyworld, they are complementary and linked in more ways than first meet the eye, as was demonstrated in the previous chapter, e.g. the example of Bloodraven, Dunk and Egg in *WIF*, *KSK* and the *SIF* novels. This example also demonstrates how certain characters reoccur across transmedia and how combining what we learn about these characters in the different transmedia, can lead to a heightened insight and new hypotheses (cf. supra). Moreover, it is not only the combination of factual information that leads to more profound insights, but also the fact that we explore the characters via different subjectivities. For instance, by comparing Duncan’s view of himself with those of Jaime Lannister and Yandel, readers get a more nuanced view of him: he is not just the hero Jaime and Yandel make him out to be, but neither is he the stupid hedgeknight he sees himself as. The truth lies somewhere in the middle, but that only becomes apparent when the different transmedia are combined.

In regard to characterisation, it can be said that the only transmedium that at times loses some richness, is *GOT*. The transmedium has made some significant changes to the *SIF* novels’ characters, and this mainly due to the medium’s constraints. A first constraint is the difficulty of conveying a lot of backstory. In his novels, Martin interweaves his exposition with his plot, both via dialogue as well as via the focalizers’ thoughts. In contrast, the show primarily relies on dialogue and what Hutcheon refers to as showing to get exposition across. An example where this influences a character’s physical appearance, is for instance the appearance of the Tyroshi Daario Naharis. In the novels it is mentioned more than once that the Tyroshi style is quite extravagant. For instance, in *GT*, Catelyn Stark remarks that “[t]he Tyroshi loved bright colors, even in their facial hair.” (Martin, 140) Be his hair green, purple or blue, every Tyroshi the reader is exposed to throughout the novels has extravagantly dyed facial hair and extraordinary outfits.\(^45\) In *SS*, Daario Naharis is described as an exceptionally “flamboyant”, “even for a Tyroshi” (Martin 597). In contrast, *GOT*’s Daario’s (seeing that the part has been recast once in between

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\(^{45}\) *WIF* elaborates on this by stating that “Tyroshi delight in flamboyant display, and men and women both delight in dyeing their hair in garish and unnatural colors.” (Martin 263) Furthermore, *WIF* explains that this style originated from the fact that the Tyroshi are renowned for the development of dyes, in all sorts of radiant colours (cf. Martin 263).
season three and four) are a lot more modestly dressed. Their garb is more warlike and battle-worthy, with layers of boiled leather and mail. In addition, both Daario’s had brown hair and whereas Michiel Huisman’s Daario (who replaced Ed Skrein after season three) does have a beard, it is natural both in terms of form and colour.

The exposition that readers got in the novels and in WIF, never was included in the show. Probably, because, with the exception of Daario, there are no important Tyroshi characters, neither in the novels, nor in the show. In novels, even lesser characters can be described elaborately, but television shows have the constraint that they have to fit in a preordained time slot (cf. Hutcheon 66; 88). In this precisely timed and limited amount of minutes per episode, elaborating on relatively unimportant backstory – in this case the Tyroshi backstory, which mostly adds body to the story’s world-building – is both expensive money- as well as time-wise, costing the makers precious minutes that could be devoted to more vital scenes (cf. Hutcheon 88). But without the backstory, it would not make sense to suddenly introduce a single character with brightly coloured facial hair and extravagant clothes in the third season. In all probability, he would likely not be taken seriously, and not regarded as a strong warrior, which Daario should embody as the captain of a sellsword company. The changes made to Daario are not enormous, however, they strip him from his physical quirkiness. Viewers do not get to see an exceptionally flamboyant, whimsical, but strong warrior, but an almost regular sellsword fighter. Arguably, the storyworld here literally loses some of its richness and colour by not introducing the Tyroshi.

The textual transmedia consist of over two thousand characters, a tally that includes historical, major and minor characters. The SIF novels especially feature many minor characters, many of which are endowed with a rich backstory even though they are relatively unimportant. The abundance of characters is not a problem for these transmedia, however, for, for instance, the show, it is. Both for budgetary reasons as well as to avoid confusion in a world that is already so rich in regard to characters, the show makes use of composite characters (cf. Gutkind 40-1). Composite characters are characters that are based on several characters from the source material, but reduced to a single character (cf. Gutkind 39-41). In GOT, we find that Davos Seaworth has only one son, Matthos, whereas he has seven sons in the novels (even though the reader only gets to know his five eldest sons, the youngest are with their mother at the family keep). Matthos therefore embodies a total of seven characters. Though this seems counterintuitive, this change seems to impact Davos the most. Because, when Matthos dies in the

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46 See appendix under “Daario Naharis“ for a comparison of the novel’s description of Daario and the show versions.

47 To help readers keep track of all these characters, the novels typically come with The novels come with an appendix that lists all the different houses and their retainers.

48 As was the case with Daario and the Tyrosh, introducing and fleshing out all of these minor characters would simply cost too much time.
Battle of the Blackwater, *GOT*'s Davos is suddenly left sonless. In contrast, in the novels, Davos loses four of his sons to the battle. Although these losses are tragic as well, he still is a father of three healthy sons, two of which are safe and sound in the family keep.

However, not all of the changes in *GOT* are diminishing ones. An example of this is the already mentioned overt homosexuality and relationship of Loras Tyrell and Renly Baratheon in *GOT*. In the novels, their sexual orientation and potential relationship is only hinted at, as can be seen in the following excerpts:

Renly said, "[...] The boar got Robert and I got Margaery. You'll be pleased to know she came to me a maid."

[Stannis:] "In your bed she's like to die that way." (Martin, *CK* 475)

From time to time, King Renly would feed Margaery some choice morsel off the point of his dagger, or lean over to plant the lightest of kisses on her cheek, but it was Ser Loras who shared most of his jests and confidences. (Martin, *CK* 346)

[Tyrion:] "[...] What of love?"

[Loras:] "When the sun has set, no candle can replace it." (Martin, *SS* 170)

In the first passage, Renly's brother Stannis subtly hints at Renly's homosexuality, whereas the second excerpt reflects the observations of Catelyn Stark. In the last passage, it is Loras himself who states that his previous love has died, and seeing that Renly is the only deceased character with whom Loras is said to be close, it strongly suggests their relationship. However, these are mere hints. In contrast, the show openly depicts their affair in more scene than one. The depiction of Loras and Renly as a couple enriches the storyworld, as it provides a heightened insight in Loras’ and Renly’s characters and their relationship, which we do not get in the novels. Take, for instance, the following example:

Loras: Do you know who should be King?
Renly: Be serious.

Loras: I am. My father could be your bank. I've never fought in a war before, but I'd fight for you.
Renly: I'm fourth in line.
Loras: And where was Robert in the line of royal succession? Joffrey is a monster. Tommen is eight. [...] People love you. They love to serve you because you're kind to them. They want to be near you. You're willing to do what needs to be done, but you don't gloat over it. You don't love killing. Where is it written that power is the sole province of the worst? That thrones are only made for the hated and the feared. You would be a wonderful King. (*GOT*, “The Wolf and the Lion”)
In this scene, viewers get to see a different side of Renly, who usually is quite cocky in public (both in the *SIF* novels and *GOT*). Renly, here, is steadily convinced by Loras to claim the title of king. The show here explores a different aspect of Renly’s character, as well as the making of a plan, both of which remain “off-screen” in the novels.

### 3.2. **External Effects of Transmedial Expansion**

#### 3.2.1. Freedom

Because the *SIF* storyworld is so extensive, fans have a vast array of media to choose from. The storyworld’s scope should not come across as daunting or intimidating, considering the fact that most media have a high degree of independence and thus can easily be consumed on their own or serve as a starting point into the storyworld. Fans are free to choose which medium appeals to them and which transmedia interest them most. In addition, fan fiction offers the fans complete freedom and control. In their fan fiction, fans can focus on whatever topic or character they want, they can change the outcome of events and create – what they believe to be – the ideal conclusion to, for instance, the *SIF* novels. In fan fiction, fans encounter no boundaries or restrictions: some fans may prefer to conform to the storyworld’s world-building, while others prefer to write highly multiplex stories (e.g. some of the *SIF* characters placed in an alternate universe).

In a similar way, transmedia storytelling also grants more freedom to the transmedia makers. Whereas adaptations often are heavily criticised for diverging too much from the source material or for being badly produced (e.g. hastily or haphazardly), extensions can be created without all too many complaints because they are expanding the storyworld by telling new stories, instead of adapting existing ones. We also see this in the *SIF* storyworld. Whereas i.a. *WIF* and most of the video games are received well, *GOT* is often criticised badly for the changes it makes to the macrostory (cf. Itzkoff n.pag.). Even though the show no longer is a prototypical adaptation, many fans still treat it as such (cf. Itzkoff n.pag.).

#### 3.2.2. Participation and Speculation

As I already mentioned in the previous chapter, the *SIF* storyworld is characterised by a lot of uncertainty. Specifically, I focused on how the textual transmedia’s narrators and focalizers are unreliable or have but a limited amount of knowledge. This is tightly connected to how Martin presents exposition in his work. Typically, Martin interweaves the exposition with his plot and disperses it over his entire series, precariously keeping a balance between informing the readers and keeping them guessing. Martin often teases readers and only provides them with mere glimpses, as is the case with the information on the Bloodraven (cf. supra). However, the storyworld also derives it uncertainty from how it bends fantasy conventions (cf. Adi 313; cf. Lowder, “Introduction” xvi-xvii). In the *SIF* storyworld, there neither are all-concurring heroes, nor guaranteed victories (cf. Adi 309-10, 313-4). And in contrast to what the genre rules
typically prescribe, no character – not even protagonists – is safe in the SIF storyworld. Take, for instance, the example of Eddard Stark. In the entire series, it can be said that only he meets the criteria of be a typical fantasy hero: he is always just, never cruel, a good father, a smart ruler and a brave warrior. The fact that he dies – in fact, he is cruelly executed by Joffrey, mostly because of his sense of honour – in the very first novel, serves as a hint to readers that the SIF storyworld is not your typical fantasy universe where good concurs all (cf. Martin, "Author" n.pag.). The way morality is dealt with, is ambiguous to say the least: no character is exempt from sins, and no one is exempt from death (cf. Adi 313-4). This latter is even reflected in the Valyrian phrase "valar morghulis", which is a common saying in the Eastern continent Essos and means as much as "all men must die". The deaths of protagonists or important subjectivities is not restricted to the SIF novels, the graphic novel or the show: the Telltale game features the unexpected death of one of the subjectivities through which the game is played, in KSK the just and kind Baelor Targaryen dies in Dunk's arms, both novellas conclude with the deaths of their topics, etc.

All of the above-mentioned elements combined, make the storyworld a highly mysterious and unpredictable construct. In fact, it could be said that the uncertainty functions as a narrative brand, as it reoccurs consistently across the different narrative transmedia. This uncertainty is further strengthened by the fact that the macrostory still is an unfinished product. And, at this moment, no one but Martin himself knows exactly how it is going to end. Weiss and Benioff, the executive producers and writers of GOT know how Martin initially intended to conclude the series, but he might change his mind (cf. Martin, "Author" n.pag.).

However, we see that in the SIF storyworld, fans react to this uncertainty with participation in the form of theorising and speculating. Actions that nowadays mostly take place on the Internet, where fans globally can find information, share analyses, pose questions and discuss tricky topics (cf. Steiner 185-8). Apart from the participatory culture, we here find another one of what Jenkins describes as an effect of convergence culture, namely collective intelligence. Via YouTube videos or on fora and wikis, each fan can contribute to the topic about which he or she knows best, which eventually has the effect that these discussions and websites are quite elaborate and accurate.

In the discussions themselves, fans speculate on the outcome of the novels, and on mysterious elements in the storyworld. With two more books to come, the plot of SIF novels is far from finished and many mysteries are still to be solved and explained. In order to fill in the gaps, fans do make use of the transmedia storytelling construct by combining information from the different transmedia for a heightened insight. This is for instance the case in the YouTube video "What's up with Quaithe?" by the YouTuber Alt Shift X, who regularly uploads videos in which he theorises about the SIF storyworld. The video itself and his argumentation are
elaborately constructed and combine quotes from the SIF novels, from WIF, the show and interviews with Martin into one coherent video in which he speculates on the mysterious Quaithe’s identity and motives for helping Daenerys. These kind of fan theories and hypotheses increase the storyworld’s continuity, drillability and immersion, seeing that they combine the different transmedia in order to find the connections – and discover how the transmedia are complementary – with the final result of being engrossed in the storyworld.

In all probability, the amount of speculation will decrease after the final SIF novel has been published. There might still be some loose ends which still intrigue fans, but overall the need for discussion and speculation will decrease. Nonetheless, it currently is a very prominent feature of the storyworld, which is why I included it in my analysis.

3.2.2.1. Unique Position of GOT

GOT takes up a unique position in regard to speculation. In general, the situation GOT and the SIF novels are in, is relatively exceptional considering that GOT now is an adaptation that has caught up with its – yet unfinished – source material (cf. Martin, “Last Year” n.pag.). It has already made some bigger alterations, e.g. changing Jeyne Poole for Sansa Stark, not including characters such as Coldhands, etc. But now that GOT has actually outrun the SIF novels, readers and viewers are confronted by a paradoxal situation: now it is the novel readers that have to be afraid of potentially being “spoiled”. Even though Martin has stated that the plots of the SIF novels and GOT are diverging from one another, and “will continue to do so”, this has not stopped readers from theorising about some of the recent developments in GOT’s sixth season (Martin, “Last Year” n.pag.). Some events have given rise to new hypotheses and even caused some fans to reinterpret certain elements from the novel. For instance, the fact that characters such as Coldhands, Lady Stoneheart, Aegon Targaryen and Jon Connington have not been included in the show (yet), makes fans wonder how really important these characters could really be. A question that is especially interesting in regard to Aegon Targaryen and Jon Connington. In the novels, Aegon Targaryen is introduced as the supposed son of Rhaegar, whom everybody held to be dead. He is accompanied by Jon Connington, a familiar face at the Westerosi court. Together they wish to claim the Iron Throne for Aegon, seeing that, as a son from Rhaegar, he is the last male Targaryen. At the end of DD, Aegon, promisingly, has arrived in Westeros. At present (May 2016), he has not featured in the show. Readers do not really know whether or not the character actually is Aegon, or whether he is a pretender. However, considering he is absent from the show, we could assume that no matter who he really is, his actions will not have a big impact on the storyworld. In regard to Jon, we find that another character seemingly has taken over part of his storyline. In DD, Jon has picked up greyscale.49 In contrast, in GOT, it is Jorah Mormont who has recently been infected with the disease. In addition, it can be said that both characters play

49 A disease that slowly turns the sick to stone.
similar parts: both function as mentors or protectors to a young noble who wishes to rule. Seeing that Jorah seems to have replaced Jon, fans doubt both his and Aegon’s importance in the SIF novels. Time, and Martin’s The Winds of Winter and A Dream of Spring, will tell whether or not the fans are justified in looking at the GOT’s plot for a preview of what’s to come in the novels. These examples show, that even though the two transmedia are increasingly diverging, they still are part of the same storyworld. And even if certain plotlines will be altered completely, they are still linked by them dealing with the same matter in a different way, as shows the example of Jon and Jorah.
4. Conclusions

In contrast to other research on the SIF storyworld as a transmedial construct, which tends to focus on one specific type of medium (e.g. social gaming in Klastrup and Tosca's research) or one specific element of the storyworld (e.g. authorship in Steiner's research), I wanted to examine the storyworld from a broader perspective. This with the main objective to gain an insight in how the different transmedia interact with one another and how this affects the storyworld.

The first chapter was dedicated to mapping out the theoretical framework in regard to media studies, adaptations and transmedia storytelling. Transmedia storytelling is a relatively new field and is said to have boomed at the beginning of this century (cf. Evans 173). The main differences between adaptations and transmedia storytelling is their aim and their extent. Adaptations can add new elements and bring new insights, but their main goal is to adapt a specific story without altering too much. The aim of transmedia storytelling, on the other hand is to create a coherent system of transmedia. Yet, the overview of the academic discourse showed that there is still a lot of debate surrounding these subjects. Especially the authenticity of transmedia storytelling as an enriching construct is often questioned. In addition, it was also demonstrated that it at times is hard to clearly demarcate concepts such as adaptations and extensions. The unclear definitions can be said to indicate a weakness in the academic discourse, seeing that two researchers might be analysing different things while using the same terminology, which affects their conclusions and can lead to confusion in the academic discourse.

The second chapter featured an analysis of the SIF storyworld by means of Jenkins’ seven principles. The analysis revealed that the SIF storyworld is a well-balanced and highly varied example of transmedia storytelling.\(^{50}\) This despite of its having expanded bottom-up, instead of top-down (cf. Shacklock 265). According to Ryan, this could imply that the expansion was mostly driven by monetary success: i.e. transmedia storytelling as a marketing strategy. The SIF storyworld undeniably is a huge commercial and marketing success, and its expansion is undoubtedly partly motivated by this. It takes one look at the sales data of the books or at the viewing rates of HBO to see that. In addition, the SIF world also contains a lot of merchandise. Fans can find almost any object in a SIF-inspired version: pins, clothes, coasters, regular playing cards, figurines, and even toilet paper holders. Some merchandise is at times even promoted on Martin’s own blog (cf. Steiner 188). The storyworld irrefutably is a part of the entertainment business. And obviously, it is not unimportant to realise the economic and profit aspects that drive the SIF storyworld. Some of the transmedia – for instance The Maester’s Path or 19 Reinos –

\(^{50}\) Cf. diagram in the second chapter.
were solely created for the purpose of boosting the hype of the other elements, to try and guarantee their success.

However, it would be wrong to reduce the SIF storyworld down to nothing but a commercial product or marketing strategy. Because, despite of its economic motives, the SIF storyworld does offer a rich experience to fans and creators alike. In general, it can be said that the biggest effect of the transmedial expansion is the fact that it creates abundance: an abundance of links, modes, experiences, an abundance of transmedia to choose from, and an abundance of topics to explore. It is a construct in which the whole is bigger than the sum of the parts, and in which most of said parts are complementary, either by adding new information concerning reoccurring characters or dealing with yet undiscovered topics.

In regard to the plot, we find that the SIF transmedia storyworld, rather than delivering a set of separate stories in the same world, actually provides a world narrative. The high amount of continuity and the well-developed world-building make the SIF storyworld feel highly realistic and full. In terms of characters, we find the storyworld diversely filled with a countless amount of characters. In addition, readers, viewers and gamers get to explore this rich storyworld via diverse subjectivities, each with his or her own unique perspective (e.g. the SIF viewpoint characters, Yandel, Dunk, the viewpoint characters in the Telltale game, the alter egos in Ascent, etc.).

An element that really defines the storyworld’s worldview is uncertainty and mystery. On the on hand, because of the fact that fans always have to expect the unexpected: the SIF storyworld bends the fantasy genre conventions by killing main characters, having no true heroes and by presenting an ambiguous morality. On the other hand, uncertainty is caused by the textual transmedia’s unreliable narrators and focalizers, who relate events biasedly or remember them falsely, and leave the reader in the dark in regard to how something really happened or what a character truly was like. Especially at this moment, with the macrostory yet unfinished and its adaptation GOT having progressed beyond the existing material, uncertainty is at an all-time high. Presently it is almost impossible to predict how the novels will end, or which mysteries will be solved and which will not. This encourages fans to actively hypothesize about mysterious elements and potential outcomes.

In general, the SIF transmedial storyworld offers a lot of freedom and control to its fans in various ways. Firstly, there are no real obligations in regard to which transmedia they ought to consume or the order in which to read, play or watch them. Almost any medium suffices as a starting point to get to know the storyworld. With the exceptions of those media that have a low degree of independence, such as WIF, the parody A Game of Groans and the essay collections. Moreover, the bigger picture fans can get by combining the knowledge they gathered from the
different transmedia, is not obligated in order to enjoy the separate transmedia. It is perfectly possible for fans to really enjoy the video games, but never watch the show or read the novels.

Fans are encouraged to assemble the puzzle and discover the bigger picture and the connections between the separate pieces. In other words, the rich, varied and continuous storyworld also allows fans to immerse themselves and dig deeper into what they love. Additionally, there are many options for the audience to participate in the storyworld. They can interact with the storyworld by playing video games, which allow them to be physically as well as mentally involved. More interesting, however, are fan fiction and the contributions that can be made to fora and wikis. The former allow fans to create multiplex stories or drill deeper into specific scenes, events and characters; whereas the latter permits fans to learn more, share hypotheses and connect with other fans.

Of all transmedia, *GOT*, arguably is the most ambiguous. Classification-wise, it hovers between being an adaptation and a multiplex retelling. Even though it started off as a typical adaptation and though the plot at the heart of the medium still is the macrostory, it simultaneously no longer is like the macrostory. However, *GOT* does clearly demonstrate how each transmedium is influenced by its affordances and constraints when engaging with and enriching the storyworld. For instance, *GOT* is able to enrich the storyworld when it uses its affordances and modes to their full potential. Concretely, the development of the languages due to the inevitable modes of (intradiegetic) sound and language. Or being able to make the world come alive, because of the modes of moving images (which can show the locations, the costumes, etc.), sound (e.g. background noises), etc. On the other hand, when we find that the transmedium, in this case *GOT*, does not enrich but rather takes something away from the storyworld, it is often because of the medium’s constraints, e.g. the use of composite characters and leaving out backstory due to budgetary reasons and comprehensibility.

Overall, it can be said that the *SIF* storyworld is a successful example of transmedia storytelling construct. And although we should not lose sight of the economic aspects, I hope I was able to demonstrate how transmedia storytelling in the case of the *SIF* storyworld can lead to a rich and varied experience.
5. Bibliography

5.1. Primary Sources


5.2. Secondary Sources


5.3. Illustrations


6. Appendix

6.1. Overview of the SIF Storyworld

Novels, novellas and short stories, all written by George R. R. Martin:


- "Arms of the Kraken", a novella comprised of those chapters from FC and DD that are linked to the Iron Islands (the Kingsmoot and its consequences), it was published in Dragon magazine (Aug. 2002).

- Tales of Dunk and Egg, three stories revolving around the same characters, "The Hedge Knight" (originally published in 1998), "The Sworn Sword" (originally published in 2003), and "The Mystery Knight" (originally published in 2010). They were released over the period of 1998–2010, but were published collectively in 2015 as A Knight of the Seven Kingdoms (KSK), which was illustrated by Gary Gianni.


- "Path of the Dragon", a novella comprised of chapters of CK and SS written from the point of view of Daenerys Targaryen, it was published in is a Novella published in the Asimov's Science Fiction magazine (Dec. 2000).

Other books:


- A Feast of Ice and Fire: The Official Companion Cookbook to A Game of Thrones (2012), written by Chelsea Monroe-Cassel and Sariann Lehrer, published by Bantam Books (and
based on their blog posts on *Inn at the Crossroads*, on which they shared *SIF*-inspired recipes).

- *Beyond the Wall* (2012), edited by James Lowder, is a collection of essays about the *SIF* storyworld.
- *Women of Ice and Fire: Gender, Game of Thrones and Multiple Media Engagements* (2016), a collection of essays on the female characters of the *SIF* storyworld edited by Anne Gjelsvik and Rikke Schubart, and published by Bloomsbury Academic.

**Graphic novel:**

- *A Game of Thrones*, scripted by Daniel Abraham and drawn by Tommy Patterson (in cooperation with Martin), is a graphic novel version of *SIF*’s first volume, *GT*. The first issue (of twenty-four) was published in 2011, the last in 2015.

**Television show:** *Game of Thrones* (2011-ongoing), as of today there are six seasons, produced by David Benioff and Daniel Brett Weiss, who also are the series’ main screenwriters.

**Video games:**

- *Blood of Dragons* (2007), an online multiplayer role-playing game, maintained by the fan site Westeros.org.
- *A Game of Thrones: Genesis Game of Thrones* (2011), a strategy video game, developed by Cyanide.
- *Game of Thrones* (2012), a role-playing game, developed by Cyanide Studios.
- *Game of Thrones Ascent* (2013), a free video game, developed by Disruptor Beam (to be played and shared over social media).
- *Game of Thrones* (2014), a serial, narrative game, developed by Telltale. The game takes place at the same time as the *SIF* novels and show, and revolves around new protagonists (though existing characters also feature).

**Other games:**

- *A Song of Ice and Fire Roleplaying*, produced by Green Ronin Publishing in 2009 (a replacement for the first role-playing game, which by then was no longer marketed).
- *The Maester’s Path* (2011) was an online website game, created by HBO, that was launched in order to raise awareness to the upcoming first season of *GOT*.

**Other media:**

In addition to the above listed media, there is an uncountable quantity of web pages dedicated to *SIF*. The most important are: Martin’s own blog *Not A Blog*, the encyclopaedic fansite *A Wiki of Ice and Fire – Westeros*, dedicated primarily to the *SIF* novels [URL: www.awoiaf.westeros.org/]; a similar fansite, but dedicated to the television show, *Game of Thrones Wiki* [URL: http://gameofthrones.wikia.com/wiki/Game_of_Thrones_Wiki]; and the web page *Westeros. The A Song of Ice and Fire Domain*, with a wiki and extensive discussion forum [URL: http://www.westeros.org/].

Furthermore, there also is quite a lively and active fan community, who create fan fiction, engage in cosplay and other events. A remarkable element that was embraced by the fans was *19 Realms* or *19 Reinos*, produced by the Spanish CANAL+, a social media and immersive game that was created in order to raise awareness to the fourth season of *Game of Thrones*.51

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51 See also infra.
6.2. The “Known World” of SIF

6.3. Fonts


Left: Jeor Mormont, portrayed by James Cosmo. Right: Jeor Mormont in the Cyanide game.


Left: Daenerys Targaryen in the Telltale game. Right: Emilia Clarke, who portrays Daenerys in *GOT*.

6.5. Title Sequence Stills and Illustrations

Taken from Game of Thrones Title Sequence. Digital image. Art of the Title. Art of the Title, 11 May 2011. Web. 10 Feb. 2016.

6.6. HBO’s *Game of Thrones* Colour Temperature

6.6.1. North of the Wall


6.6.2. The North, close to Winterfell

6.6.3. Riverlands, Central


6.6.4. Central, King’s Landing

6.6.5. Dorne


6.6.6. South of Essos, Astapor

6.7. **Graphic Novel Examples**

6.7.1. **Viewpoint Narration Example Eddard Stark**

**Novel:**

“For a moment Eddard Stark was filled with a terrible sense of foreboding. *This* was his place, here in the north. He looked at the stone figures all around them, breathed deep in the chill silence of the crypt. He could feel the eyes of the dead. They were all listening, he knew. And winter was coming.” (Martin, *GT*46)

**Graphic novel:**

6.7.2. Viewpoint Narration Example Jon Snow

**Novel:**

"His brothers and sisters had not been permitted to bring their wolves to the banquet, but there were more curs than Jon could count at this end of the hall, and no one had said a word about his pup. He told himself he was fortunate in that too." (from a Jon viewpoint chapter; Martin, *GT* 52)

**Graphic novel:**

6.7.3. Added Information Via Visualisation

When they grew hungry, Joffrey found a holdfast by its smoke and told them to fetch food and wine for their prince and his lady.

My betrothed can drink as much as she wants, he said.

6.7.4. Fictional Languages in the Graphic Novel

6.7.4.1. White Walkers’ Language


6.7.4.2. Dothraki

6.8. Daario Naharis

Novels:

[...] Daario Naharis was flamboyant even for a Tyroshi. His beard was cut into three prongs and dyed blue, the same color as his eyes and the curly hair that fell to his collar. His pointed mustachios were painted gold. His clothes were all shades of yellow; a foam of Myrish lace the color of butter spilled from his collar and cuffs, his doublet was sewn with brass medallions in the shape of dandelions, and ornamental goldwork crawled up his high leather boots to his thighs. Gloves of soft yellow suede were tucked into a belt of gilded rings, and his fingernails were enameled blue. (Martin, SS 597)

GOT:

Ed Skrein (left) and Michiel Huisman (right) as Daario Naharis.