

Over the *Inter-*, in the *Trance-* Circle. Novelizations of Video Games as an Example of Transmedia Narratives

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Introduction

The aim of this article is to present a novelization of video games as an important element of contemporary, transmedia narrative practices. I present, in the first part of the text, the characteristics of the novelization, taking into account their place in the dynamically changing convergence media landscape, and I consider what functions they play in relation to their audiovisual (in the case of film novelizations) and interactive (in the case of video game novelizations) prototypes. In the second part of the article, these recognitions allow us to reflect on the world-forming potential of the novelization, and in particular on its role in shaping, developing, and expanding, as well as in processing and deforming digital narratives. I present a typology of video game novelizations and indicate that their different types have different functions in creating storyworlds. In examining this hypothesis, I analyse selected examples of novels based on the digital prototype. I limit the research material exclusively to the so-called official novelizations (i.e. written either at the request of developers, who have copyrights and proprietary rights to the game, or with their consent), skipping unofficial novelizations (i.e. created by fans). However, I would like to point out in conclusion that the findings and presented typology can also be used for researching fan novels and stories.

Convergence and transmediality of the novelizations

Novelization is a process of transforming¹ an audiovisual prototype (film or video game) into a verbal form - into a literary fiction. The authors of the novelization create complex, usually multithreaded plots by repeating and transforming narrations developing in the space of audiovisual media². Therefore, novelizations can be treated as one of the examples of contemporary convergence culture: they are a clear manifestation of the flow of content between the various media (characterized by different ways of representing narration in the world of text³) and define new ways of communication with the audience, the participants in popular culture⁴.

The novelization, as one of the forms of convergence culture, is also part of the transmedia marketing strategies, which consist in narrating the text in different media platforms (internet, television, press, etc.). Novelizations are an example of a product which is tied to another product (tie-in⁵) in a sale. They are usually distributed on the market in parallel to the release of a film or video game, accompanied by a related literary message (e.g. Assassin's Creed novels appeared on the market with the distribution of subsequent game titles under the same title). Like other tie-in products, such as figures, posters or t-shirts referring thematically to a film or video game, the novelizations are addressed primarily to the fans of the original text and extend the experience related to it to other aspects of art and life. However, they are characterized by a much greater degree of narrativity than the aforementioned products⁶. Because they are complex narrative forms, they can function independently of their audiovisual prototypes⁷.

¹ In this article I consider the novelization as an example of transformation of an archetypical text into a medium which is different from the original one. I perceive the transformation as Dudley Andrew's preservation of the most important elements of the narrative of a given work, while adapting it to the specific nature of the medium. Dudley Andrew, *Concepts in Film Theory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 9.

² Kate Newell, *Expanding Adaptation Networks: From Illustration to Novelization* (London: Palgrave Macmillan 2017), 27.

³ Ewa Szczęsna notes that "the narrative (...) is a disposition which can be activated by various signs and which finds its multiple representations in the world of text". In literature, narrations are activated primarily by verbal forms, in film by audiovisual forms, and in video games by interactive forms. Ewa Szczęsna, *Narratologia transmedialna. Teorie, praktyki, wyzwania*, ed. Katarzyna Kaczmarczyk (Kraków: Universitas, 2017), 254.

⁴ The convergence culture - as Henry Jenkins, the author of this terminological proposal, points out - is characterized not only by the constant, dynamic flow of content between media platforms, but also by the fact that these contents influence their audience in various ways (among other things, they influence the process of crystallization of fandoms). Henry Jenkins, *Kultura konwergencji. Zderzenie starych i nowych mediów*, trans. by Małgorzata Bernatowicz, Mirosław Filiciak (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Akademickie i Profesjonalne, 2007), 9.

⁵ Kamilla Elliott, *Rethinking the Novel/Film Debate* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 127.

⁶ Inez Okulska points out the high level of narrative in the novelization, juxtaposing it with other tie-in products, such as figurines that are non-narrative in its approach („Od przekładu intersemiotycznego do produktów typu tie-in, czyli transmedialny storytelling jako strategia tłumaczenia”, *Forum Poetyki*, nr 6 (2016): 56-67). Although I agree with the author that figurines or posters referring to source texts are less narrative than novelizations, it is questionable to completely negate their narrative potential. A figurine presenting, for example, the protagonist Assassin's Creed or the McDonald's set containing a toy referring to a particular audiovisual text may, I presume, have a discursive potential, and therefore „have the ability to produce a thought stream in the perceiving subject, in which each subsequent event is read as dependent on the previous one and as a condition for the next” (Szczęsna, *O myśleniu narracyjnym i jego cyfrowej reprezentacji*, 254-255). This happens, for example, when the viewer - interacting with an object - recreates a sequence from a game in which a particular hero appeared in memory, or interacts with him/her in a ludic way, e.g. pretending that he/she interacts with a specific reproduction of a character from the game. In the above cases, figurines/toys imply the development of a narrative concerning a specific video game (or film or novel), and thus have a narrative potential.

⁷ Newell, *Expanding Adaptation Networks: From Illustration to Novelization*, 198.

The high level of narrativity, being a normative quality of the novelization, determines their species boundaries. These are novels (published in paper or electronic form), whose authors present multithreaded plots in various ways transforming the plots of archetypical texts. Novelizations, however, are not xenoencyclopedias⁸ and lexicons of diegetic worlds, which primarily have an informative function, extending the knowledge about these worlds⁹.

Novelizations, considered as narrative transformations of the audiovisual prototype, are examples of texts that are not so much intermedial as transmedial. Their creators use only literary means of expression and ways of expression (the novelizations do not fit into the 'phenomena of exchange [means of expression] between different media'¹⁰, which defines intermedia strategies), in order to develop the story within the space of a medium other than the one in which the novelized text originally manifests itself. In other words, the novelization is about creating transmedia and trans-discursive narratives, narratives that develop not so much between (inter)the media as within the media, „penetrating through and through”¹¹. In this way, they complete the audiovisual text in the medium of literature.

Transmediacy and convergence of the analysed phenomena is particularly evident in the case of the latest version of the novelization, namely the novelization of video games. Not only do they transfer the archetypical text to another medium (which is also a quality of film novelizations), but they also reformulate the ways of communication with the audience, the fans of the text. The interactive variation story, which is co-shaped by the user of video games, in the novelization becomes non-interactive and not reconfigurable¹². The normative quality of the reception of printed text is linearity¹³. This means that the reader cannot decide about the course of the narration and thus participate in the process into which he or she is “included” by interactive narrations. The novelization, a complete, non-ergodic text, therefore performs different communication functions from the video game it transforms.

⁸ The xenoencyclopedia, as Krzysztof M. Maj points out, referring to the recognitions of Richard Saint-Gelais, is „a collection of extra-diegetic materials containing additional data that enrich both the text itself and the encyclopedia of a particular genre” (Krzysztof M. Maj, „Ucieczka od linearności. W stronę światocentrycznego modelu narracji transmedialnych”, w *Narratologia transmedialna. Teorie, praktyki, wyzwania*, ed. Katarzyna Kaczmarczyk (Kraków: Universitas, 2017), 302). The key word in this case is “extra-diegetic” - in contrast to the novelizations that transform the plot of an archetypical text, xenoencyclopedias transmit information about the structures and principles that construct the represented world, but do not develop or modify the plot.

⁹ Gary K. Wolfe, *Critical Terms for Science Fiction and Fantasy* (Santa Barbara: Greenwood, 1986), 83.

¹⁰ Yvonne Spielmann, *Intermedialität. Das System Peter Greenaway* (München: Verlag Wilhelm Fink, 1998), 31-32. Polish translation by: Konrad Chmielecki, „Intermedialność jako fenomen ponowoczesnej kultury”, *Kultura Współczesna* 52, nr 2 (2007): 118-137.

¹¹ Maj, *Ucieczka od linearności. W stronę światocentrycznego modelu narracji transmedialnych*, 288.

¹² Lev Manovich points out that the receptiveness to reconfiguration, i.e. variability, is a distinctive feature of new media (the author does not use the term interactive media, replacing it with the term new media). The researcher explains that: „A new media object is not something fixed once and for all but can exist in different, potentially infinite, versions”. Lev Manovich, *The language of New Media* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2001), 36.

¹³ Szczęsna, *O myśleniu narracyjnym i jego cyfrowej reprezentacji*, 266. Obviously, there are examples of non-linear printed texts, such as the *A Hundred Thousand Billion Poems* by Raymond Queneau, but they are a kind of avant-garde, a literary experiment, not a publishing standard. In a similar way, there are examples of interactive novelizations online (e.g. *Mass Effect: Pick Your Path*, mentioned in this article), but they are mostly created by fans, so they do not fit into the „official” novelizations circulation.

The enjoyment of a game user comes from the ability to communicate with the software¹⁴. The player gives commands to the system (which “revises” these commands, either filling them in or rejecting them) and thus influences the shape and the progress of the game. Navigation in interactive reality enables the occurrence of immersion phenomena: the impression of non-mediatised involvement in the diegetic world and engagement in this world¹⁵. The purpose of the novelization, in turn, is to simulate the experience of being immersed in the world presented outside the act of playing; the recipient (fan) experiences the world of playing as if outside its digital source. The novelization of video games can be considered a form of world-forming practice. It consists of updating digital narratives in literature. Such novelizations are therefore an important composite of contemporary transmedia worlds.

The typology of novelizations of video games

The practice of novelizing audiovisual texts, the origins of which date back to the 1920s¹⁶, is nowadays extremely popular, especially in the United States. Novelizations are an important element of American cultural industries¹⁷. Their creators propagate the discourse about audiovisual texts through literature. They make narrations more appealing because they complement them (e.g. they present completely new characters, locations and events¹⁸) and expand them with new contexts (e.g. they explain the genesis of the presented worlds or build their mythology¹⁹). It also means that novelizations - using the language of transmedia narratologists - develop the world of storyworlds²⁰.

As Piotr Kubiński pointed out, referring to the recognition of researchers such as Marie-Laure Ryan and David Herman:

¹⁴Andrew Mactavish, „Technological Pleasure: The Performance and Narrative of Technology in Half-Life and other High-Tech Computer Games”, w *Screenplay: Cinema/Videogames/Interfaces*, ed. Geoff King, Tanya Krzywinska (London: Wallflower Press, 2002), 47.

¹⁵Piotr Kubiński, *Gry wideo. Zarys poetyki* (Kraków: Universitas, 2016), 44.

¹⁶It is also important to mention that the film novelizations were initially published in the form of episode novels reprinted in the press. They began to be distributed as printed books only at the turn of the 1950s and 1960s. One of the first novels of this kind was a novel based on French New Wave film *The 400 Blows* by Francois Truffaut (1959). Newell, *Expanding Adaptation Networks: From Illustration to Novelization*, 27.

¹⁷The term “culture industry” was first used by Theodor W. Adorno in his book *Dialectics of Enlightenment* published in 1947. The author wanted to draw attention to the progressive fusion of culture and entertainment, the consequence of which is the marketization or commercialization of culture. The novelizations are a vivid example of cultural industries, because they do not hide their commercial character, nor do they predestine them to be works of literary art. Researchers usually classify them as examples of secondary texts (because they copy archetypical texts) and non-authors’ texts, which results from the fact that novelizations are often written by ghostwriters. Jan Baetens, „From Screen to Text: Novelization, the Hidden Continent”, in: *The Cambridge Companion to Literature on Screen*, ed. Deborah Cartmell, Imelda Whelehan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 226-227.

¹⁸see. e.g. the novelization of *Dead Island: The Book* (Mark Morris, 2011), *Deus Ex: Black Light* (James Swallow, 2016).

¹⁹see. e.g. analysed in this chapter novelization of *Bioshock: Rapture* created by John Shirley (2011).

²⁰The Polish translation of storyworld („światoopowieść”), which I use in this article, is the first terminological proposal of Piotr Kubiński presented in the work „Gry wideo w świetle narratologii transmedialnej oraz koncepcji światoopowieści (storyworld)”, *Tekstualia* 43, nr 4 (2015): 23-36.. For more on storyworld concepts in the research of transmedia narratologists, see, among others, *Narrative across Media: The Languages of Storytelling*, edited by Marie-Laure Ryan (Lincoln-London: University of Nebraska Press, 2004) and *Storyworlds across Media. Toward a Media-Conscious Narratology*, edited by Marie-Laure Ryan, Jan-Noël Thon (Lincoln-London: University of Nebraska Press, 2014).

The term storyworld refers to the world evoked by the narrative text - it is therefore a global cognitive representation of events and their broad context (...), which is reconstructed on the basis of the indications contained in the text²¹.

The specificity of the story lies in the idea that its individual elements ("events with their broad context") can be transformed by various media (film, video games, comics, literature, music, theatre, visual arts, etc.) in any way they want. For example, the "settling" characters are an important element of the world-story. In video games, the user usually plays the role of a specific hero (the player's avatar), through whom he navigates the diegetic world and participates in events taking place in virtual reality. It may happen, however, that in the novelization of the video game this hero will be replaced by a whole new protagonist²², which will have a major impact on the evolution of the narrative of this storyworld. The storyworlds therefore change dynamically. They are shaped by various texts that describe the same world of narration, but in a different way (which is partly due to the specificity of the medium in which the text has been produced) and in different contexts.

The creators of video game novelizations use various types of them to explain, supplement, process and expand the storyworlds. The novelization, treated as a world-forming practice, is not homogeneous. There are three main types of novelizations of video games that have different functions in the creation of the storyworld:

- a) explanatory novelizations;
- b) alternative novelizations;
- c) simultaneous novelizations.

a) explanatory novelizations. Transformations of digital texts into literary language usually have explanatory functions. They present the origin of the events in which the user participates during the game (e.g. *Dragon Age: The Stolen Throne*, David Gaider, 2009), supplement the information on the fate of the avatar before the game (e.g.: *The Stolen Throne*, David Gaider, 2009; *Deus Ex: Icarus Effect*, James Swallow, 2014) or after events in the game (e.g. *Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood*, Oliver Bowden, 2010) and expand one's knowledge of the presented world - its history, mythology, politics and economy (e.g. *Bot Colony*, Eugene Joseph, 2010). Such novelizations therefore explain the narratives and extend the storyworld with new plots. They can take the form of a prequel, which is the most popular version of explanatory novelization, or a midquel or sequel.

The use of non-linear narration in video games allows users to have personalised, diverse gameplay. Individual plots as well as the ending of the game change depending on the decisions made by the player during gameplay²³. The variability of narration means that developers of non-linear

²¹Piotr Kubiński, „Cyfrowe światopowieści. Narracyjność gier wideo”, in: *Narratologia transmedialna. Teorie, praktyki, wyzwania*, red. Katarzyna Kaczmarczyk (Kraków: Universitas, 2017), 318.

²²This is the case, among others, in *Dishonored's* novelization *The Return of Daud* (Adam Christopher, 2018). The protagonist in the video game *Dishonored* (Arkane Studios, 2012) is the imperial governor Corvo Attano, while in the novel, the author presents individual events (both those presented in the game and those completely new) from the perspective of Dauda, one of Corvo's antagonists and opponents.

²³I perceive *gameplay* as a set of rules and mechanisms enabling the user to interact with the software and, consequently, navigate in the virtual reality. Nick Iuppa, Terry Borst, *Story and Simulations for Serious Games: Tales from the Trenches* (Burlington-Oxford: Focal Press, 2007), 17.

video game novelizations usually describe events that predate the game plot (see *Borderlands: The Fallen*, John Shirley, 2011; *Mass Effect: Revelation*, Drew Karpyszyn, 2007). Referring to the events that the user co-creates during the game, results in the necessity to choose one of the many possibilities of development and game ending. If this is not the ending the player experienced during the gameplay, the novelization loses its explanatory potential. It does not explain individual aspects of the story but creates alternative versions. Therefore, the novelizations of non-linear games most often have the character of prequels, which broaden the boundaries of knowledge and understanding of various narrative worlds. These are kind of literary preludes that explain and specify particular models of „dynamically changing situations²⁴„ that make up the storyworld.

For example, in the game *BioShock* (2K Boston, 2007), a player travels through the man-made underwater city of Rapture. Built in the 1940s, the metropolis is self-sufficient, geothermally powered and located on the seabed of the Atlantic Ocean. The idea of its designers was to realize the vision of absolute utopia - it was inhabited by people who were considered virtuous, empathic and guided by the principle of social equality. The user travels through the Rapture at a time of its greatest crisis, when the paradise city is being transformed into a war-torn, corrupt and dangerous place (*BioShock* is an example of a fantastic scientific anti-utopia). The player's goal is to investigate the current situation in the metropolis and find out why the residents of Rapture stopped contacting people on the surface of the earth. During the gameplay, the user finds audio recordings that gradually explain the reasons for the destabilization of the city. Finding the recordings is facultative²⁵ and is not a condition for finishing the game, so the player can skip the search for them during the game or find only part of the audio content. In this situation, the player will not gain knowledge about the social, political and economic situation of the Rapture. Moreover, even if he discovers all the sound clips, he will only learn about the events that took place in the last months of the game world and that directly led to the crisis in the underwater arcadia,- but he will not be able to learn details about the origin of the city.

BioShock Update: Rapture presents the background to the construction of a metropolis, the ideas behind its creation and how their first inhabitants have been chosen. Its author, John Shirley²⁶, fills in the narrative gaps; it updates the events that in the video game were the source of the “incomplete determinacy²⁷” of the narrative, and thus adds what was only suggested in the digital original. In this way, the novelization expands the *BioShock* storyworld: it constructs the history and legend of Rapture, and thus contributes to the establishment of the canons of the existence of this world.

²⁴Marie-Laure Ryan, „Story/Worlds/Media: Tuning the Instruments of a Media-Conscious Narratology”, in: *Storyworlds across Media: Toward a Media-Conscious Narratology*, ed. Marie-Laure Ryan, Jan-Noël Thon (Lincoln-London: University of Nebraska Press, 2014), 33.

²⁵The audio clips in the *BioShock* game play the role of a so-called pickups. Pickups are interactive objects that have been placed by their creators in specific locations within the game. Their discovery can - as is the case with *BioShock* - complement the knowledge of the world presented or increase the level of experience of the characters (e.g. *Tomb Raider*, Square Enix, 2013), or provide extra-energetic information (e.g. finding conceptual sketches in the game *Wolfenstein: The New Colossus*, MachineGames, 2017). However, collecting pickups is not necessary to achieve the end of each stage of the game. Rudolf Kremens, *Level Design: Concept, Theory, and Practice* (Massachusetts: Tylor & Francis, 2009), 286.

²⁶It is also interesting to note that John Shirley is an author who specializes in writing novelizations. He has novelized both video games (apart from *BioShock's* novelization *Rapture*, *Borderlands: The Fallen*, 2011 and *Halo: Broken Circle*, 2014) as films (e.g. *Constantine*, 2005).

²⁷Leszek Brogowski, „Struktura konkretności i miejsca niedookreślenia u Ingardena”, *Teksty Drugie* 21, nr 3 (1993): 63-80.

Explanatory novelizations, especially prequels, describe the genesis of the world presented (or the characters inhabiting this world and the events taking place in it) and root the world-story in a network of transmedia narratives. They allow the audience (fans) to feel the world more clearly (using the term Mikhail M. Bakhtin²⁸) or „worldness”²⁹. In this way, they stimulate the imagination and immerse the audience in the story beyond the interactive medium of a video game, complementing their knowledge of the reality presented by means of a highly narrativised form of presentation.

b) alternative novelizations. The way of developing the storyworld in explanatory novelizations is closely related to the canonical work. Their creators refer to the archetypal text - they supplement and explain its individual aspects, but they do not change or deform individual variants of the plot. Change and deformation, as a way of influencing the narrative, are characteristic of alternative novelizations. They update the storyworlds (especially its key elements, such as characters and individual events), and thus thoroughly re-model the canon. Alternative novelizations create semi-canons³⁰; they construct storyworlds that show a different (often optional and facultative) version of the plot.

The novel *Alan Wake* (Rick Burroughs, 2010), based on a video game under the same title (Remedy Entertainment, 2010), provides a notable example of an alternative novelization. For the most part, it repeats events in which the user participates during the game. It tells the story of Alan Wake, an acclaimed horror writer struggling with writer’s block. The protagonist, together with his wife Alice, travels to the small town of Bright Falls to find inspiration for the new novel. Shortly after arriving, Alice disappears in mysterious circumstances and Alan tries to find her, struggling with the dark forces that successively overtake the town. The author of the novelization initially makes slight changes in relation to the plot of the game; first of all, he develops the stories of independent characters³¹, giving them more important functions in the novel in relation to the role they play in the game. The alternative character of the novel is fully revealed at the end of the novel; it is different from that which is presented in the video game. The plot of the game ends with a scene in which Alan sacrifices himself, voluntarily giving himself up to the dark forces of Bright Falls to save his wife. The author of the novelization, on the other hand, made a significant difference in the end, thereby changing the focalizer of the story.

The perceptive subject „who filters out the world represented by his/her consciousness and fills it with sensual data”³², is in Alice’s last chapter. A woman, immersed in meditation, stands on the shores of a lake, where she meets the sheriff of Bright Falls. During the conversation, Alice reveals to the sheriff that she has a feeling that Alan will never come back to her again.

²⁸Bakhtin M, *Problems of Dostoyevsky’s poetics*, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.

²⁹Maj, *Ucieczka od linearności. W stronę światocentrycznego modelu narracji transmedialnych*, 294.

³⁰The term *semi-canon* was proposed by Jason Mittell in relation to film novelizations. I believe, however, that this concept is so universal that it turns out to be functional also in the research on the novelizations of video games. Jason Mittell, *Strategies of Storytelling on Transmedia Television*, in *Storyworlds across Media: Toward a Media-Conscious Narratology*, edited by Marie-Laure Ryan, Jan-Noël Thon (Lincoln-London: University of Nebraska Press, 2014), 258.

³¹*Non-player characters* is a general term for all software-controlled heroes in video games. Kathryn E. Merrick, *Computational Models of Motivation for Game-Playing Agents* (Canberra: Springer International Publishing, 2016), 45.

³²This is how Robert Birkholc - referring to the concept of Mike Bal - characterizes the category of a focalizer. Robert Birkholc, “Subjectively mediated narration. Around the issue of “seemingly dependent speech” in film”, *Studia Europaea Gnesnensia*, no. 14 (2016), 143-158.

The different, unclear ending of the novelization does not negate what the player had experienced during the gameplay, but gives this experience a new interpretative context: perhaps what happened to Alan was just an image in his mind, an idea for a book that the protagonist was looking for in Bright Falls. Above all, however, the change of the focalizer in the epilogue of the novel is intended to stimulate the emotions of the audience. The above solution can be treated as a defamiliarization³³; through it, the author reorganizes and reinterprets the existing structure of the text in order to induce certain effects in the readers, such as uncertainty (did the events presented in the game/book really happen?), surprise (was Alice never kidnapped?) and intrigue (what really happened to Alan?). An important element of alternative novelizations is therefore a peculiar game with reception habits. They create semicanones - they develop the storyworld in a different, unexpected direction. Thus, they serve a fuller, more emotional immersion of fans in the transmedia narrative.

One of the key mechanisms of immersion is the recipient's ability to feel compassion with characters and events. Readers/users/viewers design their own emotions and experiences for the presented reality, which makes them engage in it emotionally. Semicanonic alternative novelizations create various illusions that encourage the viewer to take specific emotional attitudes³⁴. They reformulate, deform or reinterpret individual plot motifs and thus question the previous habits of reception, often causing effect of discomfort³⁵, shock and astonishment. The main function of alternative novelizations in creating the world of the story is, therefore, on the one hand, to go beyond the boundaries of canonical narrative and, on the other, to provoke discussion on possible ways of its development.

c) simultaneous novelizations. The plots of simultaneous novelizations develop simultaneously to the plots of archetypal texts. Simultaneousness in this context means that novelties of this type are closely connected with the digital prototype by space-time dependencies (events in the novelization take place in the same space-time continuum as events in a video game). In other words, the chronotope of the novel is identical to the chronotope of the game that the novelization transforms³⁶. The authors of simultaneous novelizations create novels that have a repetitive

³³I refer to the concept of defamiliarization [*ostranienie*] by Viktor Shklovsky. The researcher pointed out that such ways of organizing a literary text that make it difficult to perceive it can be considered as tricks. By means of tricks, the authors process the form of a work, and the aim of their application is to make the existing motifs, themes and images seem unconventional to the reader because they are presented in an original way. Viktor Shklovsky, "Art as Technique". *Literary Theory: An Anthology*. Ed. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan. Malden: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 1998.

³⁴Edgar Morin, *The Cinema, Or The Imaginary Man*. Minneapolis: University Of Minnesota Press, 2005, 220.

³⁵Therefore, the novelizations that change and process the individual elements of the digital original often meet with criticism from fans who do not agree to include them in the official canon. See, among others, the discussion on the novelization of *Mass Effect: Deception* by William C. Dietza, 2012.

³⁶Chronotop is a term proposed by Mikhail M. Bakhtin, who defines it as follows: „We will give the name chronotope (literally, "time space") to the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature. This term [space-time] is employed in mathematics, and was introduced as part of Einstein's Theory of Relativity. The special meaning it has in relativity theory is not important for our purposes; we are borrowing it for literary criticism almost as a metaphor (almost, but not entirely). What counts for us is the fact that it expresses the inseparability of space and time (time as the fourth dimension of space). We understand the chronotope as a formally constitutive category of literature; we will not deal with the chronotope in other areas of culture. In the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history. This intersection of axes and fusion of indicators characterizes the artistic chronotope." Bakhtin Mikhail M., „Forms of time and of the chronotope in the novel". In *The Dialogic Imagination*. Austin: Univ. Texas Press, 1981, 84–85.

character (they repeat a digital story in the medium of literature, e.g. *Ico: Castle in the Mist*, Miyuki Miyabe, 2011) and complementary (they present new characters, absent from the game, whose stories develop in the same time-space as the game's action, e.g. *Dead Island: The Book*).

Simultaneous novelizations usually follow - as a related literary product - video games, in which gameplay becomes more important than telling stories. These include logic games (e.g. *Ico, Team Ico*, 2001), where the player solves complex logic puzzles and action games (e.g. *Dishonored; Dead Island, Techland*, 2011) - designers of such games create complex gameplay mechanics³⁷ that enable various interactions with the software. The limited storyline in these types of games is compensated for by the possibility of reconfiguration of individual elements of virtual reality. The purpose of simultaneous novelizations is to fill in the narrative gaps and to clarify the variety of feature information that appears as a result of the concentration of game creators on gameplay.

In the Japanese game *Ico*, the user controls the title character, a boy who, due to horns growing on his head, is banished from his village and imprisoned in an abandoned castle. He meets Yordda, the daughter of a demonic queen, who wants to use the girl's body to extend her own existence. The user's goal is to get the protagonists out of the castle. In order to achieve epiphany³⁸, the player must solve a number of puzzles correctly. The above plot - referring to Japanese folk tales and legends - is barely outlined in the video game and has been significantly expanded in the novelization *Ico: Castle in The Mist*.

The author, Miyauki Miyabe, has focused on describing the evolving relationships between protagonists, as well as complementing the story world about the context of Japanese mythology. The above novelization is characterized by repetitiveness (it repeats the plot themes that exist in the game), but also completes the narration (e.g. the reader learns about the attitude of the protagonists towards the events they participate in). More detailed history, nuanced psychology of characters and comparison with real myths of Japanese culture make the storyworld plausible and achieve a peculiar effect of reality³⁹. The novelization not only complements the numerous places of uncertainty that appear in the digital narration, but also allows to create an illusion (defined by Barthes as a referential illusion⁴⁰) that the viewer has to do with a believable simulation of reality.

Thus, the narratives of simultaneous novelizations have the character of peculiar iterations. They repeat specific plots and motifs of an archetypical text in the medium of literature. Just like explanatory novelizations, they have cognitive functions: they complement individual world stories with new epistemic and interpretative contexts. In contrast to the first type of novelizations, how-

³⁷The term *gameplay mechanics* describes the individual rules and mechanisms that make up the gameplay.

³⁸Espen Aarseth calls the obstacles appearing in video games aporias. The author considers the category of aporias in a philosophical context, pointing out that it is a seemingly unbearable difficulty, but it can be solved in various ways. Gameplay consists of a series of aporias, and the appropriate use of gameplay mechanics by the player leads to a reduction in the number of aporias and thus enables a gradual solution to further avatar problems. Once the user has overcome the difficulties, epiphanies are achieved. Aarseth thus determines the satisfaction that a player feels in achieving his gameplay goals. Espen Aarseth, "Aporia and Epiphany in *Doom* and *The Speaking Clock: The Temporality of Ergodic Art*", in *Cyberspace Textuality: Computer Technology and Literary Theory*, edited by Marie-Laure Ryan (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1999), 37.

³⁹I consider the „effect of reality“ (*l'effet de réel*) the same way as R. Barthes did in his article. Roland Barthes, „L'effet de réel“. *Communications* 11, no. 1. (1968): 84-89.

⁴⁰Barthes, 124-125.

ever, simultaneous novelizations develop in the same space-time continuum as video game plots. The aim of using an identical chronotope is not so much to create completely new models of story-worlds as to increase their emotional expressiveness. Simultaneous novelizations create more colourful, fuller (especially in terms of character psychology) and often more courageous narrations than those types of video games in which designers focus on gameplay rather than storytelling.

Conclusion

The practice of novelizing audiovisual texts highlights the tendency of convergent contemporary culture to develop narratives on different media platforms. Film and video game makers aspire to intensify the flow of content between different media. This is due both to economic issues (the novelizations are, after all, examples of tie-in products) and to the aspirations of film producers and video game distributors to unite fans around particular narrative worlds.

Literary novelizations, interpenetrating the media landscape with audiovisual and interactive texts, are a form of world-forming practice. They transform specific elements of various transmedia worlds. They allow particular aspects of the world of stories (events, characters) to develop dynamically and fluidly beyond the archetypical text. This kind of world-forming strategy, consistently “practiced” by video game producers, gives them some control over the shaping of fandom. They supervise the development of the world-story, and thus stimulate the immersion of fans in narrations beyond their source: they extend the discourse about a given text to other aspects of the life of the audience.

Of course, equally important in the landscape of contemporary transmedia narratives is the „grass-roots” novelization movement, i.e. a scenario in which the fans - on their own initiative - supplement the world stories in the space of literature. The typology presented in the article can also be used to study fan novelizations. These include simultaneous novelizations (e.g. *Mass Effect: Pick Your Path*, Mike Kayatta⁴¹) as well as explanatory and alternative novels (an interesting combination of both types of novelizations is the *Fallout - Novel project*, i.e. a book published on the Internet, consisting of twenty chapters, was written by a Polish anonymous author and refers to the game *Fallout*, Interplay Productions, 1997⁴²). In this article, I concentrated on official amendments, to present how they transform (shape, complement, transform, and deform) various storyworlds, and to indicate how the medium of literature is used for the development of transmedia narratives. I believe, however, that in future research on the novelization of video games (especially in the Polish context, where this phenomenon has not been subject to a comprehensive analysis), it is worth looking at fan novelizations and their role in shaping the storyworlds. Especially interesting in this context are the interactive novelizations (e.g. the aforementioned *Mass Effect: Pick Your Path*), which come into being in a way at the meeting point of video games and literature and use the means of expression appropriate for both media. They are therefore an example of not only trans- but also inter-media practices.

translated by Agnieszka Kocznur

⁴¹The novel *Mass Effect: Pick Your Path* is accessible at <http://www.escapistmagazine.com/articles/view/video-games/columns/pickyourpath/9514-Pick-Your-Path-Mass-Effect> [access: 5.10.2019].

⁴²*Fallout - Novel* is accessible at <http://fallout-novel.blogspot.com/> [access: 5.10.2019].

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ABSTRACT:

The article consists of two parts: in the first, theoretical part, the author characterizes the novelizations taking into account their place in the contemporary cultural and media landscape. In the author's view, the novelizing, i.e. transforming audiovisual texts into a medium of literature, is an example of transmedia and convergent world-forming practices. In the second part of the article, the author presents a typology of video game novelizations (exploratory, alternative and simultaneous novelizations). She analyses chosen examples of novelizations, and on this basis, she concludes about the functions that their particular types perform in the creation of storyworlds.

w o r l d - c r e a t i o n

VIDEO GAMES

s t o r y w o r l d

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