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TRANSMEDIAL STORYTELLING IN WORLD OF WARCRAFT

Bakalářská práce

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Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto bakalářskou práci vypracovala samostatně a uvedla jsem veškeré použité podklady a literaturu.

V Olomouci dne: 30. 4. 2024   Podpis …………………………..

"Alright, let's do this!"

"Leeroy Jenkins!"

\-   Leeroy Jenkins

Acknowledgment

Abstract

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The thesis "Transmedial storytelling in World of Warcraft" primarily examines the execution of storytelling in an associated novel (*Vol'jin: Shadows of the Horde)* and a section of a PC game (*World of Warcraft: Mists of Pandaria)*, both sharing a related plot across the two media. It seeks to analyze the advantages of this multimodal approach for both readers and players.

Anotace

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Diplomová práce „Transmediální vyprávění ve světě World of Warcraft" se primárně zabývá provedením vyprávění příběhu v přidruženém románu (*Vol'jin: Shadows of the Horde*) a části počítačové hry (*World of Warcraft: Mists of Pandaria*), které mají příbuzný děj napříč oběma médii. Snaží se analyzovat výhody tohoto multimodálního přístupu pro čtenáře i hráče.

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Introduction

The primary objective of this thesis is to elucidate and substantiate the beneficial impact of transmediality on narrative construction within the intricate realm of *World of Warcraft* (*WoW*). Positioned at the intersection of two academic disciplines often perceived as disparate—namely, literary analysis and game studies—this study seeks to bridge this disciplinary divide. Grounded in a dual-tiered analytical approach, the thesis initiates with a meticulous examination of the literary work *Vol'jin: Shadows of the Horde*, followed by an in-depth scrutiny of the video game *World of Warcraft: Mists of Pandaria*, subsequently facilitating a comparative analysis between the two.

Central to this investigation is the concept of transmediality, which underscores the intrinsic interconnectedness of the aforementioned novel and game, mutually enhancing their narrative fabric. The literary analysis, informed by foundational theories and terminologies, including those delineated by Rick Altman, serves as a theoretical precursor, seamlessly integrated into the subsequent analytical discourse. An indispensable component of the narrative tapestry under scrutiny in *WoW* is *myth*, meticulously defined within the theoretical framework and discerningly identified within the analytical purview. Emphasizing the pivotal role of transmediality, the thesis underscores the symbiotic relationship between the two media, accentuating their collaborative synergy in constructing a unified narrative continuum.

While acknowledging the distinct narrative trajectories inherent in the novel and the video game, the study underscores their harmonious convergence in shaping a coherent narrative whole. Despite variations in plot intricacy, the narrative essence resonates through both mediums, adeptly conveying multifaceted aspects such as character delineation, setting portrayal, and cultural motifs. Thus, this thesis endeavors to explore the nuanced dynamics of narrative construction, underscoring the potentiality of communicating analogous outcomes through diverse media modalities, each endowed with unique narrative affordances and possibilities.

Theoretical and Conceptual Background

In the theoretical part of this thesis, the author will introduce the *World of Warcraft* (*WoW*)[1] universe, and explore the concepts used in the upcoming analysis. The *WoW* universe consists of a multiplayer game joined by millions of people worldwide, but also novels, a film, and other media. An examination solely focused on the books would lack coherence without considering the entirety of the universe, given its interconnected nature. Therefore, the analysis will be framed with an emphasis on transmediality, as all media within the universe are interconnected and complement each other in terms of content.

Because of such complexity, it would be impossible to draw a single conclusion through a standard close-reading analysis. Instead, the analysis will be carried out by using multiple concepts through which it will explore the potential of transmedial storytelling in the worldbuilding of the *WoW* universe. Concerning the intricate nature of transmedial storytelling in *WoW,* this thesis cannot possibly encompass all its facets but it strives to introduce a novel approach that ventures beyond the typical single-medium narrative analysis. Ensuing from the complex nature of the *WoW* phenomenon "reading" of the chosen fictional universe provided in the latter part of this thesis is not concerned only with the text of the given novels, but inevitably looks across different media including the game itself.

This thesis will work with concepts of *narrative, transmediality,* and *myth as a narrative principle*, and its main concern will be what is created in their interaction. Dutch cultural theorist, with contributions to narrative theory, Mieke Bal, defines concepts as "tools of intersubjectivity"[2] which "are flexible."[3] The concept itself is not "a clear-cut methodological legislation" but rather "a territory to be traveled, in a spirit of adventure."[4] As Herzogenrath implies, students should not be writing only predictable works; "An education predicated on experimentation, instead of clinging to the status quo or to the dominant sense of education, aims not to raise students upon the platform of where they stand, but to lead ourselves and our students to a place where we have not yet been, facilitating an encounter with things beyond the reach of present thought."[5] Following those approaches, this thesis will use the aforementioned concepts instead of a traditional methodology, and the analysis will be carried out by linking them together.

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[1] "World of Warcraft"
[2] Bal, Working with Concepts, 18.
[3] Bal, Working with Concepts, 19.
[4] Bal, Working with Concepts, 19.
[5] Herzogenrath, New Perspectives on Academic Writing, vii.

Building on such a conceptual approach to narrative analysis, this work does not focus on one specific instance of a game in its full depth but rather uses *World of Warcraft* to demonstrate transmedia storytelling as a pervasive phenomenon and discuss its potential for academic analyses, and recent development.

World of Warcraft

In the context of this thesis, the term *Warcraft* is commonly employed to denote a complex and multifaceted universe. Given its expansive nature, the term encompasses various elements rather than a singular entity. Hence, it is imperative to establish a comprehensive definition.

World of Warcraft is a massively multiplayer online role-playing game (MMORPG), with ten expansions to it (which add new game areas, weapons, characters, storylines…). In the Warcraft universe are also over thirty novels, three real-time strategy games (RTS), tabletop games, card trading game, magazines, and more representations in other forms of media, in the Warcraft universe, which were created by Blizzard Entertainment. This thesis will be concerned with the transmedial character of *World of Warcraft*.

The MMORPG

The acronym *MMORPG* is used for a videogame, which enables thousands of players to interact with each other and the game world, to which they are connected through the internet, or as dictionary defines it "a computer game that can be played by many people at the same time and in which players control the actions of characters in an imaginary world."[6] The game was developed by Blizzard Entertainment and was released on November 23, 2004, on the 10th anniversary of the Warcraft franchise. This game was preceded by three other real-time strategy games: Warcraft I, Warcraft II, and Warcraft III. *World of Warcraft* is set four years after the events of Warcraft III. It has since become the backbone of the *Warcraft* universe and the whole franchise. As it is a direct extension of the three older games, there are as a result several intratextual references. The current player base has around 9.4 million players who are active monthly.[7]

World of Warcraft is a monthly subscription game, which means that players have to pay for their game-time. This creates a parallel economic system to the real one, where real

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[6] "MMORPG."
[7] "World of Warcraft Live Player Count and Statistics."

world events are reflected, along with inflation. By this, I am trying to demonstrate the complexity and fiction-reality transgressive nature of the game's fictional universe. The in-game currency is gold, bronze, and silver coins, which the player obtains as part of loot (rewards the player receives for example after killing creatures or completing quests). Currently, one hundred gold coins is approximately 47 USD, in April 2022 it was ranging from 8 to 22 USD.[8]

Blizzard Entertainment company releases new expansion packs that enrich both the space and the narrative of the game approximately every two years. The expansions are *The Burning Crusade (2007), Wrath of the Lich King (2008), Cataclysm (2010), Mists of Pandaria (2012), Warlords of Draenor (2014), Legion (2016), Battle for Azeroth (2018), Shadowlands (2020), and Dragonflight (2022)*. Each expansion introduces a new continuation of the plot, along with new game zones.

World of Warcraft could be described as a gamewold, where are two factions–the Alliance and the Horde, which have connotations of heroes and villains, (but those connotations are rather misleading, since the story of the gameworld is much more complex and not binary in this sense).

The two factions consist of races, currently eight for each faction, plus five more races which can be unlocked by completing certain objectives in the game. The player creates a character represented by one of the races. They complete quests and gain in-game money (one gold coin equals ninety nine silver coins, and one silver coin equals ninety nine bronze coins), objects (such as weaponry for the character), or experience points, which serve for leveling up (current maximum level is 70, each subsequent level requires a greater amount of time to complete).

With over 9.4 million active monthly players, *WoW* has become a staple of the gaming industry since its release in 2004. It features a monthly subscription model and in-game currency system, reflecting real-world economics. Regular expansion packs enhance the game's narrative and introduce new gameplay elements. Players choose between two factions, the Alliance and the Horde, and select from various races as they progress through quests and level up their characters. *WoW* offers a richly detailed world filled with intricate lore and dynamic gameplay mechanics, making it a captivating experience for players worldwide.

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[8] PlayerAuctions, "WoW Classic Gold to USD Price Tracker | PlayerAuctions."

Quests: Building an Interactive Universe

The story taking place in the fictional universe of the *World of Warcraft* (*WoW*) is told through a variety of means ranging from textual fragments to playable instances dubbed quests. Quests in *WoW* include various activities required of a player such as delivering or obtaining objects—by buying them, by killing or interacting with non-playable characters, or by collecting them in the virtual environment, or even by involving unique activities like saving a cat from a building on fire in quest "Cat on a Hot Copper Roof"[9] delivered by an NPC (non-playable character) Meredith located in Tiragarde Sound. Importantly, it is through the quests that the main storyline is narrated. There are main storylines which the players must complete in order to progress their playing, and side quests which are optional, however no less important for the plot.

Aside from quests players may engage in numerous other parts of the game, such as dungeons, raids, player versus player mode, professions (ranging from gathering professions such as herbalism or mining to crafting professions such as leather working, alchemy, or blacksmithing). In terms of social contact players can join guilds and form communities, where people play together, help each other, or partake in collective events. Such emergent events and accompanying communities elevate the gaming experience to an elevated level with heightened social potential and interactivity. Alternatively, users might choose to play only solo, but experiencing the game with other players is not only beneficial in terms of faster progress in the game but also in the sense of solidarity. The shared sense of a mission and shared time deepen the sense of an epic hero quest. Such a vast narrative complexity, however, might easily drive away any attempts at approaching the transmedial storytelling in *WoW* from the academic perspective, due to its intricate construction from numerous interconnected elements ranging from the narrative, the symbolic to the social and beyond. Therefore, the author of this thesis has chosen to approach this comprehensive gaming phenomenon through the lens of literary studies to uncover its transmedial potential as well as literary dimensions.

Literary fiction

Another major part of the Warcraft universe are its literary works, among which are not only novels but also numerous art-books, and volumes concerning the lore of the Warcraft

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[9] "Cat on a Hot Copper Roof."

universe. *Lore* is by definition "knowledge and information related to a particular subject, especially when this is not written down; the stories and traditions of a particular group of people."[10] In terms of *Warcraft* universe *lore* is concerned with the history and political issues such as relationships between characters and factions of the fictional universe that the player learns through the quests. Alongside each new playable expansion to the *World of Warcraft* are released new novel(s) and other pieces of complementary literature, which all together expand the Warcraft universe even further. This is the transmediality that this work is concerned with. This thesis will examine the relationship between the game and a novel, and how they work and complement each other in an emergent transmedial narrative.

Apart from books containing the narrative, as for example *World of Warcraft: Folk & Fairy Tales of Azeroth* (2021), there are also books such as *World of Warcraft: The Official Cookbook* (2016), with recipes inspired by the in-game cooking. There is also a growing series of books *World of Warcraft: Exploring Azeroth,* where books about individual continents are gradually added. Knowledge from those books is at least partially exclusive, and cannot be found in the game, which again shows the transmedial nature of the Warcraft universe, and also how the media complement each other.

For the transmedial reading delivered later in this thesis, the author has chosen the game expansion *Mists of Pandaria (2012)[11]* and a novel *World of Warcraft: Vol'jin: Shadows of the Horde (2013)[12]*, not only because they are both set in the same time period in the game, but also because they are intertextually connected when it comes to their content, such as characters, or setting. This work will discuss how the game and the novel match and complement each other, not only in terms of content but also in terms of their design.

Narrative

The analysis provided in the practical part of this work will be concerned with narrative and transmedial storytelling in a novel set in the Warcraft universe and a corresponding part of the game. Narrative, in its most broad definition, is a cultural phenomenon that emerges as a result of the practice of storytelling through various kinds of media eg. oral, written,

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[10] "Lore Noun - Definition, Pictures, Pronunciation and Usage Notes | Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary at OxfordLearnersDictionaries.Com."

[11] Blizzard Entertainment. World of Warcraft: Mists of Pandaria. Blizzard Entertainment. PC. 2012.

[12] Stackpole, *Vol'jin: Shadows of the Horde.*

illustrated, or even developed in the form of a video game.[13] As will be explored in the analysis, the video game form offers wider possibilities for interpreting the story than the book.

In this work, Altman's theory will be used the most, because Altman's definitions provide us with a model of the narrative process that includes the exchange of concrete and abstract entities between a sender and addressee. This occurs through the material vehicle of signs and can happen at either a psychological or story level. A 'story' in the narrative sense is not simply confined to what is traditionally understood as a 'story' in the literary sense. Altman maintains that we must differentiate between what happens in a narrative (the plot) and the order in which events are recounted—which will prove useful for transmediality.[14] However, there are more approaches to the same topic.

Herman and Vervaeck present an examination of narrative transformation across different media, proposing the concept of "transmedial narratological model" in some depth before modifying it to create a typology of possible relationships between source and adapted works. Their framework aligns with the notion of narratology as a cognitive process where, like a cover song, the "original" may be "re-sung" so that there are two different versions of the same narrative. The following typology is intended as a supplement to it, intended to be a comprehensive model of the many relationships between any two given narratives.[15] Their approach relies on a sequential order of media, which will not be the focus of this thesis in the context of transmediality; its aim is to demonstrate how media complement each other, regardless of which one was created first.

Narrative as a concept has not stopped evolving and keeps adjusting to new modes of communication.[16] From a historical point of view, scholars have been restricting the narrative's possible scope by accepting a limited definition of narrative.[17] As the narrative keeps evolving, so has to be evolving its definition, which then could be expanding its range infinitely. This expanding nature of the narrative prompts the proposal for a new definition of narrative, which is more inclusive in terms of range of texts and even experiences.[18] Exploring a new definition of narrative will prove useful because if analysis of narrative

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[13] Alasuutari, Bickman, and Brannen, The SAGE Handbook of Social Research Methods.

[14] Altman, Rick. "What Is Narrative?" Essay. In *A Theory of Narrative*, 1–27.

[15] Martinez, Herman, Real Readers Reading Wasco's 'City': A Storyworld Possible Selves Approach, 147-70.

[16] Altman, *A Theory of Narrative*, 1.

[17] Altman, *A Theory of Narrative*, 2.

[18] Altman, *A Theory of Narrative*, 2.

depends on how one defines it, it will broaden the possible range of analysis for this thesis—as opposed to conducting traditional literary analysis.

Narrative: a Short History

Definitions of narrative are historically linked to a certain type of plot.[19] The definition of narrative kept changing to match current prescriptions of proper narrative construction.[20] Narratology was for centuries invariably tied to considerations of an epic-based plot structure.[21] Traditions rising from the genre of novel underpin a definition of narrative as plot-oriented, meaning that the narrative is dependent on action revolving around "the hero's passing by a series of probable or necessary stages from misfortune to happiness" or vice versa.[22] Already for Aristotle, narratives had a beginning, middle, and end—"narrative is not just a set of materials but is a quite specific method of organizing those materials."[23] This plot-oriented definition of the narrative seems to include not only the plot but also characters because there could be no plot without characters, right?[24] The emphasis on characters kept changing—for example, structural analysis has rejected treating the characters as the essence of the plot.[25]

On the contrary to backgrounding the characters, Ryan explains narrative as something that is experienced by the characters, and through them; "When we compose a narrative [...] we usually try to present 'how things came to be what they are,' and the end is prefigured in the beginning. But when we read a narrative, even one in which the end is presented before the beginning, we adopt the outlook of the characters who are living the plot as their own destiny."[26] Bal defines a narrative text as "a text in which an agent or subject conveys to an addressee ('tells' the reader) a story in a particular medium, such as language, imaginary, sound, buildings, or a combination thereof."[27] By experiencing the narrative with the characters, the reader is consuming only what is happening in the present moment, which is the same experience as when playing a game.

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[19] Altman, *A Theory of Narrative*, 2.
[20] Altman, *A Theory of Narrative*, 3.
[21] Abbot, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*, 15.
[22] Altman, *A Theory of Narrative*, 5.
[23] Altman, *A Theory of Narrative*, 4.
[24] Altman, *A Theory of Narrative*, 5.
[25] Altman, *A Theory of Narrative*, 6.
[26] Ryan, *Narrative as Virtual Reality*, 113.
[27] Bal, "Working With Concepts," 5.

Establishing definitions of narrative thus implies following them, and gives them a certain status of rules—which acts prescriptively. However, a descriptive approach to the definition of narrative will not limit its possible scope and use. As Altman states, good definitions should preserve a balance between restriction and inclusion.[28] In the case of the Warcraft universe, it would be even impossible to follow only one definition of narrative, because of the multimediality of the fictional universe.

Bal refers to the media through which is the plot narrated as text. She states that those texts differ from one another, even when their content is similar, and thus implies that examining the media independently on their content is important—I will strive to use this approach in my analysis.[29] I will look at what is happening not only in terms of content but also in terms of medium—I will subject the novel, and the game, to close reading.

Narrative Today: Media, Material, Activity

Frasca (1999)[30] offers to compare games and narrative by defining a conceptual framework for the analysis of games as narrative and contrasting it with the analysis of narrative as a sequence of events. However Frasca also heavily focuses on simulation and semiotics, which is not the main objective of this thesis.

Juul's (2001)[31] approach to defining game as a subset of narrative resolves the confusion between games and other forms of narrative by describing the relationship of games to narrative. Juul argues that games and narrative are different structures and that interactivity is the cause of this difference. He defines narrative as a chain of events with cause and effect motivated by a terminative element and a game as an activity providing the participant with an experience of a closed outcome. From these definitions, Juul concludes that whereas narrative is an open-ended sequence of events, games are a closed series of connected events. This approach is also not productive for this thesis because *Wow* as an online game is not finite nor has a win-or-lose nature.

Given the historical development of narrative and the approach to narrative, Rick Altman created a definition of narrative that integrates these aspects. It consists of *narrative material*, *narrational activity*, and *narrational drive*.[32] I will explain each of the three

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[28] Altman, *A Theory of Narrative*, 9.
[29] Bal, *Working with Concepts*, 6.
[30] Frasca, *Ludology meets narratology: Similitude and differences between (video) games and narrative*, 1.
[31] Juul, *Games Telling Stories? - A Brief Note on Games and Narratives,* 1.
[32] Altman, *A Theory of Narrative*, 10.

narrative planes according to Altman's definitions, and how they will be useful for my analysis.

Narrative Material

Narrative material influences how the reader forms a mental representation of the characters and setting for example. As mentioned in the previous chapter, narrative was predominantly action-oriented, which means that action is essential. However, the characters themselves do not produce a narrative until they perform some action. Actions tie the static characters and objects together while forming the narrative.[33] Narratives are also commonly described as representing "a rise and fall, loss and recovery, or desire and acquisition"[34] In the book there is a clearly given number of characters who partake in forming the narrative by their actions and behavior. However in *World of Warcraft* are all characters present at any given point in time (apart from minor exceptions), and if the player meets them, they might be static without an option to interact with them. Only later in the chronology of the story may this change, and then the player has an option to interact with those characters (or even has to). This gradual rationing of the plot, or its chronological revelation creates a strong sense of linearity, just as the books do.

Characters and their actions are a complex matter. Characters can change and develop throughout the story and we still perceive them as the same characters, even though their characteristics may have changed. Altman points this out—that the narration depends on a certain level of abstraction, where the characters are perceived independently on the medium. The reader constructs the character by gathering different inputs and combining them, not by looking at the inputs one by one—as in reading the character's replicas separately. [35] For the reader, or player, the characters are defined by their actions. But when the book is supplementary material for the game, or vice versa, the idea of what a given character is like will vary depending on the consumed medium. The impression of a character from the game can be completely different from the impression of the same character in the book. Again, the multimedia nature of the Warcraft universe is clearly visible.

While actions define character, not every action defines the narrative. Actions are narrative-defining only when they are tied to something else in the narrative. Altman uses an example with the sun; if the sun shines and it does not affect the characters or the plot, it is

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[33] Altman, *A Theory of Narrative*, 11.
[34] Altman, *A Theory of Narrative*, 11.
[35] Altman, *A Theory of Narrative*, 13.

not narrative-defining, but when the sun shines in opposition to not shining, or it is making a parallel to the moon's shining for example, it is narrative-defining.[36] The weather in *World of Warcraft* has so far no effect on the narrative unless it is a part of a quest—such as putting out fire or walking through a windy or snowy area.

Narrational Activity

So far I have described characters and (their) actions. They are the base for a narrative, but their presence alone does not make a narrative. Cities are full of people who perform actions, but cities are not narratives. It is the viewer or reader, and their ability of following, who makes the transformation to narrative.[37] From the perspective of a reader, he or she does not view a certain person as a character until the narrator starts following a particular number of them, and gives them more attention than others. Without following a character, the text (or other medium) will not be recognizable as a narrative.[38] The reader follows certain characters, but because of this, he or she becomes aware of the presence of the narrator, who serves as a guide through the story world, and events that exist within it.

Every narration needs some kind of framing. As mentioned earlier in chapter *Narrative: a Short History*, narrative has a beginning, middle, and end, but not every narrative has all three. Altman distinguishes "some" *narrative* and "a" narrative. For "some" narrative he uses an example of soap operas on television, where the viewer recognizes a narrative structure, but no matter how long he or she watches, the closure is never reached.[39] The difference between "a" narrative and "some" narrative is the framing. A sequence of events becomes "a" narrative only when those events are framed, which reveals another type of narrational activity, but for "some" narrative, we need only narrative material and following.[40] This refers to the main storyline in the game, and the optional storylines. The main storyline would be "a" narrative because it has a beginning, middle, and end, but some of the optional storylines would be "some" narrative because they might be independent stories that do not reach any major closure. This distinction may be more apparent in written fiction, because of its linearity, where the reader cannot miss the parts that would be side quests in the game. Such distinction is important for the upcoming analysis because there will be significantly more scattered fragments of narrative in the game, than in the book. If such a

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[36] Altman, *A Theory of Narrative*, 15.
[37] Altman, *A Theory of Narrative*, 15.
[38] Altman, *A Theory of Narrative*, 16.
[39] Altman, *A Theory of Narrative*, 17.
[40] Altman, *A Theory of Narrative*, 18.

less developed fragment of narrative appears in the book, the reader has no other option than to search for additional information concerning the detail elsewhere—in case it sparks the reader's interest. This addresses the multimediality that will be dealt with in the analysis, and to what extent do the two media draw attention to the narrator.

Narrative Drive

So far it appears that all that is needed for narrative is present in the medium: characters, actions, and the narrator. However, in some cases, it can be the reader or spectator who decides on the following, and can then become the narrator. If I return to the example with a room full of people, it can be the spectator who decides whom to pay attention to.[41] This while following "may be conditioned by textual characteristics, it can never be wholly dependent on elements that are internal to the text. …without narrative drive on the part of the reader, texts are not read as narrative."[42] The narrative drive alone can however generate the factors necessary for the text to be recognized as narrative. Altman demonstrates this in an example with a drawn line, which itself does not qualify as narrative, but a reader can recognize where the line is thicker, and where it is thinner. Those are then narrative-defining qualities and the line becomes "a line," and its changing lineweight then becomes an action.[43] The degree of narrativity then depends on the reader and their commitment, or drive.

However, this narrative drive can be lost. The reader can approach the text from an analytical point of view and can treat the narrative elements separately, which then breaks the narrative.[44] For example in an outdoor scene, the reader may start cataloging species of trees, resulting in the loss of narrative drive. This shows that one text can have multiple purposes, according to its readers.

So far I have covered narrative aspects that are present in the text and outside of it. Native to the text are characters with their actions, set in some framing. Outside of the text is the reader and their narrative drive. With the characterization of those base elements, the definition of narrative can be taken one step further by looking at other elements of narrative which are built on the ones mentioned above. When it comes to books, the narrative drive may manifest itself as motivation to read, which would then affect the level of immersion. In the case of the game the narrative drive works similarly, however maintaining it may be even

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[41] Altman, *A Theory of Narrative*, 19.
[42] Altman, *A Theory of Narrative*, 19.
[43] Altman, *A Theory of Narrative*, 20.
[44] Altman, *A Theory of Narrative*, 20.

easier than in the book, because of the visual aspect of the game and its interactivity the activity of reading is one-sided, because the book is a static stimulus, but the act of playing— engages multiple sense at once, and the stimulus is mostly dynamic (in case of *World of Warcraft*).

Following-Unit

In examining narrative structures, it becomes evident that the portrayal of characters and the manner in which they are followed significantly impact the storytelling experience. In interactive media such as video games, the player assumes the role of a character, serving as the conduit through which the narrative unfolds. Following unit is relevant for this thesis because it enables one to distinguish between the character-player perspective, and first-person narrative in literature.

Narratives vary in the number of characters they have and in the number of characters that they follow. Some narratives follow one character, some two characters, and some may be alternating between following more characters. This following takes place over the course of some time period. Altman describes following-units as "a series of segments each made up of that portion of the text where a character […] is followed continuously."[45] Following however is not the same as point of view. Point of view always uses characters as a secondary filter of information, but following is present in every narrative, meaning that every narrative has following, but point of view occurs only in some narratives.[46] But delineating the following-units is another thing. Sometimes it is not quite obvious where one scene begins and where it ends. This, as *following*, is dependent on the reader. As mentioned, a text can serve for different purposes to two different readers, and they can also segment the following-units differently, according to their investment, and narrative drive.[47] In the game, the player has their character, which they experience the gameworld through—which would be first-person narrative in a book. Via that character in the game is done the following. The character is just a tool for connecting the player with the narrative. This character-player point of view is relatively constant—disrupted only by animations and cut-scenes. This division in *following* will be discussed in the analysis.

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[45] Altman, *A Theory of Narrative*, 22.
[46] Altman, *A Theory of Narrative*, 22.
[47] Altman, *A Theory of Narrative*, 23.

Modulations

Altman calls switching between following-units modulations. He distinguishes three types: *metonymic modulation, metaphoric modulation*, and *hyperbolic modulation*.[48]

Metonymic modulation is concerned with characters meeting each other within one time frame. It is a scenic method, which reduces the need for the narrator's involvement. Those bridging constructions can be established by simply steering the locations of characters.[49] An example of this could be one character stepping into the field of view of another character. Where no visual contact is possible, other means can be used, for example describing a route of a fragrance or smell, which could bend around corners, and lead the reader to another following-unit.

Metaphoric modulation is when the narrator steps in and uses some connection between characters to move to another following-unit, as Altman puts it "parallel presentation of simultaneous actions."[50] For example similar behavior, thoughts, or emotions.

Lastly, *hyperbolic modulation* is moving to another following-unit without the narrator's involvement, with no explanation. This kind of modulation connects the unexpected and may even seem out of place.[51]

Modulations are transitions between following-units, which are clearly visible in a book. However, their in-game execution is vastly different. What could interrupt the player's following? It could be the player who enacts the modulations, or it could be some non-playable character—as in interactive quests, where the player has to follow a certain character in real-time. Then the control of the situation is shifted from the player onto another entity in the game. The most prominent types of modulations in the game are then metonymic modulation—where the player interacts with other characters and hyperbolic—where the player may deviate from the main storyline to a secondary one. Explicit examples will be shown in the analysis.

Narrative in Computer Games

The previous chapter described Altman's narrative elements, which are closely related not only to the literary narrative but to the one in *Wow*, the online game.

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[48] Altman, *A Theory of Narrative*, 24.
[49] Altman, *A Theory of Narrative*, 24.
[50] Altman, *A Theory of Narrative*, 25.
[51] Altman, *A Theory of Narrative*, 26.

While I was describing narrative in terms of its history and components, I have mentioned that it does not have to be tied to one specific medium, such as written texts. Narrative is a concept that in its core combines the narrative elements, creating relationships between them, while being framed to a beginning, a middle, and an end. This formula creates meaning that the reader or spectator, or in this case player, consumes or interacts with.

Many computer games follow a similar structure. There can be a story, which unfolds and reveals a narrative structure. However, concerning computer games, the potential of narrative is even greater than in texts, because of its multimediality (more on that in the next chapter). Narrative used in games has a different purpose than in other media, such as texts.[52] Nonetheless, narrative in texts, and games are trying to do the same thing—that is to create a mental representation of the narrative structure in the mind of the reader or player.[53] Some narrative structures are more prominent than others (as "a" narrative, and "some" narrative), and this applies to games as well, some game genres are more narrative-like than others, e.g. mysteries, adventures, or combat scenarios.[54] Because games as a medium function differently than texts, their working with narrativity differs as well, "they project fictional worlds in their own flickering, provisional, and optional way."[55] Games as a medium are much younger than texts and literature, which means there are not as many structures and prescriptions which they could, or should follow.

It is actually the players' engagement which determines how many genres could switch. The main genre in the Warcraft universe is an epic hero quest narrative, with elements of adventure (as when the player has to invent ways to proceed in the game, like figuring out how to complete certain quests, or dungeons and raids, where players have to closely cooperate). Setting along with props are significant factors as well. Fog, for example, may serve as the basis for a mysterious atmosphere, especially when combined with an eerie part of the plot, or a quest. Examples of snow will be mentioned in the analysis, and how it is approached in the game and in the book.

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[52] Pearce, *Towards a game theory of game*, 144.
[53] Wolf, Perron. *Routledge companion to video game studies*, 734.
[54] Pearce, *Towards a game theory of game*, 153.
[55] Juul, *Half-real: Video games between real rules and fictional worlds*, 200.

Myth

As mentioned in the title of the thesis, myth is an integral part of it. Narrative may be of mythological character, as in the case of *WoW*. This chapter will focus on myth, its development, its role in communication, and its usage in *WoW*.

The historical origin of myth

Since the word *myth* has been used so widely, its definition remains rather broad – precisely because of its wide range of usage in different disciplines as well as general public discourse and the fact that the concept of myth dates back to ancient civilizations and has been evolving ever since.[56]

In its original sense, myth refers to an epic story, often depicting an event from the culture-specific history; as stated in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, myth is a traditional story that usually involves supernatural beings or forces, that explains or justifies something such as the early history of a society, a religious belief or ritual, or a natural phenomenon.[57] Furthermore, myth can have a predominantly negative connotation, which may not correspond with its truthfulness. In Cambridge Dictionary, myth is also defined as "a commonly believed but false idea."[58] It may not be easily visible that some part of the myth is not true, the positive connotation can give it a false sense of truthfulness; people do not consider something to be a myth if they believe it to be true.[59] Consequently, if they labeled their beliefs as myths, they would be disproving their truthfulness. Either way, myth expresses a belief that may or may not be true. (Then again, it depends on what people believe and the culture in which the myth occurs—different cultures may perceive the same myth differently)

Since myth can take on forms of diverse cultural narratives, it can be classified into various categories—for instance, Laurence Coupe divides myth in its traditional sense into four main categories: fertility myth, creation myth, deliverance myth, and hero myth[60]. Those categories then serve as model templates, after which were some of the other myths formed – or still are being formed. Myths were incorporated into daily life and among other themes

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[56] Coupe, *Myth*, 13.
[57] "Myth Noun - Definition, Pictures, Pronunciation and Usage Notes | Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary at OxfordLearnersDictionaries.Com."
[58] "Myth."
[59] Segal, *Myth: A very short introduction*, 20.
[60] Coupe, *Myth*, 3.

have become an inspiration for artists, which changed or expanded their function to an aesthetic one. As Eliade states, most of the Greek myths were adopted, by for example Homer, and modified or further adjusted.[61] However, just because the mentioned forms of myth are mostly modeled on the same template or basis, does not mean they bear the same purpose as the original traditional myths.

Myths created alongside e.g. the aforementioned types can thus acquire new meanings, structure, purpose, as well as media of transmission. With those factors in play, myths can thus be projected into contemporary media as a narrative structure. Following such contemporary iterations of myth, this thesis investigates its role in the narrative structure of *World of Warcraft*.

Function of myth

In order to be able to explore the role of myth and its function in a narrative structure of the chosen computer game universe, I will first have to identify its function outside of the scope of this thesis.

Theorists differ over the function of myth. However, for all of them, the function of myth is cardinal—unlike the functions of legends and folk tales.[62] The function of myth depends on how people perceive it, and the way in which it is perceived reflects the reality in which the perception takes place. Greek myth will have a different impact and will be understood differently in the 21st century as opposed to the 15th century. The function of myth may be broad—let's imagine myth as a glittering cloth, which looks slightly different in color from various angles. Depending on the chosen perspective, it may inspire people in different ways and each of them may use it in their own way, and the cloth then becomes only a means for creating their content. The product, created by the people who used the myth for inspiration, then gets incorporated into reality, and more people may draw from it, rooting the original substance, myth in this metaphor, even deeper into their culture. By this cumulative way of using myth, its contemporary connotations continue to be reflected outside of the myth—or new connotations are created. This (partial) replacement of reality, or integration of the myth into it, can be achieved by spreading the myth across various media such as songs, poetry, literature, narratives, computer games, and so forth.

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[61] Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, 4.
[62] Segal, *Myth: A very short introduction*, 19.

The analysis will demonstrate that this integration of myth as a narrative phenomenon can occur even in computer games, which are by their nature inherently multimedial, and thus offer a very dense narrative structure, into which myth perfectly fits.

This study seeks to explore the role of myth within the narrative framework of a specific computer game universe. Before embarking on this analysis, it is essential to establish an understanding of myth's broader function. While interpretations of myth vary among scholars, its fundamental significance is universally acknowledged. Myth's function is dynamic, shaped by individual perceptions and societal contexts. Like a multifaceted fabric, myth offers diverse perspectives and inspirations, shaping cultural narratives across various media.

Myth as a semiological system

In this work, my concern will not be myth narrated traditionally via text or orally, but through the media of computer games. To be able to examine myth in this form, I will need a universal approach to myth, which could be semiotics. Whenever someone tries to explain or define myth, sooner or later they demonstrate it in an example, which itself is a myth.[63] Thus, approaching myth from the perspective of semiology promises to bring enticing insights, because the way of communicating the myth, and the way of explaining it affects the meaning transmitted.

According to Roland Barthes myth is constructed from a second-order semiological system. There are two semiological systems; the first consists of the signifier, the signified, and the sign. This first system becomes a second-order signifier in the second.[64]
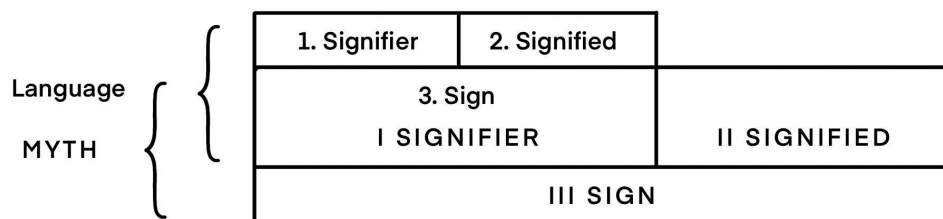
Figure 1: Barthes, Second-order semiological system.[65]

Hence all the signs mediated used in myth-making (via painting, literature, photographs, songs, etc.) are reduced to signifying function once they are involved with

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[63] Segal, *Myth: A very short introduction*, 18.
[64] Barthes, *Mythologies*, 111.
[65] Barthes, *Mythologies*, 113.

myth. Through the lens of myth, media becomes a mere channel for communicating the myth.[66]

As for the channel chosen to mediate the myth, pictorial and alphabetical media have the same amount of relevance. They are both signs occupying the same place in the semiological system.[67] As I illustrated with definitions and examples above, myth at its core is a form of narration which is not tied to a specific medium or historical period—this multimedial relevance will play a role in exploring the way in which mythical narrative structure enters the transmedial storytelling, present in the media of a computer game.

I am going to address the way (contemporary) myth works in *World of Warcraft* and its transmedial storytelling. I am going to explore how myth works across two distinct platforms—in this case *World of Warcraft* online game, and novels set in the same fictional world.

Mythical Structures in World of Warcraft

As I mentioned in transmediality, *World of Warcraft* is something as "thick text,"[68] and for that reason aspects of myth are prominent in the narrative. As Krzywinska states, aspects of myth "are present in the register of narrative…have a structural function, play a role in shaping the experience of the gameworld and its temporal condition, and are also apparent in the registers of style, resonance, and rhetoric.[69]" I will describe the occurrence of myth in detail in the analysis. Fantasy worlds, such as in Tolkien's Middle-earth, or in Herbert's Dune novels, the fictional universes use "structures and forms derived from preexisting mythological cosmologies," and follow the primeval traditions, such as Celtic, Greek, or Nordic.[70] Cosmology plays a crucial role in both the old and the new mythological structures. Cosmology refers to "forces that affect the human sphere," and contribute to the state of affairs in the fictional world.[71] Cosmology in *World of Warcraft* consists of the main universe known as the Great Dark Beyond, multiple realms, other timelines, and pocket dimensions.

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[66] Barthes, *Mythologies*, 113.
[67] Barthes, *Mythologies*, 114.
[68] Kaveney, *From alien to the Matrix: Reading Science Fiction Film,* 4.
[69] Corneliussen, Rettberg, *Digital Culture, Play, and Identity: A World of Warcraft Reader*, 123.
[70] Corneliussen, Rettberg, *Digital Culture, Play, and Identity: A World of Warcraft Reader*, 125.
[71] Corneliussen, Rettberg, *Digital Culture, Play, and Identity: A World of Warcraft Reader*, 125.

The cosmology has its own map, which lends the mythical structure coherency and character to the Warcraft universe. Such mythical structure can provide an archetype for the game, or a novel, which then unites them and makes engagement more enjoyable. The core mythic pattern which is present in games is "the epic hero quest, wherein various forces work to help and hinder the hero-player en route to achieving their goals."[72] The cosmology gives consistency to the setting, and the mythical patterns give consistency to the style of the world, to the way the worldbuilding is done.

Transmediality

Transmediality, as I will explain in this chapter, is the use of more than one medium to convey some meaning, or narrative in the case of this work. The Warcraft universe relies on transmediality and benefits from it, because it distributes its story content across multiple platforms, such as books, and games—which all together co-constitute the fictional universe.

Transmedial Storytelling

A broad definition of transmediality or transmedial storytelling would be "telling a story across multiple platforms, preferably allowing audience participation, such that each successive platform heightens the audience's enjoyment."[73] In order for this way of storytelling, the representation of the story in each media has to be satisfying on its own, but the entertainment from all of the media should be greater than the one of its parts. The usage of multiple media puts the audience in the center, which leads to "taking the audience on an emotional journey that goes from moment-to-moment."[74] This is exactly what happens in *World of Warcraft* where the player is the center of all the action, because without the player and their participation, there would be no interactive narrative.

Transmedia storytelling is a relatively new approach compared to multi-platform storytelling. The main difference is trying to create harmony "between the content and a focus on an emotional, participatory experience for the audience."[75] Jenkins defines transmedia storytelling as a "process where integral elements of a fiction get dispersed

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[72] Corneliussen, Rettberg, *Digital Culture, Play, and Identity: A World of Warcraft Reader*, 126.
[73] Pratten, *Getting started in transmedia storytelling: A practical guide for beginners*, 2.
[74] Pratten, *Getting started in transmedia storytelling: A practical guide for beginners*, 2.
[75] Pratten, *Getting started in transmedia storytelling: A practical guide for beginners*, 2.

systematically across multiple delivery channels for the purpose of creating a unified and coordinated entertainment experience. Ideally, each medium makes its own unique contribution to the unfolding of the story."[76] This uniqueness of each media is best visible if all the media work together to create the entertainment experience.
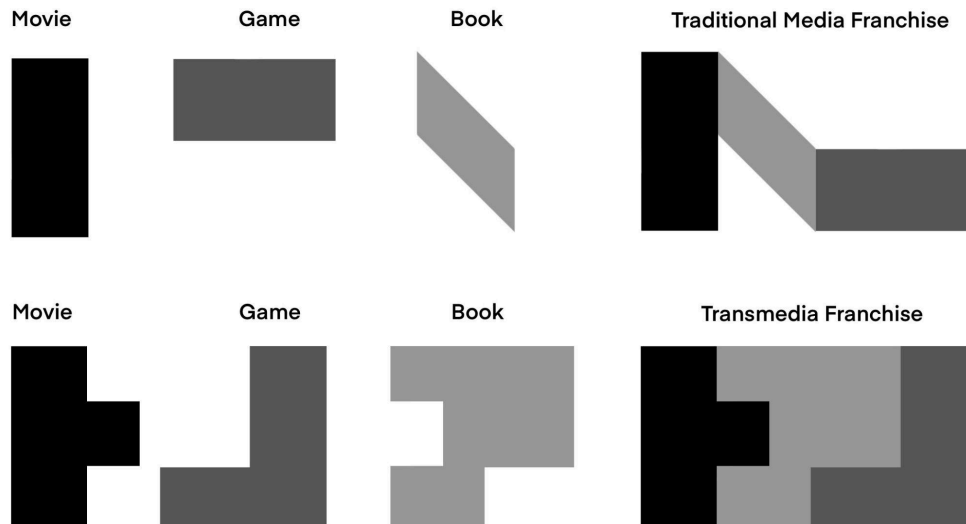

Figure 2: adapted from Pratten, What is Transmedia?[77]

As shown in *figure* 2 media which co-create one narrative can be linked to one another, while leaving gaps in the plot, or they could complement each other, with even a certain level of overlap. In a traditional multi-platform franchise the whole is less than the sum of its parts, leading to the unsatisfactory conclusion of consuming all media. Whereas in a transmedial franchise, the whole is more pleasing than all the parts combined.[78] As I have mentioned in a chapter on Warcraft literature, some information is exclusive only to the books. The same applies also to the game, and by uniting knowledge from a book and a game, as is the goal of this work, a new level of immersion is created—because the media used for the transmedial storytelling complement each other. As Ryan puts it "transmedia storytelling is not a serial; it does not tell a single story, but a variety of autonomous stories, or episodes, contained in various documents. What holds these stories together is that they take place in the same storyworld."[79] Exactly this is applicable to *WoW*. This thesis focuses on one novel and one game expansion, however, there are more media which correlate with one another, not only on the storytelling level.

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[76] Jenkins, *Transmedia Storytelling,* 101.
[77] Pratten,*Getting started in transmedia storytelling: A practical guide for beginners*, 3.
[78] Pratten,*Getting started in transmedia storytelling: A practical guide for beginners*, 3.
[79] Ryan, *Transmedia Storytelling: Industry Buzzword or New Narrative Experience?*, 4.

Media Combination

My main focus in the Warcraft universe will be novels and the game. As Barabás states, video games can be looked at as a form of media combination, where multiple elements such as digital, narrative, and interactive are merged.[80] Thus, at this intersection, another medium is created that could not have been created without the combination of other media. "Video games can dynamically simulate the details of any other medium, including media that cannot exist physically,"[81] This is one of the greatest advantages and abilities of transmedial storytelling. Using a game as a medium to transmit a narrative gives the narrative a new deeper dimension of experience. By tying this to the semiotics of *myth,* it makes it even more coherent as a whole, which leads to greater immersivity.

Barabás talks of transmediality by using Rajewsky's distinction of medial transposition, media combination, and intermedial references, with the addition of the fourth type introduced by Henry Jenkins (2006)[82]; transmedia storytelling.[83] I already introduced transmedial storytelling as the first category. In the following subchapter, I will explain the characteristics of each category and its usefulness for this work.

Intermedial References

When using media as a reference for drawing inspiration for content, one media seems to be dominant or persistent in the final form—intermedial references are based on evoking one form of media in another by thematizing techniques that are specific to that medium or by using elements which are specific to that genre.[84] "The referencing medium is materially present, as opposed to the referenced work, and it uses its own media-specific means to present the referenced material."[85] An example of intermedial references can be cinematic

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[80] Barabás, *Transmedia Storytelling in the Warcraft Universe: The Role of Intermediality in Shaping The Warcraft Lore*, 6.
[81] Kay, *Computer software*, 53-59.
[82] Jenkins, *Convergence culture: Where old and new media collide*, quoted in Barabás, *Transmedia Storytelling in the Warcraft Universe: The Role of Intermediality in Shaping The Warcraft Lore*, 6.
[83] Barabás, *Transmedia Storytelling in the Warcraft Universe: The Role of Intermediality in Shaping The Warcraft Lore*, 6.
[84] Barabás, *Transmedia Storytelling in the Warcraft Universe: The Role of Intermediality in Shaping The Warcraft Lore*, 6.
[85] Rajewsky, *Intermediality, Intertextuality, and Remediation: A Literary Perspective on Intermediality*, quoted in quoted in Barabás, *Transmedia Storytelling in the Warcraft Universe: The Role of Intermediality in Shaping The Warcraft Lore*, 6.

cut-scenes, which are short excerpts in video format inserted into the video game with the purpose of narration. Another example may be books in the game world which the players can access and read.[86] The analyzed game universe uses intermedial references extensively. The aforementioned examples such as cut-scenes and in-game books are both present in the game. The narrative depends to a large extent on cut-scenes. The parts of the story which are the most relevant for the plot are often shown through the cut-scenes.

Media Transposition

Media transposition comes in the form of adaptation and remediation, with the aim of transposing the same content from one media to another; as in films, an adaptation of literary text, an adaptation of literary text into a video game...[87] The media used in the process have a crucial role, because "the existence of the adapted or remediated work is heavily reliant on both the original source and the intermedial transformation process through which it came into existence."[88]

I will be using transmedia storytelling as an umbrella term for the above-mentioned categories, which I will specify when needed. To give an all-encompassing definition of transmedia storytelling I will cite Henry Jenkins (2006)[89], who describes it as "the phenomena of a narrative spawning across two or more forms of media, being told through each one of their media-specific approaches instead of being contained in only one medium." Jenkins shows that using various media broadens the scope of approaches that can be present all at the same time, making the subject of transmedia storytelling richer in the way of its representation. The approach to the *WoW* universe in this work corresponds to the definition Jenkins gives; if the thesis focused on novels alone, it would be sufficient for literary analysis, however, if the *WoW* game is added to them, the thesis can then address

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[86] Barabás, *Transmedia Storytelling in the Warcraft Universe: The Role of Intermediality in Shaping The Warcraft Lore*, 6.
[87] Barabás, *Transmedia Storytelling in the Warcraft Universe: The Role of Intermediality in Shaping The Warcraft Lore*, 6.
[88] Rajewsky, *Intermediality, Intertextuality, and Remediation: A Literary Perspective on Intermediality*, quoted in quoted in Barabás, *Transmedia Storytelling in the Warcraft Universe: The Role of Intermediality in Shaping The Warcraft Lore*, 6.
[89] Jenkins, *Convergence culture: Where old and new media collide,* quoted in quoted in Barabás, *Transmedia Storytelling in the Warcraft Universe: The Role of Intermediality in Shaping The Warcraft Lore*, 6.

multimediality as well as narrative—for which is the aforementioned contemporary narratology relevant.

Preliminary Theoretical Conclusions: Transmediality and the World of Warcraft

When computer games come in contact with transmediality a whole new narrative structure is created because media-specific narrative devices are combined. This merging of various benefits of multiple media is something like what Roz Kaveney (2005)[90] called a "thick text," where different allusions, correlations, and references are present.[91] This incorporation of intertextual references serves as "a way of including the expert reader or viewer in a conspiracy of informed smugness"[92] Those intertextual elements encourage deep engagement with the game, and with the narrative. The player's engagement can enhance his or her narrative drive. And because "a player is an active choice-making agent within the gameworld, narrative becomes in this context more structurally complex."[93]

While engaging with the game world, the player experiences the benefits of the combination of various media-specific narrative structures. "Identifying with a hero…affords a pleasurable sense of agency," which could not be achieved without the transmedial nature of the narrative structure.[94] The player has a certain level of freedom when it comes to choosing activities while questing through the sense of agency is "illusory" according to Parsler (2006).[95] The player feels as if making a real contribution to the game world, but at the same time, the player knows that hundreds and thousands of other players have completed the same quests before. This fact may or may not make a difference, because it can be applied to reading the Warcraft novels, where the reader also knows that hundreds and thousands of

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[90] Kaveney, *From alien to the Matrix: Reading Science Fiction Film,* 4, quoted in Corneliussen, Rettberg, *Digital Culture, Play, and Identity: A World of Warcraft Reader*, 123.
[91] Corneliussen, Rettberg, *Digital Culture, Play, and Identity: A World of Warcraft Reader*, 123.
[92] Kaveney, *From alien to the Matrix: Reading Science Fiction Film,* 4, quoted in Corneliussen, Rettberg, *Digital Culture, Play, and Identity: A World of Warcraft Reader*, 123.
[93] Corneliussen, Rettberg, *Digital Culture, Play, and Identity: A World of Warcraft Reader*, 126.
[94] Corneliussen, Rettberg, *Digital Culture, Play, and Identity: A World of Warcraft Reader*, 127.
[95] Parsler, *Understanding Agency,* quoted in Corneliussen, Rettberg, *Digital Culture, Play, and Identity: A World of Warcraft Reader*, 127.

people have read the very same books before, and it probably does not steal away the joy from reading the books.

When it comes to the meanings of the quests, their content is thickened by what players already know about the gameworld, the narrative content of the quests heightens the player's understanding of the gameworld's affairs, or even invokes certain kinds of scenarios that the players may know from other fantasy-based texts.[96].

The meeting of computer games and transmediality creates a new narrative structure by combining specific media narrative devices. This convergence, similar to Roz Kaveney's concept of the "thick text", promotes deep engagement through intertextual references, thereby enhancing the player's narrative drive and agency in the game world. While the player may experience an illusory sense of agency, the narrative complexity that transmedia storytelling provides enriches the game experience. Moreover, the game's quests are imbued with layers of meaning that draw on players' existing knowledge of the game world and evoke familiar scenarios from fantasy literature. This fusion of narrative elements from different media forms ultimately facilitates an immersive and intellectually stimulating gaming experience.

Enter the Analysis

This subchapter will serve as a transition from theory to analysis, which will summarize and conclude the theoretical part of this thesis, while also providing a rough outline for the analysis.

The main thread of the analysis follows the narrative of the novel and game, and onto which will be embedded the subsequent concepts I have established in the theoretical part. I have previously introduced the concept of narrative and its numerous definitions. I primarily worked with Rick Altman's definition of narrative, which is divided into *narrative material, narrational activity, narrative drive, and following-unit*.

First, the analysis will employ the general concept of narrative, while providing an introductory description of the plot, characters, and setting. Following the introduction, narrative material, which is concerned with the influence on the reader's creation of mental representation of the characters, will be examined. In addition, the structure of the plot will be inspected, whether it matches the "rise and fall, loss and recovery, or desire and

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[96] Corneliussen, Rettberg, *Digital Culture, Play, and Identity: A World of Warcraft Reader*, 129.

acquisition,"[97] which Altman uses in his definition. This division of the plot will show the contrast between the game and the book.

The third component of the narrative that will be analyzed is narrational activity, which describes how the reader's ability of following makes the narrative. The distinction of *"some" narrative*, and *"a" narrative* (as explained in *Narrational Activity*) will be illustrated, with a greater focus on the plot.

The section on narrative drive will explore the role of the narrator, who could be along with characters and actions inherent to the text, but the narrator position could also be shifted onto the reader. This part will consider the inherently narrative nature of the game and the novel.

Following-unit is the last section of narrative, which will deal with the distinction between following and point of view. Finally, the structural and formal components mentioned above will be tied to the concepts of myths and transmediality. Modulations, myth, and transmediality will be illustrated on this structure of narrative of the novel and the game.

Analysis

The ensuing transmedial analysis will be by its nature closest to a comparative analysis. It will deal with an expansion pack[98] *Mists of Pandaria (2012)*[99] and a novel *World of Warcraft: Vol'jin: Shadows of the Horde (2013).*[100] This analysis is limited by the amount of factors that the game and book have in common, to at least some extent. The scope of a book is limited by the number of pages it has, and by a number of characters and for example places which are introduced there. The scope of the expansion pack could be measured in the same way—in terms of the characters and locations, but the game is also audio-visual—in which it has an advantage over the novel. The game has more means to try to convey what the book does. , since it engages more senses than the novel.

The delivered analysis will be based on the novel, because, unlike the book, the game has audio and visual features, and to compare them the scope of this work is limiting, therefore they will be omitted in the analysis. aspects that the two media do not share. I will however deal with their (possible) representation in each medium. The analysis is divided

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[97] Altman, *A Theory of Narrative*, 11.

[98] See page 4.

[99] "Mists of Pandaria." World of Warcraft, Blizzard Entertainment, 2024. Accessed April 12, 2024.

[100] Stackpole, *Vol'jin: Shadows of the Horde.*

into two parts; a part concerning the plot, characters, and setting, and the second part will explore by what means is the first part conveyed. The aim of this analysis is to demonstrate that transmediality is relevant and functional in storytelling.

Plot overview

As mentioned above, the scope of *WoW* game is much broader than that of corresponding novels. The narrative is inherently transmedial, which means it would not be logical for the two media to have the same scope, also because they tend to overlap. The former chapter on transmediality discusses that each media makes its own contribution to the narrative as a whole, and that one storyworld can contain autonomous stories. This chapter will provide a comprehensive overview encompassing the plot, characters, and setting of both the novel and the associated game expansion. This serves as a foundational framework upon which subsequent analytical discussions will be grounded. By contextualizing the narrative elements within the broader framework of the story's construction, the subsequent analysis aims to offer a more nuanced understanding of the thematic and conceptual underpinnings present within the text and game.

This chapter will meticulously dissect the plots of the novel and game, followed by a comparative examination of the narrative structures inherent in each medium. Subsequently, implications concerning transmediality will be inferred from the comparative analysis, shedding light on the interplay between the two narrative forms and their potential synergistic effects across different media platforms.

Novel

The subsequent analysis delves into the intricacies of the novel's plot, with a particular focus on its transmedial implications. As elucidated later in this chapter, the examination reveals that the plot of the novel exhibits limited interference with that of the associated game. This analysis is characterized by its condensed yet detail-oriented approach, aimed at highlighting the transmedial aspect of the narrative. Indeed, transmediality is predicated upon the synergy between complementary media forms. While overarching themes such as the conflict between good and evil or the portrayal of specific locations and time periods may align across both the game and the book, the analysis seeks to identify elements or information exclusive to each medium. It is through the identification of these distinctive components that the transmedial nature of the narrative can be effectively demonstrated.

The novel *World of Warcraft: Vol'jin: Shadows of the Horde (2013)* is set in Pandaria, which is a continent in the corresponding expansion pack, which is divided in zones with their (separate) histories, towns, villages, and other settlements. However, it is set only in some of the locations, namely Valley of Four Winds, Kun-Lai Summit, Vale of Eternal Blossoms, Isle of Thunder, and Veiled Stair.

The main characters of the novel are Vol'jin, Tyrathan Khort, and Chen Stormstout. Among the supporting characters are Yalia Sagewhisper, Taran Zhu, Vilnak'dor, Warlord Kao, Khal'ak, Brother Cuo, and Bwonsamdi. There are more minor characters, and characters which are only mentioned.

The story begins with poisoned Vol'jin who wavers out of the *Ancient Passage,* and his old friend Chen Stromstout picks him up and brings him to the Shado-Pan Monastery to heal. Vol'jin, as all Zandalari trolls, has the racial ability of regeneration, which now is not working on him, because of doubts he has in himself. His decisions and conflicting loyalty to the Horde weakened his spirit so much that the Loa (beings trolls worship, such as Wild Gods) withheld his shadow hunter powers (shadow hunters are masters of voodoo and shadow magic—once they were the highest authority amongst trolls).

The more time he spends at the monastery, the more he learns about Pandaren ideology from Chen, Taran Zhu, and Yalia Sagewhisper. He becomes mesmerized by the fighting style of Pandaren monks, who are taught to fight in order to keep balance, while Vol'jin as a shadow hunter is meant to spread chaos amongst his enemies.

Vol'jin and recovering human Tyrathan Khort bond during their recoveries—Tyrathan is a veteran of many battles and was injured by the Sha of Doubt at the battle of Serpent's Heart in the Jade Forest. Yalia is estranged with her family and Chen helps her reunite with them, they fall in love in the process. Chen is then considering opening his brewery in Zouchin so that he could be close to her. With the help of friends, Vol'jin reconciles with the Loa and is granted back his powers.

Zandalari attempted to invade Pandaria through Zouchin Province right after Vol'jin's recovery. Taran Zhu and Vol'jin were at odds while discussing the defense of Pandaria because of their divergent viewpoints. The Zandalari were led by Khal'ak and Warlord Kao who were sent to prepare the way for the conquest of the newly revived Thunder King. The invasion was eventually repelled and Khal'ak was killed. Chen confessed his love to Yalia, Vol'jin fully recovered and together with Chen set off to start the Darkspear Rebellion.

Game

In this section of the *Plot overview* are described the most prominent characters and events in the expansion pack *Mists of Pandaria (2012)* which is set on the whole continent of Pandaria, and The Wandering Isle which is separate from the continent. As mentioned above the scope of the game is much larger—there are tens of characters which appear in each expansion pack. The most prominent characters in Pandaria are Lorewalker Cho, August Celestials, Vol'jin, Garrosh Hellscream, and Lei Shen.

The game storyline takes place on the whole continent with the zones following one another in certain chronology. The player starts at the Jade Forest moving from west to east across the zones. The expansion storyline is much more complex and elaborate compared to the novel. The core concepts of the novel are covered in the game; such as Vol'jin's poisoning, his doubts and relationship with the Pandaren, the characters (although Yalia is not as prominent in the game), Zandalari invasion, the conflict between Taran Zhu and Vol'jin, and the Darkspear Rebellion.

Transmediality

The two media diverge notably in content, with the book encompassing less than half of the territory available in the game and consequently featuring fewer characters. While both media share common thematic concepts, such as conflict and warfare, the narrative treatment of these elements differs significantly. For instance, the book prominently features an attack on Zouchin, a significant plot point in the book, yet receives marginal coverage in the game. Conversely, the game emphasizes conflicts with the Sha as the primary focus, with manifestations of this conflict including various adversaries, including the Zandalari. Notably, the attack on the monastery, a pivotal event that serves as the narrative climax, lacks parallel representation in the game. The only semblance of a similar experience in the game occurs within a dungeon setting, where players confront Pandaren controlled by the Sha, albeit without a direct Zandalari attack. Thus, while overarching themes remain consistent between the two media, their narrative executions and emphases differ markedly. The primary distinctions lie in the characters and settings, which will be subjected to further scrutiny in subsequent sections of the analysis.

Spatial Aspects

As mentioned in the previous chapter, one of the two main differences between the game and the book is the setting. In this section I will be commenting on the visual consistency and repetitive elements in the two media, thereby facilitating the subsequent transmedial analysis. This section is further divided in *Shado-pan Monastery and Temple of the White Tiger* and *Land and Surroundings*, where I comment on citations from the novel (vast majority of the mentions of the visual descriptions), and compare whether those mentions link to the visual portion of the game, because the visual representation holds paramount significance as it serves as the conduit through which the entirety of the game's perception is constructed.

Shado-pan Monastery and Temple of the White Tiger

Majority of indoor scenes in the novel takes place in the Shado-pan Monastery and the Temple of the White Tiger. The same is true for the game, since usually the bigger the in-game structure is, the more important it is lore-wise.

The following citation describes the Temple of the White Tiger located in the Kun-lai Summit area; "The Temple of the White Tiger, while by no means posh or opulent by any standard, was warm and filled with light. Vol'jin had been given a cell not much larger than the one he had at the Shado-pan Monastery, but the lighter color, and flashes of greenery through the windows, made it seem huge."[101] In the game, the temple complex consists of the biggest building, the Temple, and five smaller buildings, of which are three open, with columns instead of walls. The biggest building—Temple of the White Tiger has a skylight, providing a source of natural light. The walled buildings have massive entrances and high ceilings, stone floors and pillars, which invoke feelings of vastness and cold, despite the warm light provided by candles or torches. The in-game interior does not correspond to the quotation. As well as the Shado-pan Monastery, this temple complex is not subdivided into storeys, nor any habitable rooms. The surroundings are yellow mossy plains, and mountains covered in snow. On the grounds of the complex, the trees are covered in snow, as well as patches of the ground. There is no greenery present, as opposed to the novel.

While in the Shado-pan Monastery, Vol'jin was learning about Pandaren military history and geography; "Ancient imperial charts had mapped the continent out in great detail. He still found some areas only vaguely described. This was especially true of the Vale of

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[101] Stackpole, *Vol'jin: Shadows of the Horde*, 48.

Eternal Blossoms, where one map had clearly been inked over in the south-central area."[102] Shado-pan Monastery in the game contains no maps or charts, however, players can display the map whenever. There are two versions of the same map, differing in relation to the events which affected the area.

The first map displays Vale of Eternal Blossoms after patch 8.3.0 (expansions comprise of patches, released in chronological order, which provide new parts of the game and build on one another), when the damage inflicted by Garrosh Hellscream (leader of the Horde in that time period) and the Horde was reversed, and the vale was cleansed by the August Celestials (four Wild Gods of Pandaria, one of which is Xuen—the White Tiger)[103] and efforts of the Golden Lotus (guardians of the vale, picked by the August Celestials).[104] The map Vol'jin describes must be the map described above because the second map dates later to the storyline—from patch 5.4.0. to patch 8.3.0. (the patch chronology may seem illogical, however, the player can access the vale after the patch 8.3.0., and the novel storyline happens before patch 5.4.0.).

Figure 3: Vale of Eternal Blossoms[105]

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[102] Stackpole, *Vol'jin: Shadows of the Horde*, 55.
[103] Wowpedia, "August Celestial."
[104] Wowpedia, "Golden Lotus."
[105] Blizzard Entertainment. World of Warcraft: Mists of Pandaria. Blizzard Entertainment. PC. 2012.

Figure 4: Vale of Eternal Blossoms[106]

Those quotations describe one of the rooms in the Shado-pan Monastery and its details; "...fitted with a reed mat. At its heart sat a small table with a terra-cotta teapot, three cups, a whisk, a bamboo ladle, a tea caddy, and a tiny cast-iron pot."[107] "The cast-iron pot's lid had an ocean wave motif worked onto it. The terra-cotta teapot had been shaped like a ship. The handle had been formed out of an anchor."[108] "band of symbols running round the middle represented each of Pandaria's districts."[109]The Shado-pan Monastery in the game cannot be accessed outside of the dungeon (in-game battle scenario). While in the dungeon, the interior of the monastery is not furnished to be inhabited, as the book describes. There are some reed mats, but also kegs (with most likely beer, considering its importance in the culture), drums, and weaponry. The interior is not divided into rooms or floors, it is massive in scale, incomparable to the size of the player or NPCs (non-playable characters), giving the impression of an exterior or uninhabitable space. However, dungeons are combat scenarios with the goal of carrying some of the lore (story-wise, they have several other functions for

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[106] Blizzard Entertainment. World of Warcraft: Mists of Pandaria. Blizzard Entertainment. PC. 2012.

[107] Stackpole, *Vol'jin: Shadows of the Horde*, 11.

[108] Stackpole, *Vol'jin: Shadows of the Horde*, 12.

[109] Stackpole, *Vol'jin: Shadows of the Horde*, 12.

the player), which means what the player is presented in the dungeon does not have to match the reality of the game outside of the dungeon, demonstrated in the following quote: "Pandaren monks arrayed in straight ranks dominated the center."[110] The monks are not arranged in straight ranks, but rather in circles or semi-circles. In the dungeon the monks are scattered across the courtyard, dead. Their death is relevant to this visual aspect section only in the sense that it proves that the player may not be presented with all the details there could be—as mentioned, the monastery is not accessible outside of the dungeon, highlighting the importance of transmediality. Without access, the player can learn more about the interior of the monastery in the novel.

Where the monks are fighting is most likely the central courtyard, since it is the biggest one. The following citation is its description; "...the central courtyard. A fire blazed at its heart in a simple circle of stones. A small table with two golden goblets and a matching pitcher filled with dark wine stood beside it and back a bit. Two lounging mats had been placed between the table and fire, allowing easy access to refreshments."[111] What I believe to be the main courtyard in the game, serves for the monks to train and gather. The courtyard with a circular shape at its center is vacant, without fire and other described items.

The description of the courtyard continues with the monks training; "Around the edges, at various points, other monks fought with swords and spears, polearms and bows."[112] This appears to be true, tens of monks are training at the monastery, however, none of them are using weapons. There is said to be a "raised dais,"[113] upon which Taran Zhu stood. The only raised platform is the floor of a small open shrine-like structure on the monastery grounds. Apart from that, there is no dais. However, there are multiple flights of stairs, as mentioned in the novel; "the steps to the plane between monastery and mountain."[114] The stairs along with bridges connect the various islands of the monastery complex, as in the next citation; "The bridge did lead to an island, and he waited there in the open pavilion at its heart, but the gully the bridge spanned..."[115]

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[110] Stackpole, *Vol'jin: Shadows of the Horde*, 20.
[111] Stackpole, *Vol'jin: Shadows of the Horde*, 73.
[112] Stackpole, *Vol'jin: Shadows of the Horde*, 20.
[113] Stackpole, *Vol'jin: Shadows of the Horde*, 23.
[114] Stackpole, *Vol'jin: Shadows of the Horde*, 42.
[115] Stackpole, *Vol'jin: Shadows of the Horde*, 98.

Figure 5: Shado-pan Monastery[116]

It is mentioned that; "Vol'jin found it reminiscent of Durotar—though considerably colder."[117] The likeness could not have been visual, it must have been his personal sentiment, because at the Shado-pan Monastery, snow covers everything, the only vegetation—trees, and grasses, are completely different from those in Durotar.

During the attack on the monastery "the Grove of Falling Blossoms"[118] is mentioned as the starting place of the attack since the invaders are coming from the sea. The game does not include this particular invasion, the dungeon starts from inland and ends in the mentioned grove.

Both the game and the novel describe the Shado-pan Monastery and the Temple of the White Tiger as important settings, however, each medium does so in a completely different way. The structures are not given as much attention in the game as a whole, their importance is greater for the sole zone of Kun-lai Summit. Otherwise, they share their significance and relevance with other structures throughout the continent of Pandaria and its parts whose lore is not in the novel. The game contains countless more details than are described in the book,

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[116] Blizzard Entertainment. World of Warcraft: Mists of Pandaria. Blizzard Entertainment. PC. 2012.

[117] Stackpole, *Vol'jin: Shadows of the Horde*, 21.

[118] Stackpole, *Vol'jin: Shadows of the Horde*, 98.

but some information is exclusive to the book only, such as some interiors that are impossible to access in the game outside of the dungeons.

The Temple of the White Tiger is described differently in the book (greenery, habitable rooms) than in the game (snow, lack of rooms). In the book, a pivotal attack occurs at the monastery, a narrative event absent in the game but tangentially experienced within a dungeon setting, as discussed in the previous chapter.

A comparison of the maps of the Vale of Eternal Blossoms highlights the inherent advantage of transmedia storytelling. While the book primarily depicts the effects of the Sha at the character level, the game provides a more immersive portrayal by showcasing the devastated environment. This stark contrast in representation accentuates the dramatic impact of Sha's destructive power, underscoring the efficacy of conveying narrative elements through multiple media platforms.

The fact that it is possible to see from one zone to another gives the plot in the book more coherence than in the game where each zone is to some extent autonomous and part of a larger unit. The zones in the game are not as interlinked.

Land and Surroundings

While the book contains an abundance of interior scenes, in the game they account for a minimal part of the narrative. The vast majority of the game takes place in external spaces.

While at the Shado-pan monastery, Vol'jin learns about the Pandaren and their land, from the monastery grounds he scans all the land he can; "Had the troll been pressed before to pick a color to define Pandaria, it would have been green. So many shades of green, from the light buds of new grasses to the deep emerald of forests; the continent was green. But here, in the Vale of Eternal Blossoms, green gave way to gold and red. These were not the colors of autumn—though in places they came close—but the exploding hues of plants in full flower. They were in their glory, springtime frozen in a world that did not age. The diffuse light cast no sharp shadows, and what little moved below did so with a dreamlike, languid quality. The vale looked the way it felt to stretch luxuriously and long upon waking. From the heights, they could see some buildings but had no clue as to who lived there or maintained them. Their antiquity could not be disputed, but vegetation had not risen up to consume them. The vale's timelessness preserved them."[119] This scene has a great meaning for

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[119] Stackpole, *Vol'jin: Shadows of the Horde*, 67.

world-building in the novel, however is not transferable to the game, because the monastery is at the very north of Pandaria, which means it is not possible to see that far south. The novel conveys the overall look of Pandaria, which is dominated by green color, yet Kun-lai Summit is mostly deep brown and orange, and the Vale of Eternal Blossoms is mostly yellow and orange. There is one more similar scene which can be replicated in the game; "He opened his arms to take in the vista of the narrow valley with steep mountainsides. Below, a stream snaked along, blue where the sun could not touch it, silver where it did. Green, so much green and very deep, along with the rich brown of cultivated fields, screamed fertility. Even the way the buildings had been constructed into the landscape, adding to it without exploiting it, felt incredibly right."[120] It also could not be applied to Kun-lai Summit and the Vale of Eternal Blossoms but to the Vale and Valley of the Four Winds. The description of the view is extremely accurate.

Figure 6: Pandaria[121]

The inclusion of maps holds significance, particularly as the book commences with a depiction of the map in *Figure 2*, sourced from the game. However, despite the identical utilization of this map in both media, it does not seamlessly align with the narrative

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[120] Stackpole, *Vol'jin: Shadows of the Horde*, 28.
[121] Blizzard Entertainment. World of Warcraft: Mists of Pandaria. Blizzard Entertainment. PC. 2012.

trajectory. Notably, the positioning of the Isle of Thunder differs significantly between the book and the game, thereby creating a disjuncture between the spatial representation and the plotline.

Zouchin is the strategic settlement, through which the Zandalari were supposed to attack the Monastery, described as; "nestled between cliffs and the sea"[122] and "A small fishing village with nothing of substance or value save a decent harbor. Once they'd landed and secured the harbor, they'd plunge inland."[123] Zouchin is indeed separated from inland by cliffs, however, it has no harbor, only a beach. "Chen brought the small fishing boat into a tiny cove beneath the Peak of Serenity's stone spire."[124] The only coves are at Zouchin, closer to the Monastery are not any coves, and the mountains are so high that going there by boat and then climbing the mountains would not be productive at all in the game, because in this part of Kun-lai Summit is the biggest superelevation of all Pandaria, with the highest peaks being in the north.

The Isle of Thunder is also misplaced in the game, in the novel it is described to be in the northeast, whereas in the game it is in the northwest; "Taran Zhu touched the map near the northeast corner. An irregular island slowly appeared, as if the mists that hid it had evaporated. "The Isle of Thunder."[125] The isle is described as having a "jagged coastline,"[126] which accurately reflects the game."The lightning revealed a soggy, swampy landscape in which every patch of dry ground featured a troop tent or pavilion."[127] The Isle is truly waterlogged, due to the constant state of stormy weather.

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[122] Stackpole, *Vol'jin: Shadows of the Horde*, 28.
[123] Stackpole, *Vol'jin: Shadows of the Horde*, 34.
[124] Stackpole, *Vol'jin: Shadows of the Horde*, 89.
[125] Stackpole, *Vol'jin: Shadows of the Horde*, 40.
[126] Stackpole, *Vol'jin: Shadows of the Horde*, 39.
[127] Stackpole, *Vol'jin: Shadows of the Horde*, 80.

Figure 7: Isle of Thunder[128]

Buildings on the Isle of Thunder are described through Khal'ak's perspective; "settlement that had been humbled by age,"[129] with a brief mention of the harbor: "the ships rode the harbor's dark green surface."[130] The terrain of the island rises towards its tip, where the palace stands; "Khal'ak pointed back toward the palace hidden in the island's interior."[131] The palace also serves as a raid (battle scenario, larger scale than dungeon) location for players.

Several brief mentions of details and information that are not further embedded in the text or do not further develop the story contribute to the most accurate rendering of the landscape and the setting. Such mentions include; "That's our objective. The Serpent's Heart,"[132] monumental structure in the Jade Forest which was assaulted in the game. Another detail is the description of local flora; "'yellow flowers with little red runners,' 'Spring's promise,' 'There's a similar flower in Durotar, which grows up after rain. They call it heart's

[128] Blizzard Entertainment. World of Warcraft: Mists of Pandaria. Blizzard Entertainment. PC. 2012.

[129] Stackpole, *Vol'jin: Shadows of the Horde*, 33.

[130] Stackpole, *Vol'jin: Shadows of the Horde*, 33.

[131] Stackpole, *Vol'jin: Shadows of the Horde*, 33.

[132] Stackpole, *Vol'jin: Shadows of the Horde*, 24.

ease.'"[133] There is no such collectible flower (players may learn professions such as herbalism, where the objective is to collect certain flowers and weeds) in Durotar or Kun-lai Summit, which is however commonly overgrown with yellow grasses and weeds. Khal'ak mentions the step count while on the Isle of Thunder; "The steps numbered at seventeen. She did not understand the significance of this for the mogu, but then she did not have to understand"[134] Interesting detail, however, the game does not reflect it, all steps are even numbers, most commonly twenty.

Transmediality

Similar to the preliminary conclusions of the preceding analysis, the descriptions in the book are different from the visual aspect of the game. The biggest difference is the position of Zouchin and Isle of Thunder on the map. The description of the Isle of Thunder is not as thorough in the novel, so it reflects the game quite well. The player perceives the outdoor portion of the game the most, because of spending the most time traveling the land and completing quests. The book reflects rather the social aspect of the story, focusing on the characters and their locations. The more important the characters the more important places they are at—it makes all the sense that the majority of the novel takes place in the Monastery or the Temple, when the characters are trying to deflect an invasion, they have to be at their most strategic leadership hubs to do so, even though those very hubs are among the objectives of the invasion. Through the lens of transmediality, both the book and the game effectively evoke parallel sensations associated with the described environment. While the book emphasizes the significance of verdant landscapes in its descriptive passages, despite their absence in the book's delineated zones, such lush greenery is abundantly present within the game. Consequently, Vol'jin's sentiments regarding Pandaria resonate with those experienced by players, thereby facilitating a shared emotional connection to the depicted world.

Applying Altman's *Theory of Narrative*

In this segment of the analysis, attention will be directed toward the terminology elucidated by Altman, as outlined in the theoretical framework. Emphasizing Altman's assertion that characters serve as the primary conveyors of the plot, the analysis will delve into their dominant role within the narrative structure.

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[133] Stackpole, *Vol'jin: Shadows of the Horde*, 27.
[134] Stackpole, *Vol'jin: Shadows of the Horde*, 33.

Narrative Material

  The chapter Narrative Material in the theoretical part describes the narrative as predominantly action-oriented, characters themselves do not produce the narrative, until they perform a certain action. Narrative is formed by combining characters and actions. Narratives are common representations of rise and fall, loss and recovery, and desire and acquisition. In order to identify those pairs in the novel and the game, this chapter will focus on the description and development of the characters across the given media.

  In this subchapter, individual characters from the book will undergo analysis, followed by a subsequent examination of characters from the game in the ensuing subchapter in order to analyze them from the point of view of transmediality. Similar to the condensed nature of the Plot overview, this chapter is saturated with details essential for the forthcoming transmedial analysis of characters.

Novel

When reading the novel, the reader knows exactly how many characters there are, and he knows exactly how important a character is by the amount of time spent on the character. There are also background characters who are crucial to the plot, but not so important from the reader's perspective, because the reader has no way of forming any deeper relationship with them (based on the little time he spends with them). In contrast, characters that are given more space are important to the player, they form a relationship with them or an opinion about them. These opinions and relationships with the characters are then transferred from the book to the game, or vice versa.

  In the book are three main characters; Tyrathan Khort, Chen Stormstout, and Vol'jin. Supporting characters are Li Li, Yalia Sagewhisper, Taran Zhu, Bwonsamdi, Khal'ak, Vilnak'dor, and Warlord Kao. More than twenty characters are only mentioned, among which is Garrosh Hellscream, however, they still are central to the big picture plot and lore of the game, and the *WoW* universe.

  Vol'jin is characterized as a leader who is not driven by personal ambition but rather by a desire to secure a homeland for his people. He was betrayed by some of his Horde allies who attempted to assassinate him. The attack was orchestrated by Garrosh Hellscream, who perceives Vol'jin as a threat to his own power. Following this betrayal, Vol'jin forms new acquaintances with Tran Zhu and Tyrathon Khort. Vol'jin is healed by the Pandaren, embracing his role as a shadowhunter while being watched by Taran Zhu.

Vol'jin initially sees himself as superior to Tyrathan but later fights alongside him, showing his stubbornness and thirst for knowledge. His commitment to doing what's right reflects his upbringing, prioritizing leadership over tradition. Sparked by a vision, Vol'jin defends Pandaria against the Zandalari, feeling most alive in battle despite losing his troll voice to an assassination attempt. He chooses to keep his new voice, defending the Shado-Pan and recognizing their unity akin to the Horde's. Before the final battle, he symbolically shaves his head. His actions earn his father's pride, showcasing his valor in defending the Peak of Serenity alongside Pandaria's people.

Brewmaster Chen Stormstout, hailing from the Wandering Isle along with Li Li, harbors a strong curiosity about Pandaria. He shows protective patience towards Li Li but impatience when it comes to beer. Taking charge, he repairs their family brewery and yearns to settle in Pandaria. Chen's affection for Yalia Sagewhisper grows as he finds a sense of home in Pandaria, deepening their bond throughout the novel. Tyrathan acknowledges Chen's ability to uplift others. Ultimately, both Chen and Yalia express a desire for a lifelong commitment, cementing their emotional bond.

Li Li, though her age remains unspecified, exhibits traits of youth through her high activity level and impatience, particularly evident in her teasing of Uncle Chen. Despite this, her courage and martial arts prowess, noted by Chen, contradict her youthful demeanor. After a storm endangers Tyrathan and damages Zouchin, Li Li assists villagers in rebuilding, demonstrating resourcefulness and a willingness to aid in recovery.

Tyrathan, initially in deep sorrow, shares physical injuries akin to Vol'jin's, notably on his leg from battling in the Jade Forest to aid Pandaria. Despite not fitting the typical warrior mold, he excels in archery. His injury causes a limp, which vanishes only in combat. Once able to wield the Holy Light, he now renounces belief in it. Both Tyrathan and Vol'jin were transformed by near-death experiences. Refusing to tally kills, Tyrathan finds it dehumanizing and disrespectful. Vol'jin's magical intervention in the final battle saved Tyrathan from certain death.

Taran Zhu fills the role of the monastery's master and wishes for Vol'jin and Tyrathan to learn pandaren customs and philosophy. He is reserved and calculating in the presence of others and shows his emotions only selectively. While not familiar with the nuances of warfare, Taran Zhu understands the importance of knowledge as a form of power.

Yalia is depicted as a reserved, wise, and patient character, coming from Zouchin. Her backstory reveals that after leaving Zouchin, Taran Zhu changed her name, resulting in her family's unawareness of her being alive. This separation from her family contributes to her

difficulty in forming a closer relationship with Chen. Over the course of the narrative, however, Yalia gradually opens up to Chen and eventually confesses her love for him at the end of the book.

Bwonsamdi is portrayed as having a slightly mischievous attitude, though he poses moral questions to Vol'jin. When the final battle is about to begin, Vol'jin sends him the thought of sending him souls—he respects traditions and worship of the loa. Bwonsamdi guarded Vol'jin's troll essence after Vol'jin gave it up saying he was not a troll. During the battle, Bwonsamdi gave it back to him in the form of a black pearl.

Khal'ak, absent from the game, exemplifies the importance of community among trolls, sometimes leading to extremes like blind worship. Initially misinformed, she learns of the Pandaren's military strength, contrary to her prior beliefs. The Zandalari removed the Thunder King from his tomb. Under her leadership, a strict hierarchy prevails, devoid of camaraderie. Historically, the Zandalari, once enslaved by the mogu, overthrew them and formed alliances with the Amani. Khal'ak captured Vol'jin and tried to persuade him to work with her.

Other minor characters are Vilnak'dor and Warlord Kao. Both characters exist in the game but are not introduced in Pandaria yet, only in a later expansion.

Game

Characters prominent in the game are the characters with whom the player interacts during the quests, or characters whose conversations the player witnesses during quests. There are characters important for the lore but also for the game as a whole. From a gameplay perspective, the characters with whom the player interacts directly or at least is in their proximity are more important to the player (and not necessarily to the grand scheme plot). Some characters that are key to the lore the player may not even encounter in the game. The characters important to the game are discussed from the player's point of view, compared to the characters that influence the plot and form the main conflicts.

After a naval battle between the Horde and the Alliance, the two factions were washed up on the shores of Pandaria. This conflict, stemming from Horde's actions ordered by Garrosh Hellscream, led to tensions between the factions. The Mogu, aided by the Zandalari Trolls, posed a threat to Pandaria, with the Shado-pan defending against their resurgence under Lei Shen, the Thunder King. Hellscream's pursuit of power resulted in the desecration of the Vale of Eternal Blossoms, leading to further conflict. Vol'jin and the Darkspear Trolls faced opposition in Orgrimmar and were declared traitors by Hellscream,

who later turned against the Horde entirely. Garrosh faced trial for his war crimes following these events.

The previous paragraph describes the general plot of the *Mists of Pandaria,* however as mentioned at the beginning of the analysis, the plot of the novel does not include the majority of the plot the game does. The core plot of the expansion is not foregrounded as the synapsis constructed above would suggest. The majority of the quests revolve around local conflicts.

In the expansion pack the player gradually progresses through the zones in a semi-rigid order from east to west. The Jade Forest is the starting zone, where the player is introduced to the following characters as quest givers: Taran Zhu, Lorewalker Cho, Anduin Wrynn, Vol'jin, and Admiral Taylor (there are many more quest givers, however only those are the most prominent ones from the player's perspective). From the Jade Forest, the player continues to the Valley of the Four Winds, where they meet Mudmug, Li Li, Chen Stormstout, and the farmer families. Next, the player continues to the Krasarang Wilds, where the hozen Ken Ken is the main figure. Continuing to the north is Kul-lai Summit, where now characters are the grummles, brewmasters, and new farmers. To the west is zone Dread Wastes, with the race of the Klaxxi. The final continental zone is the Towlong Steppes, with Yalia Sagewhisper. On the Isle of Thunder, the player is given quests by Jaina Proudmore and Taran Zhu. The zones contain more characters than the just listed, for example, Taran Zhu appears as part of quests in the Jade Forest, Kun-lai Summit, Isle of Thunder, but mostly in Towlong Steppes.

The gradual introduction of characters to the player is important because it offers insight into the alignment of character placement between the game and the book. This comparison serves as a valuable aspect of transmedia analysis, highlighting potential inconsistencies or matches in character placement across media. Concerning the characters, I also provide information regarding the number of quests in which they are involved, offering an indication of their involvement relative to the total number of quests available, which amounts to 1840.

Taran Zhu starts eight quests, ends nine quests, and both starts and ends ten quests, primarily centered in Towlong Steppes, despite his prominence in Kun-lai Summit within the book. These quests entail combating sha, aiding the Shado-pan against the yaungol and mantid threats. The singular event shared between the book and the game is the assault on Zouchin, while the game further includes conflicts with the yaungol and mantid, by participating in these conflicts the player is brought closer to the attack on the Monastery

from the book. A direct convergence between the novel and game occurs when Taran Zhu dispatches monks to assess storm damage in the south, west, and east[135]—excluding the north due to the monastery's location. In the game, five characters seek the Hidden Master, with one proposing a split following the four winds, guiding players to respective directions through subsequent quests.

Chen Stormstout initiates six quests, concludes three quests, and both commences and concludes thirteen quests overall. Upon encountering the player in the Valley of Four Winds, Chen introduces himself and Li Li as newcomers to Pandaria, embarking on a journey with an unknown destination (quest: "Chen and Li Li"[136]). As they progress, Chen discovers their ancestral brewery, unaware of its significance in Pandaria. His quest for familial connection prompts a traversal through Pandaria, aiding its denizens along the path, repairing infrastructure and tending to agricultural tasks. Players mirror this progression through analogous quests within the game.

Li Li initiates one quest, concludes three, and both starts and finishes five quests exclusively within the Valley of Four Winds. However, her involvement in the novel extends beyond this area, including Zouchin and Kun-lai Summit, where she undertakes responsibilities such as village rearing and carpentry supervision.[137] While in the novel Li Li predominantly supports Chen and aids in various tasks, her role in the game is central to the Valley of Four Winds.

Mudmug is actively engaged in eight quests, serving as an interactive character akin to Chen and Li Li, imparting knowledge of Pandaren customs to the player. Tasks such as weeding and vegetable cultivation on his farm mirror activities mentioned in the novel. Through these quests, players emulate Chen's journey to forge connections and gain recognition among the Pandaren. Additionally, players undertake quests from farmer families in the Valley of Four Winds and interact with brewmasters in the Kun-lai Summit, following a similar trajectory to Chen's experiences.

In Binan Village, the player encounters the critically injured Vol'jin, prompting Chen to enlist their help in his recovery. In a letter addressed to the player, Vol'jin reveals Garrosh's assassination attempt and underscores the significance of friendship with the player, Chen, and Thrall. Escorted to the Shado-pan Monastery for healing, Vol'jin urges the player to monitor Garrosh's actions. Later, in a fleeting moment of consciousness, Vol'jin directs the

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[135] Stackpole, *Vol'jin: Shadows of the Horde*, 26.
[136] "Chen and Li Li."
[137] Stackpole, *Vol'jin: Shadows of the Horde*, 28.

player to seek Thrall, providing a hearthstone as a means of communication. Teleported to Durotar, the player finds Thrall who interprets the hearthstone as a distress signal, leading to a joint effort to safeguard the Darkspears at the occupied Echo Isles, covertly defying Garrosh's rule.

Yalia Sagewhisper offers a limited number of quests, all situated within Towlong Steppes, diverging from her predominant depiction in the novel set in Kun-lai Summit. In the game, Yalia is positioned in Towlong Steppes as a member of the Shado-pan Assault force, dedicated to thwarting the Thunder King's influence. In this capacity, she collaborates with the player and Taran Zhu to achieve their objectives.

Admiral Taylor is encountered by the player as an incapacitated captive of the Hozen. Upon his liberation and recovery, he forges an alliance with the Jinyu, in response to the Horde's alignment with the Hozen. The escalating conflict between these factions culminates in the battle at Serpent's Heart. Taylor's role and interactions are parallel to those of Tyrathan in the book, as Tyrathan is absent from the game.

While the novel briefly mentions the Hozen and Grummels, they play a more significant role in the game, particularly with characters like Ken-Ken. Conversely, the Mantid, absent from the book entirely, are featured prominently in the game. The relationship to them is similar to that of the Yaungol, the Pandaren face an invasion and the player helps with deflecting them.

In the game, there is comparatively limited interaction with characters, resulting in a reduced familiarity with them. However, the concept of agency within the game environment serves to immerse the player to a degree comparable to the sense of awareness experienced through engagement with the narrative in the book.

Transmediality

The characters' roles diverge between the two platforms, exemplified by Vol'jin. While the book predominantly centers on him, his presence in the game is minimal. This disparity highlights how the game provides additional narrative threads beyond the book's scope. Consequently, the sequence of consumption influences one's perception and expectations. Readers gain insights into Pandaria from the book, shaping their gameplay experience, and vice versa. Moreover, the book delves deeply into character personalities and relationships, fostering reader engagement. For instance, Chen and Li Li's familial and communal ties differ between the two media. In the book, they know about their relatives in Pandaria, whereas in the play it comes as a surprise to Chen. Furthermore, the absence of a relationship between

Chen and Yalia in the game contrast with the book. Relationships receive less emphasis in the game overall. Notably, both media feature an Alliance representative—Tyrathan in the book and Admiral Taylor in the game. While Tyrathan plays a significant role in the book, forming a crucial bond with Vol'jin, Admiral Taylor lacks centrality in the game and shares no close ties with Horde members.

In the book, Taran Zhu and Yalia assume more significant roles compared to their portrayal in the game. They wield political influence, overseeing administrative affairs and strategic planning. Taran Zhu's distrust of both the Horde and the Alliance persists in both media, reflecting concerns about their potential impact on Pandaria's stability.

Khal'ak's importance lies in her representation of troll culture and mentality, albeit diverging from Vol'jin's perspective. This contrast illuminates differing ideologies within the troll race, a theme more pronounced in the game's upcoming expansions. Conversely, Mudmug in the game effectively embodies the agrarian lifestyle depicted in the book. Interacting with him offers players a similar educational experience regarding Pandaria, akin to narratives featuring Vol'jin or Chen.

The book introduces unfamiliar characters initially, while the game begins with familiar characters, gradually introducing new ones as the story progresses. In the game, the player's character initially lacks relationships with others and gradually forms them throughout the gameplay. However, these relationships are more reflective of the player's influence rather than intrinsic to the character, leading to a somewhat illusory sense of agency. Despite having relatively few quests compared to the total available in Pandaria, the characters in the game remain significant to the overall narrative.

The Pandaren transition from an enigmatic race to a familiar one whose traits are recognizable to the player, whether derived from the book or the game. However, races such as the Mogu, Grummels, Mantid, and Jinyu receive comparatively less attention, particularly in the book. As the game's narrative unfolds, these races are progressively integrated, allowing players to acquaint themselves with their unique characteristics and attributes.

The portrayal of characters diverges between the Warcraft book and game, showcasing the expansive narrative landscape of the franchise. While the game introduces additional storylines and characters beyond the book's scope, the book delves deeper into character depth and relationships, fostering reader engagement. Disparities in character roles, such as those of Tyrathan and Admiral Taylor, highlight distinct storytelling approaches in each medium. Furthermore, characters like Taran Zhu and Yalia assume more significant roles in the book, reflecting a deeper exploration of political dynamics. Conversely,

characters like Khal'ak and Mudmug offer contrasting perspectives, illustrating diverse ideologies within the Warcraft universe. Overall, the convergence of narrative elements across media enhances the richness and complexity of the Warcraft narrative, providing players and readers with an immersive experience.

Narrational Activity

As mentioned in the theoretical part, Altman defined two types of narratives, differing in framing. The first type is "some" narrative, which is part of a story that does not have closure (it has a beginning, middle, but no end), and "a" narrative, which has closure (beginning, middle, and end are all present). In this subchapter, these terms will be applied to the *WoW* storytelling.

Novel

'Some' narrative

Literary fiction is a linear medium where the beginning, the end, and the in-between is clearly predetermined and the reader has no control over the order in which the parts are arranged. the scope of the narrative units is much smaller compared to the game because the scope of the book is also much more limited, hence it is only logical that most of the narrative units presented in the book will have closure, and not be left unresolved and open.

The extensive linearity is not favorable for pieces of storyline with no closure, because they have to be built on top of each other to a certain extent, unlike in a game, where a lot of them can be happening all at once. An example from the book might be Chen and Yalia. During the course of the reading, this framing looks like it will have a definitive ending as well, but that does not happen. It only has the beginning and the middle, the ending is not definite or otherwise closed—which in itself gives the feeling of an ending because it foreshadows a continuation in another expansion.

A romantic relationship forms between Chen and Yalia in the book. Gradually they get closer and trust each other more. The gradual escalation builds a sense of an impending climax that doesn't exactly happen. They admit their love, and their desire to spend their lives together, but their paths diverge as Chen goes to help with the Darkspear Rebellion and Yalia waits for him in Pandaria.

'A' narrative

There is no narrator in the book, it is the construction of certain segments that is disembodied to such an extent that, although it does not introduce the narrator, it distances the reader from the text, which has the same effect as if the narrator were present. The main storyline is told through the eyes of the main characters who experience it most.

The storyline regarding Vol'jin is more coherent as it stretches throughout the book. The conflict arises from Garrosh's attempted murder of the Vol'jin, but he survives. side by side, he and Tyrathan heal at the Shado-pan monastery, and together they overcome their mutual prejudices due to the conflict between the alliance and the horde. They overcome them by joining forces against a common enemy when they prevent the invasion of Pandaria. By the end of the book, Vol'jin has recovered and has a better idea of his identity and mission. But the initial conflict with Garrosh is not resolved, which could make this example "some" narrative, however, the conflict with Garrosh spans across a greater segment of time, so it does not have to be resolved quickly.

Game

'Some' narrative

The game is more extensive in terms of its plot, which can be evident in the number of storylines in each area. The individual storylines, as (in)coherent units, carry the main storyline, but not necessarily all of them.

An example of this is one area that is only laced, not permeated, with the main storyline. The most common example is plot lines related to the main storyline but also local conflicts that may have nothing to do with the storyline. The player is exposed to them because of a seemingly randomly shared location.

For instance, consider the storyline of "The Yak Wash,"[138] wherein the Muskpaw ranch falls under the control of the Ordo faction. In response, players engage in combat against the Ordo, retrieve escaped yaks, and subsequently participate in the mundane task of washing them. This narrative thread, while not directly integral to the main storyline, offers a glimpse into the localized conflicts and everyday tasks within the game world. Through such diversions, players gain a more comprehensive understanding of the intricacies of the game universe, enriching their overall gameplay experience.

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[138] "The Yak Wash."

The main storyline of the book does not coincide with the main storyline of the game. Nor could it, because the two media cannot communicate the same thing in two different scopes; this would inevitably lead to the omission of much additional and important information in the medium with the smaller scope.

The main conflicts that are depicted in the game always involve the main characters. There is a kind of timeless conflict and a conflict that only concerns a period of time that is defined by the scope of the expansion. Timeless conflicts can be more or less local, and some of them may end during one or another expansion, or new ones may arise. Here is an example of an alliance-horde conflict—it is timeless, but the conflict between Voj'jin and Tyrathan, which is conditioned by this feud, ends during the time period of the expansion (this is an example from the book, as it is not exactly the case in the game).

Narrative Drive

The narrative drive is not included directly in the medium, but rather outside of the medium and will change depending on the different people who interact with the medium.

The uniform binding element of the novel is storytelling, focusing on conflicts, characters, their relationships, and visual aspects such as the setting. Because the book is more linear, it is simpler to keep the reader's attention, because the reader doesn't have to decide which direction the story will progress—that is already decided for them. The story may branch off in different directions, or different timelines may intertwine and alternate, but the reader has no active part in the process, just follows that scripted path through the plot.

Maintaining attention also depends on the reader's emotions—for example, anticipation, fear, joy, satisfaction... A text that neither enriches the reader in terms of knowledge nor evokes emotion has a much thinner chance of engagement compared to texts that do fulfill those criteria.

The book has an advantage in that, whether it is printed or digital, the reader knows exactly how far he or she is. This linear orientation can add to the narrative drive. The game is less linear and therefore the orientation of the content is more difficult.

In the game, the narrative drive is closely tied to the plot and storytelling (communicated mainly via quests and dialogues). Without its narrative aspect, the game is only an open world that could be explored and wandered through, but with no message, conflict, or interactive characters. This means that the narrative drives fades or gets entirely

lost whenever the player prioritizes different activities over questing, such as gathering resources.

The game has a significant advantage in engaging the player over the book because it engages multiple senses and thus sustains attention through several means at once. Compared to the book, the visuality of the game (which gives less scope for imagination), and its soundtrack and noises influence the player.

In the book, the reader's involvement is carried out mainly via immersion through the characters and relating to the characters. The reader learns more about the characters through observations of other characters and through the characters' own thoughts. In the game, this is a false sense of agency, where the player is not as close to the characters and their personalities and thoughts as in the book, but through completing quests the player has a sense of conscious decision-making about the future course of the game. This is real in some minor instances, such as prioritizing one storyline over another, but in other instances, it is an illusion, as in a book where it is clear in advance what the reader is to expect—the order of minor or isolated events in the game may change only slightly, or it is possible to omit certain parts altogether.

Following Unit

As stated in the theoretical section Altman describes the following unit as a section where there is an undivided focus on a single character. The borders of those sections may be fuzzy and dependent on the reader.

The book always focuses on one or more characters. There is no clear narrator in the book, so it is always based on a character. In some sections of the book, the following changes to point of view and then vice versa, such as at the beginning of the book, where the following is focused on Vol'jin.

The entire second chapter focuses on Vol'jin, the attention shifts from him only minimally when other characters speak. The following is in the third person until Vol'jin has a vision. At that point, the main focus is no longer Vol'jin but the perception of the environment through him, with descriptions of how the sensations from the vision affect him and how he moves through the environment and what he sees. The vision shifted to a different location in the same setting and Vol'jin had a conversation with Bwonsamdi, which ended with Vol'jin awakening from the vision.

Upon awakening, the focus is on the Vol'jin and his helpless body. Then, as a partial explanation, the focus shifts to Garrosh and how he brought Vol'jin to Pandaria—this is a two-paragraph matter. The rest of the chapter takes place in the past, explaining how Vol'jin was wounded by Garrosh's allies and how they caused his serious injuries and nearly killed him.

The game is entirely point of view because the player can only experience it through his characters, who are secondary in the game's plot. The character is thus one absolutely stable following unit, from which attention is only removed during cinematics—and only some of them.

The equivalent of the plot of the second chapter is processed in the game through quests and one scenario. From the book, the reader knows that Vol'jin is unconscious and has visions. In the game, the player only sees that he is unconscious. In a series of quests, the player helps Chen Stormstout to heal Vol'jin. In the game, Vol'jin is a very important character, which makes it easier to retain focus on accepting and completing quests, even if the quests do not necessarily involve Vol'jin directly. This way, when handling some local conflict with characters the player does not know yet, it is easier to detach from the following and redirect attention to completing quests, which are always several in sequence. In the case of Vol'jin, the player has to kill *Needle Sprites*[139] and collect ten *Sturdy Needles*[140] for acupuncture for Vol'jin—this is directly related to him, but for lengthier quests, it is natural to focus more on the quest's progress and, for example, collecting the necessary items and finding them, than on the plot that is overarching the quest.

Modulations

As mentioned in the theoretical part of this thesis metonymic modulations are concerned with characters meeting, either with visual contact or without. This type of modulation is the most frequent in the book and in the game because, as already mentioned, the characters are the conveyors of the plot. Examples of metonymic modulation through direct visual contact from the book include: "he stood in a courtyard with thousands of other trolls."[141] Examples from

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[139] Blizzard Entertainment. World of Warcraft: Mists of Pandaria. Blizzard Entertainment. PC. 2012.
[140] Blizzard Entertainment. World of Warcraft: Mists of Pandaria. Blizzard Entertainment. PC. 2012.
[141] Stackpole, *Vol'jin: Shadows of the Horde*, 7.

the book where there is no visual contact are for example: "Vol'jin recognized his father's voice [...] He tried to turn his head in the direction [...] He saw his father…"[142]

Altman describes metaphoric modulation as a narrator stepping in and pointing out some similarities between the characters, which shifts attention to the next following unit. There is no narrator in the book or the game, making this the primary reason why this modulation is not common. It would not even work in the game, because the following unit is the player who cannot switch abruptly to another location (the only option would be using a portal, but that still does not shift attention to the next following unit, since the main following unit, the player, is still present).

Hyperbolic modulations are more frequent in the game because the player moves between quests without the involvement of the narrator (who is not in the game) and often without any justifications. Explanation is either not needed because the quests are not related at all, or they are logically connected to one another.

In the book, the most prominent examples of this modulation are the endings and beginnings of chapters, where one chapter ends and with it the focus on the featured character. The next chapter may then begin with a different character in a different place. As in the second chapter ends with Vol'jin being injured in the cave, and the third chapter begins with Chen in the Shado-pan Monastery.

Myth

As mentioned in the theoretical part, the mythical structure lends the *WoW* universe character and coherency. In the following subchapters will be discussed the mythical nature of *WoW* along with cosmology and archetypes, such as the epic hero quest.

Mythical structures

Part of mythical structures is the usage of preexisting mythological cosmologies, which follow traditions of certain cultures. In the case of Mists of Pandaria (the novel and the game), several instances of this are clearly visible.

The frequent mythical theme is fertility and divine purity, which can be seen in the Vale of Eternal Blossoms. The Vale is a lush and mystical sacred site. As its name suggests the seasons never change, which evokes eternal beauty and youth. The Vale is also abundant with ancient magic, which balances or contracts nature.

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[142] Stackpole, *Vol'jin: Shadows of the Horde*, 7.

The lore is concerned with the conflict between the Sha, embodiments of negative emotions, and the August Celestials, who are spirit beings maintaining balance in Pandaria. Chi-Ji is the spirit of hope, Niuzao is the spirit of fortitude, Xuen is the spirit of strength, and Yu'lon is the spirit of wisdom. The sha can manifest as doubt, despair, fear, hatred, or anger. The concept of celestial beings retaining balance is present in various mythological traditions such as the Greek Titans or the Norse Æsir and Vanir.

Another similarity to the Greek Titans are the Mogu, ancient warlords of Pandaria. The Mogu are portrayed as powerful beings who once ruled over the land with an iron fist, shaping its landscape and civilizations.

Cosmology

The Pandaren possess a philosophical outlook on life which is deeply rooted in the cosmological forces of their world. Their cultural values and traditions are shaped by the interconnectedness of elemental energies, such as earth, fire, water, and air. This cosmological framework influences their worldview and guides their actions, as they strive to maintain harmony with nature and honor the spirits that inhabit their land. The Pandaren's adherence to these cosmic principles is reflected in their daily lives, rituals, and societal structures. This aspect is made more noticeable in the book, as in the Pandaren philosophy of huojin and tushui. "Tushui is balanced by Huojin. That's more impulsive, kind of kill them first, sort the hides out later. Like Garrosh deciding to kill you. Very Hordish thing to do these days. Not what the Alliance normally does."[143] The Huojin, represented by the red crane, value traits such as passion, action, and strength, along with taking decisive action to achieve their goals. The Tushui, represented by the white tiger, value traits such as wisdom, patience, and contemplation. They believe in discipline and seeking inner balance. In the book, the characters do not choose in which of these philosophies they belong, it is determined by their nature and characteristics. The opposing forces represent the Alliance (tushui) and the Horde (huojin). In the game, the players are given a choice to align themselves with either of the factions. By choosing a faction, players express their own personal philosophy and values, reflecting the broader themes of balance and harmony within Pandaren culture. The player choice is binary, however the philosophy is not: "Chen liked to think of himself as being firmly in the middle. He mixed and matched both Huojin and Tushui or so he told himself."[144]

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[143] Stackpole, *Vol'jin: Shadows of the Horde*, 15.
[144] Stackpole, *Vol'jin: Shadows of the Horde*, 5.

Vale of Eternal Blossoms is also under the direct influence of cosmology. The region is imbued with cosmic energies that sustain its vibrant flora and fauna. However, when the Vale falls under the influence of the Sha (example from the game), its once idyllic landscape is corrupted, illustrating how cosmological forces can directly impact the state of affairs in the fictional world. The restoration of the Vale serves as a quest to restore balance and reclaim the harmony that was disrupted by cosmic turmoil.

Powerful beings in cosmology are the loa, spirits worshiped by the trolls. They are the subject of considerable importance in the book. The Loa represent different aspects of nature, spirituality, and power, embodying cosmic forces that influence the lives and destinies of the trolls. Through his interactions with the Loa, Vol'jin gains insights into the larger cosmological order. During some of these interactions, Vol'jin is unconscious or near the realm of the dead.

Throughout the novel, Vol'jin crosses the boundary between the physical world and the spirit world, inhabited by the souls of dead beings and their ruler Bwonsamdi. The spirit world is depicted as a dimension used for shamanistic rituals and divination, which allows communication with the spirits of ancestors. Bwonsamdi's governing of the spirit realm, gives him insight into the cosmological order, sometimes he would share those insights, predicting the future: "He would march straight into the terrible fate Bwonsamdi foresaw..."[145] Accompanying those predictions and inner turmoil are the changing states of weather: "The storm broke along with Tyrathan's fever, causing Chen to wonder if the weather wasn't somehow supernatural in nature."[146] The usage of pathetic fallacy deepens the narrative, creating an immersive storytelling experience.

Epic Hero Quest
The most visible aspect of the epic hero quest is the Alliance-Horde conflict (which is present in the entirety of the *WoW* universe). Players must contend with opposing forces while pursuing their objectives, such as facing off against hostile NPCs, and environments. The rivalry between the factions adds layers of complexity to the hero's journey, as they must navigate political intrigue, wartime strategies, and moral dilemmas. As in the following quote: "Out in the world, in the lands of Azeroth, finding distraction had been easy. There

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[145] Stackpole, *Vol'jin: Shadows of the Horde*, 7.
[146] Stackpole, *Vol'jin: Shadows of the Horde*, 26.

was always someone who didn't like you, or a hungry creature that wanted to eat you—and discouraging both did wonders to occupy an idle mind."[147]

An example of a hostile environment and overcoming obstacles (in this case, physical pain and limits) is Tyrathan's healing process. Tyrtahan was limping on his left leg and each step caused him pain, however: "each day, as the sun slowly crept over the horizon, the man would head out and up the trail toward the mountain summit above them."[148] The mentioned summit is one of the tallest mountains in Pandaria, which would be challenging even without injuries and would still be potentially life-threatening, especially in bad weather.

In relation to facing the risk of death, consider the example of troll leadership and Vol'jin's father, Sen'jin. He died at the hands of lesser creatures, murlocks,[149] which could be an unexpected form of death for such a strong leader: "Perhaps it was knowing that Sen'jin, a powerful witch doctor, could die so easily."[150] His death may not be epic in the traditional sense of grand battles, however, it renders the troll race to be more realistic and vulnerable. Death is mentioned in the book only a few times, however, it marks a turning point in Vol'jin's life, forcing him to confront the harsh realities of leadership and the sacrifices required to protect his people. Sen'jin's death also serves as a catalyst for Vol'jin's journey of self-discovery and redemption, as he grapples with grief, anger, and a newfound sense of responsibility. Sen'jin's death is still relevant to the epic hero quest, its emotional resonance and narrative impact contribute to the larger themes of the story and the development of the hero's journey.

During Vol'jin's recovery, both he and Tyrathan started to learn pandaren culture along with fighting techniques, under the guidance of Taran Zhu, the leader of the Shado-pan Monastery. His unwavering dedication to defending his homeland and preserving its ancient traditions inspires players and characters from the novel, embodying the spirit of resilience and honor in the face of adversity. During their training "Vol'jin noticed that in the midst of sparring, the limp would disappear." And it would come back only after Tyrathan would mentally disconnect from the training.[151] In both narratives (the game and the novel), fighting serves as a central element of the characters' hero quests, driving the action forward and

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[147] Stackpole, *Vol'jin: Shadows of the Horde*, 4.
[148] Stackpole, *Vol'jin: Shadows of the Horde*, 17.
[149] Stackpole, *Vol'jin: Shadows of the Horde*, 22.
[150] Stackpole, *Vol'jin: Shadows of the Horde*, 22.
[151] Stackpole, *Vol'jin: Shadows of the Horde*, 21.

shaping their development as leaders, warriors, and champions of their respective factions, embodying the spirit of adventure and heroism that defines the world of Warcraft.

Vol'jin and his allies frequently find themselves facing enemies and challenges that are dramatically overpowered compared to their own abilities, as in an attack on Zouchin: " only twenty-one of you can reach Zouchin in enough time to be any help at all."[152] Or during the Zandalari invasion: "Half a hundred to be stopping a Zandalari invasion and sending a millennia-old Mogu tyrant back to the grave."[153] During the defense of the monastery, the intensity of the Zandalari superiority escalated even more, when at one point there were only seven members of the defense squad: "Each of the seven set about the preparations in his or her own way."[154]

Myth as a semiological system

Myth as a narrative structure has one meaning in the first-order system, which is elevated in the second-order system, shedding light on greater themes, both in the book and in the game.

The first example is the Celestials. In the first-order system, they represent powerful beings, they embody virtues such as wisdom, strength, hope, and fortitude. In the second-order system of myth, the Celestials take on a deeper symbolic meaning. They represent abstract concepts and archetypal forces that resonate with players on a subconscious level.

As mentioned, the Sha are malevolent entities spawned from negative emotions. Players encounter them as enemies to be defeated in combat, often as bosses in dungeons or during questlines. In the second-order system, the sha represent more than physical enemies, they symbolize inner turmoil, moral corruption, and the consequences of unchecked emotions. By confronting the Sha, players engage with themes of personal growth, emotional resilience, and the struggle to maintain inner balance in the face of adversity.

Battles have their first-order meaning as a physical fight, mostly for power, in the second-order system they may symbolize larger themes as fight for freedom, justice, or they can serve as allegories for real-world conflicts, or historical events. "Chen was one of those

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[152] Stackpole, *Vol'jin: Shadows of the Horde*, 41.
[153] Stackpole, *Vol'jin: Shadows of the Horde*, 60.
[154] Stackpole, *Vol'jin: Shadows of the Horde*, 65.

who had always been able to mythologize battles, primarily because he was at a distance from them."[155]

Reinforcement of semiotics within the myth system is when players interact with a '?' or '!' mark over NPCs' heads, and these lead to quests. This gives quest giving and receiving a semantic depth, matching a signifier to a referent by taking a spoken lore statement and saying that it's true within the game. The '!' or '?' signifiers are then matched with a quest sign, and the completion of the quest will be matched with the quest signified. These lead to more signs created from the referents within the game. This involves a complex web of mythology created within the game semiotics.

Mythology in *World of Warcraft: Mists of Pandaria* is presented as a primary system through the stories told and also as a secondary system through the game platform itself. Myth as a narrative is easy to understand, this is more improved by the NPCs speaking. From the game developers' idea, NPC sound files play as soon as players are within range and trigger area. Sound files encourage lore by connecting the myth as a narrative with the myth as a semiotic system. This gives players the chance to learn lore and keep up with the game narrative even though they might not be reading the quests.

The vast amount of lore and mythic material which serves as a source for the narrative of World of Warcraft enriches its expressive depth, yet its capacity as a mythic narrative can be investigated further. Roland Barthes' 'Myth Today' offers an adaptable structure for examination which can be applied to the mythic narrative of *WoW*, yielding the following insights: The mythic aspect of many signs in *WoW* is clear, with the interpretation of an item, ability, or character often having an intended greater significance due to its relation with specific lore or event within the Warcraft universe. An example is the character Medivh, who through the events of the Warcraft games is depicted as a tragic and corrupted hero, with much of his significance being shown through various dialogues in the game. The use of mediation is clear; various signs in the form of images, icons, and words are employed throughout its virtual and off-game space, as well as reading or interpretation of particular events or characters providing mythic connotations.

The naturalization of myth is expressed by *WoW*'s deep immersive qualities, some players becoming so deeply involved that they begin to interpret real-world happenings according to the Warcraft universe. Finally, the mythic signifiers of *WoW* through various forms of mythology always reflect some form of metalanguage about the game itself, be the

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[155] Stackpole, *Vol'jin: Shadows of the Horde*, 63.

content an allusion to real-world or historic events, or a symbolic depiction of faction-specific elements within the game, the entire *WoW* mythos is in actuality a grand narrative-driven to reach various points in signification about the game or the aims of player groups within it.

Transmediality

I applied the previously established theory in the analysis. I mainly examined the dispersion of narrative elements across multiple platforms, how transmedial storytelling creates harmony between content and focuses on an emotional, participatory experience for the audience, how the meanings of quests in the game are thickened by the player's pre-existing knowledge of the gameworld, and how the narrative content of quests enhances the player's understanding of the gameworld's affairs. I came to several conclusions and insights, but as I expected, the functionality of transmedia storytelling was confirmed.

A significant observation pertained to the divergence in plotlines and characterizations between the book and the game, with each medium presenting exclusive content. The same is true for the characters, plot, and Setting. The book is distinguished by a far greater scope of characters' emotions—compared to the game, where the other characters are only seen through the lens of the player. The book captures a section of the plot that is only marginally present in the game, or parts are missing altogether. The book adds depth and a broader context to these events (such as the attempted murder of Vol'jin, his treatment, and Garrosh's intrigues against not only the Horde). In terms of setting, the game is richer (because of its larger scope and use of audio-visual elements). The game and the book successfully communicate the same impressions of the Pandaria setting, even if they differ in some key descriptions of places (the snow and foliage do not correspond across the media at all, and the descriptions of the interiors of the Temple of the White Tiger and the Shado-pan Monastery).

The number of characters in the book is significantly lower than in the game (where they are not given as much attention). In the game, the narrative is built primarily through quests, of which there are many (1840).[156] It is evident that characters do not necessarily require a substantial number of quests for players to remember them. For the characters I examined, only 8 quests were enough to remember the character, which is very few compared to the total number of quests in the expansion. However, this is an exact example of following in the game, where certain characters are given more attention than others—with

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[156] "Pandaria Quests."

which the player interacts less or not at all. With the game having a larger scope, the player has the opportunity to interact with characters that were not featured in the book, such as members of the Jinyu, Grummels, Hozen, and Klaxxi races. While these races are merely mentioned in the book, they do not assume any significant role. In contrast, in the game, they are actively involved in various aspects of the plot.

The book features a greater number of resolved plotlines compared to the game, where logically fewer plots are concluded. In the book, the presence of more unresolved plots would disrupt the narrative flow. Conversely, the interactive nature of the game ensures that there is always a central plot that provides support for sections where certain plotlines remain unresolved.

In both media, the narrative drive is intricately linked to the storytelling that transcends across platforms. The interactive nature of the game enhances immersion by engaging multiple senses. However, the game's perspective is solely first-person, while the book occasionally adopts a point-of-view narrative approach.

Both media feature an abundance of mythical elements, although the game incorporates more diverse cultural and mythological previews, reflecting its expansive scope. Cosmological themes are present in both media, yet the book delves deeper into spiritual and philosophical dimensions.

Within the realm of mythic structures, World of Warcraft stands out as the most rooted in the epic Hero quest archetype. Its semiotic elements are so deeply interwoven with its narrative fabric that they are seamlessly integrated and often imperceptible.

Conclusion

This thesis aimed to underscore the merits of transmedia storytelling within the expansive universe of World of Warcraft (*WoW*), while also exploring the interdisciplinary intersections between traditional literary analysis and the emerging field of game studies. Initially, the thesis provided an overview of *WoW*, delineating its historical backdrop and structural framework. Subsequently, the narrative aspect was examined, drawing upon both historical perspectives and contemporary approaches. Of particular significance was the integration of Rick Altman's *Theory of Narrative*, which served as a foundational framework for the analysis. Key concepts such as Narrative Material, Narrative Activity, Narrative Drive, Following-Unit, and Modulations were expounded upon and subsequently employed in the analytical discourse to demonstrate transmediality.

Similarly, the exploration of myth began with its theoretical definition before being substantiated within the analytical framework. The subsequent analysis juxtaposed the narrative content of the book and the game, elucidating notable disparities in plot intricacies and the portrayal of key internal locations. Altman's theory was applied to illustrate the varying significance of characters across the two mediums. Furthermore, the analysis discerned the distinct narrative engagement and interactivity offered by the game compared to the more limited sensory experiences afforded by the book. Delving into the concept of following units, it became evident that while the book employed both point of view and following narration, the game immersed players solely through the former, thereby enhancing their immersion within the narrative.

In summary, the core elements of this thesis—*narrative, myth*, and *transmediality*—highlight significant findings. The analysis of these elements across both literary and digital platforms has demonstrated that transmedia storytelling is substantially more effective and engaging than conventional monomedial storytelling. The integration of two distinct media allows for a more detailed and layered communication of the narrative, as each medium can concentrate on different narrative aspects such as setting, characters, and relationships. Mythology serves as a unifying element, enriching and deepening the narrative structure. Therefore, the employment of transmedia storytelling is not only more innovative compared to traditional single-medium narratives but also more impactful in its execution.

Resumé

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá transmediálním vyprávěním ve fikčním světě World of Warcraft. Na základě literárního rozboru a rozboru hry, tato dvě média porovnávám v různých oblastech, abych zjistila, jakou formou je v nich děj odvyprávěný. Každé médium obsahuje jiné části děje než to druhé, nebo jsou zmíněné příběhy a postavy exkluzivní jen pro jedno médium. Tuta exkluzivita je zkoumaná v kapitolách o transmedialitě, které se postupně týkají více oblastí. Hlavním cílem této práce je popsat jak funguje transmediální vyprávění a jaké jsou jeho přínosy oproti tradičnímu vyprávění skrze jedno médium.

Práce je rozdělena na dvě části. První část práce je teoretická, kde zavádím a vysvětluji teorie a terminologie, které budou aplikované v praktické části. Hlavními tématy jsou vyprávění, jeho historie a vývoj, spolu se současnými přístupy, kde je zavedena i dominantní teorie pro tuto práci od Ricka Altmana. Z vyprávění teorie přechází k mýtu, jeho historii a funkci. Mýtus je představen také jako sémiotický systém, skrz který může být komunikované jakékoliv sdělení, v tomto případě hra nebo kniha. Vyprávění i mýtus je později analyzováno také skrze transmedialitu, která uzavírá teoretickou část.

Praktická část analyzuje jednotlivé koncepty nejdříve v knize, následně ve hře a srovná je v transmedialitě, která jak se potvrdilo, vytváří harmonii mezi médii a dává tak prostor emocionálním a participativním zážitkům pro publikum. Role mýtu je pro tuto problematiku důležitá, protože mýtické struktury v knize i hře dodávají vyprávění větší hloubku, protože vycházejí z již existujících kosmologií a kultur.

Na základě analýzy skrz narativ se poté v transmedialitě ukazuje zásadní rozdíl mezi dějem, počtem postav a popisem časoprostoru v knize a hře, který je dále rozebírán do hloubky. Avšak navzdory těmto rozdílům se knize i hře úspěšně daří komunikovat stejný prožitek.

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