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Paratexts to Non-Linear Media Texts: Paratextuality in Video Game Culture

Disertační práce

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Anotace

Tématem této disertační práce je paratextualita v kultuře počítačových her. Koncept paratextuality představil literární teoretik Gérard Genette v roce 1982 v kontextu knižního vydavatelství. Během posledních třiceti pěti let jej převzaly další obory včetně filmových, televizních nebo herních studií. Nicméně současná podoba paratextuální metodologie se významně odlišuje od původního teoretického rámce a vede k terminologickým nesrovnalostem. I přesto lze však paratextualitu stále považovat za potenciálně hodnotný analytický nástroj, který se věnuje otázkám takzvaných přidružených textů a kulturním praktikám napříč kulturními průmysly. Paratext, který bývá obrazně popisován jako práh interpretace, tématizuje oblast často přehlížených složek mediálních ekosystémů, jako jsou například propagační materiály nebo návody k použití. V této disertační práci nejprve nabízím podrobný kritický rozbor současné paratextuální teorie a metodologie. V dalších kapitolách pak představuji aktualizovaný teoretický a metodologický rámec paratextuality, který staví na základech konceptu textuální transcendence, z něhož vycházela i původní Genetteova konceptualizace. Konkrétní analytické dimenze pak berou v potaz specifika počítačových her. V empirické části se zaměřuji na trailery k počítačovým hrám a analyzuji jak jejich formální stránku, tak i diváckou recepci. Zjištění odhalila dvojznačný stav trailerů k počítačovým hrám jako paratextuálních prvků a autonomního textů zároveň. V tomto ohledu výsledky analýzy potvrzují potřebu detailnějšího zacházení s paratextualitou předestřenou v aktualizovaném teoretickém rámci paratextuality.

Abstract

The thesis explores paratextuality in the video game culture. This concept coined in 1982 by Gérard Genette in the context of literary publishing has been throughout the last thirty-five years adopted by other fields, including television and film studies, and game studies. However, the recent appropriations of the paratextual framework significantly deviate from its original conceptualization and cause terminological confusion. Still, paratextuality has the potential to provide a unique insight into cultural practices across various cultural industries, including video games. Figuratively described as a threshold, the concept of paratextuality deals with often overlooked elements of media ecosystems, such as promotional materials or instruction manuals. In the thesis, I present a thorough critical review of the current state of paratextual research. Due to its unsatisfactory state, I propose an updated paratextual framework, which builds on the theoretical foundations of textual transcendence. Its more practical dimensions then acknowledge the cultural specificities of the video game cultural industry. In the empirical part of the thesis, I focus on video game trailers and analyze both their formal qualities as well as their audience reception. The findings uncover the ambiguous status of a video game trailer as both a paratextual element and a noteworthy text in its own right. In this regard, they confirm the need for a more nuanced treatment of paratextuality explicated within the theoretical framework.

Klíčová slova

paratextualita, paratext, počítačové hry, trailer, recepce, textuální transcendence

Keywords

paratextuality, paratext, video games, trailer, reception, textual transcendence

Prohlášení

1. Prohlašuji, že jsem předkládanou práci zpracoval samostatně a použil jen uvedené prameny a literaturu.
2. Souhlasím s tím, aby práce byla zpřístupněna pro studijní a výzkumné účely.

V Praze dne 17. července 2017 Mgr. Jan Švelch

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Introduction

"Are paratexts merely para?"

– Robert Brookey (Brookey and Gray 2017)

"A thing in 'para,' moreover, is not only simultaneously on both sides of the boundary line between inside and out. It is also the boundary itself, the screen which is a permeable membrane connecting inside and outside. It confuses them with one another, allowing the outside in, making the inside out, dividing them and joining them. It also forms an ambiguous transition between one and the other. Though a given word in 'para' may seem to choose univocally one of these possibilities, the other meanings are always there as a shimmering in the word which makes it refuse to stay still in a sentence. The word is like a slightly alien guest within the syntactical closure where all the words are family friends together."

– J. Hillis Miller (1979)

The opening quotes capture two very different moments in paratextual scholarship. In the first one, Robert Brookey asks Jonathan Gray, who helped to popularize the concept of paratext in film and television studies with his influential book *Show Sold Separately: Promos, Spoilers, and Other Media Paratexts* (Gray 2010), an important question about the definition of the widely used concept. Is paratextuality the only thing that there is to say about paratexts? The second quote marks the origins of the concept, which was introduced by Gérard Genette in 1982. Genette (1997b) explicitly refers to Miller's explanation of the meaning of the prefix 'para', which is in stark contrast to the popular understanding of paratext as an ancillary subordinate element of cultural industries. Currently, the ambiguity of the term paratext has been abandoned in favor of a use as a more straightforward analytical tool. This however fails to capture the complexities of cultural production and does not stay true to the roots of the term. The goal of this thesis is therefore to address these concerns about the paratextual framework, refine its definition and apply it to the study of video games while capturing the initial meaning of paratext.

The term paratext was originally conceived in the context of codex book publishing. Thus, its definition and the surrounding analytical framework best suits this particular medium, especially the realist and modernist literature from the period between the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century. This era has also supplied most of the empirical cases for Genette's (1997b) seminal book *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, first published in French in 1987.[1] Foreshadowed in his previous work on palimpsests (Genette 1997a) in 1982 and contextualized, albeit implicitly, in the treatise on works of art (Genette 1997c) in 1994, paratextuality was considered to be one of five possible transtextual relationships (the individual types are discussed in section 1.1). Overall, Genette's typology, including the paratext, presented a more nuanced look at the broader topic of intertextuality (Kristeva 1969; Riffaterre 1983). However, out of these only paratext has received wider recognition in academia and has been later adopted by other fields outside literary theory.

[1] For the English-speaking part of academia, the term paratext was officially introduced in the journal *New Literary History* in 1991. However, the article *Introduction to the Paratext* (Genette 1991) is not an independent text, but only a translation of the introductory chapter of the original French monograph by Marie Maclean. At that time, another chapter of the book – about the functions of titles in literature (Genette 1988) – had been already published in the journal *Critical Inquiry* in 1988 in translation of Bernard Crampé. The whole monograph in its entirety was finally translated by Jane A. Lewin in 1997.

Paratextuality deals with issues of a textual surround and social practices connected to cultural industries. Genette's exploration of a book as a cultural artifact followed developments in the academic study of texts in general and challenged the centrality of a work and its univocality presumed in classical literary criticism. To a certain extent, paratext highlights the same tensions within meaning making processes addressed by Barthes's critique of authorship (1987b) and work/text distinction (1987a). It also relates to the inquiry of the Constance School's into reception (Jauss 1970; Iser 1978) and its emphasis on the active role of a reader. Although Genette's belief in subordination of paratexts to proper literary texts suggests a somewhat traditionalist approach to literary culture, the necessity of a paratext to provide framing for a text shows that centrality of a text is no longer deemed automatic and self-sufficient. On the contrary, it needs to be established through paratextual elements such as book covers, colophons, prefaces or notes, which attempt to reduce the polysemy of texts. Genette supports this post-structuralist reading of paratextuality by referencing the deconstructionist J. Hillis Miller (1979) and his essay on parasite as a metaphor of relationship between literary works and criticism (see section 2.2.2). Thus despite focusing on authorial intent and the production perspective, the paratextual framework deals with the limited control that creators have over their own texts once they are situated in the socio-historical reality. By drawing attention to previously overlooked practices, Genette has encouraged further research not only within literary theory, but in other fields and cultural areas, which he himself identified as using equivalent measures to frame their artifacts: *"[…] the title in music and in the plastic arts, the signature in painting, the credits or the trailer in film […]"* (Genette 1997b, 407) Television and film studies or game studies among others have appropriated the original conceptual framework to fit new objects of interest.

However, any such acts of adoption inevitably create new conceptual and terminological demands. Most importantly, one has to ask what should be considered the *text* if there is to be something paratextual to it. Is it even necessary to identify a *text* in order for paratextuality to be established and manifested?

The academic discussions about textuality are complex and not the primary interest here, but it can be only beneficial to clearly communicate the way how broad terms such as text or work are used in the thesis. Unless otherwise stated, text and work are considered as synonyms standing for a cultural artifact, including video games. The choice of the term text as the most general designation of a cultural artifact is motivated by the interdisciplinary nature of the thesis. Combining developments from literary theory, media studies, film and television studies assumes that these different fields all share an object of study that could be in the most basic sense of the word identified as a text. Usually, this object belongs to what is metaphorically sketched as a triangle including (besides the text) also its producers and recipients. This terminological decision does not prioritize verbal elements over other potential modes of expression even though that is sometimes the case in paratextual research (Wolf 2006b; Rockenberger 2014). Instead, I aim for an inclusive approach and use the term text partly as a metaphor that allows one to view video games and computer technology in general as *"interpretively flexible"* (Woolgar 1990, 60).

Within the field of game studies, the term text is loaded with a preference of narrative content of a game over its ludic features. This is quite a paradox considering that the neologism cybertext has been originally used to define the object of interest as a whole by one of the founding fathers of the field (Aarseth 1997). The historical dispute between the approaches of narratology and ludology has been at least partly reconciled by Jesper Juul's (2005) influential book *Half-real: Video Games Between Real Rules and Fictional Worlds* but it still remains a relatively controversial topic and it needs to be explicitly acknowledged as such.

Essentially, the usage of the term text can be considered colonialist when it comes to the field of game studies, which at its beginnings lacked proper theoretical foundations. Thus, it borrowed concepts and terminology from already established disciplines such as literary theory and narratology, mostly during the late 1990s and early 2000s. This is also the case of paratextuality, which was introduced to game studies in 2007 by Mia Consalvo in her book *Cheating: Gaining Advantage in Videogames* and has been used widely since then (see section 2.3 for an overview of recent research using the framework). The thesis attempts to retrace the trajectory of paratextuality as a concept on its way from literary theory to game studies to see what has changed in its conceptualization along the way. In this regard, I aim to critically evaluate the previous colonizing efforts and emancipate the paratextual framework from its place of origin and to fully appropriate it for game studies while respecting its foundations.

The terms text and paratext are inevitable parts of any debate on paratextuality but they can always be reevaluated in the specific contexts in which they are used. For the sake of this thesis, video games are considered texts in the broadest sense of the term. While it would be easy to supply a different terminology and rename the concept of paratextuality while keeping the prefix para-, any such enhancements would be purely cosmetic and superficial even though this was attempted (Denson and Jahn-Sudmann 2013; LeMieux 2014). Instead, I propose to treat the framework of paratextuality thoroughly and systematically by paying close attention to Genette's original vision and to any relevant revisions and updates. The underlying argument is that paratextuality as a concept can be beneficial in the study of video games even though it may require certain adjustments to be fully applicable to the new object of study. I agree with Genette and other proponents of the paratextual approach that media-centric paradigms in general tend to replicate hierarchies established in production practice by directing their attention at what is considered the 'medium'. In consequence, they lose sight of many other elements that constitute a cultural area. The concept of paratextuality questions the centrality of the text by refocusing the debate on how cultural industries actually establish the connections between producers, texts and audiences. Overlooking paratextual qualities yields only limited understanding of how cultural industries work and this is true for video games as well. This is why game studies need a systematic theory of paratextuality that would respect the unique aspects of the cultural area but would also maintain core values of the concept liberated from their initial object of study.

Although paratextuality has been taken up by many different fields over the course of thirty-five years since its inception, rarely it has been critically assessed during these transitions. As Georg Stanitzek shows on the example of film studies, the process of adoption has been sometimes overly mechanical and too automatic: *"Yet in a certain respect the paratext concept has been transferred from literature to film studies with almost too little resistance."* (Stanitzek 2005, 38) In other cases, the paratextual framework has been bent so much that it now only vaguely resembles Genette's concept. This is true for the majority of significant extensions of paratext, especially the two influential appropriations undertaken by Consalvo (2007) and Jonathan Gray (2010). These new versions of the concept consider nearly anything than does not fit the privileged form of their cultural areas of interest to be a paratext of sorts. These so-called epiphenomena (Klinger 1989; Johnston 2013) – anything that is not a video game yet for some reason belongs to the video game culture (the same logic of course applies to the film or television culture) – are automatically identified as paratexts without any proper reflection on the implications of using negative definitions. Such appropriations of the framework however do not serve as critical contributions to the overall discussion because they take too many liberties with the source theory without fully explaining the changes made to the underlying conceptualization of paratextuality. On the

contrary, they often cause a terminological confusion as different versions of paratextual framework now permeate academia without clear understanding of what separates them.

One of the goals of this thesis is to put these new additions into context and to assess them in comparison to each other and to Genette's original proposal. This is the first step towards an updated paratextual framework that treats video games as a specific cultural area and provides a toolkit for rigorous treatment of their paratextual relationships and elements. As Genette argues, paratextuality is based on practices and conventions of a given cultural area. Therefore, it evolves through time and changes if one moves beyond the world of literary publishing. This means that the proposed framework has to take into account current developments in video game cultural industry to be able to shed light on its workings. For this reason, it is field tested on the empirical material of video game trailers.

Twelve selected trailers representing typical contemporary mainstream video game production are first analyzed regarding their formal paratextual aspects. I primarily focus on paratextual traits of the trailers and present a systematic overview of practices as opposed to description of individual trailers. This formal paratextual analysis fully utilizes the updated framework and presents its first empirical application. In the second step, I focus on reception of the selected video game trailers using the method of discourse analysis arguing that paratextuality is established through negotiations of various stakeholders and only takes effect when it is received by audiences. Moreover, the selected example of video game trailers highlights the tensions between textuality and paratextuality, which often surface in scholarly discussions. While the traditional approaches to paratextuality treat paratexts as subordinate elements of textual systems, the extensions of the framework usually challenge this assumption. Unfortunately, they themselves replicate similar hierarchical structures by distinguishing between texts and paratexts based on the dominant cultural forms of the specific cultural domains. I argue against such generalizations and explore video game trailers as being both potentially paratextual and textual based on the formal analysis and the actual audience reception.

The relatively large amount of previous research on paratextuality and the overall complexity of the argument influences the structure of the thesis. In order to provide a substantiated revision of the framework, relevant scholarly contributions have to be critically reviewed and evaluated before I can proceed to the presentation of a new framework. This makes the thesis predominantly theoretical with a secondary focus on empirical analysis, which is designed to explore the points foregrounded in the theoretical chapters.

The first chapter serves both as an introduction to the themes of paratextuality and as a review of other related concepts from diverse scholarly fields. In order to identify the analytical value of paratextuality, I go beyond works dealing explicitly with Genette's concept and compare it to other theoretical approaches such as intertextuality, transmedia storytelling, diegesis, materiality, framing, promotion, technical communication and reception. This arguably broad perspective pinpoints the fundamentals of paratextuality that distinguish it from other available concepts. This knowledge is then further utilized throughout the subsequent chapters where it guides a critique of previous paratextual revisions and provides a grounding for the basic mission of paratextuality as an analytical concept ensuring that paratextuality remains a sovereign framework and offers unique scholarly insight.

In the second chapter, the current state of paratextual research is explored and evaluated. Starting with Genette's framework, I address its main features and dimensions, including spatiality, temporality, substantiality, pragmatics, and functionality. Afterwards, two opposite general directions of appropriation of paratextuality are reviewed, the reduced scope of paratextual framing (Wolf 2006b; Rockenberger 2014) and the expanded framework

(Consalvo 2007; S. E. Jones 2008; Gray 2010). Other particular critiques and revisions are considered in the later sections, especially the developments concerning the industrial perspective, subordination of paratexts, and spatial and temporal typologies. Lastly, I provide an overview of research methodologies in order to map the application of the original concept of paratextuality and of its various versions. In this regard, I focus both on the areas of interest and the methods employed covering a relatively large body of academic work from literary theory, film and television studies and game studies. This review of existing empirical research shows the actual analytical capabilities of paratextuality and the general bias towards tangible paratextual phenomena.

The third chapter is the core of this thesis. It draws on the critical evaluation of the theory of paratextuality and related concepts from the previous chapters and presents a new paratextual framework suited for the study of video games. This long-needed theoretical update builds on the foundations of textual transcendence (Genette 1997a) and provides a new refined conceptualization of paratextuality and related terms (paratext, paratextual) based on the connection that is established between a text and the surrounding socio-historical reality. In this regard, the new definitions distinguish themselves from Genette's (1997b) largely figurative statements, the arbitrary limitations of the reduced framework (Wolf 2006b; Rockenberger 2014), and the overly inclusive and vaguely phrased extended versions of paratextuality (Consalvo 2007; S. E. Jones 2008; Gray 2010). In the second part of the chapter, I highlight the implications of video games as a cultural industry for video game paratextuality. These specificities are reflected in the updated operationalization of paratextual dimensions. Taking cues from Genette's (1997b) original theoretical introduction, I synthesize them into four key dimensions, which are ordered based on their importance for a paratextual phenomenon: (1) function, (2) authorship, (3) substantiality and materiality, and (4) spatiotemporality.

The fourth chapter continues in the theoretical discussion and elaborates on the importance of reception of paratextuality and how it can influence the reception of a text as a whole. I draw a distinction between preferred and perceived functionality of paratextual elements arguing that an authorial intention behind paratextuality is among other factors always subjected to active audience reception. Next, I focus on video game trailers as sites of paratextuality, reviewing the origins of the audiovisual form and the recent empirical research dealing with their reception (Johnston, Vollans, and Greene 2016). In the second part of the chapter, I describe the research design including the data selection steps and methods of the formal paratextual analysis of twelve selected video game trailers and the discourse analysis of online discussions.

The last, fifth chapter presents the original empirical research of this thesis. The application of the proposed framework to the study of video game trailers is divided into two parts. First, I present a formal paratextual analysis of twelve video game trailers representing contemporary mainstream video game production. Utilizing the refined dimensions of paratextuality, I focus on trailers as a whole and also on their paratextual traits and elements and provide an overview of practices that link video games and their respective trailers to the socio-historical reality. The second part of the chapter consists of a discourse analysis of online discussions about analyzed video game trailers. Here, I explore three broad discursive stances: (1) those that emphasize paratextual qualities of trailers; (2) discourses that treat trailers as noteworthy and autonomous parts of the video game culture; (3) and the holistic approach, which combines the two aforementioned perspectives and acknowledges the ambiguous cultural status of video game trailers.

In the conclusion, I summarize the findings of the thesis and discuss potential future research endeavors. I also address the limitations of my approach to the study of video game

paratextuality. As any revision of a currently used methodology, the new paratextual framework has to compete with existing approaches and justify its existence. This inevitably increases the terminological complexity. Here, I draw attention to practical benefits of the new framework and talk about possible future research directions.

Chapter 1: The Paratextual Framework in Context

The following chapter explores terminological and theoretical surroundings of the concept of paratext. A wide variety of analytical tools have been developed across different scholarly fields to tackle similar aspects of cultural productions to paratext, however I would argue that Genette's (1997b) original framework provides a unique insight. In comparison to terms such as intertextuality, transmedia storytelling, materiality, framing, promotional materials, technical communication, or theory of reception (each presented in an individual section), I will discuss the benefits of paratext as a concept fit for analysis of video game culture. As my aim is to present a coherent theoretical discussion, I avoid chronological or field-focused structure, which would have only obscured the interconnections between various scholarly traditions. Still, to limit any potential eclecticism the chapter first deals with structural features of paratext and similar concepts and gradually moves towards more applied and reception-oriented approaches.

The final selection of the approaches presented in this chapter is not to be taken as exhaustive. When engaging with paratext on a metaphorical level, other possible terms might surface as related or complementary. Here, the main goal is to highlight the differences and commonalities between widely used concepts from the fields closest to the topic of the thesis – literary theory as the place of origin of the paratextual framework, media studies, and closely related areas of film, television, and game studies. Additionally, I dedicate an individual section to the often overlooked area of technical communication. Recently, it has attracted more attention also due to its emphasis on technology, which is relevant for study of video game culture (Eyman 2008; Mason 2013; deWinter and Moeller 2014).

While my approach might be selective in portraying the innumerable interactions between different scholarly traditions, its goal is to present the term paratext in the context of other relevant research topics. Even though paratext is an established analytical tool in most of the aforementioned fields and thus it would seem that it does not require such an introduction, I consider an extensive theoretical discussion both necessary and beneficial for this and future research endeavors. Moreover, by highlighting paratext's unique position among other concepts and offering as whole a picture as possible, the chapter seeks to remedy previous reductive applications of Genette's framework, which are explored in chapter 2 along with any relevant revisions and appropriations.

1.1 Intertextuality and Transtextuality

On a structural level, the concepts of paratext and paratextuality are used to describe one of many possible relationships between texts and therefore relate to the broader issue of intertextuality. Coined by Julia Kristeva (1969), intertextuality in its original definition addresses the mosaic of quotes and quotations and the overall process in which a new text absorbs and transforms previous texts. Since then intertextuality has been appropriated, updated and revised in many different ways resulting in somewhat confusing terminology.[2]

[2] For example, Linda Hutcheon (2012) among others understands intertextuality as a dialogue between texts and in her own research analyzes adaptations and parodies as examples of this relationship. Moreover, in the context of historical fiction she has previously drawn a connection between paratexts (especially in the form of book notes) and intertextuality, arguing that paratexts potentially ground historical fiction in history by introducing historical facts to otherwise fictional narratives (Hutcheon 1989). She thus combines terms from two different conceptualizations of textual relationships – intertextuality in Kristeva's (1969) broad sense and Genette's (1997b) more specific term.

Genette mostly pursues a structuralist[3] perspective on relationships between texts and attempts to clear up and redefine the often vague conceptualizations of intertextuality. However by renaming categories of his own typology of textual relationships, he has added to the overall terminological confusion. As he admitted in the introduction to *Palimpsests: The Literature in Second Degree* (Genette 1997a), paratextuality had been originally used to describe the relationship of transformation (adaptation) between the original and the transformed text. In fact, the first sketch of textual transcendence presented in Genette's (1992) treatise on architextuality from 1979 had featured only four relationships and had used the term paratextuality for what was later renamed to hypertextuality. The other three relationships – intertextuality, metatextuality and architextuality – have remained the same.

Still, his work on textual transcendence aims at a clarification and careful distinction between particular types of textual relationships. Often stylized as transtextuality, textual transcendence (as opposed to textual immanence) is defined as *"all that sets the text in a relationship, whether obvious or concealed, with other texts"* (Genette 1997a, 1). In this sense, transtextuality partly corresponds to broad definitions of intertextuality of Kristeva or Hutcheon. However, Genette does not stop at rebranding the established concept but offers a nuanced distinction between its five basic forms.

Altogether, these five different types of textual transcendence are: (1) intertextuality, (2) paratextuality, (3) metatextuality, (4) hypertextuality, and (5) architextuality. Paratextuality – the primary focus of the thesis – can be only fully understood within this complete system as individual relationships complement each other and only together serve as an analytical framework.

First, Genette's take on (1) intertextuality builds on Kristeva's (1969) definition, however it limits its scope to explicit or implicit co-presence of two or more texts (Genette 1997a). In practical terms, this covers various cases of quotation, plagiarism and allusion. It is the most basic of all transtextual relationships as it is concerned only with presence of one text within another. Therefore, it mostly takes place on a micro-level of words, sentences or paragraphs. However, plagiarism can encompass larger structures – for example, a plagiarized novel might be considered as a whole in an intertextual relationship with the original work.

The definition of (2) paratextuality is more fluid and is addressed fully in chapters 2 and 3. Here, I only cover the basics and the most apparent interactions between this particular type of textual transcendence and other parts of the typology. Metaphorically, paratextuality as a phenomenon is described as a setting (Genette 1997a) or a threshold (Genette 1997b) of a text. Due to the fact that it is mostly employed strategically, its role is to inform a reader about the existence of a text and influence its interpretation according to aims of paratextual authority, in most cases the author or the publisher. In the codex book medium, paratextuality takes the following forms:

> [...] a title, a subtitle, intertitles; prefaces, postfaces, notices, forewords, etc.; marginal, infrapaginal, terminal notes; epigraphs; illustrations, blurbs, book covers, dust jackets and many other kinds of secondary signals, whether allographic or autographic. (Genette 1997a, 3)

One of the defining aspects of paratext is the necessity of a paratextual authority behind its creation. That means that a completely external origin of paratext is ruled out in the

[3] However, he draws connection between the concept of paratext and the deconstructionist approach to literary criticism (Miller 1979). This ambiguity between post-structuralist theoretical foundations and a structuralist operationalization of the paratextual framework has been already noticed by other scholars before me (Rolls and Vuaille-Barcan 2011a, 2011b) and is explored throughout the thesis, especially in the context of reception.

framework: *"By definition, something is not a paratext unless the author or one of his associates accepts responsibility for it, although the degree of responsibility may vary."* (Genette 1997b, 9) While Genette's definition allows for both official and unofficial paratexts, this distinction is much more restrictive than, for example, the widespread expanded framework of paratextuality, which allows for journalistic or fan-made paratexts (see section 2.2.2 for in-depth discussion of the expanded framework). Originally, the unofficial (or semiofficial) paratext related mostly to interviews with an author, which could be easily retracted as opposed to official statements.

To a certain extent, paratextuality overlaps with (3) metatextuality as they both potentially comment on another text, even though metatextuality is first and foremost defined by a critical relationship. Similarly to intertextuality, this relationship might be purely implicit, however the most common examples of metatextuality – reviews and critiques – usually contain direct links to the original text. Unlike paratextuality, a proper metatext requires external authorship.

Hypertextuality (4) is metaphorically described as a palimpsest. In this sense, a newer text (hypertext) builds on an earlier text (hypotext) and transforms or imitates it (Genette 1997a). Genette distinguishes six major categories of hypertexts based both on the mood and the relation to hypotext: parody, travesty, transposition, pastiche, caricature and forgery (Genette 1997a, 28). What sets hypertexts apart from the previous types of transtexts (i.e. texts defined by their particular transtextual relationship), is the fact that they are often considered proper literary works compared to the less valued status of paratexts and metatexts. In different conceptualizations (Hutcheon 2012), adaptations are often considered to be a form of intertextuality. Additionally, Genette's approach to hypertextuality significantly differs from the dominant meaning of the term, which denotes a type of text organization coined by Ted Nelson (1992) in the 1960s, based on previous work of Jorge Luis Borges (1962) and Vannevar Bush (1945).

Lastly, (5) architextuality significantly differs from the previous types of textual transcendence as it takes place between a text and more abstract formations and practices, such as literary or video game genres (Genette 1992). Novel, tragedy, prose, poem, essay or first-person shooter are all examples of architexts. Often, texts claim their adherence to a genre via paratextual clues, for example in subtitles. While a relationship between a text and an architext subsequently creates a connection between particular texts within the same architextual tradition (effectively establishing intertextual links among individual works), this process requires activity on the side of the reader as its initial link is usually implicit and relatively abstract.

An important feature of Genette's framework of textual transcendence is that in practice the individual relationships are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, they often complement each other and work in tandem. Thus, one particular text can manifest various types of textual transcendence at the same time.

Moving forward, media studies scholar John Fiske (1987) developed his own take on intertextuality in the context of television culture in the 1980s. While it matches Gennete's earlier efforts by following a mostly structuralist approach, the theoretical grounding here is much vaguer. The individual categories are inductive rather than systematic, resulting in unwieldiness of the whole typology.

First of all, Fiske distinguishes between two types of intertextuality: (1) horizontal and (2) vertical. Horizontal intertextuality takes place between so-called primary texts; this connection is often explicit and established through *"genre, character or content."* (Fiske

1987, 108) In this regard, it combines the classical understanding of intertextuality of Kristeva with architextuality from Genette's (1997a) framework.

Vertical intertextuality imposes hierarchy on interconnected texts – the primary text, for example a television series, is expanded by ancillary texts such as publicity features, criticisms and audience-created texts. However, Fiske proposes a further distinction between these subordinate texts. So-called secondary texts aim to steer the preferred readings of a text (see section 1.7 for discussion of theory of reception), while tertiary texts manifest audience reception in a textual form and include, for example, fan letters and other types of fan creativity. Thus, vertical textuality overlaps with metatextuality (both secondary and tertiary texts) and paratextuality (only secondary texts).

Interestingly, Fiske's typology is even more hierarchical than Genette's framework. This shared elitist perspective of both frameworks, which assumes the production logics of cultural industries (echoed by traditional literary criticism), has been already criticized for overlooking the importance of reception (see Lunenfeld 1999). Still, it comes as a surprise considering that Fiske is a scholar working in the tradition of audience-oriented cultural studies. Even more striking is that fan-created intertextuality is degraded to the status of a tertiary text.

Overall, Fiske's classification of vertical intertextuality lacks a systematic approach. Different criteria are used to distinguish between primary, secondary and tertiary texts. Primary texts are defined through the lens of media industries according to their position in production. Secondary texts fulfill the function of influencing the audience interpretation. Lastly, tertiary texts are designated by their authorship, even though they still retain the ability to influence readings of primary texts akin to the secondary texts.

In Fiske's terms, secondary and tertiary texts are concerned with the polysemic nature of primary texts. They promote particular readings over other potential interpretations. In this sense, Fiske's typology closely relates to Genette's framework in which paratext serves as a threshold and frames a given text in a certain fashion. While Genette emphasizes the practices of literary publishing, Fiske focuses mostly on the reception side within the television culture. Despite its apparent flaws,[4] Fiske's typology thematizes the impact of various intertextual relationships on reception and attempts to explicitly ground the concept of intertextuality in the paradigm of audience-focused cultural studies, clearly following in the direction of Umberto Eco (1972) and Stuart Hall (1973) whose contributions are explored in section 1.7.

To summarize, paratextuality has been conceived as a specific relationship between texts within the broader categories of intertextuality, or textual transcendence if one sticks to Genette's terminology. In consequence, the concept addresses a specific subset of textual interactions that creates a notion of threshold. Compared to intertextuality, it provides a narrower focus on phenomena that have been often overlooked by traditional criticism and academia. Paratextuality implies a similar structuralist logic behind its conceptualization as intertextuality but opposed to Fiske's concretization of intertextual relationships it is guided by a unified and clear criterion of functionality. On a practical level, paratextuality as a phenomenon is often accompanied by other types of textual transcendence.

[4] Fiske's intertextual framework is rarely used in current academia as it has been made obsolete mostly due to a wide adoption of concepts of paratextuality and transmedia storytelling. Rare exceptions, such as Brookey's (2010) book on convergence in film and video game industries, struggle to utilize the three only intuitively conceptualized categories of vertical intertextuality. Even Brookey's more recent work (Brookey and Gray 2017) shows a shift away from Fiske towards Gray's (2010) appropriation of Genette's paratextual framework.

1.2 Transmedia Storytelling

The mostly structural questions of intertextuality have been to some extent explored and developed further in the context of intermediality, which was conceived in 1983 within the German tradition of literary theory (Hansen-Löwe 1983). Compared to intertextuality whose main focus are the relationships between texts, intermediality addresses the connections between specific media. Overall, intermediality is an arguably large field of study encompassing literature, film, music, visual arts and many other media. The already broad scope of intermediality is further widened by complementary intramedial and transmedial phenomena (Rajewsky 2006).[5] Moreover, intermediality often suffers from vague definitions of media resulting in conflicting notions of what should be considered a medium and how this notion relates to arts (Elleström 2010).

This media-centric perspective is not the primary interest here as it focuses on relationships between media (often in the sense of technology) instead of connections between texts. Compared to intermediality and transmediality, paratextuality can as easily take place within the same medium as across many different channels. Still, the broader intermedial and transmedial debate has spawned the concept of transmedia storytelling (Jenkins 2006a), which raises points relevant to the study of paratextuality as it contests the hierarchical structures of cultural production mentioned in the previous section and intrinsic to paratext's conceptualization.

Transmedia storytelling is the deliberate use of different media channels for development of narratives or storyworlds (Ryan and Thon 2014).[6] In terms of production, Jenkins distinguishes transmedia storytelling from adaptation (Jenkins 2009). He argues that adaptation does not create a complete narrative experience as it only replicates already existing stories, while transmedia storytelling in its fullest potential adds new narrative content and offers a qualitatively different experience. However, recently it has been argued that adaption is in fact a cornerstone of transmedia storytelling experiences, at least on the side of reception, despite its merely transformational nature and redundancy (Martínez et al. 2016; Ryan 2016). When focusing on structural aspects of the original concept, it is fruitful to distinguish between adaptation and transmedia storytelling as the former is defined primarily by hypertextual relationship while the latter is facilitated by looser intertextual connections. Paratextuality often comes into play in terms of explicating the links between different parts of transmedia storytelling and providing space for orientation to audiences.

Although transmedia storytelling presupposes a certain independence of its various strands (Jenkins 2007), even the most popular transmedial franchises are often built around one central text grounded in a particular medium. The other parts of the transmedia storytelling, which are usually introduced later or operate on smaller budgets, are to some extent autonomous as they include new stories and thus expand the storyworld. At the same time, they exist in the shadow of a main text. This hierarchy applies to most video game intellectual properties. Actually, it is the industrial perspective that itself imposes the hierarchical structure on transmedia storytelling. For example, a decision to expand a video game

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[5] In her attempt to review the terminology of intermediality research, Irina Rajewsky has defined intermediality broadly as *"configurations which have to do with a crossing of borders between media*" as opposed to transmedial phenomena, which can be understood as *"the appearance of a certain motif, aesthetic, or discourse across a variety of different media"* (Rajewsky 2006, 46).

[6] Christy Dena (2014) provides a useful distinction between intercompositional and intracompositional transmedia, which deals with the usually implicit assumption that transmedia storytelling happens between discrete art and media forms. In this regard, the former emphasizes the transmedia relationship between these discrete media artifacts (serving thus as a synonym for transmedia storytelling) while the latter tackles use of different media within what could be considered a singular work, such as an alternate reality game.

storyworld to another medium from the original video game is always encumbered by the fact that it is undertaken by a video game company.

However, there have already been attempts to circumvent this type of power relation between particular texts and media by creating transmedia content from scratch. For example, *Defiance* is a transmedia collaboration built around an eponymous television series and a massively multiplayer online game (further abbreviated as MMO). Even in this case the balance between the initially equally important halves of the transmedia storytelling shifted after the cancellation of the television series in 2015. The video game (Trion Worlds 2013) is still being updated with new content by its developer at the time of writing.[7]

Transmedia storytelling does not only provide additional content, it also provides visibility for all of its other parts. Thus, it potentially functions as an elaborate promotional tool where individual parts advertise the rest of the transmedia experience, possibly motivating a collector's mindset. To get the full experience out of a particular intellectual property, a consumer may feel a need to acquire all transmedia episodes. In this regard, transmedia storytelling perspective suggests that even texts with a strong paratextual function can be considered proper texts as they meaningfully contribute to development of a fictional.

Transmedia storytelling and paratextuality are not two mutually exclusive qualities of texts. On the contrary, the actual linking of texts within transmedia storytelling franchises is in essence paratextual. Consequently, firsthand experience of particular transmedia episodes (or even knowledge about their existence) qualifies as a paratext. It frames any future readings of different parts of the storyworld and influences reception alike serial publication, which Genette (1997b) explicitly considered a paratextual phenomenon. Moreover, the crossing of boundaries between different media channels (intermediality) necessitates further development of paratextual elements in order to maintain cohesion of transmedia storytelling and access to particular transmedia episodes. In essence, the wider and more complex the transmedia storytelling is, the bigger amount of paratexts is required to hold it together and to provide a way in to it from the various entry points.

While Jenkins' concept of transmedia storytelling is primarily focused on media practice, at the same time it follows the idea that a work of art does not necessarily have to be constrained by material boundaries of one text.[8] Genette himself has later explored this particular topic by shifting the debate from the text to the work of art:[9]

> [...] the mode of existence and manifestation of works is not restricted to 'consisting' in an object. They have at least one other mode of existence, which is to *transcend* this 'consistence', either because they are 'embodied' in several objects, or because their reception can extend far beyond the presence of this/these

[7] Transmedia storytelling is often seen as a modern trend within cultural industries facilitated through industrial convergence (Jenkins 2006a; Gray 2010; Clarke 2013; Mittell 2015). However, such a type of cross-media promotion has been already present in the *Wonderful Wizard of Oz* marketing strategy in the early 1900s and included comic strips with original stories syndicated to newspapers across the USA (Freeman 2014). These short stories expand the storyworld of Oz and at the same time serve as a paratext of sorts informing newspaper readers about the existence of the book series akin to contemporary transmedia storytelling efforts.

[8] Transfictionality explores a similar process of sharing of narrative elements, such as characters or environments, between more than one texts or works of art (Saint-Gelais 2011). It is, however, much broader in its scope and potentially encompasses both transmedia storytelling and hypertextuality.

[9] Here, the actual distinction between the text and the work of art is mostly terminological and peripheral to the issue at hand. It does not imply a distinction between a cultural meaning of a text and its manifestation as a work (Barthes 1987a).

> object(s), and, in a certain way, survive its (or their) disappearance [...] [emphasis original] (Genette 1997c, 10–11)

The important part of the argument is the transcendence of material constraints. A video game can be embodied in more than one object, for example in a game disc, box, or promotional materials. Paratextuality might be then seen as one of the potential relationships between these objects (or specific parts of the objects). By emphasizing the autonomy of seemingly ancillary texts, transmedia storytelling as a concept challenges the traditional hierarchy of textual systems perpetuated by literary and media scholarship (see Genette 1997b; Fiske 1987).

1.2.1 Diegesis

Transmedia storytelling usually operates on the assumption of storyworlds. In this regard, paratextuality is often considered secondary to diegesis (and diegetic elements). Therefore it is relegated to a role of a technical apparatus, which ensures that the more privileged parts of actual transmedia storytelling franchises maintain their connections.

Storytelling is a traditional object of scholarly inquiry since Plato and Aristotle. The respective field of narratology still uses the traditional concepts of diegesis (narration) and mimesis (imitation). Coincidentally, Genette (1990) himself has been interested in narratology and has provided a structural framework for various levels of narration. While the difference between diegesis and mimesis is a complex issue on its own[10], for the sake of this section I adhere to the Genettian framework, which uses diegesis as a general term for describing layers of narrative.

Diegesis can be defined as the world of characters and story or *"the universe of the first narrative"* (Genette 1990, 228). Outside of this primary position, which is also called (1) intradiegetic, narration can take place on two other basic planes: (2) the extradiegetic layer is located outside and around the primary story, it is often where the act of narration is happening; (3) the metadiegetic layer is inserted into the intradiegetic layer and corresponds to the literary device of a story within a story. Any given text can combine these three basic positions and create intricate groupings of different layers. For example, metadiegetic layers might potentially be added ad infinitum. Generally, Genette's narratological framework is often used in a simplified version that collapses any intradiegetic and metadiegetic layers to a diegetic level, effectively creating a dichotomy of non-diegetic and diegetic. This take on diegesis is common in film and television studies, and video game studies.

The aforementioned narrative levels are not completely separate, their boundaries can be transgressed, resulting in narrative metalepsis (Genette 1990). One notable example of metalepsis is the alienation effect, also called the Verfremdungseffekt after Bertolt Brecht (1961) who coined the term in 1936. The alienation effect is usually achieved by directly addressing the audience from within the intradiegetic layer. In popular culture, this technique is known as "breaking the fourth wall".[11] Metalepsis is often used for aesthetic

[10] Traditionally, the Platonic category of mimesis is a domain of theater while diegesis in the sense of narration is a primary form of literature (Genette 1990). However, there are interactions between these two ideal categories. For example, direct speech in literature can be considered a type of mimesis embedded in otherwise narrative discourse. Riffaterre (1990) has explored issues of mimesis in terms of realist literature and verisimilitude.

[11] In video games, the term breaking the fourth wall becomes problematic due to the complex nature of the video game text. John Conway (2010) has argued for more nuanced version of the concept by proposing different metaphors of movement – namely "relocating" and "expanding" (Conway 2010, 153) – as alternatives. Moreover, he draws a close connection between diegesis and the magic circle, i.e. the space where the games takes place (Huizinga 1971; Salen and Zimmerman 2004). Still, his argument about expansion and extraction of the magic circle seems to be mostly concerned with the

purposes, inviting critical perspective and attracting reader's attention to artificial origins of a text, whether it is a novel or a video game. In essence, metalepsis and especially the alienation effect work against immersion[12] and break the empathetic connection with characters and the story (Brecht 1961).

Kristine Jørgensen (2013) has previously questioned the applicability of diegesis to the study of video games pointing to differences between video games and film where the concept has been successfully adopted from literary theory. She argued that a storyworld does not equate a gameworld and labeling certain elements as non-diegetic in the sense of not belonging to the narration does not necessarily make them stand out from the gameworld for a player as it might in the context of film, television or literature. In a sense, her framework implicitly disregards the alienation effect and metalepsis. To signal the departure from narratological paradigm, Jørgensen substitutes the original terms diegetic and non-diegetic with ecological[13] and emphatic[14], respectively. Along the same lines, Laine Nooney (2016) has recently argued that various video game menus despite being in essence non-diegetic can provide gameplay activities not just technical settings, meaning that they do not necessarily stand out of the gameplay experience.

Additionally, Jørgensen (2013) cites interactivity as one of the main obstacles of diegesis if it is to be applied to video games. Arguably, video games are considered more interactive than linear media such as traditional literature or film. The pronounced technical aspects of video game artifacts, which allow for human-game interactions, result in more visible distinction between textual and paratextual layers (and diegetic and non-diegetic) if one decides to borrow these terms from a medium of the codex book whose materiality is subtler (see section 1.3). However, this does not necessarily have to be a downside of the framework but a feature that a scholar needs to be aware of when making comparisons across media.[15] Still, one can look at differences between particular video games and other phenomena of video game culture where the narratological lens might yield beneficial insights despite its apparent bias.

While I agree that diegesis requires careful consideration and should not be applied uncritically, Jørgensen's core intention to redefine the dichotomy of diegetic/non-diegetic as a continuum does not justify the resulting terminological confusion.

Alexander R. Galloway (2012) has tried to appropriate diegesis to fit the field of video games and has drawn explicit connections between the narratological concept and paratextuality. According to him, both dichotomies – diegetic/non-diegetic and text/paratext – can be essentially understood as questions of centers and edges. Paratextuality emphasizes the boundaries of a text, while diegesis focuses on the inside and outside elements of a narrative.

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vernacular discourses and not with the original scholarly concepts, which do not contain the breaking metaphor. Thus, I would argue that metalepsis and the alienation effect still remain useful, however they need to be applied within the boundaries of their narratological definitions.

[12] In video games, immersion is usually defined as a feeling of presence within a virtual environment and is often sought after by developers (Calleja 2011). However, immersion is potentially hindered by non-diegetic or metaleptic elements of texts, in this case mostly by video game interfaces, which directly address the player (Galloway 2012). The questions of interfaces is explored in more detail in section 1.4.1.

[13] Jørgensen defines ecological information *as "[…] natural to the gameworld in the sense it exists in a harmonic and dynamic relationship with its surroundings, where it may effect and be affected by the gameworld and other entities in that world, such as avatar."* (Jørgensen 2013, 79)

[14] On the other hand, emphatic information emphasizes certain elements of the gameworld or adds new information and *"tends to be represented by way of symbols, color filters and other features that are not are not represented in a verisimilar manner."* (Jørgensen 2013, 79)

[15] For example, stating that video games are more paratextual and non-diegetic than linear texts bears no value as it is largely imposed by the chosen perspective.

However, that does not mean that the relationship between paratextuality and non-diegetic elements is straightforward or mechanical. One can assume that most paratexts are extradiegetic as they take place outside of the primary storyworld. Still, some paratexts might combine various diegetic layers, including the intradiegetic one. Comparably, extradiegetic elements are not always paratextual, even though these dimensions sometimes align. For example, notes in a novel might be both intra- (for example, when written in character) and extradiegetic but they are always potentially paratextual as they influence the interpretation of the text they relate to and work within the established cultural practice of a literary note.

In this respect, Galloway poignantly describes the implications of interactivity of a video game artifact caused by its technological underpinnings. He advises to pay attention to the internal tensions caused by video game's dual nature – the narrative and the machine – and addresses the bias of paratextuality as a concept that is intrinsically connected to the functional and technical aspects of a text:

> […] software is functional and thereby exacerbates and ridicules the tension within itself between the narrative and mechanic layers – the strictly functional transcodings of software, via a compiler or a script interpreter for example, fly in the face of the common sense fact that software has both an executable layer, which should obey the rules of a purely functional aspect of the code (similar to what Genette calls "paratextual" in literature), and a scriptural layer, which would obey the rules of semantics and subjective expression […] (Galloway 2012, 76)

What this means for video games as a medium is that elements which address the ludic aspects are more likely to be considered paratextual and extra-diegetic even though they are not strictly speaking peripheral to a video game experience. On the contrary, they are rather central to a gaming experience but at the same time also outward facing in order to facilitate a working interface (see section 1.4.1) with a player.

In his analysis of *World of Warcraft* (Blizzard Entertainment 2004), Galloway hints at an important link between diegesis and paratext on an empirical level. Social games such as MMOs require a lot of extradiegetic information to facilitate the connections between players, the game and the outside world. These elements then establish paratextual connections between the text and its outward-facing elements, which include various forms of interfaces.

Storytelling and diegesis should not be treated as everything a video game has to offer. Nevertheless, these narratological concepts offer insight into the internal tensions between the components of a video game. While paratext and extradiegetic elements might easily overlap in the case of narrative literature, in video games the text is always more than just a story or video game's verbal content and the distinction is thus more important. Moreover, paratextual genres provide a possible space for metaleptical effects where the expected industry practice might be subverted by addressing the paratextual relationship at hand, for example through self-referentiality.[16]

[16] The launch trailer for the video game *Deadpool* (High Moon Studios 2013) is an example of such metalepsis enabled by paratextuality. In the trailer, the titular character Deadpool explicitly acknowledges the fact that he is starring in a trailer. In a role of its director, he deliberately attempts to uphold the formal characteristics of a video game trailer by choosing appropriate music and footage. However, the metaleptical device of the alienation effect here causes a subversion of the genre of a video game trailer and provides a critical commentary on trailers in general and the promotional logic behind their creation.

1.3 Materiality

In the most literal sense, the material borders of a work constitute its physical threshold, thus serving as a paratext of sorts: *"the sole fact of transcription – but equally, of oral transmission – brings to the ideality of the text some degree of materialization, graphic or phonic, which, as we will see, may induce paratextual effects."* (Genette 1997b, 3) Whether one talks about a book cover or a picture frame, these liminal phenomena position a text within a broader social reality and provide an entrance for a reader. They are the literal *"thresholds"* , *"vestibules"* (Genette 1997b, 2) or *"airlocks"* (Genette 1997b, 408), to which Genette alludes in his metaphorical description of paratexts. The paratextual effects of materiality do not end with the cover and include other elements such as typography. The original definition of paratextuality accounts for these types of non-verbal paratexts.

One of the first scholars to study physical boundaries of a work of art was Georg Simmel (1994) who wrote an essay about a picture frame in 1902. He describes it as a border that divides the work from the surrounding world where it is displayed. At the same time, the frame maintains the unity and the self-sufficient existence of a painting. Boundaries of a work of art then fulfill a double function: *"they are that absolute ending which exercises indifference towards and defense against the exterior and a unifying integration with respect to the interior in a single act."* (Simmel 1994, 11) In consequence, a frame posits a reader outside of a work of art, allowing for an aesthetic experience. Simmel further argues that photography cannot achieve a comparable internal unity because it is always connected to the reality it depicts. Because of this relationship, it is often displayed without a frame. Moreover, he explicitly introduces a hierarchy between a picture and its frame, which serves to highlight the picture's artistic value.

Simmel is mostly concerned with the structural implications of a frame, however he implicitly touches upon its influence on reception. The aforementioned quality of a frame, which enables an aesthetic experience, in essence communicates that its insides are a work of art. This observation hints at the ways in which the material boundaries impose a certain reading of a work of art just by containing it within its boundaries and differentiating it from surroundings.

Gennete (1997b) pays attention to material aspects of literary publishing and, for example, closely examines the role of typesetting, paper quality and formats of codex books, including both the original sheet size and the distinction between hardcover and pocket book editions. Beside basic economic implications, book sizes carry cultural meaning, being thus truly paratextual: *"For undoubtedly the pocket edition will long be synonymous with canonization. On that account alone, pocket format is a formidable (although ambiguous – indeed, because ambiguous) paratextual message."* (Genette 1997b, 21–22) But despite the variety of analyzed paratextual elements, Genette's work is limited by its object of study: a printed codex book.

Within the field of literary theory, the questions of materiality have been picked up by N. Katherine Hayles (2002) and expanded to the area of electronic literature. Her concept of technotext emphasizes the material dimension of literary works and focuses on the interactions between a text and its inscription technology. According to Hayles, *"the physical form of the literary artifact always affects what the words (and other semiotic concepts) mean."* (Hayles 2002, 25) Despite this general assumption, the term technotext is reserved only for specific works, which openly address their status of material artifacts with regards to their verbal content. Technotexts thus practice literary criticism by interrogating their cultural form and the conventions attached to it. In all the presented cases of technotexts, the actual organization of the text takes the form of hypertext (in its dominant meaning) or cybertext (Aarseth 1997). This focus on non-linear texts uncovers the cultural underpinnings

of the term technotext – the foregrounding of material circumstances of a text is particularly visible when a text is working against its default linear organization established historically through the medium of a codex book. Hypertext literature makes the material aspects tangible as it requires non-trivial and unconventional effort to traverse its contents, thus motivating a conscious manipulation with a literary artifact. Otherwise, navigation through linear texts is taken for granted. Such trivialization potentially obscures the impact of materiality (page size, for example) on reception.

Despite Hayles' arguably narrow focus, she calls for medium-specific analysis and for careful consideration of materiality across all types of literature. While technotext is an arguably rare case within the overall literary production, materiality influences the final meaning of any text to a certain extent. Moreover, technotexts' foregrounding of materiality can be considered a similar technique to metalepsis or the alienation effect, however with a different emphasis.

Overall, materiality is an important dimension of texts despite the rather homogeneous physical aspects of codex book publishing. When considering other media, materiality becomes more apparent. In digital environments, it often is an object of remediation (Bolter and Grusin 2003) – where materiality from one medium is recreated in another, for example book covers and pagination in e-books (McCracken 2012; Birke and Christ 2013; Pressman 2014; Smyth 2014; Malone 2015). The paratextual functions are adopted but new qualities and implications emerge in the new contexts. Still, one should not overlook paratextual implications of materiality just for the sake of visible physical differences and the literal sense of the term framing. Materiality often bears cultural and economic implications that go beyond the surface level of pure physical boundaries.

1.4 Framing

In the previous sections, I have touched upon the questions of edges and centers of a text and its material boundaries. These issues, which are closely related to paratextuality, have been also explored in a figurative sense as frames and framing. The scholarly understanding of frames is influenced by Erwing Goffman's (1986) sociological work in which he uses the term as a metaphor for interpretative schemata. Regarding media production, two broad categories of frames can be distinguished: (1) the ones that are embedded in texts by their producers, and (2) the ones that are employed by readers during the interpretation of a text.

Frames have been picked up by different fields and disciplines, often with major modifications to Goffman's original idea. For example, media studies scholars have developed the analytical concept of framing to study media effects (Scheufele 1999; Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007). In this methodology, framing is understood as a cognitive schema embedded by producers in texts to present news events in a particular manner, effectively steering the interpretation of such an event by audiences. While this perspective is partly connected to the act of reception, framing in communication research emphasize general structures in news presentation. Therefore, they deal primarily with genre theory or architextuality instead of paratextuality.

In his seminal work from 1974, Goffman (1986) himself was much closer to what Genette (1997b) defines as paratextuality. The introduction of the book actually reads like a practical experiment with framing. Goffman's understanding of framing capabilities of an introduction as a literary form can be easily compared to the function of paratext.

> That is the introduction. Writing one allows a writer to try to set the terms of what he will write about. Accounts, excuses, apologies designed to reframe what follows after them, designed to draw a line between deficiencies in what the author writes and deficiencies in himself, leaving himself, he hopes, a little better defended than

> he might otherwise be. […] Just as certainly, such efforts are optimistic when their purpose is to recast the way in which a long book is to be taken. (Goffman 1986, 16–17)

Goffman then muses about prefaces and comments to prefaces and chains a series of meta-referential paragraphs in an attempt to show the complexity of framing devices. In the actual book, the scope of frames is much wider and encompasses the whole social reality as opposed to Genette's (1997b) focused look on literary publishing. However, both scholars seem to share a broad perspective on the substantiality of frames and paratexts, respectively, ranging from contextual information to texts and material objects.

It is the so-called factual paratext that aligns with Goffman's broad understanding of framing. It allows any information about a text, its author and other circumstances to become paratextual. This feature of the original framework emancipates paratextuality from being constrained by textual manifestations (effectively in both the verbal and the more general sense of the term assumed throughout the thesis):

> Most often, then, the paratext is itself a text: if it is still not *the* text, it is already *some* text. But we must at least bear in mind the paratextual value that may be vested in other types of manifestation: these may be iconic (illustrations), material (for example, everything that originates in the sometimes very significant typographical choices that go into the making of a book), or purely factual. By *factual* I mean the paratext that consists not of an explicit message (verbal or other) but of a fact whose existence alone, if known to the public, provides some commentary on the text and influences how the text is received. [emphasis original] (Genette 1997b, 7)

Notable examples of factual paratexts are age and gender of an author. Such information might not be manifested in any tangible textual form but still influences how one reads a given text.

Ironically, the aforementioned breadth of paratext was criticized by a literary scholar Werner Wolf (2006b) using the term framing borrowed from Goffman. In his exhaustive overview on previous developments on framing, Wolf appropriates Gennete's concept and limits its scope in two significant ways (this revision of paratextual framework is further explored in section 2.2.1). First, his concept of "paratextual framing" is restricted by a textual form and second by a position at the borders of a work, meaning that paratexts are no longer spatially independent of the text they refer to. Examples of such redefined paratexts are titles or footnotes in codex books, opening and closing credits in film, picture frame or caption in visual arts. The broader meaning is then taken up by framings in general, which are classified into many different categories in a structuralist fashion.

This particular redefinition implies that paratexts should also be texts besides initiating their respective transtextual relationship. While such limitation might make this new version of paratext more comprehensible and tangible as an analytical concept, it reverses the original etymology of the term (meaning that something is para- to a text). According to Genette (1997a), paratextuality creates categories of so-called paratexts. However, the first step is a relationship signified by "para" in the actual term that is connected to a text, hence the name paratext.[17] Constraining paratexts or consequentially the whole relationship of paratextuality

[17] Georg Stanitzek provides a similar explanation of paratext's etymology by broadening the notion of textuality beyond the purely verbal: *"the term […] suggests that text is both something implied by paratext and simultaneously a superordinate concept. But at any rate paratexts—even author portraits or typographical appearance […] which one would first tend to classify under the category of graphics or typeface—are something like texts. Paratexts always imply at least a moment of readability and hence textuality—in the broader sense."* (Stanitzek 2005, 30)

to a verbal form in the context of printed literature goes against the original idea, despite the fact that Genette (1997b) himself mostly analyzes verbal paratexts.

To summarize, framing in Goffman's sense is very close to the threshold function of the concept of paratext. However, these two concepts are grounded in very different paradigms, namely sociology and literary theory. Thus, the scope of paratext is fairly limited (especially by authorship) compared to its counterpart.

1.4.1 Interface

Materiality (see section 1.3) can be considered the most literal take on the act of cognitive framing, assuming that tangible manifestations of framing – a picture frame – gave the concept its name. Interface lies between the literal and the figurative sense of the term and also closely relates to issues of paratextuality, especially in the vernacular understanding of video game interfaces. Interface originated in chemistry and physics, where it describes a surface boundary between two different matters. It was most likely first applied to media (and technology) surfaces by Marshall McLuhan in *The Gutenberg Galaxy* (2002) in 1962. Even later, McLuhan often (see McLuhan 1994, 1997; McLuhan, Fiore, and Agel 2001) referenced interface in a metaphorical sense of confronted environments or even confronted public issues within a media landscape. However, he has never tried to refine the meaning of interface for media studies, instead reinforcing the ambiguity of the term with every iteration. Currently, the meaning of interface ranges from the actual connection of two substances to the outward facing elements of an environment.

The growing interest in cybernetics and computational design resulted in the foundation of the field of human-computer interaction. This field introduced a new take on interface, focusing on user-oriented features of computer systems and digital media (Manovich 2002). The vernacular term "user interface" corresponds to this particular perspective that highlights the functionality and especially the usability of digital technologies. Still, this approach is often too preoccupied with practical aspects of interfaces to be able to delve into structural implications of the term and its confounded etymology.

Recently, Branden Hookway (2014) offered an exhaustive interdisciplinary overview of the concept of interface and its origins in the 19th century in the field of fluid dynamics. In his definition, interface is considered to be a form of relation. Thus, it is determined by the qualities of relation between entities and not by the actual entities themselves. Arguably, such perspective reflects McLuhan's earlier musings and is much broader and more abstract in its scope than the vernacular understanding of interface, pursued by the more hands-on computer science literature (Laurel and Mountford 1990). Often, the actual outward-facing features of one entity, which are supposed to be at the forefront of the interface relationship, are understood as the interface itself (ibid.). These varying definitions result in vague conceptualizations and terminological confusion. For example, video game heads-up displays (HUD) are usually considered interfaces or at least notable parts of interfaces (Calleja 2011; Jørgensen 2013). However, if one would follow Hookway's definition, the interface would be the whole relation of a player to a game, not just a part of software and hardware design.

Still, interface is not just any type of relation. As a liminal phenomenon between two entities, interface is characterized by the literal ambiguity of its transitory position. It creates many paradoxical situations and combines opposite processes in its role of surface between two environments: *"The interface is defined in its coupling of the processes of holding apart and drawing together, of confining and opening up, of disciplining and enabling, of excluding and including."* (Hookway 2014, 4) Interface is neither one of the entities confronted, instead it creates a special quality at their intersection.

Hookway himself uses the metaphor of threshold to describe the specificities of interface, yet he does not draw a connection between it and paratextuality, which Genette (1997b) likens to a threshold as well. Other scholars, such as Johanna Drucker (2011) or Galloway (2012), explicitly mention the overlaps between interface and paratextuality. Similarly to some forms of paratextuality, interface takes place at the surface levels of two entities giving limited insight into each other (depending on types of agency involved) while at the same time creating a certain boundary between them. For example, an airplane cockpit is an embodied interface between a plane and a pilot. It provides a feedback loop between the two entities while also separating them. To address the widespread metaphors used to describe its mediatory function, interface is not a window, nor a doorway as Galloway (2012) has already argued. Interface relation may be enabled by material aspects of two entities but as a liminal phenomenon its materiality is shifting and it is only borrowed for a time being while the relation manifests. Applying additional metaphors to an already metaphorical term only adds to the overall mystification of what interface means.

Still, the current state of terminology leaves us with unsatisfactory tools to tackle the overall issue of interface, especially in the context of framing. User interface might just as well be an interactive and sometimes immaterial frame embedded at the edges of an entity, while interface is the special relation of threshold where two entities meet. If one heeds to preserve some of interface's original etymology related to fluid relationships between different matters, then further distinction between features and relationships is necessary. Galloway's term "intraface" fits within this line of thinking. Defined as *"an interface internal to the interface"* (Galloway 2012, 40), it deals with the link between the center of an entity and its edges and tackles the interface question internally in an expectation of a potential interface relation. Thus, outward-facing features such as video game user interfaces can be understood as intrafaces instead, freeing up the former term for the original relational meaning.

Intrafaces come close to being paratexts. They are part of an object, although they are located at its outskirts. Moreover, their existence alone explicitly presumes a potential interface relation with another entity. Fundamentally, intraface highlights the interface even though its function is in most cases to facilitate a smooth and satisfactory interface experience of human actors, thus making the interface seem transparent or even invisible.[18] To a certain extent, it draws an operator's attention to itself and the boundaries between two interfaced entities. Therefore, it creates a distance alike the alienation effect providing a possibility of a critical perspective on a technology or a medium at hand. From a design perspective, intrafaces are often understood as struggles between transparency and opacity. Especially in video games, transparency is often sought after in a quest for greater immersion (Calleja 2011; Jørgensen 2013), while the critical possibilities of intraface are often overlooked.[19]

From a media studies perspective, intrafaces (akin to material boundaries of texts) are subjected to the logic of remediation (Bolter and Grusin 2003). Media-specific forms of intrafaces are adopted in other, historically newer but also older, media and carry a specific cultural message, which potentially influences the message transmitted with their help (Manovich 2002). Desktops, icons, first-person shooter perspective among others have all

[18] Intraface design is not necessarily oriented only at humans, it can also focus on computer actors interacting with each other.

[19] Diegesis is one of the ways to increase transparency of the intraface as I have already hinted at in section 1.2.1. Embedding necessary interface information in a diegetic layer of a video game is often considered a way to enhance immersion (Calleja 2011; Jørgensen 2013). Here, the tension between the center and the edges of a video game provides developers with an opportunity to shift otherwise peripheral information (e.g. health of an avatar) into the center of a diegetic world, effectively drawing attention away from its interfacial implications.

come to signify a specific interface positions and carry paratextual quality similarly to different book editions (for example, paperback/hardcover).

To summarize, framing in its broadest sense closely relates to paratextuality. However, it is arguably more abstract (and potentially encompasses a wider range of phenomena) as it is not grounded in a particular cultural practice and does not require paratextual authority. Interface is a connected concept that highlights the specific qualities of certain framing devices. Despite the terminological closeness and overlaps, paratextuality still remains an autonomous concept. However, intrafaces in general often manifest a paratextual relationship, thus they can be potentially classified as paratexts in the sense of a paratextual category.

1.5 Promotional Materials

Promotion[20] and advertising usually focus on selling a product or an experience. Thus, it mostly follows the hierarchical structure shared with Genette's paratext; a certain valuable text is promoted by instrumental texts whose function is to create a notion of a *"consumable identity"* (Klinger 1989). Understandably, scholars are often overlooking the role of promotion in pursuit of the main text. This particular bias has been already widely criticized by media and film scholars (Lunenfeld 1999; Johnston 2013; Gray 2010). Lately, promotion and promotional materials have been gradually attracting more attention as researchers have argued that the promotional costs often rise to a full third of the whole budgets for cultural productions and can often go even higher, especially in the film industry (Gray 2010). Beside their economic importance, some promotional materials have gained a privileged position within the media landscape. For example, trailers have become a popular cultural form on their own merits (Kernan 2004; Johnston 2008; Gray 2010; Vollans 2015; Johnston, Vollans, and Greene 2016).

The promotional paradigm emphasizes the commercial nature of many cultural artifacts, such as films, video games or books. While this also holds true for paratextuality, the interpretative frame of the figurative threshold is deliberately downplayed in promotional practice at the expense of wide distribution and accessibility. Barbara Klinger has pointed at this feature of promotional materials already in 1989:

> [...] the industry that creates these commercial epiphenomena is not primarily concerned with producing coherent interpretations of a film. Rather, the goal of promotion is to produce multiple avenues of access to the text that will make the film resonate as extensively as possible in the social sphere in order to maximize its audience. Promotional categories will often tend to diversify the text by addressing several of its elements, including subject matter, stars, and style. But this particular type of inter-textual zone cannot be settled within the textual system; rather, it raids the text for features that can be accentuated and extended within its social appropriation. (Klinger 1989, 10)

In general, promotion does not enforce an authorial interpretation of a promoted text, but instead provides a wide net of potential readings in order to attract as many consumers as possible. Thus, promotional perspective explores the current industry practices of production and distribution by going beyond the myth of a single authorial vision. This does not necessarily mean that promotional materials are incompatible with paratextual framework. Genette himself explicitly analyzes both authorial and publisher's paratexts and their impact

[20] I have already addressed the special case of cross-media promotion in section 1.2 about transmedia storytelling.

on textual systems, arguing that pursuing authorial intent, as many actual literary paratextual elements attempt to, is potentially harmful for the success of a text.

The promotional paradigm features a wide array of approaches, some of which deliberately follow in Genette's footsteps. Jonathan Gray's call for *"off-screen studies"* (2010, 4) echoes the previous interest in seemingly ancillary texts. As a film scholar, he challenges the centrality of the film in its theatrical form within the film culture. By refocusing the debate to hype, promos, trailers and merchandising, Gray aims to address the uncharted spaces between the three traditional pillars of media studies – texts, producers and audiences. After all, the viewer experience is co-defined by these side activities. However, as Johnston (2013) has argued, the actual term off-screen studies overlooks the amount of information being disseminated through screens even if one looks past the perceived "central" texts. Trailers, behind-the-scenes footage or licensed video games are all approached and experienced through screens and at the very least present a terminological (or etymological) obstacle to off-screen studies. Even though the screen is supposed to stand for a metaphor of both film and television studies, it feels counter-intuitive to the actual mission of the proposed discipline.

Another attempt at reframing the debate around promotion and paratextuality has been undertaken in the edited collection *Ephemeral Media: Transitory Screen Culture from Television to YouTube* (Grainge 2011).[21] However, the term ephemeral media encompasses many other phenomena than promotional materials, even though ephemerality plays an important role in formally ancillary texts such as advertisements. Ephemeral media or ephemera as a category of texts range from idents, interstitials and promos to other short-lived or short-in-length texts. While there is a notable overlap between this rather broadly sketched-out framework and off-screen studies – namely the interest in overlooked forms of screen culture –, the ephemerality of promotional materials is partly coincidental. While many forms of advertising elude archiving as they are below the threshold of scholars, professionals and fans, increasing prestige of certain promotional texts – such as the aforementioned trailers – goes against this historical trend. Ephemeral media thus proves to be too loose a category to warrant a coherent analytical framework. Still, the emphasis on ephemerality can enrich future explorations of promotion and paratextuality.[22]

Lastly, Johnston's (2013) proposed term *"promotional materials"* suffers both from vagueness and over-reliance on the promotional quality, which to a large extent presupposes a subordinated role of promotional materials compared to "main" text, the very feature that Johnston himself criticizes about paratexts. While promotional materials might serve as a temporary catch-all phrase for all sorts of understudied cultural phenomena, Johnston is aware that it is not strong enough to provide necessary theoretical and methodological foundations. Compared to paratextuality, it is also narrower in its scope due to the titular promotional function. However, a more specific focus might be considered an upside in the context of bloated terms such as intertextuality and the expanded versions of paratextuality (see section 2.2.2).

There are also research perspectives that allude to advertising but avoid taking a discrete stance within the overall debate on paratextuality and promotion. For example, Raiford Guins (2014) studies video game packaging, which could be easily understood as both promotion or paratextuality and is closely connected to materiality of video game artifacts. Even though Guins does not choose any of the available approaches, the framework of

[21] It was later followed by another edited volume focused on the ephemeral character of peripheral texts and paratexts (Pesce and Noto 2016).
[22] In fact, Genette (1997b) deals with issues of ephemerality in his operationalization of the temporal dimension of paratextuality (see section 2.1.2).

promotional materials offers such broad theoretical foundations that might be otherwise favored by scholars who aim to avoid adopting methodology from different cultural contexts.

1.6 Technical Communication

The discipline of technical communication[23] focuses on another subset of often overlooked texts that have a lot in common with paratexts. Similarly to many promotional materials, the artifacts of technical communication are considered ephemeral and invisible (Kimball 2017). To a certain extent such invisibility is intentional and even desirable. As I have already shown on the examples from sections about diegesis (1.2.1) and interface (1.4.1), transparency is often sought after in hopes of greater immersion on the side of a consumer. Technical communication genres such as instruction manuals follow this logic; as long as they are easy to comprehend and helpful, they stay unnoticed. The anonymous character of technical writing strengthens the notion of negligibility. Thus, both the technical communication and its authors appear nearly invisible. However, when a glitch appears or one gets lost while interacting with an object, technical communication comes to forefront at the expense of user experience.

Understandably, technical communication often falls below the threshold of both scholars and laymen. The profession of technical communicators lacks prestige and respect partly due to the voluntary invisibility its members accept when creating technical documents (Kimball 2017). These issues echo some of the concerns around paratexts that are not usually considered proper artistic literary works (Genette 1997b). Authorship of many paratextual categories is also anonymous or implicitly attributed to a publisher as a commercial enterprise.[24] Both paratextuality and technical communication also share the focus on liminal spaces, from which they attempt to frame the reading or use of a given text.[25]

The similarities between the fields of technical communication and literary theory and the applicability of literary concepts to analysis of technology, its production and distribution has been acknowledged already by Steve Woolgar in 1990:

> The body of documentation [...] comprises a set of texts which accompany the machine which [...] is itself best understood as a text. We can think of the documentation texts as peripheral texts intended to enable the operation/reading of a core text. They are, so to speak, captions for helping readers find and see the relevant features of the machine itself. These captions configure the user in the sense, discussed above, of defining the correct courses of interpretation and action to be followed. They help guide access to the machine text. (Woolgar 1990, 81)

In essence, technical communication and the traditional literary paratexts aim to promote a preferred reading of a text. However, too forceful prescription of the uses of technology can

[23] The scholarly focus of technical communication lies in the communication about technology, through technology and in the critical understanding of the profession of technical writing.
[24] In this regard, Stanitzek notes the difference between paratexts in book publishing and cinema. While the authorship of the former is usually anonymous, film introductory sequences often include information about their creators: *"[...] in films it is not unusual—at least since the fifties—for the production of the opening credits to be acknowledged as well, that is, credited in them. [...] films enable one to see the authors of paratexts, in particular the authors of title sequences, the title makers."* (Stanitzek 2005, 37)
[25] The core interest of technical communication lies in obviously technical artifacts and paradoxically replicates the aforementioned concerns about the invisibility of the whole field. For example, technical aspects of established cultural artifacts such as books are easily overlooked because most readers know how to use a book. Still, elements of book publishing such as colophons can be easily understood as forms of technical writing. On the other hand, video games provide an obvious research venue for technical communication scholars.

be counterproductive in terms of sales as Woolgar argues in the context of personal computers:

> The text sells well if many different readers find a use for it. One might even go so far as to say that an author's attempts to prescribe readings, to delimit ways in which the text can be read, is a sure recipe for disaster, at least in the sense of guaranteeing early returns from the publisher [...] (Woolgar 1990, 73)

This call for openness of interpretation echoes Klinger's (1989) understanding of promotional materials and questions the value of authorial intent in commercial enterprises in which any potential ideological meanings of a text are only secondary to economic interests of producers and investors. Genette (1997b) himself comments on the fact that literary paratexts often stand in the way of a text's commercial success by imposing preferred readings on the reader and effectively limiting the size of its audiences.

As I have mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the paradigm of technical communication is currently dealing with similar topics of video game culture to the paratextual framework. The first attempt to map out technical communication within this particular context was undertaken by Douglas Eyman in 2008, coincidentally one year after the term paratext had been introduced to game studies by Mia Consalvo (2007) to address similar phenomena. In *Computer Gaming and Technical Communication: An Ecological Framework* (Eyman 2008), a five-part framework for treatment of video game culture with regards to technical communication is introduced, focusing on the following aspects: (1) actions happening in a game, (2) game interfaces, (3) developer- and user-created documentation, (4) a game design process, and lastly (5) research and other forms of critical commentary. Especially the area of documentation for both the internal purposes of video game development and the end-users has been extensively studied over the last few years (Mason 2013; deWinter and Moeller 2014; McDaniel and Daer 2016). Design documents, manuals, game guides and patch notes have all been identified as instances of technical communication in video games, however the same texts have already been analyzed as paratexts (Consalvo 2007; Paul 2010; Harper 2014; De Grove and Van Looy 2014; Švelch 2016a), resulting in contesting conceptualizations. Still, both approaches seem to share the belief that the aforementioned categories of texts are not just technical accounts of video game artifacts but also provide room for ethos construction and rhetorics in general (Paul 2010; Sherlock 2014). Thus, in these particular cases Genette's framework and the discipline of technical communication significantly overlap and even put emphasis on the same issues, namely the preferred use.

However, the two approaches in question still differ greatly in scope established by their basic definitions. Genette's framework originally dealt with a wide range of cultural and socio-historical aspects of book publishing while the discipline of technical communication clearly prioritizes technical writing. Thus, the concept of paratextuality is arguably broader as it encompasses many non-technical elements of textual systems, but some categories of technical communication, such as product reviews (Thominet 2016), nonetheless elude it.[26] For the sake of the thesis, Genette's framework provides a more fitting analytical tool for study of video game culture as a whole and not just of its apparently technical aspects.

1.7 Theory of Reception

Throughout the previous sections, I have been alluding to the issue of reception of texts and how paratextuality and other similar concepts deal with it. Genette's (1997b) original definition of paratext pays close attention to the paratext's influence on interpretation of

[26] User reviews would be considered metatexts in Genette's framework due to their critical relationship and (ideally) independent authorship.

texts and thematizes the potential polysemy of a literary text and how it can be steered and framed by paratextual elements. Thus, paratext as a strategic tool of any area of cultural production presupposes a certain autonomy of the reader. This autonomous act of reading might potentially yield interpretations of a text that have not been forecasted or desired by the author. In practice, the paratext's function is often to prevent such alternative readings (Genette 1997b).[27]

Implicitly,[28] the paratextual framework invokes the theory of reception, which was introduced to literary scholarship by the Constance School in the 1970s. The audience-oriented focus of Wolfgang Iser's and Hans Robert Jauss' work manifested in their interest in the reading process. Here, Iser represents the theoretical branch of the Constance School by addressing the phenomenological processes of reading (Iser 1972, 1978), the indeterminacy of a text (Iser 1971), which influences the range of interpretation (Iser 2000), and an implied reader (Iser 1995). In his own theory of aesthetic response, Iser (1978) argues that a text presupposes a certain implied reader whose interpretation of a text is desirable by the author. However, the actual reading process undertaken by a real reader offers a range of different interpretations, which are caused by the polysemy and indeterminacy[29] of a literary text. Thus, the reader's response is not automatic or completely determined by the text but it is influenced by certain characteristics of a reader and a context. In this sense, Iser (2000) likens interpretation to translation in order to emphasize the activity of a reader and the disconnect between a text and its reading.

Paratextuality comes into play as a potential set of instructions or a corrective for the reader to show them a path to the expected interpretation (Genette 1997b). However, as Klinger (1989) has shown on promotional texts and Woolgar (1990) noted about technical writing both of which often overlap with paratexts, paratextuality might as well deliberately promote different interpretations of a text for different audiences and increase the polysemy of a text. Overall, the concept of paratextuality fits within the broader debate on reception as the paratext's main function is to present a text to audiences and *"ensure the text's presence in the world, its 'reception' and consumption"* (Genette 1997b, 1) whatever the actual framing aims for.

Paratextuality always manifests at a concrete socio-historical moment. Among the members of the Constance School, it is Jauss (1970, 1982) in particular who has called for the study of reception in the historical context and whose work provides necessary foundations for the assessment of paratexts within the concrete historical reception. The historicity of reception has two main implications for paratexts: (1) the production and dissemination of paratexts itself, which always takes place in a concrete socio-historical moment, and (2) the historical record of a text and its reception, as it is captured within paratextual elements.

Jauss argues that reception is always influenced by a *"horizon of expectations"* (Jauss 1970, 12), which is formed by previous experiences and knowledge of older texts. Thus, any new text *"evokes for the reader (listener) the horizon of expectations and rules familiar from earlier texts, which are then varied, corrected or just reproduced."* (Jauss 1970, 13) The process of horizon setting then often works along the lines of genres or architextuality. Paratexts can explicitly address the historical body of earlier texts and call upon the shared

[27] Alternatively, paratexts can be also issued after an unsatisfactory reading has been noticed by an author in order to at least remedy the previous negative reception.
[28] By referencing Miller's (1979) deconstructionist approach to literary theory, Genette encourages a post-structuralist reading of paratextuality, including its implications for audience reception.
[29] Iser (1978) builds on the concept of *"Unbestimmtheitsstellen"* – the spots of indeterminacy – coined by Roman Ingarden (1980) but he rejects Ingarden's distinction between true and false concretizations of a literary work.

horizon of expectations by drawing attention to similar works, authors or traditions. Texts are created in a particular historical moment and paratexts can link them to specific parts of the socio-historical context. In turn, reception may be potentially steered by setting or changing the horizon of expectations. Paratextual categories such as prefaces often deliberately position a text within a concrete space and time, for example by including the exact location and date of writing of the preface (Genette 1997b).

Moreover, later prefaces in subsequent editions of a text can be used as a response to critics. According to Genette, this was *"the main business of prefaces to plays in the classical period"* (1997b, 241). In consequence, later paratexts attempt to reset or adjust the original horizon of expectations that may have not been favorable to reception of previous editions of a given text. At the same time, paratexts when preserved become a record of historical reception and chronicle the author's or publisher's reaction towards previous audience interpretations of the text.

Fundamentally, theory of reception revisits the basic constituents of literary culture and refocuses the debate from texts and producers to readers:

> In the triangle of author, work and reading public the latter is no passive part, no chain of mere reactions, but even history-making energy. The historical life of a literary work is unthinkable without the active participation of its audience. For it is only through process of its communication that the work reaches the changing horizon of experience in a continuity in which the continual change occurs from simple reception to critical understanding, from passive to active reception, from recognized aesthetic norms to a new production which surpasses them. (Jauss 1970, 8)

In this triangle, paratexts can be located as the links between the three points making the often hidden interactions among them visible. They explicitly connect authors with their texts and their audiences by addressing the socio-historical reality in which the whole triangle is located. Gray has described this feature of paratextuality in terms of media ecosystems:

> If we imagine the triumvirate of Text, Audience, and Industry as the Big Three of media practice, then paratexts fill the space between them, conditioning passages and trajectories that criss-cross the mediascape, and variously negotiating or determining interactions among the three. (Gray 2010, 23)

While the Constance School laid the groundwork for study of reception, the individual types of readings have been later developed by media scholars Umberto Eco (1972) and Stuart Hall (1973)

In the context of television audiences, reception studies were based on a significantly different tradition of communication research stemming partly from the earlier models of Claude Shannon (1948) and Harold Lasswell (2014). The first attempt to develop a typology of readings that would account for activity of audiences was undertaken by Eco in 1965.[30] As a semiotician, Eco focuses mostly on the issues of code and its implications for interpretations of texts. The main contribution of this article lies in the term *"aberrant reading"* (Eco 1972, 104), which is defined as a decoding of a message by its recipient that is significantly different from the one initially encoded by its author. Eco assumes a historical perspective and charts four possible reasons for aberrant readings: (1) missing knowledge of a code, (2) superimposition of a different code, (3) a different hermeneutic tradition, and (4)

[30] Eco presented his basic typology of readings at the workshop *The Study Group for the setting-up of an interdisciplinary research model on the television audience relationship*, which took place at the University of Perugia in October 1965. It was translated to English by Paola Splendore and published by the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in 1972.

a different cultural tradition. He further argues that aberrant readings have been an exception before the advent of mass media, which broadcast messages across many cultures and face a greater risk of an unexpected decoding. Overall, Eco is interested in rather apparent misunderstandings caused by incompatible codes. However, his formal approach frees up aberrant reading from any ideological connotations – in this sense it gets very close to the notion of interpretation as translation. At the same, Eco downplays the activity of a reader as their role is reduced mostly to picking the right code for a message at hand.[31]

The ideological aspects of interpretation have been picked up by Stuart Hall (1973) who provided a typology of reading stances. Chronologically, it can be considered a continuation of Eco's earlier contribution with which it also shares the semiotic terminology, here combined with Marxian dialectics. Hall distinguishes between three basic types of readings: (1) dominant-hegemonic also known as preferred, (2) negotiated, and (3) oppositional. The first type presents a reading position in which audiences fully accept the encoded meaning of a message, while in the third case a reader rejects the encoded ideological message despite understanding its literal meaning and any relevant connotations within a dominant discourse. Lastly, the negotiated position is a middle ground where a receiver of a message accepts some but not all of its rhetorics.

This typology adds a new layer on top of aberrant reading. Eco's aberrant reading is in its purest form a technical failure of communication while Hall's readings are always situated within an ideological struggle. However, the latter's dialectical foundations imply a certain deterministic flow between production and reception.[32] In consequence, readers can never escape the overarching dialectics embedded in the Marxian paradigm even though in their active role they are able to negotiate with hegemony or outright oppose it.[33]

Both Eco's and Hall's approaches can also benefit from the historical perspective on reception developed by Jauss. In this sense, preferred and aberrant readings are always historically dependent and undergo a never-ending process of negotiation and reevaluation. Here, the authorial control is limited by other involved stakeholders who can shift the original meaning of a text and make the author reconsider their original intention. In their capacity of links to socio-historical reality, paratexts then record these shifts in accepted interpretations, which can be used to track the evolution of interactions of involved actors between the individual moments of production and reception.

To summarize, paratexts are closely tied to the issues of reception of media texts. One of their main functions is to facilitate the reception itself by presenting a text to audiences. Additionally, paratexts potentially frame reception by emphasizing specific aspects of texts and can promote preferred readings (or any other for that matter). Moreover, the concept of

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[31] This particular feature of the framework is at least partly compensated by the introduction of sub-codes and functions of a message, which take into account the intentions of an author and the interests of a reader. Eco uses an example of an advertising message, which can be decoded on many separate levels, including the code, sub-codes and potential functions: *"An advertising message can denote 'man, woman, children around a table with a saucepan and a box of X cubes', secondly it can connote 'happiness and serenity' – and in this it performs the reference, emotional, and imperative functions together (it could also perform an aesthetic function) […] it is very likely for the addressee to interpret it in the light of the first three functions and to leave the fourth one out of consideration. But a more guarded and sensitive addressee could not be persuaded that he must buy X cubes […]"* (1972, 115–16)

[32] Admittedly, Hall attempts to address this deterministic relationship by claiming that these are *"linked but distinctive moments – production, circulation, distribution/consumption, reproduction."* (Hall 1973, 1) However, this reservation is barely reflected in the rest of the article.

[33] This particular dependence on the hegemonic discourse resulting in inability to think outside the constraints of a basically two-sided societal struggle has been, for example, criticized by Iser (2000) in his later work on a range of interpretation.

paratextuality explicitly connects the trinity of producers, texts and readers to each other by explicating the links between them including the historical negotiations over the meaning of texts. At the same time, paratexts are also objects of reception themselves even though they often initiate reception of other texts. However, their own textual status is usually neglected in favor of more prestigious texts. Even if considered as a part of broader textual systems, paratexts are the outward facing elements that directly address readers. Thus, any study of actual reception of a text cannot be complete without the inclusion of its paratexts. Consequently, any analysis of paratexts necessarily deals with reception or at least with potential reception.

1.8 Paratextuality Contextualized – Conclusion

The previous sections have presented Genette's paratextual framework in the context of related theories approaches in order to evaluate its usability for the task at hand – exploring paratextuality of video game trailers. Through this comparison to other concepts, I have uncovered the following four thematic aspects of paratextuality – (1) structural relationships, (2) framing effects, (3) types of communication, and (4) reception – which in combination make it a unique analytical tool. In the next sections, I summarize the first chapter by addressing these specific facets of Genette's concept.

1.8.1 Structural Relationships

At its core, the concept of paratextuality is concerned with the structural relationships between texts and textual systems. Thus, it can be seen as a refinement of broader intertextual debate initiated by Kristeva in 1969. As one of five transtextual relationships, paratextuality often interacts with other transcendent properties of texts, from which it is distinguished by its threshold function – the task to present a text to its potential readers – and a certain dependence of a paratext on the text it informs about, at least in Genette's (1997a) original conceptualization. In terms of general intertextuality (and intermediality as well), texts are usually independent and interact with each other on equal terms. For example, a novel intertextually connected to another novel is still a sovereign literary work. On the other hand, in Genette's (1997b) framework paratexts are subordinate to the so-called main texts and they are rarely considered proper literary texts. Moreover, paratexts are located at the edges of textual systems and this liminal position is crucial to their role as thresholds.

Paratextual relationships thus create systems of closely interlinked texts that belong to one intellectual property, within one storyworld or any other clearly defined grouping of texts. The concept of transmedia storytelling addresses similarly interconnected texts but it warrants more autonomy for its individual elements (Jenkins 2006a). The subordination implied by paratextuality is largely caused by the cultural bias of the original site of Genette's inquiry. Traditional literary publishing as a cultural venue values what is traditionally considered a proper literary text from the perspective of both production and reception. Transmedia storytelling deals with a significantly different situation of media mixes from the late 20th century onwards. In consequence, if paratextuality is to be applied in the context of new media environments then it requires refinement that would take into account the increasing importance of formerly ancillary texts as stated by Peter Lunenfeld: *"[…] the backstory— the information about how a narrative object comes into being— is fast becoming almost as important as that object itself."* (1999, 14)

At the same time, paratextuality, even if one accounts for its growing autonomy in contemporary cultural industries, still proves to be broader in its scope than transmedia storytelling as it does not necessarily have to be limited to diegesis. Here, the structure of narrative is a separate issue even though it may be relevant for an analysis of particular forms

of paratexts, possibly distinguishing between specific paratextual practices. Moreover, the diegetic viewpoint acts as an actual link between the concepts of paratextuality and transmedia storytelling allowing for their empirical comparison within textual systems. Effectively, diegetic paratexts can take part in transmedia storytelling efforts.

1.8.2 Framing Effects

Due to their liminal position within groupings of texts, paratexts provide a framing effect in both literal and figurative sense. The actual material boundaries of a text, as well as its elements that address the text's place within socio-historical reality, fit within Genette's paratextual framework. In the broadest sense of so-called factual paratexts, any information about a text can assume the role of a paratext, thus aligning with Goffman's (1986) understanding of framing. However, for the sake of analysing cultural industries a limitation on authorship is crucial (Genette 1997b). Paratexts thus require a paratextual authority – usually an author or publisher in the context of literature – to take responsibility and guarantee the aforementioned threshold function. Consequently, paratexts become strategic tools that frame texts in such a manner as to provide a desirable reading experience, at least according to the perspective of the paratextual authority.

As a framing device, paratexts come to forefront in a situation of interface where one entity comes into contact with another entity (Hookway 2014). Their outward-facing nature creates an instance of so-called intraface (Galloway 2012) – a part of a text that is designed to facilitate an interfacial connection and ensure an effective communication flow between the two entities in question, usually a text and its reader. However, paratexts surpass the arguably limited notion of user interfaces as they are not constrained by co-presence of the text they refer to – they might be located both inside and outside of a text and inform audiences about the text's existence remotely.

1.8.3 Types of Communication

The actual framing effect can take different forms, depending both on a particular text and industry practices. In cultural industries such as literary publishing, the film or the video game industry, many paratexts fulfill a promotional role. Here, the function of threshold overlaps with advertising of a product that has to be first bought in order to be "consumed". In context of technically demanding texts, some paratexts might also be understood as artifacts of technical writing instructing users how to efficiently engage with a techno-cultural artifact.

Both the promotional and technical communication frameworks emphasize the practical (applied) aspects of the relationships between texts defined by the rather instrumental roles of said texts. Thus, the perspectives of promotional materials and technical communication imply a hierarchical structure. Still, scholars from both disciplines call for more equal consideration of these often overlooked parts of textual systems (Johnston 2013; Kimball 2017) compared to what is culturally understood as a proper text of a given cultural area.

The concept of paratextuality shares many qualities with the two communicational frameworks, however the paratext's relationship to another text is much more broadly defined. It does not necessarily have to deal with promotion or instruction, even though it can do both. On the other hand, the issue of authorship is arguably stricter in the case of Genette's (1997b) concept, which leaves user-created texts out of consideration.

1.8.4 Reception

The issue of reception is embedded in the original definition of paratextuality alongside the structural, framing and applied implications of the concept. After all, the paratext's role is to initiate reception. Paratexts inform audiences about the structure of textual systems and

draw attention to texts that are considered reception-worthy by their producers. The framing effects then ground the text (and the paratext for that matter) in a particular socio-historical situation by addressing its status within a respective cultural tradition and horizon of expectations. Lastly, the particular instrumental functions of paratexts aim to influence the interpretation of a text in terms of preferred reading(s). All three steps are reflected in reception of a text. In a way, Genette's framework attempts to at least partly resurrect the author who has been proclaimed dead at the expense of activity of audiences; to borrow the metaphor from Roland Barthes' (1987b) influential essay from 1967. Despite potentially different interests behind paratextual production in terms of the author-publisher relationship, paratexts allow for limited control over a text's interpretation on the behalf of its creators. However, the necessity of paratextual elements in cultural industries actually supports the argument behind the postmodernist departure from the traditional notion of a singular authorial vision.

Additionally, paratexts can be considered links between the triangle of producers, texts and audiences possibly explicating their interactions and relations, including the historical evolution of text's reception.

To conclude, paratext is a multifaceted concept that deals with concrete issues of specific areas of human culture. Originally deployed in literary theory at the time when a codex book was the primary medium of literary publishing, paratexts addressed particular elements of literary culture – for example, titles, prefaces or formats – and assessed their importance for production, distribution and reception of literary texts (Genette 1997b). Other concepts have been developed over time but paratextuality still holds a unique analytical value due to the complexity with which it deals with issues of structure, framing and reception. However, in order to be applied to video games, Genette's framework needs to be first revisited and revised. As a concept dealing with cultural meanings and practices, it needs to take into account the specificities of video game culture.

Chapter 2: The State of Paratextual Research

During its thirty-five year long history, the terms paratextuality and paratext have been applied in many different fields often in ways that shifted their meaning away from the original definition. Their scope has been both broadened and narrowed down in their various iterations. Currently, there is no accepted version of paratextuality. Instead a multitude of different interpretations of Genette's (1997b) original framework permeates academia. In order to use it as an analytical tool, I first must take into account these variations and address their differences.

As a concept that is concerned with cultural meanings of textual practices, paratextuality manifests a certain bias caused by the original venue in whose context it has been developed. Many of paratext's dimensions are inferred from the realities of literary publishing and the way it had worked until the late 1980s. Therefore, the aforementioned revisionary approaches are to be expected. Moreover, they are to some extent justified when the original framework is to be transported to new cultural industries, including video games. Even literary publishing has undergone developments, for example the rise of digital distribution, which contest some of the basic properties of Genette's framework (see McCracken 2012; Birke and Christ 2013; Pressman 2014; Smyth 2014; Malone 2015).

In chapter 1, I have explored concepts related to paratextuality and the scholarly context in which it has been conceived, applied and further developed. With that knowledge in mind, the current state of the art can be assessed. First, Genette's framework is summarized with all its relevant features. Second, notable updates and revisions from various fields are addressed and analyzed. Additionally, I present an overview of previously used methodologies and research topics in order to capture the current state of academic interest in paratextuality.

Despite the all-encompassing title of the section, it is hardly possible to thoroughly examine all scholarly works dealing with paratextuality and paratexts. At the same time, even if attempted such broadness and exhaustiveness would come at a price of in-depth understanding of how various applications of the concept relate to the original framework and to each other. Therefore, the upcoming sections should be understood as a selection of works notable either for their impact or innovativeness. Due to the topic of the thesis, I focus primarily on game studies. Where there are overlaps, I also explore other areas of academia such as literary theory, media studies, and film and television studies.

2.1 Genette's original framework

In section 1.1, I have presented the basic definition of paratextuality in the context of the overarching concept of textual transcendence (Genette 1997a, 1997c). Here, I go into more detail regarding the particular aspects of the framework and the terminology used by Genette.

First of all, by 'text' Genette (1997b) means a text proper in the sense of a verbal body of mostly a literary text. Despite his focus on literary (or artistic) works, any book can be considered a text, thus warranting the existence of paratexts. On the other hand, paratexts do not necessarily have to take a verbal form. They encompass a wide variety of elements of literary publishing that relate in a certain way (simply put, by being a threshold) to texts – they are 'para' to 'texts'.

While the term paratext is often used interchangeably with the term paratextuality, there is a significant difference between a category of texts – an object – and a type of textual transcendence – a relationship. Initially in 1982, paratextuality was conceived as one of five transtextual relationships (Genette 1997a). It might seem counterintuitive and potentially misleading to adapt a typology of textual relationships into a typology of texts. Indeed,

Genette is aware of the potential issues, but he nonetheless claims that transtextuality creates specific categories. In his opinion, the terminological step from paratextuality to paratext is justified:

> [...] every text may be cited and thus become a quotation, but *citation* is a specific literary practice that quite obviously transcends each one of its performances and has its own general characteristics; any utterance may be assigned a paratextual function, but a *preface* is a genre (and I would claim the same for *titles*); criticism (metatext) is obviously a genre [...] [emphasis original] (Genette 1997a, 8)

I have previously argued that this particular feature of the original framework is questionable and potentially reduces the complexity of textual relationships (Švelch 2016a). Here it suffices to say that this connection between types of textual transcendence and categories of texts is indeed a part of the original definition and as such it has been adopted by other scholars. I cover the underlying issue more thoroughly in chapter 3.

In *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, Gennete (1997b) in the translation of Jane E. Lewin actually never uses the term paratextuality, opting instead for *"paratextual element"* (1997b, 4), *"paratextual message"* (1997b, 3) or *"paratext"* (1997b, 1). However, the foreword by Richard Macksey includes an overview of transtextuality and explicitly mentions "paratextuality" three times over the course of 11 pages. Interestingly, the omission of paratextuality seems to be a deliberate choice on Genette's part as it is also missing from Marie Maclean's translation of the introduction chapter from the monograph, which was published in 1991 in the journal *New Literary History* (Genette 1991). Still, the term paratextuality can be found in *The Architext: An Introduction* (Genette 1992) translated by Lewin and in *Palimpsests: The Literature in Second Degree* (Genette 1997a) translated by Claude Doubinsky. The sporadic use of the term paratextuality might explain the adoption of paratext instead of the original designation for the actual relationship. I address this issue and its implications, specifically the focus on texts and textual genres (or categories) instead of textual relationships in chapter 3.

Genette's (1997b) classification of paratexts is governed by five basic questions, which allude to linear communication models, including Shannon's (1948) and Lasswell's (2014) work from the late 1940s. The questions relate to specific dimensions of paratext: (1) *"where?"* – spatiality, (2) *"when?"* – temporality, (3) *"how?"* – substantiality, (4) *"from whom to whom?"* – pragmatics, and (5) *"to do what?"* – functions (Genette 1997b, 4). In consequence, this allows Genette to chart specific subtypes of paratexts based on their respective qualities determined by these five dimensions using examples from literary publishing. This classification is an integral part of the paratextual framework and deserves a closer attention.

2.1.1 Spatiality

Spatiality is conceptualized as a dichotomy of paratextual elements that are (a) either bound to the same location as the text they refer to – peritexts –, or which are (b) located elsewhere and work at a greater distance – epitexts. Genette explicitly leaves out no space for any hybrid categories of spatiality: *"peritext and epitext completely and entirely share the spatial field of the paratext. In other words, for those who are keen on formulae, paratext = peritext + epitext."* (Genette 1997b, 5)

This distinction is based on an original location of any such paratext and thus takes into account only the ideal and unaltered version of a text, meaning a book volume as it was designed by its author and publisher. Therefore, an interview with the author glued by a third party into a book still remains an epitext despite its actual location. Here, Genette assumes a producer's perspective and downplays the importance of an actual reader experience, which may be easily influenced by missing peritexts or epitexts-turned-peritexts. Moreover, not

much attention is paid to diverse material conditions that facilitate peritexts' attachment to a book. For example, a preface printed in the same volume as the text is much harder to remove than a dust jacket, which can get lost during distribution before the book gets to its reader. Still, both elements of book publishing would be equally considered peritexts in Genette's framework. The arguably underdeveloped conceptualization of spatiality is mostly caused by the simple materiality of a codex book, which does not contradict such binary thinking. When applied to more complex media technologies and distribution channels, including those present in video game culture, peritext and epitext fail to capture the variety of possible locations of paratextual elements. This part of the framework, which has been already criticized, is addressed in more detail in section 2.2.5.

2.1.2 Temporality

The temporal dimension of paratext is treated with more nuance and thus here Genette's typology successfully eludes structuralist constraints by not attempting to be exhaustive at any cost. Three basic criteria are taken into account when distinguishing between temporal conditions of paratexts: (a) relative timing to the original publication, (b) relative timing to the author's life, and (c) duration.

The first criterion (a) offers three possible situations: (I) prior – published before the text –, (II) original – published at the same time –, and (III) later paratexts, which are published after the text. Interestingly, Genette also decides to add a category of (IV) delayed paratexts, which are distinguished by a longer time difference from the original publication than later paratexts. In some cases, delayed paratexts are also considered to be final in the sense that no additional (later or delayed) paratexts of the same type (for example, a preface) have been published for a given work. However, such a distinction between later and delayed paratexts is arbitrary, at least regarding the presented operationalization of the temporal dimension. In the case of delayed paratexts, the actual difference is in fact functional and not purely temporal: *"For reasons of function that I will elaborate on below, here we have grounds for differentiating between the merely later paratext [...] and the delayed paratext [...]"* (Genette 1997b, 6). Still, this disclaimer does not change the fact that such an approach is not systematic and that it betrays the otherwise structuralist perspective of the relative timing to the original publication.

The second criterion (b) creates two basic self-explanatory categories: *"anthumous"* (Genette 1997b, 6) and posthumous. Either a paratext is published during an author's life or after their death. Such a distinction is relevant to literary culture but it lacks any real analytical value in cultural industries with wider production collectives, such as video games, films or television series.

Lastly, the duration (c) is determined by an act of deletion of a paratextual element, thus effectively establishing three basic categories: (I) deleted, (II) restored and (III) untouched. While the act of deletion is significant from the producer perspective, such a conceptualization of duration overlooks varying ephemerality of certain paratextual elements. For example, if one focuses on particular material manifestations of literary texts, peritextual prefaces are much more likely to be preserved than epitexts such as dust jackets or bands:

> The material feature that these two elements have in common, which allows us to look at both of them as appendages of the cover, is their detachable character, as if they were constitutively ephemeral, almost inviting the reader to get rid of them after they have fulfilled their function as poster and possibly as protection.
> (Genette 1997b, 27)

Genette is primarily interested in the act of deletion, connecting it to a notion of authorial control and its evolution throughout time. The physical ephemerality is sidetracked in favor of functional utility of a given paratextual element. A paratext is removed because it no longer serves its purpose in a new socio-historical situation, such as a publishing of a new edition within a new context of historical reception. In this perspective, Genette considers the act of disappearance of a paratext noteworthy only if it was caused by its author or publisher.

Temporality in general is conceptualized much more loosely than the spatial dimension. Beside the aforementioned digression to paratextual functions, Genette is somewhat reluctant to aim for mutually exclusive categories. Later in the book he admits that certain existing paratexts can be indeed identified as original, later and delayed at the same time. He even humorously frames this reluctance as conscientiousness when speaking about Jean de La Bruyère's *Caractères* (first published in 1688):

> [..] here is a preface that, in the form in which people have been reading it since 1694, is at one and the same time (or rather, according to segment) original, later, and delayed. All of that, it is true, over a span of six years, but it is equally true that four times in those six years La Bruyère felt the need to enrich, or at the very least expand, his prefatorial discourse. The name for that is professional conscientiousness, and it ought to induce us to act with equal conscientiousness. (Genette 1997b, 178)

By abandoning the structuralist quest for completeness and introducing multiple overlapping criteria, Genette prevents future criticism of this particular part of the framework. At the same time, the inconsistency and incompleteness of his temporal categories is most likely the reason why they are not as widely known and used as the peritext/epitext distinction.

2.1.3 Substantiality

Regarding the actual form of paratexts, Genette assumes an inclusive perspective that takes into account any manifestation of a paratextual relationship despite the fact that he later in the book focuses mostly on verbal paratexts. However, Genette does not go into much detail about other types of paratexts, listing only three examples: *"iconic"* (illustrations), *"material"* (typography, format), and *"factual"* (Genette 1997b, 7). The first two types fit easily into the general framework as they still have a somewhat tangible manifestation that helps one to locate them within the overall framework and assess their four other dimensions. The factual paratext, which I have compared to Goffman's framing (see section 1.4), eludes such classifications because it is purely contextual information. What makes such information paratextual is its potential to influence an interpretation of a text.

Regarding the factual paratext, the framework departs from the limitation imposed by authorship, which otherwise allows only for paratextual elements created by the author, the publisher or their associates. Genette explicitly talks about an *"authorial"* factual paratext as just one of the possibilities next to *"generic"* (caused by a text's genre) and *"historical"* (Genette 1997b, 7) paratexts. However, here it seems that the term paratext is used in a more figurative sense as opposed to other parts of the monograph. While a genre or a historical era might influence the reading of a text, they are only remotely connected to the deliberate acts of authorial framing, which lie at the center of the paratextual framework. Still, the framings established through these types of factual paratexts can be still attributed to the author (and their initial decision to write a certain text with a given genre in a given historical moment), although the author's ability to influence this particular paratextual quality of their text is very limited.

Genette does not actually use the category of factual paratext in his empirical analysis. Nonetheless, some sections, for example on anonymity, allude to an idea that missing

information about a text can be meaningful in its absence. Such missing information would technically fall within the category of the factual paratext as it lacks any tangible manifestation, but it still influences an interpretation of a text. In this regard, Genette distinguishes between paratextual and factual information, suggesting that factuality is in fact not a prerequisite of a factual paratext:

> [...] paratextual indications are matters of legal responsibility rather than of factual authorship: under the rules of onymity,[34] the name of the author is the name of whoever is putatively responsible for the work, whatever his real role in producing it; and a possible "inspection to verify" does not fall within the jurisdiction of a paratextologist. (Genette 1997b, 40)

Factually correct information about a text should does not be automatically become a factual paratext. In practice, factual paratexts are facilitated by contextual information first introduced either in other tangible paratexts (but now circulating independently among audience members) or implied by cultural practices and conventions. Technically, dissemination of factual paratexts can be indeed directly initiated by a paratextual authority but it is no longer under direct authorial control. For the sake of empirical analysis, such a broad scope is problematic[35] and Genette's own empirical work serves as an evidence to the fact as it avoids dealing with factual paratexts. Even material and iconic paratexts are sidetracked and explored only to a limited extent in the chapter on a publisher's peritext (Genette 1997b, 16–36).

2.1.4 Pragmatics

The treatment of the pragmatic dimension of paratextuality follows the less authoritative style of both temporality and substantiality compared to strictly operationalized spatiality. Genette (1997b) admits that he might have overlooked some pragmatic characteristics of paratextuality by providing the following four distinct aspects: (a) sender, (b) addressee, (c) sender's degree of authority, and (d) illocutionary force.

Regarding the sender (a), Genette identifies three basic categories of paratexts based on admitted authorship: (I) *"authorial"*, (II) *"publisher's"*, and (III) *"allographic"* (1997b, 9). The two first types are self-explanatory. The allographic category refers to a third party that has been delegated by the author or the publisher of a text to create a paratext and that the third party takes responsibility for it. A signed preface by someone else than the author is an example of an allographic preface. In practice, paratextual responsibility can also be shared between these three ideal types. Notably, this distinction reduces the scope of paratextuality to only such paratextual elements that can be considered authorial, publisher's, allographic or a mix of the three, thus disqualifying any external authorship.

The category of the addressee (b) is conceptualized using the reach of a particular paratextual message as conceived by its producer. When a paratext addresses the whole audience or its bigger segments such as actual readers or critics, then it is deemed (I) public. When it is meant only for specific individuals who are not supposed to share its contents, it can be considered a (II) private paratext. Lastly, the (III) intimate paratext has the most limited reach as it is addressed to the author. These types can easily evolve throughout time, for example in later or posthumous editions, when a formerly intimate paratext can be made publicly available. This classification, as many others from the original framework, assumes

[34] *"Onymity"* (Genette 1997b, 39) refers to a signing of a text with author's own name as opposed to anonymity (lacking a signature) and pseudonymity (signature of a fake identity).
[35] For example, temporality of factual paratexts is highly relative to individual reading experience and cannot be decisively classified from the production perspective.

the production perspective, meaning the intended addressee and not the actual audience of a given paratextual element.

The degree of authority (c) thematizes the level of responsibility taken by an author, publisher or their associates. I have already highlighted that Genette's definition requires a specific authorship of a paratext despite the often only implicit authorship of factual paratexts. Here, the original requirement is upheld and explored in a greater detail. Two basic types of responsibility are identified: (I) official, and (II) semiofficial. An official paratext presupposes a complete responsibility on the side of the author or the publisher. A semiofficial paratext, for example an interview with producers, can be denied or withdrawn by them. An allographic paratext can also be considered semiofficial, as it also easily questioned (or outright rejected) by the first party that has originally delegated it. In the monograph, Genette uses the term semiofficial interchangeably with unofficial, however I would argue that the word unofficial implies a completely external origin, especially in the context of fan studies-influenced fields and paradigms. Thus, it can potentially lead to confusion and to the broadening of the framework as seen in its many extensions (see section 2.2.2).

Lastly, the types of the illocutionary force[36] (d) are sketched in terms of a graded scale. Starting from the most simple illocutionary acts, paratexts can state an (I) information, (II) intention, (III) interpretation, (IV) decision, (V) commitment, (VI) advice, (VII) command or they can be (VIII) performative. Genette gives examples for all the aforementioned possibilities, however his typology should not be taken as exhaustive. One could easily think of other possible illocutionary acts taking a cue from Searle's (1976) taxonomy of illocutionary acts.

2.1.5 Functions

Beside the figurative functions of *"threshold"* (Genette 1997b, 2), *"airlock"* or *"canal lock"* (1997b, 408), Genette emphasizes the subordination of paratexts to so-called main texts. This servitude then determines the particular functions taken up by paratexts, for example the correction in the sense of errata. However, Genette does not provide any typology of functions and instead explores different variants in empirical material. He justifies this absence of even an attempt at a typology by arguing that functions are not mutually exclusive qualities of paratextuality as opposed to previous dimensions and thus do not need to be conceptualized deductively. Still, this claim contradicts his previous statements on all dimensions except for the strictly structuralist spatiality. Even though the categories of temporality, substantiality or pragmatics are not mutually exclusive, Genette still presents at least tentative typologies in these cases.

While the reconstruction of Genette's typology of functions is possible, it is not the aim of this section.[37] It suffices to say that Genette does not take any effort to do it himself in any organized way. Instead he argues that the functions are so heteronomous and diversified that they elude easy classification. Therefore, they are explored in particular sections on different literary genres of paratextuality, most thoroughly in the context of original prefaces (Genette 1997b, 196–236).

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[36] Genette (1997b) uses the term illocutionary force interchangeably with the more common concept of illocutionary act to designate an intended pragmatic meaning of a paratextual element compared to its literal meaning (a locutionary act).

[37] In her attempt to exhaustively list all paratextual functions, Annika Rockenberger (2014) has identified 16 types applicable to all media.

The majority of Genette's monograph is structured as an analysis of the most frequent types of literary paratexts. In a sense, the contents of the book can be taken for an unfinished typology of the following paratextual practices of literary publishing: (I) publisher's peritexts, (II) the name of the author, (III) titles, (IV) please-inserts,[38] (V) dedications and inscriptions, (VI) epigraphs, (VII) prefaces, (VIII) intertitles, (IX) notes, (X) public epitexts, and (XI) private epitexts. Apparently, this classification does not always work on the same level. Some categories are arguably much broader and more varied than others. For example, publisher's peritexts encompass formats, series, covers, title pages, typesetting and other material qualities of a text, whereas titles despite their rich history are formally a rather homogeneous practice. Genette also admits the absence of three other prominent types of literary paratexts, which he has deliberately chosen not to investigate: (a) translation, (b) serial publication, and (c) illustration. Thus, the monograph is more of a proof of concept than a definitive treatment of literary paratexts.

As I have already mentioned in the Introduction, Genette himself also encouraged the application of the concept of paratextuality outside of the area of literary publishing. Despite not dealing with texts in a verbal sense, other cultural industries employ similar strategies mirroring literary paratexts.

Overall, the theoretical treatment of paratextuality feels underdeveloped. The five dimensions are addressed in very different ways, from strictly structuralist spatiality to vaguely defined aspects of functionality. Genette contradicts himself on a few occasions as I have mentioned above and is clearly more interested in an empirical analysis than in presenting a coherent theory of paratextuality. In consequence, the relatively brief theoretical sections, namely the introduction (1–16) and the conclusion (404–410), read like a manifesto. Genette both stresses the importance of overlooked parts of literary publishing, which he conceptualizes as paratexts, but at the same time warns before fetishizing them as the new fashionable subject of literary scholarship. By coining the term factual paratext, he allows for nearly any information to serve as a paratext. Still, he is reluctant to call everything that is not the main text a paratext. In an attempt to limit the broadness of the concept, Genette emphasizes its subordination, which in turn determines the functionality of paratext. However, such a definition takes into account only the production perspective of a very traditional industry. Thus, it is easily contested by expanding the scope of the paratextual framework to modern publishing strategies such as transmedia storytelling (see section 1.2).

It is evident that Genette's original framework needs to be clarified if not partly revised to account for the aforementioned contradictions and the reductive perspective imposed by the chosen cultural area. However, any update needs to pay close attention to the fundamentals of paratextuality to prevent misinterpretation of Genette's core aims. While the actual execution of the paratextual framework is flawed, its mission has undeniable integrity and potential of uncovering strategies that authors and publishers employ to present their work in a specific light to their audiences.

2.2 The Current State of the Paratextual Framework

Recent applications of Genette's paratextual framework can only be evaluated in comparison to its original version. In the following sections, I explore the notable appropriations and critiques of the concept of paratext, following partly a chronological structure but also organizing the individual contributions into thematic areas. Over time, two main tendencies towards the paratextual framework can be observed in academia: (1) reduction of the scope of

[38] Genette defines please-inserts as a *"short text […] describing, by means of summary or in some other way, and most often in value-enhancing manner, the work to which it refers and to which […] it has been joined in one way or another."* (Genette 1997b, 104–5)

the concept of paratextuality and (2) expansion. Both approaches are selective in how they utilize the original concept. The reductionists (1) mostly follow the course set by Genette's empirical work, which only covers a fraction of possible paratextual phenomena, as I have mentioned in section 2.1. In consequence, they depart from the original vision and limit it by often arbitrary requirements on the actual form of a paratext. This approach is not particularly strong in academia but is nonetheless notable as it highlights the inconsistencies[39] within Genette's treatment of paratextuality.

The expanded concept of paratextuality (2) is characterized by disregard for its original theoretical foundations of textual transcendence. In consequence, the complexity and specificity of paratextuality is abandoned in favor of an all-encompassing term that combines metatextuality and hypertextuality and in essence applies to any epiphenomenon of a given cultural area. This breadth is caused by primarily by rejecting the limitation on authorship and inviting fan-made or journalistic texts into consideration. The expanded framework is highly influential in film and television studies, and game studies. It shapes the current understanding of paratextuality, often without clearly communicating its departure from Genette's original conceptualization.

In the rest of this chapter, I explore individual topics that do not directly fall within the two aforementioned general tendencies. First, it is Caldwell's (2014) sensitive appropriation of paratextuality to the study of cultural industries. While the original concept is concerned with cultural practices and conventions, they mostly provide a context for analysis of texts and paratextual phenomena. Only rarely, do they themselves become the main object of interest. In this regard, Caldwell presents a new direction, which at the same time preserves Genette's definitions. Second, I focus on critique of subordination, which has been developed across both the reduced and the expanded frameworks. As a defining feature of the original concept, subordination of paratexts has come under scrutiny in the context of modern media production and transmedia storytelling, which are understood as potentially subversive of the traditional textual hierarchies known from literary publishing. Lastly, I take a closer look at developments in the operationalization of the spatial and temporal dimensions of paratextuality. These two conditions of paratextual phenomena are closely related and have undergone methodological revisions based on new media industries, such as video games.

2.2.1 Paratextual Framing: The Reduced Concept of Paratext

The attempts to narrow down the scope of the concept of paratextuality have been originally undertaken in literary theory, however they have also been picked up in other fields, such as game studies. Scholars try to narrow down the scope of the concept of paratextuality in order to create a more homogeneous category of texts and cultural practices. Beside the intention of limiting the arguably broad original framework, they also share the frame metaphor, which they use to distinguish between general framings and a more limited notion of a paratextual framing.

Already one of the earliest articles dealing with the concept of paratextuality presents a limited version of Genette's (1997b) framework. Marie Maclean, who translated the introductory chapter of Genette's monograph for the journal *New Literary History* (Genette 1991), argues in the same issue that paratext is a *"verbal frame"* (Maclean 1991, 274). While she does not explain the reasoning behind such a reduced definition, she then proceeds to analyze particular examples of verbal paratexts such as titles or dedications. Maclean shares Genette's opinion on the liminal position of paratexts and supports this argument using the theory of speech acts (Austin 1975; Searle 1976). In her opinion, the illocutionary acts of

[39] Genette (1997b) presents a broad concept but its empirical application is narrow and focuses mostly on the subset of verbal peritexts.

paratexts are significantly different from the illocutionary acts of the text itself. Supposedly, this is caused by the difference between diegetic layers of textual and paratextual elements of a book. This claim implies a rather mechanical connection between the extradiegetic/diegetic dichotomy and the distinction between a text and a paratext, suggesting that paratexts are always extradiegetic. However, conflating the structural questions of diegesis with paratextuality presumes very basic types of texts and paratexts. Maclean's observation might hold true for some literary texts, but paratexts written in-character or autobiographies easily disprove such a universal assumption – in these cases the text and the paratext can take place on the same diegetic level while facilitating potentially different illocutionary acts.[40]

A more elaborate version of the reduced approach was presented by Werner Wolf in 2006. In his introduction to the edited volume *Framing Borders in Literature and Other Media* (Wolf and Bernhart 2006), Wolf (2006b) drastically limits the scope of paratext even compared to Maclean (1991). Wolf's paratext is not only reduced to verbal form, thus disqualifying iconic, material and factual manifestations of paratext, but also to elements spatially bound to individual artistic works, effectively leaving out the whole category of epitexts. Technically, this version of the term paratext would be considered a verbal peritext in the original framework. Still, Wolf never explicitly acknowledges this fact.

Apart from limiting the scope of paratext, Wolf includes it as a sub-category of his own concept of framing, which is built on Goffman's (1986) work on frame analysis and applied to media content. The resulting framework is structuralist at its core. Compared to Genette's vaguely sketched theory of paratext, Wolf's framing attempts to be a definitive and exhaustive treatment of all framing effects in media. In consequence, framing becomes even broader than paratextuality as it encompasses framing processes on both the sender's and the recipient's sides of communication along with any contextual and textual framings. However, here the underlying conceptualization is not built around the themes of a threshold and an authorial (or industry) perspective of attempted control over a text as in Genette's framework, but is instead based on the notion of cognitive frames and meta-concepts.[41] In other words, the basis of paratextuality is textual transcendence, which deals with a combination of topics (structural relationships, framing, functional types of communication and reception), while framing as a concept is primarily influenced by cognitive processes happening during the interpretation of media messages. Although the theoretical foundations differ significantly, the application of both frameworks partly overlaps. This is apparent from the topics of the aforementioned edited volume, which include film trailers (Hedling 2006), title sequences (Sommer 2006) or opera overtures (Walter 2006); all three phenomena could easily be considered paratexts as well.

A notable downside of Wolf's contribution is the terminological confusion caused by appropriating terms and greatly altering their original meaning. In consequence, paratext bears at least two very different meanings even though it would have been possible to choose another term – the original peritext is much closer to the redefined meaning of paratext. Moreover, Wolf does not attempt to systematically update or critique[42] Genette's framework.

[40] Maclean (1991) supports her claim that the difference in diegesis determines the type of an illocutionary act with an example from *Don Quixote*. Interestingly, Genette (1997b) uses the same example to prove a nearly opposite point – that a preface written in-character should still be considered a paratext despite being effectively intradiegetic.

[41] Here, "meta" stands for "about", effectively meaning concepts about concepts.

[42] The only exception is Wolf's (2006b) critique of paratext's subordination, which is built around a typology of framing functions that go beyond a text-centered role. This particular feature of Wolf's framework is explored along with other critiques of subordination of paratexts in section 2.2.4.

He only borrows certain terms that have gained momentum in academia and applies them in a potentially misleading way.

Fortunately, some of Wolf's followers explicate the differences between the two frameworks and the possible reasons for rearticulating Genette's terminology. For example, David Jara (2013) argues that Wolf's update addresses the problematic aspect of the factual paratext (see sections 1.4 and 2.1.3). However, limiting the original meaning of paratext to just a verbal peritext is a drastic solution. The perceived flaw could have been easily corrected in a more sensitive manner, for example by limiting paratexts only to elements of material manifestation. Moreover, framing encompasses even greater variety of phenomena than the original paratextual framework and Jara does not seem troubled by the existence of a broad contextual framing, which is a part of Wolf's framework. Arguably, Jara's interest in tabletop role-playing game rulebooks allows for such a reductive perspective as it focuses on a very small subset of both paratextual and framing phenomena. In a way, Jara does not have to directly deal with the methodological implications of the adjustments he promotes by choosing Wolf's framework.

Another attempt at combining Wolf's framing and Genette's paratext was undertaken one year later by Annika Rockenberger (2014). In her auto-ethnographic analysis of introductory sequences from *BioShock Infinite* (Irrational Games 2013), Rockenberger proposes a limited version of the concept of paratextuality in the sense of Wolf's update but supplies her own four basic criteria, which distinguish it from other liminal phenomena and create yet another version of the term paratext. This new paratext is (1) *"functionally subservient"*, (2) *"authorized […] by entitled members of the production collective"*, (3) *"verbal"* (Rockenberger 2014, 275), and (4) *"(at least partly) extra-diegetic"* (2014, 252). While the first two criteria align with Genette's original definition, the latter two contradict it. The limitation to a verbal form, which has been first explicitly proposed by Wolf (2006b), has never been intended by Genette despite his focus on primarily verbal paratexts (see section 2.1.3). Thus, Rockenberger's claim that *"there are very few indications that he [Genette] wanted to extend the meaning of the term 'text' to non- and paraverbal properties of books and texts or, accordingly, to mere facts […]"* (Rockenberger 2014, 267) is baseless and can be easily disproved by both Genette's (1997b) statements and his empirical work, which touches upon typography and book formats as elements of a publisher's peritext. Moreover, Rockenberger engages in false etymology by presuming that paratext needs to be formally a text (see sections 1.4 and 2.1). Instead, paratext in the original definition should be understood as an element of any substantiality that is 'para', meaning that it exhibits a paratextual relationship or facilitates paratextuality of a 'text'.

Rockenberger's revisionist tendencies extend to the fourth criterion. In this case, however, she acknowledges the departure from the original framework. Genette considers diegetic prefaces to be paratexts, partly because they are in essence still a paratextual category despite the uncoventional form. In other words, such experiments with diegetic layers still take place in the context of an established paratextual practice – the preface. The extra-diegetic requirement, which has been foreshadowed by Maclean (1991), is thus only concerned with the ontological side of things and overlooks the functional and cultural implications of paratextuality. Rockenberger's distinction between extra-diegetic paratexts and diegetic *"as-if paratexts"* (2014, 276) engages in highly metaphorical conceptualization in which the four restrictive criteria clash with the understanding of framing functions of paratextuality. As-if paratexts might thus behave paratextually but they do not fit Rockenberger's arbitrary

constraints, which have been introduced in an attempt to improve the applicability of the concept of paratextuality for empirical analysis.[43]

To summarize, the reduced versions of paratext share an interest in empirical application of Genette's original framework. The most frequent approach is to limit the substantiality of potential paratext forms. In fact, all four examples (Maclean 1991; Wolf 2006b; Jara 2013; Rockenberger 2014) reduce paratextual phenomena to verbal elements of media ecosystems. Unfortunately, the reduced framework does not succeed in making the term paratext easier to wield as it becomes dependent on broader concepts of frames and framing, further increasing the complexity of the framework and its terminology with arbitrary limitations to Genette's original definition.

2.2.2 The Expanded Concept of Paratext

Expansions of the concept of paratextuality have mostly taken place during adoption by new fields. Understandably, a new type of cultural production demands a certain re-articulation of paratextuality. Film and video game scholars have broadened up the notion of paratextuality in order to fit new phenomena, drawing inspiration from fan studies and including of user-created paratexts. In consequence, the expanded framework has abandoned a crucial characteristic of the original concept – the limitation on authorship.

Regarding game studies, arguably the most influential revision also marks the first widely recognized introduction of the concept of paratextuality to the field.[44] In *Cheating: Gaining Advantage in Videogames*, Mia Consalvo (2007) explores seemingly peripheral parts of video game culture claiming that surrounding texts should not be underestimated in their influence on the overall gaming experience. Her arguments follow Gennete (1997b) who also emphasized the role of paratexts within literary publishing in an attempt to contest the otherwise unquestioned centrality of the literary text proper. Despite calling attention to the importance of paratextual elements, Genette still believes in a traditional hierarchy of literary culture as explicated through the paratext's subordinated functions governed by the main text. Consalvo shifts the discussion from the industrial importance of paratexts to their potential benefits for audiences. In this regard, she connects them to gaming capital, a modified version of Bourdieu's (2010) cultural capital applied to video games. In her opinion, *"[p]aratexts are also anything but peripheral, and they grow more integral to the digital game industry and player community with every year."* (Consalvo 2007, 182)

More importantly, Consalvo expands the scope of paratextuality to elements of external authorship. While she focuses mostly on commercial efforts of so-called *"peripheral industries"* (Consalvo 2007, 9) or *"paratextual industries"* (2007, 4), which consist of video game magazines, strategy guides or mod chips, her inclusive redefinition of the term encompasses all video game epiphenomena, including fan-created texts and artifacts. If one would stay true to Genette's (1997a) notion of textual transcendence, many of these texts would be considered metatexts as they provide potentially critical commentary on video

[43] Here, also lies the explicit link between Genette's (1997b) paratext and Wolf's (2006b) framing – as-if paratexts are conceptualized as framings in general while paratexts serve as their sub-category. As in Jara's (2013) case, the breadth of paratext, which is the main focus of the critique and redefinition, is delegated to a different concept. However, unlike Wolf and Jara (2013), Rockenberger (2014) preserves the spatial variety of the original paratext allowing for both peritextual and epitextual paratexts.

[44] In fact, Mia Consalvo is not the first to use the concept in game studies. The first mention should be attributed to Nick Montfort (2006) who used the term in 2006 when talking about packaging and manuals of the game *Combat* (Atari 1977). Still, compared to Consalvo (2007) who discusses the concept throughout her entire book, Montfort only mentions the term twice, the second time in a footnote.

games.[45] Fundamentally, Consalvo seems to equate a peripheral location with paratextuality. However, the distinction between center and periphery has been originally applied only to texts authored by a production collective or a publisher, not by third parties. Firstly, externally-authored artifacts are always peripheral if one assumes the industry perspective, resulting in an arguably tautological conceptualization. Secondly, such texts might seek different goals by influencing interpretation of a video game compared to paratexts created by legally responsible producers.

The pursuit of equality of potential influence of peripheral elements on players and the video game industry should not come at the price of terminological confusion. Genette's definition of paratext is guided by the issues of production and distribution, while Consalvo is primarily interested in cultural capital within video game communities. Externally authored texts might increase gaming capital of a player in a comparable way to official texts, but they only contribute to framing of a video game within a particular socio-historical moment after it has been already presented via the traditional paratexts, such as official websites, trailers or box covers.

The issue of authorship is a key aspect of paratextuality and the decision to open it up threatens to undermine its analytical value. Consalvo's altered definition and especially the empirical chapters of *Cheating: Gaining Advantage in Videogames* divert attention from ancillary texts created by original producers to other parties involved in video game culture, presenting a skewed perspective of paratextual phenomena.

While appropriating Genette's original framework, Consalvo criticizes Fiske's (1987) intertextuality for being too broad.[46] However, her own take on paratextuality is nearly as broad as intertextuality. It combines the secondary and tertiary categories of Fiske's intertextuality, meaning both industry- and user-created texts, except for the hierarchical structure implied by the original terminology (see section 1.1). The only significant difference is the exclusion of primary texts and the transtextual relationships on this level. In other words, Consalvo's conceptualization of video game paratextuality includes any instances of paratextuality, metatextuality and transmedial hypertextuality as long as the texts bearing these qualities are not video games. Fundamentally, any non-game text that is somehow connected to video games is considered a paratext within this framework. This is ultimately a negative definition.

Around the same time, Steven E. Jones (2007, 2008) has devised a similar take on paratext. Despite a thorough introduction into the framework, which touches upon the basic properties of paratextuality and suggests a more traditional understanding of paratextuality, the resulting application of the term significantly widens its scope akin to Consalvo's (2007) concept of peripheral industries. For example, Jones considers fan-made texts such as machinima to be paratextual: *"[…] such acts of appropriation and repurposing—or I would say instead, paratextual extensions of the universe […]"* (S. E. Jones 2008, 45) Again, this is a considerably inclusive approach, which relegates issues of authorship to the background. The notion of authorial control is abandoned for a more structural perspective of textual relationships. In this regard, Jones builds on the concept of transmedia storytelling (see

[45] Recently, James Newman (2016) has addressed the importance of distinction between official and unofficial walkthroughs as the former category promises access to inside information from the developers. This means that official walkthroughs arguably become partly paratextual even within the original framework as their authorship can be classified as allographic in relation to the video game.
[46] Consalvo criticizes the all-inclusive framework of intertextuality as it has been put forward by Kristeva (1969) and later adopted by Fiske (1987): *"But the concept of intertextuality does not adequately account for the system-as-a-whole that can result, as it frequently refers to media relations at the broadest possible level—often searching for breadth rather than depth."* (Consalvo 2007, 21)

section 1.2) and argues that video games and other modern cultural artifacts are encircled by additional content, which both expands and feeds on the original text. Jones claims that transmedia storytelling is primarily paratextual. This is a complete overturning of Genette's (1997b) understanding of paratextuality as a phenomenon – from subordinate to dominant. In this perspective, a high degree of paratextuality is considered a defining quality of texts. Previously, it would have been considered a sign of improper texts, effectively a hindrance barring so-called 'paratexts' from being considered noteworthy and 'textual' on their own merits.

> We might say that [Charles] Dickens's texts, like *Lost*, and like almost any popular video game, are always already predominantly paratextual. That is, the formerly limited role of the paratext, to serve as a threshold or transactional space between the text and the world, has now moved to the foreground, has become the essence of the text. Once you look at today's games and game-like media entertainments, it's *all* paratext, in concentric circles rippling out into the world. [emphasis original] (S. E. Jones 2008, 43)

Jones' use of the term paratext revolves around a more inclusive meaning of a threshold. To him, any extensions or surroundings of a text function as a *"paratextual arena"* (S. E. Jones 2008, 152), facilitating a transitional space between a text and the outside socio-historical reality. Such understanding of a paratextual threshold allows any text to become a paratext at the expense of the notion of strategic deployment of paratextual cues, which is a key aspect of Genette's framework. Moreover, Jones barely distinguishes between the meaning of paratextuality and paratext, conflating these two concepts into an unwieldy term, which denotes neither a type of a relationship, nor a type of a text.

Essentially, Jones' approach overlaps with Consalvo's (2007) treatment of paratextuality except for the much bolder statements about the privileged status of the so-called paratextual surround, which distance Jones' paratext even further away from Genette. Additionally, Jones is primarily interested in various transmedia epiphenomena, both official and fan-created, while Consalvo focuses on commercial peripheral markets, which make profit of video game culture and in return offer ways to increase one's gaming capital. To a certain extent, both of these approaches imply a certain parasitic relationship between a paratext and a text – in the sense of Miller's (1979) deconstructionist take on literary criticism or Michelle Serres' (1982) influential re-articulation of parasitism in which parasites also serve as important connectors within a system (here within a system of texts). Such a quality is only implied in Genette's original framework. Paratextuality as a phenomenon of literary publishing is issued deliberately and always in the service of the main text.[47] A different interpretation of this relationship is that main texts parasite on their paratexts. Nonetheless, Consalvo's and Jones' conceptualization of paratext is an extension of the original term as it

[47] Genette never uses the word parasite in *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* (1997b) even though he directly references Miller's (1979) essay on parasite right on the first page when he explains the etymology of the term paratext. Still, Genette seems to be more interested in the spatial implications of the term parasite than in the power relations between a host and a parasite. Admittedly, the metaphor of parasite could be much more easily applied to the area of hypertextuality. So-called hypertexts (for example, parodies) often use popular hypotexts in order to capture a potential reader. Essentially, they build their claim of being considered a proper literary work on the status of an earlier text by an act of transformation or imitation. However, Genette also avoids using the term parasite in *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree* (1997a).

also includes more obviously parasitic elements such as metatexts of various origins, which fall within Miller's understanding of literary criticism as a parasite.[48]

A more literal take on the parasitic relationship is explicated in Jonathan Gray's (2010) update of paratextuality in the context of film and television. Genette's original etymology of the term paratext has borrowed from Miller's essay on literary criticism as a parasite. Its aim has been to thematize the simultaneous *"proximity and distance, similarity and difference, interiority and exteriority"* (Miller 1979, 219) of paratextuality as a phenomenon. On the other hand, Gray effectively subverts the original definition by applying the metaphor of parasitism more literally. Thus, he departs from Genette's understanding of paratextuality and moves closer to Miller's and Serres' (1982) terminology: *"[…] as a parasite feeds off, lives in, and can affect the running of its host's body, a paratext constructs, lives in, and can affect the running of the text."* (Gray 2010, 6) Given such a reconceptualization of paratext, it is logical that Gray considers external texts as potentially paratextual. However, such a paratextual framework is no longer concerned with the authorial intent emphasized by Genette and it conflates various types of textual transcendence into one broad relationship.

Interestingly, Gray sees paratextuality as a wider concept than *"hype"* or *"promotion"* (2010, 6) as both these terms imply an official origin. However, the same is true for paratextuality, at least in the original version of the framework (Genette 1997b). It is counterintuitive to choose a concept that shares this particular limitation and then revise it to include texts of external authorship. Technically, any different term could have been picked in order to create a broad category of texts that encompasses paratextuality, metatextuality, certain forms of intertextuality and hypertextuality. Even though Gray is aware that there is a difference between press reviews, fan-produced texts and official paratexts in terms of the interpretations they promote and the claims they can make about a text, he still decides to discard the distinction between paratexts and metatexts proposed by Genette (1997a), which deals with exactly the same issue. The resulting breadth of the expanded paratext reaches the same levels as in Consalvo's and Jones', with the only difference that here the main text is not a video game but instead a professionally produced film or a television series as Gray, a film and television studies scholar, introduces his own cultural bias.

The inclusion of paratexts of an external origin implies a dichotomy of industry- and fan-created paratexts in terms of a struggle over a meaning of a text. In this regard, the expanded paratext relates to an ongoing debate of fan-producer relationships as explored in fan studies (Jenkins 2006a) and critical political economy of communication (Terranova 2000; Dijck and Nieborg 2009). Arguably, such a discussion would be possible even without a terminological shift – fan creativity does not have to be considered paratextual in order to be compared in its aims and functions to official paratexts. However, if one decides to expand the paratextual framework, there are other areas of textuality that share more qualities with paratexts and relate to the underlying question of control over a meaning of a text than completely external texts. For example, John Thornton Caldwell (2011, 2014) and more recently also Brookey and Gray (2017) draw attention to worker-created paratexts, which contest the binary thinking of official/unofficial framing effects, such as staff leaks. Understandably, Genette (1997b) mostly overlooks any such potential paratexts. After all, literary publishing usually does not involve large production compared to film, television or video game industries. Worker-created texts have a certain claim of paratextual authority due to the involvement of their authors in the creation process of a main text, especially when compared to fan-created texts or criticism. However, such paratextual authority is easily

[48] However, Miller is quick to add that the parasitic relationship is in this case mutual: *"The critical text and the literary text are each parasite and host for the other, each feeding on the other and feeding it, destroying it and being destroyed."* (1979, 249)

contested or even discarded by more privileged members of a production collective, for example by a director in the context of the film industry. In the original framework, worker paratexts such as staff leaks could be identified as semiofficial paratexts (see section 2.1.4). Still, they do not actually fit within Genette's three possible categories of authorship: they are not entirely authorial, publisher's or allographic. Nonetheless, worker's paratextuality as a concept emphasizes the differences between cultural industries and the authorial control over a text and as such follows Genette's original vision.[49]

Arguably the most radical expansion of Genette's framework has been proposed by Marcus Carter (2015). His new concept of the emergent paratext – *"emitext"* (Carter 2015, 311)– is essentially a factual paratext constructed through social play of video games. History or propaganda and their tangible manifestations (which are usually created by players) are examples of such emitexts, which potentially influence how a game is experienced and played. Carter's claims on paratextual nature of these abstract concepts is based on Consalvo's (2007) broad version of paratextuality. In such an inclusive perspective, it is enough for propaganda to *"shape a player's experience of a game and give new meanings to acts of play"* (Carter 2015, 337) to be considered paratextual*: "Like game guides and developer diaries, propaganda frames the way the game is received […] and thus defines and assures its presence in the world."* (ibid.) While it is hard to disagree that propaganda employed by competing player groups of MMOs influences the reception of the game as a whole, this quality alone does not necessarily make it paratextual. Under such terms, any phenomenon that comments or otherwise frames the act of play would have to be considered a paratext, resulting once again in a vague and all-encompassing term. Carter himself focuses on historical documentation of play and propagandistic memes in order to analyze the "paratextual" impact of history and propaganda. His concluding argument that play itself is paratextual shifts the attention from Consalvo's peripheral industries to activities and creations of players. However, the fact that any act of play potentially comments on a game does not make it necessarily paratextual, but instead metatextual as the commentary originates outside the production collective of the game. The issues of authorial control highlighted in Genette's original definition should not be completely overlooked as the distinction between official and player framings of gameplay might uncover tensions, negotiations and potential counter-movements. Still, the shift from the factual paratext's interest in author- and work-centered contextual information to the emitext's emphasis of socio-historical reception as a potential part of a paratextual surround is relevant, especially in video game culture. Certain paratextual genres – such as patch notes – often establish their paratextual connection to a game based on the socio-historical state of play at a particular moment in time that has necessitated the creation of a patch and its communication to audiences.

As I have already mentioned, the expanded version of the paratextual framework often includes other types of textual transcendence beside paratextuality. Some of these appropriations also deliberately include various types of transmedia storytelling and hypertextuality in general. The origins of such a broad approach can be located in works of Jones (2007, 2008) and Gray (2010) who consider alternate reality games and various narrative and ludic tie-ins and spin-offs to be paratextual. Following in this line of thinking, Jason Mittell (2015) has attempted to combine Genette's terminology with Henry Jenkins'

[49] Beside worker paratexts, Caldwell (2011) also recognizes fan-made texts as potentially paratextual, thus effectively following Gray's (2010) expanded version of the framework. His later work on para-industry, which is explored in section 2.2.3, shows a more orthodox approach to paratextuality while introducing new terminology and keeping the previous focus on complex relationships within production collectives and the resulting polyvocality of paratextual elements authored by individual members involved in the creative process (Caldwell 2014).

concept of transmedia storytelling, resulting in a classification of three types of paratexts: (1) transmedia, (2) promotional, and (3) orienting. The first category is supposed to deal with narrative extensions of a text but the terminological baggage of subservience attached to the term paratext is here a hindrance as it implies hierarchy between a text and its transmedia paratext. Nonetheless, Genette's hypertextual relationship, which includes adaptation, has been often reinterpreted into the expanded version of paratextuality. This questionable implementation comes encumbered with a medium-centric bias. In this rather reductive perspective, varied phenomena such as game adaptations (Servitje 2014), licensed games (Gray 2010; B. Jones 2014; Booth 2015, 2016) and other transmedia storytelling elements (Mittell 2012a, 2014, 2015; Hills 2013; Nottingham-Martin 2014; Pearson 2015; Waites 2015) have all been considered to be paratexts.

The strong cultural bias, which is characteristic for all aforementioned expansions of the concept, is anachronistic to the development of transmedia storytelling techniques and partly presumes that transmedia storytelling content primarily serves paratextual functions. Consalvo (2017) has recently commented on this problematic feature of the expanded framework noticing that video games are often relegated to roles of paratexts within film and television studies. However, she has not presented any systematic solution besides arguing that even in video game culture video games themselves can play a secondary role to other texts, for example to substantial mods and livestreaming channels. A conceptual distinction between paratexts, metatexts and transmedia storytelling could address the issues of subordination and autonomy, which are lost if one conflates these terms by proposing the expanded version of paratextual framework.

To summarize, the expanded concept of paratext effectively becomes a different name for any epiphenomenon of a given culture. A by-product of this broadening of the original concept is inclusion and equal consideration of ancillary texts of various origins. While the theoretical grounding differs across the three presented cases – from a notion of periphery (Consalvo 2007, 2017), a social text and its threshold (S. E. Jones 2007, 2008) to textual activities that create hype around a text and influence its reception (Gray 2010) – the proposed re-definitions are nearly identical in their scope. The resulting breadth is all-encompassing and at the same time reductive in its medium-centered perspective. For Consalvo and Jones books, films or machinimas are paratextual, while Gray talks about licensed video games in the same manner.

2.2.3 Para-Industrial Shift

The previously discussed expanded framework has a strong medium-centric bias, which in turn changes the focus of the concept of paratextuality. While Genette (1997b) explored what contributes to making a text into a book within the context of literary publishing, proponents of the broader definition look at whole cultural industries built around their medium of choice. For Consalvo (2007, 2017), Jones (2007, 2008) and Carter (2015) this is video game industry and the surrounding video game culture. For Gray (2010) and his followers the areas of interest are the screen industries including film and television. This methodological shift is partly caused by the move from a rather individualistic realm of literary publishing, at least considering the way Genette portrays it, to industries with larger production collectives. It is also most likely the reason behind the more inclusive, but arguably careless redefinitions hailed by aforementioned scholars.

Brookey and Gray (2017) criticize Genette for underestimating the publisher's influence on the final form of a book. However, they themselves stop their reflection on the implications of the expanded framework screen industries by discussing various types of authorship in screen industries akin to Caldwell's (2011) previous work. It has then been Caldwell (2014) himself who has further pursued the industrial implications of paratextuality in the article

entitled *Para-Industry, Shadow Academy*, which remains largely unnoticed outside of the field of production studies. Arguably, the concept of paratextuality inevitably deals with larger cultural and industrial practices and conventions but they are always analyzed based on particular texts and their respective paratextual elements. What Caldwell suggests by coining the term para-industry is to look deeper into the structures of cultural industries utilizing instances of paratextuality as a potential source of information.

The concept of para-industry should not be confused with Consalvo's (2007) term paratextual industries, which denotes the actual businesses creating paratextual materials. According to the expanded definition, paratextual industries are, for example, strategy guide publishers. On the other hand, para-industry applies the prefix para- in a Genettian sense, meaning a study of what makes cultural industries into what they are understood as in a given socio-historical situation. In Caldwell's words, para-industry is:

> [...] an economic and cultural–industrial interface woven together by socio-professional media communities, through trade narratives, ritualized interactions and conventionalized self-representations that viewers and scholars must wade through before they can find a primary text or featured on-screen content. (Caldwell 2014, 721)

Para-industry as a concept does not attempt to question the relevance of the concept of paratextuality but instead sets it in the context of industrial practices. In consequence, the study of para-industry prioritizes interactions between producers, above the line and below the line workers and their audiences compared to the text-centric focus of Genette's original framework. To achieve this, Caldwell proposes to move:

> [...] from the concept of 'para-text' (which implies secondary textual 'flack' that stands between the viewer and the 'primary' text), to the concept of 'negotiating texts' which underscores how texts are refereed interface zones for industry's intercultural and inter-organizational interactions." (Caldwell 2014, 724)

In this case, Caldwell employs a rather limited definition of paratextuality that is concerned only with actual textual content. However, Genette's original framework allows for analysis of cultural and industrial practices in general, which are then manifested in paratextual elements. Moreover, these elements do not necessarily have to take a verbal or textual form, such as the already discusses factual paratexts (see section 2.1.3). The para-industrial shift is thus not as dramatic as it might seem at the first glance. It mostly offers a methodological guidance for production studies while honoring the integrity of the paratextual framework. Arguably, the biggest achievement of the concept of para-industry is the critical evaluation of all texts produced within a cultural industry in light of their formative status on the state of industry as such. This is best seen due to Caldwell's emphasis on questions of authorship, which remain central not only to Genette's concept but also to understanding of para-industry: *"Para-industry defines itself, in part, through reflexive displays of authorship."* (Caldwell 2014, 725)

Overall, Caldwell's application of paratextuality is commendable for its sensitive use of terminology. Effectively, para-industry widens the scope of the framework without creating confusion by redefining existing concepts and by applying the prefix para- consistently with the source theory. The medium-specific bias of the expanded framework (even though technically Caldwell himself employs the original definition) is here mitigated by a conscious reflection of a cultural industry as the primary object of study.

2.2.4 Critique of Subordination

The subservient function of paratexts is a core aspect of the original framework. Genette explicitly states the role of paratextuality within literary publishing – it is a tool of authorial

control and promotion. The figurative threshold effect facilitated by paratexts is initiated deliberately and strategically, even though not always efficiently. The proponents of the reduced version of paratext (see section 2.2.1) usually share this opinion as it distinguishes Genette's concept from the more general term framing. However, they have reservations to the totality of subordination and explore possible exceptions from this rule. The expanded concept presupposes a varying degree of autonomy, which is closely connected to external authorship. A paratext created by a third party is inevitably connected to a text but does not necessarily promote preferred readings (see section 2.2.2). In this regard, the critique of subordination as such often revolves around similar arguments as the overall conceptualization of the expanded framework. Considering that the reduced framework also engages in the discussion of subordination, the whole topic requires individual treatment as it is fundamentally an independent issue of paratextuality despite certain alignments with the expanded framework.

Overall, the critique of subordination is focused on the importance of paratexts, especially within new media cultures, which allow for easy distribution of various paratextual elements. Peter Lunenfeld opened this debate in 1999 when he questioned the centrality of so-called main texts:

> [...] the backstory—the information about how a narrative object comes into being—is fast becoming almost as important as that object itself. For a vast percentage of new media titles, backstories are probably more interesting, in fact, than the narratives themselves. (Lunenfeld 1999, 14)

Of course, paratexts are not limited to only being backstories, even though they often inform readers about socio-historical conditions of a given text and thus uncover its origins. Lunenfeld connects the issue of paratextuality to a notion of unfinished texts (or narratives), which never receive closure but are instead expanded through serialization, transformation and also through paratexts. According to him, this is the reality of current media conglomerates, which combine various industries into what Jenkins (2006a) would later call transmedia storytelling franchises. The "making-of backstory" known from Hollywood productions then presents a newly established type of content, which is sought after by viewers and at the same time allows for an authorial framing of a text, therefore qualifying as a paratext. What Lunenfeld suggests is that a paratext can be noteworthy on its own, possibly even without a first-hand experience of a text it refers to, effectively becoming a self-contained text. Such a claim contests the traditional logic of literary publishing in which only proper literary texts are considered worthy by authors, publishers and audiences. In this regard, Lunenfeld is not necessarily criticizing Genette's original framework but noting the development of cultural industries during the late 20th century. Lunenfeld thus foreshadows that paratexts are becoming equally important compared to texts proper akin to Jenkins' definition of transmedia storytelling.

Consalvo (2007) has later picked up Lunenfeld's argument and applied it to video games. She assumes the perspective of players, when she claims that

> [...] we have moved from a trickle to a torrent of information, and it all plays a role in shaping our experiences of gameplay—regardless of the actual game itself. [...] To call it peripheral dismisses or ignores its centrality to the gaming experience. Whether we admit it or not, we have learned how to play games, how to judge games, and how to think about games and ourselves as gamers in part through the shaping of these [paratextual] industries. (Consalvo 2007, 8)

By *"torrent of information"*, Consalvo means a mixture of paratextuality, metatextuality and hypertextuality that from a viewpoint of industrial actors arguably takes place on the periphery, but becomes central to an individual's gaming experience. Arguably, a similar

paratextual surround (in the expanded meaning of the word is also present in other cultural industries where it shapes audience interpretations and experiences.

Nonetheless, the core of Consalvo's argument lies in a distinction between an industry perspective on video games and audience reception. Even though paratexts are still on the outskirts of the traditional video game industry – especially when Consalvo considers third party texts such as magazines and strategy guides to be paratextual – they are crucial for the enjoyment of a video game and can significantly alter the gaming experience by providing information and instruction. However, this perceived centrality of paratexts is to a great extent caused by broadening of Genette's framework, which I have discussed in section 2.2.2. By inviting external authorship into question, the issue of subordination turns into a question of a parasitic relationship between a paratext and a video game.

A more radical critique of subordination has been presented by Jones. He argues that paratexts are at the *"foreground"* (2008, 43) of video game culture.[50] According to him, paratexts are the formative force that steers the way how a game is perceived. Such a perspective is disconnected from Genette's (1997b) framework for two main reasons. First, Jones again proposes an expansion of the concept (see section 2.2.2). Second, his argument implies a great deal of efficiency on the part of paratextual elements compared to a game itself, suggesting that player's experience is determined mostly by surrounding texts.

Essentially, Jones suggests that video games are experienced in a social context, which is in turn shaped by paratexts. However, this remains true for other media besides video games, which Jones is aware of when he explicitly compares video games to literary works of Charles Dickens or to the television series *Lost*. Still, all these examples imply a very close connection between paratextuality and popularity. The claim that popular video games are *"predominantly paratextual"* (S. E. Jones 2007, 76, 2008, 43) is caused by the fact that popularity and a resulting commercial success encourage production of ancillary texts by both the producers and any third parties (mostly, by the press and audiences). In this perspective, paratextual richness and popularity are two sides of the same argument. This observation does not offer any relevant insight into cultural industries beyond suggesting that popular texts incite creation of new texts, which relate back to the successful original.

An arguably more structuralist approach to the critique of subordination deals with functions of paratext (see Wolf 2006b; Rockenberger 2014). In this regard, Genette is strict about the subservient function, which prevails even if a paratext attempts to be self-referential or self-centered.

> Whatever aesthetic or ideological investment the author makes in a paratextual element (a "lovely title" or a preface-manifesto), whatever coquettishness or paradoxical reversal he puts into it, the paratextual element is always subordinate to "its" text, and this functionality determines the essence of its appeal and its existence. (Genette 1997b, 12)

Although, Genette in a few instances identifies a self-referential function of a particular paratextual element, including titles (1997b, 87), epigraphs (152) and prefaces (235), it is, in his opinion, always accompanied by a text-centered subservient function. A similar assumption is made by Rockenberger (2014) who includes *"self-referential"* and *"ornamental"* (2014, 262) categories among her typology of paratextual functions. While both can be considered at least partly self-centered – the former by explicitly drawing

[50] The spatial metaphor of 'foreground' used by Jones is problematic and ambiguous, especially when discussing paratextuality. It might signify either a place of importance or proximity to an observer. Jones invokes the first meaning, but the second one actually captures Genette's understanding of paratextuality.

attention to a paratext, the latter by achieving an aesthetic quality of its own – Rockenberger still insists on a subordinate role of paratext, agreeing with Genette's original argument.

On the other hand, Wolf (2006b) is more critical of the unquestioned subordination of paratexts and framings in general. Beside the self-evident text-centered function of framings, he emphasizes the possibility of a self-centered function, which is usually achieved through experimentation with otherwise formally established paratextual genres, such as prefaces.

> It may be observed wherever (elements of) framings make more or less independent and prominent contributions to the total meaning of a work (and thus take on an importance of their own) or where they refer to themselves as framings (and thus become self-reflexive). (Wolf 2006b, 29–30)

Here, Wolf directly contests Genette's framework by giving priority to the self-centered function over the text-centered one. However, it is hard to measure contribution to a total meaning of a text (or self-reflexivity, for that matter) without a more detailed elaboration on Wolf's part. To a certain extent, any paratext contributes to a meaning of a text, for example by adding information about the text's origins and the authorial intent. Paratexts also tend to be partly self-reflexive by explicitly communicating their paratextual status. For example, a table of contents is usually called contents or it at least occupies the space in a book that is conventionally reserved for it. Where is then the line between a negligible self-centered function and noteworthy autonomy of a paratext? If one accepts Genette's argument that paratextuality is very much cultural and thus its meaning is influenced by conventions of a certain cultural area, then self-centered experiments still take place within established paratextual confines and cannot really escape their subordinated role.

Arguably, such subversions are possible only because of established paratextual traditions. A self-centered preface can be identified as self-centered and noteworthy due to the fact that it goes against the norm of prefaces. Wolf (2006a) proposes a concept of defamiliarized framings to explain some of the self-centered aspects of unconventional paratexts. According to him, there are four features that contribute to a traditional paratext: (1) reliability, (2) subservience, (3) conventionality in terms of form and location, (4) and a discrete form removed from a framed text. Any deviation from the aforementioned characteristics results in defamiliarization.[51] However, defamiliarization alone does not warrant a lack of subordination, not only because subservience is just one of the four features. Fundamentally, subordination is a matter of perspective. If one sticks to the authorial viewpoint, prioritized by Genette, then even a deliberate defamiliarization of a paratext does not change anything about the cultural logic of literary publishing, which is built around main texts and thus relegates any paratextual experimentation to the subordinate paratextual domain.

Genette's assumption of the all-trumping feature of subordination obscures differences between particular paratexts as evidenced by self-referential (Genette 1997b), self-centered (Rockenberger 2014) and otherwise atypical paratextual elements (Wolf 2006a). Claiming that all paratexts are either central (S. E. Jones 2007, 2008) or peripheral is misleading, first and foremost because any such thesis operates with a rather fluid range of texts whose paratextual nature is partly determined by tradition. Furthermore, one might ask whether a paratext can cease to be in a paratextual relationship to a text. In other words, if prefaces in

[51] Wolf distinguishes between five types of defamiliarized initial framings: *"[…] a) unreliable framings (which mislead by creating erroneous expectations); b) unrelated and parasitic framings (which are inflated to unusual proportions and possess a relative independence); c) displaced framings (which appear where one would not expect them or are conspicuously absent as in the case of 'missing opening frames'); d) recursive framings; and e) metaleptic framings (in which framing and framed become paradoxically confused)."* (Wolf 2006a, 295) However, he admits that this typology is only tentative.

general are paratexts, is it possible for a particular preface to deviate so significantly from the norm, including the presumed subordinated role, that it is no longer consider a paratext? Would a book collection of paratexts taken out of their original context still be considered a paratext? This question is part terminological, part theoretical and it is connected to the disputable connection between the typology of textual relationship and the typology of texts, which I explore further in chapter 3.

2.2.5 Adjustments to Spatial and Temporal Dimensions of Paratextuality

The distinction between peritexts and epitexts is arguably the most rigid part of the original framework. Genette recognizes only these two spatial categories, which can be considered reductive even in the original context of literary publishing (see section 2.1.1). Understandably, this operationalization of spatiality has been criticized for its dichotomous character. Resulting adjustments often connect the spatial dimension to temporality, largely through use of similar metaphorical descriptions, especially in so-called temporal media.[52] Therefore the two dimensions are addressed together throughout this section. First, I explore the critique of the peritext/epitexts distinction before moving on to works, which have supplied new categories of the spatial dimension. In the second part, I review Gray's (2010) and Wolf's (2006b) treatment of a position of a paratextual element within a reception process, which is influenced by spatial and temporal conditions.

Lunenfeld (1999) is one of the first scholars to question Genette's treatment of spatiality of paratext. Without referencing the terms peritext and epitext, Lunenfeld suggests that the act of localizing a paratext and a text is made more complicated if not even unattainable due to the properties of modern media ecosystems:

> [...] the transformation of the publishing industry in the past two decades—the melding of publishers with moviemakers, television producers, and comic book companies, and the development of media conglomerates like Time Warner, Disney/ABC, and Sony—has bloated the paratext to such a point that it is impossible to distinguish between it and the text. Digital forms are even more prone to this, for who is to say where packaging begins and ends in a medium in which everything is composed of the same streams of data—regardless of whether the information is textual, visual, aural, static, or dynamic? [...] The result of such dubious corporate synergy is the blending of the text and the paratext, the pumping out of undifferentiated and unfinished product into the electronically interlinked mediasphere. (Lunenfeld 1999, 14–15)

However, Lunenfeld's arguments should not be taken literally. After all, a preface and a literary text are also technically composed of *"the same streams of data"* – meaning words –, yet that does not stop authors, publishers and readers from easily distinguishing between them. Still, the observation of *"blurring boundaries"* (Lunenfeld 1999, 15) implies that the categories of peritexts and epitexts might be becoming outdated. Logically, when it is nearly impossible to say where a text begins and ends, it should also be hard to identify the spatial relation of a paratext to such a text. This could mean that in a completely digital environment

[52] Temporal medium, an expression used by Wolf (2006a, 2006b), is a rather vague concept built around the notion of a narrative sequence – events happening in a succession (Genette 1990). The term is based on narratology as opposed to ontology of media and it is thus applicable to any narrative content regardless of technology used. For example, narrative literature or a narrative film both satisfy the definition of a narrative sequence and can be therefore both considered to be temporal media. At the same time, the degree of temporality (or sequentiality) of particular media and narratives can vary. For example, a sequence of a recorded narrative is easier to be shuffled around than a performed oration. Arguably, a sequence of a printed book is easier to manipulate than that of a film on a DVD. Overall, the term temporal medium is problematic as it prioritizes narratological structure over technological features and media.

every paratext is automatically peritextual because it can be accessed using the same technological artifact as the text.

While the relative position of a paratext towards a text is meaningful, mostly due to its varying influence on reception,[53] the original dichotomous operationalization inevitably leads to such counterproductive statements as in the last sentence of the previous paragraph, at least in the context of digital media. In other words, the conceptually clear boundary between peritext and epitext no longer represents the realities of cultural industries and makes for a crude analytical tool. In this regard, Jones (2008) has criticized the binary categories for being too disconnected from actual paratextual practices, at least in the video game industry:

> [...] these [peritext/epitext] are artificial distinctions, parts of a continuum of "threshold" effects active in any textual or other expressive object with a life in the world. Consider blurbs printed on removable jacket covers, early reviews solicited from celebrity authors or others. These are primarily peritextual elements—appended texts that shape the reception of the book. But they may also be part of larger ad campaigns and are meant to serve as headlines in catalogue copy—in which case they become more epitextual in their aims. (S. E. Jones 2008, 25–26)

What Jones suggests is treating the peritext/epitext distinction as a continuum, which might provide at least a hands-on tool for measuring the relative location among any selected paratexts. Still, he does not provide any clear instructions on how to assess a position of a paratextual element in such a continuum, leaving the whole issue unresolved. Instead he focuses on spatially hybrid paratexts, which are, at least according to him, the most *"interesting"* (2008, 26) as they create complex threshold effects. His examples however imply a rather unorthodox treatment of the spatial dimension in which proximity is rather mechanically attributed with a text-centered function while remoteness is coupled with a focus on the context.

A more systematic approach to the issue can be found in the work of Ellen McCracken (2012). In the context of e-reading devices, she has proposed to supply the terms peritext/epitext with an additional category of orientation. Two basic directions can be identified in this regard – the (1) outward and the (2) inward vector, named *"centrifugal"* and *"centripetal"* respectively (McCracken 2012, 106). Within the original framework, a centrifugal direction could be understood as dealing with the socio-historical context, however in McCracken's case it means the actual trajectory and respective movement away from a text to a potential epitext or completely outside of a textual system. On the other hand, centripetal paratexts bring a reader closer to a text, for example by interacting with the text's properties or with embedded media.

McCracken's understanding of paratext is not completely governed by textual relationships but rather by interconnections facilitated and accessed through an e-reading device. In this perspective, even otherwise non-related advertisements or user reviews become a part of the paratextual threshold despite their purely spatial connection to a text. McCracken presents spatial proximity as a defining factor of paratextuality while in the original framework it is considered a mere dimension of paratext. Genette (1997b) himself is rather vague regarding the question whether spatially-related phenomena are paratextual based purely on their location. However, he mentions external advertisements – which would fit McCracken's definition – in a chapter about publisher's peritext:

[53] Considering that peritexts are positioned closer to texts, they might be more likely to frame a text during an actual reading experience than epitexts, which can be more easily avoided by readers as they are located independently from the main text.

> "Paid" advertisement – that is, paid to the publisher by a manufacturer outside of publishing (for I doubt that a publisher will ever accept an ad from a competitor); it is up to the reader to establish an ad's relation to the theme of the book; an example: an ad for American cigarettes on Dashiell Hammett's *Sang maudit* [*The Dain Curse*] (Carré noir, 1982). (Genette 1997b, 26)

Genette does not disclose whether the content of such an unrelated advertisement is paratextual or if only the space in a book (for example, a back cover) is the paratext in question. Nevertheless, identifying such elements as paratextual is problematic for mainly two reasons.

First, the spatial situation becomes a frame of definition – everything connected spatially to a text would then be considered a paratext. This is partly true for the codex book medium, which is analyzed as a completely paratextual entity by Genette. Here, the threshold in question is largely an actual physical object with all that it entails. On the other hand, epitexts have to be connected to a text by strategic association to be considered paratextual. Moreover, spatial surroundings of an epitext might provide a threshold to the epitext itself but does not necessarily have to be in a paratextual relationship to a given text. That would mean that user reviews – which McCracken uses as an example – are not in fact paratextual despite their proximity to an epitext, such as an online retailer product listing. Reviews and other critical commentaries are still metatextual even though they might be spatially connected to a text.

Second, the subordination of an unrelated advertisement to a text is figurative at best. While one can argue that the ad space and the revenue are enabling publication of a text, the actual content of the advertisement is detached from the text and serves its own agenda, effectively being subservient to a different commodity and thus serving as a paratext to a different text than to which it is spatially connected.

Any departure from a medium of a linear codex book requires a careful examination of paratextual relationships at hand. McCracken uncovers some of the paradoxical features of digital paratexts, however her application of Genette's framework is unorthodox for the two aforementioned reasons. Nonetheless, the distinction between centrifugal and centripetal vectors is potentially beneficial at least in terms of literal spatial trajectories. However, McCracken's distinction should not be used figuratively. After all, paratext is a zone of transition and as such it should always allow for movement in both directions – away from and towards a text. To summarize, centrifugal and centripetal trajectories are relevant only if applied to the actual movement within digital environments, for example within e-reading devices.

A video game-specific set of spatial categories has been proposed by Daniel Dunne (2016). Based on the original dichotomy, it establishes three new possible locations of peritexts: (1) *"in-game"*, (2) *"in-system"*, and (3) *"in-world"* (2016, 282).

The first category is placed within the actual video game manifestation and is accessible only after a game file has been executed. Examples of such in-game paratexts are various forms of user interfaces. The in-system paratext (2) is connected to a system – here, standing mostly for a software layer of a platform that runs the game – and includes installation screens, file representations in a directory system of a computer or even searching the Internet. Lastly, the in-world paratexts (3) present the basic version of peritext known from Genette's framework, however here limited to physically tangible elements to avoid potential overlaps with the previous two categories. Additionally, any spatially disconnected paratexts are considered epitexts.

Although Dunne provides a few satisfactory examples for the proposed typology, the underlying conceptualization is questionable for two reasons. First, the three newly formed categories are pictured as concentric circles located around a text creating a succession of figurative entry-gates a player must pass before accessing a video game. This suggests that video game is always located in one discrete location and that the ordering of spatial categories in relation to a player stays the same regardless of a game and its distribution model. For example, arcade games are in most cases missing the in-system layer of paratexts while digitally-distributed games lack any in-world paratexts. Second, the sketched succession of the proposed categories implies increasing proximity of peritexts as one approaches the video game in the center. However, the in-system paratexts include a rich variety of elements, for example both a desktop icon and an official website of a game, whose proximity compared to other layers is uneven. Some of its more remote manifestations are hardly closer to a video game than an in-world paratexts such a video game disc or box.

Thus despite being conceptualized as concentric circles, the three new types of peritext only vaguely relate to the underlying dichotomy of closeness/remoteness, as they overlook the inconsistency of video game phenomena, which belong to the proposed categories. Especially, the digital layers of the typology – the in-game and in-system paratexts – impose proximity on any digital paratextual element without further consideration of its respective location. Here, Gavin Stewart's (2010) hands-on, inductive and admittedly tentative distinction of (1) *"off-site"*, (2) *"on-site"* and (3) *"in-file"* (Stewart 2010, 57) spatial categories in the context of online interactive fiction provides a more accurate overview regarding the potential reading experience. However, Stewart forgets to mention code as a potential source of paratextuality by prioritizing the more apparent layers of online interactive fiction.

The succession order of Dunne's three categories is not purely a matter of spatiality but also an issue of chronology of paratexts as experienced from a player's viewpoint. In this regard, Genette's own treatment of temporality is pre-occupied with the production perspective, effectively overlooking the reception side of a temporal dimension, meaning whether paratexts are encountered before, during or after the main text. Arguably, it is always speculative to classify a position of a paratext in an actual process of reception based on a paratext's temporal relation to a text at the point of its production. For example, a trailer might be released before a video game but that does not mean it has to be experienced before the game. A player can as easily start with the game and watch the trailer later. Sequentiality of some media forms including video games, film and television makes any such claims more viable, at least in the context of spatially-connected paratextual elements. In this context, Gray has proposed the distinction between *"entryway"* and *"in medias res"* (Gray 2010, 23) paratexts. The former category influences an audience member before the actual contact with a text, while the latter type encourages re-entry and communicates an unfinished state of a text as Lunenfeld (1999) has suggested.

Overall, Gray's typology presents two unequal categories whose conceptualization is neither completely ontological, nor phenomenological. From a production perspective, some paratexts are created with an intention to provide access to a text. When encountered before an actual text they fulfill the role of entryway paratexts also in the sense of reception. Similarly, a recap can be considered an in medias res paratext in terms of both production and reception if experienced at the moment preferred by its creators. However, this distinction creates a dichotomy that acknowledges only the moment of first direct experience with a text as it effectively divides all paratexts to those happening before or after this first contact.[54] In consequence, Gray overlooks a possible ending of a text as a relevant point in

[54] Gray (2016) has later explored paratexts that address audiences after the publishing and the reception process of the original have been successfully finished. Even though Gray does not explicitly

chronology of both production and reception. Although it can be argued that a text does not have a definitive end in contemporary culture (Lunenfeld 1999),[55] that does not change the fact that some paratextual elements (for example, end credits in a film) effectively function as an ending of sorts signalizing at least a momentary terminus of the text at hand.

In a similar manner, Wolf (2006b) provides a more structuralist approach to temporality by identifying three types of paratextual framings according to their location in a reception process: (1) initial, (2) internal, and (3) terminal.[56] Again as in Gray's (2010) case, the criteria for such a classification are not as simple as Wolf makes them out to be. Most importantly, Wolf's (2006a) own application of the typology does not operate with the actual position of a paratext in a reception process, but instead with an expected or preferred location of a paratext.[57] Otherwise, Wolf would not be able to study initial paratexts without analyzing the actual reception of a text. Still, the problematic conceptualization of the three categories does not diminish the potential analytical benefit of distinguishing between preferred locations of a paratext in a reception process. In this regard, Genette (1997b) points to the different functions of prefaces and postfaces caused by their respective positions within the structure of a codex book. However, he does not treat the temporal position of a paratext in a reception process systematically, as it is not included among the many criteria of the temporal dimension of paratextuality (see section 2.1.2).

Another important difference between Gray's and Wolf's classifications is that the former works with the expanded version of paratext while the latter limits paratexts to verbal peritexts. Arguably, the peritextual location allows for a more nuanced treatment of preferred temporal positions than the entirety of paratexts whose place in a reception process is hard to account for.

To summarize, spatiality and temporality are interconnected dimension of paratexts, especially on a figurative level. Recent critiques (Lunenfeld 1999; S. E. Jones 2008; McCracken 2012; Dunne 2016) have shown that the peritext/epitext distinction loses most of its analytical value in the context of digital distribution and complex media technologies. Unfortunately, the newly proposed typologies of spatiality (Dunne 2016) and temporal locations (Wolf 2006b; Gray 2010) lack proper operationalization and thus present only tentative contribution to the paratextual framework.

2.3 Current Methodologies of Paratextual Research

In the previous sections, I have focused on the main theoretical developments of the paratextual framework. However, to fully grasp the state of paratextual research it is necessary to explore the empirical work as well. Paratext encompasses a great variety of textual elements, partly due to the expanded version of the concept adopted throughout film, television and game studies. In practice, many different phenomena can be studied using the framework, ranging from traditional literary paratexts to elements of digital culture.

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expand his original classification, Raúl Rodríguez-Ferrándiz has proposed to treat these *"memorabilia"* (2017, 177) paratexts as an additional category.

[55] Reasons for this 'unfinishedness' are manifold, including production of sequels, transmedia storytelling, and fan activities (for example, fan fiction or fan art).

[56] Wolf (2006b) argues that such a distinction is applicable only to temporal media, however he later used the term initial framings to refer also to pictorial arts (Wolf 2014), which are arguably non-temporal, but instead spatial (see note 52 about temporal media in section 2.2.5).

[57] Wolf further limits his temporal typology by stating that the three possible locations relate only to the first reception of a text: *"[…] it is under this condition that the particular location of framings in the reception process is most important (while repeated receptions would blur the differences somewhat, as former framings may be felt to anticipate later ones)."* (Wolf 2006b, 21) While this is an important clarification, it still does not warrant that paratexts are encountered in their expected locations during even the first reception.

Moreover, an overview of empirical research can also uncover the practical differences between the various versions of paratextuality and hint at their relative proportions.

I strive to include as many scholarly works as possible as long as they explicitly use the term paratext in such a way that I can identify its scope and the selected paratextual empirical material. In consequence, articles and books that only mention paratextuality in passing or do not elaborate on what is meant by it (or it is not implicitly clear by its analytic application) are left out. The presented overview is primarily oriented at fields that deal with digital media due to the topic of thesis. As such, it is not meant to be exhaustive and representative of the complete academic output concerning paratextuality.

In the following sections, I first analyze the areas of interest, meaning the actual empirical material that is considered to be paratextual. Second, I look into research methods employed to study paratextuality.

2.3.1 Areas of Scholarly Interest

While literary scholars mostly adhere to the original definition, Consalvo's (2007) and Gray's (2010) revisions of the framework are influential in their respective fields. Fan studies as an interdisciplinary research area contains both approaches, largely depending on the background of individual scholars. In terms of quantity, Wolf's (2006b) reduced definition is clearly a minority in the total paratextual research output. Notably, the category of factual paratext is rarely utilized in the aforementioned scholarly works, instead researchers focus on more tangible cultural artifacts as can be seen on the lists of analyzed paratextual elements.

The term paratext is still relevant in its field of origin – literary theory. Even though Genette (1997b) has provided an extensive even if not exhaustive study of codex book paratexts, the emerging formats and reading devices present new venues for research. Recently, scholars have explored paratexts in the context of digital literature (Bordalejo 2014; Desrochers and Tomaszek 2014; Rau 2014; Strehovec 2014; van Dijk 2014), including digital texts metadata (Vitali-Rosati 2014) and ebooks (McCracken 2012; Birke and Christ 2013; Pressman 2014; Smyth 2014). Specific areas connected to digitalization of literature entail paratexts of online text databases (Wilson 2014), notes and their status in ebook formats and online annotation projects such as Genius (McCracken 2016). Besides focusing on modern forms of literature, scholars have also argued that paratextuality of early literary texts has been largely overlooked by Genette due to his primarily synchronic approach. In this regard, paratexts of historical manuscripts (Ciotti and Lin 2016), Roman (Jansen 2014), Anglo-Saxon and gothic (Bredehoft 2014) as well as renaissance literature (H. Smith and Wilson 2011) have been studied.

However, one should not overlook the research into more traditional facets of literary paratextuality, including covers (Jaccomard 2011), dedications (Maclean 1991), hypertrophied and experimental literary paratexts (Gascoigne 2011; Le Mesurier 2011), literary marketing (Gascoigne 2011), mystification paratexts (Müllerová 2014), notes (Effron 2010), prefaces (Grauby 2011; Chaemsaithong 2016), translation (Fornasiero and West-Sooby 2011; Rolls 2011; Vuaille-Barcan 2011) or typography (Graulund 2006; Lak 2015). The digital environment also provides new material for the orthodox understanding of paratextuality, for example in terms of author's tweets as paratexts (Andersen 2017). Outside of the regular scope of literary theory, lie, for example, fact/fiction labeling of texts (Appel and Malečkar 2012; Appel and Mara 2013), fictional maps as paratexts (Bushell 2016) and paratexts in online interactive fiction (Stewart 2010) and science writing (Allard 2016; Weber and Thomer 2014).

The majority of literary theory research adheres to Genette's original framework beside a few minor revisions and additions, such as McCracken's (2012) introduction of orientation

vectors (see section 2.2.5). The reduced version is mostly present in Wolf's works on defamiliarized literary paratexts (2006a) and titles in literature and pictorial arts (2014), but also in Till Dembeck's (2006) analysis of literary abstracts. The expanded version is at least implicitly employed in studies of handwritten annotations (Palmer 2014) and ownership marks on manuscripts (Ancel 2016; Fölster 2016). Both of these phenomena would not be considered paratexts in the original framework as they are created by readers or owners and not by the producers of the respective texts. There is also a small group of researchers who use paratext to signify hypertextual relationship in parabiblical literature (Alexander, Lange, and Pillinger 2010), effectively using the later rejected meaning of the term paratext, which was introduced in *The Architext: An Introduction* (Genette 1992).[58]

Moving beyond literature, paratexts have been adopted to study aspects of other media including comics (Bavlnka 2013; Hassoun 2013; Bredehoft 2014; Stein 2015), performance arts (Nye 2008; Preece 2011), photography (McCoy 2006), music (Englund 2010; Sutton 2015) and radio (Stockfelt, Lønstrup, and Sangild 2012). Recently, Paul Grainge (2017) has applied the concept of paratextuality to study of higher education and its marketing strategies.

Film and Television

A large amount of research has been carried out in film and television studies. Apart from the general treatment of paratextuality in film (Innocenti and Re 2004; Böhnke 2015) and television (Gillan 2014), analyzed paratextual elements include (in an alphabetical order): ballyhoo[59] (Lyczba 2016), brands (McCulloch 2015; Aronczyk 2017), cinematic mottos (Mahlknecht 2011), company logos (Hobbs-Morgan 2017), credit sequences (Klecker 2015; Zons 2015), cross-cultural appropriation through paratexts (Bernabo 2017), crowdfunding paratexts (Scott 2015), dubbing (Matamala 2011), posters (Cavalcante 2013; Mahlknecht 2015), promotional campaigns in general (Pumroy 2015; DeCarvalho and Cox 2016; Grainge and Johnson 2015), recaps (Dawson 2011), spoilers (Gray and Mittell 2007; Perks and McElrath-Hart 2016), television introductory sequences (Picarelli 2013; Abbott 2015) and typography (Sommer 2006).

Two particular phenomena of film and television culture have been explored in a greater detail: DVDs and trailers. Concerning the former, additional DVD content including making-of documentaries and other so-called extras has been analyzed (Gray 2010; Brereton 2012; Birke and Christ 2013; Gardner 2014; Hobbs 2015) as well as anti-piracy notices (Benzon 2013). Arguably, trailers are not exclusive to film and television industries. This audiovisual form has been adopted by literary publishing (Grøn 2014), video games (Švelch 2015b, 2016a, forthcoming) and performance arts (Preece 2011) and is also studied in these contexts. Still, the majority of paratextual research of trailers has been carried out by screen studies scholars (Kernan 2004; Gray 2008, 2010; Swanson 2014; Calbreath-Frasieur 2015; Johnston, Vollans, and Greene 2016), including Daniel Hesford's (2013) article questioning the paratextual nature of a trailer and a study of spoof and fan trailers, which employs the expanded paratextual framework (Ortega 2014).

While the majority of the aforementioned elements of film and television culture fit within Genette's version of paratext, Gray's (2010) expansion of the framework is particularly strong and influential within the field. Broadly speaking, three additional categories of texts are considered to be paratextual due to the altered definition: (1) transmedia storytelling and

[58] At that time the current concept of paratextuality has not yet been developed and term was instead used to denote hypertextuality.
[59] Ballyhoo is a historic form of a publicity stunt usually considered to be an excessive hype, often hyperbolic and non-representative of a film or of another product that it aims to promote.

adaptations (Hills 2013; Mittell 2012a, 2014, 2015; Nottingham-Martin 2014; Pearson 2015; Waites 2015) including merchandising (Scott 2017), (2) journalism and criticism (Hernandez-Perez 2016; Lughi 2016; Menarini and Tralli 2016; Johnson 2017), and (3) fan- and user-created texts, such as fan discussions, fan fiction, fanvids, fan wikis or fanzines (Mittell 2009, 2012b; Caldwell 2011; Hoge 2011; Sandvoss 2011; Hills 2013, 2015a, 2015b, 2015c, 2015d; Veale 2013; Bakioglu 2014; Gürsimsek and Drotner 2014; Nacher 2014; Ortega 2014; Saunders 2014; Simonsen 2014; Geraghty 2015; O'Neill 2015; Sandvoss, Youngs, and Hobbs 2015; Boni 2016; Re 2016; Thomas 2016; Draper 2017; Hills and Garde-Hansen 2017; Nishime 2017).

Even though fan creations are often studied as paratexts using the expanded framework, fandom and fan activities can be also studied using the original framework. In this regard, fan studies scholars often analyze paratextual elements of fan fiction, including dedications, notes, prefaces, tags and other traditional paratextual forms (Herzog 2012; Simonova 2012; H. L. Hill and Pecoskie 2014; Leavenworth 2014; Fathallah 2016).

Digital and Analog Games

A similar schism between the original and expanded version of the paratextual framework can be found in game studies. Here, Consalvo's (2007) redefinition is highly influential. Still, some scholars focus on paratexts in Genette's original meaning of the concept, including (in an alphabetical order): covers (Oliva, Pérez-Latorre, and Besalú 2016), errata (Švelch 2016c), FAQs[60] (Sherlock 2007), infographics (Švelch 2016a), making-of materials and audio commentaries (Glas 2016), packaging and distribution (Montfort 2006), patches (Paul 2010; Švelch 2016a), promotion (Payne 2012), rule books and manuals (Karhulahti 2012; Flanagan 2016; Sterczewski 2016; Trépanier-Jobin 2016), terms of use (Carter, Gibbs, and Arnold 2015), user interfaces (Drucker 2011; Galloway 2012; Dunne 2016) and websites (Švelch 2016a). Feelies[61] present a contested area, which some scholars deem to be largely paratextual (Conway 2010; Peters 2014; Dunne 2016) while others consider them an integral part of a video game (Karhulahti 2012).

The expanded framework again brings the three aforementioned categories of texts into question. In terms of (1) adaptations and transmedia storytelling, those are licensed games (Gray 2010; B. Jones 2014; Booth 2015, 2016), video game adaptations of non-game texts (Servitje 2014) and transmedia storytelling content such as tie-in novels, comics, web series or alternate reality games (S. E. Jones 2007, 2008, Mukherjee 2015, 2016). The category of (2) criticism and journalism includes the video game press (Consalvo 2007; Ensslin 2011; Matheson 2015). Additionally, on the borders of (2) journalism and (3) fan-created texts one can locate game guides and walkthroughs[62] (Consalvo 2007; Apperley and Beavis 2011; Apperley and Walsh 2012; Mason 2013; De Grove and Van Looy 2014; Harper 2014; deWinter and Vie 2016). Among the other (3) fan-created paratexts belong (in an alphabetical order): after action reports (Mukherjee 2015, 2016), fan discussions (Ensslin 2011), fanzines (Ouellette 2014), livestreaming and let's plays (Hong 2015; Mukherjee 2015, 2016; Burwell and Miller 2016; Jayemanne, Apperley, and Namsen 2016; Consalvo 2017),

[60] The abbreviation stands for "frequently asked questions".
[61] Feelie is a physical object included in video game packaging. It usually belongs to the fictional world of the game and in most cases it is required for solving in-game puzzles.
[62] Some walkthroughs and strategy guides can be considered paratextual even within Genette's original framework due to their licensed nature. In this regard, Newman (2016) distinguishes between official and unofficial walkthroughs even though he does not use the term paratext. Technically, the official walkthroughs are allographic paratexts.

machinima (Fernández-Vara 2014), memes (Carter 2015), mods (Hong 2015; Consalvo 2017), and theorycraft[63] (Paul 2011; Egliston 2017).

On the other hand, the reduced framework is less prominent and can be located only in two articles: one dealing with rulebooks to analog roleplaying games (Jara 2013) and the other with mostly verbal video game peritexts (Rockenberger 2014).

Some game studies scholars use the term paraludic elements instead of paratexts to highlight the ludic nature of games. However, the scope of this concept in fact follows Consalvo's revision as evidenced by the inclusion of fan creativity and does not enrich the paratextual debate in any notable way (Denson and Jahn-Sudmann 2013; LeMieux 2014). Lastly, the so-called endgame of the game *Adventure* (Atari 1979) has been interpreted as a paratext (Giappone 2015) as it provides a certain meta-commentary to the intradiegetic level of the game. I would argue that metalepsis in general does not need to be paratextual as paratextuality itself is not determined by its structural relation to diegesis (see section 1.2.1).

To summarize, paratext as an analytical concept is used throughout different fields to address phenomena that both relate to Genette's version of the concept (for example, trailers, introductory sequences, or digital literature paratexts) but which also often go beyond its scope by introducing texts of external origins such as journalism and fan-created texts.

2.3.2 Research Methods and Approaches

The majority of paratextual research presented in the previous section employs the method of textual analysis focusing primarily on paratexts, their connection to the main text and the authorial vision behind their creation. Admittedly, such approaches follow Genette's (1997b) example by replicating his method of choice – a close reading of paratextual material. The dominant methodology can also be identified as synchronic, taking into account only the present state of paratexts within a given area. I will not go into detail on the particular variations of the actual methods used in this strand of research, be it close readings, discourse analyses or case studies. It suffices to say that this line of scholarly research emphasizes textual structures and the interplay of a text and its paratexts. Instead, I will focus on the outliers, which approach paratextuality from different angles and highlight its other features (see chapter 1).

First of all, it is the historical work on paratextuality, which deliberately comments on Genette's primarily synchronic approach (H. Smith and Wilson 2011; Bredehoft 2014; Jansen 2014; Malone 2015). In this perspective, the evolution of particular paratextual genres can be traced and analyzed, including a shift in functions and cultural meanings over the course of history. At the same time, archived paratexts can be used as a supplementary empirical material for an analysis of historical reception.[64]

Reception in general is closely connected to paratextuality (see section 1.7), however actual empirical audience studies in this area are rare. However, reception is often only hypothesized or speculated based only on close readings of paratexts. At best, such an exploration of reception could be understood as auto-ethnography, but only a few scholars explicitly admit to using this method (see Rockenberger 2014). The inclusion of fan-made texts within the expanded framework problematizes my earlier statement that reception is largely missing from the empirical work on paratextuality. Although one can understand fan

[63] Theorycraft is a specific approach to strategy guides based on a statistical analysis of gameplay data and metrics, it usually emerges in competitive online multiplayer games.
[64] However, the benefits of using preserved paratextual material for analysis of historical reception are highly dependent on the version of the paratextual framework – the expanded framework allows for criticism and journalism to be included as a paratextual material (Fernández-Vara 2014), while the original definition encompasses primarily promotional material (Švelch 2016b).

activities as a part of the reception process, the focus in the end is the reception of the main text and not of the individual paratextual elements. In consequence, the reception of paratexts regardless of the chosen framework is currently underdeveloped. To my best knowledge, there are only three articles that empirically analyze reception of paratexts. Most recent is a survey of trailer viewing practices (Johnston, Vollans, and Greene 2016). In 2013, Andre Cavalcante (2013) analyzed online discussions about film paratexts and Annette Davison (2013) organized focus groups to study how audiences approach television series title sequences.

Other alternative approaches paratextual research include experiment (Appel and Malečkar 2012), normative research on media literacy (Apperley and Beavis 2011; Apperley and Walsh 2012) and various meta-studies such as bibliometric studies (Åström 2014) or literature reviews (Klecker 2015; Rodríguez-Ferrándiz 2017).

2.4 Paratextuality Multiplied – Conclusion

Paratextuality has become a contested ground in academia. Partly due to Genette's (1997b) tentative approach to paratextual theory, its objectives have been reevaluated and revised on its way into disciplines outside literary theory. The prevalence of figurative language in Genette's theoretical introduction and conclusion to *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* makes any such appropriations possible and often even desirable. Notably, the original framework is largely shaped by its object of study – a codex literary book. However, even in this context the original treatment of paratextuality lacks finality. Genette himself admits that the monograph does not cover all potential paratextual elements (namely translation, serial publication and illustration). Applying the original concept along with its mostly inductive categories to other media and cultural forms is challenging and inevitably leads to departure from the orthodox version of Genette's framework. As shown in the previous sections, literary theory mostly upholds the original definition except for a few particular refinements, such as McCracken's (2012) orientation vectors. Even Wolf's (2006b) paratextual framing, which limits the scope of the term to verbal peritexts belongs to this tradition, as it still accepts the authorial (or publisher's) intent emphasized by Genette.

Many of the revisions covered in this chapter distance themselves from the original to such an extent that the decision of respective scholars to use Genette's terminology for significantly different aims is potentially more confusing than useful. In this regard, the reduced versions of the paratextual framework (Wolf 2006b; Rockenberger 2014) are less problematic as they focus on a subset of the original paratext, mostly verbal peritexts. The expanded revisions (Consalvo 2007; S. E. Jones 2008; Gray 2010; Mittell 2015) range on being all-inclusive, effectively presenting a slightly modified take on intertextuality in its broadest sense (Kristeva 1969), encompassing also other types of textual transcendence beside paratextuality, namely metatextuality and hypertextuality (Genette 1997a). In this perspective, any seemingly peripheral element with a connection to a text is considered to be paratextual. However, the notion of periphery is questionable as it no longer follows a unified viewpoint. Genette (see section 2.1) is mostly coherent in assuming the industry perspective of authors and publishers. Through this lens, the majority of paratextual elements are arguably peripheral and also subordinate to a text. By expanding Genette's framework, the position of self-contained texts (such as transmedia storytelling and adaptations) and externally-created texts collides with the production logic. It is no longer clear whose perspective is being assumed when paratexts are claimed to become central to film and video game cultures (Consalvo 2007; S. E. Jones 2008; Gray 2010). Suddenly, the relative conceptual clarity of Genette's original definition achieved through limitation to the production perspective is replaced by a call for greater inclusivity of various stakeholders (players, fans, journalists, academics, investors, etc.) who give importance to elements of

media cultures. However, this adjustment problematizes the applicability of the concept of paratextuality as a whole.

While the stakeholders can to a certain extent accept the hierarchy of texts as it is presented by producers and publishers, their own texts and artifacts compete for the position of centrality. I contest the idea that non-official texts are paratexts just because they might share a perceivably peripheral position and a general intertextual quality with paratexts. First of all, official and non-official paratextual elements are functionally different. Although they all potentially provide a framing effect to a text, that alone does not make them necessarily paratextual. Their origins are important in the way they influence a reception of such a transtextual connection. In other words, there is a palpable difference between paratextuality and metatextuality, for example between a promotional material and a critical commentary. Even in the rare cases of overlapping relationships of textual transcendence, for example when a paratext of external authorship pretends to be an official paratext, such an outsider intrusion into the realm of paratextuality can be resolved by the bearer of paratextual authority who can step in and publicly discard the paratextual claim of a pseudo-paratext.

By expanding the scope of the framework, the lines between the original paratexts and related concepts get blurred. Framing, transmedia storytelling, adaptation, criticism or fan creativity become all embedded in the 'new paratextuality', mostly on the grounds of having a certain intertextual connection and at the same time not being considered a text proper in a given cultural area. If one accepts the expanded definition, nearly everything becomes a paratext. However, the peripheral position of such texts is questionable as they are often designed to be self-contained narrative experiences, albeit with an explicit connection to other existing texts that share the same fictional world. The primary function of transmedia storytelling content is not to serve another text – on the contrary, these are texts proper in terms of their respective artistic. Their synergistic connections to the other parts of a transmedia storytelling franchise do not disqualify them from being considered as noteworthy texts.[65] On the other hand, traditional forms of paratexts such as prefaces or notes are not self-sufficient and work only in tandem with the text they refer to. Thus, the paratextual relationship of transmedia storytelling content despite being potentially present is not its dominant quality and treating it as a paratext obscures its other functions and values. Understandably, such a significant change to the underlying conceptualization of paratextuality requires other adjustments, including the criticism and the subsequent rejection of the subordination of paratexts. The subservient role of paratextual elements is one of the key defining points of Genette's framework. When limited to official authorship, the subordination can be assessed based on the production logic of a given cultural industry, looking, for example, at revenue. On the other hand, externally created paratexts (in the sense of the expanded framework) might be dependent on a text, but they can feed on it instead of serving it.

What follows this drastic expansion of the original framework is a need to classify the new broad paratext into more practical categories whose elements would then finally share some meaningful qualities among them. In this sense, Genette's original is often revisited – for example, the spatial distinction between peritext and epitext is widely adopted – or new criteria and typologies are introduced (Gray 2010; McCracken 2012; Carter 2015; Mittell 2015; Dunne 2016).

The multitude of existing paratextual frameworks would in an ideal case demand any scholar to explicitly address their position on the matter. However, this is rarely the case as the

[65] Not all parts of transmedia storytelling are equally important in practice though and they do not receive the same visibility (see section 1.2).

concept of paratextuality has become in certain fields, such as screen and game studies, only widely adopted after the aforementioned expansions of the framework by Consalvo (2007) and Gray (2010). The resulting disconnect between individual paratextual traditions leads to terminological confusion and perpetuates a mistreatment of revised frameworks as if they were the original.[66] Moreover, paratext as a concept is still subjected to further revisions (see Rockenberger 2014; Carter 2015; Mittell 2015) as the current state of the analytical toolset is often found lacking.

In the afterword to the edited volume *Popular Media Cultures: Fans, Audiences and Paratexts*, Gray (2015) has revisited his previous contribution to paratextual research and commented on the criticisms of paratext as a concept arguing that it is still valuable for a critical understanding of meaning making processes.

> […] a paratext is not simply to the side of a text. Rather, paratexts do the work of texts and are functional parts of them. Sometimes they will represent a smaller, specialized component of the text; sometimes they are its elite edge. Sometimes they do everything the rest of the text does; sometimes they are entrusted to conduct very particular tasks and to play very particular roles in the construction of the text. So why bother with the word "paratext" at all, then? Why not just talk about different parts of the text? My answer here is a practical one: we need the word as a reminder – an insistence, even – to look at paratexts. (Gray 2015, 232)

Here, Gray invokes Barthes' (1987a) distinction between a work and a text suggesting that paratexts participate in a process that makes a work (the rigid object) into a text (the socially processed meaning of a work). However, there are many other phenomena that co-create a text and they are not all automatically paratextual because they participate in relevant cultural processes. Where does one draw a line between a text, paratext and everything else that relates to an act of reading? The negative definition embedded in the expanded framework encompasses any non-work elements that are somehow connected to the work in the metaphorical center of a textual system. While this conceptualization does not necessarily undermine the framing quality of paratexts, it potentially obscures other features of the original framework, especially the issue of an authorial intention and the distinction between industrial and reader interactions with a text.

The core issue behind both problematic sides of the expansion of Genette's framework, is the overuse of the term paratext. Currently, paratext can signify a variety of things – mostly relationships between texts or categories of texts – which no longer satisfy the original defining criteria. The many versions of paratextuality reviewed throughout chapter 2 rarely account for its theoretical foundations and instead they pluck the term paratextuality out of Genette's conceptual inventory and repurpose it for the specific aims of respective scholarly fields without too much concern for a systematic approach. In this regard, mostly the various versions of the expanded framework repeat the shortcomings of Genette's treatment of paratextuality, which too has been limited by its empirical basis.

Beside the terminological and conceptual problems, paratextual research is lacking in terms of the variety of empirical research methodologies. A majority of empirical work employs some form of a close reading of paratextual elements. In consequence, audience and reception research of paratextuality is rarely attempted despite the strong theoretical implications of paratextuality to the study of media and textual reception. The impact of

[66] Arguably the most extensive paratextual terminology can be found in Matt Hills' (2015a) analysis of Doctor Who's 50th anniversary, in which he chains various prefixes and in consequence operates with vaguely defined terms such as inter-paratextuality, meta-paratextuality or para-paratextuality. To add to the confusion, he operates within the expanded framework and uses the prefix meta- in non-Genettian sense.

paratexts on reception is often only hypothesized based on close readings and other forms of textual analysis. On an empirical level, it thus replicates a fetishization of a literary work criticized among others by Barthes (1987a, 1987b) at the expense of analysis of the actual meaning making processes.

This unsatisfactory state of the paratextual framework requires a further revision, which is presented in chapter 3. My aim is to stay as close to the Genette's original vision as possible while accounting for problematic features of the framework and the criticisms raised by scholars before me. I believe that paratextuality is a viable concept, which in the context of book publishing provided an additional insight into literary culture beyond other available theories and concepts. It can yield similarly valuable understanding of the video game culture.

Chapter 3: Paratextuality Refined

A possible solution to the dysfunctional state of paratextual theory explored in chapter 2 lies in redirecting the debate back to paratextuality and clarifying the derived terminology. Furthermore, I call for a culture-specific update of the concept of paratextuality that will acknowledge the differences between literary culture of the 20th century and the current video game culture (see section 3.2). Paratextuality is a cultural phenomenon and as such it is influenced by conventions and traditions of a given cultural industry. The different media technologies involved in the respective areas are relevant, however I assume a more socio-centric perspective emphasizing the cultural implications of video games manifested through negotiations of various stakeholders in video game culture. While the technologies in question might be ontologically different, paratextuality as a concept addresses cultural meaning that is brought to life by social interactions. My complete treatment of the framework is not meant to be an all-encompassing update of the concept of paratextuality for any cultural industry, but primarily an appropriation for video games at the present moment in time taking into account the historical evolution of video games. This reservation applies primarily to the dimension of video game paratextuality, which are explored in section 3.3. The general refinements, which I introduce in the following section 3.1, are applicable to other areas, as they deal with the fundamentals of paratextual theory.

3.1 The New Paratextual Framework

Genette's framework provides only basic orientation based mostly on metaphors and examples. If one moves past book publishing whose paratextual forms have been largely accepted by scholars (see section 2.3.1), a proper definition of both paratext and paratextuality is required. A general consensus is that paratextuality provides a framing for a text – this is the figurative threshold effect. However, as Wolf (2006a) shows, framing entails various phenomena and can be considered both a process and a manifestation of a frame (i.e. the encoded framing). Assuming that Goffman's (1986) frame and Wolf's framing are the broadest and the most abstract concepts, the conceptualization of paratextuality needs to provide a further specification, at least according to its general use in academia, which primarily deals with materialized framings.

3.1.1 The Refined Definition of Paratextuality

Along with Genette (1997a), I would argue that paratextuality is a type of textual transcendence. It is a quality that goes beyond the internal structure of a text and facilitates connections to other texts but also to the socio-historical reality, which envelops the text. While paratextuality is usually understood solely as a relationship between texts, it is not without a precedent to expand its reach and the elements, which can sustain a transtextual relationship. For example, architextuality in its original conceptualization connects an individual text to a literary practice or a genre (Genette 1992). Moreover, the factual paratext (see section 2.1.3) accounts for the possibility that any contextual information about a text (for example, the author's identity) can establish a paratextual relationship between itself and the text. I would argue that the connection to a socio-historical reality, particularly any comment on the position of a text within the socio-historical reality, is crucial in distinguishing paratextuality from other types of paratextual relationships. The acts of informing about a text, explicating its origins or instructing a recipient about its potential use – all functions belonging to basic manifestations of paratextuality as explored by Genette (1997b) – intrinsically deal with the role of a text within the socio-historical reality. This particular connection is what sets paratextuality apart from other types of textual transcendence. Intertextuality is concerned with presence, either explicit or implicit. Metatextuality presumes a critical evaluation of a text, an external viewpoint commenting on

qualities of a text. Hypertextuality deals with transformation or a continuation of a text. Lastly, architextuality attaches a text to an established practice or tradition.

Figuratively speaking, paratextuality is *"[…] an arrow pointing to the outside, that is, pointing to the actually existing social and historical reality in which the work sits."* (Galloway 2012, 42) Arguably, paratextuality not only points to the socio-historical reality but explicates the role and the potential meaning of a text within the socio-historical reality. Genette's own metaphors of *"threshold"*, *"vestibule"*, *"zone not only of transition but also of transaction"* (Genette 1997b, 2) imply this exact relationship between a text and the socio-historical reality, which is later explicated in the conclusion to *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*:

> […] the paratext provides a kind of canal lock between the ideal and relatively immutable identity of the text and the empirical (sociohistorical) reality of the text's public […] permitting the two to remain "level". (Genette 1997b, 407–8)

Essentially, paratextuality bridges the space between a text and the socio-historical reality and is achieved primarily by a reference to the text's socio-historical circumstances – its creators, origins, evolution, distribution, sale, or preferred reading. This specific type of textual transcendence can be facilitated by a variety of elements of diverse substantiality. In the context of codex books, Genette (1997b) acknowledges verbal, iconic, material and factual (immaterial) sources of paratextuality (see section 2.1.3). In other media, one could easily add other modes and semiotic resources. The proponents of the reduced framework limit paratextuality to verbal elements (Wolf 2006b; Rockenberger 2014), while the review of existing empirical research shows a preference towards tangible paratextual cues (see section 2.3.1). The question of substantiality is explored later in section 3.3.3 where I present an updated typology of this particular dimension of paratextuality drawing on Genette's original operationalization and on more recent advancements in the study of multimodality (Elleström 2010; Ryan 2014).

3.1.2 The Refined Definition of Paratext

According to the general use of Genette's terminology, paratexts are texts that are in a paratextual relationship to another text, meaning that they ground it in a socio-historical reality. However, this is not entirely accurate. Such an assumption would treat textual transcendence as a typology of texts instead of a typology of textuality and textual relationships. Genette himself warns of this misleading conclusion:

> If one views transtextuality in general not as a classification of texts (a notion that makes no sense, since there are no texts without textual transcendence) but rather as an aspect of textuality, and no doubt *a fortiori* of literariness, as Riffaterre would rightly put it, the one should also consider its diverse components (intertextuality, paratextuality, etc.) not as categories of texts but rather as aspects of textuality. That is precisely how I understand it, though without the exclusion it entails. The various forms of transtextuality are indeed aspects of any textuality […] [emphasis original] (Genette 1997a, 8)

Any text is potentially and in fact inevitably paratextual – a text cannot be approached without appearing in some form in the socio-historical reality, thus its existence alone if noticed by a reader is what establishes the most basic level of paratextuality.[67] In other words,

[67] Any potentially self-contained part of a text – this is an epistemological matter, not an ontological one – can be treated as a text or as a part of a greater textual system, which can also be understood as a text of sorts using Barthes' (1987a) definition. In consequence, the individual paratextuality of such an element always contributes to the paratextuality of the whole system. For example, the authorship of a trailer is relevant in the context of the authorship of a video game.

proclaiming that a text is paratextual (or a paratext) is like saying that it is textual. These are automatic qualities of any text or to use Genette's expression they are *"aspects of textuality"* in general. Nonetheless, Genette decides to engage with categories of texts that are, in his opinion, somehow more paratextual than others. The same of course applies to other types of textual transcendence, for example an openly declared adaption of an earlier work is more hypertextual than other texts. Similarly, a text that is easily classifiable within established modes of discourse and genres would be considered more architextual than a text that escapes such convenient classifications.

> […] but they are also potentially, and to varying degrees, textual categories: every text may be cited and thus become a quotation, but *citation* is a specific literary practice that quite obviously transcends each one of its performances and has its own general characteristics; any utterance may be assigned a paratextual function, but a *preface* is a genre (and I would claim the same for *titles*); criticism (metatext) is obviously a genre […] [emphasis original] (Genette 1997a, 8)

What then makes a text more paratextual and potentially warrants the label of paratext? The answer to that question lies in Genette's understanding of the immutability of a text. According to him, the core of the text remains mostly the same throughout time while its presentation maintained by paratextuality adapts to the evolution of the socio-historical reality: *"Being immutable, the text in itself is incapable of adapting to changes in its public in space and over time. The paratext – more flexible, more versatile, always transitory because transitive – is, as it were, an instrument of adaptation."* (Genette 1997b, 408)

But should one reserve the term paratext only for genres or otherwise established cultural forms or is it also applicable to individual texts and textual elements? Arguably, paratextuality creates categories – paratexts – whose paratextual quality has been established through tradition and widely accepted as such by involved stakeholders. In this sense, covers, colophons or prefaces serve in general as tools of authorial control over a text, setting the threshold for the rest of the text and thus functioning as paratexts. Other potential functions or relationships are secondary to this paratextual quality. Still, the actual boundaries between a paratext and other 'transtexts', such as metatexts, are blurry as Genette admits in the empirical chapters of *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*:

> Nevertheless, the critical and theoretical dimension of the allographic preface clearly draws it toward the border that separates (or rather, toward the absence of a border that does not sharply separate) paratext from metatext and, more concretely, preface from critical essay. (Genette 1997b, 270)

This would mean that individual manifestations of elements belonging to these categories no longer have to be paratextual, or more precisely other types of textual transcendence might take priority in deciding the status of such a text. Formally paratextual categories can be emancipated from their paratextual function (in terms of a textual system) through processes of artistic experiment, modern cultural production or audience participation among other possibilities. While they still remain paratextual at a very basic level, the relevance of this particular aspect of textual transcendence can be reduced in favor of another textual quality, including hypertextuality or metatextuality. Such a perspective also highlights the cultural process of establishing paratextual genres. For example, prefaces traditionally address the socio-historical situation of a text. However, when a certain preface breaks from this role – such as the critical allographic preface – it does not necessarily change the expectation of a reader to learn more about the socio-historical implications of a text from the preface.

Considering that every text is paratextual on the empirical level, using the term paratext in the context of individual texts and textual elements is pointless. What is exactly the measure of the critical level of paratextuality that would justify such labeling? Considering that it is a

relative statement as every text is to some extent paratextual where does one draw the comparison between texts, paratexts and other transtexts? The ideal categories of text and paratext work on an abstract level but it is impossible to completely separate them on a practical level. That would imply a possible distinction between a text and its paratextual elements as if they were discrete parts of a text that could be isolated from the rest of it. However, such distinction would be artificial as it would separate aspects of textuality that otherwise always appear together. Moreover, the measure of paratextuality is highly relative and the term itself obscures other qualities of a text (or a textual element). This is especially true when one ignores other possible types of textual transcendence, as it is often the case in current paratextual research, which usually overlooks the theoretical foundations of paratextuality.

> First of all, one must not view the five types of transtextuality as separate and absolute categories without any reciprocal contact or overlapping. On the contrary, their relationships to one another are numerous and often crucial. (Genette 1997a, 7)

However, Genette's own empirical work resorts to the simplifications that he himself warns of. But as he later argues, the terminological choice to treat individual textual elements as paratexts is motivated by the issues of effectiveness and should not be taken for an authoritative description of reality.

> But above all, we must not forget that the very notion of paratext, like many other notions, has more to do with a decision about method than with a truly established fact. "The paratext," properly speaking, does not *exist;* rather, one chooses to *account in these terms* for a certain number of practices or effects, for reasons of method and effectiveness or, if you will, of profitability. The question is therefore not whether the note does or does not "belong" to the paratext but really whether considering it in such a light is or is not useful and relevant. The answer very clearly is, as it often is, that that depends on the case – or rather (and this constitutes a great step forward in the rational description of facts) that that depends on the *type* of note. This conclusion, at least, will perhaps justify in the long run (with regular use) a typology that at first glance is cumbersome. [emphasis original] (Genette 1997b, 343)

Even with this disclaimer, the term paratext is potentially misleading if it is applied to individual texts. However, this issue can be at least partly sidestepped by searching for more direct links to socio-historical reality within texts while avoiding reductive statements, such as "every note is a paratext". Identifying links to a socio-historical reality is potentially beneficial but locating them within discrete elements of texts and labeling those parts as paratexts reduces the complexity of textual immanence and transcendence. In practical terms, this means that individual prefaces should not be automatically treated as paratextual based on their form (or genre) but instead one should look at the qualities that might make them paratextual.

Therefore, I propose to reserve paratext for classification of practices, textual forms and categories. After all, this is currently one of its many meanings, which follows Genette's suggestion first explicated in *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*. In practical terms, this means that textual categories such as prefaces or notes can still be considered paratexts if discussed generally as an established practice of a given cultural area.

Previously, I have called for a complete rejection of the term paratext arguing that it in its most common meaning only leads to reductive interpretations where paratextuality obscures any other types of textuality (Švelch 2016a). The proposed solution has been to instead focus on sources of paratextuality in the context of the complete framework of textual

transcendence. In retrospect, I found this decision counterproductive not only because of how widespread the use of the term is (see section 2.3) but also due to its drastic implications. Any negotiations between existing approaches to paratextual research and the proposed update would be less likely if there is no attempt of salvaging even the most problematic parts of the terminology. While I still stand behind the claims that on the level of individual texts the term paratext causes oversimplification of textual relationships, I now present a more moderate update of the framework. I reserve the term paratext for general practices and forms whose paratextual qualities and functions can be assessed by investigation of cultural conventions employed mostly by producers and related personnel but also shared and accepted by other stakeholders. For example, a trailer as a form of expression across many different cultural industries is a paratext but individual trailers always have to be analyzed more closely in terms of sources of paratextuality in the context of textual transcendence. While individual trailers are usually paratextual (at least to some extent), reducing them to paratexts oversimplifies the richness of co-present types of textuality.

Additionally, this terminological update opens up paratexts to potential external authorship although the resulting texts do not necessarily have to be paratextual to a notable degree. For example, a fan-made trailer utilizes the established paratextual form but can possibly fulfill different functions. In consequence, this proposed revision of the paratextual framework bridges some of the discrepancies between the original and expanded version of paratextuality, however only in terms of established paratextual practices but not on a level of individual texts or textual elements.

3.1.3 Terminology Clarified

Going back to the definition of paratextuality, the issue of authorial limitation can now be revisited and addressed. The process of grounding a text within the socio-historical reality does not automatically disqualify external authorship of either paratextuality or a paratext. Hypothetically, this would mean that many notable extensions of the framework (Consalvo 2007; S. E. Jones 2008; Gray 2010; Caldwell 2011; Carter 2015; Mittell 2015) apply the basic definition of paratextuality correctly, even if unknowingly, and in accord with its primary function of creating a threshold. However, this argument would redeem the misuse of the term paratextuality by the expanded framework only if there was no overarching theory of textual transcendence. Within the complete system, the concepts of metatextuality and also hypertextuality are the aspects of textuality that deal with externally-created texts referring to another text and they should be applied accordingly.[68] Even though authorship is a not a defining quality of paratextuality, it is its secondary characteristic, which distinguishes paratextuality from other types of textual transcendence on an analytical level. In this regard, Genette argues that: *"[…] valid or not, the author's viewpoint is part of the paratextual performance, sustains it, inspires it, anchors it."* (Genette 1997b, 408)

Inevitably, paratextuality as a quality of a text is often coupled with both metatextuality and hypertextuality.[69] A text must be usually first presented within a socio-historical reality before a critical commentary can ensue. The same applies to transformations of a text (hypertextuality), especially if they are openly declared as is often the case in fan creations such as fan fiction or fan art. However, from an analytical viewpoint, it seems

[68] Arguably, the category of allographic paratextuality presents a point of transition between regular paratextuality and metatextuality in regards to authorship and the critical nature of a commentary.
[69] This also applies to intertextuality and architextuality in general. For example, a quote in an academic text is always accompanied by an information about the original source, thus presenting it to a reader via a paratextual element. Belonging to a mode of discourse or a genre (architextuality) is usually facilitated through paratextual elements, for example by genre tags or in product descriptions.

counterproductive to focus on a less accurate account of a textual situation (paratextuality) when other concepts are more fitting (metatextuality, hypertextuality). Arguably, this is a result of a selective reading of Genette's original theory, which Georg Stanitzek (2005) identified already in 2004 when his essay was first published in German:

> That Genette [...] should extract in 1987 *one* concept—and specifically this one—from his original conceptual inventory and send it on a more or less isolated journey through the cultural disciplines and that later it should find such acceptance are indications of a problematic situation that needs to be diagnosed from a cultural perspective. [emphasis original] (Stanitzek 2005, 29)

Here, I would contest the agency, which Stanitzek at least figuratively attributes to Genette in regards to his control over the fate of paratextuality and textual transcendence in general. Except for intertextuality and metatextuality, Genette has dedicated a monograph to each type of textual transcendence (Genette 1992, 1997a, 1997b). Therefore, he cannot be easily accused of picking favorites among his concepts. Arguably, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* do not present the concept of paratextuality in the appropriate theoretical context, as it is too preoccupied with the empirics. Richard Macksey's foreword attempts to sketch out the origins of paratextuality as presented in *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*. Still, such an important piece of information should not be relegated to an allographic paratext. The acceptance of paratextuality and the relative rejection of other types of textual transcendence within academia is not entirely Genette's responsibility, even though it possibly shows the usefulness of paratextuality as an analytical concept.

The conceptualization of paratextuality is intrinsically tied to other types of transtextuality and these origins should be recognized by any critical revision of the framework. In this sense, I object to some of the aforementioned implications of the expanded versions as I propose an update of paratextuality that takes into account Genette's textual transcendence as a whole. However, I also mostly reject the arguments behind the reduced framework. Although they are more orthodox in the acceptance of basic qualities and dimensions of Genette's paratext, the reasoning behind the narrowing of the scope is arbitrary and primarily concerned with easily applicable analytical categories. From a theoretical viewpoint, limiting paratextuality to verbal elements while generally considering it a link to the socio-historical reality would be illogical. At best, it would require a new term, which would attend to non-verbal grounding of a text within the socio-historical reality.

To summarize, I define paratextuality as an aspect of a text that refers to the socio-historical reality and potentially comments on a text's position and role within this reality. Paratext is a practice, form or genre that is culturally established as facilitating paratextuality of a text. The adjective paratextual denotes a relevant measure of a text's reference to the socio-historical reality: it can be applied to texts or elements of texts when comparing between parts of a text or textual systems. Notably, paratextuality is understood as only one facet of textual transcendence. Whenever another type of transtextuality more accurately represents the specific quality of a text or of a textual relationship it takes priority as an interpretation of such a quality. However, close attention is paid to the overlaps and interactions between types of transtextuality.

At this point, I conclude the basic theoretical and terminological revision of paratextuality. The concrete dimensions of video game paratextuality are explored in following sections, which address the cultural specificities of video games and its implications for paratextuality and paratext. With the knowledge of original categories (see section 2.1) and later additions (section 2.2), a more detailed and updated account of video game paratextuality is presented in the following sections (3.3.1 to 3.3.4) based on the aforementioned definitions of paratextuality, paratext and paratextual.

3.2 Paratextuality in Video Games

The ways in which paratextuality is manifested is culture-specific. This is a logical implication of its definition. After all, video games do not have the same position in the socio-historical reality as literature, thus different issues have to be addressed by paratextuality, leading potentially to specific paratextual genres. In other words, any detailed classification of paratextual qualities and dimensions needs to be grounded in the realities of the analyzed cultural area.[70]

The differences between book publishing and other cultural industries have been already noted by scholars. The various revisions and additions to the original framework explored in chapter 2 attest to that. While the basic notion of paratextuality is easily transferable if one is willing to treat other cultural forms and artifacts as texts, Genette's (1997b) inductive categories do not apply as easily. Additionally, cultural areas and related paratextual practices change over time. This is why the original framework also fails to accurately capture the state of literary publishing both before (H. Smith and Wilson 2011; Jansen 2014) and after (McCracken 2012; Smyth 2014; Vitali-Rosati 2014; Malone 2015) the classical period analyzed by Genette. Logically, the move to film, television or video games presents even more challenges despite various instances of remediation, which mimic certain aspects of media technologies used in the respective areas.

By differences between codex book publishing and video game culture (and other potential areas), I do not primarily mean the technologies utilized. They themselves of course carry an abundance of paratextuality as the materiality of a medium is intrinsically tied to a presentation of a text, which is in turn a paratextual phenomenon. Still, I would argue that more important than the ontologies of specific media are the practices established around them in terms of production, distribution, reception and appropriation. Technological differences alone do not cause a dramatic shift in the ways in which paratextuality is manifested. In this regard, Georg Stanitzek (2005) has noted that a codex book and a film (when observed in a cinema) structure their respective paratextual genres around the core of the text in a very similar manner: *"Just as a book has two covers, a title, an imprint, and so on, a film—at least this type of film—has opening and closing credits, and so on. And thus a book can function as a filmic organizer of communication, as a kind of natural delineation of the entire work."* (Stanitzek 2005, 38) At the same time, the notion of authorship of these two cultural forms is traditionally very different. While literature usually revolves around a single authority of the writer, films are created by large collectives with a high degree of task specialization. This particular aspect of production has significant implications for paratextuality while it is largely independent from the underlying technology of the medium.

Video games do not exist in a cultural vacuum. Thus, a certain overlap of paratextual dimensions and genres between video games and older types of media ecosystems is to be expected. As cultural artifacts, video games utilize and appropriate existing practices while they possibly also introduce new specific forms, which might then find their way into other cultural areas. Arguably, paratextual genres are not subjected to the issue of technical incompatibility but to logics of production, distribution and reception. The impact of these particular processes is addressed in the next section following the main paratextual dimensions as first presented by Genette.

[70] Theoretically, it should be possible to create a more transmedia-conscious version of a paratextual framework that would take into account the convergence of media technologies and cultural industries (Jenkins 2006a). However, I would argue that such a broad scope would always come at a price of more generic analytical tools resulting in less detailed explorations and interpretations.

One important and rather basic question remains to be answered though. What is meant by video games if one decides to study their paratextuality? Is it the video game culture, which is in academia usually located around players (Shaw 2010)? Or is it the notion of video game industry, which focuses primarily on the production and only as a side-note on distribution (Consalvo 2006; Kerr 2006; Ip 2008; O'Donnell 2011; Jørgensen, Sandqvist, and Sotamaa 2015), with rare exceptions that pay more systematic attention to circulation of video games (Kerr 2017)? Does the video game press (Carlson 2009; Kirkpatrick 2012) fit in as a source of metatextuality and a potential venue for promotional content? And what about other types of stakeholders who influence the way in which video games are presented, for example by introducing age ratings (Nikken and Jansz 2007; Dogruel and Joeckel 2013; Felini 2015)? I would argue that all aforementioned concepts and phenomena contribute to the notion of a video game as a cultural artifact and should be considered constituents of video games in the sense of a cultural industry (Hesmondhalgh 2007). Here, I mostly follow Aphra Kerr's application of the concept to video games explicated in the following quote:

> [...] digital games are socially constructed artefacts that emerge from a complex process of negotiation between various human and non-human actors within the context of a particular historical formation. Digital games cannot be understood without attention to the late capitalist economic systems from which they emerge and the changing political, social and cultural contexts in which they are produced and consumed. (Kerr 2006, 4)

This paradigm positions video games on the same level as film, television or literature in terms of their status as a cultural industry and emphasizes their socially-attributed meanings. I believe that this approach corresponds to Genette's own treatment of paratextuality in book publishing, which he describes as *"[...] the most socialized side of the practice of literature (the way its relations with the public are organized) [...]"* (Genette 1997b, 14) and thus allows for a rigorous application of the concept of paratextuality to the study of video game culture.

3.3 Dimensions of Video Game Paratextuality

Genette's presentation of paratextual dimensions follows the logic of linear models of communication (Shannon 1948; Lasswell 2014). In *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* (Genette 1997b), five aspects of paratextuality are addressed individually in the following order: spatiality, temporality, substantiality, pragmatics, and functionality (see sections 2.1.1 to 2.1.5). However, this succession is counterintuitive as it leaves the more central properties of paratextuality – functionality and pragmatics – to be treated last even though they both significantly influence the more basic dimensions of spatiality, temporality and substantiality. The original sequence is structured along the lines of increasing complexity: starting with two categories of spatiality and moving towards more intricate classifications of other dimensions. Instead I propose to revert the original order and start with the core issues of (1) functionality, moving then to the (2) pragmatic situation of authorship. Next, I address the question of (3) substantiality and materiality. Lastly, the spatial and temporal dimensions are treated together, as recent contributions explored in section 2.2.5 show that these qualities are highly interconnected and often theorized using both spatial and temporal metaphors.

3.3.1 Function

While Genette never attempts to provide a systematic overview of paratextual functions, he is clear about paratext's subordination to the text. This subservience implies a certain sense of functionality but the specific manner in which it is established has been only hinted at in the original framework. Although, I have rejected the notion of subordination in the previous sections of chapter 3, functionality is still a key aspect of my proposed redefinition of

paratextuality. In the following paragraphs, I discuss the fundamentals of paratextual functions in the context of the new framework and introduce a basic typology.

Broadly speaking, the function of paratextuality is any form of linking of a text to the surrounding social reality. According to Genette (1997b) and some proponents of the reduced framework (Rockenberger 2014), this means that paratextuality (or more precisely paratexts) always serves the main text. Such a claim is problematic for two basic reasons. First, it implies that the source of paratextuality or the paratext can be completely isolated from the text and that the two can then be analytically approached as two separate entities. However, according to the general definition of textual transcendence, paratextuality is an aspect of any textuality, thus any text is always already paratextual if it exists in a socio-historical reality (Genette 1997a). Second, suggesting that a text serves itself is somewhat tautological and does not shed any light on the role of paratextuality in video games, or book publishing for that matter, without a more detailed exploration.

Arguably, the subservience attributed to paratextuality and paratexts is supposed to address the perceived hierarchy of such constituent parts of a text, suggesting that some elements are less important than others and can be removed or changed without threatening the integrity of the text. According to Genette, that is the case with adjustments to the presentation of the text, meaning paratextuality and paratexts, which adapt the text to the evolution of the socio-historical reality. This statement implies that the text's presentation and the text itself can be separated and that a change to the former does not significantly alter the latter. Here, Genette's argument is motivated by the literary practices such as prefaces or later editions and makes sense only in the specific context of literary publishing culture. Interestingly, such a view both reinforces and contests the conservative approach to literary works criticized by Barthes (1987a, 1987b). Genette presumes the centrality of a work but he immediately relativizes it by pointing to the importance of paratextuality as a framing tool. Actually, video games provide an abundance of examples when changes are made not only to the presentation but to the game itself if one follows Genette's simplistic distinction. Patches or updates actually adapt the game to the evolution of the socio-historical reality, be it criticism or exploits of game design flaws. In consequence, Genette's argument about the immutability of a text is culture-specific and comments only on particular literary practices but not on general features of texts (in the broad meaning of the term as established in the Introduction).

With this knowledge in mind, I would argue that the inductive approach favored by Genette conflates certain paratextual genres with the relationship of paratextuality as such. The subordinate and peripheral status of some textual elements is not an implication of paratextuality but rather a coincidence. Paratextuality itself is not subordinate or peripheral in terms of importance and role within a text: on the contrary it is an inseparable facet of textuality. Still, some paratexts within specific cultural contexts indeed play a secondary role to a main text. However, this is not a structural but a cultural issue. Thus, not all paratextual elements are necessarily lower-grade constituents of a cultural artifact. In this regard, Galloway (2012) argues that the intraface, a video game element with a direct link to the socio-historical reality, in a multiplayer video game takes the central stage within the gameplay experience.

Another basic aspect of paratextuality that relates to its functions is the matter of its deliberate utilization. The majority of the paratextual genres explored by Genette strategically address the text's position in the socio-historical reality, be it covers, prefaces or notes. However, some instances of paratextuality are arguably more incidental than deliberate, such as unpublished older versions of a text discovered and made available to audiences by historians and similar phenomena, which are labeled as *"pre-texts"* (Genette 1997b, 395).

Genette uses the categories *"de jure"* and *"de facto"* (ibid.) to distinguish between the strategic and incidental paratextuality and paratexts. To a certain extent, errors, flaws and subsequent corrections also introduce this type of involuntary paratextuality by pointing to the fallibility of the producers and the technologies that they employ.[71] However, not all paratextuality has to be either strategic or incidental, there is also a middle ground where certain paratextual properties limit the artistic freedom of the producer due to technological constraints, normalized cultural practices or legal requirements. In the context of video games, warnings about the saving of a game state at every launch required by console certification procedures are an example of such forced paratextuality (Blow 2012). This particular information has to be included in any release that passes the certification process but it can take different forms in terms of typography, color or placing on the screen.

Paratextuality and paratexts are not always a matter of unlimited choice on the part of the producer, often they are inevitable and highly regulated by-products of any creative process. Still, the original decision behind the creation of a text can be attributed to the author and one can assume the acceptance of responsibility for creating the necessary paratextual elements. This includes complying with any regulations pertaining to the selected form of a video game (or any other cultural artifact) suggesting that not all paratextual elements are primarily tools of authorial control. In consequence, the functions of paratextuality vary accordingly from strategic to obligatory and inevitable based on the specificities of a given cultural area.

What are the actual functions of video game paratextuality and paratexts? Genette's inductive approach can provide only basic orientation as it is deeply rooted within literary publishing (see section 2.1.5). Rockenberger's (2014) extensive classification of sixteen potential functions is limited by the reduced definition of paratextuality, which recognizes only verbal paratexts. Moreover, its scope is general and attempts to deal with paratextuality in all media. On the other hand, Mittell's (2015) functional typology is informed primarily by television culture and employs the expanded framework. His three categories of (I) transmedia, (II) promotional and (III) orienting paratexts leave out a variety of other goals of paratextuality such as instruction or correction. Additionally, transmedia storytelling content in the sense of narrative extension is not primarily a paratextual quality according to both the original and my proposed definition of paratextuality.

Any attempt to create a typology of functions has to balance the level of abstraction and specificity. In this regard, one might think of Rockenberger's sixteen categories as overly specific while Mittell's three classes are too broad. I would argue that combining the deductive and inductive reasoning can help to construct a usable typology. Thus, I propose to juxtapose the definition of paratextuality and the existing paratextual genres of the video game industry. Drawing on previous scholarly work presented in section 2.3.1 and my previous contributions (Švelch 2015b, 2016a), following elements of the video game culture serve as the empirical basis of my proposed treatment of functions related to paratextuality (in alphabetical order): advertisements, boxes, covers, credits, EULAs[72], FAQs, introductory sequences, making-of materials, manuals, official infographics, official websites, packaging and distribution materials, patches, patch notes, screenshots, trailers, terms of use, user interfaces, and video game company logos. As a result of the empirical exploration and a critical review of the previous contributions to operationalization of the functional

[71] Glitches and technical errors in particular can uncover the inner workings of a medium and the technology, which was used to create a text, effectively commenting on its origins (B. M. Hill 2011) and thus acting as sources of paratextuality.
[72] EULA is an abbreviation for an *"end-user license agreement"*, which serves as a legal contract establishing the legal conditions of use of a software between its legally responsible creator and the user.

dimension, I recognize five basic functions of paratextuality: (1) referential, (2) instructional, (3) interfacial, (4) corrective, and (5) revelatory. I further distinguish two sub-types of the referential function: (1a) promotional and (1b) legal.

The most basic function of paratextuality is the (1) referential one, which addresses the object at hand as a video game along with its common characteristics, such as its producers, publishers, title, genre, technology used, year of publication or number of active players. Credits, introductory sequences, making-of materials, official infographics, official websites, video game company logos, or video game covers are all generally speaking referential types of paratextuality. A wide variety of related sub-functions could be easily operationalized, in fact any paratextual function is at least partly referential due to the definition of paratextuality; it can only be established through linking of a text and the socio-historical reality, thus requiring at least an implicit reference to a text itself.

Here, I intend to draw attention to only two specific categories of referential paratextuality that are instrumental for the effectiveness of the video game industry. First, it is the (1a) promotional function, which relates to the status of a video game as a commodity, which can be purchased by players. Elements such as packaging, trailers or official websites often emphasize the commodified nature of a video game and aim to advertise it. Second, it is the (1b) legal function dealing with the legal implications of purchasing and playing a video game. EULAs and terms of use are paratextual elements that focus on the legal aspects of paratextuality. However, any copyright notice, anti-piracy warning, age rating or any other manifestation of self-regulation also fits within this category.

The remaining functions are arguably more complex and go beyond the basic meaning of referentiality even though they inevitably invoke it by grounding the video game artifact in the socio-historical reality. The second function, which is particularly dominant in video games due to their traditionally non-linear or ergodic (Aarseth 1997) structure, is (2) instructional. Through this function, the usability and the active reception of a video game artifact is addressed by explicating the preferred ways of playing. Manuals, FAQs or tutorials fulfill this particular goal. This function is not video game-exclusive but can be found in other cultural areas as well. However, video games can be considered more demanding in terms of the interactions with their technological aspects due to an arguably greater variance between functionality of individual video game titles. For example, codex books largely share the same linear organization and the relevant instructions thus do not have to be explicitly mentioned on every occasion. Still, an experimental book might point to its unconventional structure through instructional paratextuality similarly to a video game.[73]

The closely related (3) interfacial function draws attention to the outward-facing features of a video game (intrafaces), which establish the actual interface between it and the player (see section 1.4.1). User interfaces (in the vernacular sense of the word), heads-up displays, video game menus, sound signals or even haptic feedback such as controller rumbling facilitate this type of paratextuality as they provide basic feedback loops of interactivity. Additionally, customizable elements of interface (such as language selection, subtitles, and font size or gamma correction settings) belong to this category. Again, parallels can be found in literary publishing where interfacial functionality is usually more basic and seemingly invisible to a reader. For example, page numbers both in physical books and ebook formats show the reader's progress achieved by turning of pages.

Lastly, I want to address a set of two interrelated functions: (4) corrective and (5) revelatory. The former category is introduced by creating a new version of a text, which is then

[73] I have discussed this act of foregrounding of technological aspects in experimental literature in section 1.3 using the concept of technotext (Hayles 2002).

communicated to be the official one. The term corrective suggests that there was a problem in the first place, but general updating follows the same logic as it establishes hierarchy between obsolete and up-to-date variations of a text. Patches, patch notes or game updates fulfill this function in the context of video games. The latter category is devised as an operationalization of the involuntary instances of paratextuality caused by technical errors, lack of expected functionality or undisclosed unconventionality perceived as a flaw.[74] This de facto function (at least from the perspective of recipients) reveals information about the creation process, utilized technologies or simply about a deviation from an established and normalized practice within a particular cultural industry. Errors, bugs or glitches facilitate this type of video game paratextuality.

The aim of my proposed typology is not to claim an exhaustive treatment of functional aspects of paratextuality, but rather to provide a basic classification of the ways in which paratextuality is established as a link between a video game and the socio-historical reality. Admittedly, more than the five presented functions (plus the two sub-functions) could be easily identified.[75] At the same time, some scholars also argue that paratextuality is incompatible with certain textual functions such as diegesis.[76] However, I would argue that introducing too many additional classes would make the typology unwieldy and hardly applicable to actual elements of video game culture. Notably, the presented categories are not mutually exclusive; individual functions often appear together and complement each other. This is partly caused by the fact that some functions, namely the referential one, are more general than the rest. This means that the other six functions and especially the two sub-functions (promotional and legal) can be considered a concretization of basic paratextual functionality. The proposed typology is not a means to its own end and should always be applied as an analytical tool of a certain degree of abstraction in conjunction with actual empirical material.

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[74] In some cases, unconventional features tend to be interpreted as glitches or bugs if not properly disclosed ahead of a launch of a game. For example, the so-called infinite respawn glitch from *Dead Space 3* (Visceral Games 2013) has been treated by players as a glitch even though it has been later confirmed by the developer as an intentional gameplay mechanic (Švelch 2015a).

[75] For example, various types of real-money trade, subscription fees, paid DLC and microtransactions (Milner 2013; Grimes 2015; Nieborg 2015, 2016; Hart 2017; Švelch 2017) accessible from the game could be positioned at the intersection of promotional and interfacial function by being connected both to the commodified and interactive facets of a video game. At the same time, these forms of commerce often necessitate a legal framing (Lehdonvirta and Virtanen 2010; Lastowka 2011), thus bringing the respective legal function into the equation.

[76] Paratextuality is sometimes seen as a consequence of all extradiegetic (or non-diegetic) textual elements as the conceptualization of text/paratext often follows the same dichotomic pattern as the distinction between diegetic/non-diegetic elements (Galloway 2012). Both dichotomies are sometimes understood as questions of center and periphery (see section 1.2.1). However, such a perspective is simplistic and implies a causal connection between paratextuality and diegesis. Terms such as the *"actorial"* (Genette 1997b, 179) and *"fictional preface"* (1997b, 277), *"artificial paratext"* (Effron 2010, 201), *"paratextual paradox"* (Waites 2015, 13) or *"transmedia paratext"* (Mittell 2015, 261) deal with textual elements that are seemingly both diegetic and paratextual at the same time. Co-existence of paratextuality and diegesis is, however, not paradoxical as it relates to two independent features of textuality. The confusion between the two concepts is caused by the fictional nature of many literary texts, which establishes boundaries between the level of narrator and the events described in the narration. When a fictional narrative is considered the core of a text, then its extradiegetic elements often facilitate the paratextual grounding within the socio-historical reality. However, this is not a rule, but only a coincidence. Paratextuality can as well be manifested by diegetic elements of a text. In the context of video games, a diegetic part of a user interface, such as the health bars on Isaac Clarke's suit in the Dead Space trilogy (EA Redwood Shores 2008; Visceral Games 2011, 2013), conveys paratextual information while it at the same time fits within the fictional world. Thus paratextuality is not a function of diegesis (or lack of it) and narration is not a function of paratextuality, respectively.

3.3.2 Authorship

The dimension of authorship is one of the most divisive aspects of paratextuality. As shown in sections 2.2.1 and 2.2.2, the original and the reduced frameworks limit paratextual authorship to producers and closely related parties, while the proponents of the expanded version allow a completely external origin of paratextual elements. In the inclusive revisions, authorship forms only a minor feature, usually solved by a simple distinction between two basic types of authorship – official and unofficial. Under the category of the unofficial belong fan- and user-created texts or criticism. This approach broadly follows Fiske's (1987) classification of intertextuality as reviewed in section 1.1, notably the categories of secondary and tertiary intertextuality. Interestingly, this exact typology has been applied by Valentina Re to paratextuality, resulting in two vaguely sketched types of paratexts*: "[…] secondary (top down) and tertiary (bottom up) paratexts […]"* (Re 2016, 61)

Within my proposed framework, theoretically anyone can author a paratextual element of a text, however in the cases of external origins, paratextuality is always obscured by metatextuality (or hypertextuality). Thus, if one sees paratextuality as one aspect of textuality, then in situations of external authorship of potentially paratextual elements, it is more relevant and accurate to focus on their metatextuality caused by the arguably critical distance of an external author. For analytical purposes, it is beneficial to limit the scope of paratextual authorship to actors included in the original creation process of a text, its publishing, distribution or to those who were delegated by the producers and given temporary paratextual authority (allographic authorship in Genette's original framework). Contribution of these actors to the grounding of a text within the socio-historical reality is always paratextual as these actors are incapable of critical commentary, at least in terms of the conventional understanding of such types of critical evaluation in the context of a given cultural area. It is for this exact reason, why user reviews written by members of video game development teams are considered deceitful as they pretend to be able of unbiased assessment of one's own work (Fahey 2011).

Previously, it has been suggested that video games allow a certain degree of co-authorship on the part of players (Mukherjee 2015; Jennings 2016). However, I would argue that this type of alternative authorship does not provide any paratextual claim to a player in regards to the original video game as a cultural commodity and in this regard it acts only as a special type of agency (Murray 1998; Poremba 2006). Still, this does not bar players from establishing paratextual elements to their own creations derived from a video game, such as mods. However, their paratextual reach only extends to their authorial contribution, not to the original video game.

Moving on to the classification of producers, Genette (1997b) recognizes only three types of possible authorship of paratextuality: authorial, publisher's and allographic (see section 2.1.4). Such a classification might fit literary publishing but it does not take into account the large production collectives in video game development (Kerr 2006, 2017). The typology of authorship of video game paratextuality can however draw inspiration from the scholarly treatment of film and television industries, which also employ large creative teams. In this particular context, Caldwell (2011, 2014) suggests that workers create their own paratextuality. As active participants in the creation process they have a certain paratextual claim, but the privileged status of the recognized author is usually reserved for specific members of a video game development team akin to film where the director is usually considered the creative mind behind the text (Caldwell 2008) and is treated as such in the majority of paratextual elements (Gray 2010). Still, the resulting paratextual polyvocality (Caldwell 2014) is a relevant aspect of any production within the video game industry as it comments on the socio-historic circumstances of video game development. In this regard,

Caldwell (2014) rightfully draws attention to the important subset of negotiations over a text's meaning that happen within the circle of its original producers suggesting that paratextual elements are key in understanding the overarching industrial struggles over authorship and meaning:

> [...] makers constantly negotiate with themselves through texts. Media texts, by definition, distribute agency across the networks of makers, tools and groups that: (1) comprise them and (2) constantly reiterate them. [...] media texts are 'poly-vocal' and 'polysemic', and not only because audiences 'read' them variously and in highly complex ways. The collective, negotiated nature of all production means that multivalent, polyvocality is a fundamental industrial condition that requires political-economic analysis to fully understand. (Caldwell 2014, 732, 737)

Another problematic aspect of the original classification is the rather vaguely conceptualized notion of a publisher described by Genette only as *"the publishing house"* (Genette 1997b, 16). It is possible to reconstruct what fits within this category by looking at the particular paratextual elements explored in the respective sections of *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*. A wide variety of phenomena such as formats, covers, title pages, typesetting, posters, advertisements or press releases are all considered to be authored by the publisher. Arguably, this reduces the manufacturing, publishing and distribution and the paratextual elements created during these stages to one vague amalgam of nearly everything that is officially connected to a text but does not directly involve the persona of the author as the enunciator of a paratextual message. A more detailed account of the individual actors involved in "publishing" a video game is necessary if the typology of authorship is supposed to account for the different actors who from an official capacity establish links between a video game and the socio-historical reality. Even though it might be hard to trace the actual authorship of paratextual elements used in a distribution chain, ideally at least three different stages should be identified: publishing, distribution and retail, including both physical and digital (Kerr 2006).

To deal with the aforementioned issues of authorship, I propose a refinement of Genette's classification (see section 2.1.4) encompassing six possible types of video game paratextual authorship: (1) authorial, (2) worker's, (3) publisher's, (4) distributor's, (5) retailer's, and (6) allographic. Compared to original framework, I add three new categories (2, 4, and 5) in order to account for the complex production realities within the video game category.

The first category relates to any paratextual statement traceable to the developer in the sense of the whole production collective as one entity or its high-ranking, so called members, such as lead designers, lead writers, lead producers or directors.

The second category contains paratextuality created mostly by the so-called *"below the line"* (Caldwell 2008) workers or other talent without decision making privileges within the development process. This can also include celebrity voice actors or film music composers whose paratextual capacity as creative contributors is used for promotion of a video game but who are at the same time recognized as outsiders to the video game industry.[77] Worker's paratextuality can be either solicited, or unsolicited by the production team, resulting in acts of compliance with authorial framing or resistance. Notably, the first historic Easter egg[78] in

[77] A recent example is the publicity around the casting of the actress Natalie Dormer (of *Game of Thrones* television series fame) as a character in *Mass Effect: Andromeda* (BioWare 2017), including a behind-the-scenes video, which was reported on by the specialized gaming press (Phillips 2017)

[78] Currently, Easter eggs are understood as intertextual secret messages hidden by developers within a game (Consalvo 2007; Montfort and Bogost 2009; Conway 2010; Nooney 2014). For example, *Minecraft*-inspired (Mojang 2011) monsters in *Borderlands 2* (Gearbox Software 2012) are considered Easter eggs in the video game vernacular ("Borderlands 2 Easter Eggs" 2017).

the game *Adventure* (Atari 1979) is an example of worker blowback manifested in a worker's paratext following a disregard for the designer Warren Robinett who was not allowed by the publisher to publicly claim authorship (Montfort and Bogost 2009; Nooney 2014).

The categories of (3) publisher's, (4) distributor's, and (5) retailer's paratextuality explicate the other important actors in video game production and distribution beside the actual developers. These slightly more peripheral entities can either share paratextual materials or create their own in order to promote and sell a video game product. In some cases, certain parts of the video game industry can fulfill more roles at the same, this applies, for example, to platform owners such as Sony or Microsoft or digital distribution platforms like Steam.

Lastly, the (6) allographic paratextuality addresses the instances where third parties (external to the core production process and not participating in the publishing, distribution or sale of the video game) are commissioned to create a paratextual element. This type of authorship is relatively speaking less prominent in video games compared to literary publishing, especially in terms of visible allographic paratextuality such as prefaces of postfaces. However, allographic literary devices such as epigraphs[79] are sometimes used also in video games. For example, the adventure game series *Uncharted* (Naughty Dog 2007, 2009, 2011, 2016) is known for including epigraphs attributed to various historical figures, such as Francis Drake or Marco Polo. Less visible instances of allographic paratextuality are various instances of outsourcing of potentially paratextual elements such as trailers or manuals.[80] The actual authorship of these paratextual genres is often anonymous or at least not explicitly referenced in the text itself.[81] From the viewpoint of a recipient, such anonymous types of allographic paratextuality can be considered authorial or publisher's.

The proposed typology has certain limitations. First of all, the actual origins of many official paratextual elements are not always possible to trace to its responsible authors, thus the relatively detailed distinction of specific actors within the game industry (compared to Genette's broadly-sketched categories) is not always applicable. Due to this fact, an umbrella category of corporate or industry (Caldwell 2011) paratextuality should be used instead for any official paratextuality that lacks concretization of its producers but is considered in accord with the authorial or publisher's framing of a video game.

Secondly, some types of potential paratextual information authorship have not yet been explicitly acknowledged in the presentation of the typology. Most notably, it is the non-human actor authorship of the game technology. Video game software or hardware can address the position of the video game in the socio-historical reality, for example by providing official player statistics, error notices or other automated or procedurally-generated paratextual elements. I would argue that this type of paratextual authorship forms a special subcategory of the allographic paratextuality as it is in a sense delegated by the production collective to the video game as a non-human actor.

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[79] Epigraphs (quotes presented at the beginning of the text and providing a framing effect) are a very specific type of allographic paratextuality as they are often used without the knowledge or permission of their original author. Genette dedicates a full chapter to their exploration (Genette 1997b, 144–60). Arguably, epigraph's relation to the socio-historical reality is relatively minimal compared to other paratextual genres. However, the act of selection and attribution of an epigraph inevitably comments on entities and events outside of the text itself, which are part of the socio-historical reality, thus combining intertextuality and paratextuality.

[80] For example, the visual effects and animation company Blur Studio has created a number of CGI (computer-generated imagery) trailers for big budget video game titles such as *League of Legends* (Riot Games 2009), *Star Wars: The Old Republic* (BioWare 2011) or *The Elder Scrolls Online* (ZeniMax Online Studios 2014).

[81] This applies primarily to technical communication and technical writing (Kimball 2017), see section 1.6.

At first glance, seemingly objective genres of unofficial video game wikis (Mittell 2009, 2012b; Thomas 2016), player statistics obtained via APIs (application programming interface), or so-called player dossiers[82] (Medler 2011) and other skill-building resources based on game analytics (Egliston 2017) feel similarly paratextual and potentially allographic. But there is a distinction to be made as to the actor who selected and publicized such data. If such an actor fits within one of the proposed six categories, then the relationship is paratextual. However, if it is a completely external third party (such as a player, fan, or a journalist), then the act of selection and disclosing of information about the position of a video game within the socio-historical reality is already metatextual and implies certain critical distance. In practice, revealing any information that the authors or publishers of a video game want to keep confidential creates a metatextual relationship between the presented information and the video game.[83] The reasons for confidentiality can range from hiding undesirably low number of active players to intentionally obscuring game mechanics to make it harder for players to play the game efficiently as certain playstyles might discourage players from investing into additional monetization offers such as microtransactions.

Patronage is a related issue of paratextual authorship. Usually, financial investment or backing does not provide a person with a paratextual authority. Genette (1997b) mentions patronage only passingly in the context of dedications as a paratextual genre, which sometimes includes reference to the patron of a text. Thus, the information about a patron is relevant in terms of paratextuality as it uncovers the economic aspects of a text's creation but a patron is under normal circumstances still an outsider incapable of wielding a paratextual authority. However, crowdfunding introduces a notion of co-creativity (A. N. Smith 2015), which contests the traditional understanding of patronage since backers are at least partly included in the creative process. Their input might be minimal – such as naming an in-game character or providing a likeness for it – but due to their active participation they are entitled to paratextual authorship in the sense of worker's paratextuality.

Lastly, materiality of a video game itself is a source of paratextuality and as an individual dimension it is explored in more detail in the next section 3.3.3. This has implications for authorship. Additionally, the question remains who to attribute the authorship of material aspects of a video game to, given that some parts of a video game are provided by third parties, be it game engines, other middleware (Charrieras and Ivanova 2016), packaging or merchandising? Here, I would argue that the creative decision to use a certain technology takes precedence over the actual creation of that particular component of the video game. Thus, any paratextuality originating in material aspects should be considered as authorial, publisher's or potentially corporate if it is impossible to track the particular party responsible for utilizing third-party components.

3.3.3 Substantiality and Materiality

Generally speaking, paratextuality and paratexts are usually considered to be at least partly verbal. Many of the empirical sources of paratextuality studied by scholars (see section 2.3.1) are either entirely verbal (prefaces, manuals, notes), or at the very least the verbal form constitutes an integral or even dominant part of the analyzed multimodal mixes, such as the

[82] Player dossiers are *"data-driven visual reports comprised of a player's gameplay data"* (Medler 2011), which can include various statistics and trophy achievements even across multiple games or platforms.

[83] Hypothetically, the already revealed game statistics by a third party can be retroactively sanctioned by the producers of the game shifting the previously metatextual relationship towards a paratextual one. An example of this is a fan-made progress tracker of weekend multiplayer challenges in Evolve (Turtle Rock Studios 2015), which has been highlighted on Evolve's official Facebook page by its administrators (Evolve 2015).

movie poster, introductory sequence, user interface or trailer. The actual substantial form of a paratext is however rarely explicitly addressed, except for the works employing the reduced framework, which limits the scope of paratextuality only to verbal elements (Wolf 2006b; Rockenberger 2014).

Genette's (1997b) own treatment of substantiality is limited by his object of study. Nonetheless, he recognizes at least four types of substantiality of paratextuality and paratexts: (1) verbal, (2) iconic, (3) material, and (4) factual (see section 2.1.3). I would argue that for video games the range of possible types of substantiality should be extended to include all semiotic resources (Van Leeuwen 2005; Kress and Van Leeuwen 2010) or modes (Elleström 2010; Kress 2010) utilized in video game culture as the majority of them are able to create a link between a text and the socio-historical reality. Unfortunately, the breadth of both of these interrelated concepts makes it practically impossible to use them as a basis for a typology. Such an attempt would spawn a nearly infinite number of categories and new ones could always be suggested as combination of previously identified modes.

This particular problem of overly specific and often overlapping categories has already been noted and the academic debate about modes, modality, media and their potential classification is still ongoing and without a clear consensus (Ryan 2014). Thus, using the micro-level approach of semiotic resources is not beneficial if the aim is to provide an overview of basic possibilities of paratextual expression. Elleström poignantly summarizes this unwieldiness of the concept of semiotic resource:

> […] a mode is understood as any semiotic resource, in a very broad sense, that produces meaning in a social context; the verbal, the visual, language, image, music, sound, gesture, narrative, colour, taste, speech, touch, plastic and so on. This approach to multimodality has its pragmatic advantages but it produces a rather indistinct set of modes that are very hard to compare since they overlap in many ways that are in dire need of further theoretical discussion. (Elleström 2010, 14)

It seems necessary to reach a certain level of abstraction that would solve the innumerable variety of modes and semiotic resources. Genette's typology already attempts to create umbrella terms for potentially broad types of substantiality. In this sense, the verbal category encompasses written and spoken word. Similarly, the material category is even broader and includes typography, formats or covers as technical properties of a text capable of carrying a cultural meaning.

Following Ryan's (2014)[84] and Elleström's (2010)[85] example, I propose an update of Genette's official categories, which explicates the fact that a much wider array of semiotic resources and modes can be utilized to facilitate paratextuality. The new classification is not supposed to be exhaustive. Rather, its aim is to provide a basic orientation for analytical work, which then needs to acknowledge existence of individual modes within the four broader categories of (1) semiotic, (2) sensorial, (3) technical/material, and (4) factual/cultural. Additionally, paratextuality can be established through the combination of elements of varying substantiality.

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[84] Ryan assumes a bottom-up approach to classification of modes and distinguishes between three broad categories: *"semiotic substance"*, *"technical dimension"*, and *"cultural dimension"* (Ryan 2014, 29).

[85] Elleström proposes a media-conscious perspective taking into account four modalities, which then include particular modes: *"material modality"*, *"sensorial modality"*, *"spatiotemporal modality"*, and *"semiotic modality"* (Elleström 2010, 36). The order of modalities is based on increased complexity, starting with the inevitable and most basic material modality and ending with the most complex type of semiotic modality.

The semiotic category (1) is devised as an extension of Genette's verbal substantiality and includes various semiotic codes along with their different manifestations, for example spoken and written word. The sensorial category (2) encompasses various primarily non-code elements experienced through five basic human senses and it is fundamentally a revision of the original iconic category, which included illustrations. The technical/material category (3) operationalizes the impact of an inscription technology (Hayles 2002) – a printing press or a computer – on the form of a text. As a primary prerequisite of presentation of a text within the socio-historical reality, the material conditions of a text are always at least partly paratextual (see section 1.3). Examples of this category in video games are the game cartridge as the physical object, game files, resolution or framerate.

Lastly, I intend to preserve the often criticized category of factual paratextuality (4) even though it is in its original form practically inapplicable in an actual empirical analysis (see section 2.1.3). Still, it serves as a reminder that the paratextual connection can be potentially emancipated from its material form and can then be circulated as a contextual information. More importantly, the added cultural emphasis is supposed to explicate the paratextual conventions of a given cultural area that either do not have to be expressed but are inferred by the recipient anyways, or can be subverted by withholding paratextual information that is under normal circumstances expected to be conveyed. For example, anonymity is paratextually relevant although it is sometimes signaled only by the omission of an author's name.[86] This hidden paratextuality – a meaningful absence of information that refers to the position of a text within the socio-historical reality – lacks materiality of its own and thus can be only considered as a part of the category of factual/cultural substantiality. In this regard, Beth McCoy (2006) has studied missing captions and curatorial elements in photography exhibitions, while I have analyzed the incomplete information about language versions in promotional leaflets of early spoken films in Czechoslovakia (Švelch 2016b). These two articles can be used to classify two ideal situations of hidden paratextuality: (1) unconventional and (2) conventional. McCoy's approach deals with individual outliers (1), which go against an established paratextual practice. The lack of curatorial paratextual elements is meaningful because exhibition attendees are used to having additional socio-historical contexts to whatever is displayed. On the other hand, the absence of information about a language version of a sound film captures the historical practice (2) around the year 1930 when this particular detail has not been considered important enough to be included in promotional materials. There is also a third possible situation – a transient one – in which a convention is being established but still not followed by the majority of producers (or related parties). All three types of hidden paratextuality influence the presentation of a text within the socio-historical reality and belong to the factual/cultural substantiality.

3.3.4 Spatiotemporal Dimension

Genette (1997b) treats spatiality and temporality as two separate qualities in *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*. However, the later additions to the framework such as entryway and in medias res paratexts (Gray 2010) or initial, internal, and terminal paratextual framings (Wolf 2006b) show that these two dimensions are closely interconnected (see section 2.2.5). Thus, I propose to deal with them as constituent parts of a spatiotemporal dimension, which only together relate to actual paratextual practices.

Starting with the spatial part of the dimension, I agree with the numerous critics of the dichotomous peritext/epitext distinction (Lunenfeld 1999; S. E. Jones 2008; Carter 2015) that such a perspective is simplistic in its portrayal of spatial relations within various cultural

[86] Genette calls this particular type of anonymity a *"de facto anonymity"* (Genette 1997b, 42). Besides, he also acknowledges false anonymities, which could be understood as cryptic onymities, for example when the name of the author is hidden in an unusual place in the book.

industries, including literary publishing and video games. While a certain measure of proximity and distance would be beneficial for understanding paratextual relationships, peritext and epitext categories are too broad and struggle to stay relevant as analytical concepts outside of the codex book context. Newly introduced categories such as Stewart's (2010) off-site, on-site, and in-file or Dunne's (2016) in-game, in-system, and in-world lack proper theoretical grounding and are tentative at best, even though they provide basic orientation in possible locations of both digital and physical paratexts (see section 2.2.5).

Instead of searching for discrete categories, I propose to treat spatiality as a continuum organized by its relation to a video game surface. Figuratively speaking, the surface can take various forms but in terms of video game culture I limit it to two basic types of a surface: (1) physical and (2) digital. The former is manifested in the game storage medium assuming that the game in question has such a discrete material manifestation, for example a Blu-ray disc, game cartridge or a video game arcade cabinet housing a singular game. The latter type consists of various executables that immediately initiate a start of the game, for example desktop icons, console dashboard icons, digital distribution library game pages, or executable game files. Paratextual elements can be then located outside of the surface, or beneath it, allowing for more precise identification of spatial relations.

The temporal part of the proposed treatment of the spatiotemporal dimension is based on the relative timing of a paratextual element to the original launch of a game, utilizing the primary criterion of Genette's temporal typologies (see section 2.1.2). Along with spatiality, I propose to treat temporality as a continuum in which paratextual elements can be located before or after the launch of the game for three main reasons. First, the video game launch is traditionally the most important moment of the production cycle (Kerr 2006, 2017) and thus it is usually supported by the greatest amount of paratextual elements. While certain events in a life cycle of a video game are becoming comparably important, such as the start of the Early Access[87] period (Galyonkin 2015) or releases of expansions, patches and updates in online multiplayer games, the actual release of a video game still remains the most notable milestone. Second, the criterion of relative timing to an author's life is mostly inapplicable to video game culture due to the large production collectives. Lastly, the duration of a paratextual element is an important aspect of video game culture, especially due to patches and updates (Paul 2011; Sherlock 2014; Švelch 2016a), which make previous paratextual information obsolete. However, duration eludes a simple classification and cannot be captured using a singular classifying criterion that could be used in conjunction with the proposed operationalization of spatiality.

The resulting model of the spatiotemporal dimension is a two-dimensional space where the two axes (x for temporality, y for spatiality) intersect at the point of the launch and the surface, creating schematic quadrants in which any potential paratextual element can be located (see Figure 1). However, many paratextual genres (which would be labeled original in Genette's framework) are positioned directly at the y axis, meaning at the time of a launch.

[87] Early Access is fundamentally a monetization model in which a game in early development stages is available for purchase and play, providing funding for the completion of the game's development. It is similar to alpha and beta stages of games except for the monetized access. The model has been gradually incorporated into various digital distribution platforms, including Steam or GOG.com.

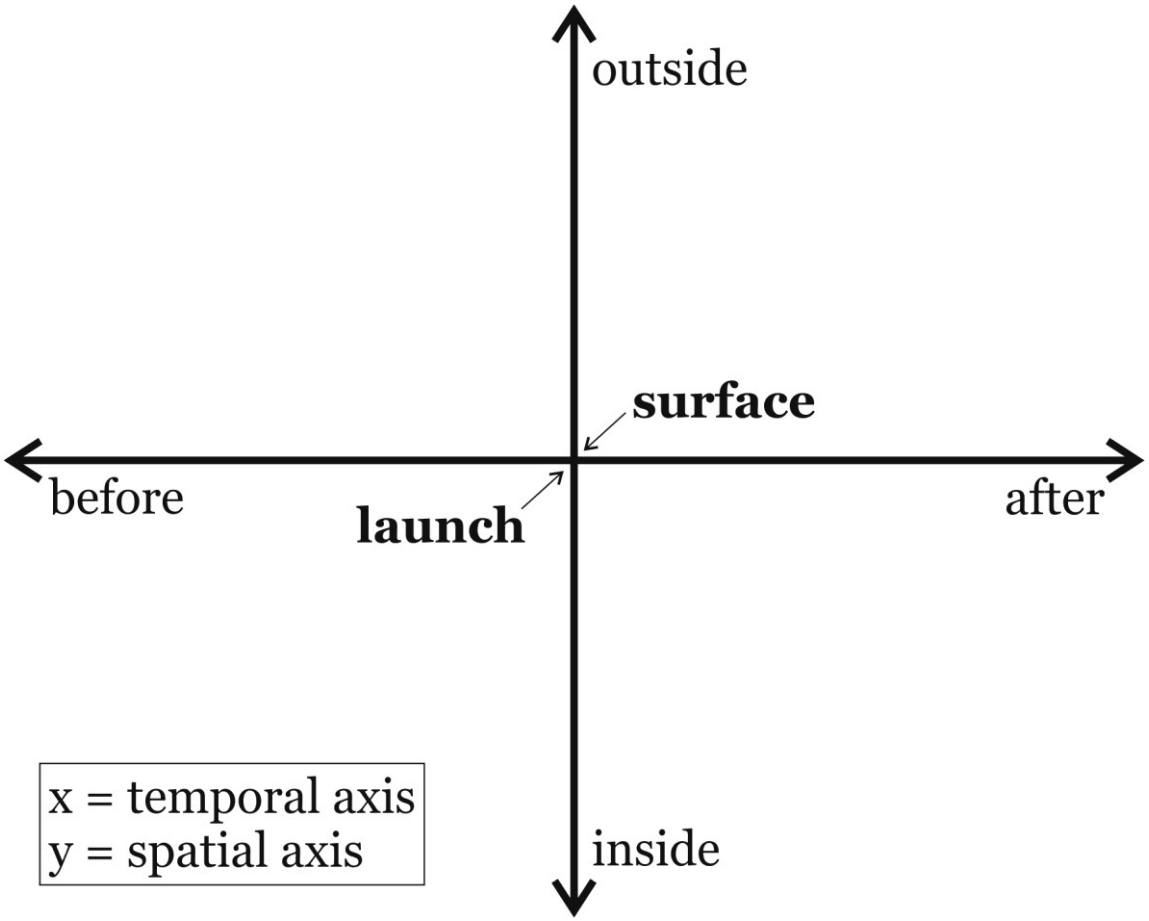

Figure 1: A model of the spatiotemporal dimension of paratextuality

The primary perspective assumed in this operationalization of the spatiotemporal dimension is the matter of production meaning that the positions in the diagram are established on producers' original intentions and not on their actual placing within a process of reception. Still, some reception-focused and arguably hermeneutical terms such as the initial, internal, and terminal paratextual framings (Wolf 2006b) can be at least partially re-conceptualized as possible coordinates of the inside-part of the spectrum of spatiality. In other words, due to the fact that most video games have *"partially fixed sequentiality"* (Elleström 2010, 19),[88] the temporal dimension of reception can be at least partially translated into a question of spatiality within the virtual space of a video game (i.e. below the digital surface of a video game). This distinction is only possible due to the fact that in the proposed model the operationalization of spatiality goes beyond the simplistic peritext/epitext distinction and instead is conceived as a continuum, which allows for more detailed treatment of both distance and depth and applies both to the physical and the digital surface.[89] Not all formerly peritextual elements are equal in their position within a text. For example, introductory sequences, which would be in previously labeled as entryway (Gray 2010) or initial (Wolf

[88] Elleström (2010) does not specifically talk about video games in this regard but instead argues that hypertexts and music accompanying video games have partially fixed sequentiality. This claim can however be easily applied to video games as their organizational structure is similar to that of hypertexts (Aarseth 1997).

[89] Technically, it is possible to locate surface in both the physical and the digital sense and classify paratextual phenomena according to their relative location to both the respective surfaces. For example, the foiled-up game box might make up the surface and its contents, which are accessible only after opening the packaging, are then located in the inside spectrum of the continuum including of course any paratextual elements such as manuals or legal information on a game disc.

2006b) paratexts, are positioned and also encountered closer to the digital surface compared to the ending credits. Secret messages such as the first video game Easter egg in *Adventure* (Atari 1979), which informs the player about the identity of the designer of the game, are hidden even deeper within the game and thus less likely to be encountered by a player or at least only after passing through more surface-positioned paratextual elements.

The main benefits of the model are on the one hand the simplification of the original framework and on the other hand the acknowledgement of the interconnectedness of spatiality and temporality of paratextual elements. The former is achieved through the selection of unifying criteria relevant to video game culture – the launch and the surface of a video game. The latter is a motivation for the holistic treatment of paratextuality, which is established and then experienced at a certain time at a certain place. This location within the spatiotemporal dimension is relevant to its functionality. In this regard, the quadrants of the model provide basic orientation in terms of particular paratextual genres. For example, video game trailers with promotional function can be mostly located outside of the game and before the launch, with exceptions such as trailers for downloadable content, which are released later. Similarly, patch notes bearing primarily referential and secondarily corrective function usually appear after launch and outside, while the actual patch applies below the surface of the game.

There are of course other relevant issues of spatiotemporality beside what can be attended directly by the proposed model such as the orientation of paratextual elements (McCracken 2012), which can benefit from the unified approach to spatiality and temporality. In this regard, the formerly purely spatial categories of centrifugal and centripetal vectors could be updated to treat also spatiotemporal phenomena. The new center would then be understood as the up-to-date version of a text and paratextuality can then reach both outside but also to history and future. For example, it can inform both about a previous state of a game as well as about planned updates.

Ephemerality (Grainge 2011; Gray 2016) is also an important quality connected to the spatiotemporal dimension. Generally speaking, video games are often subjected to updates and patches, which render some paratextual elements of older date obsolete and possibly in need of an update themselves. The more spatially removed sources can be archived by players and fans, while the internal parts of a video game can be completely revised by producers resulting in erasing of a paratextual information altogether. Paradoxically, certain parts of the paratextual surround can lose touch with the video game after the release even though paratexts are usually considered the more mutable part of a textual system, not only by Genette but also by game studies scholars:

> Although games are not immutable in the sense that there is only one way to play them, they can be more static and fixed than their surrounding discourse. And that discourse is much easier to change, amend, update, or retract than even a patch—arguably a paratext itself—to a computer game. (Consalvo 2007, 21)

I have previously explored official websites of video games as one of the potential venues of outdated paratextuality (Švelch 2016a). Many similar paratextual genres are abandoned after the launch of the game in favor of more direct communication with actual players as opposed to potential customers who are the usual focus of the pre-release period of the production cycle. Arguably, the more distant a paratextual element is from the video game and its evolution after launch, the lesser chance it has of being updated accordingly. In consequence, the ephemerality can take form of either deletion or outdatedness partly based on the spatiotemporal location of a given paratextual element.

3.4 The Framework of Video Game Paratextuality – Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented the updated version of the paratextual framework. I understand paratextuality as one aspect of textual transcendence, which should therefore be addressed within this particular theoretical context. The main implication of this stance is the rejection of the externally authored paratextuality included in the expanded versions of the framework, as there is another type of textual transcendence – metatextuality – which is reserved for such instances of critical commentaries.[90] In pursuit of terminological clarity, I explicitly address the differences between the concepts of paratextuality, paratext and paratextual and refine their meaning. I define the first as link between a text and the socio-historical reality. Paratext is reserved for practices, forms and genres but not for individual textual elements, while the adjective denotes a measure of paratextuality of a certain textual element in comparison to other parts of a text. This set of definition draws on Genette's (1997b) original framework, Galloway's (2012) work on interface and my previous contribution on paratextuality in official communication of video games (Švelch 2016a). The oft-used threshold metaphor for the function of paratextuality is interpreted as a connection to the socio-historical reality surrounding any text.

The introduction of particular dimensions of paratextuality is preceded by a call for the culture-specific treatment of paratextuality – with regards to video games as a cultural industry. This is due to the fact that the concept of paratextuality itself originally dealt with book publishing as a social practice and many of its categories were devised inductively through close reading of literary paratextual elements.

Dimension	**Operationalization**	**Main Categories**	
Function	Categories	1. Referential	1a. Promotional
			1b. Legal
		2. Instructional	
		3. Interfacial	
		4. Corrective	
		5. Revelatory	
Authorship	Discrete categories	1. Authorial	
		2. Worker's	
		3. Publisher's	
		4. Distributor's	
		5. Retailer's	
		6. Allographic	
Substantiality	Categories	1. Semiotic	
		2. Sensorial	
		3. Technical/Material	
		4. Factual/Cultural	
Spatiotemporality	Two-dimensional continuum	x-axis – before and after launch y-axis – outside and inside the surface	

Table 1: Overview of paratextual dimensions and their operationalization

The four main qualities of paratextuality are approached in the context of video games and the respective current practices. Contrary to Genette (1997b), I start with the more fundamental dimensions and leave the formal features to be addressed last, effectively reverting his original order. First, I deal with the function and identify seven main types of how a text is connected to the socio-historical reality by paratextual elements: (1) referential, (1a) promotional, (1b) legal, (2) instructional, (3) interfacial, (4) corrective, and (5) revelatory. Second, I explore the issue of authorship and propose six categories relevant to

[90] By 'critical' I mean the whole continuum of positive and negative assessments.

video game culture: (1) authorial, (2) worker's, (3) publisher's, (4) distributor's, (5) retailer's, and (6) allographic. Although drawing from Genette's classification, I call for a more detailed consideration of actors involved in video game production and distribution, including non-human actors, which in this case belong to the allographic category along with other delegated third parties. Third, I broaden the potential sources of paratextuality by drawing on social semiotics and multimodality research. Four general types of substantiality are possible to facilitate paratextuality (1) semiotic, (2) sensorial, (3) technical/material, and (4) factual/cultural. Lastly, I simultaneously address both the spatial and the temporal dimension using a two-dimensional model based on relative timing to a video game launch and relative proximity/depth to a video game surface. Spatiality and temporality are two closely interconnected dimensions, which can only benefit from being operationalized in one unifying model. In this regard, I reject the reductive peritext/epitext distinction and propose to treat spatiality along with temporality as a continuum.

Of course, other dimensions could be introduced and they might be equally relevant for certain areas of paratextuality. However, I would argue that the aforementioned four categories constitute the basic facets of paratextuality and are applicable to nearly any paratextual element.

For example, Genette's temporal distinction between anthumous and posthumous paratexts (see section 2.1.2) does not fit the notion of authorship in mainstream video game industry. While certain individuals within game development have publicly known personas, which are attributed to particular projects or studios, at large the video game industry operates rather on logic of brands, similarly to film animation (McCulloch 2015; Aronczyk 2017). Thus, the death of the author does not present any meaningful information that would influence a meaning of a paratextual element. The same reservation applies to the duration of a paratext, which has been devised based on the deliberate act of deletion issued by the author or the publisher. The complex industrial structures make it hard to track any such decisions to individual actors in video game industry, let alone understand the reason and the meaning of any such deletion of a paratextual element. I have previously argued that ephemerality and obsolescence is an important issue relevant to certain paratextual forms (such as official websites) in video game culture that tend to go out of touch with the evolution of a video game product (Švelch 2016a). Still, I consider this a side issue, which does not directly influence the basic properties of video game paratextuality.

Compared to Genette, I also streamline certain aspects of the pragmatic dimension (see section 2.1.4) in favor of more systematic and approachable criteria. Overall, the original four different pragmatic typologies are too detailed and particular to be applied to paratextual elements in general. In my proposed framework, the degree of authority is partly compensated by the more nuanced treatment of authorship, which also includes the umbrella category of corporate (or industrial) authorship for official paratexts without a clearly designated responsible party. The addressee of majority paratextual elements is usually the public, making further categories too circumstantial for a general typology. Lastly, the illocutionary force is combined with the separate dimension of functions and presented as a unified set of types of paratextual functionality.

Concerning contributions from other scholars, the most relevant addition to the dimensions of paratextuality are McCracken's (2012) directional vectors**.** However, I would argue that they do not belong to the basic properties of paratextual elements. For the specific cases where they provide better understanding of paratextuality, they can be easily added as a new layer to the proposed four dimensions.

Chapter 4: Reception of Paratextuality

The aims of the following chapters are twofold. Starting with the issues of reception, I first intend to show that paratextuality is an aspect of any textuality and that its reception is relevant to the reception of a text, to which it is connected. Second, the selected examples of video game trailers and their audience reception are analyzed using the new framework in chapter 5. The empirical research itself is divided into two parts: a formal paratextual analysis of twelve video game trailers and the qualitative exploration of online discourses about the selected trailers. Both parts are designed to test the framework in the field for the first time and look for empirical support for its revised terminology, which rejects the reductive label of paratext and emphasizes the interconnectedness of paratextuality and other aspects of textual immanence and transcendence.

Paratextuality as a phenomenon is directly tied to the reception process of a text, primarily by ensuring that it happens at all by informing about the existence of the text. This is the goal of the promotional function (see section 3.3.1) of paratextual elements – to draw attention of a player towards a game and to persuade them to buy it. Other dedicated paratextual genres such as tutorials and manuals go beyond merely informing about a game's existence and provide cues as how to satisfyingly play it.

There are many ways how to approach a game, or any text for that matter. The player is an active participant in meaning-making processes and can interact with a game in a variety of styles. Paratextuality along with its main functions is not an exception to this notion of active reception and interpretation. For paratextuality to be efficient and successful, it has to be received as paratextuality and understood by audiences in its capacity of linking a video game to the surrounding socio-historical reality and explaining the video game's role in it.

According to theorists of reception such as Iser (1972, 1978), Jauss (1970, 1982), Eco (1972), Hall (1973) or even Miller (1979) and Barthes (1987a, 1987b), there is a certain degree of freedom in terms of interpretation of what a text and its reading mean (see section 1.7). Especially, Eco and Hall provide concrete conceptualization of possible readings, which I have reviewed in chapter 1. Here, I want to go one step further and propose a combination of their approaches, which compensates for the shortcomings of the individual models. The ideological limitations of the concept of preferred reading (Hall 1973) can be overcome by adding aberrant reading (Eco 1972) back into consideration. After all, the decoding activity of audiences does not necessarily equate to their ideological intention. In other words, the factual and ideological parts of a decoding process are connected but remain autonomous. Thus, possible readings might stray away from the preferred correct decoding (as envisioned by the sender of the message) due to both technical and ideological reasons. In order to chart a more exhaustive model of interpretation, I propose a two-dimensional continuum (see Figure 2) with possible readings located within a quadrant bordered by axes x and y, standing for factual and ideological decoding, respectively. At the intersection of the two axes lies the ideal preferred reading, which requires a factually correct decoding. Further away from this point are located other possible readings based on the degree of factual incorrectness and ideological opposition. The proposed model accounts both for technical and ideological aspects of communication by combining Eco's and Hall's typologies.

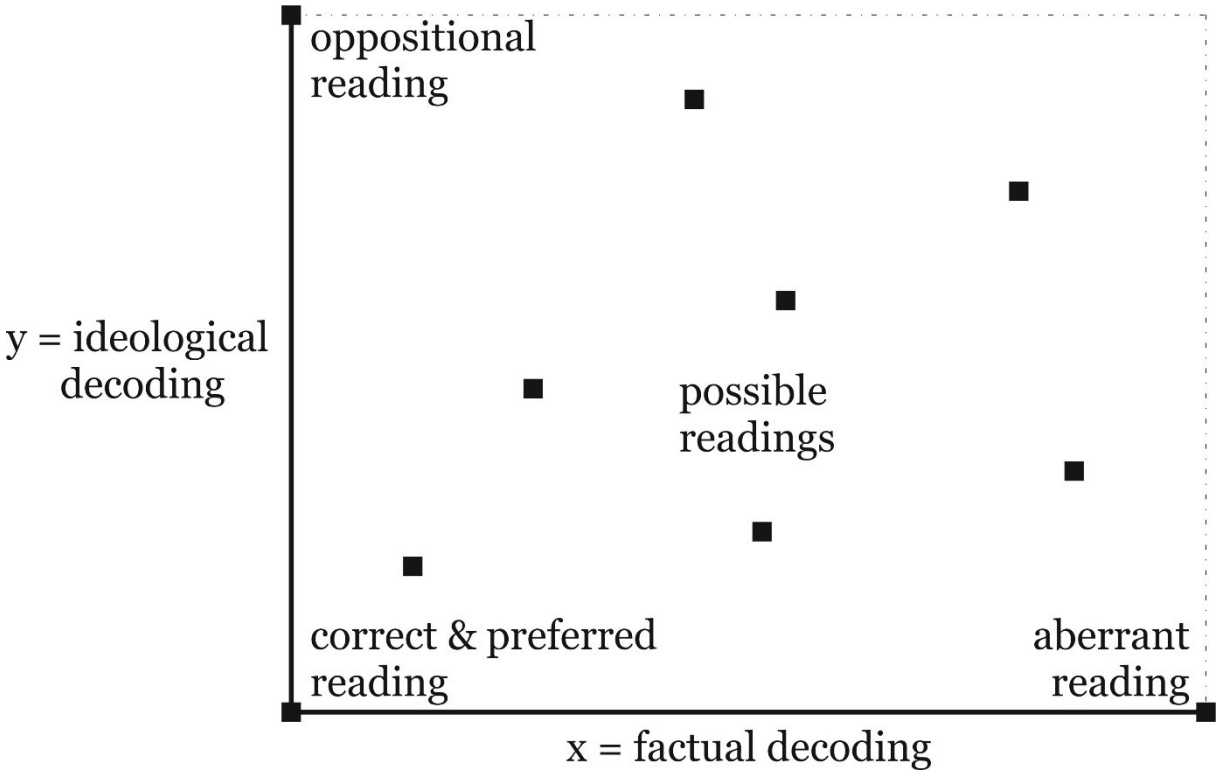

Figure 2: A two-dimensional model of possible readings

The autonomy of reception applies to video games and the act of play, including any narrative and representational content. Usually, producers have a certain playstyle in mind when designing and developing a game and their notion of preferred reading or play is communicated mostly through paratextual elements with the instructional (or interfacial) function. Thus, paratexts potentially serve as a tool to ensure preferred readings and to prevent undesirable readings by influencing both the technical and ideological aspects of a decoding process. Code-wise, paratexts can contain information about the text's origins including insights into the encoding process, which might help readers to choose an appropriate code during the decoding stage. In terms of ideologically-driven interpretations, paratexts can address the text's relation towards the hegemonic discourse even though it may not change a reader's stance. This means that a successful reception of paratextuality, technically also a preferred reading of sorts, should increase the chance that a player then interacts with a game in a way desired by its authors. After all, paratextuality is a part of the text and its encoding contributes to the overall meaning.

However, not all paratextuality is efficient in instructing players how to engage with a game in the preferred way. Such paratextual failure can occur due to various reasons. For example, it may be caused by factual incorrectness, ambiguous and vague phrasing of paratextual elements (Yucel 2014) or by disputes among the producers and other directly involved parties resulting in paratextual polyvocality (Caldwell 2014). Paratextual framing can be also deliberately rejected by a player who might technically understand the implications of the employed paratextuality but still can decide to play in an oppositional or subversive way (Aarseth 2007). Genette (1997b) acknowledges that the functional side of paratextuality does not always reach its goals. In accord with the rest of the *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, which focuses on the production perspective of literary publishing, he attributes paratextual inefficiency to its producers and not to the recipients:

> From the fact that the paratext always fulfills a function, it does not necessarily follow that the paratext always fulfills its function well. Several years of frequenting

> the paratext have at least convinced me of [...] the great conscientiousness with which writers perform their paratextual duty (some would call it their paratextual drudgery). Contrary to the impression that could be created here and there by some behavior that is far too accommodating, most writers set their sights not on an immediate or facile success but indeed on a more fundamental and more "noble" success: having their work be interpreted correctly (according to their lights). The main impediment to the effectiveness of the paratext generally does not arise from a poor understanding of its objectives but rather from the perverse effect (hard to avoid or control) that we have met several times under the whimsical name of the *Jupien effect*:[91] like all relays, the paratext sometimes tends to go beyond its function and to turn itself into an impediment, from then on playing its own game to the detriment of its text's game. [emphasis original] (Genette 1997b, 409–10)

The act of promotion puts a paratextual element into an arguably subservient role. However, advertising can have its own artistic value, which can in certain situations clash with that of the promoted text. In this regard, Genette takes a normative stance and explicitly advises against making paratextuality overly decorative:

> [...] that a book more tempting than its title is better than a title more tempting than its book; well, things (in general, and these things in particular) always become known. The procurer must not overshadow its protégé [...] (Genette 1997b, 94)

Genette's warning can be understood as a call for accuracy or representativity of promotional paratextuality. In other words, the temptation of a paratextual element should be proportionate to the quality of a text. This comes as no surprise from Genette who is very explicit about the subordinate function of paratextuality. However, as I have argued in chapter 3, paratextuality is just one aspect of textual transcendence and therefore it cannot be ever completely isolated from the rest of textuality and presented in an ideal form of a timid servant as Genette suggests. In practice, certain paratextual elements can become over-present and possibly responsible for creating unreasonably high expectations.

Along the same lines, Suzanne Scott has recently noted that paratextual elements might be in practice harmful to the economic success of a text by excluding certain interpretations and thus discouraging respective audiences from accessing the text. Talking about merchandising for *Star Wars: Episode VII – The Force Awakens* (Abrams 2015) and the controversial absence of action figures of the main female character Rey, she argued that: *"Paratexts serve a gatekeeping function, greeting certain audiences and deterring others, and toys serve this function more forcefully than others."* (Scott 2017, 142) In this case, some fans of *Star Wars* might have been discouraged from watching the film as the merchandising suggested that there are no notable female characters despite the fact that Rey is arguably the film's protagonist.

Overall, Scott's observation and Genette's advice to keep paratextual elements simple and always in service of the text remind us of Klinger's (1989) and Woolgar's (1990) arguments about the potential economic benefits of openness of interpretation, which I have discussed in more detail in sections 1.5 and 1.6, respectively.

The current ethos of technical writing seems to be built around these recommendations (Kimball 2017). Technical communication in general is considered to be successful if it does not attract too much attention to itself and at the same time allows for a smooth operation of

[91] Genette derives the term for an overly tempting and decorative paratextual element, which risks scaring the recipient away, from the tailor Jupien from Marcel Proust's novel *In Search of Lost Time*.

a technical artifact. Only in a case of a failure does technical communication become visible and that is already a problem. When manuals have to be consulted, some other part of technical communication, such as the user interface design, has not been helpful enough. In other words, invisibility of technical communication is a desirable quality. According to Genette, the same can be also said about paratextuality:

> Here as elsewhere, the "impediment" aspect of the paratext could easily cause it to direct a little too much attention not to the text but to the fact of the *book* as such: "This is a novel by Victor Hugo," proclaims the table of contents of *Les Misérables*. "This," says the paratext more generally, "is a book." Such a statement is not, of course, false, and no truth is better left unsaid. But an author may also wish his reader to forget about this particular truth, and one sign of a paratext's effectiveness is no doubt its transparency: its transitivity. The best intertitle, the best title in general, is perhaps the one that goes unnoticed. [emphasis original] (Genette 1997b, 316)

The notion of invisibility ties into a greater debate on immersion and alienation. In video game design, immersion is often regarded as the goal (Calleja 2011). According to this perspective, enabling a smooth and uninterrupted gameplay experience should increase the player's enjoyment of a game. Arguably, too obtrusive paratextuality can draw the player away from the text towards its status as a text. Especially, when actions do not lead to expected outcomes (based on conventions or paratextual information), the text of a video game gets obscured by its dysfunctional parts, for example by unresponsive menus. The player then tries to make sense of what is happening in the game and how it relates to their role as its operator based on the cultural understanding of a game within the surrounding socio-historical reality. Of course, this paratextual awareness can be instigated on purpose by the producers to achieve a critical distance from a game in the sense of the alienation effect (Brecht 1961). In individual cases, the player should be able to tell if the act of breaking the immersion is intentional or erratic. That would mean that even though paratextuality can take the center stage for a limited amount of time, then this is the alienation effect taking place. In other words, the breaching of conventions is enabled by otherwise functional and invisible paratextuality. This does not mean that reception of paratextuality is not important or relevant but that in many cases it becomes overshadowed but other aspects of textuality, given that it is fulfilling its functions successfully and facilitating the preferred or at least a technically correct reading.

However, invisibility of paratextuality does not equate to its lack or absence. The action role-playing game *Dark Souls* (From Software 2011) is a notable example of unconventionally minimal paratextuality, at least in terms of the tutorial and other instructional elements. Daniel Vella (2015) has explored how many of the game mechanics are left unexplained and that certain in-game descriptions of in-game objects are intentionally vague and cryptic. This might increase a sense of so-called ludic sublime for some players – a process of uncovering the game's mysteries driven by the need for understanding and knowledge. On the other hand, the same lack of clearly understandable paratextual information can drive others to search for metatextual commentaries and guides online, resulting in a significantly different experience of nearly complete ludic transparency. Although metatextuality lacks the paratextual authority of official communication, it can still provide useful instructions to complete the game. The question remains whether the latter approach to *Dark Souls* should be considered a type of oppositional (or negotiated) reading as it rejects the mystery but accepts some parts of gameplay challenges. Nonetheless, the minimal paratextuality of *Dark Souls* can be received at least in two drastically different ways, suggesting that paratextuality is indeed influential but not deterministic for the process of reception of a video game as a whole.

To summarize, paratextuality is subjected to a process of reception and its reading can shape the gaming experience. This impact of paratextual phenomena is in no way deterministic. On the contrary, it is influenced by other factors such as video game conventions, established cultural practices or discussions among stakeholders. In an ideal situation, a successful interpretation of a paratextual element from both the technical and ideological perspective should increase chances of a preferred reading of a video game. I aim to treat the complex issue of reception of video game paratextuality by empirically exploring reception of video game trailers, which tread the line of being paratextually functional and self-sufficient as texts in their own right. They are therefore a prime example of the need for a nuanced treatment of paratextuality and its cultural understanding through the combination of both a formal analysis and reception research. In this regard, my revised framework is suited to address the interconnectedness of textual qualities, which are particularly complex in the case of video game trailers, for two particular reasons. First, the new definition of paratextuality treats this phenomenon as an integral aspect of any text existing in the socio-historical context. Second, the terminological choice to limit the term paratext only to practices (and not on the level of individual texts) helps to avoid reductive observations otherwise caused by an overuse of the term paratext. In the next section, I begin with a brief exploration of video game trailers as a potential paratextual genre before I present the findings of the empirical research in chapter 5.

4.1 Video Game Trailers

Traditionally, trailers are considered promotional material (Johnston 2009, 2013) or a paratext with a strong promotional function (Kernan 2004; Gray 2010). Originating in the film industry around 1912 (Johnston 2009), trailers have been adopted at the end of the 20th century by other cultural industries including video games (Švelch 2015b, 2016a, forthcoming), book publishing (Voigt 2013; Grøn 2014) or performance arts (Preece 2011). Recently, Ed Vollans (2015) has tracked the evolution of a trailer from a purely cinematic means of expression to its current meaning of basically any audiovisual form of promotion. Both the promotional and paratextual approaches to trailers imply a subordinate role to another text.

What makes a video game trailer paratextual? I have previously explored some of the potential links to the socio-historical reality using an example of the reveal trailer for *Mass Effect: Andromeda* (Švelch 2016a). Elements such as age ratings, corporate logos, launch dates or statements about the claimed representativity of a trailer all establish paratextual connections between a trailer, game and the socio-historical reality. Other arguably more subtle links can be found in the actual used footage, voice over, on-screen blurbs, which serve as a preview of what a player might expect from the final video game. In practice, any explicit admission of the trailer's role as an advertisement comments on the socio-historical reality by referencing the video game as a commodity.

At the same time, trailer can be also considered a short audiovisual artistic form with notable decorative value (Rockenberger 2014) or transmedia potential (Švelch 2015b), which can overshadow the text itself. Trailers can be emancipated from the presumed subservience when they are utilized as a form of fan expression (Williams 2012; Ortega 2014) or a type of performance[92] of a text (Hesford 2013). Still, even though a trailer might be recognized as a self-contained experience and a text on its own merits, this does not mean that it cannot at

[92] In this regard, trailer is understood as a cinematic performance of textual material akin to a theater performance of a drama. According to Hesford (2013), this perspective partially emancipates trailers from their subordinate position and turns them into noteworthy performances.

the same time facilitate paratextuality. In this regard, I have previously sketched a typology of video game trailers based on their paratextual connection to a video game (Švelch 2015b). Each of the three proposed types highlight a potential focus of a video game trailer: (1) performance, (2) transmedia, and (3) interface. The second category of transmedia trailers explicates the possibility of a trailer being both paratextual and also constitutive in terms of transmedia storytelling. To a certain extent, non-film trailers are more likely to escape the constraints of being regarded as mere paratexts as they often require the creation of new content. This applies especially to early stages of video game development when actual gameplay footage is not yet presentable but the advertising of the game has already begun (Carlson 2009).

All in all, video game trailers expose the problematic features of Genette's (1997b) original framework and its many appropriations reviewed in the previous chapters. Paratextuality is not all that there is to say about any text or textual element that links video games to the socio-historical reality. Thus, an interest in paratextuality should not obscure other potential qualities of a textual element. Arguably, the popularity of trailers in general (Johnston 2008) helps to expose the fact that *"[…] there may be additional pleasures to be gained from trailer viewing, and that the trailer-audience relationship is informed by more than simple informational exchange about feature content."* (Johnston, Vollans, and Greene 2016, 60) Video game trailers are no exception to the online popularity of this particular audiovisual form. In 2016, the reveal trailers for the first-person shooters *Battlefield 1* (EA DICE 2016) and *Call of Duty: Infinite Warfare* (Infinity Ward 2016) ranked among the most liked and disliked videos respectively on YouTube with the combined number of views reaching the 90 million mark in April 2017, roughly a year after their release. In June 2017, the 11-minute trailer for the experimental video game *Everything* (OReilly 2017) has won a jury prize at a shorts film festival, thus qualifying for the Academy Awards in the category animated short film ("VIS 2017: Triumph for US Documentary - Animation Films Steal the Show" 2017). While this is reportedly the first time a video game trailer achieved such a level of formal recognition within the film industry, it further proves the self-sufficient quality of at least some video game trailers.

According to a recent survey of trailer audiences (Johnston, Vollans, and Greene 2016), nearly 83% of the 500 respondents have been at some point in time disappointed with a film after seeing its trailer, suggesting rather high prominence of what Genette calls the Jupien effect.[93] Two basic interpretations are possible. Firstly, viewers attribute a certain degree of representativity to trailers, which also applies to the overall cinematic quality of both the trailer and the promoted film. This expectation of accurate representation is among other things fostered by the usually indexical[94] relationship between a trailer and a text. In the case of video game trailers, this applies primarily to performance trailers, which use gameplay footage. An inaccurate representation of a text by the trailer can lead to a disappointment for audiences. Three out of four clusters of responses identified by the authors of the aforementioned survey relate to a possible disappointment caused by a trailer: *"accuracy"*, *"best bits in the trailer"* and *"trailer better than the film"* (Johnston, Vollans, and Greene 2016, 73). The last remaining cluster of *"spoiler"* partly suggests a different interpretation:

[93] The exact wording of the survey question is: *"Thinking about trailers in relation to their feature films, has there been an occasion where you were disappointed with the film?"* (Johnston, Vollans, and Greene 2016, 72)

[94] According to Peirce's (1985) semiotic typology, so-called index signs are caused by the referent. Thus, the act of repurposing content from a text within a trailer creates an indexical representation of the text in question, similarly to the fact that a photograph is considered to be indexical in its relationship to what is captured on it. In other words, indexical signs confirm the existence of the referent. Trailers that use new footage specifically created for promotion can be understood as primarily iconic signs.

viewers compare the text with its trailer and are disappointed by its hypertrophied representativeness, which they were not expecting. Especially, the clusters of *"accuracy"* and *"spoiler"* are practically opposite in their implications for the resulting disappointment and uncover the ambiguous role of trailers, which are supposed to be representative without disclosing too much information. Nonetheless, the empirical findings suggest that audiences approach trailers with a certain thirst for paratextual information even though they can appreciate the quality of its cinematic expression.

I would argue that video game trailers are more diverse than their film counterparts, which are the primary focus of Johnston's, Vollans' and Greene's research.[95] This greater variability has implications for the reception of video game trailers as potential bearers of paratextuality. Historical examples such as the reveal trailer for *Dead Island* (Techland 2011) show that even non-representative trailers can be highly regarded for their artistic and promotional quality and that they do not have to harm sales of an inaccurately portrayed video game (Hamilton 2011). However, it is necessary to go beyond anecdotal knowledge and approach the issue of reception of video game trailers and their paratextual qualities more rigorously. The measures of visibility, invisibility, and appropriateness of any paratextual element are highly contingent and need to be explored within the specific contexts of video game culture. Moreover, the role of a video game trailer as a potential bearer of a paratextual quality is not purely a matter of its formal characteristics but it is influenced by audience reception. In the next section, I describe research methodology whose aim is to analyze paratextual qualities of a sample of video game trailers and their audience reception using the updated paratextual framework presented in chapter 3.

4.2 Methodology

The empirical part of the thesis is constructed to offer as complete a picture of paratextuality of video game trailers as possible and reflects both the production and the audience perspectives in two interconnected but individually presented empirical parts: (1) a formal paratextual analysis of video game trailers, and (2) a discourse analysis of online discussions about the previously analyzed video game trailers. The former provides a necessary basis for the latter as it highlights the paratextual qualities of the selected trailers, which then inevitably influence how trailers are received and discussed online. That does not mean that the formal qualities of trailers determine the process of reception, since viewers are active participants in the meaning making processes. Still, the features of a trailer might be referenced or implicitly reflected within the discussions despite the varying levels of freedom of reading including both the factual and the ideological decoding (see section 1.7). The formal analysis thus attempts to show the key aspects of the perceived preferred and technically correct reading as assessed by the researcher[96] with regard to the paratextual qualities of a trailer.

Due to the fact that the two empirical parts are based on the same sample of video game trailers, I first present an overview of the data collection. This stage alone has multiple steps: (1) selection of video games, (2) selection of trailers for the respective games, (3) selecting sites of online discussions and (4) collection of online discussions. I describe these stages and move onto the discussion of employed research methods and the matters of presentation of the findings.

[95] Only three video game trailers have been listed by respondents of the survey compared to tens of individual films and television series.

[96] Here, the potential bias of the researcher, including personal trailer preferences or previous gaming experiences, should be largely mitigated by employing the rigorous paratextual framework as the guiding tool during the formal analysis.

4.2.1 Video Game Corpus

First of all, a sample of diverse but comparable video game titles needs to be constructed. In this regard, I limit the scope of the analysis to mainstream video game production, which has the necessary marketing budgets to invest in extensive creation of video game trailers (Carlson 2009). A typical blockbuster game features five to ten trailers prior to its launch.[97] Other segments of video game industry, such as the indie game scene, usually have limited access to traditional distribution and promotional channels and deliberately utilize other alternative marketing tools to distance themselves from the mainstream video game production (Lipkin 2012; Garda and Grabarczyk 2016; Sharp 2016). Thus, even though indie developers often employ the trailer promotional form, it plays a different role in the overall promotional mix.

Despite the reduced scope, mainstream production is heterogeneous. Due to the lack of previous empirical research, I aim for exploratory research design and prioritize a qualitatively saturated sample as opposed to a fully representative selection of games. Considering that there is no authoritative typology of mainstream video game titles, I depend on my expert knowledge as a game studies scholar and a video game journalist to create a valid corpus of diverse, yet comparable video game titles. To achieve this, I apply specific non-subjective criteria of (1) number of players and (2) release date. As the main criterion for selection of particular video game titles, I choose the number of players (single-player/multiplayer) due to the fact that online multiplayer games often continue to receive trailers long after their launch, potentially using trailers for different aims than the traditional pre-release promotion. Reception of paratextual qualities of a trailer can change if a viewer has already played a promoted game, thus the relative timing of a video game launch to the date of data collection on August 17, 2016 is considered as an additional selection criterion. To limit any potential bias that I might hold towards particular video games and their trailers, I include video games, with which I both have direct gameplay experience with and which I have not played in an equal proportion (4:4).

Out of the eight selected games, five were published before the date of data collection while the remaining three still awaited their release (see Table 2). Three of the selected games are primarily multiplayer experiences: *League of Legends* (Riot Games 2009), *The Elder Scrolls Online* (ZeniMax Online Studios 2014), and *Overwatch* (Blizzard Entertainment 2016). Three provide both single-player and multiplayer modes, however with different emphasis on the two constituent parts: *Battlefield 1* (EA DICE 2016) can be considered multiplayer-oriented, while in both *Deus Ex: Mankind Divided* (Eidos Montreal 2016) and *Mass Effect: Andromeda* (BioWare 2017) multiplayer modes are peripheral to a single-player campaign. The last two games – *BioShock Infinite* (Irrational Games 2013) and *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* (CD Projekt RED 2015) – are solely single-player. The selected games are also slightly varied in terms of their countries of origin: *Battlefield 1* was developed in Sweden, *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* in Poland, *Deus Ex: Mankind Divided* and *Mass Effect: Andromeda* in Canada, the other four games in the US.[98]

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[97] There are no official records or statistics that would support this estimate on a large scale. Admittedly, this statement is based mostly on anecdotal knowledge. For example, *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* lists eleven trailers on its official YouTube channel.

[98] Japanese video games are intentionally omitted from the sample as they represent a very specific segment of the global market. All selected video game titles have international launch dates and are available to players across America, Europe and Australia usually within the same week. However, many Japanese big budget games are first released in Japan and only afterwards localized for other languages and markets (Consalvo 2006). This means that Japanese trailers might be available online long before the international versions, creating a unique promotional condition compared to Western video games.

Video Game	Developer	Publisher	Launch Date[99]
League of Legends	Riot Games	Riot Games	October 27, 2009
BioShock Infinite	Irrational Games	2K Games	March 26, 2013
The Elder Scrolls Online	ZeniMax Online Studios	Bethesda Softworks	April 4, 2014
The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt	CD Projekt RED	CD Projekt	May 19, 2015
Overwatch	Blizzard Entertainment	Blizzard Entertainment	May 24, 2016
Deus Ex: Mankind Divided	Eidos Montreal	Square Enix	August 23, 2016
Battlefield 1	EA DICE	Electronic Arts	October 21, 2016
Mass Effect: Andromeda	BioWare	Electronic Arts	March 21, 2017

Table 2: List of selected mainstream video games (in a chronological order)

4.2.2 Trailer Corpus

In the second step (see Table 3), I have constructed a qualitatively diverse sample by choosing twelve video game trailers on the video-sharing platform YouTube, taking into account three criteria: (1) type of footage used (Carlson 2009; Švelch 2015b), (2) type of a trailer according to its paratextual focus (Švelch 2015b), (3) relative timing of a trailer release date to a video game launch.

Regarding the first criterion, three basic types of footage are represented in the sample: gameplay, CGI and live-action. This variety also ties into the two most prominently featured types of trailers – performance and transmedia. The former type usually claims a closer indexical relationship between a trailer and a video game through use of gameplay footage presented as a staged performance (Fernández-Vara 2009). The latter can be considered more independent and potentially engaging in transmedia storytelling. The types of selected trailers have been assessed during a pilot study using a formal analysis based on the paratextual typology of trailers (Švelch 2015b). A more detailed paratextual analysis of the trailers is discussed in section 4.2.5 and presented in section 5.1.

Out of the twelve trailers, two were released after the actual launch of the game. *League of Legends Cinematic: A New Dawn* was published nearly five years after the launch of the game without any particular connection to any post-launch events, content updates or patches. *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt – Blood and Wine || Launch Trailer ("Final Quest")* promotes the downloadable content *Blood and Wine* made available for purchase roughly one year after the initial release of the game. Both of these trailers can be easily compared to their respective video games, in the latter case at least to the main game if not to the DLC.

Another important factor regarding the timing, is the availability of a game at the date of data collection. Even though a trailer itself may have been released before a video game, players can later engage in retrospective viewing comparing their gameplay experience to a trailer (Zanger 1998). This can lead to a discursive shift in online discussions and influence the overall reception – while re-watching, other qualities of a trailer might come to forefront, such as factual inaccuracy or the prominence of spoilers (Johnston, Vollans, and Greene 2016). Out of the twelve trailers, eight allow such a retrospective viewing at the date of data collection; the four exceptions are *Deus Ex: Mankind Divided – 101 Trailer*, *Deus Ex: Mankind Divided – The Mechanical Apartheid*, *Battlefield 1 Official Reveal Trailer* and *Mass Effect™: Andromeda Official EA Play 2016 Video*.

[99] The respective launch dates in most cases apply worldwide. However, whenever there are more launch dates for a video game, the North American one is listed as it is usually the earliest. For example, *Mass Effect: Andromeda* was released in North America on March 21, 2017 and in Europe two days later on March 23.

Trailer	Date	Time	Views	Comments	Footage	Type	Code
League of Legends Cinematic: A New Dawn	7/2014	6:27	29,974,058	75,802	CGI	transmedia	LOL
BioShock Infinite Beast of America Trailer	10/2012	1:37	850,940	1,699	gameplay	performance	BS1
BioShock Infinite TV Commercial	3/2013	1:04	2,067,006	2,851	CGI	transmedia	BS2
The Elder Scrolls Online – The Alliances Cinematic Trailer	1/2013	5:47	6,061,571	25,375	CGI	transmedia	TES
The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt – The Sword of Destiny Trailer	6/2014	2:21	4,509,977	10,530	gameplay	performance	TW1
The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt – Blood and Wine || Launch Trailer ("Final Quest")	5/2016	1:37	2,819,338	2,963	gameplay	performance	TW2
Overwatch Cinematic Trailer	11/2014	6:00	9,639,137	19,744	CGI	transmedia	OW1
Overwatch Gameplay Trailer	11/2014	5:56	4,986,811	8,332	gameplay	performance	OW2
Deus Ex: Mankind Divided – 101 Trailer	4/2016	6:10	1,462,004	2,208	gameplay	performance	DE1
Deus Ex: Mankind Divided – The Mechanical Apartheid	5/2016	3:58	701,919	2,724	live-action	transmedia	DE2
Battlefield 1 Official Reveal Trailer	5/2016	1:19	44,326,916	349,963	game engine	performance	BF
Mass Effect™: Andromeda Official EA Play 2016 Video	6/2016	1:58	2,548,268	7,828	mixed footage	mixed type	MEA

Table 3: List of selected official trailers, ordered chronologically by the game's launch date (number of views and comments on official channels on YouTube as of August 17, 2016)

4.2.3 Sites of Online Discussions

Online user discussions provide insight into dominant discourses of a given cultural area or a community. Compared to methods of surveys or focus groups, the researcher's impact is minimal and mostly limited to the selection of particular discussion threads. Due to the fact that paratextuality as a concept relates to cultural meanings of video game production and publishing practices, the spontaneous character of online discussions present a relevant venue where shared attitudes, opinions and discourses are made public.

As the primary site for online discussions, I have selected the official YouTube video pages. They can be easily considered to be the official sources of the trailers and in most cases garner the most views and comments. Moreover, by lacking any authoritative metatextual commentary (at least in terms of non-user content), YouTube sites are effectively a neutral ground where different video game stakeholders can watch trailers and then engage in discussions across divisions of fans, non-fans and anti-fans (Gray 2003). Nonetheless, trailers are also covered by the gaming press and the respective comments sections of relevant articles provide a space for discussion. Thus, as a complementary source of empirical material three gaming news sites – Eurogamer.net, Kotaku.com, and Polygon.com – have been selected based on my expert knowledge, although I am not personally affiliated with any of the websites. Kotaku and Polygon are based in the USA and belong to the most respected specialized press outlets. Eurogamer.net is a British news gaming site, which focuses on the European part of the video game market. All three websites are aggregated by Metacritic, which further proves their respected status within the video game culture.

To find relevant journalistic articles, I have conducted a Google search using a combination of the name of the selected game, name of the trailer and the respective gaming news website and limiting the search results to a one month range from the original release of the respective trailer. Altogether, twenty-two relevant articles have been found, which either inform solely about one of the twelve selected trailers or feature it prominently and explicitly as a part of a bigger story (see Table 4).

Beside the difference of metatextual framing between YouTube and press article comments, these two online environments also manifest varied forms of ephemerality (Grainge 2011; Pietrzyk 2012; Pesce and Noto 2016). YouTube as a relatively stable site allows for retrospective watching of trailers and its comments sections are thus showing a mix of comments across the lifetime of a video, including comments from the initial release of the video to newer contributions closer to the date of the data collection on August 17, 2016. On the other hand, press articles are usually obscured in a few days after their publication due to the logics of a news cycle. In consequence, they rarely receive any later comments. In this regard, they provide a historical snapshot of the reception of video game trailers at the time of their release.

Article	Site	Trailer	Date	Comments
League of Legends new cinematic trailer could be its best yet	Polygon	LOL	8/2014	47
BioShock Infinite's New Trailer Brings You the Beast America has to Offer	Kotaku	BS1	10/2012	434
BioShock Infinite explodes back on the scene with new trailer	Eurogamer	BS1	10/2012	29
BioShock Infinite commercial features a hanging, a Handyman and heartbreak	Polygon	BS2	3/2013	33
BioShock Infinite commercial brought Elizabeth to life with 3D scanner and a cosplayer	Polygon	BS2	5/2013	13
Three Avatars Do Battle In This Six-Minute Cinematic Trailer For The Elder Scrolls Online	Kotaku	TES	1/2013	221
Stunning Elder Scrolls Online cinematic sets the three-way battle scene	Eurogamer	TES	1/2013	42
Elder Scrolls Online cinematic trailer heralds start of beta sign-ups	Polygon	TES	1/2013	7
The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt trailer sets up Geralt's date with destiny	Polygon	TW1	6/2014	39
Witcher 3: Wild Hunt gets February release date, new trailer	Eurogamer	TW1	6/2014	119
Watch Blizzard's Overwatch introduction, which is basically a Pixar animated short	Polygon	OW1	11/2014	17
Overwatch's gameplay shows a gorilla versus the grim reaper versus an angel versus a robot	Polygon	OW2	11/2014	5
Battlefield 1 announced, watch the first trailer for the WWI shooter	Polygon	BF	5/2016	125
Why does EA's Battlefield teaser include a disclaimer about endorsements?	Polygon	BF	5/2016	14
Battlefield 1 is the new World War 1 Battlefield game	Eurogamer	BF	5/2016	168
Battlefield 1 now the top-rated trailer on YouTube	Eurogamer	BF	5/2016	73
The Next Battlefield Is Called Battlefield 1, Set In WW1 [UPDATES]	Kotaku	BF	5/2016	935
Let's Check The Battlefield 1 Trailer For Historical Accuracy	Kotaku	BF	5/2016	123
BioWare Shows Some New Bits Of Mass Effect Andromeda	Kotaku	MEA	6/2016	313
Watch Mass Effect: Andromeda gameplay in a new galaxy 'where you are the alien'	Polygon	MEA	6/2016	32
What do we know from the new Mass Effect: Andromeda Trailer?	Polygon	MEA	6/2016	26
Mass Effect Andromeda trailer teases new human character	Eurogamer	MEA	6/2016	40

Table 4: List of selected articles about video game trailers, ordered chronologically by the game's launch date

4.2.4 Collection of Online Discussions

As Jenkins (2006b) advises, when doing Internet research and especially when utilizing qualitative methodology, it is important to work with a manageable amount of data that is both qualitatively saturated but not overly big that it would threaten to overwhelm the researcher. In practice, this relates to scaling down of potential material. Alone the most popular trailer from the corpus – *Battlefield 1 Official Reveal Trailer* – has nearly 350,000 comments on YouTube. Thus, only the 40 top comments from YouTube video pages and all

their respective replies are included in the sample. *"Top comments"* is the default setting on YouTube and it should therefore provide a valid representation of the online user comments section any regular viewer might see below a video.[100]

Given the fact that there are significant differences in the number of comments of the selected articles (see Table 4), I limit the amount included for the sample to first 200 per article.[101]

Altogether, 34 different venues of online user discussions have been collected summing up to 480 YouTube comments including all their respective replies and 1752 article comments.

4.2.5 Methods of Analysis

The analytical part of the thesis examines two corpora – (1) video game trailers and (2) online discussions. These two sets of empirical material require specific research methods. The former is oriented at exploring the formal qualities of the selected trailers using the proposed paratextual framework, while the latter deals with the discourses about video game trailers and offers a glimpse of the audience reception as manifested in online discussions. The main methodological consequence of the chosen approach is the rejection of the reductive label of paratext, which would otherwise reduce video game trailers to a role of mere subordinate and secondary texts within the video game culture.

Both approaches are qualitative and exploratory. Regarding the first method, I do not make any claims regarding the quantitative distribution of the identified traits of video game trailers. While the corpus does not pretend to be wholly representative of the general trailer production in video game industry, it is diverse enough to provide a qualitatively rich account of paratextuality within video game trailers. Regarding the second part of the empirical research, the particular discursive stances are identified according to their treatment of trailers as both texts and paratextual elements. I do not make any claims about the proportions of the identified discursive stances. In this regard, the corpus itself and the findings stemming from the analysis are not representative of the general discussions about video game trailers. Still, the diverse corpora of games, trailers and online discussions should provide a qualitatively saturated sample of video game culture. Arguably, the particular discursive stances relate to larger attitudes and opinions and shed light on the status of a video game trailer as a potential bearer of paratextuality.

Formal Paratextual Analysis

Regarding the analysis of paratextual elements, there is no established rigorous method available at the moment. Genette (1997b) is in practice employing what one could call a 'formal paratextual analysis' throughout the majority of his monograph but he never actually explains his approach. At best, it can be understood as close reading. Genette also utilizes a relatively large amount of contextual information about authors, publishers and literary history in order to comment on the cultural meaning of particular paratextual elements. Moreover, he combines the inductive logics of close reading with the deductive features of the paratextual framework, applying the mostly theoretical criteria and classifications to

[100] Under normal circumstances, YouTube displays only the first 20 top comments, meaning that in order to see the other 20 a user has to click a *"show more"* button once. Replies are usually displayed collapsed with only one or two being visible from the outset. The rest has to be manually revealed by clicking *"view all x replies"* button where x stands for the total number of replies in a comment thread. One comment can have between zero to tens of replies, significantly increasing the volume of user contributions.

[101] Still, this reduction applies to only four out of the 22 articles. Thereby the total number of comments as shown in Table 4 covers the entirety of user contributions, including both comments and replies.

individual texts. Recent works on paratextuality include some type of empirical analysis but they as well lack clear methodology even though they sometimes vaguely refer to approaches of rhetoric, textual analysis, textual forensics or case studies (see Kernan 2004; Consalvo 2007; S. E. Jones 2008; Gray 2010).

A connected issue is the proper treatment of empirical material. Although Genette acknowledges diverse types of substantiality of paratexts, the core of his empirical work lies in verbal peritexts. Compared to fairly simple and mostly monomodal paratextual elements of literary publishing, video game trailers are complex multimodal texts, which require careful consideration of all employed semiotic resources (Van Leeuwen 2005; Kress 2010; Kress and Van Leeuwen 2010; Norris and Maier 2014). This means that any selected method has to reflect the rich layers of video game trailers and the interactions between them. Additionally, a specific actualization of a given video game trailer has to be first selected before one can proceed to its analysis. I access the selected trailers on the official channels on YouTube using the desktop browser Firefox. In comparison, YouTube mobile apps might show less of the additional content such as video game descriptions or various overlay elements.

Paratextuality as a phenomenon is concerned with the presentation of a text within the socio-historical reality. As such, it inevitably engages with the overall discourses of a given cultural area. In this regard, I call for using a modified version of multimodal discourse analysis[102] to explore the paratextual qualities of video game trailers. The paratextual links to the socio-historical reality should be evaluated within the overall context of promotion and trailer culture in general. The analytical process draws from established discourse analysis methodology (Fairclough 2003) and focuses on individual semiotic elements such as choice of words, images, sounds, music including their spatiotemporal location in the trailer and the representational relationship to a video game as well as larger phenomena such as the overall structure of a trailer or overarching argumentative stances.

Similarly to Genette's approach, the employed method is not strictly inductive and applies deductive reasoning by confronting the contents of a trailer with theoretical and historiographical knowledge about video game cultural industry. This feature of the proposed formal paratextual analysis allows for the study of particular paratextual elements and qualities within the context of general promotional practices and conventions. The awareness of a traditional form of a video game trailer enables a researcher to also spot the missing paratextual features, which might be equally meaningful as those that are present in a trailer (McCoy 2006; Švelch 2016b).

The presentation of the results of the formal paratextual focuses on general paratextual qualities of trailers. I organize the relevant sections according to common characteristics and traits and not by individual trailers. Moreover, the findings of the formal paratextual analysis are reflected in the discourse analysis of online discussions, which might be influenced by the formal qualities of the selected trailers.

Discourse Analysis of Reception of Video Game Trailers

As I have shown in sections 2.3.1 and 2.3.2, the research of the reception of paratextuality is lacking, save for a few exceptions (Cavalcante 2013; Davison 2013; Johnston, Vollans, and Greene 2016). In consequence, the design of both the data collection and the actual analysis of the reception of paratextuality cannot build on proven and validated methods and approaches. At the same time, the absence of similarly-oriented work provides an

[102] I have previously applied this particular method to film leaflets, programs and other promotional ephemera from the 1930s (Švelch 2016b).

opportunity for innovation and breaking new ground. Fundamentally, my chosen approach is a discourse analysis of online user discussions, however its particular aspects require a more thorough explanation.

The collected online discussions are explored using the method of discourse analysis (Fairclough 2003), focusing on the reported reception of video game trailers. Admittedly, this approach can only deal with publicly shared discursive stances but this should not be seen as a limitation but as a feature of the chosen analytical method in conjunction with the empirical material. Arguably, the publicly shared opinions related to video game trailer reception are constitutive in terms of cultural meanings of trailers within video game culture. After all, paratextuality is manifested as links to the socio-historical reality and these connections are often based on cultural conventions, which emerge from stakeholder negotiations and interactions. As I have argued in section 4.2.1, the potential paratextual status of a video game trailer is shaped by audience reception, which can be inductively studied in the online discussions and confronted with the findings of the formal paratextual analysis.

As this is the first attempt in studying reception of video game trailers, I prioritize exploring the discursive stances before looking at individual participants in online discussion or communities, which they might belong to. An ethnographic approach might yield additional insight into motivations and overall video game preferences behind the particular approaches to video game trailers, but the discourses are more directly connected to the issues of paratextuality and how they are understood within video game culture.

For the sake of the discourse analysis, the collected material is treated as dominantly mono-modal in the sense of a written word (Van Leeuwen 2005; Kress 2010; Kress and Van Leeuwen 2010; Norris and Maier 2014). Still, various verbal linguistic elements of different levels and complexity are taken into account, e.g. the choice of words, syntax, the structure of argument, literal meaning, framings, or the dynamics of polyvocal discussion exchange. Even though typography can be used as a semiotic resource on YouTube and the comments sections of Eurogamer, Kotaku and Polygon allow for embedding of pictures and GIFs, only a minority of commenters utilize these affordances, further justifying a mono-modal approach.

The discursive stances presented in the next chapter are supported by quotes from the collected empirical material. For greater transparency, user comments are labeled by their origin using the codes from Table 3 to designate the particular trailer and an abbreviation for the site – (Y) stands for YouTube, (E) for Eurogamer, (K) for Kotaku, and (P) Polygon. For example, BS1-Y means a YouTube comment to *BioShock Infinite Beast of America Trailer*. Online discussions about video games often feature a high degree of specific information about a given video game, including its characters, mechanics, skills, etc. To allow for easier comprehension, lesser known facts are explained in square brackets within respective quotes.

Research Ethics

Due to the differences between the original context of the discussions, which can be by some users interpreted as a fan space, and the new context of a scholarly work, the quotes are anonymized to protect the privacy of commenters (Sveningsson 2009; Busse and Hellekson 2012). Only minor spelling corrections have been made to ensure easier comprehension. These edits and the shortening of quotes signaled by "[…]" should decrease the chance that the user comments might be backwards searchable on the Internet (Beyer 2012), further ensuring that the privacy of commenters is not violated.

Chapter 5: Analyzing Video Game Trailers and Their Reception

This chapter is divided into two parts, which both engage in the empirical analysis of video game trailers using the new framework of paratextuality. First, I present a formal analysis of trailers focusing primarily on their paratextual traits by applying the new framework presented in chapter 3. The second part deals with reception of video game trailers as observed in online discussions and identifies particular stances towards trailers based on their perceived paratextual and textual qualities. Together, the chapter explores the empirical implications of the redefined concept of paratextuality, especially the call for a more nuanced treatment of paratextual elements, which contests the binary thinking that a cultural phenomenon is either a text, or a paratext.

5.1 Formal Paratextual Analysis of Video Game Trailers

Previously, trailers have been often considered to be paratexts (Genette 1997b; Kernan 2004; Gray 2010). This approach highlights the subordinate position of trailers within the production logic of the cultural industries, which employ this particular audiovisual form for promotional purposes. Recently, it has been argued that trailers offer an enjoyable viewing experience, which surpasses the embedded informational value of learning about an upcoming feature film or a video game (Hesford 2013; Vollans 2015; Johnston, Vollans, and Greene 2016). Still, researchers have rarely addressed what contributes to this ambiguous status of trailers, which makes them to be understood both as paratextual phenomena and as texts in their own right (Švelch 2016a).

The analysis aims to remedy this issue by looking at individual elements of video game trailers. Although sources of paratextuality are of the primary interest, they are evaluated within the context of the whole video game trailer, including its arguably "textual" constituents such as its unique aesthetics or any original content. To avoid unnecessary descriptivism, I focus on particular trailer traits across the whole corpus of the twelve video game trailers, using the individual cases as examples of general trailer qualities. This approach fits the exploratory research design and provides more insight into what contributes to a trailer's paratextual quality than a thorough but disconnected analysis of individual trailers would achieve.

In the following paragraphs, I start with a discussion of the four dimensions of paratextuality, which have been presented in section 3.3. This general treatment of paratextuality tackles the basic implications of video game trailers as an established promotional genre. Afterwards, I move to individual elements of trailers and analyze their impact on the paratextual/textual status of a video game trailer.

5.1.1 Paratextuality at the Level of a Trailer

In order to systematically explore paratextuality of video game trailers, I follow the typology of the main dimensions of paratextual phenomena as put forward in the new framework (see chapter 3). After all, a proper typology should provide an applicable and rigorous tool for empirical analysis of video game trailers, first addressing their central qualities, which in turn influence the other related aspects of the examined phenomenon.[103]

[103] In sections 2.1 and 3.3, I have criticized Genette's (1997b) original framework for the decision to start with the less important dimensions of spatiality and temporality, which might be easier to operationalize but say less about the cultural meaning of paratextual elements than the underdeveloped dimensions of pragmatics and functions. Instead, the organizing principle of any such typology should be the core quality of paratextuality, its functional capacity to connect texts to the

Beyond analyzing paratextual qualities of video game trailers, the following presentation of empirical findings illustrates the benefits of a more systematic approach caused by meaningful organization of paratextual dimensions. Although the dimensions are conceptualized as separate facets of paratextual phenomena, they are in practice interconnected. Due to their numerous overlaps and interactions, it is beneficial to follow the causal links by starting with the core dimension of functionality. Otherwise, I would be forced to simply state the spatiotemporal conditions of video game trailers before being able to comment on the reasons behind the strategic choices to position trailers prior and outside of a video game.

Functionality

The most basic function of the analyzed twelve trailers is the referential one, which is being facilitated by various elements from titles to used footage. In this regard, trailers establish two[104] instances of paratextuality, which are nevertheless intertwined (Švelch 2016a). First, they ground themselves in the socio-historical reality and comment on their status as trailers. Second, trailers also inform about the existence of a video game and connect it to the same socio-historical reality as they themselves occupy. For example, all the titles of the selected trailers are thus at least doubly paratextual and explicitly address their own audiovisual form and connect it to their respective video game.

Only rarely do trailers stop at referential functionality. Notably, all the other functions facilitated by trailers are nearly exclusively aimed at the video game and establish its paratextual position within the socio-historical reality. Moreover, just by assuming the trailer form, signaled by the discursive framing of an audiovisual text as a 'trailer', these phenomena of video game culture effectively become trailers and accept the promotional function attributed to this genre (Vollans 2015). In other words, trailers do not need to manifest basic promotional features, such as informing about a release date or showing a video game product in its standardized form, to be perceived as a part of promotion. Even the designation "cinematic" is interpreted as a trailer and thus it also implies a promotional function. This can be seen on the case of LOL, which has been reported by Polygon in a story entitled *League of Legends new cinematic trailer could be its best yet* (Gera 2014). The same audiovisual text is also regarded as a trailer in online discussions as I show in section 5.2.

The dominant promotional function of video game trailers has direct implications for the other dimensions, especially spatiotemporality, which is addressed fully in a separate section. To be able to fulfill their promotional role, trailers are located outside the respective video game and in most cases appear before its launch to facilitate hype building (Gray 2010), informing about so-called coming attractions (Kernan 2004; Johnston 2009) and creating a notion of consumable identity (Klinger 1989). This timing relates to video game pricing strategies, which usually start at the manufacturer's suggested retail price (MSRP) at the day of the launch and then see a gradual decrease in value over time. After release video games also go through more significant limited time offer discounts such as the widely known Steam

socio-historical reality. To achieve this, the new framework completely reverts Genette's original ordering of dimensions and prioritizes functionality before the more formal characteristics.

[104] Or more precisely, trailers create at least two instances of paratextuality. Based on the perspective and the expressed self-referentiality of individual trailer elements, parts of a trailer can also be understood as potentially separate textual phenomena capable of manifesting their own paratextuality. This micro-level of paratextual analysis is further investigated in section 5.1.2. Here it suffices to say that such an overdetailed account of paratextual effects can end up being more confusing than enlightening. The two identified instances of paratextuality are enough to capture the cultural understanding of video game trailers, especially when the unit of analysis throughout this section is the whole trailer.

sales.[105] The initial sales at the full price of a video game commodity are incentivized through pre-order bonuses, which are featured in the pre-release trailers (BS1, DE1, and DE2).

The commodity form of a video game, which is marketed by trailers, is subjected to various legal regulations, including copyright (Lastowka 2013) or consumer rights and protection (Chew 2011). In consequence, video game trailers are often required to comply with a legal framework or they uphold self-regulation conventions and thus include paratextual elements that fulfill the legal function. These can be age rating notices (Nikken and Jansz 2007; Dogruel and Joeckel 2013; Felini 2015), copyright and trademark information or legal terms of special promotions.

Trailers can also suggest (but not comprehensively explain or prescribe) a certain playstyle. This limited instructional functionality is achieved by using gameplay footage. Such a staged performance of a video game might be interpreted as worthy of mimicking. Some trailers explicitly highlight the instructional function and even present diverse scenarios, which can be reenacted within the video game by its audiences. For example, DE1 shows possible playstyles and discusses, albeit in-character of the protagonist, the diegetic consequences of choosing one over the others.

Lastly, video game trailers can potentially serve the revelatory function when engaged during the so-called retrospective viewing (Zanger 1998). When compared to the actual video game, players can spot the differences between it and the trailer and infer, for example, that the video game changed later in the development after the trailer in question had been released. This function is largely involuntary and it is based on audience interpretation of the referential relationship between the video game and the trailer. Within the corpus, it is especially relevant for TW1 and OW2, which use early gameplay footage that differs from the final product. These discrepancies have been noted by commenters in the online discussions and are further explored in section 5.2.1.

Other functions are mostly missing from the twelve analyzed trailers at least in relation to the video game. Still, some rudiments of interfacial and corrective functions can be located within the trailers even though they play a marginal role compared to the dominant promotional quality. Trailers on YouTube exhibit a low level of interfacial paratextuality, which consists of a simple playback intraface (see sections 1.4.1 and 3.3.1) and beside various technical settings shows progress through the sequence of a video. The discontinued annotations feature previously allowed for correction of outdated paratextual information in a trailer. For example, TW1 includes an annotation displayed over the previously announced release date and informing that the launch had been postponed by roughly three months from February to May 2015. Technically, the annotation in question serves as a corrective paratextual element, which creates a new iteration of the trailer due to technical capabilities of YouTube as a video-hosting platform.

To summarize, the selected video game trailers are characterized by a strong promotional function, which is complemented by the basic referential function. The legal function is also present, especially in age rating notices, which are a result of self-regulation within the video game industry. The other remaining functions are not completely missing from the corpus, but appear only rarely and play marginal roles in a trailer as a whole.

[105] The topic of video game discounts and special promotions has so far eluded scholarly examination, it is nonetheless a frequent topic of the specialized press and industry insiders (see Curtis 2012; Rohrer 2014).

Authorship

While trailers prominently communicate the authorship of a given video game, their own origins are often left unexplained. Logos of developers and publishers in most cases precede the cinematic content of a trailer and frame the following audiovisual content as belonging to the official vision of the video game intellectual property by the responsible first parties. Therefore, all selected video game trailers belong to the umbrella of corporate or industry authorship (see section 3.3.2). This particular type of authorship is only implied.

When distinguishing between de jure and de facto layers of authorship, the corporate category always relates to the former. In reality, every trailer has its own creators. However, their contribution might not be credited, at least in the context of official video game trailers on YouTube. The resulting anonymity of the makers of trailers resonates with the general issues of authorship of paratextual genres and technical writing (Stanitzek 2005; Kimball 2017) and reinforces the notion of a subordinate role of a video game trailer. Developers and publishers are highlighted in a trailer without any necessary involvement in its creation process, while the actual producers of the audiovisual text that is being viewed are denied their public claim of authorship. Of course, the de facto authorship of a trailer often surfaces despite the conventions that cause the omission of this particular paratextual information from the contents of a trailer. For example, LOL and TES have been created in cooperation with the animation studio Blur, which includes both videos on its official website in the section Work (Blur 2017a, 2017b). With this knowledge in mind, the de facto authorship of these two trailers is allographic – outsourced to a third party uninvolved in the production of a video game.

Paradoxically, certain elements of trailers receive more recognition for the artisanship behind their creation than the trailers as a whole. This relates especially to licensed music used in a trailer. For example, BS2 and BF feature full credits for the two respective songs: *Beast* by Nico Vega and *Seven Nation Army* by The White Stripes in the remixed version by The Glitch Mob. The former trailer includes the information in the verbal description of the video on YouTube, while the latter besides linking to an iTunes[106] page in the video description also displays the song credits at the end of the video next to other paratextual information such as footage disclaimers or copyright. Here, again the authorship status is allographic even though the musical score has not been commissioned but merely licensed. The paratextual qualities of licensed music are explored in more detail in section 5.1.2. Notably, not all licensed tracks from the corpus have received the same treatment. BS1 features the same song as BS2 but without credits. TW2 does not disclose the authorship of the licensed song *Blessed with a Curse* by Bring Me the Horizon. In case of both present and missing authorship information, viewers often discuss trailer music, as I show in greater depth in sections 5.2.1 and 5.2.2.

To summarize, the authorship of trailers is implicitly attributed to video game companies that have created the promoted game. The real makers of the selected trailers often remain in anonymity, suggesting that their role within the video game industry is considered less important. Interestingly, the authorship of licensed music receives more attention.

Substantiality and Materiality

When analyzing the form of a trailer and its relevance to paratextuality, it is necessary to select its concrete actualization within a specific context. In this regard, I examine the selected video game trailers on the official channels on YouTube and consider the platform's

[106] Interestingly, the link leads to the original version of the song *Seven Nation Army* by The White Stripes and not the remixed version by The Glitch Mob, which is featured in the trailer. However, this particular oddity might have been a part of the licensing deal and does not change anything about the allographic authorship of the track.

(Gillespie 2010) features, such as video descriptions and diverse overlay elements, as functionally belonging to the trailer even though they are technically not a part of the originally uploaded video file. Still, for any regular viewer these arguably peripheral elements of a video game trailer are nonetheless connected to the video and their relevance is backed by the paratextual authority that has chosen YouTube for dissemination of their trailer.

All in all, video game trailers are complex multimodal phenomena exhibiting mostly semiotic and sensorial categories of substantiality. In practical terms, this encompasses moving image, music, sound, spoken word, written word, voiceover, typography and other resources, including qualitatively unique combinations of the aforementioned elements. I go into further detail about some of these elements of a video game trailer, which are relevant for facilitation of paratextuality, in section 5.1.2. Here it suffices to say that most of these resources can facilitate paratextuality, for example by explicitly describing the representational relationship between a trailer and a video game via semiotic messages, or by utilizing the same sensorial content. At the same time, the rich substantiality of trailers distances them from a trailer, as it requires the creation of at least some original content. Gameplay trailers are in this regard closest to their respective video game, but they nonetheless require video editing and minor audiovisual elements such as logos.

The digital nature of video game trailers on YouTube decreases the importance of the technical/material category of substantiality. The video sharing platform in question imposes only a few relevant limitations on the form of a trailer, namely the linear sequence[107] and the visual quality divided into widely recognized levels of image resolution (for example, 1080p). A more remote but arguably still technical quality of a trailer stems from the repurposing of gameplay footage. In this regard, a gameplay trailer is constrained by the capabilities of a video game engine. This limitation is however only mediated in a trailer and not directly caused by the trailer's format or its actualization on YouTube.

As an established, albeit formally loose promotional genre (Vollans 2015), trailers invoke certain cultural meaning even if they do not explicitly communicate it. This is especially relevant for paratextual qualities of trailers, which are often established purely by the factual/cultural substantiality. This includes the promotional function and anonymity of trailer makers, which I have mentioned in the previous sections. In the former case, even a minimal referential relationship between a text and a trailer implies the promotional function of the second artifact, such as in the case of LOL, which lacks many of primarily promotional elements as highlighted in section 5.1.2. The latter is caused by the absence of credit to the creators of a trailer. Still, it is without a question that any artificial text, including a video game trailer, has to be authored by someone. The omission of such information thus works to strengthen the subordinate role of a video game trailer.

To summarize, video game trailers are complex multimodal texts. One the one hand, their rich audiovisual form emancipates them from being solely focused on presenting a video game in the socio-historical reality. However, specific resources, such as gameplay footage, can directly connect them to a video game in a paratextual fashion. Furthermore, the factual/cultural substantiality is highly formative for the paratextual status of a video game trailer, including its conventionalized promotional function.

[107] Before May 2017 it was possible to experiment with the structure of a trailer on YouTube using the now discontinued feature of annotations, which could function as a shortcut to a specific frame of the video (Švelch 2015b). Still, any alternatively structured trailer still showed the linear sequence of its video file due to the YouTube's intraface.

Spatiotemporality

The spatiotemporal condition of the analyzed trailers can be understood as a consequence of the dominant promotional function as I have indicated in the section on functionality. All twelve trailers are located outside of their respective video games. While it is technically possible for a trailer to be included in a video game in its entirety, such a location would be only alternative to the external one.[108] In most cases, a trailer could be included in some other game but not in the game to which it refers, meaning that its position would still be external.

The temporal side of this dimension is slightly more varied among the analyzed trailers (see Table 5). Ten out of twelve were released prior to the launch of the respective game, ranging from as early as eighteen months to one week. The two remaining trailers were made public with one and nearly five years of delay, respectively.

Trailer	Code	Time Difference in Months
Overwatch Cinematic Trailer	OW1	-18
Overwatch Gameplay Trailer	OW2	-18
The Elder Scrolls Online – The Alliances Cinematic Trailer	TES	-15
The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt – The Sword of Destiny Trailer	TW1	-11
Mass Effect™: Andromeda Official EA Play 2016 Video	MEA	-9
Battlefield 1 Official Reveal Trailer	BF	-5
BioShock Infinite Beast of America Trailer	BS1	-5
Deus Ex: Mankind Divided – 101 Trailer	DE1	-4
Deus Ex: Mankind Divided – The Mechanical Apartheid	DE2	-3
BioShock Infinite TV Commercial	BS2	0
The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt – Blood and Wine || Launch Trailer ("Final Quest")	TW2	12
League of Legends Cinematic: A New Dawn	LOL	57

Table 5: Overview of the relative timing of the trailer release to the video game launch (ordered ascendingly by the time difference)

As the relative timing has been one of the selection criteria for the video game trailer corpus, it is impossible to make any judgements based on the distribution of the time difference among the twelve trailers. Nonetheless, even the post-launch trailers can potentially promote a video game or its parts. In the case of TW2, the promoted commodity has been the final piece of downloadable content for the main game. *League of Legends* is an ever-evolving online multiplayer experience and the trailer in question can be understood both as a promotional tool aimed at newcomers but also at the stable player-base. Moreover, the game utilizes the freemium[109] monetization model (Nieborg 2015, 2016; Hart 2017) and allows for continuous investment even years after the original launch.

To summarize, the spatiotemporal condition of the selected trailers is rather homogeneous. In order to efficiently fulfill their promotional function, video game trailers are located

[108] For example, *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt "The Trail" Opening Cinematic* (which is not included in the trailer corpus) is a trailer based on the introductory sequence of the game. While it matches the in-game cutscene regarding its contents, the trailer also includes additional elements such as release date or a visual representation of the video game packaging. In this particular case, it is hard to tell what is the original location and form of the video in question. Moreover, the same footage positioned in a video game might as well lose its claim to be considered a trailer due to the fact that its spatiotemporal condition completely aligns with that of the video game.

[109] Freemium means that a video game can be played for free but fans can invest into microtransactions providing various additional content. In the case of *League of Legends*, microtransactions include, for example, new outfits (so-called skins) for the playable characters.

outside of a video game. The temporal aspect is slightly more varied among the sample, but it nonetheless follows commercial interest of video game companies. Even trailers released after the launch of a game, can promote a video game or its parts and motivate economic behavior.

5.1.2 Trailer Traits and Elements

The overall characteristics of a video game trailer can be to a certain degree tracked to its constituent parts and the interactions between them. Especially, the paratextual qualities and their specific facets such as the diverse functions are established by individual elements of a trailer. This perspective corresponds with the methodological implication of the rejection of the term paratext in the sense of a concrete text defined by its paratextual quality (see sections 3.1.2 and 3.1.3). In consequence, the researcher needs to look for actual sources of the links between a trailer, video game and the socio-historical reality. The presented exploration of trailer traits and elements follows a previous analysis of the reveal trailer for *Mass Effect: Andromeda* (Švelch 2016a).

As in the section about the dimensions of the selected trailers, I look for general tendencies across the whole corpus prioritizing a more interpretative approach to a mere description of individual trailers. While I have followed the four dimensions of paratextuality as the organizing principle in the previous section, identifying and analyzing trailer traits and elements is admittedly a more freeform endeavor, as there is no authoritative list of trailer components. I define a trailer element based on two criteria: (1) a self-contained nature and (2) a functional focus in terms of established paratextual relationships between the trailer, video game and concrete socio-historical circumstances. In consequence, two categories of elements arise based on which criterion takes precedence: (a) formally defined elements, such as titles or descriptions; and (b) functionally defined elements, for example promotional or authorship-oriented paratextual messages. The former category applies mostly to elements outside of the actual video file on YouTube, which are separated by the platform itself. The latter is employed to more internal parts of a trailer to avoid redundant and overly descriptive accounts of functionally similar phenomena. For example, developer and publisher logos are treated together, as they both relate to authorship of a video game.

The ordering of the trailer traits and elements is governed primarily by their location within a trailer, starting with broader and liminal phenomena and moving inside the sequence of the video from both its ends. This means that the issues of the context of a trailer and its structure are discussed before more particular and internal components. Last, I address the potentially textual elements that contest the subordinate paratextual role of a video game trailer. Admittedly, the topics of site and structure do not fit the definition of a trailer element as described in the previous paragraph. Nonetheless, their relevance for the paratextual quality of a video game trailer justifies their inclusion in the analysis.

Site

YouTube as a platform hosts diverse audiovisual content whose nature ranges from purely amateur to commercial (Gillespie 2010; Cunningham, Craig, and Silver 2016). The presence of a video on this site does not imply a paratextual or any other specific quality regarding both textual transcendence and immanence (Genette 1997a). In other words, a video on YouTube might as well be “the text” or “the paratext” (if one would use such a simplification of cultural phenomena); the platform does not discriminate against either of these ideal categories. Nonetheless, YouTube provides a variety of paratextual information about any video and allows for ready-made creation of other potentially paratextual elements, including the title, description and overlay elements. Moreover, the obligatory data – date of publication, number of views, likes and dislikes – clearly comment on the status of a video

within the socio-historical reality by providing a very simplified account of historical audience reception. Recommended and similar videos sidebar or the comments section also connect the video to the surrounding socio-historical reality. However, since these particular elements are not authored or controlled by the producers of a video game trailer, their actual contents are primarily in a metatextual relationship to the video. The playback intraface also relates to the issues of paratextuality, mostly by foregrounding the video's technical attributes as I have already argued in the section on substantiality and materiality.

Structure

Before I go into detail on particular elements of the twelve analyzed video game trailers, it is necessary to examine how they fit into a trailer's overall structure (including the closest surroundings on YouTube, such as the title or description), since the location of a trailer element has direct implications for paratextuality. Traditionally, paratextuality as a phenomenon is understood as happening within liminal spaces, both literally and figuratively. The former relates to the formal organization of a cultural artifact, its tangible edges such as a book cover or opening (and closing) frames of a film. The latter thematizes the questions of textual integrity and leads to the distinction between the text's core and its presentation in the socio-historical reality. The structure of a video game trailer is primarily connected to the literal understanding of liminality.

Expectedly, many paratextual elements find themselves at the beginning or the end of a temporal sequence. For example, age rating notices, company and game logos open the video, while copyright information, footage disclaimers or hyperlinks to other promotional materials tend to close it. Still, a liminal position alone does not equate paratextuality. A trailer can start with original footage and only then turn to more paratextual elements. For example, TW1 starts with an age rating, but the trailer then immediately switches to gameplay footage and shows the logo of the video game company roughly half-way through the video at 1:12 time mark.

Besides the obvious temporal structure of a video game trailer, YouTube enables palimpsestine effects due to the existence of various overlay elements, which can add new information but sometimes also obscure the original part of a trailer. Using these tools, the owner of the video can create layers of visual content where the topmost layer is located figuratively closer to the spectator than the underlying video file, thus inhabiting the liminal space. I discuss these specific forms and their implications for paratextuality in an individual section about overlay elements.

Title

Despite their short and purely verbal form, titles facilitate complex paratextuality and establish links between themselves, the trailer, video game, and the socio-historical reality. Similarly to the practices of literary publishing, video game trailer titles can be also understood as being formed by three distinct elements per Genette's original classification: (1) *"title"*, (2) *"subtitle"*, and (3) *"genre indication"* (1997b, 56). However, trailer titles are in a very specific situation compared to a title of a literary work. Aside from being a separate audiovisual text spatially removed from a video game, trailers also serve as a promotional tool. This makes their titles potentially doubly paratextual, grounding both the trailer and the video game within the socio-historical reality. This two-step paratextual connection has direct implications for the first part of a video game trailer title – (1) the main title itself – which in all twelve cases refers to a video game or its specific part. For example, in TW2 it is the downloadable content *Blood and Wine* for *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt*.

Formally speaking, (2) subtitles are the most diverse element of a video game trailer title. One of their primary functions is to clearly distinguish between all the trailers that exist for one video game. However, this role can be fulfilled in two basic ways, which Genette has already identified in the context of literary publishing: (a) *"thematic"* (1997b, 81) and (b) *"rhematic"* (1997b, 86). The first category usually relates to the narrative of the trailer and includes poetic subtitles like *A New Dawn* (LOL), *Beast of America* (BS1), *The Alliances* (TES), *The Sword of Destiny* (TW1), *Final Quest* (TW2), and *The Mechanical Apartheid* (DE2). The second type offers a more prosaic designation, focusing on the formal characteristics of a trailer, such as its role within the promotional strategy or its focus on either gameplay or cinematics – *Cinematic Trailer* (OW1), *Gameplay Trailer* (OW2) *101 Trailer* (DE1) or *Official Reveal Trailer* (BF). The original event at which the trailer was first presented can also serve as a rhematic subtitle, see for example *Mass Effect™: Andromeda Official EA Play 2016 Video* (MEA). These two approaches are not mutually exclusive; thematic and rhematic title elements can appear next to each other within one title as in the case of *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt – Blood and Wine || Launch Trailer ("Final Quest")* (TW2).

Genre indications (3) explicitly address the cultural form of a trailer and connect it to an existing practice. In this regard, genre indications are both paratextual and architextual. The former quality is established by reference to a trailer's status within the socio-historical reality. The latter is caused by the actual form of this paratextual reference – the fact that producers have chosen to frame the audiovisual text in question as a trailer. Expectedly, the most common genre indication is *"trailer"* appearing in eight titles. The alternative designations *"cinematic"* (LOL), *"commercial"* (BS2), and *"video"* (MEA) are represented in the corpus once each. Only DE2 lacks any explicit genre indication.

Despite the choice of formally different subtitles and the slight variance among genre indications, titles as a whole and combined with the actual video file rather dutifully take on their paratextual role and inform a viewer about what they are going to see by clearly designating the trailer as the chosen audiovisual form, its defining characteristic, and the video game.

Description

Similarly to titles, official video descriptions have to reflect the doubly paratextual situation of being a paratextual element of another potentially paratextual element (the trailer). Although mostly monomodal as well, descriptions are less conventionalized than titles. This might be partly caused by the lack of space constraints.[110] While there are no direct literary equivalents to descriptions, please-inserts (see section 2.1.5) partially resemble them due to their role of quasi-press releases (Genette 1997b). Video game trailer descriptions are relatively standalone elements, which on their own facilitate paratextuality of a given video game. As such, descriptions often summarize paratextual information available in a trailer and expand on it with further details, including hyperlinks to various official sites and social networking profiles of the video game or the developer. If a viewer decides to follow these connections to other elements of video game culture, the actual movement is only partly centrifugal (McCracken 2012) in the sense of distancing oneself from the trailer. McCracken's distinction (see section 2.2.5) does not capture that this particular vector can be also

[110] Both the title and the description have no hard limits to their length, however only the first circa hundred characters (including spaces) of the title are visible in various display modes on YouTube. Regarding descriptions, a significant amount of content is usually obscured in the default setting. To see the full description a user has to click the "Show more" button.

understood as orbital, meaning a trajectory that stays within the zone of paratextual phenomena spatially remote from the video game.

In some cases, descriptions do not explicitly acknowledge the existence of a trailer and instead refer directly to a video game. For example, TW2 offers a lot of additional information about the downloadable content concerning playtime and the fact that it is the last video game adventure featuring the protagonist of the series, but it never mentions the trailer:

> For the last time become the professional monster slayer Geralt of Rivia and explore Toussaint, a remote land untouched by war, where you will unravel the horrifying secret behind a beast terrorizing the kingdom. *Blood and Wine* is a 30+ hour adventure full of dark deeds, unexpected twists, romance and deceit. […] [emphasis added] (TW2)

A nearly opposite approach can be seen in the description of BS2, which first refers to the narrative of the trailer and only afterwards touches upon the socio-historical circumstances of the video game, namely its launch date:

> Watch as Booker DeWitt, with weapons in one hand, and powerful vigors in the other, takes a death defying leap onto the Sky-Line, to rescue Elizabeth from the floating sky-city of Columbia. *BioShock Infinite*, out March 26th. […] [emphasis added] (BS2)

Descriptions functionally surpass what their vernacular designation might suggest. They are not merely describing a trailer, instead they address the overarching socio-historical circumstances of the video game industry both implicitly by spatial proximity to a trailer and explicitly by a direct reference to a video game, official websites, social networking profiles and other parts of the intellectual property. Regarding their paratextual functionality, descriptions echo the role of video game trailers as a whole, manifesting mostly the referential function including the promotional and legal sub-functions.

Overlay Elements

There are five types of overlay elements available on YouTube, all of which create palimpsestine effects when displayed over a trailer – (1) annotations, (2) cards, (3) end screens, (4) branding watermarks, (5) subtitles and closed captions. Due to their crude aesthetics compared to the visuals of a video game trailer and their liminal position, they are usually relegated by their creators to take up paratextual duties. Their actual functionality is however rather diverse and based on the specific type of the overlay element.

Regarding the twelve trailers, annotations (1) offered the greatest variability among the overlay elements by inhabiting any place within the temporal sequence and the visual frame of the video game trailer. However, they were discontinued by YouTube on May 2, 2017 due to incompatibility with mobile devices (YouTube 2017). The actual content of annotations was not constrained by any prescribed task as is the case with all the other overlay elements. Annotations acted in diverse roles from supplying further details about a video game to serving as hyperlinks leading the viewer away from the site of the trailer to official websites or social networking profiles (similar to descriptions they encouraged centrifugal and orbital movements). Most notably, annotations were able to fulfill the corrective function by obscuring a part of a trailer and showing new up-to-date information. As I have mentioned earlier while discussing functions of trailers in section 5.1.1, TW1 uses an annotation to fix the launch date after it has been postponed by three months.

The successors of annotations are (2) cards, (3) end screens, and (4) branding watermarks, which all fulfill similar roles. The most significant difference is their location within the

temporal sequence and the visual frame of a video game trailer. Cards (2) can be accessed anytime using a small circular icon designated by a lowercase character *"i"* in the upper right corner, but are teased and displayed over a trailer only for a brief moment. The end screens (3), as the name suggests, appear exclusively within the last twenty seconds of a video. They are more visually striking as they can show previews of other videos, channel logos or custom pictures for hyperlinks to approved websites. Lastly, branding watermarks (4) operate on a level of the whole channel and are displayed over all its videos. They show the channel's logo and by clicking them a viewer can immediately subscribe to a channel. Compared to annotations, these three types of overlay elements are constrained by their prescribed forms and thus barred from acting as correctives. In consequence, cards, end screens and branding watermarks are not able to truly manipulate a trailer beyond the confines of their respective locations at the outskirts of a visual frame and temporal sequence.

Out of all the overlay elements, subtitles and closed captions (5) are arguably the simplest paratextual phenomena; they offer nearly no new information and only supply redundancy for the semiotic resources already present in a trailer. Notably, subtitles and closed captions exclusively deal with a video game trailer and establish only its paratextuality in the sense of the referential function. In other words, they do not directly refer to a video game as such, save for the association with its trailer. Subtitles and closed captions are a less prominent feature of the selected video game trailers being included in only five videos (TW1, DE1, DE2, BF, and MEA). While the number of available languages varies from as much as sixteen for BF to one for MEA, subtitles nonetheless accommodate a given trailer for different language contexts or in the case of English captions primarily for viewers with hearing impairment.[111] In both cases, the act of presenting a trailer to specific audiences fits the definition of paratextuality. Moreover, translation has been considered a paratextual phenomenon already in Genette's (1997b) original framework and as such has been studied using examples from literary publishing and screen industries (see Fornasiero and West-Sooby 2011; Matamala 2011; Rolls 2011; Vuaille-Barcan 2011). A notable exception are the auto-generated English captions for DE1 whose algorithmic authorship makes them partly metatextual. This stays true even though the owner of a trailer has an option to disable YouTube's automatic captions feature. By enabling auto-generated captions, trailer's producers accept at least partial responsibility for the content of the captions, suggesting also a paratextual quality. Still, any resulting dissonance between the supposedly redundant semiotic resources might function as a critical commentary. For example, captioning the abbreviation for the European age rating system *"PEGI"* (Pan-European Game Information) as *"Peggy"* in DE1 might ridicule the video game lingo.

Legal Paratextual Elements

Moving onto elements included in the video file, eleven of the selected video game trailers start with an (1) age rating notice (Nikken and Jansz 2007; Dogruel and Joeckel 2013; Felini 2015).[112] Considering its inclusion in a trailer as part of self-regulation of the video game industry, it can be understood as a primarily legal paratextual element along with (2) copyright information (Lastowka 2013) or (3) legal conditions for special promotions and other limited offers.

Out of these three broad categories, (1) age rating notices, which are presented in a simple visual style and sometimes accompanied by a voiceover (BS2, DE1, DE2), arguably convey the

[111] Hypothetically, the same language captions can be also used by viewers who watch trailers with sound turned off, allowing for better comprehension in settings where loud volume is unacceptable, for example at the workplace.

[112] The exception is LOL, which does not feature an age rating notice. This omission fits the overall scarcity of paratextual elements in LOL.

largest amount of paratextual information. Beyond stating the minimal age of a player, these notices disclose the cultural form of a promoted commodity (the video game), specific types of content deemed potentially harmful to underage audiences and also the timing within the development cycle of a video game (Švelch 2016a). In the corpus, age ratings of two different agencies can be found – the Entertainment Software Rating Board, which operates in the US and Canada, and the Pan-European Game Information, which, as the name suggests, is relevant to most European countries.[113] For any viewer familiar with age rating systems, the inclusion of a notice by these two regulatory bodies already communicates that the trailer refers to a video game. These notices also sometimes feature concrete warnings for specific characteristics of a video game. For example, BS2 lists five potentially harmful aspects of *BioShock Infinite*: *"Blood and Gore, Intense Violence, Language, Mild Sexual Themes, Use of Alcohol and Tobacco."* As previous research has shown, similar ratings can cause (although rather rarely) the so-called forbidden fruit effect among younger players who might pursue the offensive content because it is restricted by authorities (Nikken and Jansz 2007). More importantly, these detailed notices inform a viewer about the potential themes of a video game even before the actual promotional message of the trailer starts. While it is more incidental than deliberate, age rating notices nonetheless participate in promotion of a video game by pointing to its specific features. However, not all notices include such detailed accounts. Before the video game is submitted for rating, the regulatory bodies supply only provisional warnings. The difference between a concrete notice and pending rating is culturally meaningful and informs a viewer about the stage of the development of a video game in question. BS2 and TW2 are the only two trailers from the corpus that include a final age rating. This is possible due to their release one week before and nearly one year after the game launch, respectively (see Table 5). Other trailers, which have preceded their respective video game at least by three months, include only provisional notices.

Compared to age ratings, (2) copyright notices usually appear at the end of a trailer. Considering that trailers prominently feature logos of video game companies, copyright statements are largely redundant as a paratextual phenomenon. The main added value is the information about the actual legal ownership of a video game intellectual property. For example, TES includes the following copyright notice:

> © 2013 Zenimax Media Inc. *The Elder Scrolls® Online* developed by Zenimax Online Studios LLC, a Zenimax Media Company. Zenimax, The Elder Scrolls, Bethesda Softworks and related logos are registered trademarks or trademarks of Zenimax Media Inc. in the US and/or other countries. All rights reserved. [emphasis added] (TES)

A viewer might thus learn about the legal form and trademarks of involved companies, acquiring better understanding of the socio-historical circumstances of a video game in question. In this particular case, any longtime player of *The Elder Scrolls* series can notice that *The Elder Scrolls Online* is developed by a different studio than the main games such as *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim* (Bethesda Game Studios 2011). The trademark and copyright information included in trailers is not always limited only to developers and publishers. For example, DE1 and DE2 contain extensive legal information about all the logos used within the trailers, ranging from platforms such as PlayStation 4 and Xbox One to the hardware manufacturer AMD or the digital distribution platform Steam. TW1 and TW2 also explicitly acknowledge the hypotext of the video game: *"The Witcher game is based on the prose of*

[113] An exception is, for example, Germany, which uses its own rating system called Unterhaltungssoftware Selbskontrolle (usually translated as Entertainment Software Self-Regulation and officially abbreviated as USK).

Andrzej Sapkowski. All other copyrights and trademarks are the property of their respective owners."

A very specific copyright information can be found in BF, which is, as a whole, rich on various paratextual cues. Besides the regular copyright notice, attributing *Battlefield 1* to *"Electronic Arts Inc."*, the trailer also informs about the depiction of military equipment within the game: *"No weapon, vehicle or gear manufacturer is affiliated with or has sponsored or endorsed this game."* Use of real weapons in video games is a contested area. Licensing itself is sometimes deemed morally questionable as weapon manufacturers can then benefit financially from sales of a military-themed video game (Parkin 2013). Depiction of guns without a proper license falls under fair use or free speech doctrines in some legal systems but not in others and might thus lead to lawsuits when a video game is sold on global markets. In this regard, any disclaimers or other legal information about representation of potentially trademarked or otherwise protected property comment on the socio-historical reality in which the video game is situated. Interestingly, copyright notices rarely address the legal status of a trailer, focusing instead on a video game.

Lastly, (3) legal conditions specify the socio-historical circumstances of special offers featured in a video game trailer, including pre-order incentives and bonuses (BS1) or beta versions of a video game (BF). This both literal and figurative "fine print" usually occupies the edges of the visual frame at the end of a trailer's temporal sequence. As a paratextual phenomenon, it puts any promotional claims into a legal context in order to prevent any potential confusion among players who would like to participate in special offers. However, it is usually not required by law, meaning that inclusion of such additional paratextual information can be interpreted as a transparent business behavior.

Authorship-oriented Paratextual Elements

As I have mentioned in section 5.1.1, the authorship of trailers is rarely considered worthy of mentioning in the trailer itself.[114] However, the developers and publishers of a video game are heavily featured in trailers as can be also seen on the case of copyright notices discussed in the previous section. Logos of video game companies often visually frame the trailer from both ends, appearing in most cases right after age rating notices and then again during the closing frames along with abundance of other mainly paratextual elements such as end screens or copyright information. The publisher's logo often precedes the developer's one, following even if unintentionally the overall logic of liminal spaces. Publisher, who is arguably more remote from a video game, is introduced first and thus inhabits a space further away from the core of a video game trailer whereas the developers' more intimate connection is supported by the relative proximity of their logo. Of course, another interpretation of this sequence is that the publisher is the more important actor, which in some cases owns the developer, and the first position signals this privilege within the video game industry.

The most prominent spotlight among the selected trailers is reserved for producers from BioWare who are shown working on *Mass Effect: Andromeda* in MEA. In this case, it is not only the brand and the corporate form of video game development that is being revealed to viewers (as is the case with company logos), but also individual developers in their

[114] The only exception among the selected twelve trailers is LOL, which on its end screen includes a preview and a link to a making-of video about the trailer (League of Legends 2014). The video itself features selected individual workers who participated in the creation of the trailer but as a whole it is more concerned with an artistic vision than with a full account of a trailer production. Moreover, it lacks any explicit mention of the animation studio Blur, which worked on the trailer along with Riot Games.

workplace. Arguably, such an explicit connection between a video game and its creators should provide a strong paratextual quality. The actual reception of this promotional strategy has been rather polarizing, as I show in section 5.2.1. Here it suffices to say that the some players have voiced their preference to see gameplay instead of behind-the-scenes footage.

Another notable case of authorship-oriented paratextuality can be found in BS2. This trailer does not include any company logos, instead it cryptically alludes to a previous game by the developer Irrational Games stating that *BioShock Infinite* comes: *"From the makers of the highest-rated first-person shoot of all time*. *Based on Metacritic average rankings across all platforms."* (BS2) The video game in question is the original *BioShock* (2K Boston and 2K Australia 2007). However, the reference to a six years old video game title is potentially confusing considering that two weeks before *BioShock* was published the studio known as Irrational Games since 1997 had been divided into two separate entities: 2K Boston and 2K Australia. The Bostonian branch changed its name back to Irrational Games in 2010. This intricate corporate history, which is hinted at within the two short sentences, might be deciphered by seasoned video game fans but to a newcomer it may sound like a vague promotional phrase. Nonetheless, it is an attempt to ground an upcoming video game in the socio-historical reality, thus qualifying as a paratextual element despite its questionable efficiency.

Authorship in video game culture is not limited only to human actors, as I have argued in section 3.3.2. In the context of video game trailers, information about technological tools utilized in the development of a video game addresses this non-human co-authorship. Within the corpus, BF and MEA display the logo of the Frostbite engine. Beyond revealing the underlying technology of these two video games, such paratextual information establishes a connection between individual games that use this particular engine and creates expectations, especially regarding the visuals of a promoted video game.

Commodity-oriented Paratextual Elements

Many of the previously discussed trailer traits and elements are functionally promotional. For example, the information about authorship can be easily used for promotion, especially when a developer has a successful track record, such as the Irrational Games. Here, I intend to focus on potentially paratextual elements that are included in a video file, directly address the commodity form of a video game and communicate it to the viewers of a trailer. Among these elements with a strong promotional function belong release dates, pre-order incentives, pre-release version invitations, representation of video game packaging, collector's editions, platform logos or newsletter sign-ups. All this promotional information regularly appears in video game trailers and frames a video game as a commodity that can be purchased or is, broadly speaking, a product of the video game cultural industry (Kerr 2006, 2017; Hesmondhalgh 2007). After all, not all video games require an upfront payment to be played but might incentivize financial investment through other means, such as by offering additional content via the freemium model (Nieborg 2015, 2016; Hart 2017), as is the case of *League of Legends*.

Despite the advent of alternative distribution models, production cycles of many mainstream video games are still organized around the traditional launch of a final and complete product (see section 3.3.4). These central dates are often promoted by trailers if a concrete launch date or at least an approximate release window are known (BS2, TW1, TW2, DE1, DE2, and BF). Purchasing video game right at launch is further incentivized by pre-order bonuses, which attempt to persuade players to pay the full price without access to press reviews and thus decrease the potential impact of negative critical reception (BS1, DE1, and DE2). In the context of multiplayer video games, players are often invited to participate in testing pre-release versions of a game. So-called 'betas' usually run for a limited amount of time and do

not require any payment. In cases of 'closed betas', they are accessible only to selected fans. Open betas available for the general public appear closer to a launch of a video game. Within the corpus, TES, OW1, OW2 and BF inform about these testing stages and offer viewers the chance to sign up to play the video game ahead of its official launch.[115] All these elements, which highlight the temporal circumstances of video game production, add to the overall paratextual quality of a video game trailer by directly referring to the industrial logic based around official release dates and iterative development process. The latter is especially relevant in multiplayer games, which go publicly through numerous alpha and beta stages before launch.

Packaging and related physical objects appear in trailers (BS1, BS2, DE1, and DE2), even though video games do not require any tangible form to be experienced and played. Various digital distribution platforms attest to this fact. Notably, some developers and publishers create mock-up physical copies of video games that are only availably digitally, exclusively for promotional purposes (Dunne 2016). The packaging of video games, including any special or collector's editions and related merchandising, is arguably a historically-conditioned form of a video game, which is no longer necessary for distribution. Its inclusion in a trailer nonetheless emphasizes video game's commodified nature, further grounding it in the socio-historical reality. Moreover, the expensive premium versions of a video game, which contain diverse memorabilia, not only serve as a source of additional revenue, but also pitch a notion of a collectible status of a video game.

Platform logos can also be understood as promotional paratextual elements as they connect a video game to established video game channels (BS1, BS2, TW1, DE1, DE2, and BF). An owner of given hardware immediately understands that the promoted video game is going to be released for their platform of choice and that they might consider buying and playing it. The same can be said about logos of online retailers such as Steam, which is associated with PC gaming (DE1 and DE2).

Lastly, newsletter sign-ups and other options to subscribe to official promotion shown in trailers refer to the fact that the trailer is only one part of a complex marketing strategy (DE1, DE2 and MEA). Any similar subscription serves as a promise of more promotional materials that are to come and that a viewer can start following in a systematic manner from the figurative threshold of a trailer. In other words, this paratextual element communicates the redundancy embedded in business practices of video game industry. A trailer might be a unique promotional tool, but there are other advertisements spread-out through sites of video game culture, which fulfill the same functions.

Licensed Music

I have already argued that licensed music[116] (BS1, BS2, TW2, and BF) is a specific part of a video game trailer, especially due to the fact that its authorship is publicly acknowledged compared to the authorship of a trailer as a whole, which stays anonymous by current conventions (see section 5.1.1). It is also widely discussed by audiences regarding its impact on a trailer, as I show in sections 5.2.1 and 5.2.2. Paratextual quality of licensed music is also rather unique compared to other elements of video game trailers and out of the literary devices analyzed by Genette (1997b) it comes closest to the complex nature of epigraphs. In literary publishing, epigraphs are quotes placed *"generally at the head of a work or a section of a work"* (Genette 1997b, 144) that usually fulfill one or more of the three following

[115] Arguably, this rather detailed information about video game development might make players more aware of the production routines than film viewers.
[116] Music in general has been studied as an important element of trailers (Deaville and Malkinson 2015; Johnston 2015).

functions: (1) justify the title, (2) specify or emphasize the meaning of a text by a means of commentary, or (3) back the text using the authority of a quoted person. As an allographic paratextual practice, epigraphs can be technically used without a permission or delegation. In other words, any author can put a quote of a famous person at the start of their book without facing any legal repercussions. This inexpensive nature of epigraphs distinguishes them from other allographic paratextual elements, such as allographic prefaces of postfaces, which have to be under normal circumstances commissioned. Proper epigraphs in the original sense of the term also appear in video games, for example, in the *Uncharted* series, which features quotes from historic figures in introductory sequences (see section 3.3.2).

What makes licensed music resemble epigraphs are the second and the third function highlighted by Genette (1997b). Regarding the former, a well-chosen song can strengthen the impact and meaning of a video game trailer. This can be seen in BS1 and BS2, which both use the song *Beast* that echoes the themes of a societal struggle of an underprivileged social class explored in the game itself. Admittedly, the same effect could be also achieved with an original composition. However, what makes licensed music stand out is the third function. By associating itself with a popular song, a trailer might increase its cultural status. For example, the international hit *Seven Nation Army* can help *Battlefield* 1 in its aspiration to become a blockbuster. Arguably, this has been also the main reason behind many literary epigraphs, which have been believed to be able to elevate a given text to the heights of a quoted person and their achievements. In this sense, Genette describes epigraphs as *"a signal (intended as a sing) of culture, a password of intellectuality."* (1997b, 160)

Still, the paratextual status of licensed music differs from epigraphs in two aspects: (a) the location and (b) the contract between the video game company and the performer. Licensed music usually accompanies the whole trailer or its major part. However, it is still easily distinguishable from the rest of a trailer and as such can provide at least semi-liminal framing. While existing musical compositions cannot be used without a permission or license, the licensing contract between the producers of the video game (and the trailer) and the owner of the rights for the song is a rather simple financial transaction compared to the commissioning of a preface or any comparable allographic paratextual element. Due to these reasons, I consider epigraphs the closest fit for the paratextual role of licensed music in video game trailers.

Blurbs

Another instance of quotes used for a paratextual effect is the practice of so-called blurbs (BS2 and TW2). Although the full text of a press review is in a metatextual relationship to a video game, the repurposed statements used in promotion are primarily paratextual as they are handpicked by developers and publishers to praise the game in question. The external origins of blurbs are supposed to make any laudatory comments feel authentic and sincere in their assessment of a video game. To support their credibility, blurbs are attributed to a concrete source. However, by being removed from their original context, where a singular positive statement might be balanced out by an overall negative feel of the review, blurbs partly lose their critical potential and become a promotional tool.

Similarly to epigraphs, authorship of blurbs is technically allographic. Quotes from the press can be used without a permission as they represent only a small excerpt from the original critical commentary. Moreover, the higher the status of a press outlet that published such a review, the better impression it can potentially make on viewers. For easier recognition of the cultural authority, blurbs are usually attributed to publications and not to individual critics, at least based on the selected trailers. For example, BS2 informs that Entertainment Weekly reportedly said that *BioShock Infinite* is *"… a stunning creation"*. Unlike epigraphs, blurbs are available only after journalists have had a chance to play or review the game. This means

that only trailers close to the launch date feature this type of quotes. Within the corpus, only two video game trailers employ this paratextual practice – BS1 and TW2.

Genette (1997b) only mentions blurbs in passing while exploring the very broad category of publisher's peritext and his primary interest is the etymology of the term. Nonetheless, these specific quotes deserve the attention from paratextual scholars as they uncover the complex nature of textual transcendence, specifically the blurred boundaries between paratextuality and metatextuality. Here, the function of a textual element should take precedence in distinguishing its transtextual nature before a purely formal treatment based on authorship and the original context of a blurb. The proposed framework is able to deal with such hybrid phenomena as it acknowledges the full range of textual transcendence. The function of a blurb is not to impartially assess the quality of a video game but to present it to its potential audiences as worthy of their attention and positively received by the video game press. In this regard, blurbs are dominantly paratextual because they frame a video game in the socio-historical reality according to the aims of its producers.

Footage and Footage Disclaimers

The core content of a video game trailer is relevant to its overall paratextual quality, notwithstanding the actual type of footage used. The vernacular distinction between gameplay, CGI, and live-action highlights the importance of the representational relationship between a trailer and a video game (Švelch 2015b). While gameplay scenes can claim the closest connection to a video game, the relative lack thereof is equally significant from a paratextual perspective.

Under normal circumstances, an informed viewer with a basic level of previous gaming experience should be able to tell the difference between different types of footage and thus correctly interpret the paratextual message of a given trailer. While gameplay trailers aspire to show how the video game looks in action and emphasize the indexical relationship between the trailer (as a sign) and the game (as a referent), CGI and live-action trailers are able to focus on the themes and the mood of the game without being constrained by the limitations of a game engine. Both ideal approaches are capable to facilitate paratextuality of a video game, however the latter allows a trailer to more easily break away from its promotional duties and pursue an artistic quality of its own. This does not mean that the semiotic relationship between a video game and a trailer footage determines its textual (or paratextual) status, but this particular structural connection is considered culturally meaningful within the promotional practice and the video game culture in general. This can be evidenced by various calls for accurate advertising, which revolves around the notion of representativity – the ability to truthfully represent a video game by a trailer. Failing to comply with these audience expectations can cause player protests or boycotts (Švelch 2016a).[117] I explore this topic from the perspective of viewers throughout section 5.2.

To prevent any potential backlash, many current video game trailers include footage disclaimers,[118] which explicitly address the representativity of a trailer. However, there is

[117] The latest notable controversy arose in the second half of 2016 around the allegedly misleading promotion for *No Man's Sky* (Hello Games 2016). Players have issued official complaints about its trailers and screenshots shown in the product listing on Steam. However, the British Advertising Standards Authority found no breach of advertising regulations (Advertising Standards Authority 2016). Nonetheless, cases like this show that representativity of video game trailers is a disputed issue within the video game culture and as such it is still being negotiated by involved stakeholders. In other words, the assumption that an informed viewer should be able to correctly interpret the paratextual claim of a trailer does not capture the current state of affairs.

[118] According to Rebecca Carlson (2009), the practice of footage disclaimers emerged only after a misleading trailer for *Killzone 2* (Guerrila Games 2009) had appeared at the Electronic Entertainment

currently no established form of footage disclaimers. It is up to the producers how they phrase their note about representativity of a video game trailer. Within the corpus, only four trailers explicitly disclose what type of footage is used and how it relates to the actual gameplay (BS1, BS2, BF, and MEA). Three basic approaches to disclaimers can be observed on these particular examples: (1) a positive definition, (2) a negative definition, (3) and a combination of both. The first category appears in BS1 and directly answers the question of representativity: *"This trailer was made entirely form in-engine footage."* Although this statement is not entirely correct as the trailer also features various logos and visualizations of video game packing, the core audiovisual content fits the description. Arguably, the so-called "in-engine" footage does not have to mean the same thing as gameplay footage as can be seen in BF, which combines both the positive and negative definition: *"Frostbite™ game engine footage representative of Xbox One. Not actual gameplay."* This disclaimer seems to suggest that the trailer is running on the same technology and hardware as the video game does but the scenes depicted are non-interactive and therefore not the actual gameplay of *Battlefield 1*. MEA is even more cryptic due to the use of the negative definition in its disclaimer, which says that *"Not all images [are] representative of actual gameplay"*. Such a warning might make a viewer more cautious about the content of the trailer, but it also implies that some images are indeed representative. The additional note about *"Space Images Courtesy of SpaceX and NASA"* does not help to clear up the confusion caused by the ambiguous disclaimer as the trailer combines different types of footage, including also live-action from the offices of the developer and potentially also gameplay and CGI. Lastly, BS2 features the simplest disclaimer, which decisively rejects any connection between the trailer and gameplay footage: *"Not actual gameplay footage"*. The eight remaining trailers do not include any explicit information about used footage.

Admittedly, footage disclaimers are more important in pre-release stages of video game production cycle when it is impossible for a potential player to compare a final product with its trailer. According to this logic, LOL and TW2 could do easily without disclaimers. The terms *"gameplay"* and *"cinematic"* in the trailer's subtitle can functionally compensate for the lack of explicit information about the trailer footage (TES, OW1, OW2). Even if one accounts for these implicit paratextual signs, three trailers still lack any indication of their representativity. For example, TW1 consists mostly of gameplay footage but includes a three-second glimpse of an in-game cinematic at 2:12. DE1 combines various types of footage in the beginning, but its majority focuses on actual gameplay. Lastly, DE2 is a live-action trailer. While this type of footage might for some players automatically signify that the trailer does not represent gameplay, there are still video games that heavily feature real-life acted scenes.[119] In such a case, live-action would be technically gameplay footage.

Missing Paratextual Information

The absence of footage disclaimers relates to a larger issue of missing paratextual information, which might result in a lack of a socio-historical context. The previously discussed paratextual elements are mostly employed strategically (although some of them are obligatory) to provide a framing to a video game from which its developers and publishers can benefit. Various promotional tools embedded in trailers attempt to persuade a viewer to buy and play the given video game, although one might always question their efficiency (see chapter 4). It is their presence in a trailer by which the paratextuality of a video game is

Expo (E3) in May 2005. By the speaker on stage, the trailer, which consisted purely of outsourced CGI, was presented as portraying actual gameplay. The expectations raised by this widely reported but non-representative promotional material eventually led the developers to shift the development to then new hardware of PlayStation 3 in order to stay true to the CGI trailer (Almaci 2011).

[119] Video games that utilize live-action in their gameplay are usually called either full motion video games (FMV), or interactive movies. None of the selected eight games uses this type of footage.

facilitated. However, absence of certain paratextual information can be equally meaningful and deliberate. The three types of hidden paratextuality – unconventional, conventional, and transient (see section 3.3.3) – can be also observed among the selected trailers. For example, LOL's omission of an age rating notice can be considered an unconventional missing paratextuality. In the context of video game trailers, conventional missing paratextuality might include the price of a video game commodity or the authorship of a trailer. The former would make a trailer quickly outdated as prices of video game decrease rather quickly after launch. The latter reinforces the notion that a trailer is a promotional tool in service of a more important text – the video game – whose authorship is given priority. Regarding the transient hidden paratextuality, footage disclaimers are in this state of flux. While they are common in video game trailers, their inclusion has yet to become a norm.

The absence of a paratextual information does not automatically determine how a trailer is going to be received. Still, it can influence the way audiences discuss video game trailers even though individual viewers may take different stances towards the lack of information as I explore throughout section 5.2.

Potentially Textual Content

So far, the formal analysis has focused on those trailer elements and traits that are potentially paratextual. To stay true to the proposed framework and its rejection of the reductive label of paratext, it is necessary to explore phenomena that might make trailers textual in the sense of autonomous cultural artifacts with more than just informational value. As Hesford (2013) has previously argued, trailers can be understood as a type of performance imbued with a cinematic expression. Although trailers do not have a strict established form but rather exhibit basic shared aesthetics (Johnston 2009; Vollans 2015), the notion of a cinematic expression of a video game can indeed provide a unique artistic value to a trailer potentially qualifying it as a text in its own right. Acting as a synecdoche to a video game, trailers can attempt to capture the essence of the promoted text and present it in a visually striking package, which is short enough to be successfully disseminated on the Internet (Johnston 2008) and experienced even by the uninitiated. Thus, the rhetoric of a video game trailer – its claim to show the best "bits" of a video game with playtime counted in tens of hours and still aspire to some level of representativity – might make it an enjoyable viewing experience. Video game performances, such as primarily metatextual Let's Plays or livestreaming (Hong 2015; Mukherjee 2015, 2016; Burwell and Miller 2016; Jayemanne, Apperley, and Namsen 2016; Consalvo 2017), potentially also provide entertainment beyond commenting on a given video game, but they lack the rhetorical quality of a trailer, which promises a professionally created visual spectacle.

Aside from its form, aesthetics and rhetoric, a video game trailer can emancipate itself from its paratextual duties by including original content. By subverting the indexical relationship, which has been established in the film culture, trailers can engage in transmedia storytelling (Švelch 2015b) and become textually autonomous. Usually, this is achieved through the use of CGI (LOL, BS2, TES, and OW1) and live-action (DE2) footage. However, if a video game goes through significant changes during its development after a release of a gameplay trailer, even gameplay footage can potentially be disconnected enough from the final game to be considered original or constitutive in terms of transmedia storytelling. Technically, transmedia storytelling content would rarely be strategically deployed in such a manner, but it can nonetheless provide viewers with non-canonical "what if" scenarios. At the same time, the effect of comparison caused by non-matching gameplay scenes between the trailer and the video game is paratextual as it invokes the corrective function by foregrounding the realities of video game production.

For example, TW1 shows a different version of the video game than that which was published eleven months later. First, the trailer uses an older version of the game engine including different lighting and particle effects. This arguably technical layer of the trailer has caused a controversy about a perceived downgrade of the final game (Purchese 2015). Second, some of the character models have undergone significant overhauls. This is especially evident on the sorceress Yeneffer (seen briefly in the trailer at 1:40) who belongs among the main cast of the game. Lastly, an entire story moment, which is prominently featured in the trailer, has been changed. The main protagonist no longer appears before the whole imperial court but receives a private audience with an emperor. The last two discrepancies can be interpreted as original content of the trailer, the former showing an alternative look of a character and the latter exploring a different story development. All these issues are also explored regarding their audience reception throughout section 5.2.

Original or disconnected footage is only one of the possible ways how to establish autonomy of a video game trailer. For example, new narratives can help distinguish a trailer from a video game, also in the context of CGI and live-action footage. In this regard, BS2 shows one of the main characters, Elizabeth, as she is being hanged by a lynch mob. While this scene does not happen in the game, it fits the overall fictional world, which operates on the basis of alternate universes. It might be interpreted as non-canonical but it further removes the trailer from the game by deciding not to merely adapt its actual storyline. Another emancipating factor might be original music. For example, TW1 features its own score, which is not reused within the game even though its opening seconds resemble the first track *The Trail* from the official soundtrack. The trailer music theme was created by the game's composers Marcin Przybyłowicz and Percival Schuttenbach and later released for free on the developer's website, reportedly due to a fan demand ("Download the Main Theme from 'The Sword of Destiny' trailer!" 2014). In this case, the original track itself has become autonomous but it has also helped to elevate the trailer above its otherwise subordinate role.

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Video game trailers possess various qualities that make them potentially textual. Treating them as mere paratexts reduces their complex form to but a few over-exposed traits. At the same time, many trailer elements undermine any semblance of autonomy as they directly focus on a video game and establish its paratextual footing while neglecting a trailer's own socio-historical status. The invisibility of trailer authorship, the instrumental form of titles or the relatively high degree of paratextual redundancy and intertextuality (facilitated by hyperlinks) all mark trailers as expendable tools with a clear promotional function. The formal analysis can go only as far as to observe this conflicted and ambiguous nature of video game trailers, which despite sharing a large number of traits are still a diverse group of audiovisual texts. The actual reception of the selected twelve trailers is explored in the next section and picks up on the questions of their paratextual/textual status within the video game culture.

5.2 Reception of Video Game Trailers

With the knowledge of the formal qualities of the selected video game trailers, it is now possible to analyze their audience reception and see how it corresponds with the previously presented findings. Overall, the viewer reactions include a great variety of topics, argumentation and emotions. I classify the relevant discourses on video game trailer reception based on two basic principles, which have surfaced from the formal analysis: (1) the paratextual connection between a trailer and a game, and (2) the trailer's autonomy as a text in its own right. The former manifests primarily in discussions about representativity and accuracy, while the latter takes form of an appraisal of cinematic expression, artistic values or specific elements of a trailer. These two broad audience approaches to video game trailers are

not mutually exclusive and their interactions are also explored in a section about the (3) holistic perspective, which reconciles the two polarizing principles and accepts the ambiguous nature of video game trailers.

The audiences' understanding of trailers as both paratextual phenomena and noteworthy texts follows the findings of the formal analysis (see section 5.1) and the methodological implications of the updated framework of paratextuality presented in chapter 3. The presented discourse analysis serves to analyze the nuances of these approaches and the reasoning behind their public declaration in online discussions. It also shows that conflicting views of paratextuality, including its disputed impact on a cultural status of a text, are not limited to scholarly discussion but also appear during everyday reception of video game trailers.

Due to its explorative design, the analysis does not make any claims regarding the prominence of individual discursive stances. The main goal of this section is to chart and understand all the possible approaches to video game trailer reception based on the selected empirical material. The qualitative richness of the analyzed arguments stems from the selected discussion threads and thus primarily relates to the respective mainstream video games, their trailers and the specific online sites. Due to the diverse and relatively large sample on all three mentioned levels, I consider the identified discourses to be indicative of the overall mainstream video game culture and applicable to reception of video game trailers in general. While there might be other specific and noteworthy reactions to video game trailers that are missing from the empirical material and therefore also from the discourse analysis, I believe that the presented findings provide an extensive qualitative overview of online discussions about video game trailers.

5.2.1 Emphasizing the Paratextuality of Video Game Trailers

I identify two main approaches to the interpretation of a video game trailer as a dominantly paratextual phenomenon: (a) relay and (b) representational. The former sees a trailer as a figurative relay between a viewer, video game and the surrounding socio-historical reality. The efficiency of this relay relationships causes trailers to be overlooked and omitted from the discussions. Instead viewers exclusively focus on a video game and ignore the existence of a trailer that has initiated this paratextual presentation of a video game. The latter focuses on the informational value of a trailer and its ability to stand in for a video game. This particular discursive stance explicitly acknowledges the existence of a trailer but judges its quality based on both the declared and perceived representational relationship. According to this perspective, a trailer is primarily an information source for a video game. The trailer as a whole and its constituent parts are evaluated with regards to their ability to accurately and satisfactorily present a game to the viewer.

Relay Discourse

The relay approach is characterized by a disinterest in a trailer signaled by a complete lack of acknowledgement of its existence in a user comment. Overall, this implies that an unquestioned paratextual link between a trailer and a video game has been inferred by a viewer. A trailer is approached as an information source and it is received in its capacity to convey facts about a game. In other words, it works as a perfect relay in accord with the mission of paratextual elements as conceived by Genette (1997b) and draws attention away from itself to a game, which is then commented on, even though the actual text that is being received at that particular moment is a video game trailer. Thus, the industrial hierarchy of video game culture phenomena, in which a video game is the central object, is accepted on the side of the trailer's audiences. This puts the relay discourse very close to the

(ideologically) preferred reading. The difference between viewing a trailer and playing a game is understated in some user reactions in favor of the aforementioned relay relationship.

This relay discourse can take place both before and after the launch of a game. In the pre-release stages, this approach to trailers is manifested in statements about viewers' expectations of a game, feelings of hype or declarations of pre-ordering. All these reactions focus primarily on a video game without even mentioning its trailer.

> TW1-E: This is going to be one of the best games ever made. I am certain of it.
>
> MEA-E: Looks bloody awesome, cannot wait for it.
>
> DE2-Y: I am so hyped.
>
> BF-Y: [...] I already have a pre-order.

After a launch, expectations give way to memories of players' previous gameplay experiences. These comments again focus on a game without mentioning the trailer that effectively initiated such reminiscing.

> BS2-Y: Will there ever again be a game so extraordinary, flawless and beautiful with this wonderful fantasy experience, plots, locations, graphics, characters and performances, will there ever be a masterpiece like this again?
>
> TW1-Y: Not going to lie, the best part of the game was in Kaer Morhen [in-game location] with the other witchers. Even when we got drunk, I didn't do anything crazy because I was scared of Yennefer [female character], because I thought that if she is angry, then no ass for Geralt [protagonist].

In the context of video game series such as *Mass Effect*, players are able to share past gaming experiences before a launch of a next installment, which is promoted by a trailer. As in previous cases, trailers serve as a mere relay whose existence is not explicitly acknowledged. This time the paratextual relationship does not stop at a video game that is represented in a trailer but extends to an entire video game series. Admittedly, trailers often only imply the existence of previous parts of a video game franchise. For example, BS2 refers to the first entry in the *BioShock* series, albeit only by its critical achievement of becoming highest-ranking title on Metacritic at a certain point in time. MEA never explicitly mentions the original *Mass Effect* trilogy but for a seasoned fans of the series the trailer's voiceover promises a new beginning in a different setting. To a large extent, the connections between individual games and a trailer are inferred by viewers based on their knowledge of video game culture. Still, as both BS2 and MEA show, a trailer might deliberately motivate this line of thinking using subtle allusions to previous video games.

> MEA-Y: This looks amazing! I recently played the *Mass Effect* trilogy for the first time this year and man was I blown away. I had a great experience playing it and I'm just so pumped for *Andromeda*. Can't wait to see what this new galaxy has in store for the main character and the interesting characters they will come into contact with. Including who will join us on our quest. One thing I loved was the great backstory given to each character that was part of your crew and learning more about them and being able to get attached to them [...]
>
> MEA-Y: The only negative stuff I can say about the [*Mass Effect*] trilogy is the ending which was shit for so much stuff that happened, but the rest of the trilogy was perfect, especially for me who loves sci-fi and pays attention to the smallest details and story. I felt like I really was on another real world tripping balls. I give the *Mass Effect* trilogy 9.5/10.

Online discussions of video game trailers are often diverted away from a trailer and towards a game, be it an upcoming one or a previous part of a series. Admittedly, this shift does not have be directly caused by a trailer or a viewer's understanding of its role in video game culture. Other comments also influence a flow of a discussion and what might seem as a deliberate neglect of a trailer might have been a gradual process of moving from the topic of a trailer towards a game as the latter is undisputedly a more robust cultural artifact. Thus the suggested relay effect does not necessarily have to be immediate and completely frictionless. Still, comments that exclusively deal with a video game make up a significant amount of the analyzed discussions and are not being considered as off-topic in any way. This shows that trailers are effective in establishing a paratextual relationship between themselves, a video game and the socio-historical reality. The object of reference is for many commenters more interesting than the sign representing it. Within the relay discourse, the act of watching a trailer builds up a basic awareness of a promoted game. The expectations based on this approach are unconditional and do not question its source, whether it is the trailer or some other element of the video game culture. The relay effect also extends both ways regarding the temporal dimension, it can be a basis for projection of future gaming experiences or for revisiting of memories of already released games.

Representational Discourse

A more explicit link between a trailer and a game is assumed within the representational discourse. According to this perspective, a trailer is considered primarily a representation of a game. The accuracy, with which a trailer portrays a game, is evaluated and discussed by viewers. As in the case of the relay discourse, a trailer remains subordinate to a game and functions as a source of paratextual information. However, here the actual content of a trailer becomes relevant for a discussion about a video game and vice versa. In other words, the proponents of this discursive stance engage in comparing various facets of a video game and a trailer.

The notion of representativity of a trailer is assessed on two levels: (1) the whole trailer vis-à-vis the whole game and (2) their particular elements. The first level is characterized by a general treatment of a trailer's representational relationship towards a game. Two main factors are relevant regarding the overall paratextual claim of a trailer: (1a) footage and (1b) genre conventions. Various types of footage influences how the proponents of the representational discourse receive a trailer. Expectedly, gameplay footage, as the only one that under normal circumstances establishes an indexical connection between a trailer and a game, is preferred due to its higher degree of potential representativity. Differences between video game genres extend in some cases also to a promotional practice. For example, MMOs (represented in the corpus by *The Elder Scrolls Online*) are known for utilizing high budget CGI trailers. The second level can be organized into four main categories of trailer elements: (2a) visuals, (2b) gameplay mechanics, (2c) narrative, and (2d) music. While footage has direct implications for the representativity of both visuals and gameplay mechanics, these elements are nonetheless discussed across different types of footage and thus present independent topics of the representational discourse. The same reservation applies, albeit in a limited degree, to narrative and music; in the case of staged gameplay performance they can be fully determined by a video game. At the same time, a trailer's narrative and music can distance themselves from a video game and become noteworthy autonomous elements of a trailer capable of creating complex paratextual effects. They also have a potential to contribute to a trailer's textual status.

In section 5.1.2, I have discussed the formal aspects of the selected twelve trailers regarding the (1a) used footage and the practice of footage disclaimers, which explicitly addresses the representational relationship between a trailer and a video game. With that knowledge in

mind, it is possible to analyze the audience reception of different types of footage according to the representational discourse. Its proponents usually prefer gameplay footage trailers over CGI and live-action. This preference suggests that they are first and foremost interested in what a trailer can say about a game and not as much in the trailer itself. In other words, representativity is considered a desirable quality and something video game trailers should strive for. Accordingly, a trailer using gameplay footage is considered by many to be the default form and any deviation is criticized for its lack of representativity.

> MEA-Y: Would have loved to see actual gameplay.
>
> MEA-Y: [...] they promised to show gameplay but are showing other things that no one cares about.
>
> LOL-P: I'm just not a fan of marketing trailers that portray a game to be something it isn't. *League of Legends* and its ilk aren't story-based games, their characters aren't characters. They're just empty puppets. Let's stop pretending they're anything more than that.
>
> TES-K: To be honest, I'm a little sick of these cinematic trailers of late. They do not represent the game in any way what-so-ever. They are neat to watch, but when that's the entire commercial for the product, I'm curious how they get away with it. I want to see the game in action, not some high end movie trailer style crap.

The focus of the representational discourse is the video game product as such. Any seemingly peripheral information although potentially paratextual might be disregarded on the grounds of straying too far away from what viewers consider important – the video game itself. It is not only transmedia storytelling content (such as CGI and live-action) that is interpreted as off-topic but also behind-the-scenes documentary shots featured in MEA.

> MEA-E: I can't say I understand the thinking behind these "dev diary" and "making of" style trailers... Even for someone who understands the development process, it still kind of takes a bit of the magic away seeing people creating the characters, and a voiceover telling me how they've created all this stuff just for me. [...]

Footage disclaimers are an integral part of discussions about representativity. While they can be understood as an attempt to prevent potential aberrant readings of a trailer, even the four trailers from the corpus that explicitly disclose the nature of used footage (BS1, BS2, BF, and MEA) do not completely eliminate confusion among their viewers. The following comments show a dispute about the technically correct reading of BS2.

> BS2-Y: It says actual gameplay footage... like fuck no...
>
> BS2-Y: It literally says at 0:07 *"Not actual gameplay footage"*, the real game does not look as good as this, it's a pre-rendered trailer.

The uncertainty about the meaning of a disclaimer can be partly caused by its vague or ambiguous phrasing (see section 5.1.2). This is especially relevant for BF and MEA whose disclaimers can be interpreted in a multitude of ways. While BF has raised questions about what "in-engine footage" but "not actual gameplay" means for the representativity of the trailer, MEA has surprised its audiences by an inclusion of behind-the-scenes footage from the offices of the developer BioWare, which some viewers had at first mistaken for computer animation. However, they quickly realized their technically incorrect reading and jokingly commented on the unexpectedness of documentary shots in a video game trailer.

> BF-P: Hard to get excited about a fully "in-engine" CGI trailer that shows no gameplay what so ever... Electronic Arts [publisher] again missed the mark here releasing a very underwhelming trailer that they built up and hyped up for quite

> some time. They could have really stolen the show if they showed a gameplay trailer. That would have gotten people much more hyped.
>
> MEA-Y: I was dropping my jaws at the hyper-realistic CGI then I realized I was looking at BioWare's artists.
>
> MEA-Y: I do think it's funny that today's games make us question whether or not a trailer is using CGI or live-action footage.

Authorship of footage is also relevant for its representativity. Gameplay trailers can be attributed to developers or publishers using the umbrella category of corporate authorship (see section 3.3.2). On the other hand, alternative footage such as CGI or live-action can imply external origins as their content is not gameplay. The missing indexical connection to a video game means that other parties, which are not directly involved in the development of a game, might have created a non-gameplay trailer in question. The allographic authorship potentially undermines the representativity of an outsourced trailer if information about its creators becomes known to viewers. As I have shown in sections 5.1.1 and 5.1.2, none of the twelve trailers explicitly addresses its origins. Even though all the trailers are thus presented as de jure corporate, the de facto allographic (outsourced) authorship is discovered by commenters and discussed in the case of LOL and TES.

> LOL-Y: Riot Games didn't technically make this. Blur did this one and *A Twist of Fate* [another CGI trailer for *League of Legends*].[120]

The aforementioned comment has been written in an answer to other viewers' appeals to Riot Games to create more CGI trailers, which would feature new playable characters. It can be interpreted as a clarification of the socio-historical circumstances of the trailer, including its potential representation of the current state of the game. In this regard, allographic trailers are not exclusively in the hands of the developers but also depend on the external animation studio Blur, which was commissioned to create LOL.

Video game (1b) genres alter the shared understanding of representativity of video game trailers. Overall, paratextuality as a cultural phenomenon is largely dependent on conventions. Massively multiplayer online games (MMO) and related genres stand out when compared to the rest of mainstream video game production due to their frequent use of non-gameplay trailers. Most notably, *World of Warcraft* (Blizzard Entertainment 2004) and its developer Blizzard Entertainment are known for high production values of their cinematic promotional videos. Within the corpus, the MMO genre specificity is relevant to *The Elder Scrolls Online* and its CGI trailer created by the external animation studio Blur. Some of the commenters have pointed to the fact that the MMO genre is usually promoted by cinematic trailers.

> TES-E: Well, it wouldn't be an MMO without a super cool cinematic that bears little resemblance to the actual game.
>
> TES-K: To be fair, that cinematic [cinematic trailer for *World of Warcraft*] represented a seminal point in the history of MMO. I still remember the day it came out. I got goosebumps because I'd been waiting to jump into the *World of Warcraft* [...]

This particular promotional practice influences the expected representativity of a video game trailer. Even without a footage disclaimer, TES is considered a proper trailer for MMO whose

[120] This particular quote is also used in a related article about representativity in video game trailers (Švelch forthcoming).

lack of an indexical relationship to the game is not a cause for complaint as it fits the paratextual conventions of the genre.

> TES-Y: It isn't ZeniMax's [developer] fault that most people are idiots that they'd have to have "the game won't look like this" in huge flashing letters across the entire screen for the entire video to stop every person from thinking it's going to be like that. If someone is stupid enough to think an MMO can look that good, then they deserve to lose some money. They probably wouldn't be able to figure out to turn their PC or console on anyway.

Not all viewers are willing to make exceptions for MMOs based on the tradition of using CGI trailers. Even though they acknowledge that this is indeed a genre convention by referencing other video games, the general preferences of the representational discourse in this case overrule the exceptional position of MMOs.

> TES-E: I remember the *Star Wars: The Old Republic* intro videos were breathtakingly good when I first saw them. Then look at how that turned out…

> TES-E: CGI is beautiful but, as with *World of Warcraft*, not an accurate representation of the game itself. I really do wish we would get a game with the graphics and the action shown in that video.

Even the more tolerant commenters, who accept the specificities of MMO promotion, have criticized TES for not representing the game accordingly beyond giving a generic impression of the game. However, it is not the lack of gameplay footage that is blamed for the low degree of representativity, but the actual contents of the CGI trailer, which according to some viewers only replicate the fantasy MMO tropes without adding any concrete information about the game's themes or fictional world.

> TES-K: [The trailer] gave you absolutely no insight into the game what so ever even on the broadest level of ideas/subjects/concepts… because there were four damn factions fighting there (only three with "heroes") and I believe three have been talked about. The only merits it has are that it's fairly well animated, and that you could take it and sell it to any other generic fantasy MMO and it would probably still apply without any edits.

> TES-K: […] I wish game companies would watch the first *World of Warcraft* cinematic and realize this is how you do one for a MMO. Show off races, locations and feature memorable music to create awe, beauty and imagination, then have them interact with each other. Short and sweet, and not overdue with CGI battles that I end up yawning through. CGI battles are cool to watch, but this one went on too long for me to care or wonder what was going on. This already makes *The Elder Scrolls Online* feel generic like so many others (*Warhammer Online: Age of Reckoning*, *Guild Wars 1*, and *Rift* intros are great examples). […]

The last commenter then continues to elaborate that the trailer is arguably more efficient and informative for players already acquainted with *The Elder Scrolls* series than for newcomers. This remark suggests that trailer's representativity is by some viewers demanded as a standalone quality, which should not require other information in order to convey a meaningful paratextual account of an upcoming video game. In this case, TES is evaluated on its own merits without taking into account other potential sources of video game paratextuality and the overall promotional redundancy, in which a trailer is but one of many persuasive tools. This assumption raises the demands on representativity of an individual paratextual element by calling for self-contained paratextuality and thus for even more redundancy among the overall promotional strategy, at least when it comes to expected functions of a trailer.

> TES-K: From playing *The Elder Scrolls: Morrowind*, *The Elder Scrolls: Oblivion*, and *The Elder Scrolls: Skyrim*, I guessed what each race was, but for somebody new, you really couldn't tell what was going on.

Aside from the general discussions about representativity on the level of the whole texts – a trailer representing a video game –, the representational discourse also deals with particular elements of a video game.

When it comes to the most apparent of a trailer – (2a) its visuals –, the representational discourse prioritizes representativity before image quality. High level of cinematic expression and visual detail is not understood as a means to its own end. It is relevant only as long as a trailer accurately represents a video game. This means that gameplay footage is preferred as it has direct indexical connection to video game's visuals. Comments about CGI trailers and BF's in-engine footage attest to that.

> TES-K: I don't think it is fair to call that "crap". It was very well done. However I do agree with you that it doesn't represent the actual game at all and that sucks.

> TES-E: It's not bad, but it's only a cinematic. When I want cinematics, I watch movies.

> OW1-P: [...] I'm interested in the game, I just thought this short was all flash no substance.

> BF-P: Trailer looks great but it's either a vertical slice,[121] or the high end PC version. I'd be very impressed if all versions of the game look as good as the trailer did.

Regarding gameplay footage, any perceived lack of an additional polish might contribute to the trailer's representativity. In other words, what could be otherwise criticized as low quality video game visuals might end up being praised for an untampered representation of a video game according to the representational discourse. For example, the relatively rough image quality of DE1 have been interpreted as representative.

> DE1-Y: Wow. This is probably the best game trailer I've seen in a decade. This is what a game trailer should be. All in-game footage. Tons of context. Excellent delivery. No shady "ultra-graphics" that won't be in the actual game. Hell, this is a better start to the game than most actual games have.

Yet, gameplay footage does not always warrant a faithful representation of graphics of a final video game product. A potential misrepresentation can be caused, for example, by an ongoing development, which might require changes to a game engine. In section 5.1.2, I have briefly mentioned the downgrade controversy around *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt*. This criticism of the game's early gameplay trailers, including TW1, has also surfaced in the analyzed online discussions. However, not even concrete evidence and admission of changes by the developers are able to discourage viewers from trusting gameplay trailers in general. They merely result in a distinction between early gameplay trailers, which are approached more cautiously, and the trailers closer to a launch, which are still considered representative.

> TW1-Y: Target shot trailers never represent the final product. Wait for gameplay videos shortly before the game release. Target shot trailers are often taken from

[121] Vertical slice is a demonstration of an early build of a video game aimed at showing all its key features to investors, journalists or the general public. It is often made specifically for promotional and business purposes and in consequence consists of original (prototype) content, which does not have to be included in the final product (Carlson 2009).

> alpha versions, and that's how the developers want it to look, but in the end some of the details will always be altered/lowered/removed/and so on.[122]

> TW1-Y: [...] They marketed the game with that level of graphical fidelity, they should have said they downgraded it.

> TW1-Y: [...] It is more than common for developers to do this nowadays, it should be expected nearly every time. [...]

Some viewers even praise use of explicitly non-representative trailers in early stages of development as they might prevent potential disillusionment that could be otherwise caused by seemingly representative gameplay. For example, MEA shows only a few seconds of gameplay and mostly focuses on behind-the-scenes footage.

> MEA-K: Electronic Arts [publisher] does seem a bit gun shy on revealing these big games. On some level I can respect them not trying to pass off magic gameplay trailers that don't end up being the product. [...]

Before a launch, (2b) gameplay mechanics are often inferred from video game trailers similarly to visuals. Viewers closely analyze the staged performance shown in trailers utilizing gameplay footage to speculate about how the game is going to feel and play once it is released. In this regard, they attempt to distinguish between interactive elements of a video game, which require player's agency, and more automated actions, which happen regardless of a player's input. For example, shooting in *BioShock Infinite* requires agency while conversations happen based on the script and their actual form cannot be controlled by a player.

> BS1-K: [...] From what I see in the trailer the control scheme looks like always, so when you're playing *BioShock Infinite* (and if you've played the first two games, or only the first one) you will feel like you're playing a *BioShock* game.

> BS1-E: Looks lovely, although I'm afraid that much like the original *BioShock* it focuses too heavily on the shooting [...]

> MEA-Y: Planet exploration is back!

> MEA-Y: It will likely be similar to *Dragon Age: Inquisition*, in that it's not true "open world" but rather large maps, which certainly have a bit of an open-world feel to them separated by loading screens. Don't expect a level of openness like *No Man's Sky*; the development team is likely focused more on making the game enjoyable than just massive.

This guesswork is not only limited to gameplay footage trailers. For example, the discussions around the cinematic trailer for *BioShock Infinite* show that some viewers predict gameplay mechanics even from non-gameplay footage, extending the belief in representativity to trailers in general.

> BS2-P: Sure, it's a bit stylish as a CGI trailer, but it's still got the mechanics of the actual gameplay. Skyhooking, landing the drop kill, using powers to save Elizabeth [protagonist], using powers against the Handyman [enemy], and Elizabeth aiding Booker [protagonist]. At least that's what I see myself doing as I play.[123]

[122] This particular quote is also used in a related article about representativity in video game trailers (Švelch forthcoming).
[123] This particular quote is also used in a related article about representativity in video game trailers (Švelch forthcoming).

In some cases, it is impossible to tell whether a prediction of game mechanics happens based solely on a trailer, or if other resources have been utilized as well. These might be other texts about a given video game, previous gameplay experiences or genre conventions. After all, trailers do not exist in a vacuum, nor are they the only potentially paratextual phenomena created for a singular video game. Nonetheless, connections between perceived mechanics based on trailer watching and experienced game mechanics do not cease to be drawn even after a launch. While engaging in retrospective viewing, any potential discrepancies are noted and often interpreted as an outcome of changes made during development.

> OW2-Y: Back when this video was released, which I presume was mid to late alpha, or incredibly open beta [early stages of development], Bastion [playable character] had a shield in front of him, as seen in the video. They removed it in one of the adjustments, and even now without his shield he's pretty strong. His only counter really is Genji [playable character], and you have to have someone that knows how to press a button, or are willing to switch to that hero.

After launch, CGI trailers, which might have previously offered at least a basic indication of gameplay mechanics, are often criticized for misrepresenting them when compared to a released video game. This further shows the core logic of the representational discourse. Within this perspective, trailers are expected to stay as true to a video game as possible even if they are using non-gameplay and are thus not constrained by the capabilities of a game engine. Furthermore, even though their relationship to a video game is limited due to the lack of an indexical representation, the demands on their representativity are not significantly lower than those aimed at gameplay trailers.

> OW1-Y: What noobs. Tracer [playable character] no ultimate, Reaper [playable character] uses Death Blossom [in-game ultimate ability] for no one, Widow [playable character] on infravision can't see that kid on her back, and the best Winston [playable character] who don't even has a tesla cannon.

> LOL-Y: Come on, Riot [developer], you made so many mistakes. First of all, how can Leona [playable character] take Darius's [playable character] ultimate power when it's locked to Ahri [playable character] already? How can Ahri one-shot Zyra [playable character] with her q [attack ability Orb of Deception]? How is Katarina [playable character] dodging Rengar's [playable character] basic attacks? How did that tree fall on Nautilus [playable character]? [...]

> TES-Y: Made a cool assassin ranger hoping to be like the one in this video. I'm 30 something levels in now and... still no fucking cape, fuck this game!

The same expectations attributed to gameplay mechanics hinted at or performed in trailers extend to (2c) narrative elements of a trailer. Within the representational discourse, the events presented in a trailer are presumed to play out identically in a game itself. As such trailers are again used to predict the final form of a video game, this time in the context of a narrative.

> BS1-K: [...] "This trailer was made entirely from in game footage" + footage of the lighthouse above Rapture [fictional setting of *BioShock* and *BioShock 2*] = you're probably going to Rapture at some point [in *BioShock Infinite*].

> TW1-E: Triss, Yennefer and probably Ciri [characters]. All those in a two-minute trailer. This is going to be so awesome that we won't be capable of enjoying another RPG for a long time after *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt*.

> MEA-Y: Ryder [protagonist] is waking up at the end of the trailer, which supports a long-held speculation that the Pathfinders were put into a cryosleep and launched

> out of the galaxy to escape the Reapers [main antagonists of the *Mass Effect* trilogy]. My guess is that's your intro.

From the perspective of retrospective viewing, changes in a video game's narrative are considered noteworthy. Logically, such observations are more likely to be made in the context of narrative-driven games. I have already mentioned that one of the scenes of TW1 was altered in the final game (see section 5.1.2). TW1 involuntarily performs a revelatory function and gives insight into a video game development by showing what can be understood as previous version of the game. Interestingly, the disappointment described in the following comments is not caused primarily by misrepresentation of the game's narrative but by the fact that viewers would have liked to see the particular story event preserved in the game.

> TW1-Y: I'm so disappointed that the scene with Emhyr [character] on the Viziman throne [seat of power of the fictional kingdom of Temeria] was cut from the game.

> TW1-Y: The scene with Emhyr wouldn't have necessarily have been about Ciri. I meant that I wished they had found some other way to work the scene into the game.

> TW1-Y: I'm sad so much was cut out of the game it would have added a lot more to the awesomeness.

A similar situation can be observed in the discussions about BS2. I have described its rather loose connection the storyline of *BioShock Infinite* in section 5.1.2. The alternative scenario presented in this CGI trailer has been criticized for not staying true to the actual storyline of the game. In the following comment, it is compared to an older gameplay video, shows the character Elizabeth trying to rewind time in an attempt to heal a wounded horse (Ghost Story 2011).

> BS2-Y: Well, none of these happened in the game. That's why I said it's stupid. And the horse thing never happened.

As with previous trailer elements, the representational discourse applies the same expectations to narrative content in non-gameplay trailers despite the apparent lack of an indexical relationship to a video game.

Within the representational discourse, (2d) music becomes a topic of discussion when it is perceived to be in discord with a video game. In this regard, the actual inclusion within a video game is not the main issue. Viewers thus do not demand a trailer soundtrack to be completely intradiegetic and indexically related to a video game. Their main concern is whether a song fits the setting of a video game. In an ideal situation, it should be possible to perform the music theme within the fictional world. On the other hand, modern instruments and music genres create an anachronistic feel in the context of historical or quasi-historical games. The music choices of BS2, TW1, and BF (see section 5.1.2 for details about the particular tracks) have been criticized for this exact reason. *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* takes place in a fantasy setting inspired by 14th and 15th century medieval Europe. The majority of *BioShock Infinite* unfolds in the year 1912 but the time-travelling elements of the game take its main characters as far as to the 1980s. The game also features anachronistic covers of popular songs from the second half of the 20th century, including *Shiny Happy People* originally by R.E.M., which was first released in 1991. This existence of modern music in *BioShock Infinite* is explained as a result of time-travelling. *Battlefield 1* covers the event of the World War I.

> BS1-K: I don't know about anyone else but the reason why I don't like the song is I don't like modern music in historical games, *Assassin's Creed* is the one that does this the most and it is immersion breaking. I have nothing against the song itself.

> TW1-Y: The sound is way too modern for a world of swords and monsters.
>
> BF-E: [...] They managed to shoehorn a bad dubstep remix in to a World War 1 game... is that wise? Seems, oh I don't know, totally disconnected from the subject matter.
>
> BF-P: What a ridiculous song choice. I guess it's easier to take the obnoxious action music and obnoxiously over-the-top action clips quickly cut together with no relation whatsoever. [...] I'm not insulting the song itself. I'm just saying it's a lazy and unfitting song for this trailer.

Trailer music is so important for some commenters, that a poorly chosen song can make them reportedly lose interest in a video game. In this context, representative music helps to achieve immersion while the opposite causes an unintentional alienation effect. In consequence, a non-fitting song can undermine a trailer's promotional function for proponents of the representational discourse.

> BS1-K: So yesterday, I was practically sold on a game by virtue of a snippet of its soundtrack (*Kentucky Route Zero*), so I guess it's only fair that I find myself abandoning almost all interest in another game, by fault of the music used in its trailer.
>
> BS1-K: [in a direct reply to the previous comment] I don't think you should abandon all interest of a game because of the music in a trailer, but I do see your point. The original *BioShock* was based in quietude and immersion. Music only existed in Rapture [in-game location] because the inhabitants would have listened to music, but the choice in music was very fitting for the time and setting. The music used in this trailer obviously lies outside of the world that Irrational Games are creating. It holds only a silhouette resemblance to the underlying folk tone that was set up in earlier trailers with the song *Will the Circle Be Unbroken*.[124] The feeling of immersion is completely removed. Instead, the trailer works to extract parts of the world and define them through a song that has little connection to the world. So I understand why you would abandon this game. The trailer defines the world poorly, and it gives little information about the in-game music. However, this doesn't mean that the game and its music will be poor. It only shows that whoever makes Irrational's [developer] trailers doesn't really understand the game.

Paradoxically, the arguments about the historical (or fictional) inaccuracy of the song *Beast* by Nico Vega, which was originally released in 2006, do not acknowledge the time-travelling aspects of *BioShock Infinite*. Moreover, they show the representational discourse in its most extreme form. The high demands on a trailer are in this case applied also to elements that are clearly not supposed to be fully representative of a video game. Still, a specific song choice is interpreted as representative of an overall artistic vision if not of a video game itself. When such music is not aligned with a viewer's understanding of a game and its fictional world (even if it is counterfactual), then it can potentially lead to rejection of the whole game.

The representational discourse includes also more tolerant stances whose notion of representative music is not as strict as in the aforementioned cases. For some viewers, it might suffice that a chosen soundtrack is at least a thematic fit to the game. These arguments have surfaced in the discusssion of BS1 and BF.

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[124] *BioShock Infinite* and one of its earlier trailers, which premiered at 2011's Video Game Awards (2K 2011), feature an acoustic rendition of the Christian hymn *Will the Circle Be Unbroken?*, originally composed by Ada R. Habersohn and Charles H. Gabriel in 1907. Therefore, it can be interpreted as being historically accurate to the game's main setting. The game also includes a more traditional choir version of the song.

> BS1-K: It's a trailer, how many trailers out there have music not in the actual game/film? Loads, it was the *Assassin's Creed: Revelations* trailer that got me pumped enough to go and finish *Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood* because it just worked so well with the opening sequence and the song.
>
> BS1-K: As other people have said, the song is very clearly modern, and sounds similar to current popular rock bands, such as The Black Keys. That said, I thought the lyrics fit perfectly with the political undertones Ken Levine [lead designer] has repeatedly talked about with *BioShock Infinite*, and I doubt the song will actually be used in the game.
>
> BF-Y: *Seven Nation Army* – The Glitch Mob remix suits it way better than any song. EA DICE [developer] picked the perfect song.

As mentioned in the second comment, the song *Beast* explores similar political themes of a struggling working class as does *BioShock Infinite*. Admittedly, the connection of *Seven Nation Army* to *Battlefield 1* is much looser and limited mostly to the song's title, which might be by some viewers understood as a military reference. However, the composer Jack White has clarified that it is actually based on his childhood mispronunciation of The Salvation Army (Martin 2013), which is technically a charitable organization. Still, both songs can evoke a thematic connection and become at least tonally representative of their respective games.

***

To summarize, the paratextual approaches to video game trailers can be classified into two basic discourses: (1) relay and (2) representational. In the former, trailers are understood as mere pointers towards a video game. Most of the trailer's qualities are ignored in favor of the basic referential function, which informs about the existence of a video game. The latter discourse is based on the notion of representativity, which is considered by its proponents as the defining feature of the relationship between a trailer and a video game. In this regard, trailers containing gameplay footage are rated higher than CGI and live-action trailers due to their indexical relationship to a video game. Beyond the general issues of footage and genre conventions, the representational discourse attends to four main elements of a video game trailer: visuals, gameplay mechanics, narrative, and music. Overall, proponents of the representational discourse are highly conscious of the commodified status of video games and their reception of trailers indicates a significant interest in making informed economical decisions.

5.2.2 Video Game Trailers as Noteworthy Texts

As I have argued in section 5.1.2, certain formal aspects of a video game trailer, such as different types of original content and varying degrees of cinematic expression (Hesford 2013), can contribute to trailer's autonomy within the video game culture. However, these predispositions have to be received accordingly in order to establish a trailer's textual status. The most prosaic way of treating a video game trailer as a text in its own right is to comment on the story events portrayed by it. Admittedly, this approach does not show an explicit appreciation of trailer's textual or artistic qualities but it nonetheless implies that a viewer is interested in the actual content of a trailer. Compared to the relay and representation discourses, the paratextual information no longer receives priority in the audience's interpretation of a video game trailer. The following comments show that this discursive stance applies to different types of footage, including gameplay (OW2), in-engine (BF), CGI (TES, OW1), and live-action (DE2).

> OW2-Y: Mercy [playable character]: *"Heroes never die."* Gets killed three seconds later.

> BF-Y: If you pause at 0:33, you'll see there's no one actually flying in the plane that collides with the camera.
>
> TES-Y: So, how'd you get here? Elf: Climbed a rope… turned a few guys to ash. Breton [in-game race]: Rode a bridge, shot some guys, threw knives at other. Nord [in-game race]: I made an undead werewolf my bitch.
>
> OW1-Y: Genius security. I also like how Tracer [playable character] just puts it [a weapon called Doomfist's gauntlet] back in there [into a vitrine] and there being no glass left. Logic!
>
> DE2-Y: […] I mean when the guy says *"You see what your kind are doing out there"* to his wife just because she has a prosthetic limb. Dear god, that's a terribly thought out writing.

The above-listed comments describe memorable moments from trailers or summarize their plot. As the last contribution shows, these audience reactions can range from positive to negative. What they have in common is that they treat the selected trailers as audiovisual texts whose plotlines, writing or technical details are important enough to be noted and discussed. Still, they focus on the surface level of a trailer and provide only basic observations, which do not explicitly reflect the specificities of a cultural status of a video game trailer. A more direct acknowledgement of trailer's textuality can be located in contributions that critically evaluate the viewing experience.

> LOL-Y: I can't get over how well this is made, so many sequences that gave me this epic feeling that movies used to have on me when I was sixteen years old. Now movies are mostly boring but this gave me a thrill.
>
> TES-Y: It's obvious a ton of work went into this. Beautiful modeling, shading, animation, lighting, particles, cinematography, compositing… Too bad all that effort and talent has been poured into yet another boring fight scene to throw on the pile of all the zillions that have come before it. Not even a glimmer of any original thinking whatsoever.

The last comment addresses the socio-historical circumstances of CGI trailers by praising the artisanship behind TES even though the overall impression is critical. I have shown a similar assessment of this particular trailer from the perspective of the representational discourse in section 5.2.1. These complaints about uninspired and generic feel of TES are however approached from two significantly different viewpoints even if their final evaluation aligns. For the proponents of the representational discourse, TES is generic because it too closely resembles other trailers for MMOs and does not inform enough about the fictional world of *The Elder Scrolls Online*. For viewers who focus on the cinematic and entertainment value of the trailer, TES shows *"yet another boring fight scene"*. While the first approach deals primarily with paratextuality of the game as facilitated by the trailer, the second perspective also acknowledges the socio-historical circumstances of the trailer by commenting the creative process of trailer making. This admission of the trailer's own paratextuality effectively elevates TES to a status of a noteworthy text. As I have observed during the formal analysis (see section 5.1), trailers themselves only rarely address their own paratextuality and instead provide a detailed presentation of a video game. In consequence, this approach to video game trailers can be considered alternative and not fully in accord with its inscribed functions and meanings. The same can be said about the identification of trailer's real creators who have not been publicly credited in the trailer itself or on a respective YouTube page (see sections 5.1.1 and 5.1.2).

> TES-P: It's nice to see Blur still getting work, and continuing to make pretty cinematics.[125]

Comments about the number of views of a given trailer also highlight the status of a trailer as a text of its own importance, which is not only defined by its connection to a video game but also by its viewership.

> BF-Y: I can't believe this is one million views away from *Grand Theft Auto V* reveal trailer.

All the aforementioned observations suggest that a video game trailer can be enjoyed independently from its paratextual connection to a video game. The following comments also highlight the fact that the high production values of cinematic trailers for MMOs can make watching worthwhile even if a viewer does not intend to play the game at all.

> TES-E: Wow, that trailer was badass. I don't play MMOs, but I love watching their trailers and stuff.

> LOL-P: That's a pretty cool cinematic. Almost makes me care about *League of Legends*. MOBA's[126] just aren't my thing though.

What then makes a video game trailer good enough to be enjoyed on its own? The praises and complaints usually fit within the cinematic vernacular, suggesting that some viewers indeed approach trailers as short cinematic texts.

> BF-E: Thing is though, the *Battlefield 1* trailer is just a better put together trailer. [Trailer for] *Call of Duty: Infinite Warfare* goes on for three minutes, just chucking everything at you, and it's exhausting, it's like a sugar high child telling you about an exciting event, I think you could re-edit the trailer into something a lot better. *Battlefield 1* on the other hand gives you a short burst of wow, great editing, amazing visuals and just an all-round eye feast.

Commenters also directly compare trailers to standalone movies including references to well-known animation studios such as Pixar or Dreamworks in the case of OW1. This suggests that trailers can achieve a similar level of cinematic quality as animated films. Being compared to works of Pixar is considered a praise among viewers of video game trailers.

> OW1-Y: I feel like I watched an end of a movie from Pixar or Dreamworks.

> OW1-P: Way too saccharine and derivative of Pixar's work. The over exaggerated British accent is almost unbearable. […]

CGI and live-action trailers such as LOL, BS2 or OW1 spawn speculations about possible films set within the fictional worlds of the respective video games. In this regard, a well-received trailer becomes a proof of concept that a cinematic form might be applicable to a video game intellectual property.

> LOL-Y: I hope they really adapt *League of Legends* into a 2–3 hour-long film even if they create anthologies.

> BS2-Y: If this gets a movie or even just a 3D animation film, the fans will totally go mad and the movie will be fucking awesome.

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[125] This particular quote was also used in the related article about representativity in video game trailers (Švelch forthcoming).
[126] An abbreviation of a *"multiplayer online battle arena"* denoting the video game genre of *League of Legends*.

> OW1-Y: I'd pay to see a full length animated movie of *Overwatch* and its characters.
>
> DE2-Y: Can you please make a *Deus Ex* TV series and put it on Netflix or Amazon? This trailer proves you have the production quality to pull it off.

These commenters base their expectations of a potential film firstly on the enjoyment of a trailer and secondly on the idea of an ideal movie, which would cater to the fans of a video game. Their enthusiasm is often discouraged by more cautious viewers who remind the more optimistic fans about the botched film adaptations.

> DE2-Y: As long as it's made by the creators and not a second hand studio. That is why most video game franchise movies fail, because the second hand studio doesn't know how to capture the magic of interactive media.
>
> DE2-Y: I'm so sick of you fucking idiots asking for a movie. With all due respect, you have learned nothing from the horrible movie adaptations they made after a lot of video games (*Warcraft: The Beginning*[127] included), so please, go fuck yourself and take your moronic ideas with you. Thank you.
>
> BS2-Y: Yeah, the *BioShock* series is on my #1 wish list to have a movie adaptation. But for the movie quality, with the current track-record of game adaptations, well… fingers crossed.

However, not all commenters ask for traditional film adaptations. Some viewers instead propose a strategic use of different media channels, which could utilize their specific capabilities and explore new areas of video game fictional worlds. In this regard, they follow the logic of transmedia storytelling (see section 1.2).

> LOL-P: As a fan I'd love to see a movie/miniseries/comics about *League of Legend*, the battles between Demacia and Noxus [locations], the horrors of Zaun [location], and the yordle [animal] of Bandle City [location].

Moreover, this line of argument applies to video game trailers that can also act as a part of transmedia storytelling. Especially, non-gameplay trailers, which are interpreted by some viewers as partly detached from a video game based on the used footage, can pursue their autonomy by expanding a fictional world of a given video game. By not being constrained by the capabilities of a game engine, these trailers can potentially tackle topics that are not addressed in a video game. In this regard, some commenters argue that if there is to be original content created specifically for a trailer it does not have to replicate what is already done in-game but instead it can explore new areas. In the process, these transmedia trailers (Švelch 2015b) become autonomous texts with their own artistic aspirations.

> BS2-P: I think a trailer should define what the story is about while at the same time mesmerizing the audience with stunning imagery and sound to get them interested in project if they haven't been already. Why should this be limited by their engines' constraints? Would the original *BioShock* trailer have been as effective if it had been done in-engine? I would argue not.
>
> DE2Y: A big appeal to *Deus Ex* is its story and lore. A mechanical apartheid [thematic title of the trailer]… Seriously. There are trailers for its gameplay, there are trailers for its lore. We've already been given the gameplay so why not give us more of the lore? It's a trailer after all.

[127] *Warcraft: The Beginning* (D. Jones 2016) is a feature film set within the fictional world of the video game series *Warcraft* and *World of Warcraft*. It currently holds a below-average score of 32 out of 100 on Metacritic.

Overall, these discursive stances, which consider video game trailers to be noteworthy texts in their own right, reject the demand of representativity. According to this perspective, trailers can fulfill various functions and do not have to comply with the strict expectations of the representational discourse.

> BS2-Y: As inaccurate as this trailer is it's still fucking awesome and so is the game.
>
> TES-Y: It's a cinematic trailer, it's not meant to represent the game graphics or gameplay. A shitload of games do that, not just *The Elder Scrolls Online*.

The appreciation of a trailer's entertainment value can extend to its particular parts. In the previous section, I have mentioned the criticism of non-representative trailer music. However, music can be enjoyed regardless of its representativity. Following comments praise the allegedly non-fitting song from BS1 and the lore-friendly soundtrack of TW1 written by the composers of the whole score *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt*.

> BS1-Y: The song is pretty much awesome.
>
> TW1-Y: I love this music so much.

The same applies to negative reception of trailer music. When evaluated independently, even a representative track can be criticized. This has been the case of TES, which features a standard fantasy theme.

> TES-P: I wonder who did the music for this game. It sounds pretty generic so far.

Still, a music track can be evaluated not only in terms of its representativity to a video game but also based on how it corresponds with a trailer and its other elements. While this approach implies a certain autonomy for a trailer in question, at the same it puts its musical elements into a subordinated role. In other words, it replicates the representational discourse on the micro-level of trailer music. However, viewers' understanding of what fits a trailer is primarily based on a theme and style as opposed to accuracy of representation and an indexical relationship between a sign and a referent. For example, the metal song from TW2 (see section 5.1.2) has been praised in the context of the trailer and the overall branding of the developer CD Projekt RED.

> TW2-Y: The music doesn't fit the game but it does fit the trailer almost perfectly. So hyped. [...]
>
> TW2-Y: But it's the perfect song for a CD Projekt RED [developer] *Witcher* trailer. Have you checked trailers of their old games? There was also metal. And I love their taste and style. CD Projekt RED consider themselves to be rebels, and yeah I think they truly are, when it comes to content and ambience or music, they make their stuff and not something casual. I respect this.

To summarize, video game trailers can be treated by their audiences as noteworthy texts. Within this perspective, viewers comment on events portrayed in a trailer without necessarily referencing the portrayed game or they either praise or criticize trailer's artistic execution. In this regard, some trailers, which further explore the fictional world of a video game and go beyond basic referential and promotional function, can be considered constitutive parts of transmedia storytelling. This is especially relevant for non-gameplay trailers that break away from the indexical relationship otherwise caused by the use of gameplay footage.

5.2.3 Holistic Approach to Video Game Trailers

In the previous sections, I have focused on two opposite approaches to video game trailers, which emphasize broader aspects of textuality in general – (1) transcendence represented by

paratextuality and (2) immanence. While the former perspective highlights the connections between texts, textual elements and the socio-historical reality, the latter emphasizes the self-contained quality of a text. As I have shown in chapter 3, both of these qualities are integral parts of textuality and they cannot be in practice isolated from each other. Thus, the already identified discourses, which I have abstracted from the analyzed online discussions, present admittedly polarized approaches to video game trailers. Still, some commenters and their contributions fully embrace these discursive stances.

The analyzed discussions about video game trailers rarely reach any authoritative or final agreement among commenters. There is no correct or dominant discourse, instead different preferences and expectations are expressed in an ongoing negotiation over the cultural status of a video game trailer. Admittedly, certain alignments between specific types of trailers and discursive stances can be observed but they are not determining for the overall audience reception. For example, gameplay trailers are likely to be treated as paratextual elements, while other types of footage are appreciated for their entertainment quality. In consequence, the comments sections are polyvocal and often bridging the two radical perspectives as discussions progress and viewers further elaborate on their interpretation of video game trailers. Some of the analyzed threads also diverge from the topic of video game trailers and fully focus on a video game (in the sense of the relay discourse) or other, even unrelated, phenomena.

The holistic discourse treats video game trailers as both paratextually connected to a video game and possessing an autonomous textual quality of their own. The acknowledgment of these co-present aspects of trailers is usually implicit and established through combination of arguments across the aforementioned polarized discourses. Most commonly, the holistic discourse is manifested in discussions about varied forms of video game trailers and their respective roles within video game promotion and video game culture in general.

For example, the following commenters note the lack of gameplay footage in TES and BF but still are able to enjoy the respective trailers suggesting a more tolerant approach than that of the representational discourse. The second quote also shows that even though non-gameplay trailers might be understood as mostly non-representative, they can still create a hopeful expectation of an upcoming video game if only by conveying its fictional setting.

> TES-K: I personally was hoping for a bit of gameplay, but I definitely enjoy cinematics.

> BF-P: No gameplay, so reserving judgement, but the trailer was good and a World War I shooter is pretty refreshing nowadays.

Another example of the holistic discourse is the advocating of the existence of non-representative trailers against the strict supporters of the representational discourse. Following user contributions justify the existence of non-gameplay trailers using various arguments from a personal taste, praise of live-action scenes to diversification of trailers. What all these comments have in common is that they oppose any prescription on the role or form of video game trailers and instead welcome the variety caused by different footage while admitting the demand for gameplay trailers.

> DE2-Y: Maybe there is no valid reason [for a non-gameplay trailer]? The question of whether they wanted in-engine or live-action is honestly, a matter of taste and direction, and they went for the latter. I suppose it's just not your cup of tea.

> DE2-Y: You're just a hater. They make a trailer like this with real people so we can feel more personally and emotionally connected. Something that we can look at

> and say *"Wow, what if this is what the future will be like?"* Also just gives us an idea of what's happening in the world of *Deus Ex* to bring us closer.

> TES-K: But why do people have to crave for gameplay videos exclusively? Why can't we have both? It's not like they won't release any gameplay trailers later on. Complaining about this makes you a goddamn turd.

The holistic discourse evaluates individual video game trailers in the context of other released trailers for the same video game. Similarly to the previous three comments, the following commenter advocates the existence of the CGI trailer TES. However, here the underlying argument takes a more concrete shape and explicitly rejects the accusation that non-gameplay trailers are false advertising if they are not the only trailers available for a given video game.

> TES-Y: But if there are also gameplay trailers, how the hell is this false advertising? There are two cinematic trailers, which tell you that isn't what the game will look like. Every other trailer shows you exactly what it's like...

Another direction of the holistic discourse addresses the perceivably looser connection between non-gameplay trailers and a video game. While the use of different footage breaks the indexical relationship that is considered the norm at least by the proponents of the representational discourse, trailers can still maintain links to a video game even though their actual nature might not be as easily interpretable. For example, BS2 shows an alternative scenario (see section 5.1.2), which does not take place in the game, but the overall theme of *BioShock Infinite* allows for it to be understood as a potentially canonical event. Still, many viewers have voiced their complaints about the trailer's misrepresentation of the game. One commenter has defended the trailer pointing to the alternative dimensions of the fictional world of *BioShock* and arguing that it is indeed related to the game, albeit in not the most obvious way of adaptation but as a transmedia storytelling episode.

> BS2-Y: Everyone saying the trailer is unrelated to the game... Sighs. Constants and variables guys, constants and variables, ha-ha. It's just another universe where Comstock [character] doesn't give a shit about keeping her [Elizabeth, one of the two protagonists of the game] alive.

Acknowledging the ambiguity of a video game trailer's role in the video game culture is an underlying theme of the holistic discourse. The complex relationships and interactions between a trailer and a video game do not have to be presented in a particularly organized fashion in order to show reluctance to classify a trailer either as a paratextual phenomenon or a standalone text. For example, the following rebuttal to a criticism of LOL suggests a certain expectation of representativity within the first sentence. However, the rest of the comment implies a perceived disconnect between a video game and a trailer. According to the user, negative feelings for a game should not automatically cause a dislike for a trailer.

> LOL-P: Nothing in that trailer made me think that *League of Legends* was even slightly character or story based. I do not recall a single word of dialog. Maybe you've decided to hate the trailer because you hate the game – or just all multiplayer games – and are simply inventing reasons that don't make sense and have no basis in reality.

Overall, the holistic discourse is characterized by a negotiation of the two polarized perspectives on video game trailers explored in sections 5.2.1 and 5.2.2. It provides a more thorough interpretation of a video game trailer taking into account other available trailers and the promotional context. It lacks definitive interpretations of what a video game trailer is or should be, instead it respects and praises the diversity of various types of footage and their implications for a trailer's meaning and role. This moderate approach also manifests in a

slightly different tone of comments compared to the previously explored discourses. In general, the analyzed discussions of video game trailers are often expressive and emotional, ranging from ecstatic to angry. This is understandable considering the selected venues, their informal setting and pseudonymity of many commenters. The use of video game lingo is also shared across the whole spectrum of discursive stances. The holistic approach is less emotionally loaded, even if it does not shy away from vulgarities or from direct confrontation with differing opinions. What makes it stand out in this regard is that the individual comments sometimes already include counterarguments. This thorough consideration of different points of view makes the holistic discourse come across as more composed and rational compared to more immediate reactions, especially in the relay discourse.

To summarize, according to the proponents of the holistic discourse, video game trailers are complex phenomena that are both partly paratextual and autonomous as texts of noteworthy entertainment and artistic value connected to a greater system of video game textual system.

5.3 The Ambiguous Video Game Trailer – Conclusion

Video game trailers are symptomatic of the complex realities of textuality in cultural industries. Trying to fit trailers into rigidly operationalized categories such as the paratext, threatens to reduce both their formal qualities and audience reception. In order to avoid simplistic statements about video game trailers, it is necessary to treat them as rich and diverse phenomena and look at their overall meaning and function as well as their specific elements and traits.

Utilizing the new paratextual framework presented in chapter 3, I have first focused on the four main dimensions on the level of the whole trailer. In this regard, the analyzed twelve trailers formally exhibit a strong promotional functionality, which in turn influences the other conditions, such as the spatiotemporal location outside and usually prior to a video game. The undisclosed authorship further strengthens the paratextual quality of a trailer. By obscuring its own socio-historical circumstances in favor of a video game, a trailer focuses on presenting a video game as a noteworthy cultural artifact. The rich substantiality of a video game trailer nonetheless implies a non-trivial amount of creative work, which goes into its development.

On the level of individual trailer elements and traits, the immediate surroundings of a trailer on YouTube provide paratextual redundancy by fulfilling referential and promotional functions on their own. At the same time, some of these elements, such as video descriptions, also establish paratextuality of a trailer by summarizing its content or addressing its socio-historical context, for example by hyperlinking to a behind-the-scenes featurette (LOL) or to an iTunes page of a licensed song used in a trailer (BF). Many of the internal parts of a trailer again focus on a video game, including age ratings, company logos, release dates or copyright notices. Overall, paratextual information tends to occupy liminal spaces at the beginning and end of the temporal sequence of a trailer or at the edges of visual frame. However, some exceptions can be found among the sample, including a delayed display of developer logo in TW1, which is shown halfway through the trailer. Besides a rich array of primarily paratextual cues, video game trailers also feature content that is self-sufficient and thus contributes to an autonomous status of a trailer as a whole. Most prominently, this relates to the so-called cinematic expression (Hesford 2013) and use of original footage that has been created specifically for a trailer such as CGI (LOL, BS2, TES, and OW1) or live-action (DE2). Original narrative and music of a video game trailer can also make it further detached from its otherwise strong referential and promotional function and aspire to its own entertainment and artistic value.

Audience reception picks up on this ambiguous formal nature of a video game trailer, which is neither fully paratextual and subordinate, nor completely standalone and independent. Among the viewers who prioritize the former side of video game trailers, two separate discourse can be identified. The relay discourse treats trailers as mere pointers in the direction of a video game and neglects the presence of a trailer in favor of the promoted text. Comments that fall within this discursive stance do not explicitly acknowledge the existence of a trailer. The representational discourse pays closer attention to the content of a trailer although it approaches it rather instrumentally as a means to learn more about a video game. Expectedly then, gameplay footage is often preferred by the proponents of this discursive stance as it facilitates indexical representation of a video game. In this regard, representativity as a capability of a trailer to accurately represent a video game is demanded by some viewers. Not all commenters seek video game trailers exclusively for their paratextual information. Trailers are also interpreted as noteworthy texts, which provide entertainment even to audiences that are not interested in a promoted video game. This particular discourse praises trailers for their original content or editing and often compares them to cinematic texts such as animation films. Individual trailer elements like music can also receive this type of treatment, meaning that they are evaluated independently and not based on their connection to a video game. Lastly, these two admittedly polarized stances towards video game trailers are complemented by the holistic discourse, which notes the ambiguity of a trailer's cultural status and their diverse form. Furthermore, this approach rejects the normative prescriptions on trailers pushed by the representational discourse and evaluates individual trailers within the broader context of other trailers.

Overall, video game trailers surpass the confines of the term paratext in the sense of a subordinate textual element that comments on the socio-historical situation of a text. Both formally and regarding their audience reception, trailers confirm the need for detailed analytical tools, which has been identified in the theoretical part of the thesis (see chapter 3). The new framework allows for such a treatment of paratextual qualities of video game trailers without obscuring their other aspects, be it the autonomous entertainment value or potential participation in transmedia storytelling efforts. The proposed methodological update to Genette's (1997b) concept of paratextuality encourages thorough rigorous analysis by clearly defining it as a cultural phenomenon that ground texts in the socio-historical reality. At the same time, it is not seen as an all-trumping quality but as one of many potential aspects of textuality. In consequence, paratextual layers of video game trailers can be explored next to their other facets, yielding a more detailed understanding of their formal structure and cultural status. The concluded ambiguity of video game trailers is not a shortcoming of the methodology, but a nuanced observation of the video game cultural industry in which trailers are partly paratextual but can also easily exhibit other qualities. This complex nature is evidenced both from the formal and reception perspective.

Conclusion

Compared to other available frameworks, paratextuality is a unique concept and its analytical application can yield valuable insight into the workings of cultural industries and media ecosystems in general. While there are certain overlaps and connections between paratextuality and other theoretical approaches, it allows to focus on the interconnections between four thematic areas of (1) structural relationships, (2) framing effects, (3) functional types of communication and (4) reception. Regarding the first topic, paratextuality presents a more detailed view on intertextual relationships by distinguishing between specific types of textual transcendence (Genette 1997a). In the context of modern cultural production, the concept of paratextuality often overlaps with transmedia storytelling but Genette's term goes beyond the issues of narrative. It also proves to be more applicable to the treatment of features whose substantiality is more intricate than that of primarily verbal modes of expression. Second, paratextuality as a concept addresses the issues of framing with an important limitation of paratextual authorship to producer collectives or delegated third parties. This clearly distances paratextuality from broader treatments of framing effects such as Goffman's (1986) frame analysis or Wolf's (2006b) framing devices and provides an analytical toolkit for the study of production and distribution of cultural artifacts. The topic of framing is closely connected to the functionality of paratextual communication, which fulfills various roles from promotion to instruction. Lastly, paratextual framework thematizes the activity of audiences during reception by arguing that the core aspects of a text can be interpreted in many ways and require a specific presentation within the socio-historical reality in order to ensure (or more precisely to increase the chances) of preferred readings.

Many recent appropriations of Genette's (1997b) framework either broaden it so much that it becomes nearly all-encompassing (Consalvo 2007; S. E. Jones 2008; Gray 2010; Mittell 2015), or reduce it to only verbal elements (Wolf 2006b; Rockenberger 2014). In consequence, both of these approaches significantly rearticulate the analytical value of paratextuality without enough consideration for the theoretical foundations of the concept. While many of the critiques raised during these revisions are valid and uncover the inherent cultural bias in Genette's original conceptualization caused by his chosen object of study – the world of literary publishing –, they also potentially lead to devaluation of paratextuality as an analytical tool. At the same time, the influential expansions of the framework by Consalvo (2007) and Gray (2010) have turned it into a yet another version of intertextuality. In this perspective, nearly all epiphenomena regardless of their authorship or function are considered paratextual as long as they do not have the proper form of a given cultural industry. In other words, everything that is not a video game, yet is for some reason related to it and belongs to the video game culture is automatically paratextual according to the expanded framework. Paradoxically, this operationalization is built on a negative definition and inevitably creates hierarchies between texts and paratexts, which are otherwise so explicitly criticized by proponents of the expanded framework (Consalvo 2006; S. E. Jones 2008). In comparison, the reduced framework overlooks a wide range of paratextual elements due to its narrow focus on verbal phenomena. This limitation goes directly against the original definition of paratextuality, which includes also material, iconic and factual paratexts.

Overall, the current state of the paratextual methodology is confusing and in many respects contradictory. The existence of multiple versions of the framework should ideally encourage clear communication of a methodological stance, but at this moment in time a comprehensive paratextual approach for fields outside of literary theory is lacking. Moreover, recent contributions from literary theory show that Genette's framework fails not only to capture the new developments in literary publishing such as e-books or electronic literature

(McCracken 2012) but also early historical stages of literary culture (H. Smith and Wilson 2011; Jansen 2014).

Due to its focus on cultural meaning and practices, paratextuality as a concept required certain adjustments before it could have been applied to the video game culture. Nonetheless, the basic redefinitions of the new framework are relevant for paratextuality in general. I have argued for a refinement of the terminology in the context of textual transcendence, which includes four other aspects beyond paratextuality. Genette's (1997b) own treatment of the paratextual framework operates mostly with figurative statements and empirical examples. His own use of the term is inconsistent. I have proposed more explicit definitions and challenged the connection between the typology of textual relationships (paratextuality) and the typology of texts (paratext), which is often taken for granted. This step is arguably reductive of the social reality of cultural industries and implies that there is always a dominant aspect of textual transcendence (or immanence for that matter) present in a text, which determines its place within the latter typology. However, this assumption goes against Genette's (1997a) own claims that textual transcendence is a feature of textuality as such and its various types are often interrelated and complementary, meaning that they cannot be completely isolated from each other. Paratextuality, which provides threshold effects between the inside of a text and the outside world, is always present if a text is situated within the socio-historical reality. This means that every text is always at least partly paratextual. Thus, the label paratext in its original designation as a text manifesting paratextual qualities is either redundant or misleading in the way that it creates arbitrary boundaries between texts that are already paratextual to start with. Essentially, the distinction between texts and paratexts replicates hierarchies of cultural industries suggesting that some texts or textual elements are less valuable based on the functions assigned to them by their producers. To mitigate this reductive assumption, I have proposed to use the term paratext to denote cultural practices and genres but not individual texts whose status is influenced not only by their authors but also by other stakeholders, including audiences.

Additionally, I emancipate the term paratextuality from being limited to relationships between texts as the new definition conceptualizes the phenomenon as consisting of links between a text and the surrounding socio-historical reality. This revision is not as drastic as it might seem at the first glance. It is supported by Genette's own claims about the function of paratexts, which according to him provide a *"[…] canal lock between the ideal and relatively immutable identity of the text and the empirical (sociohistorical) reality of the text's public […]"* (Genette 1997b, 408) My definition also follows Galloway's work on interfaces and his re-articulation of paratextuality as *"[…] an arrow pointing to the outside, that is, pointing to the actually existing social and historical reality in which the work sits."* (Galloway 2012, 42) Moreover, textual transcendence, which is the theoretical foundation for paratextuality, allows for relationships that go beyond the basic intertextual links between texts. For example, architextuality also connects a text to a practice, genre or convention, which are all arguably more abstract phenomena than texts.

The video game specific part of the framework consists of four revised dimensions of paratextuality. Contrary to Genette (1997b) who prioritizes the formal aspects, I order the dimensions according to their influence on paratextual elements starting with the central issues of (1) function and (2) authorship before moving on to the more practical conditions of (3) substantiality and (4) spatiotemporality. The individual categories take into account the current state of video games as a cultural industry and aim to give a researcher a more concrete and applicable toolkit than Genette's original operationalization, which does not go into much detail beyond the basic dimensions of spatiality and temporality. The updated framework builds on recent contributions to paratextual research and most notably rejects

the spatial distinction between peritexts and epitexts, instead proposing a two-dimensional continuum for the analysis of a spatiotemporal dimension.

Paratextuality cannot be properly analyzed without a closer look at its reception. Although Genette's concept highlights the activity of audiences in terms of how differently they interpret a text compared to an authorial intention, reception of paratextuality itself is often overlooked. Researchers usually focus on formal aspects of paratextuality and adopt the production perspective. Any impact on audiences is hypothesized based mostly on auto-ethnographic exploration. Only a handful of academic works undertake empirical analysis of the reception of paratextuality (Davison 2013; Cavalcante 2013; Johnston, Vollans, and Greene 2016).

Genette and many other scholars presume that properly developed and deployed paratextual elements ensure a better reception of a text as a whole, at least in the sense of preferred readings. However, the authorial vision does not always align with what could be considered the most successful reception, for example in purely economic terms. Differences between producer and publisher goals notwithstanding, paratextual elements are still subjected to active audience interpretation and can lead to various readings. In other words, the preferred functions of paratextuality do not automatically determine the final reception of a text. For example, a lack of instructions for a video game can as easily encourage in-game experimentation and exploration as also searching for third party guides and walkthroughs online, resulting in widely different gameplay experiences.

The overall research design is constructed to test and apply the new framework and to provide a thorough analysis of video game trailers as a potential paratextual phenomenon. To this end, I approach video game trailers from two complementary perspectives, which are reflected in the structure of the empirical part of the thesis. First, I explore the formal aspects of twelve trailers for eight mainstream video game titles published between 2009 and 2017. The second part then addresses the aforementioned issues of reception by looking at online discussions of the analyzed video game trailers. The formal analysis applies the updated paratextual methodology and is conducted on two main levels – of the trailer as a whole and its individual elements and traits. The findings show that trailers exhibit many paratextual qualities by commenting on the socio-historical situation of a promoted video game. Their own paratextuality is often neglected in favor of the more privileged text of the video game industry. By featuring original content and due to their rich audiovisual substantiality, trailers escape a purely indexical relationship to a video game and become partly independent texts capable of acting as constitutive part of transmedia storytelling.

The findings of the discourse analysis of online discussions on YouTube and on websites of the specialized press suggest that video game trailers are not just considered as mere 'paratexts' but that they can provide entertainment and aesthetic experience beyond informing about a video game. In this regard, three basic discursive approaches are identified. The first one puts emphasis on paratextual qualities of a video game trailer and can be further divided into two strands based on the explicit acknowledgement of the existence of a trailer or lack thereof. The relay discourse utilizes trailers as instrumental signs pointing towards a video game but not worthy of attention beside their basic referential quality. Its proponents exclusively discuss a game without even mentioning its trailer. The representational discourse more closely examines the representational relationship between a video game and a trailer and prioritizes representativity before original content. The second approach treats video game trailers as noteworthy texts and in practice rejects the reductive term paratext in its traditional meaning. The last approach – the holistic discourse – captures the complex attitudes in which video game trailers are perceived as being both paratextual and autonomous.

Altogether, the findings of the two empirical parts show that while the video game industry downplays the paratextuality of trailers in favor of the promoted games, some viewers are interested in the socio-historical circumstances of trailers. In this regard, players search for paratextual information about trailers and speculate about their origins or the decision making processes behind their creation. Although some trailers implicitly aspire to an entertainment and artistic value that would be independent from the game, these attempts lack institutional support from video game developers and publishers who mostly treat trailers as instrumental promotional materials, at least regarding their presentation. There are exceptions to this convention, but in general the industry approach to trailers is more one-sided than their audience reception.

As the empirical application shows, the main benefit of the proposed paratextual framework is a more nuanced analysis of paratextuality, which goes beyond the reductive scope of paratext but instead focuses on paratextual qualities within the context of textual transcendence as a whole. Additionally, the new framework provides an operationalization of paratextual dimensions suited for video games, stripping away the outdated features induced from empirical study of literary publishing. Beyond the framework, the thesis also reviews relevant paratextual research and provides a critical evaluation of available paratextual approaches across fields of literary theory, film and television studies, game studies and partly also media studies. Despite the existence of several literature reviews on paratextuality (Rockenberger 2014; Klecker 2015; Rodríguez-Ferrándiz 2017), none works with a comparably large body of interdisciplinary scholarship[128] as this thesis, nor offers a systematic comparison of the influential revisions (Wolf 2006b; Consalvo 2007; S. E. Jones 2008; Gray 2010) and Genette's (1997b) original framework, including the sometimes overlooked elaboration on textual transcendence (Genette 1997a).

Despite this contribution, the updated paratextual framework can be criticized for being inherently structuralist by utilizing the concept of textual transcendence. However, I would argue that the emphasis on reception, cultural meanings and practices compensates for this potential downside. Paratextuality as a quality of a text is not defined as an objective feature independent from its socio-historical situation but as a framing that is established through conventions and negotiations of various actors and stakeholders.

Concerning the form of the empirical analysis, I have chosen qualitative methodology and exploratory design considering the lack of existing empirical research on paratextuality in the video game culture. Especially, audience reception of paratextuality and the non-expanded version of the paratextual framework are underdeveloped research directions in game studies. Admittedly, video game trailers present only one part of the video game culture. Still, I would argue that their complex nature illustrates the general issues of potentially paratextual video game phenomena. The selected corpus of video games and trailers strives to be diverse and qualitatively saturated but it limits its scope to mainstream video game titles of American and European origins. Future research could expand its reach into other parts of video game industry, including the indie scene or Japanese video games. Considering the lack of existing research on the reception of video game paratextuality, the better fulfills the exploratory mission of the thesis. However, there are also opportunities for quantitative analyses now that the initial phase of research has been undertaken, at least when it comes to video game trailers.

[128] Understandably, the primary source here is the English-speaking part of academia, which is also the major contributor of paratextual research across languages (Åström 2014). While there is a small but still noteworthy number of French, Spanish, German and Italian publications, they have been left out of the thesis, apart for a few exceptions, due to language constraints.

Future research could also address other elements of video game cultural industries with paratextual qualities beside trailers. I have previously applied a case study approach to video game infographics, official websites and patch notes (Švelch 2016a). Analog games present a logical extension of the study of video game paratextuality.[129] Such research direction would require an adjustment of the new framework that would take into account the specificities of the analog game industry. The comparison of these two related but autonomous cultural industries could also yield an additional insight into the conceptualization of the four main paratextual dimensions.

To conclude, I would argue that paratextuality has been established as a valid concept throughout many fields and disciplines and its familiarity suggests a range of possible applications and future research endeavors. Nonetheless, as any analytical tool, paratextuality can both yield new insights as well as obscure the understanding of other cultural phenomena. Genette has warned literary authors and scholars of replacing the idol of the text by the paratext, arguing that a paratext is and should stay *"an assistant, only an accessory of the text."* (1997b, 410) While I don't share his reasons for this cautious approach, I have noted many times throughout this thesis that the current state of paratextual research simplifies many cultural industries and their artifacts to a binary distinction between text and paratext. Thus, the absoluteness of paratext is already spreading through academia. To paraphrase Genette's slogan from the conclusion of *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, I can offer one advice: Watch out for paratextuality. It is only one aspect of textuality. As much as it adds to the understanding of cultural practices and conventions that ground texts in the socio-historical reality, it should not lead to reductive observations. The basis of this balanced approach is provided by the proposed framework.

[129] In this context, I have explored analog game errata as paratextual phenomena functionally resembling patch notes of video games (Švelch 2016c)

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List of Tables and Figures

Appendix

Trailer	Code	Channel	URL
League of Legends Cinematic: A New Dawn	LOL	League of Legends	https://youtu.be/vzHrjOMfHPY
BioShock Infinite Beast of America Trailer	BS1	Ghost Story (formerly Irrational Games)	https://youtu.be/5gBVZj6ROV0
BioShock Infinite TV Commercial	BS2	Ghost Story (formerly Irrational Games)	https://youtu.be/RvrnUcB8ZJc
The Elder Scrolls Online – The Alliances Cinematic Trailer	TES	Bethesda Softworks	https://youtu.be/0jNT5cMwxw0
The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt – The Sword of Destiny Trailer	TW1	The Witcher	https://youtu.be/HtVdAasjOgU
The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt – Blood and Wine || Launch Trailer ("Final Quest")	TW2	The Witcher	https://youtu.be/OP-ZsLYGJfQ
Overwatch Cinematic Trailer	OW1	PlayOverwatch	https://youtu.be/FqnKB22pOC0
Overwatch Gameplay Trailer	OW2	PlayOverwatch	https://youtu.be/dushZybUYnM
Deus Ex: Mankind Divided – 101 Trailer	DE1	Deus Ex	https://youtu.be/ZGGaVCCMgfw
Deus Ex: Mankind Divided – The Mechanical Apartheid	DE2	Deus Ex	https://youtu.be/D7XCAgjoTtI
Battlefield 1 Official Reveal Trailer	BF	Battlefield	https://youtu.be/c7nRTF2SowQ
Mass Effect™: Andromeda Official EA Play 2016 Video	MEA	Mass Effect	https://youtu.be/y2vgHOXeps0

Table 6: List of video game trailers and their original YouTube locations (ordered chronologically by the release data of a video game)