Reincarnations of transmedia

Interrelated objects of contemporary Transmedia Storytelling and the medieval Catholic Church: A media-archaeological approach

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"The strategy of expanding a narrative into other media is as old as media themselves"

(Mittell, 2014, p. 253)

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Abstract

This thesis comprises an exploratory study with a media-archaeological approach examining the shared properties of contemporary phenomenon transmedia storytelling and the medieval Catholic Church. The constructed opposition between storytelling in the Catholic Church and contemporary transmedia storytelling provides new insight into the historical and recent practices of transmedia storytelling. Using the medieval Catholic Church as a framework for contemporary transmedia storytelling reveals structural resemblances between storytelling in the Middle Ages and storytelling in contemporary transmedia. These resemblances will be demonstrated in interrelated textual analyses divided in four categories. The first category examines the case of the (fictional) character, because characters are often central in a transmedia story (transmedia character). The second category provides insight into narratological concepts and franchising (transmedia narrative). The third looks at transmedia as a product and the economic logic of media companies and the Catholic Church expanding their 'products' (transmedia distribution), and the last one emphasizes the functional use of aesthetics (transmedia immersion). Through these four categories, this thesis will present an alternative interpretation of historical and recent media phenomena. Placing the Catholic Church and transmedia storytelling within a frame provides a better understanding of both phenomena. By suggesting the parallels, it is not implied that media-use in the medieval Catholic Church is identical to contemporary media culture; the categories of transmedia storytelling discussed in this thesis have affiliations with earlier movements, but have radically different means to similar ends.

Keywords

Transmedia storytelling, transmedia character, transmedia narrative, transmedia immersion, transmedia franchise, medieval, Catholic Church, religion

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Foreword

I grew up in a religious home, and every Sunday I visited a reformed church with my parents. As I sat there, I fantasized about the stories that were told. Illustrations of the stories were not visible in the church, but I made creative visualisations of them in my mind. The strict religious tradition of the 'black stockings church', for a long time prevented me from having contact with contemporary media, such as television, movies, and radio.

As I grew older, the inevitable happened, and I became familiar with popular narrative through contemporary media. The moving images that I had missed in my childhood now drew me into the interpretation of stories in contemporary media. The fascination for stories and media has resulted in my choice to study journalism and, after finishing my bachelor, to specialize in new media and digital culture. In this thesis, two worlds converge which have been hugely important in my life. The church and contemporary media. These two caused major shifts in my life, and will continue to do so in the future. At the core, religion shaped my interest in stories and has driven me to become a media scholar.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank a few people who helped me realizing this thesis. First, the tremendous help and support of my supervisor Stefan Werning. His patience and advice gave me 'faith' and provided a huge boost to this study. I also want to thank Imar de Vries for conveying his passion for media archaeology. He infected me with fascination for finding the recurring elements in media phenomenon. Back at home, I want to thank my dear boyfriend Barend, who cheered me up through the 'breakdowns' and inspired me with his refreshing approach to my subject. And last but not least, I also want to thank my friends who patiently wait until I'm back in action at drinking wine and beer.

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Introduction: The Religious "Origins" of Transmedia Storytelling

> "For most of human history, it would be taken for granted that a great story would take many different forms, enshrined in stain glass windows or tapestries, told through printed words or sung by bards and poets, or enacted by traveling performers" (Jenkins, 2003).

The above quote is the conclusion of an article written by Henry Jenkins (2003) in which he introduced the term *transmedia storytelling*. In his conclusion, he uses a historical reference to the centuries-old tradition of storytelling. He argues that the transmedia story unfolds across multiple media platforms (then and now), with each new text making a distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole (Jenkins, 2006a, p. 119). The creation of worlds and development of rich environments, while supporting a variety of different characters, is an aspect that distinguishes the transmedia story from the 'average' story with one storyline.

"Transmedia storytelling is the ideal aesthetic form for an era of collective intelligence" (Jenkins, 2007). However, transmedia storytelling has a history of various alternative and peripheral domains reaching back several decades (Ibrus & Scolari, 2014) and the term *transmedia intertextuality* was already introduced in the academic field by Marscha Kinder in 1991, discussing blockbusters and television (Kinder, 1991, p. 1). However, Henry Jenkins is the scholar who made transmedia storytelling a household term in the creative industries. The technological development in the creative industries was hastily moving towards storytelling through multiple modes of media. Transmedia storytelling was often regarded as a 'new' narrative format and the popularity of the concept often had the connotation of a "buzzword" in the recent past (Jenkins, 2011).

This predicate of a "buzzword" became less dominant in 2014, because several scholars saw the necessity of historically contextualizing contemporary phenomenon transmedia storytelling. This thesis also provides a historical contextualization of transmedia storytelling, constructing an opposition with a peripheral domain. The framework of the Catholic Church and the spread of Biblical stories are used to gain more insight into current transmedia storytelling. I use the Biblical stories because they have proved to possess the ability to create worldwide communities and therefore inspire franchises (Ryan, 2013), and the Bible itself became a franchise. In the Middle Ages, stained glass windows, the Bible, sermons, and psalms were media used by the Catholic Church to convey the Biblical stories. For example, the spectator experiences the story of

Genesis through a rose glass window, then Exodus through a sermon, followed by Deuteronomy through paintings (Long, 2007, p. 24). The many storylines, worlds, and characters made the Biblical stories suitable for unfolding on multiple platforms in the Middle Ages.

Constructing this opposition will give us new insight into transmedia storytelling as a recent as well as a historical media phenomenon. In suggesting resemblances, I will always remain alert to the unique and very different circumstances in which the texts informed the audience. The four categories based on transmedia characters, narratological, industrial, and aesthetic models incorporated in transmedia storytelling will each discuss the objects that have affiliations with earlier movements, but have radically different means to similar ends. I, however, do not suggest that media use in the medieval Catholic Church is identical to contemporary media culture. The primary function of religious texts was central in everyday life and articulated spirituality, more so than contemporary transmedia stories. However, numerous parallels invite comparison concerning the treatment and function of formal features that transform mass culture (Ndalianis, 2004, p. 22).

As mentioned before, several authors in 2014 historically contextualized the phenomenon transmedia storytelling. Over a decade after Jenkins coined the term different trajectories can be distinguished in the development of the discourse concerning transmedia. In the next section, I provide an overview of the scholars who examine transmedia storytelling in a historical context. I elaborate on these trajectories in the academic discourse of transmedia storytelling, because it defines the necessity and place of my thesis in the academic field.

Trajectories in the Current Transmedia Storytelling Discourse

Conversations about transmedia storytelling often include many other adjacent concepts: "cross media," "multimodality," "multiplatform," "enhanced storytelling," and others (Scolari, 2009, p. 587). According to Carlos Scolari (2009), semantic chaos is not new in digital communication conversations, and with this knowledge, we can develop a more consistent theoretical transmedia storytelling discourse. The conceptual chaos surrounding transmedia storytelling and the popularity in the media industry gave it the predicate of a buzzword. Marie-Laure Ryan and Jan-Noël Thon (2014) argue that terms like this only can be rid of this predicate if scholars examine what "media converge around" (Ryan & Thon, 2014, p. 2). This means that scholars should analyse how these 'new' multimodal narrative structures of transmedia storytelling create different consumers construct narrative worlds. In 2009, Scolari was one of the first scholars who moved beyond the conceptual chaos surrounding transmedia storytelling and contextualized what it converges around.

Recently there is a shift visible in the academic discourse; in 2014, several scholars historically contextualized transmedia storytelling, looking for alternative interpretations of recent and historical phenomena. The scholars meta-reviewed transmedia storytelling using a media-archaeological approach. Matthew Freeman (2014) emphasizes that transmedia storytelling is born out of advertisement, arguing that transmedia, in terms of its participatory or commercial characteristics, can be understood as a notably older phenomenon than is often acknowledged. Paolo Bertetti (2014) looks at the classical typology of the transmedia character, from a perspective that integrates semiotic and narratologic categories. Carlos Scolari and co-authors (2014) look at popular fiction of the last century and make the connection between fan cultures, which extend the fictional worlds of favourite stories. Finally, Marie Laure Ryan (2014) argues that not the media, but the narrative is central in storytelling. Different media converge around a specific story and present different aspects of it. Popular narratives (e.g. *Lord of the Rings* and *Tomb Raider*) migrate from medium to medium in any imaginable order. However, this practice is not unique and can be traced back to the presentation of biblical stories in the Middle Ages (Ryan, 2014, p. 3).

The flourishing interest in historically contextualizing transmedia storytelling emphasizes the importance of media-archaeology to distinguish transhistorical discourses. In the next two sections, I will examine the importance of the media-archaeological approach in my research. In addition to this, Scolari (2014) argues that researching the history of transmedia should start with the transmedia productions before the introduction of the concept and "move backward, looking for transmedia storytelling practices in the past" (Scolari, et al., 2014, p. 119). With this in mind, I use the framework of the Catholic Church to examine the (religious) historical origins of transmedia storytelling. In the next section I elaborate why I especially want to examine the historical context of transmedia storytelling with reference to the medieval Catholic Church.

Relevance of the Topic and Academic Contextualization

As can be seen, several scholars have examined the manifestation of transmedia storytelling in earlier media forms throughout history. They reveal alternative interpretations of the recent and historical phenomenon transmedia storytelling. Several scholars also note a parallel with media use in the medieval Catholic Church to spread the Biblical stories and transmedia storytelling. It is mentioned as a side note by Geoffrey Long (2007) or used to strengthen a media-archaeological argument (Jenkins, 2006a, p. 122; Ryan, 2014, p. 15; Scolari et al., 2014, p. 20; Mittell, 2014, p. 253).

Even though they note the resemblances with the Catholic Church and transmedia storytelling, they do not produce an extensive follow-up on the historical reference. My

thesis contains the 'elaborated sequel' of the resemblances mentioned by scholars; I add to the religious historical context and provide a road map of alternative interpretations of the recent and historical manifestations of transmedia storytelling using the framework of the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church and transmedia storytelling are not ontologically related, but constructing an opposition will provide more insight into both historical and contemporary practices of transmedia storytelling. Therefore, I look at transmedia storytelling not as a product of contemporary media landscape, but more as a concept that moulds historical narratological, industrial, and aesthetics models in a contemporary form. This will also demonstrate how religion as "mythic traces of transcendence, ritualized practices of sacralisation, and orientations in sacred time and space might permeate or animate a cultural field" (Chidester, 2008, p. 84). Herein we can recognize that media incorporate discursive and ritualized practices of religion.

By emphasizing the continuities between the representation of Biblical stories by the Catholic Church and current transmedia stories, I do not claim that they are ontologically related. Transmedia stories are entertainment and do not have the primary function of being central to one's everyday life or articulating spirituality in the way the Biblical stories do.[1] In examining the resemblances between the 'transmedia representation' of Biblical stories by the Catholic Church and contemporary storytelling I will not examine the whole spectrum, but only selected categories concerning character-orientated (because older forms of transmedia are more character-centred), narratological (focused on transmedia production), industrial (focused on transmedia distribution), and aesthetics models (focused on transmedia immersion). These categories provide creative insight into the historical and current business, aesthetics, and the weaving of a narrative across multiple media forms. To guide this alternative approach on contemporary transmedia storytelling I formulated the following main question and four subquestions:

What are the resemblances between the 'transmedia representation' of Biblical stories by the Catholic Church and the multiple modes of media used in practices of transmedia storytelling in the 21st century?

  I.   What are the parallels of contemporary transmedia characters and the first 'transmedia' character, Jesus Christ?
  II. What are the narrative parallels of contemporary transmedia franchise and the Biblical stories created by the Catholic Church?

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[1] However, some scholars will argue that it does. In section *3.3 Canon and Exegesis,* I look at the quasi-religious forms of fandom and the community-building ability of transmedia.

III.   What effects do distribution and exhibition have on transmedia storytelling, e.g. with regard to franchising?

IV.   What role does immersion play in transmedia storytelling, both historically and now?

Methodology: Transhistorical Principles of Transmedia Storytelling

To answer the main question and the subquestions, I perform a series of (small-scale) textual analyses. In these textual analyses, I discuss the interrelated objects of media-use by the medieval Catholic Church and contemporary transmedia storytelling. I do not discuss the whole spectrum of transmedia storytelling, but represent the archive divided in four selected categories. These categories are (I) character-oriented and based on (II) narratological, (III) industrial, and (IV) aesthetic models. I selected these categories, because they ontologically represent a different aspect of transmedia storytelling and therefore provide varied insights into storytelling in the Middle Ages and contemporary transmedia storytelling.

In the textual analysis of several transmedia objects, I follow media-archaeological approaches mentioned by Erikki Huhtamo (1997) and Siegfried Zielinski (2006). The use of media-archaeology enables me to represent selected recurring elements of transmedia storytelling in history and give a clearer grasp of old and new practices. I do not claim a historical continuity of those recurring elements, but represent selected parts of the archive of transmedia storytelling. The thesis is a "systematic description of the discourse-object" (Foucault, p. 140) divided in four categories. I reveal or hide the contradictions about transmedia storytelling being an object of the digital era. In the analyses of interrelated objects in the two timespans (medieval and contemporary), I do not search for a progressive trend in the history of media, but I hope to discover individual variations and qualitative turning points.

In this refusal of the notion of progress, I first follow Zielinski's media-archaeological approach in which he emphasizes the importance of recognizing the crucial moments in history, which he calls "windows" or "cuts". Throughout the history of transmedia storytelling, these "windows" can be recognized in the narratological, industrial, and aesthetic moulds which I demonstrate in the following chapters of my thesis. Zielinski's approach is focussed on finding "the new in the old" (Zwaan, 2014, p. 68). He is looking to deviate, to have heterogeneous examples and probes, to think heterologically and avoid linearity, and to avoid the trap of thinking about the past in the perspective of increasing power. This is also what I aim to represent in my textual analyses; I want to show that media functions with recurring moulds, and not in a progressive way. For example, the spread of Biblical stories in the Middle Ages inspires

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transmedia franchises today, and the neo-classical models that sell the "product of salvation" (Davidson, 1995, p. 120) are related to the current media industry. In constructing the opposition of the medieval Catholic Church and contemporary transmedia storytelling, I identify the resemblance between the two, I do not find it. In the interrelated small-scale textual analyses, I answer the plea of Zielinski by "keeping the concept of media as wide open as possible" (Zielinski, 2006, p. 33).

The examples and objects I use do not have an ontological overlap, but more a discursive overlap. In this discursive overlap, I look at "topos", the recurring elements in media history. With topos you can study the typical and commonplace in media history. These are the phenomena that (re)appear and disappear repeatedly and somehow transcend specific historical context (Huhtamo, 1997). An example of this approach is visible in chapter 3 on transmedia distribution in which the introduction of a 'new' media technology was followed by 'revolutionary' shifts in history. In the Middle Ages, the printing press advanced the spread of reformed pamphlets and books and therefore stimulated the Reformation. In the contemporary media landscape, you can see this in the arrival of peer-to-peer distribution networks, which led to fragmentation in the creative industries.

Media-archaeology as a method has no solid framework. "It is best to conceive the topos as a temporary manifestation of a persisting cultural tradition, linked by numerous threads with other cultural phenomena both from the past and from the cultural context within which the topos has made its appearance" (Huhtamo & Parikka, 2011, p. 41). In *Media archaeology: Approaches, applications, and implications,* Huhtamo and Parikka (2011) attempt to theoretically reorganize media archaeology, but the book confirms the idea that media-archaeology should be regarded as a heterogeneous set of instruments and inspiration for historians of media, rather than as a coherent theory about the development and history of media technologies (Natale, 2012, p. 526). In my thesis, I use media-archaeology to represent the constructed opposition between the medieval Catholic Church and contemporary transmedia storytelling. In each category, I examine a different object of transmedia storytelling with the interrelated historical context on which I elaborate more in the next paragraphs.

The first category is discussed in the first chapter of my thesis. It examines transmedia storytelling on the level of the character, as "older forms of transmedia franchise were constructed on character sharing rather than on the logic of a particular world" (Scolari, et al., 2014, p. 17). In constructing a transmedia story, the characters are key to the engagement of the audience with the story. The manifestations of characters on different media platforms give the audience more details of the character to which they

can relate. In the Middle Ages, active involvement of the audience is visible in the Stations of the Cross, where the audience can literally walk by the passion of the Christ. Also in contemporary transmedia stories, several techniques are used to bring the character 'alive' and integrate him/her into the daily life.

A character in a transmedia story is often closer to the audience than a 'normal' character, because every medium makes the character more 'real' and gives the audience more to which they can relate. This results in transmedia characters who adapt to the cultural context of the audience. Hence, omission or inclusion of a certain race in transmedia narrative is more valued. In the depiction of Jesus Christ, all the races on earth can be distinguished and, in contemporary transmedia storytelling, race can be used as a tool to relate to the cultural context, or render a character's race in a way that is most appealing to the audience. Next to this, the impetus of redemptive sacrifice is a common recurring motif in transmedia narrative. The saviour archetype can make the difference between an ordinary film and an exceptional one. Herein you can see the realm of the character, Jesus Christ, which became over centuries the symbol of sacrifice, duty, betrayal, suffering, and evil against good. In the last section of chapter 1, I briefly discuss the role of the minor characters in transmedia stories. A transmedia story, such as the Bible and several popular narratives (e.g. Lord of the Rings, The Matrix, Harry Potter, and Game of Thrones) depends also a great deal on the minor characters. Especially in the different storylines spread across different media platforms, the narrative of a minor character can be used to contrast or highlight that of the main characters.

The second category (transmedia narrative) is discussed in the second chapter. In this chapter, different aspects of narrative are highlighted. First, I discuss the religious narrative that is visible in several transmedia stories. Furthermore, I elaborate on the many religious themes used in contemporary transmedia and the shift of secularization of society where media is taking over some social functions of the church. In section 2.2. I look more at the technical aspect of constructing a transmedia narrative and the development of the transmedia bible. This is the master document describing the many storylines of a transmedia production; the producers use the Bible as an inspiration in constructing their transmedia story. Because there are many media platforms involved in a transmedia production, it is often also called the 'transmedia franchise'. In section 2.3., the contemporary transmedia franchise will be laid alongside the Catholic Church, functioning as a multidivisional firm with maximum spread of salvation and Biblical stories as main purpose. Traditional franchising has a bad reputation in the media industry, because it often relates to poorly produced sequels. Transmedia franchises, on the other hand, can improve the reputation of franchises while engaging more with the audience

through multiple media platforms. In the last part of chapter 2, I elaborate on transmedia narrative on a micro level. In this section the use of the international language, Latin, is laid alongside the use of artificial languages in transmedia productions as, for example Star Wars, Harry Potter, Game of Thrones, and Lord of the Rings.

In the third category, discussed in the chapter 3, I focus on the distribution of transmedia. I look at Biblical stories and popular narratives as products and the economy logic of institutions, such as media companies and the medieval Catholic Church. I elaborate on the previously unified system of distribution by the medieval Catholic Church in the Middle Ages, which has been affected by the Reformation and the introduction of print. This highlights resemblances with the current fragmentation of creative industries caused by digitation. Also the ritualized practices of canon and exegesis will be discussed, because audiences in the Middle Ages and current fandom show, sometimes, the same 'religiosity' in forming communities around stories. In the distribution of stories, the audience plays an important part, because authority of stories does not come from top-down doctrine, but arises from the effective interaction and negotiation of ideas and meaning between the users and producers of the texts (Lewis, 2005, p. 119).

Transmedia immersion is the last category I examine and this takes place in the chapter 4. In this chapter, the techniques of immersion used by the Catholic Church will be laid alongside the contemporary immersive practices of transmedia storytelling. The visual spectacle used by the Catholic Church to counteract the Reformation is placed next to the "neo-Baroque entertainments" (Ndalanis, 2004, p. 5) with regard to the spectacle in transmedia productions. Environmental storytelling has a rich history in the Catholic Church, using architecture, placing of windows and light to impress the spectators. This form of immersion is likewise visible in theme parks and games, because there is also movement through utilitarian moments and symbolic ones. Especially the Baroque aesthetics in the 16th and 17th century demanded a greater participation by and active role of the spectators. In contemporary transmedia storytelling, *The Matrix* and transmedia ARGs (Alternative Reality Games) represent the notion of baroque being the "theatre of the world" (Ndalianis, 2012, p. 190). These practices of spectacle emerged from historical circumstances; in contemporary media, the spectacle is used to offer the audience an extra dimension they cannot receive freely on the web. In the 16th and 17th century, the baroque was a direct response to the threats the Catholic Church suffered in the Reformation. The baroque was the "sensual seduction" (Jay, 1994, p. 45) of attracting the masses back to the Catholic Church.

In this thesis, I construct an opposition that gives more insight into current and historical practices of transmedia storytelling. Looking at objects, which are not

ontologically related, but related in a discursive way, provides an alternative interpretation in certain similarities and new insights between the two timespans. In the interrelated small-scale textual analyses, transmedia is located in the specific historical, cultural, and technological framework from which it emerges.

1. Transmedia Character

"Older forms of transmedia franchise were constructed on character sharing rather than on the logic of a particular world" (Scolari, et al., 2014, p. 17). In this section, I will look at the resemblances between the representation of Jesus Christ in the Catholic Church and contemporary transmedia characters (or heroes). I take this point of view, as various stories are more developed around characters than 'storyworlds'. In the Catholic Church, Jesus Christ on the cross is often central in the representation of Biblical stories.

A character is not the result of a single text, but becomes a cultural element "that finds its own being in a wider socio-cultural dimension, including transtextual and transmedia changes and intersemiotic translations" (Marrone, 2003, pp. 25-26). The character becomes a living object in the mind of the reader. The transmedia character is a fictional hero whose adventures are told across various media platforms, each one giving more detail on the life of the character (Bertetti, 2014, p. 2345). If we look at the Catholic Church, the 'character' Jesus Christ can be seen as a multiplatform, with audiences engaging with it through various forms (Evans, 2011, p. 32). Jesus Christ is one of the most depicted figures in history; "there are more portraits of Jesus than there are scholar painters" (Witherington, 1995, p. 77). His appearance in the Church is rooted in stained glass windows, psalms, sermons, sculptures, and they all culminate to form his personality. Each representation of Jesus Christ in the Catholic Church assumed that the viewer, listener, reader already knew the character (Jenkins, 2006a, p. 122). The sharing of character is paired with sympathizing and identifying with the character; the more the audience can relate to the character the more devoted they will be.

1.1. Audience Identification with Transmedia Character

The popular hero as an fictional character is "granted a quasi-real status" that transcends his own fictionality (Parody, 2011, p. 60). The appearance of the character circulates in the collective cultural consciousness and the audience can identify with it.

The Catholic Church in the Middle Ages decided to depict the image of Jesus in a way that the spectator could imagine his suffering and the pain.[2] In almost every Catholic

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[2] Depicting the divine personality of Jesus Christ is a controversial topic in the Catholic Church and caused much criticism from Reformers Martin Luther and Calvin. They both saw images in the Church as idolatrous, which acted as a medium for human cognition. Luther countered that he was unable to hear of

Church you can find the passion of the Christ on the walls (Radcliffe, 2015, p. 7). In the *Stations of the Cross*, the spectator can follow Jesus through 14 stations, from the palace of Pontius Pilate in Jerusalem, where he was condemned to death, to the cross and then to his tomb (Ibid., p. 7) (see image 1).

Image 1 – Stations of the Cross (Notre Dame des Champs, Avranches, Manche, Normandie, France)

This series of events are re-enacted in many churches all over the world. The depiction of the Stations of the Cross reminded the believers two things: first, God is everywhere, and second, that God became flesh and blood in his particular being (Ibid., p. 7). These two ideas made the Stations of the Cross one of the most popular devotions of many Christians (Chryssides & Wilkins, 2014, p. 51).

The Stations of the Cross provided interactive involvement by the audience; they could literally walk Jesus's journey and this movement helps the believers to identify with the suffering of Jesus Christ. The Stations of the Cross helped the believers with a spiritual pilgrimage of prayer as well; they could look at the suffering of Jesus and actually feel his pain and sorrow. Jesus's suffering would come alive, not only through the spoken word, but also through rose glass windows, series of paintings or chapels that represent, in chronological order, the various episodes of the crucifixion (Ryan, 2012, p. 14).

Giving the character a "quasi-real status" (Parody, 2011, p. 60) is often used in expansions of the character in transmedia. An example of a character transcending his own fictionality is Frank Underwood from *House of Cards* (2013). In the launch of the newest season, Frank Underwood appeared as a 'real person' in the streetscape and on the social media platform Twitter. Street artists painted (by request of Netflix) the series

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the Passion of Jesus and not form mental images of it, so images could only be used for teaching (Luther, 1958, p. 99). But Calvin stated that images are not in the least inclined to tell the truth because they are the product of the human imagination, a faculty dedicated to dissimulation (Morgan, 2008, p. 106).

campaign image of Frank Underwood on several walls in cities (see image 2). Also in the social media campaign, Frank Underwood is presented as a real person by sending selective private messages to users on Twitter with many followers political influence or a media background (image 3). Also in the personalization algorithm of Netflix, users are informed by Frank Underwoods' choice of movies (image 4).

Image 2 – Street art Frank Underwood Rotterdam
(Source: Twitter)

Image 3 – Personal tweet from Frank Underwood

Image 4 – Frank Underwood entering the personalization of Netflix
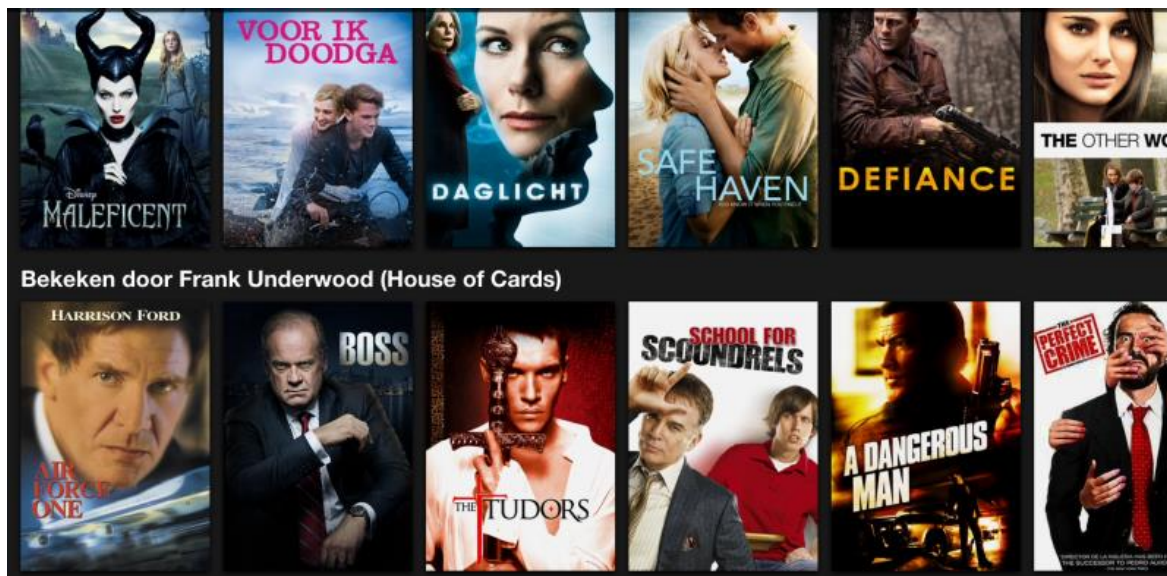(Source: Netflix)

I will not suggest a direct parallel with Jesus Christ and Frank Underwood, as traditionally transmedia storytelling focuses on fictitious characters. However, the need of the audience to identify with the character through various forms of media brings both characters 'alive'. Emphasising the human elements in a story transmits the transmedia

story and gives the spectators more empathy with the character. Placing these two examples next to each other shows the similar techniques of representing a main character in popular narrative, techniques which have been used for centuries in different forms of transmedia.

1.2.   Multiplicity and Race of the Transmedia Character

In *The Revenge of the Origami Unicorn*, Henry Jenkins (2009) explains the seven key principles of transmedia storytelling. One of the key principles is multiplicity versus continuity. Many transmedia franchises, (and also the Catholic Church) seek to construct a strong sense of continuity, which contributes to the appropriation and plausibility of a fictional storyworld. However, multiplicity is also common in transmedia stories. "Multiplicity gives the possibility of alternative versions of the characters or parallel versions of the stories. This provides an "alternative set of rewards for our mastery over the source material" (Jenkins, 2009, p. 3). In his book *Convergence Culture*, Henry Jenkins addresses (2006a) the case of the Indian Spiderman a retelling of Marvel's Spiderman. Peter Parker becomes Pvitr Prabhakar and the comic depicts Spiderman leaping over scooters in Mumbai streets and swinging past the Gateway of India drawn by an Indian comic book artist (Jenkins, 2006a, p. 111).

Multiplicity in biblical stories occurs often in the appearance of Jesus Christ. There is no scholarly agreement about the race of Jesus Christ, as he has been depicted in multitude ways over the centuries. Colin Kidd (2006) reveals the multiplicity in the depiction of the race of Jesus Christ. The representation is influenced by cultural settings (Kidd, 2006, p. 26). Although Christianity often stated "Christ is above race", the depictions in art show all kinds of races, colours and forms, including the Asian (see image 4), black, Aryan and more Mediterranean Jesus. The race of Jesus Christ was also key in some historical movements through time.

Image 4 - Chinese illustration of Jesus Christ (Beijing, 1879)

In Nazi Germany, Jesus Christ was always depicted as an Aryan Jesus. It mattered a great deal to Adolf Hitler that Jesus was not from Semitic stock. In a table talk, he discussed the race of Jesus and developed a theory about the Galilean background and the ethnographical significance. "As Galilee was a colony, the Romans had probably installed Gallic legionaries, and it's certain that Jesus was not a Jew. The Jews, by the way regarded Him as the son of a whore – of a whore and a Roman soldier" (Kidd, 2006, p. 51).

Another example of the importance of race in universal stories is the depiction of Jesus in the *Black Christian National Movement* (started 1967). The leaders believed that it was important for the people to see Jesus as black, because he could then be the "the God of the oppressed". In March 1967, Albert Cleage, one of the leaders installed a Black Madonna holding a black baby Jesus in the church (see image 5) (Ibid, p. 48).

Image 5 – Albert Cleavage on the pulpit with Black Madonna and baby Jesus in background (Glanton Dowdell, 1967)

Changing the colour of Jesus' skin changes the function of the Biblical stories, from an excuse for Nazism to a symbol of the black oppressed citizen. The representations include the assumptions and biases of the authors or designers. The social construction of race is used within and across media to render the characters and storyworlds in particular ways to suit political and social interests (Rish, 2015, p. 3).

The inclusion or omission of colour descriptions and racial categories represent how an author or designer addresses the issue of race within a storyworld. *Racelifting* of a transmedia character often occurs to render a character's race in a way that is appealing to the audience, just as in the representation of Jesus Christ. In some cases, this may involve whitewashing the cast to appeal to a predominately white audience (Rish, 2015, pp. 7-8). For example, in the movie *Prince of Persia*, the Arabic prince is played by Jake Gyllenhaal with tanned skin. Alternatively, the 'chosen' race in the transmedia extension of a novel into a film sometimes does not relate to the assumptions of the reader about the fictional world. *The Hunger Games* had several African American actors play prominent characters in the movie, which this caused much criticism from the fans who read the books and imagined the characters to be white (Garcia & Haddix, 2012).

1.3.   Saviour Archetypes and Transmedia Heroes

A saviour archetype is a transmedia hero, whose role echoes the life of Jesus Christ. In popular media, the impetus of redemptive sacrifice is a common recurring motif, with male heroic individuals, willing sacrificing their own lives so that others might live (Morgan, 2008, p. 91). The messianic archetype according to Evans Smith and Nathan Brown (2008) fulfils a number of very specific criteria as follows:

o   The birth/arrival of messiah is prophesied in advance
o   A messiah figure does not necessarily deny his position, but at times wishes it were not his/her "cross to bear"[3]
o   A messiah resists temptation by an opposing evil force, which encourages the messiah to use his/her power to escape suffering
o   A messiah is often betrayed by someone close to him/her
o   All messianic figures must fulfil one basic duty – to die in order to save the people or humankind in general
(Smith & Brown, 2008, p. 304)

Heroes are never completely enclosed in a single text (Scolari, et al., 2014, p. 16). They circulate in the cultural collective and the adventures are told across different media

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[3] The predestination of the hero is a recurring element in transmedia storytelling. Joseph Campbell (2008 [1949]) argues that the state of predestination reveals the relationship between the biography of the character and the lesson spectators can learn from him. Jesus Christ can be regarded as a man who by dint of austerities and meditation attained wisdom; on the other hand, one may believe that a God descended and took a human form. In the first view, one might literally imitate Jesus, Campbell argues, and in the second, the hero is rather a symbol to be contemplated than an example which literally should be followed. The divine in the son of God should, according to Campbell, be undertaken as a mediation of one's own immanent divinity, not as precise imitation. In Campbell's view, the type of hero reveals the lesson. Should we precisely imitate it or does it reveal our own divinity (Campbell, 2008 [1949], pp. 294-295)?

forms, each one giving more detail about the character (Ibid., p. 16). Examples of modern saviour archetypes in popular culture are James Bond, Harry Potter and Neo (The Matrix). Especially in science fiction films, there are frequently representations of biblical characters, particularly Christ figures (e.g. Neo in The Matrix, Anakin Skywalker in Star Wars, Bruce Wayne in Batman). Moreover, the subtexts of a messianic archetype can make the difference between an ordinary film and an exceptional one (Kozlovic, 2001, p. 1). Entertainment media thrive within the general economy of expenditure and sacrifice. David Morgan (2008) argues: "Big-budget extravaganzas, exorbitance, publicity, and transgressive superstars all participate. However, this sacrificial economy, based on loss, also demands sacrificial victims" (Morgan, 2008, p. 91). In popular narrative the hero always has to deal with themes of sacrifice, duty, betrayal, suffering or evil.

Not only is the saviour archetype used in media productions, but also in politics. For example, during the American election, the Obama campaign transformed the persona of Obama into a saviour archetype with a crafted storyline. "The first African-American president is a symbol for change, youth and liberal values" (Tenderich, 2013, p. 7). Another example of a messianic archetype in the entertainment industry is Harry Potter. Although there is a lot of discussion in the Vatican about the famous boy wizard distorting Christianity in the souls of children, J.K. Rowling states that Christianity was one of her major inspirations. The fight between good and evil and the parallels between Harry Potter and Jesus Christ are intentionally interwoven into the story (Rosenthal, 2005). Neo, the main character in the Matrix is also one of the many examples of the saviour archetype. In the trilogy he is referred to as 'The One' and, in the last Matrix film, Neo must perform the ultimate act of the messianic archetype: he must sacrifice his life for what is left of the human race. The minor character Zypher emphasizes the saviour archetype in Neo, as he betrays him much like the disciple Judas. Minor characters play a large part in the crafting of the storyline and highlighting the main characters. The next section discusses the minor characters in a transmedia story.

1.4. Minor Characters

Transmedia storytelling conveys storylines over multiple platforms, one including the main story and the other dedicated to a minor character. However, the overall theme remains the same (Kalogeras, 2014, p. 21). In the interpretation of minor characters in biblical text, it is not always possible to make a clear and unequivocal distinction between a minor and major character. Shimeon Bar-Efrat (1989) looks at the narrative art in the Bible and particularly at the subsidiary characters who play a part in the network of the interpersonal relationships in both speech and acts, such as when one character conducts a dialogue with another or acts in some way towards another character. He states that

"minor characters play a structural role in literature, paralleling and highlighting the main ones, whether through correspondence or contrast. The positive and negative parallel is not enough to shape the characters, but provides emphasis and colour" (Bar-Efrat, 1989, p. 86).

In the Bible, 2,600 figures are mentioned and they can be divided into major and minor characters. Because of the enormous amount of characters, a minor character in the Bible is distinguished differently than in a contemporary transmedia story. The characterization of a minor character in the Bible means that they are not specifically discussed. The minor characters are also considered the more anonymous followers of Jesus Christ. Also the family of Jesus Christ can be seen as minor characters; they appear twice, but are not specifically discussed. Their description is flat in comparison with the more rounded disciples, who are considered as major characters (Malbon & McKnight, 1994, pp. 82-83). Minor characters are not specifically depicted in the media of the Catholic Church, as they focus more on the major characters, such as Jesus Christ, Mary and the Saints.

In transmedia storytelling, Scolari (2009) identifies four strategies to expand the narrative world. Two strategies are applicable for the expansion of the minor character. First, there are parallel stories, which take place at the same time as the original story, for instance by following the destiny of a minor character, and peripheral stories "that can be considered more or less distant satellites of the macrostory" (Scolari, 2009, p. 598). Parallel stories may evolve and transform into spin-offs. Peripheral stories may also, even though they have a weak relationship to the macrostory.

In the transmedia franchise the characters should avoid showing courses of action that contradict. However, in many character-oriented franchises, when moving from one media to another, profiles and life histories of the characters that contrast with one another (Bertetti, 2014, p. 2347). In the character-oriented franchises the focus is less on the narrative coherence, but on the various media platforms used in transmedia storytelling, which creates an opportunity to profile a minor character. In the next part of the thesis I will elaborate more on the resemblances in narratological concepts and franchising between the Catholic Church and contemporary transmedia storytelling.

2. Transmedia Narrative

Transmedia narrative is often referred to as a synonym of transmedia storytelling, but in this section I will particularly highlight narratological concepts of transmedia storytelling. I will look at religious themes reflected in transmedia, structural resemblances between the transmedia narrative, and franchises both in the Middle Ages and by contemporary media companies.

2.1. Biblical Themes and Transmedia

In the section 1.3. on saviour archetypes, it was mentioned that Jesus Christ is the inspiration for many contemporary heroes in popular culture. The increased presence of religious themes in media can be seen to falsify the idea that secularization is the hallmark of high modernity and that the media are agents of enlightenment. Subsequently, the development can also be interpreted as an increased tendency towards *resacralization* of modern society (Hjarvard, 2008, p. 11). There is a prominent secularization of society visible, and during this historical process, media has taken over the many social functions of the Church. Rituals, worship, mourning, and celebration are all social activities that earlier relied on institutionalized religion, but have now been taken over by the media and transformed into more or less secular activities (Martin-Barbero, 1997, p. 110).

In *Narnia, Lord of the Rings* and *Harry Potter,* magicians, ghosts, elves, unicorns, monsters possessed by both evil and good spirits are vividly alive and inhabit worlds with mortal human beings (Hjarvard, 2008, p. 11). The supernatural appears to be real, especially through transmedia expansions, such as games and theme parks. The supernatural world is coming to us through daily entertainment. "Watching aliens and vampires in television series like The X-files and Buffy the Vampire Slayer and spending an hour or two every day fighting supernatural monsters in computer games with a magic character of your own creation make the world of the unreal a pretty familiar phenomenon" (Ibid., p. 2).

On the other hand, Hollywood is more driven by money than ideology. In 2014 there was a sudden interest in turning biblical stories, such as "Mary, Mother of Christ", "Son of God", "Noah" and "Exodus" into big budget movies, with biblical figures as the heroes on the white screen. This was not because Hollywood had a spiritual epiphany, but more an epiphany financially based (Greenburg, 2014). Religion sells as history has proven. However, when I argue that media has taken over the main social functions of the Church, it has more to do with the community building ability of certain stories (see 3.3. Canon and Exegesis).

2.2. Transmedia Bibles

In a transmedia production, a religious metaphor is used for the development of the transmedia canon. Producers call it the *Transmedia Bible*, the master document with the full exploration and definition of the universe of intellectual property. This universe of intellectual property is the complex franchise of stories, games and environments. The transmedia bible explicates all aspects of the storyscape including any and all documentation related to characters, history and canon, mythology and symbols. This can include biographical sketches, designs, real and artificial histories, maps and anything else that is relevant (Blumenthal & Xu, 2012, p. 4).

The producers call it the transmedia bible, because of the depth and layers that can be recognized in the biblical stories. Society was also an important part of the establishment of the Bible; the Church councils did not create biblical canons, but rather reflected the state of affairs (McDonald, 2006, p. 209). The biblical stories in the Catholic Church are transmedial (through the rose-glass window, the psalms, sermons, and sculptures) with the Bible at the top of the hierarchy of texts and the other media serving as supporting paratexts. This contrasts with contemporary transmedia, which according to Jenkins "each text does what it does best" (Jenkins, 2006a, p. 96); there is no hierarchy between the text and the paratext. Ryan (2014), on the other hand, argues there is a hierarchy in the texts of the transmedia storytelling. Traditional television can be a core text and the transmedia extension serves as paratext (Ryan & Thon, 2014, p. 255). In looking at the parallels between contemporary transmedia and medieval transmedia in the Church, I will consider a hierarchy between the texts. In the Catholic Church each medium has his specific purpose with the Bible clearly privileged above all. This relates to contemporary transmedia production were the transmedia bible presents a large story schema and connects all the elements across media. It is the most important model for the producers to map out the mythological and physical aspects of the world and characters they create (Blumenthal & Xu, 2012, p. 4).

2.3. Media Franchising and Narrative

Transmedia storytelling is the system in which a certain story is conceived from the very beginning as a project that develops over many different media platforms. "Storyworlds become commercial franchises. The purpose of these franchises is to get the public to consume as many different media as possible" (Ryan, 2013). The franchises of transmedia storytelling "envision a unified, serialized, and centrally authored mode of franchising" (Johnson, 2013, p. 31). However, they provide less insight into the "multiplied industrial production" and this results in sequels who are often redundant, clumsy and do not fit anymore in the more coherent, unified aesthetic (Ibid., p. 31). According to Henry Jenkins

(2006a) in the 'perfect' transmedia franchise (such as *The Matrix*) every piece dispersed in the serialized narrative plays a unique integral role (Johnson, 2013, p. 31).

Derek Johnson (2013) argues that the Christian Bible can be seen as an evolving franchise constituted by the exchange of its stories over centuries between different contexts of production, including not just translations of the text, but also religious paintings and icons that reiterated those stories in new ways. They were "most often underwritten by the religious institutions instead of the commercial ones" (Ibid., p. 50). Here Johnson does not take into account that the medieval Catholic Church functioned similarly to a modern multidivisional firm, obtaining monopoly profits by supplying the product of salvation, erecting barriers to entry, and manipulating demands through product innovation (Ekelund, et al., 1996). In the Middle Ages the Church went to considerable lengths to maintain its market dominance. "As a monopolist, the Church had to protect its 'market' against entry by competitive firms." Its product "was surrounded by doctrinal characteristics and conditions that had to be met in order to attain the product" (Ibid., p. 60). The Church had two major threats of punishment: excommunication and sanctions against heresy and witchcraft. These punishments were seen as forms of entry control (Wells, 2012, p. 99).

Also in terms of franchising, the Church can be seen as a vertically integrated monopoly which employed vertical contractual restraints under conditions of fixed proportions. "A soul saved by the downstream monastery equals a soul saved by the upstream Church" (Davidson, 1995, p. 120). Much of the daily activity of the Church was delegated to its divisions (the parish, monastery, or diocese) and the long term strategy was centralized within the College of the Cardinals (Board of Directors) and the Pope (CEO) (Ekelund, et al., 1996). The franchise arrangement was used to control the Cistercian monasteries, which were the dominant retailers in the salvation industry (Davidson, 1995, p. 120). Consistency in the 'religious product' was important, which is why the Catholic Church used legitimate binding contracts (such as sacraments) to control the religious texts.

This controlling of the continuity and the debates about canonicity are also visible in the establishment of the Star Wars archive. George Lucas (the creator of the series) emerged as author, authority, and authorising figure in forming the Star Wars canon (Parody, 2011, p. 104). Although, there are some similarities, media franchising in the "age of convergence" (Jenkins, 2006a, p. 96) means something different than to the Catholic Church in the Middle Ages. The purpose of transmedia franchising is to motivate the public to consume as many different media as possible, and franchising in the Church concerned the expansion of the religious texts and the number of souls saved by the

monasteries. However, the economic logic and system of franchising used to maximize the 'profit' has parallels with the media companies. I will look at two forms of media franchising, the ones based on the current licensing system (protecting the original property) and the ones more focussed on co-creation (using different points of entry into the franchise) (Jenkins, 2006a, p. 107).

Franchising has a bad reputation in the creative industries, as it is mostly more governed by economic logic (maximizing profit) than by artistic vision (as seen in the failures of sequels) (Ibid., p. 107). According to Henry Jenkins, the current licensing system typically generates work that is "redundant" (Ibid. p. 107). This means that no new characters and plot development are allowed. Franchises ask new media to slavish duplicate experience through the old and sloppy contradictions. Collaborative authorship and co-creation are more suitable for the spreadable media landscape; the creative industries are forced to move from an "appointment model" towards an "engagement model" (Jenkins, et al., 2013, p. 33). The "appointment model" concerns content that is created and distributed primarily to attract the attention at a certain time from a predictable audience. "Engagement models" see the audience as an active agent by creating alternative forms of market value (Jenkins, et al., 2013, p. 116). In his book, *Convergence Culture* (2006a), Henry Jenkins describes *The Matrix* (1999) as the ultimate transmedia franchise in the age of convergence. The Wachowski brothers saw the process of collaborative authorship and co-creation as a vehicle to expanding their potential global market (Ibid., p. 111). No franchise has ever made such demands on its consumers (Ibid., p. 96). The players of the game depend on the film, and the knowledge of the backstory of the character. The materials are so numerous and the story of the Matrix so rich that nobody has a complete overview of the storyworld (Ryan, 2013).

In the medieval Catholic Church, you see the licensing system and the Church trying to protect the monopolist position against competitive parties, such as the Reformers. On the other hand, you see the fragmented storyworld of the transmedia franchise as well. The biblical narrative is so fragmented into different forms of media in the Church that reading the paratexts is not possible without engaging the core text (the Bible) as a believer. In the section 3 on Transmedia Distribution of this thesis, I elaborate more on franchising and particularly look at the failure of institutions with the introduction of new media technologies, such as print and digitisation. The next section focuses on the transmedia narrative on the micro level with the use of language as code in transmedia productions and in the Catholic Church.

2.4. Language as "Code"

The use of Latin in the Catholic Church has a particular function which has resemblances with the use of language in popular transmedia narratives. In the Middle Ages, Latin developed as an international language for communication between the member states of the Holy Roman Empire and its allies (Thorley, 1998). Until 1962, the position of the Catholic Church was that the Bible was best read in Latin. This provided the Church a monopolist position on the religious texts until the Reformation. Latin at some point transformed into an arbitrary symbolic 'code' that the common believers could not read or speak.

If we look at popular narratives, such as *Star Wars*, *Lord of the Rings* and *Harry Potter*, similarities in the use of language can be distinguished. In *Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien created 'Elvish Latin', an arbitrary symbolic 'code' similar to the medieval Latin (Manning & Planetarium, 2003, p. 16) . Also the spells in Harry Potter have incantations that originate in Latin[4]. Moreover, the language, 'Galactic Basic' in Star Wars includes multiple Latin letters[5]. The use of 'Latin-type' languages resembles the use of medieval Latin; they are used in ceremonies and to communicate 'internationally' among elves, wizards and galactic residents.

3. Transmedia Distribution

The transmedia franchise is dependent on various forms of distribution. In this part of the thesis I will elaborate on the previously unified system of distribution by the Catholic Church in the Middle Ages and during the Reformation. The distribution and changes in the Reformation shows parallels with the current fragmentation of the creative industries.

3.1. Religious Texts and Transmedia Stories as "Products"

The Catholic Church used neo-classical models to distribute the "product of salvation"[6] (Davidson, 1995, p. 120). The product the Church sells is defined by Clifford Geertz (1973) as a "cultural system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations by men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence" (Geertz, 1973, p. 90).

In supplying a religious product, theories of monopoly, rent seeking and industrial organization were applied. The leaders of the medieval Catholic Church were no different

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[4] http://harrypotter.wikia.com/wiki/Category:Spells_with_Incantations_of_Latin_Origin
[5] http://starwars.wikia.com/wiki/Galactic_Basic_Standard
[6] Because salvation is a credence good, (the quality of the good is uncertain prior to and after its purchase), quality had to be authenticated (or warranted) by the Church. The quality of the assurance of salvation was upheld by the manufacturer- the Church- through its teachings and doctrine, facilitating a monopoly for the monasteries (Davidson, 1995, p. 122).

from entrepreneurs in their attempt to become monopolistic suppliers of goods and services by establishing public policies that gave them a comparative advantage over competitors (Ekelund Jr, et al., 1989). Douglas Davidson (1995) argues that the monastery was a "profit-maximizing downstream monopoly franchise of the institutional medieval Church" (Davidson, 1995, p. 120). The medieval monastery held a central place in local economies. It was often both the solitary large scale producer of agricultural goods and a franchise monopolist in the sale of the assurance of eternal salvation in a society plagued by disease and poverty. The monastery also provided services of education, health care and relief of poverty (Ibid., p. 119). When salvation was sold by a "competitive party" (Ekelund Jr, et al., 1989, p. 60), such as the Reformers, the Church used threats and punishment. This included excommunication and sanctions against heresy and witchcraft and were used to control the monopoly on the religious texts. The social function of the Catholic Church differs from the 'entertainment' function of transmedia, but as mentioned before, several scholars argue that the social functions of the Catholic Church have been replaced by mass media (Hjarvard, 2008: Martin-Barbero, 1997). The religious texts spread by the Church have partly been replaced by media content.

The unique affordances of digital media showed that traditional media find it hard to participate and adapt their product. Media nowadays can be compared to a "virus" (Douglas, 1994, p. 9). In our interconnected contemporary culture, media spreads through the datasphere the same way viruses spread through the body or the community. Transmedia storytelling can be the answer in connecting the elements and providing artistic and economic opportunities to create a new media form that relates stories, games, and environments but also requires a new design approach that can knit these elements together (Blumenthal & Xu, 2012, p. 1). The transmedia products are often emerging and show new visibility in the networked culture (Jenkins, et al., 2013, p. 33).

In transmedia, you can see the reconfiguration of older industry logic (such as licensing and franchising), as practiced by the Church in the Middle Ages. Contemporary creative industries had to depart from this logic due to the fact that the audience demanded engagement through new platforms. The content of cinema, music and television nowadays can be distributed by a range of digital technologies (Bolin, 2007, p. 204). The products within the media landscape have moved from an "appointment model" towards an "engagement model", which is more suited to a spreadable media landscape (Jenkins, et al., 2013, p. 33). In the next section I will look at key cultural shifts accompanied with the introduction of new technologies, such as the commercial printer in the Middle Ages and digitisation in the 20th century.

3.2. Failing of Institutions: Reformation and Fragmentation in the Creative Industries

In terms of franchising, the Catholic Church was a vertically integrated monopoly which employed vertical contractual restraints under conditions of fixed proportions. A soul saved by the downstream monastery equals a soul saved by the upstream Church. Furthermore, expanding the religion and maintaining its status in the local monopoly lay in the interest of the Church. Until the Reformation, led by Martin Luther, the Catholic Church had exclusive territory with a general absence of the alternative religious organizations (Davidson, 1995, p. 121). The Reformation was a triumph of literacy and the new printing press. The distribution of pamphlets and books were key to the spreading of the Reformed view on Christian faith. The changing religious atmosphere corresponded with the commerce and production processes of publishing at that time (Horsfield, 2008, p. 117). Luther strengthened his attacks on Rome by depicting the good church against the bad church. From 1517, religious (propaganda) pamphlets flooded Germany and much of Europe. In 1530, over 10,000 publications were known, with a total of ten million copies (Edwards, 2004, p. 9).

The spreadable material dramatically affected the monopoly of the Catholic Church. The Church argued that the Bible was best read in Latin, but the Reformation provided the believers a Bible in their own language. The Bible could now be interpreted by common people and the Catholic Church lost the monopolist position on the religious texts. The Reformation breaking down the unified distribution system of the Church is comparable to the fragmentation of creative industries. Since 1970, it has been possible to spread music and films on peer-to-peer networks. Since then, the film and music industry have been working hard to secure the assets in order to be able to control the content flows and thereby secure the revenue streams (Bolin, 2007, p. 238). Considering the break-down of old industry logic, there is a resemblance between the introduction of the print and the peer-to-peer networks. The popularity of the platforms is due to the social logic and the cultural practices they enable, because "there is nothing more human than sharing stories" (Jenkins, et al., 2013, pp. 2-3).

Transmedia can be seen as the reconfiguration of the older industry practices, such as licensing and franchising. The distribution of content among the audience is, according to Jenkins (2013), key to the success of transmedia production. "If it doesn't spread, it's dead", is the tagline of his book *Spreadable Media,* in which he emphasizes the importance of "sharing" possibilities of media content (Jenkins, 2013). The challenge of the media companies is to recognize the new energies of digital media motivating the transmedia strategies, which is moving towards an engagement model. In the beginning of the 16th

century, the Catholic Church used an engagement model using the 'spectacle' of the Baroque to counteract the Reformation. In the section on *Transmedia Immersion*, I will look closely at the developments in that time period, which resemble the use of immersive games, theme parks and virtual reality to counteract the 'outlawed' material on the web.

3.3. Canon and Exegesis

Sometimes a story becomes so popular that it creates a "snowball-effect" (Ryan, 2013). Examples are the canon of Star Wars, Lord of the Rings and Harry Potter, which transcended linguistic and national boundaries. The story becomes culturally prominent, and spontaneously generates a variety of exegesis, such as sequels, fan fictions (fanon) and transmedia adaptations.

Exegetical stories are the interpretations of the Bible, which explore and explain the text. Fans interpret contemporary source texts through fan fiction, which functions just as the exegese does to sustain the community and enable members of the community to join the communal conversation (Barenblat, 2014). Some scholars argue that media companies are taking over the social functions of the Church and see structural resemblances with fans and believers (Hjarvard, 2008). An example is the Star Trek community, which shows parallels with religious communities. First the fans were exclusively male, and then later females appeared. Fans married fans, and raised their children to be fans as well. Nowadays, there are third, even fourth generations attending the conventions (Jindra, 1994, p. 35). As in religious communities, it is difficult to explain the zeal of science fiction to an outsider if you have never experience it. Frederick Pohl (1984) argues that the "cellar Christians" in pagan Rome are the closest analogy to (science fiction) fans: "small furtive groups of believers, meeting in secret, shunned or even attacked by outsiders, or as fans came to call them the 'mudanes'" (Pohl, 1984, p. 47).

Pointing out the resemblance between fans and believers can be problematic, as established religion and the potentially blasphemous fandom suggests that the two are incompatible (Doss, 1999, pp. 73-74). Approaching fans as believers can turn them into pathologised "cultists", which implies an unreasonable attachment with their object (Jenkins, 2013, pp. 9-49). Henry Jenkins included in his book *Fans, Bloggers, and Gamers*, a discussion he had with Matt Hill about religion and religiosity in fandom. Jenkins argues that the language of religion is visible in fandom, but is often framed as a hyperbole. He reproaches the ethnographers to have a very "literalizing interpretation" (Jenkins, 2006b, p. 21). Hill, on the other hand, makes a distinction between "religion" as an organized social group and "religiosity" as an impulse. He argues that there is a culturally contextualized individual search for some kind of authenticity in fandom (Ibid., p. 20).

If you look at the "snowball-effect" created in popular narrative, the social function of fandom has parallels with believers and religious communities. However, there are many differences in the way religion is practiced and how fans behave. The divinity and the exclusiveness of religion is something that is not comparable with an average fan (but maybe a zealous one). Furthermore, in fan fiction, the fans create "alternate universes" which collide with the program material. With the exegesis of the Bible, the text is holy and cannot be changed into "alternate universes" (Ibid., p. 57).

3.4. Relationship between Audience and Institutions

In transmedia, you can see the reconfiguration of older industry practices (licensing and franchising). In this "engagement model", the audience is central (Jenkins, et al., 2013, p. 33). This is comparable to the Middle Ages, when the printing press provided more power to the audience. For a long time the audience was considered a passive recipient, but with the introduction of media technologies which stimulated story sharing, the audience became an active agent in the process of communicating and constructing meaning to the message. Media is a mental interaction between the person producing the message, the media itself, and what the person receiving the message does with it (Lewis, 2005, p. 307). The power of the message arises in this cultural complex interaction. There is also the power of the producers of the messages, but this power is not absolute. Threats of excommunication and sanctions didn't prevent the 'competitive' messages of the Reformers. Even as the media companies trying to secure the revenue streams to prevent that the digital content spread freely over the web.

The authority of religion and media texts arises in the effective interaction and negotiation of ideas and meaning between the producers and users of texts (Ibid., p. 119). The printing press used in the Reformation is an ancestor of contemporary online (sharing) platforms, which enables the social and cultural practice of sharing stories. This key shift between the audience and the institutions led to the first "epoch of masses" (Maravall, 1986, p. 13) with the Baroque period. In the next part of the thesis, I will discuss how the Catholic Church used spectacle to counteract the Reformers compared to how media companies restore their power by shifting from an "appointment model" to an "engagement model" to better suit the spreadable media landscape (Jenkins, et al., 2013, p. 33).

4. Transmedia Immersion

"Because of our desire to experience immersion, we focus our attention on the developing world and we use our intelligence to reinforce rather than question the reality of the experience" (Murray, 1997, p. 110).

In this section, I will look at the experience of immersion incorporated in transmedia storytelling. I consider immersion a metaphorical term derived from the "physical experience of being submerged into water" (Ibid., p. 98). It is a pleasant experience where the spectator is transported to a new dimension and extra alertness of the senses arises.[7] "Transmedia is significantly driven by the aesthetic and pleasure of immersion" (Parody, 2011, p. 29). It is the imaginative relationship that the spectator has with the textual world, through which the fictional world acquires the presence of an autonomous, language-independent reality populated with live human beings (Ryan, 2001, p. 92).w

The house of God, the Church, is the place where the fictional and real world fuse and where immersion takes place. The Catholic Church used several immersive techniques to evoke admiration over the spectators. In this section I will partially look at Baroque from the 17th century implied in art or music of extravagance, impetuousness, and virtuosity, concerned with stirring the affections and senses of the individual (Ndalianis, 2004, p. 7).

These techniques of 'spectacle' are also applied in contemporary media culture and Angela Ndalanis calls them the "neo-Baroque entertainments". This is a product of conglomerate entertainment industries, multimedia interests, and spectacle that is often reliant upon computer technology (Ibid., p. 5). For example, Harry Potter, in which the narrative universe was occupied in a novel, but expanded to the immersive entertainment of movies, theme parks, games and interactive reading experiences. Characterizes of immersion (and Baroque) is that the individual deconstruct of the story is not surprising. The immersive representation of a story is self-explanatory and therefore easily interpreted as promoting "a passive attitude towards the reader" (Ryan, 2001, p. 11).

4.1. Environmental Storytelling in the Catholic Church and Transmedia Worlds

In environmental storytelling, special narratives, architecture and lighting are used to tell a story. The Catholic Church has a rich history in using architecture to impress and immerse spectators. After the legitimization of Christianity in 313 by the emperor

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[7] Baptist often refers to the Greek word Baptizo, as "to immerse" or "to dip". John 3:23 tell us that John the Baptist baptized where there was a lot of water. He did this so he could dip people down into the water. In short "baptism" is immersion (Brom, 2004).

Constantine, the Roman Empire began to build churches, flooded with light, filled with beautiful tapestries, vessels, sculptures and decorations. This resulted in an enormous increase of worshippers (Miles, 1985, p. 45). The Constantinian buildings stood for vastness in size with a simple plan for the exterior and an elaborate interior, designed for maximal visual engagement of the visitors.

Colour and light in the Church brought the architecture alive. In the Gothic period, the structure of the windows developed from simple openings to immensely rich and decorative sculptural designs. The stained glass windows added a dimension of colour to the light and therefore became a medium for the figurative and narrative art (Swaan, 1984). The architects of the Church understood precisely how to arrange the windows to create the crepuscular ray most effectively. The rays emphasized the Godly presence in the Church. An example is the Milan Cathedral where the light touches the pulpit. Also, in the famous Saint Peter's Basilica in Vatican City, the crepuscular rays are very impressive and are seen at certain times each day (see image 9 & 10).
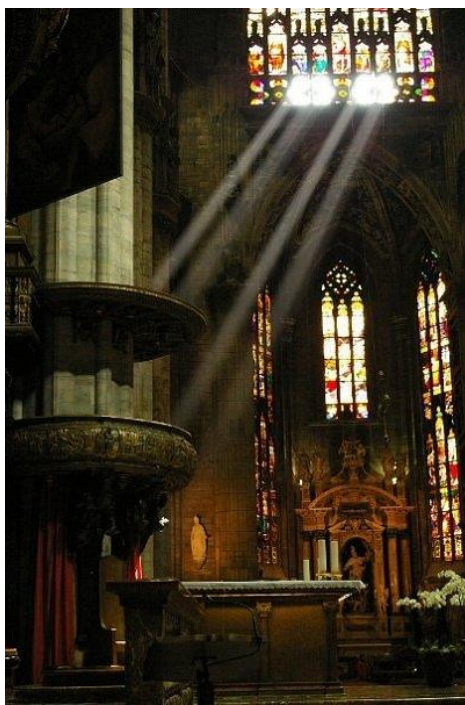

Image 9 - Milan's Cathedral where the light touches the pulpit   *Image 10 – The crepuscular rays in Saint Peter's Basilica in Vatican City*

The trend towards stronger light in the Gothic Buildings displeased the conservative souls of the Protestant reformers. The imbalance between the engagement of the visual and the auditory sense of the worshippers became a focus of both parties. The Catholic Church and the Protestant Reformers responded differently to the problem that worshippers were not expected or trained to use their ears and discursive intellect to understand the liturgy, but only eyes and emotion (Miles, 1985, p. 99).

In the architecture of the Catholic Church, you see that symbolic and functional spaces are fused. In theme parks, there is also movement through utilitarian moments and symbolic ones. The moviegoer is further removed from the film in an interactive sense, but in the theme park, there is a continuous opportunity for immersion. The environment and texts merge in a "complete form" (Lukas, 2008). Not only is environmental storytelling performed in the 'real' world, it is also present in game design with the ability to shape worlds and sculpt spaces. However, game designers do not simply tell stories. Jenkins (2004) argues that the game design documents (describing the design of a game) have historically been more interested in issues of design level than on plot or character (Jenkins, 2004, p. 121).

Especially Baroque architecture demonstrates environmental storytelling. In fact, the theme parks can be seen as the "survival and revival of the Baroque capitols" (Moore, 1998, p. 473). In the next section, I will look closely at the style which expressed the triumph of the Catholic Church as never before. This style inspired Walt Disney when he built the Magic Kingdom; it had to take the Baroque form if people were "to believe" (Ibid., p. 473).

4.2. Baroque Aesthetics

Baroque was the first culture using art and music extravagance to produce mass effects. The Baroque style begun in the late 16th century and, by the 17th century, it was an epoch of the masses, undoubtedly the first in modern history (Maravall, 1986, p. 13). The style demanded a greater participation and active role from the spectators. Distinct from the serenity sought by the Renaissance, Baroque set out to stir and impress in a direct and immediate way. The Catholic Church effectively used the style to influence the passions (Ibid., pp. 74-75). Baroque is also called the "culture of spectacle" (Cubitt, 1998, p. 75). In fact, to understand the history of digital aesthetics, you first have the look at Baroque. Themes in Baroque are often related to terrors of absolute power, and morbid fascination with decay and morality (Ibid., p. 75). Baroque created dreamscapes and called the viewer to enter a fictive space, changing with their movements and inviting their co-authorship (Ibid., p. 75). In Baroque the representations of action require physical movement through the space.

Examples in contemporary culture are transmedia ARGs (Alternate Reality Game), which present modern articulations of the baroque concept of "theatre of the world". *The Dark Knight* take the seriality of television to new limits by extending the medium boundary of the franchise into the everyday environment. (Ndalianis, 2012, p. 190). In this transmedial play that the ultimate story agency, and decentralized authorship can be realized. Thus the VUP (viewer/user/player) becomes the true producer of the Artwork

(Dinehart, 2008). In the ARG The Dark Knight, involving the Dent rally, participants were also invited to leave a mark of the Batman mythology on their real environment. They could for example make a video of the cheerleading team of their school yelling for Harvey Dent, cover someone's cubicle with Harvey Dent posters, write and perform "Take Back Gotham" song and Make up a "Dent Dance" routine, etcetera. Events could be filmed and covered by fake journalists and uploaded onto the Gotham Cable news site and presented as "real" news updates covering events (Ndalianis, 2012, p. 191).

Angela Ndalanis (2003) points out the example of the sculpture of *David* (Gian Lorenzo Bernini, 1623-1624) with his slingshot and stone to kill Goliath. Different narrative perspectives are revealed depending on the spatial relationship of the viewer and the sculpture. David's facial expression of concentration can only be experienced on the left side and the stone can only be seen if the spectator moves to the frontal view of the sculpture (Ndalianis, 2004, pp. 154-155). In comparison, the kinetically charged scenes in *The Matrix* (1999) also invited a spatial dimension of sight, accompanied by shifting viewpoints. The speed of the images and the sounds that animated the images, invited the eyes of the spectator to scan the screen restlessly, searching for significant details that might disappear before the eyes had captured it (Ibid., p. 155). The genesis of the "culture of spectacle", known as Baroque, was not a coincidence. The culture derived from an historical response to the Protestant Reformation.

4.3.   Functions of Baroque Aesthetics in the Counter Reformation

Baroque culture emerged from historical circumstances. Baroque is not a question of religion, but more a question of the Catholic Church wanting to retain absolute monarchical power (Maravall, 1986, p. 13). As noted before, the Baroque spaces of 'persuasion' produced mass effects for the first time in modern history. The Catholic Church used the heady, vertiginous style known as Baroque to fight against the Protestant Reformation (Lister, et al., 2009, p. 121). The Church architecture, palaces, paintings, sculptures and theatre was all a response to the Reformation. "The underlying factor of the Baroque texts was to combat Protestantism and scientific revolution" (Ndalianis, 2004, p. 188). In images of the Immaculate Conception in many Baroque paintings you see the Virgin Mary trampling a snake. The Virgin signified the victory over sin, and especially over the Protestantism (see image 11) (Impelluso, 2004, p. 270).

Image 11 - Immaculate Conception (Rubens, 1628-1629)

The Baroque texts were a direct response to the threats the Church suffered. Martin Jay (1994) calls the counteracting of the Reformation "sensual seduction" (Jay, 1994, p. 45) by attracting the masses with spectacle.

The central characteristics of Baroque are the lack of respect for the limits of the frame. The stories are not contained in a single structure, but expand their narratives and universes into further sequels and serials. By comparison, you can witness these "grand illusions" (Ndalianis, 2004, p. 25) in theme park attractions and in special-effects of films which blur the fictional and the real world. The traditional distribution of entertainment based on the "appointment model" is affected by digitization (as discussed in the section 3.2. Failing of institutions: Reformation and fragmentation in the creative industries). That is why the companies are engaging more in multimedia conglomerate operations, such as transmedia storytelling. The active engagement of the audience is dominant and horizontal integration of media, became a successful strategy of the revitalized film industry. In this instance, the resemblance to the Baroque era is obvious, as it too blurred fictional spaces and reality to invoke wonder on the part of the spectators. Producing mass effects is also attested in the character of theatre. The following section discusses the techniques and technology of theatre in counteracting the Reformation and also how media companies currently distinguish their product by using immersive techniques.

4.4. Jesuit Drama and Immersive Techniques of Imax

The rise of theatre in the Middle Ages came from an unexpected source: the Catholic Church. In the Middle Ages the Church used theatre to revitalize the congregations across Europe, minimizing the effects of the Protestant revolt. As we saw in the previous chapters, the Church launched a powerful propaganda campaign against the Reformation using all the powers of persuasion at its disposal. Despite the continuing distrust of the immorality of theatre (actors were, for example, excommunicated), the Church could not easily afford to reject the persuasive powers of the stage (Norman, 2001).

In the beginning of the 16th century, the 'Society of Jesus' (the Jesuit order) became a large part of the rebuilding the authority of the Church. Theatre was cultivated as a medium for the dissemination of the doctrine of the Church. Favourite subjects included the biblical histories, the lives of the saints and martyrs, the afterlife and incidents in the life of Jesus Christ. Also pagan mythology, ancient history and contemporary events were used, but all reinterpreted into the doctrine of the Catholic Church (Kuiper, 2012, p. 160). The religious images praised in the paintings and sculptures came alive in the re-enactment of the 'Jesuit Drama'. The power of declamation, gesture, and machinery were used to create images more appealing to a larger public (Norman, 2001). The Jesuit plays became increasingly elaborate and incorporated the newest techniques of the European theatre (Kuiper, 2012, p. 161). Jesuits attempted to simulate the spectators senses through various devices: trap doors for ghostly apparitions, vanishing acts, flying machines, and sound effects such as thunder and wind were common practice on their stages. "In one play, a puppet stuffed with material that looked like blood, flesh and bones was torn to pieces by actual wild dogs" (Wetmore, 2010, p. 40).

By comparison, using the newest techniques to simulate the spectators senses is common in contemporary transmedia productions. An example is the collaboration of HBO and IMAX on several episodes of the TV series *Game of Thrones*, which brought it to the cinema. In the beginning of 2015, the final episodes of season four were remastered for the IMAX format, making them the first TV episodes showcased in IMAX (Webster, 2015). IMAX states on their website that the crystal clear images, the theatre's geometry and the powerful digital audio "create a unique environment that will make audiences feel as if they are in the movie" (IMAX, 2015). The newest techniques of IMAX make the spectator feel fully immersed by the experience.

The practices found in Jesuit theatre, which used the most modern techniques to provide an immersive story, still echos in the use of technology in transmedia productions. Not only is the image a powerful aspect of immersion, but the use of the newest techniques to simulate the stories in a convincing way. Immersion is highly dependent on

the image, but by stimulating more senses than the eye, a fully immersive experience can be achieved.

Conclusion

This thesis explored a selected scope of interrelated historical and current objects of transmedia storytelling. In constructing an opposition between media use in the medieval Catholic Church and contemporary transmedia storytelling, I construct resemblances that give more insight into the phenomena. The series of interrelated small-scale textual analyses are divided in four categories, based on narratological, industrial, and aesthetic models of transmedia storytelling.

In every chapter, I discussed several transmedia objects related to the particular category and, with the media-archaeological approach, I showed the interrelated discursive overlap. I constructed an opposition of transmedia in the Catholic Church and contemporary popular narrative, which does not ontologically overlap, but the comparison provides more insight into the historical and recent phenomena. I present an alternative interpretation of historical and recent transmedia as a practice that does not originate in the digital era. Weaving a story into different forms of media does not represent the increasing power and a progressive trend in techniques of storytelling. Per category, I conclude with how the interrelated objects demonstrate insight into the correlation of the historical and current practices of transmedia storytelling. The spread of stories in the medieval Catholic Church and contemporary transmedia is not a "mirror double" (Ndalianis, 2004, p. 22). Therefore, I just show the resemblances and do not claim that they have the same unique circumstances in which the stories are constructed.

With regard to transmedia character, I argued that the depiction of Jesus Christ in the medieval Catholic Church is interrelated with the depiction of heroes in popular culture. The character is often depicted in an interactive way to bring the character closer to the audience and encourage the spectator to identify himself with the character. In a transmedia story, the hero often transcends the medium and acquires a "quasi-real status" (Parody, 2011, p. 60). In popular narrative, the echo of Jesus Christ is also visible in the Messianic Archetypes in, for example, Harry Potter and Neo (The Matrix). Over time, the way in which producers/religious leaders regard race and multiplicity of the transmedia hero or Jesus Christ is also interrelated. Throughout history, the social construction of race is used to depict a popular hero or Jesus Christ in a certain way. The omission or inclusion of skin colour often reveals the underlying political and social interests of the authors and designers.

In the category transmedia narrative, I argued how religious and supernatural themes are often used in popular culture (e.g. Harry Potter, Game of Thrones, and Lord of the Rings). Some argue that these themes are used to falsify religious ideas; however, some scholars also argue the opposite. Media can be seen as the "resacralization" of

society (Hjarvard, 2008, p. 11); in this way, media takes over several social functions of the Catholic Church. In positing an overlap in the social function of the stories, I note that Biblical stories often articulate more spirituality and are more central in everyday life, but placing the two objects next to each other shows that contemporary media incorporates the same discursive and ritualized practices of religion (e.g. fandom). In transmedia production, the master document used to show the layers and different storylines is called the 'transmedia bible'. This bible obviously interrelates to the actual Bible and the way in which it is constructed. The Bible and the way in which, inter alia, the Catholic Church, spread the Biblical stories have inspired transmedia franchises, because no story has ever created such a worldwide community. This is directly related to what contemporary media franchise aims for – a storyworld becomes a commercial franchise. "The purpose of these franchises is to get the public to consume as many different media as possible" (Ryan, 2013). On a micro-level of the narrative, the Catholic Church and a transmedia franchise also relate, because they both tend to use a 'code' language (e.g. Latin and Latin-like languages) in creating communities.

The transmedia representations of Biblical stories by the Catholic Church and storytelling in big media productions relate to each other through the neo-classical models of commercial firms, obtaining monopoly on their products, and protecting their assets by sanctions. During the Reformation, reformers like Martin Luther effectively used a new technology, namely the printing press. Through the printing press, it was possible to rapidly spread the views of the Reformers through pamphlets and books, which dramatically affected the doctrine of the Catholic Church. Considering the breakdown of old industry logic, there is a resemblance between the introduction of the printing press and the introduction of peer-to-peer networks. The current fragmentation in creative industries caused by the introduction of digital technologies relates to breaking down the monopoly of the medieval Catholic Church on religious texts, using the 'new' technology of the printing press.

This relates to transmedia storytelling, because storytelling through different media forms can be seen as the reconfiguration of older forms of media franchising and licensing. Transmedia storytelling relates closely to the "engagement model" (Jenkins, 2013, p. 33) and focuses on the audience. Active audience engagement is a successful strategy to revitalize the creative industry, but it closely relates to the Catholic Church counteracting the Reformation through baroque aesthetics. Immersive aspects of contemporary transmedia can be seen in IMAX, theme parks, and games. These environmental forms of storytelling interrelate to the cathedral in which the fictional and real world merge; the church is the perfect example of 'immersing' audience. In counteracting the Reformation,

the Church used the aesthetics of Baroque and Jesuit drama to evoke wonder and passion over the spectators and rebuild the doctrine of the church. In both timespans, blurring fictional and real spaces was used to revitalize an industry or to restore the authority of the Church. This way, back then and now, blurring fictional and real spaces through the spectacle of Baroque was used to invoke mass effects.

Finally, I want to critically reflect on my chosen method, thus, two aspects of my thesis have to be addressed. First, the interrelated small-scale textual analyses reconnects current ideas with the past and I obviously study the historical objects with knowledge of the present, this can imply, in an unintended way, the linear and teleological representation of the past. Therefore, I used the media-archaeological approach to make a description of selected examples of transmedia storytelling, not in terms of progression or increasing power, but as a road map with arbitrary examples that do not logically evolve, but connect, start, and disappear in a surprising and seemingly random way. Secondly, the resemblances between storytelling in the Catholic Church and contemporary transmedia storytelling should not be regarded as findings, but more as constructed relations. Also, assumptions about conscious and collective ways of storytelling (by institutions and creative industries) can be too deterministic. In further empirical research, each category should be examined more on an individual level, looking at transhistorical ideas projected on transmedia. Also, the role of the audience can be explored in greater depth. In this thesis, I mainly focused on the institutions and the texts of transmedia storytelling, and not on audiences. In further research, the role of the audience in transmedia storytelling can be explored.

Every time a new media phenomenon is coined, a media scholar must question the 'newness' of the concept. In this thesis, I constructed an opposition of the Catholic Church and contemporary transmedia storytelling to gain more insight into how current and historical forms of storytelling are interrelated. Constructing this opposition presents an alternative interpretation of historical and recent phenomena. To put contemporary transmedia storytelling in a frame with storytelling in the Catholic Church shows the recurring elements in media history. In the four categories, I argued that the representation of Biblical stories by the Catholic Church relates to the multiple modes of media used in contemporary transmedia. Weaving a story into the different forms of media is not related to a specific era or digital media, but transmedia storytelling can be distinguished in current and historical phenomena. Biblical stories inspired transmedia franchises, because they represent the ability to create worldwide communities. The more layers in the story, the more media are involved in constructing the story, the more people will 'believe' the story and the more (economic) value the story will create. We can

recognize that media incorporate the discursive and ritualized practices of religion. Constructing the opposition of contemporary transmedia and storytelling in the Catholic Church, the institution that inspired many franchises, shows certain discursive overlap of transmedia in historical and recent times. These similarities can be conceived as interrelated objects, but they are not the same. Framing historical and recent objects of transmedia in four categories gives new insights into the way we should perceive new media phenomena. This means that every time a new media phenomenon is introduced, aiming for mass effects or ultimate engagement of the audience, we need to be aware of this phenomenon being a 'representation' of earlier forms of media. The new is represented in the old and vice versa, because the strategy of expanding a narrative into other media is as old as media themselves.

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