13 The manifestations of game characters in a media mix strategy

Joleen Blom

Media-crossing characters dominate contemporary transmedia practices. Defined as quasi-persons within a social assemblage that motivates the reader to endow them with a form of personhood (Frow 2014; 2018, x), these characters span the media gamut from novels to television series and comics to games. They shape a transmedia ecology whose complex relations and structures challenge scholars from Western Europe and the USA (the “West”), as well as from Japan, where franchises distribute these characters across as many media as possible, following a strategy known as the *media mix* (Steinberg 2012).

One of the academic discourses that discusses transmedia texts as identified by Eder (2015) emerges from recent studies on the structure and production of transmedia works known as transmedia storytelling (Jenkins 2006), transmedia practice, or transmedia world-building (Klastrup and Tosca 2004; Wolf 2012). This largely Western discourse focuses on consistency between fictional worlds, primarily via stories, especially characters, and iconography (Harvey 2014), and it is only beginning to engage with the scholarship on these issues that has been conducted in Japan since the late 1980s.¹ This discourse tends to reevaluate the identity and narrative continuity of a character as a requirement for stories (Brooker 2012; Denson 2011; Geraghty 2017; Pearson 2019; Rosendo 2016; Tosca and Klastrup 2019; Uricchio and Pearson 1991). As such, it is based on two assumptions: First, that characters are foremost elements of a diegetic world (Eder, Jannidis, and Schneider 2010; Margolin 1983; 1986); and second, that as quasi-persons (Frow 2014), it is a prerequisite for characters to have a consistent identity analogous to human persons.

This chapter diverges from these assumptions by moving beyond the Westernized discourse of transmedia storytelling, looking instead at popular characters whose coherence of identity becomes discontinuous when they appear in a variety of media within a media mix strategy, especially when it comes to the unstable relation between games and narrative media such as manga or anime. The Pokémon franchise’s Pikachu, for instance, does not represent the same character in all the media in which it appears. In the *Pokémon* anime TV series (1997–), its identity is that of the Pokémon

of trainer Ash Ketchum, while in other cases, the character functions as the mascot for the Nintendo Company or represents one of the many Pokémon creatures the player can catch and train in *Pokémon* games like *Pokémon Sword and Shield* (2019).

In Japan's historical development of media convergence, such types of *media mix* represent a popular commercial strategy aimed at dispersing content across a variety of media to stimulate their consumption. Marc Steinberg's *The Anime Media Mix* (2012) created an expanding awareness about Japan's media practices as part of the current global media ecology. According to Steinberg (2012, 84), the character is the focus of the media mix, whose proliferation across media allows these media to connect and communicate. The point of departure is not any striving for consistency. Rather, character proliferation is the node that combines transmedia and crossmedia practices. Characters become autonomous from any particular story, and their appearances across media do not have to be coherent in terms of narrative continuity. Instead, characters continually reappear across media platforms akin to the life of game characters existing in a continuous loop of dying and respawning after their initial death (Azuma 2007; Kascuk 2016).

The proliferation of the character seems to stand in stark contrast to the ideal of consistency on the Western side of the discourse, but both transmedia practices from the West and from Japan face a similar challenge when characters appear in digital games. The challenge is caused by the structural differences between games and media with narrative affinities, like comics, novels, or animation (Aarseth 2006). Despite the fact that games can and do represent worlds and characters, game characters have multiple functions at the same time. They can be at once the representation of the players inside the game world, a fictional entity of the game world's story, ludic game pieces, and proprietary symbols of a larger franchise (Aarseth 2012; Aldred 2014; Klevjer 2006; Schröter and Thon 2014; Vella 2014, 2015). It would be easy to generalize digital games in terms of how they communicate characters; however, each game can vary to a great extent from other games in how they present characters. For example, *Thomas Was Alone* (2012) and *Overwatch* (2016) use different means to invoke characters; the former depends primarily on an extradiegetic narrator, whereas the latter uses visual design techniques to tell the player that the characters they see on screen are person-like entities.

This chapter utilizes the position of game characters inside the media mix strategy in order to explore the challenge digital games pose to contemporary transmedia practices and structures when a media mix strategy attempts to converge games with various narrative media. It addresses the following questions:

1. What is the relation between transmedia characters and characters in the media mix?

2. What do game characters contribute to a media mix, and how do they influence the distribution of the game character in other media?
3. How do game characters affect the identity of the character in the media mix?

I will first provide a theoretical foundation for the relation between characters in the media mix and transmedia characters, then use a case study of the *Persona 5* franchise to assess the challenges game characters bring to a media mix, and finally conclude how game characters affect the identity of the character when characters are distributed across multiple media.

Transmedia characters

The primary difference between transmedia storytelling and a media mix is that the former focuses on narrative continuity between stories as they are told via various media, whereas a media mix concentrates on the distribution of characters without the need for any coherence between their appearances. In this section, I discuss the theoretical basis of transmedia characters before turning to their counterparts in the media mix.

Inspired by Kinder's (1991) term of transmedia intertextuality, Jenkins (2006) popularized transmedia storytelling as a technique to tell stories across multiple media platforms that each contribute something new to a (fictional) world. This is not to say that these worlds can only be created via stories, but according to Klastrop and Tosca (2004) and Wolf (2012), stories are the dominant method of creating these worlds. When creating new fictional worlds, producers tend to use so-called bibles, or world databases (Harvey 2015; Rosendo 2015), to preserve the narrative thread, which ensures the coherence of the world as it is constructed across multiple media platforms. These practices are not limited to stories; the bibles can also come in the form of character profiles, art, sound, references, combat explanations, and more in order to facilitate the communication between different teams as the world is being developed (Francis 2019).

These practices resonate with the process of canonization. Backe (2015) explains that during the construction of a canon, many different "invisible hands" attempt to establish a set of works as normative and fixed, which happens on a micro level by individuals and on a macro level by institutions. The creation of a world bible is primarily enforced on a macro level where institutions attempt to create consistency in the fictional world by attributing to that bible an almost sacred meaning and where the institution attains a position that becomes "associated with unquestionable authority and the totality of knowledge on a subject, outside which only heresy remains" (Backe 2015, 6).

Transmedia characters appear in different works across multiple media platforms, but they are subject to the same desire for coherence and consistency. Their main issue is their transtextual identity because the various

manifestations of a character in multiple works create incoherence and inconsistency between the character's appearances. Over the years, characters such as Batman, Superman, Buffy, Lara Croft, Sherlock Holmes, Harry Potter, or Bella Swan have appeared repeatedly across a wide range of media. This multiplicity of manifestations creates diverse and competing identities with different continuities; sometimes the characters appear in different franchises; at other times, the competing manifestations only make sense in different timelines or parallel universes.

Characters appearing in multiverses, or standalone issues in comics, and films are far from being the exception in the everyday business of contemporary transmedia practice. The audience watching *Into the Spiderverse* (2019) will likely not wonder if Spider-Man character Miles Morales will appear in the current Spider-Man films starring Tom Holland as Peter Parker. Yet theories about transmedia characters like these assume that a character must be the same individual between stories in which it appears (Rosendo 2016). Wilde describes the position of the transmedia character in "Western" theories as follows: "Transmedia character theories in the narrower sense clearly prefer the theoretical option that a 'character' must first and foremost be thought of as a coherent, contextualized entity (although always presented *incomplete*), which is presumed to exist within a diegetic world" (2019, 8, original emphasis).

These conventional theories of characters derive mostly from the field of literary studies, where they are presumed to exist in a diegetic world constructed via stories (Bal 1979; Eder et al. 2010; Jannidis 2012; Margolin 1983; Reicher 2010). According to Wilde (2019), strategies that theorists adopt to provide a theoretical explanation of transtextual identity tend to construct the character as a semiotic object belonging to a transmedial storyworld (Thon 2015) that consists of multiple works instead of a single narrative work, or they conceptualize the character as an intersubjective communicative construct (Eder 2008; 2010). Other strategies to tackle the issue of a coherent identity tend to define a "core" to the character that provides a framework to determine the cohesion between each character manifestation (Brooker 2012; Pearson 2019; Uricchio and Pearson 1991). However, these kinds of strategies tend to create hierarchy between character manifestations; if one identity of a character's manifestation does not cohere on enough points with the established core, then that manifestation is automatically lower in the hierarchy and thus less of that character.

Within this Western discourse, only few theorists advocate the dispersion of the character identity in terms of a constellation; once inconsistencies in continuity occur, the manifestations are perceived as different characters with different identities. For example, Denson (2011) differentiates between a series character and a serial figure, whereas Bertetti (2014) presents an extensive typology of character identities when the character travels between works; the typology distinguishes between character manifestations over a single course of events and multiple courses of events.

Characters in the media mix

As Wilde (2019) suggests, the contingency of a character's identity is commonplace in Japan, where the character functions akin to a character instance, or a character role that changes depending on the work in which it appears. It is only fairly recently that Japanese theory about characters is trickling into the West. Early works by Napier (2001), Allison (2006), and Lamarre (2009) discuss characters in the media mix, but they do not clearly address the media mix. It was not until Steinberg (2012) that the media mix, and the role of characters within it, took a prominent spot in the discussion about contemporary transmedia practices.

In a media mix strategy, Steinberg explains, the character is a “a device that simultaneously allows audiovisual media and objects to connect and forces their proliferation” (2012, 84). He contributes two main attributes to the discussion of characters: First, the character is mobile; it transfers from one medium to the next. Second, the character allows for communication between different media and modalities. The character functions as a network of different nodes, where each node—that is, each of the character's manifestations—connects to its other manifestations. As Steinberg also states, the media mix in Japan has its own historical development alongside the term media convergence in the West (2012, viii). Among the most prevalent works are those by Ōtsuka (1989, 2010), Itō (2005, 2011), and Azuma (2007, 2009). Ōtsuka (1989, 2010) is an early authority who examines a narrative-oriented media mix from the 1980s. In this media mix, the role of the character is one that allows readers to attain a *grand narrative*, the single totality of all individual narratives of the world accumulated. Readers obtain this grand narrative by gathering information about the world, following the multiple manifestations of the character(s) appearing in individual narratives.

Responding to Ōtsuka's concept of the grand narrative, Azuma (2009) argues that the media mix trend of the early 2000s shifted from being narrative-oriented to being character-oriented. Azuma describes the consumers of the character-oriented media mix as *otaku*, (male) consumers obsessed with aspects of popular culture who do not attempt to obtain any grand narrative but only absorb smaller narratives. They consume the character itself without the goal of gaining a larger understanding of the world to which it is connected. The character exists separated from its world in a multiplicity of manifestations, only to be consumed by *otaku* as the primary goal of its existence. Itō's revolutionary book *Tetsuka izu deddo*² (2005, 2011) further changes perspectives on the media mix. Itō uses the concept of the symbolic body (*kigōshintai*), described by Tezuka—who is commonly known as the father of manga—to differentiate between the *kyara* and the *kyarakutā* (character) in the character-oriented media mix. The *kyara* is the symbolic body, that is, the visual representation of a body but not yet a character (Itō 2005, 116). Using Ōtsuka's idea that the character has to be akin

to a real person (Itō 2005, 130), the *kyarakutā* is what Itō considers to be a *dramatis persona* (*tōjō jinbutsu*) that gives the impression that it is a human-like figure and therefore mortal, whereas a *kyara* is not (Itō 2005, 120).

Unfortunately, most of the works from Japan about characters remain untranslated to this day. Azuma (2007), for example, contradicts Itō's distinction between the *kyara* and the *kyarakutā* specifically on the point of the death of characters, proposing instead that the character has overcome death as it lives multiple lives. He connects the ongoing reappearances of the character across media platforms to the life of game characters that tend to exist in a continuous loop of dying and respawning after their initial death.³ However, Saitō (2014) objects to Azuma's idea of the character overcoming death. Instead, he proposes that a character can transfer from one work to another but that its life cannot be reproduced. Saitō considers it an essential element to the character that every time the character transfers to another work, it becomes a different character. This element he calls "*tensō kanō/fukusei fukanō*" (Saitō 2014, 109, original emphasis), the possibility to transfer and the impossibility of reproduction. The *kyara*, on the other hand, can be reproduced, but not transferred, due to their extradiegetic existence. Considering *kyara* phantoms that reside in a network of plurality, Saitō concludes that "even if we try to transfer a *kyara* from one work to another, each time we transfer a *kyara*, it will just multiply, and as a result, the act of transferring a *kyara* is just reproducing the same *kyara*" (2014, 110, my translation). *Kyara* do not become different characters when they move from one work to another, but instead the *kyara* operates in a network in which the same symbolic body is constantly repeated in each work, while none of these bodies are characters at all. Saitō calls the *kyara*'s impossibility to transfer as a character "*fukusei kanō/tensō fukanō*" (2014, 109, original emphasis), the possibility of reproduction and the impossibility to transfer.

In his translated discussion of Itō's notion of the *kyara*, Wilde (2019) explains that Itō perceives the entity to be "pre-narrative" that exists outside of a narrative context, and outside of a diegetic world. According to Wilde, although in the West the serial figure—a character with multiple identities—is perceived as the result of inconsistent character manifestations, the current debate could profit from the Japanese concept of the *kyara*. *Kyara* are not bound to a "default mode" of a diegetic incarnation and "can accordingly be seen as 'mediated performers' or 'virtual celebrities' [...]. Fictitious actors that can take on any *role* (usually, but not always likewise, fictional) attributed to them" (Wilde 2019, 13, original emphasis).

The problem with games and narrative media

Game characters have been discussed primarily in terms of the differences between the avatar—as the locus of agency or the representation of the player—and the character, which were often used as interchangeable terms particularly in the early years of game studies (Aarseth 1997; Bartle 1996;

Bayliss 2007; Calleja 2011; Newman 2002; Klevjer 2006; Tosca 2003). Later, the dual identity between the player and the character became a topic of discussion, where the character is considered to be an inhabitant of a game world while simultaneously embodying the player as its locus of agency (Tronstad 2008; Vella 2014, 2015). Following from this, the general consensus seems to be that characters have multiple functions at the same time. Depending on the genre, these functions range from the representation of the player to ludic pieces as well as to fictional beings in a narrative world (Egenfeldt-Nielsen et al. 2008; Linderöth 2005; Schröter and Thon 2014). However, even within this discussion, there is a lack of engagement with game characters that players do not control as a player-character. An exception is Jørgensen's (2010) work about supporting characters to provide a coherent narrative experience in games. However, when characters are addressed as textual beings with a life on their own, they are discussed in terms of the story or narrative that the game supposedly has to have.

With a few exceptions, there seems to be a relative lack of engagement with games and game characters despite their visible presence in contemporary transmedia practices. Games seem to be relatively left out of the debate, although they do participate in media mixes. According to Picard and Pelletier-Gagnon (2015), Japanese games (*gēmu* in Japanese) are not bound to any essence that defines their "Japaneseness" but are subject to a market that develops and fluctuates under the influences of macro cultures (institutions and industrial structures) and micro cultures (player communities, fans of popular culture, etc.) in a technological environment developed globally. *Gēmu* develop in a media ecology characterized by commercial strategies, in particular the media mix (Picard and Pelletier-Gagnon 2015, 3).

A few Western scholars argue that games and narrative media have an unstable relation when they are involved in a trans- or crossmedia strategy. For example, Aarseth states that "narrative affinities and affordances shared by books and films are not shared by games" (2006, 207). He uses Cawelti's (1976) distinction between two levels of popular fiction: (1) the level of cultural convention where characters, stereotypes, themes, and environments are located; and, (2) the level of structure where a series of events happen. According to Aarseth, the story is told in the latter, but games only contain the first without affording the latter.

Aarseth's argument against games as a storytelling medium resides inside the Western context that accentuates the coherence of stories. This discussion of coherence is also present in Aldred's (2012, 101) work about the connection between game characters and film characters. She argues that game characters in a crossmedia production are forced to be doubles for their filmic counterparts and therefore function more in terms of aesthetic contemplation than as the locus of agency for players. In a later work, Aldred adds that game characters in crossmedia productions function simultaneously as "interactive representatives of the players in the game world, fictional entities that serve to advance the story of the game world, and the

proprietary symbols of the larger game franchise they belong to” (2014, 355). She explains that these kinds of characters lack the affordances of player modification in order to enable their translation across multiple media platforms and merchandise (Aldred 2014, 359). In other words, game characters in a crossmedia production have to be structurally regulated to resonate with their counterparts in media with narrative affinities because any modification to the character that games can do structurally causes turmoil in the effort toward coherence in the character’s identity.

Reflecting on the place of Japanese games inside a media mix, Steinberg (2015) argues that games are central. The 1980s *Madara* franchise illustrates this centrality. Here, the manga mimicked the visual aesthetics of digital games and in turn enabled crossmedia development. This resonates with Aarseth’s (2006) argument that crossmedia transfers only happen on the level of cultural convention. Games in this particular case are used as additional works to stimulate the consumption of the *Madara* manga media mix (Steinberg 2015, 47). However, games have become increasingly common as the primary medium around which the rest of a media mix is built, recent examples of such media mix strategies being *Danganronpa: Trigger Happy Havoc* (2010), *Persona 5* (2016), *Pokémon Sun and Moon* (2016), *Final Fantasy XV* (2016), or *Nier: Automata* (2017), to name just a few.

Within these games, characters continuously switch back and forth between different segments. Each segment declares that the player expects something different from the characters, which could be exploration, battle, or narrative development, or something else. To use Lamarre’s (2018) term, game characters are in a constant state of switching between codes where we expect something different from them within each segment. These segments function as games within the overall game, consisting of their own mechanics, rules, and goals that contribute to the game’s larger structural process so that the player can reach the game’s endstate. The sum of the different segments provides the player with a plurality of possibilities that do not only affect the overall progress of the game but also provide the player creative agency to influence game characters in the process toward the endstate. For example, in *Fire Emblem: Three Houses* (2019), the player has to choose a house at the start of the game: Golden Deer, Blue Lion, or Black Eagles. The choice determines which characters the player will initially develop, recruit, and, as the game’s plot progresses, kill. The game is divided into different modes, each with its own goals and rules, but all contributing to the characters’ development. The battle mode gives the characters experience points in battles; during the school class mode, the player will teach the characters new skills or develop already attained skills; in the courtyard, the player-character can walk around completing quests for these characters; and the game’s various simulation modes allow the player to have characters bond with each other as they cook, dine, and have tea parties together. Each segment develops the characters in a specific way so that they not only become stronger as pawns in

the battle mode, but it also allows the player to influence the outcome of their connection to each other.

It is therefore relevant to discuss the contribution of games in the debate about the coherence of character identity in contemporary media practices. Games structurally differ from media with a stronger affinity to narrative. As a result, game characters have to adhere to their narrative counterparts, but a lack of scholarly engagement exists about those cases where games are the first platform on which a particular character identity manifests itself. In the next section, I will analyze *Persona 5* to explore the influence of game characters when they appear in other media inside a media mix strategy, and I will provide a preliminary conclusion about how they affect the transtextual identity of the character.

Characters in *Persona 5*

After waiting for ten years, fans of the *Shin Megami Tensei: Persona* videogame franchise were rewarded for their patience: Developer Atlus finally released the next game installment of the series, *Persona 5*, in September 2016. As was custom in the previous game installments, the player takes control over the game's silent teenage protagonist, whose mission is to rid the world of those corrupted adults who deprive others of their much-needed freedom. Together with his friends, Joker, the protagonist, creates a vigilante group called *Kaitōdan*, with whom he roams the palaces of the shadow world to steal the hearts from corrupted individuals.

Persona 5 is more than a game; it is a media mix strategy with the game as its focal point. The game has been adapted into a manga serialization (see Murasaki 2017 for the first volume) and an anime⁴ television series (2018–2019). The characters also appear in a rhythm game, *Persona 5: Dancing in Starlight* (2018), in the dungeon crawler game *Persona Q2: New Cinema Labyrinth* (2018), and Joker appears in the crossover fighting game *Super Smash Bros. Ultimate* (2018). In October 2019, Atlus released an expanded version of the original game, called *Persona 5 Royal* (2019), that includes added content such as new dungeons, new activities, and new characters. The characters are also sold as merchandise.

In the *Persona 5* game, the player directs Joker and his group of friends through a variety of segments: In the dungeon exploration, the player moves Joker through the palaces where they plan to steal the hearts of their enemies, while trying to perform actions of stealth to avoid detection. Once they engage an enemy, the characters enter a battle segment in which players can command the characters to attack, avoid, defend, and more in order to win and return to the dungeon exploration. Any won battle provides the characters experience points, money, and sometimes new *personae*, creatures the Joker can use in battle. Outside of the dungeons, the player engages with Joker's everyday school life, and they can modify the character's attributes (called *social stats*) in terms of numerical value by participating in school

classes, working part-time jobs, and hanging out with his friends. These attributes characterize Joker in five different aspects: guts, knowledge, charm, kindness, and proficiency. Once the player manages to increase the numerical value of the protagonist's charm aspect from one to two, the characterization changes semantically from "existent" to "head-turning." The player cannot change the attributes any other way, nor can they lower them. They only increase in one direction, but the player can determine how far the attributes rise—until they reach their maximum. All these segments contribute to the overall process to smooth the way to the game's endstate.

The main events that take place in the game progress in a fixed sequence and do not differ per gameplay; they will always take place in the same order. The player has no influence over what will happen and how. For example, Joker's classmate Ann Takamaki will always follow Joker, his friend Ryūji, and cat mascot Morgana inside Kamoshida's palace, where she will be captured by their teacher Kamoshida. When Joker and Ryūji enter Kamoshida's hideout, they find Ann and Kamoshida. Kamoshida speaks down to her, telling her that her best friend's suicide attempt was Ann's fault because Ann had refused Kamoshida's sexual advances. Ann stands up to him and awakens her inner *persona*. The player will then enter a battle segment. The player has to win this battle; although the player could potentially lose the battle against the enemy, this will only lead to a game over screen so that one has to try the battle again if one wants to progress the game. After the battle, Ann joins the Joker's group of *Kaitōdan*. The same goes for all the other characters the player will recruit: Morgana, Yusuke, Makoto, Futaba, Haru, and Goro will all join the *Kaitōdan*, regardless of how the player performs in the game.

Persona 5 consists of a macro structure that connects fixed major events in a sequence (Backe 2012, 254) over which the player has little to no influence, and of a micro structure, several smaller segments that allow the player to modify the characters. In the macro structure, the characters function as fictional beings with their own inner life and motivations, whereas the segments in the micro structure present the characters as ludic pieces that the player cultivates on a structural level to smooth the process to the game's endstate. This gives the impression that there is a strict distinction between the identity of the characters as quasi-persons in the game's macro structure and as ludic pieces in the game's micro structure. However, there is a particular segment in *Persona 5* in which the character as a quasi-person and as a ludic piece converge, which I call the *system of affection* (SA).

Persona 5's system of affection

The SA is a ludic process inherently procedural in nature in which the player creates relationships of love and friendship between characters. The relationships are embedded in structural systematic game design, which players affect by performing sets of actions. Kelly (2015, 47) refers to the

simulation of love in *Dragon Age II* (2011) as a system of courtship, but also as a system in which the game characters are integrated and bound to the game and its rules so that they only have to execute a certain strategy in order to successfully woo a nonplayable character.

In *Persona 5*, the SA is presented in the so-called *confidant* segments of the game; over the course of the game's main events, the player has opportunities to have Joker establish several relationships of friendship and/or love with characters, whom the game calls *confidants*. These include all the characters with whom Joker roams the palaces, but also characters he meets in his daily life, such as classmate Yuuki Mishima, *shōgi*⁵, player Hifumi Togo, or his landlord Sojiro Sakura. As ludic game pieces, the player just needs to execute the right strategy to successfully develop these relationships. The player executes this strategy by having Joker give the confidants gifts they like and by choosing the correct dialogue option in order to raise the confidant's affection. The degree of affection is presented via a tier-rank with the maximum level of ten. Each rank gives the player certain benefits that help reaching the game's endstate. For example, reaching the second rank with Ann allows her to perform a follow-up attack in the battle segments, while reaching rank nine provides a chance that she saves Joker from a fatal attack. When the player has reached a character's tenth rank, they have "maxed out" the relationship with that character. This means that the relationship will not develop any further during the game. While possible, it is incredibly difficult to "max out" each confidant's relationship over the course of a single gameplay. It is much more likely that players need to start playing the game again, for which they can import the data from a previous gameplay to max out all the confidant relationships.

The events that unfold in the SA differ per *confidant*, but they always concern the personal issues the character faces. After a relationship is maxed out, the confidants will confront their issues. The segments with Ann revolve around Ann trying to come to terms with her friend Shiho's attempted suicide. As the relationship progresses, Ann opens up to Joker, informing him about Shiho's recovery as well as confiding in him how she changed as a person. Before "maxing out" the relationship, the player can decide to have her as a friend to Joker or have them become lovers. While the events over the course of the relationship development are fixed sequences, the player has agency over whether they pursue these relationships at all, and how far they will bring the relationship. The player can stop leveling up the ranks at any time over the course of the game.⁶ Another choice the player has concerns the nature of the relationship; in the case of female characters, the player can choose for the relationship to become romantic or one of friendship. Due to the heteronormative nature of the SA in this game, the nature of relationships with male characters is always one of friendship. Regardless, the relationship segments are not required to play and reach the game's endstate; they only provide additional benefits.

The SA provides the player with agency that allows them to choose the extent to which characters develop as quasi-persons, while they can simultaneously develop these characters as ludic pieces to support the progress of the game. Because the player has this agency in the game, they are partially involved in the characterization of the character. Developments such as Ann Takamaki having resolved her concerns about her friend's attempted suicide, or having entered a relationship of romance with Joker, depend on the actions of each player. This kind of agency is not present in the other media version of *Persona 5*. In the next section, I will therefore look at how two examples in *Persona 5*'s media mix strategy engage with the SA of the game: the *Persona 5* manga and the *Persona 5 Comic Anthology*.

The system of affection in the *Persona 5* media mix strategy

The *Persona 5* manga (Murasaki 2017) is an adaptation that translates the game into comic book format. The manga is drawn by *mangaka*⁷ Hisato Murasaki, but the cover of each volume contains the words *gensaku*⁸ followed by the Atlus logo. This implies that this serial release is officially recognized as an adaptation by the game's intellectual property owner (IP) Atlus. At this moment, the manga consists of four volumes, all of which I have analyzed to see if they contain traces or references to the game's SA.

The manga presents a close adaptation of the game's macro structure with little variation to the fixed events. For example, as in the game, Ann Takamaki follows Ryūji, Morgana, and Joker into Kamoshida's palace and is captured. In the manga, Ryūji and Joker are held down to the ground by enemies to prevent them from rescuing Ann, an action that does not occur in the game. Aside from small differences like these, Ann does stand up to her teacher and awakens her inner *persona*. That said, the battle segment of the game is replaced by a boss battle between Ann, Ryūji, Morgana, Joker, and Kamoshida, which in the game takes place after Ann has officially joined the *Kaitōdan*. Battles such as those against the palace's boss will happen in the game regardless of whether the player intends to fight them; however, the translation of the battle to comics format occurs mostly on the level of convention. On a structural level, the manga does not implement the actions the player could have undertaken during the battle segments.

No volume of the *Persona 5*'s manga adaptation acknowledges the existence of the source work's system of affection. I cannot find a trace of Joker developing relationships with the *confidants* beyond what the game's macro structure presents—it omits even entire scripted sequences of the events that happen during the SA segments. For example, after the boss battle with Kamoshida, Ann convinces Ryūji, Morgana, and Joker that she should join their team so that she can fight against corrupted individuals like Kamoshida. When they accept her offer, she is introduced as a *confidant*. This entire sequence is skipped in the manga. The transition to a new chapter where

the team celebrates their victory suggests instead that she has become part of the *Kaitōdan*.

The *Persona 5 Comic Anthology* is a series of short stories in comic book format written and drawn by multiple artists. I managed to obtain two volumes, volume one and two, on which I base my analysis (DNA Media Comics 2017a; 2017b). Although the Atlus logo is absent from the cover, the publisher, DNA Media Comics, has received the copyright license to use the *Persona 5* characters for their manga, which is stated on the last page of each volume. According to Tosca and Nakamura (2019), character proliferation in a media mix strategy happens via the selling of copyright licenses to other creators, who can then use the franchise's characters to create their own works within that strategy, such as manga or anime, but also games and mobile phone applications. The *Persona 5* media mix strategy operates exactly on these principles; although the manga volumes by DNA Media Comics are not recognized by Atlus as official adaptations, DNA Media Comics has required Atlus's official authorization to use the *Persona 5*'s characters for their own works, making these volumes part of the *Persona 5* media mix strategy.

The content of the manga anthology consists of parody and pastiche stories about the game, and it is presented in either of the two following comics formats:

- The *yonkoma*; four-panel comics with the intention to provoke laughter. The last panel usually presents the punchline of the joke. They come in a set of eight pages (one page contains two *yonkoma*) written by an individual author.
- Short stories; fixed sequences of events that range between eight to twelve pages. Each story is written by a different author.

All of the short stories present “what if” scenarios, and not a single story imitates the events of the game. For both male and female characters, the SA is addressed in terms of background explorations, in which stories present additional events about the relationships between Joker and the *confidants*. For the female characters, the relationship explorations tend to be of a romantic nature, although the game allows the relationship to be one of friendship. For example, the story “Na mo shiranu kafetomo”⁹ by KyūZIP (2017) in the anthology's first volume tells about the encounter between medical doctor Tae Takemi and Goro Akechi in café Leblanc, where Joker lives. Tae, in a moment of doubt about her relation to Joker, interrogates Goro about Joker's favorite food, places he likes to go, and things he likes. Tae is happy to hear she is closer to Joker than Goro. At the end of the story, she decides to text Joker to invite him over to her clinic. Although this event does not occur in the game, it does correspond to the scripted events during the SA segments between Joker and Tae Takemi, where she regularly texts him, asking him to come over to her clinic.

In the rest of the comics, including the *yonkoma*, the SA is addressed in a humorous light, specifically to make fun of the possibility that in the game Joker can date nine female characters at the same time, and the requirements for dating all of them simultaneously. In the short stories, poking fun at this possibility comes in passing. For instance, in “Morugana kagekiha”¹⁰ by Tamura Mutō (2017), Morgana expresses his desire to date Ann. This is problematic, however, since Morgana is a talking anthropomorphic cat and can only date her when he returns to his human form. In a single panel, Joker thinks about Morgana’s lack of realization about how much money dating would cost and all the skills Morgana would need: that he would need the courage of a lion, a charm level that has to be extremely high, kindness like that of a female goddess, extreme knowledge, and high skills in magic. This text is shown over a flashback of the multiple dates Joker has had with the female *confidant* characters. Both the visual flashback and the Joker’s written thoughts are references to the SA system. In order for Joker to engage with the SA of some of these confidants, he does indeed need to have a high level of these attributes. To raise the rank of Tae Takemi, for example, Joker must have level four “charismatic” of the charm attribute—which is the second highest level for an attribute and requires quite some time and in-game training to obtain. Although the joke about the possibility to date all nine women simultaneously only occurs in passing in the short stories, in the *yonkoma* it tends to be the punchline. In “Saigo no kotoba”¹¹ by Kinoko Mori (2017), Joker’s infidelity is discovered by his female teammates, Ann, Makoto, Haru, and Futaba. When Ann tells him that he is the worst for dating all four of them, Joker denies it and delivers the punchline: He had been dating nine women at the same time, not four.

In short, any translation of the SA into the *Persona 5* manga adaptation seems to be absent, as the manga only adapts the fixed events in the game’s macro structure. However, the *Persona 5 Comic Anthology* does refer to the SA system, but every translation of this system remains on the level of convention; the jokes and “what-if” background stories do acknowledge the existence of the system, but they do not incorporate it. Following Aarseth’s (2006) conclusion about the friction between games and media with narrative affinity, the structure that games have influences what narrative media can and cannot do. In the final section, I will therefore focus on how game characters affect the identity of the character in the media mix.

The identities of the characters

In a media mix strategy, the contingency of a character’s identity is common; the character does not have to have a coherent fixed identity. At first glance, the proliferation of the characters in the Atlus media mix of *Persona 5* seems to be following just that contingency. The variety of media that deliver *Persona 5*, such as the official adaptation from game to manga, suggests that Atlus just wants to distribute the franchise over as many media as possible.

However, a close reading of the official manga adaptation reveals that the SA segments of the game that structurally merge the characters as quasi-persons and as ludic pieces is not adapted—its existence is not even hinted at.

This is not to say that Atlus does not acknowledge their game's system of affection at all. The *Persona 5 Comic Anthology*'s official use of the *Persona 5* characters suggests that Atlus is relatively comfortable with the exploration of the characters' relationships in peripheral nonludic media that have legally obtained copyright licenses. However, I have to stress that the acknowledgment only occurs on the condition that the relationships correspond to the relationships represented by the game. The anthology shows a "what-if" story about the relationship between Joker and Tae Takemi, but it does not show a "what-if" story of a romantic relationship between Joker and Goro Akechi. To provide a counterexample, the *dōjinshi*¹² *Pelsona 5 unofficial fanbook: Koko ni ai ga aru akashi o: Joker X Akechi* (Banyu 2017a) and *Perusona 5 unofficial fanbook: Futari de aruita ano hi no hoshizora: Joker X Gori Akechi* (Banyu 2017b)¹³ have not received any official license, but—as the titles suggest—depict a queer reading of the relationship between Joker and Goro Akechi. Besides the fact that these *dōjinshi* recognize, on the level of convention, the game's SA, they add another layer to the relationship and make it explicitly romantic and sexual.

The paradox is that a media mix strategy with a game at its center in which players can influence the character's development has to take the role of the player into consideration. The role of the player causes friction between the game and crossmedia distributions. Atlus might not want to tinker with the player's own experience from a commercial point of view because it could devalue that experience and could establish a dominant reading that retroactively affects the game. However, Atlus's lack of any engagement with the SA in the official manga adaptation and the subsequent relocation of the depiction of their game's SA to a peripheral publication still establishes a dominant reading because it implies that the experience the player gains by playing with the SA in the game is of secondary value to the game's macro structure.

One can say that contingency of character identity in the media mix should not require coherence. Of relevance here is that Atlus only officially acknowledges the relationships in the *Persona 5 Comic Anthology* as they adhere to the representation of relationships in the source work. Although the anthology seems to illustrate an exploration of the possible romantic relationship between Tae Takemi and Joker, the anthology does not explore any queer readings of the relationships between Joker and other *confidants*. These queer readings only happen in *dōjinshi* that do not have obtained Atlus's legal copyrights to use their characters and that are, in this sense, not part of the *Persona 5* media mix strategy. This means that Atlus maintains a position of authority that decides which publications of *Persona 5* should be counted as normative and which ones regarded as heresy. In other words, any *Persona 5* character that is not officially recognized by Atlus is not counted as part of the identity of the character.¹⁴

Acknowledgments

This research has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (Grant Agreement No [695528]—Making Sense of Games).

Notes

- 1 This engagement is mostly confined to the field of Japanese studies, not in the least because of the language barrier between Japan and the West. As English translations and contributions become more and more available, knowledge about media practices and structures from Japan becomes increasingly accessible to media scholars without proficiency of the Japanese language.
- 2 The translation of the title is “Tezuka Is Dead.”
- 3 For an English-language summarized explanation, see Kascuk 2016.
- 4 *Anime* (アニメ) are hand or computer drawn animations that can appear as film and/or television series.
- 5 *Shōgi* is known as Japanese chess.
- 6 With a few exceptions, such as Goro Akechi, Sae Niijima, and Morgana, these SA are mandatory and will rank up regardless of the player's performance in the game.
- 7 A *mangaka* is a comic book writer or comic book artist.
- 8 原作 (げんさく) means “original source.”
- 9 「名も知らぬカフェとも」 (なもしらぬカフェとも) translates as “My café buddy whose name I do not know.”
- 10 「モルガナ過激派」 (モルガナかけきは) translates as something like “Morgana the Extremist.”
- 11 「最後の言葉」 (さいごのことば) means “Final Words.”
- 12 *Dōjinshi* (同人誌) are self-published works such as magazines, comics, or novels usually containing fan fiction.
- 13 Spelling mistakes in the titles are intended and reproduced exactly as the titles of the *dōjinshi*'s covers spell them.
- 14 In this chapter, I focus on the character proliferation of a Japanese media mix model only. This is not to say that this kind of model has not already reached Western comics and games culture in some sense. The *Mass Effect* game series (2007–2012) also contains a system of affection. The developer Bioware has migrated the characters of these games to the *Mass Effect* comics that also do not present the game series' system of affection. However, unlike the *Persona 5* media mix strategy, where the coherence of characters does not seem to matter in terms of narrative continuity, the *Mass Effect* comics avoid any expansion of the world, as they only depict a character's background stories as told or hinted at by the events of the game. Moreover, the comics avoid any visual depiction of Shepard and any indication of their gender in order to create a sense of narrative continuity between the character's manifestations.

Works cited

- Aarseth, Espen J. 1997. *Cybertext: Perspectives on Ergodic Literature*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

- Aarseth, Espen J. 2006. "The Culture and Business of Cross-Media Productions." *Popular Communication* 4 (3): 203–211.
- Aarseth, Espen J. 2012. "A Narrative Theory of Games." In *Proceedings of the International Conference on the Foundations of Digital Games*, edited by Magy S. El-Nasr, 129–133. New York: ACM.
- Aldred, Jessica. 2012. "A Question of Character: Transmediation, Abstraction, and Identification in Early Games Licensed from Movies." In *Before the Crash: Early Video Game History*, edited by Mark J. P. Wolf, 90–104. Detroit: Wayne State University Press.
- Aldred, Jessica. 2014. "Characters." In *The Routledge Companion to Video Game Studies*, edited by Mark J. P. Wolf and Bernard Perron, 355–363. New York: Routledge.
- Allison, Anne. 2006. *Millennial Monsters: Japanese Toys and the Global Imagination*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Azuma, Hiroki. 2007. *Gēmuteki riarizumu no tanjō: Dōbutsuka suru posutomodan* 2. Tokyo: Kōdansha.
- Azuma, Hiroki. 2009. *Otaku: Japan's Database Animals*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Backe, Hans-Joachim. 2012. "Narrative Rules? Story Logic and the Structures of Games." *Literary and Linguistic Computing* 27 (3): 243–260.
- Backe, Hans-Joachim. 2015. "The Literary Canon in the Age of New Media." *Poetics Today* 36 (1–2): 1–31.
- Bal, Mieke. 1979. "Inleiding: Wat zijn personages en wat doen we ermee?" In *Mensen van papier: Over personages in de literatuur*, edited by Mieke Bal, 1–13. Assen: Van Gorcum.
- Banyu. 2017a. *Pelona 5 unofficial fanbook: Koko ni ai ga aru akashi o: Joker X Akechi*. <http://banyu.info/> (accessed 31 January 2020).
- Banyu. 2017b. *Perusona 5 unofficial fanbook: Futari de aruita ano hi no hoshizora: Joker X Gori Akechi*. <http://banyu.info/> (accessed 31 January 2020).
- Bartle, Richard. 1996. "Avatar, Character, Persona." <http://mud.co.uk/richard/acp.htm> (accessed 31 January 2020).
- Bayliss, Peter. 2007. "Beings in the Game-World: Characters, Avatars, and Players." IE '07: *Proceedings of the 4th Australasian Conference on Interactive Entertainment*: Article 4. <https://dl.acm.org/citation.cfm?id=1367960> (accessed 31 January 2020).
- Bertetti, Paolo. 2014. "Toward a Typology of Transmedia Characters." *International Journal of Communication* 8: 2344–2361.
- Brooker, Will. 2012. *Hunting the Dark Knight: Twenty-First Century Batman*. London: I. B. Tauris.
- Calleja, Gordon. 2011. *In-Game: From Immersion to Incorporation*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Cawelti, John. 1976. *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Danganronpa: Trigger Happy Havoc. 2010. Developed and published by Spike. PlayStation Portable.
- Denson, Shane. 2011. "Marvel Comics' Frankenstein: A Case Study in the Media of Serial Figures." *Amerikastudien/American Studies* 56 (4): 531–553.
- DNA Media Comics. 2017a. *Persona 5 Comic Anthology* Vol. 1. Tokyo: DNA Media Comics.
- DNA Media Comics. 2017b. *Persona 5 Comic Anthology* Vol. 2. Tokyo: DNA Media Comics.

- Dragon Age II*. 2011. Developed by Bioware. Published by Electronic Arts. Windows.
- Eder, Jens. 2008. *Die Figur im Film: Grundlagen der Figurenanalyse*. Marburg: Schüren.
- Eder, Jens. 2010. "Understanding Characters." *Projections* 4 (1): 16–40.
- Eder, Jens. 2015. "Transmediality and the Politics of Adaptation: Concepts, Forms, and Strategies." In *The Politics of Adaptation: Media Convergence and Ideology*, edited by Dan Hassler-Forest and Pascal Nicklas, 66–81. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Eder, Jens, Fotis Jannidis, and Ralf Schneider. 2010. "Introduction." In *Characters in Fictional Worlds: Understanding Imaginary Beings in Literature, Film, and Other Media*, edited by Jens Eder, Fotis Jannidis, and Ralf Schneider, 3–64. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Egenfeldt-Nielsen, Simon, Jonas Heide Smith, and Susana Pajares Tosca. 2008. *Understanding Video Games: The Essential Introduction*. New York: Routledge.
- Final Fantasy XV*. 2016. Developed and published by Square Enix. PlayStation 4.
- Fire Emblem: Three Houses*. 2019. Developed by Intelligent Systems and Koei Tecmo. Published by Nintendo. Nintendo Switch.
- Francis, Bryant. 2019. "Building a Basic Story Bible for Your Game." *Gamasutra*, 18 October. www.gamasutra.com/view/news/352517/Building_a_basic_story_bible_for_your_game.php (accessed 31 January 2020).
- Frow, John. 2014. *Character and Person*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Frow, John. 2018. "Character." In *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative Theory*, edited by Matthew Garret, 105–119. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Geraghty, Lincoln. 2017. "Transmedia Character Building: Textual Crossovers in the *Star Wars* Universe." In *Star Wars and the History of Transmedia Storytelling*, edited by Sean Guynes and Dan Hassler-Forest, 117–128. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Harvey, Colin, B. 2014. "A Taxonomy of Transmedia Storytelling." In *Storyworlds across Media: Toward a Media-Conscious Narratology*, edited by Marie-Laure Ryan and Jan-Noël Thon, 278–294. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Harvey, Colin, B. 2015. *Fantastic Transmedia: Narrative, Play and Memory across Science Fiction and Fantasy Storyworlds*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Into the Spiderverse*. 2018. Dir. Bob Persichetti, Peter Ramsey, and Rodney Rothman. USA: Sony Pictures.
- Itō, Gō. 2005. *Tetsuka izu deddo*. Tokyo: Seikaisha Shinsho.
- Jannidis, Fotis. 2012. "Character." In *The Living Handbook of Narratology*, edited by Peter Hühn, Jan Christoph Meister, John Pier, and Wolf Schmid, n.p. Hamburg: Hamburg University Press. www.lhn.uni-hamburg.de/article/character (accessed 31 January 2020).
- Jenkins, Henry. 2006. *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York: New York University Press.
- Jørgensen, Kristine. 2010. "Game Characters as Narrative Devices: A Comparative Analysis of *Dragon Age: Origins* and *Mass Effect 2*." *Eludamos: Journal for Computer Game Culture* 4 (2): 315–331. www.eludamos.org/index.php/eludamos/article/view/vol4no2-13 (accessed 31 January 2020).
- Kascuk, Zoltan. 2016. "From 'Game-Life Realism' to the 'Imagination-Oriented Aesthetic': Reconsidering Bordieu's Contribution to Fan Studies in the Light of Japanese Manga and Otaku Theory." *Kritika Kultura* 26: 274–292.

- Kelly, Peter. 2015. "Approaching the Digital Courting Process in *Dragon Age 2*." In *Game Love: Essays on Play and Affection*, edited by Jessica Enevold and Esther MacCallum-Stewart, 46–62. Jefferson: McFarland.
- Kinder, Marsha. 1991. *Playing with Power in Movies, Television, and Video Games: From Muppet Babies to Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Klastrup, Lisbeth, and Susana Tosca. 2004. "Transmedial Worlds—Rethinking Cyberworld Design." *CW '04: Proceedings of the 2004 International Conference on Cyberworlds*: 409–416. <https://dl.acm.org/doi/10.1109/CW.2004.67> (accessed 31 January 2020).
- Klevjer, Rune. 2006. "What Is the Avatar? Fiction and Embodiment in Avatar-Based Singleplayer Computer Games." PhD thesis, University of Bergen, Norway. <http://bora.uib.no/handle/1956/2234> (accessed 31 January 2020).
- KyūZIP. 2017. "Na mo shiranu kafetomo." In *Persona 5 Comic Anthology* Vol. 1, edited by DNA Media Comics, 123–130. Tokyo: DNA Media Comics.
- Lamarre, Thomas. 2009. *The Anime Machine: A Media Theory of Animation*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Lamarre, Thomas. 2018. *Anime Technology*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Linderoth, Jonas. 2005. "Animated Game Pieces: Avatars as Roles, Tools and Props." *Proceedings of the Aesthetics of Play Conference*: n.p. www.aestheticsofplay.org/linderoth.php (accessed 31 January 2020).
- Margolin, Uri. 1983. "Characterization in Narrative: Some Theoretical Prolegomena." *Neophilologus* 67 (1): 1–14.
- Margolin, Uri. 1986. "The Doer and the Deed: Action as a Basis for Characterization in Narrative." *Poetics Today* 7 (2): 205–225.
- Mori, Kinoko. 2017. "Saigo no kotoba." In *Persona 5 Comic Anthology* Vol. 1, edited by DNA Media Comics, 5. Tokyo: DNA Media Comics.
- Murasaki, Hisato. 2017. *Persona 5* Vol. 1. Tokyo: Shogakukan.
- Mutō, Tamura. 2017. "Morugana kagekiha." In *Persona 5 Comic Anthology* Vol. 2, edited by DNA Media Comics, 40–52. Tokyo: DNA Media Comics.
- Nakamura, Akinori, and Susana Tosca. 2019. "The *Mobile Suit Gundam* Franchise: A Case Study of Transmedia Storytelling Practices and the Role of Digital Games in Japan." *DiGRA '19: Proceedings of the 2019 DiGRA International Conference: Game, Play and the Emerging Ludo-Mix*: n.p. www.digra.org/wp-content/uploads/digital-library/DiGRA_2019_paper_235.pdf (accessed 31 January 2020).
- Napier, Susan J. 2001. *Anime from Akira to Princess Monoke: Experiencing Contemporary Japanese Animation*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Newman, James. 2002. "The Myth of the Ergodic Videogame: Some Thoughts on Player-Character Relationships in Videogames." *Game Studies: The International Journal of Computer Game Research* 2 (1): n.p. www.gamestudies.org/0102/newman/ (accessed 31 January 2020).
- Nier: Automata*. 2017. Developed by PlatinumGames. Published by Square Enix. PlayStation 4.
- Ōtsuka, Eiji. 1989. *Monogatari shōhiron*. Tokyo: Asuki Shinsho.
- Ōtsuka, Eiji. 2010. "World and Variation: The Reproduction and Consumption of Narrative." *Mechademia: Fanthropologies* 5: 99–118.
- Overwatch*. 2016. Developed and published by Blizzard Entertainment. Windows.

- Pearson, Roberta E. 2019. "Transmedia Characters: Additionality and Cohesion in Transfictional Heroes." In *The Routledge Companion to Transmedia Studies*, edited by Matthew Freeman and Renira Rampazzo Gambarato, 148–156. New York: Routledge.
- Persona 5*. 2016. Developed by P-Studio. Published by Atlus. PlayStation 4.
- Persona 5: Dancing in Starlight*. 2018. Developed by P-Studio. Published by Atlus. PlayStation 4.
- Persona 5 Royal*. 2019. Developed by P-Studio. Published by Atlus. PlayStation 4.
- Persona Q2: New Cinema Labyrinth*. 2018. Developed by P-Studio. Published by Atlus. Nintendo 3DS.
- Picard, Martin, and Jérémie Pelletier-Gagnon. 2015. "Introduction: Geemu, Media Mix, and the State of Japanese Video Game Studies." *Kinephanos: Journal of Media Studies and Popular Culture* 5 (December): 1–19.
- Pokémon Sun and Moon*. 2016. Developed by Game Freak. Published by The Pokémon Company and Nintendo. Nintendo 3DS.
- Pokémon Sword and Shield*. 2019. Developed by Game Freak. Published by The Pokémon Company and Nintendo. Nintendo Switch.
- Reicher, Maria E. 2010. "The Ontology of Fictional Characters." In *Characters in Fictional Worlds: Understanding Imaginary Beings in Literature, Film, and Other Media*, edited by Jens Eder, Fotis Jannidis, and Ralf Schneider, 111–133. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Rosendo, Nieves. 2015. "The Map Is Not the Territory: Bible and Canon in the Transmedial World of *Halo*." *IMAGE: Zeitschrift für interdisziplinäre Bildwissenschaft* Special Issue 22 (July): 54–64.
- Rosendo, Nieves. 2016. "Character-Centred Transmedia Narratives: *Sherlock Holmes* in the 21st Century." *Artnodes* 18 (November): 20–27.
- Saitō, Tamaki. 2014. *Kyarakutā seishin bunseki: Manga, bungaku, nihonjin*. Tokyo: Chikuma Sobo.
- Schröter, Felix, and Jan-Noël Thon. 2014. "Video Game Characters: Theory and Analysis." *DIEGESIS: Interdisciplinary E-Journal for Narrative Research* 3 (1): 40–77.
- Steinberg, Marc. 2012. *Anime's Media Mix: Franchising Toys and Characters in Japan*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Steinberg, Marc. 2015. "8-Bit Manga: Kadokawa's Madara, or, the Gameic Media Mix." *Kinephanos: Journal of Media Studies and Popular Culture* 5 (December): 40–52.
- Super Smash Bros. Ultimate*. 2018. Developed by Bandai Namco and Sora Ltd. Published by Nintendo. Nintendo Switch.
- Thomas Was Alone*. 2012. Developed and published by Mike Bithell. Windows.
- Thon, Jan-Noël. 2015. "Converging Worlds: From Transmedia Storyworlds to Transmedial Universes." *Storyworlds: A Journal of Narrative Studies* 7 (2): 21–53.
- Tosca, Susana. 2003. "The Appeal of Cute Monkeys." In *Proceedings of Level Up: Digital Games Research Conference*, edited by Marinka Copier and Joost Raessens, 392–403. Utrecht: Utrecht University Press.
- Tosca, Susana, and Lisbeth Klastrup. 2019. *Transmedial Worlds in Everyday Life: Networked Reception, Social Media and Fictional Worlds*. New York: Routledge.
- Tronstad, Ragnhild. 2008. "Character Identification in *World of Warcraft*: The Relationship between Capacity and Appearance." In *Digital Culture, Play, and*

- Identity: A World of Warcraft Reader*, edited by Hilde G. Corneliussen and Jill Walker Rettberg, 249–264. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Uricchio, William, and Roberta E. Pearson. 1991. “‘I’m Not Fooled by That Cheap Disguise.’” In *The Many Lives of the Batman: Critical Approaches to a Superhero and His Media*, edited by Roberta E. Pearson and William Uricchio, 182–213. New York: Routledge.
- Vella, Daniel. 2014. “Modeling the Semiotic Structure of Game Characters.” *DiGRA ‘14: Proceedings of the 2014 DiGRA Conference*: n.p. www.digra.org/digital-library/publications/modeling-the-semiotic-structure-of-game-characters/ (31 January 2020).
- Vella, Daniel. 2015. “The Ludic Subject and the Ludic Self: Analyzing the ‘I-in-the-Gameworld.’” PhD thesis, IT University of Copenhagen, Denmark. <https://en.itu.dk/~media/en/research/phd-programme/phd-defences/2015/daniel-vella---the-ludic-subject-and-the-ludic-self-final-print-pdf.pdf> (accessed 31 January 2020).
- Wilde, Lukas R. A. 2019. “Recontextualizing Characters: Media Convergence and Pre-/Meta-Narrative Character Circulation.” *IMAGE: Zeitschrift für interdisziplinäre Bildwissenschaft* Special Issue 29 (January): 3–21.
- Wolf, Mark, J. P. 2012. *Building Imaginary Worlds: The Theory and History of Subcreation*. New York: Routledge.