

**Historical Settings as Transmedia Storyworlds
Across Fiction, Tabletop RPG, Live-Action Role-Plays and Video Games.
Theory and Case Studies Through the Lens of Narratology and Heritage Discourses.**

In recent years, we have come to pay great attention to fantastic transmedia universes. Whether it's Tolkien, *The Witcher*, or *Star Wars*, we are enchanted by the way a storyworld can manifest itself differently in multiple instances presented to the audience in different media. The field of transmedia narratology examines these storyworlds, looking in particular at how different stories set in the same world but told in different media provide the audience with unique ways of entering the storyworld, in each case presenting it using different media-specific affordances.

The argument can be made that works of historical fiction - and academic historiography - also provide access to a different kind of storyworld. Specific historical settings, for example the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, are a kind of storyworld, which is presented to the audience in multiple works across multiple media. As the audience is exposed to more such works, they develop a deeper understanding of the storyworld, the events and characters that inhabit it, and the structures that serve as its foundations. However, while a historical storyworld is based on an actual historical setting, its relationship with history is far from simple. Historical fiction often intentionally veers away from historical fact, and it does so for many different reasons. Indeed, our understanding of historical accuracy and authenticity - two related, but not synonymous concepts - is increasingly complex. The field of heritage studies examines how these issues around cultural heritage and history become enmeshed in complex debates about individual and community values, heritage, and ideology.

Thus far, there has been little cross-pollination between transmedia narrative studies and heritage studies as research methodologies. This present project seeks to combine these two methodologies and perspectives in one study in order to better understand historical games and historical fiction. Building on the concept of historical settings as storyworlds, the project examines a pair of historical settings, the American Wild West and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, across four narrative media: literary fiction, tabletop role-playing games (RPGs), live-action role-play (larp), and video games. In doing so, the study looks at the different ways these four narrative media shape the audience's engagement while creating, representing and enacting a specific historical setting - and how individual instances of these historical storyworlds connect to existing debates about cultural heritage.

Heritage is said to be “a creative engagement with the past in the present” (Harrison, 2013). By looking at these two historical settings as transmedia storyworlds, this project hopes to build a stronger understanding of the complexities of this creative engagement, which occurs whenever people explore their individual visions of history through any medium. The outcomes of the project will be presented at three conferences, three journal papers, and a book, contributing to the fields of historical game studies and historical fiction theory.