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Introduction

The well-known Sherlock Holmes, the character created by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle in 1887, has – through an evolution of adaptations – developed into a media-convergent phenomenon. The popular BBC TV series *Sherlock* has been in production since 2009, and the latest season, the fourth, first aired in January 2017. Each episode stages a case that the police cannot solve which is taken on by Sherlock Holmes, a highly intelligent but socially awkward consulting detective who applies deduction and both digital and forensic tools. The series is an example of the latest trends in entertainment media, and is accessible easiest via the Internet.

How would one explain a digital series like *Sherlock* to a grandparent? Or more generally, to someone who grew up before the age of the Internet and the digital turn, that is, before the 1990s? The series obviously exists as a digital media product: one can watch, perceive and understand what is happening, but one cannot really touch it as a material object. And what one really sees is colourful dots, framed by a screen, a technical boundary, and limited by a specific time frame. How then is a meaningful story extracted from this? According to Kappelhoff, several layers of meaning-making and perspectives create impressions that trigger affects,[1] and this study aims to investigate how filmic modalities specifically structure these affects.

Producers of TV series such as *Sherlock*, which are foremost distributed online, are faced with the challenge of connecting different conventionalised spatiotemporalities, since they have to adapt the entertainment media channels to technology's possibilities and the conventions around it. Part of technological and digital development is its impact on the reproduction and shaping of culture and its conventions. This takes place through interactions between objects and humans, and it is increasingly happening on a digital, intangible level. Therefore, it is important to investigate the materiality of *Sherlock*.[2]

This paper will contribute to the understanding of media products with respect to their materiality and performativity, and how these phenomena appear in the context of the mediation of literature. For that purpose, the paper will examine how the TV series *Sherlock* transforms traditional stories into new spatiotemporalities and media forms. By doing

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[1] | Herrmann Kappelhoff: *Genre und Gemeinsinn: Hollywood zwischen Krieg und Demokratie*. Vol. 1. Berlin 2016, p. 126.

[2] | Materiality here shall be seen as the description and definition of how something appears and is perceived in someone's direct environment. Therefore, to be material is not limited to tangible or watchable objects, but strongly connected to their significance to those who perceive these objects, as will be exemplified through *Sherlock*.

so, as will be demonstrated, it both conserves and develops cultural phenomena and values. After first examining some ideas on materiality influenced by cultural anthropologist Daniel Miller,[3] examples of transmediation that can be found in *Sherlock* will be related to Elleström's ideas.[4] When discussing the influence of transmedial processes on a medium's materiality and significance, this study draws foremost on Elleström's thought as well as Barad's interdisciplinary approach to performativity, which advocates the idea of subjectobject interactivity.[5] Finally, this study concludes with some reflections informed through an ethnographical perspective, which supports notions regarding the series' performativity. By linking these thoughts to the researcher's role within qualitative analysis from the field of ethnography to that of intermediality, and adding Kappelhoff's thoughts on the poetics of affect, this paper aims to show the usefulness of an interdisciplinary research approach.[6]

Media Products and Transmedial Processes

Transmedial processes enhance multimodal communication. Conveying aspects of both the crime fiction genre and digital communication, *Sherlock* serves as a text and mediatisation that belongs to contemporary literature. The series transmediates and reproduces modern cultural conventions, while at the same time staying true to the novels' original stories and characters, thereby achieving the aforementioned connection of different spatiotemporalities.

To analyse transmedial processes, one needs to focus on a certain phenomenon and its relation to other phenomena, in order to frame the investigation and offer feasible results. When highlighting the series and detaching it to a certain degree from its context, it is perceived as an object, as a digital media product that comes into being when someone watches it, which correlates to Kappelhoff's approach.[7] Only in the performance of perceiving the dynamic medial frame is the media product distinguishable from its surroundings and can thus be defined and used. As such, it becomes a sign and a tool for communication and understanding, although it should be kept in mind that detaching something from its context is unnatural otherwise.[8] A transmedial process or transmediation does not simply mean that a *concentrated understanding* in the sense of fabula is moving between media; rather, it highlights the process of referring to and deconstructing a media product into characteristics and its media specificities. At the same time, crucial aspects of a product are re-established to create other media with a similar fabula. Another possibility is the reference in one or more aspects to the source medium. A source medium, following Elleström, is the media product that is deconstructed and that

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3 | Daniel Miller: »Materiality: An Introduction«. In: Daniel Miller (ed.): *Materiality.* Durham / NC 2005, p. 1–50.

4 | Lars Elleström: *Media Transformation: The Transfer of Media Characteristics among Media.* London 2014.

5 | Karen Barad: »Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter«. In: *Signs* 28.3 (2003), p. 801–831.

6 | For further visual support of this paper, please use the following link: https://prezi.com/vki88dry5ysb/sherlock-/?webgl=0

7 | Kappelhoff: *Genre und Gemeinsinn* (ref. 1), p. 75.

8 | Jacques Derrida and Craig Owens: »The Parergon«. In: *October* 9 (1979), p. 3–41.

reoccurs in some form in the target medium. In the present case, the novels would be the source medium and the series the target medium.[9]

Having established these crucial terms, here is an example of a transmedial process between media: Imagine someone is picking out the cherries from a Black Forest cake to make a new cake, maybe cupcakes, containing just these cherries. Someone not tasting the cherries or not knowing about the specialty Black Forest cake will not be reminded of it, partly because there is a different imagination, perception and intention involved in the target product. A specific aspect or ingredient from one medium is taken to create another one, not only recreating a cake but recalling the idea or association of a Black Forest cake. Obviously, the limitation of this example is given by the fact that cherries have a much more conventional materiality than *Sherlock,* nevertheless, it illuminates the basic idea.Taking into account the transference of the cherries as a kind of transmediation does not suffice totally as a model for transmediation, as the acknowledgement of this transmedial process is always dependent on the beholder's point of view, and their personal aesthetic experience, like the subjectively differing perception of the taste of the cherry. Someone who does not recognize the relationship will not perceive the transmedial relation, which will therefore be insignificant in the production of meaning.

The concept of transmediation is often based on narratology and is related to trans-narrativity, for example, transferring the story presented in a book to a medium using moving pictures to convey meaning, like in a film.[10] However, transferring the narrative is just one component, as the whole concept of transmediation goes beyond that. Not only plotlines but also any other modality, aspect or sign can be transmediated, as the following examples will show.

Transmedial Processes in *Sherlock*

Applying this expanded concept of transmediation, this essay will show how the TV series creates tension between various basic and qualified media. Following Elleström's idea of media as »mainly identified by their modal appearances«,[11] which can be defined by their material or sensory characteristics, can be regarded as *basic media*, whereas *qualified media* are those that are defined foremost through their context and use, although these two definitions are complementary.[12] By creating tension between those media specificities, the series *Sherlock* allows for a broader potential of meaning making and enhances and influences the construction of a new message. Compared to the original stories in the printed version of crime fiction by Doyle, the *Sherlock* series differs in its spatiotemporality, especially the time frame. While it keeps some crucial, almost nostalgic attributes like the coat, the deerstalker hat and the London address known from earlier versions that relate to other filmic adaptations of the novels, the plot of the series is set in a busy modern London. To reflect 21st-century London, the use of technology is extensive, including, for example, cellphones, laptops and forensic science. All of these aspects belong to the complex process of transmediation.

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9 **|** Elleström: *Media Transformation* (ref. 4), p. 16–17.

10 | Marie-Laure Ryan: »Transmedial Storytelling and Transfictionality«. In: *Poetics Today* 34.3 (2013), p. 361–388.

11 | Lars Elleström: »The Modalities of Media: A Model for Understanding Intermedial Relations«. In: Lars Elleström (ed.): *Media Borders, Multimodality and Intermediality*. London 2010, p. 27.

12 | *Ibid*., p. 11–48.

Sociocultural codes, materialized in various technologies, when printed, for example, in the form of a newspaper series or compiled into a book, allow for the complexity of a transmediation process as defined in the foregoing section. In the following, the multiplicity of the sources as a challenge to the idea of the original source medium will be highlighted. Concentrating on the distinction between certain relationships, these will become distinguishable as prominent transmediations in the series.

I. Book to Film

To begin with, transmedial storytelling is to be found in *Sherlock*; the recurring plot lines show quite a common transmediation process, both regarding form and content in relation to the books' narratives. Every episode is loosely based on at least one of Doyle's short stories, which could be considered a case of transnarrativity.[13] Every episode follows the same structure: The well-known investigation into, and resultant solution of, a mysterious incident often involving a murder. At some point the police fail, and it is Mr. Sherlock Holmes who solves the riddles. Thus, even the crime fiction genre is made highly recognizable, in this respect, through the narrative content. Reproducing a genre through key aspects or symbols can make the viewer recognize, remember and ascribe meaning to it, as exemplified with war movies by Kappelhoff.[14]

The aforementioned original sources, however, were not originals at all, but versions of compositional and constructed ideas, interrelated with each other and embedded in a context. Doyle may have given a number of shared codes an overarching signifier and personified them through the characters of *Sherlock Holmes*. However, this is just another form of remediation within a big network that is in constant flux, not the original version of the cultural phenomenon *Sherlock Holmes*, or even crime stories. This thought even poses the question: where did Doyle get his ideas? Supposedly, there were real cases serving as inspirations for his stories, and, for example, Sherlock's wardrobe is a clear mirror of the Victorian and Edwardian times Doyle's novels are set in.[15] The investigation into the genealogy of the series might just as well be done with the books in focus, which would reveal their transmedial relations, as is done in a way by Luc Boltanski,[16] yet this would be the framework for another paper.

II. Culture to Film

Modern technological conventions are materialized in various diegetic aspects through the perceivers' background knowledge. This is done by integrating text messaging, websites or a blog kept by Dr. Watson, the latter of which is taken the older form of newspaper articles in Doyle's stories. Of special interest is the inclusion of verbal intradiegetic text in the cinematic images in a rather unconventional way. The different diegetic levels have a transmediating function:

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13 | Ryan: »Transmedial Storytelling« (ref. 10), p. 361–388.

14 | Kappelhoff: *Genre und Gemeinsinn* (ref. 1), p. 20.

15 | N.a.: *What Is the Time Setting of the Sherlock Holmes Books?,* n.d. http://education.seattlepi.com/time-setting-sherlock-holmes-books-6938.html (last viewed on 29.06.2017).

16 | Luc Boltanski links the *Sherlock Holmes* stories to the rise of social sciences and paranoia and the search for reality at the start of the 19th century. Luc Boltanski: »Rätsel und Komplotte«. In: *Kriminalliteratur, Paranoia, moderne Gesellschaft.* Frankfurt / M 2013.
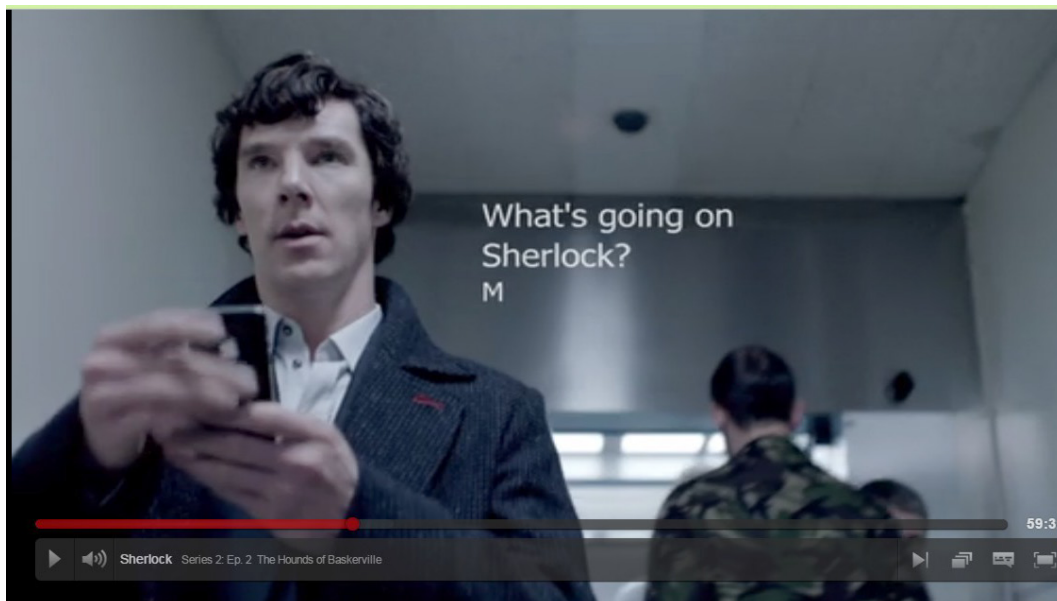
Picture 1: Text messages embedded as intradiegetic text, representing modern communication

Various texts, messages or characters' thoughts appear on the usually transparent screen, also known as the fourth wall. The letters have no frame, making them less static, and they are clear and easy to read, connoting an unemotional atmosphere of logical thinking. They relate to the way the character Sherlock is presented in the series: socially rather unskilled, but thinking in highly logical and deductive processes. The letters' appearance enhances not only the understanding of the storyline in general, but also furthers the emotional effect of recognising transmediated entities at the same time, emphasizing the enigmatic nature of the crime story. This is how the creators of the series mediate the communication habits of the expected receiver, which contributes to an increased feeling of immersion and influences the positioning of the perceiver. In accordance with Kappelhoff, such reproduction of cultural conventions triggers affects, which in turn create a sense of commonality, of identifying with those that relate to the series' use of digital communication. Thus, the way *Sherlock* is staged even informs the recipients about the cultural practices of the cultural historical context in which it is embedded.[17]

This example shows that the culturally established use of media technology in communication habits is a source of its own, which is applied through performing communication on the screen. The idea of modern-day digital communication and its cultural value is reproduced throughout the series through both transmediation and media representation. On a more ethical level, the use of technological communication ties the inhuman aspect into the interacting relationships of performance. The text messages function as an *agency* in the performance, in which one medium exerts power on another one. This particular transmediation exemplifies the influence that technological development has on the interaction between humans in postmodern societies. Aspects of the time that information takes to travel, and the fact that the possibilities and sources of gaining and spreading knowledge are multiplying, adds to the heightened performativity in general. Ethically, this poses questions regarding dependency, trust and power, even those indicated in the series.

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17 | Kappelhoff: *Genre und Gemeinsinn* (ref. 1), p. 33 and p. 49.

III. Mental Representation to Film

My third example of transmediation in *Sherlock* is the representation of modern metropolitan life and its conventions. Rushing cars, underground stations and city skylines are a common visual throughout the series, combined with unusual angles and short and fast cuts. To understand this transmedial relation fully, both imagination and experience of what it feels like to be in a metropolis such as London are needed. Signs such as time and velocity in the acting, filming and cutting can stand as a metaphor for aspects of modern culture, including its ideological values of being effective and multitasking, for example, talking on the phone while walking or driving somewhere. In other words, the series is converting cultural knowledge and personal experience into the signs that appear on screen in order to establish a transmediation, which draws strongly on the associations and sociocultural background of the viewer.

IV. Myth to Film

The intentional symbolism included through objects such as Sherlock Holmes' hat, the looking glass, occasionally substituted through the lens of a microscope, or the long dark coat, all tie into the traditional idea of Doyle's *Sherlock Holmes*. The character Sherlock Holmes, as a cultural phenomenon that has been reproduced through many different media has a different appearance in different viewers' perceptions, has an impact on their expectations and therefore forms the impression(s) that the series makes on the viewer. Keeping in mind that these symbols strongly emphasize a relation to the books, it seems like these symbols have turned into denotations of the Sherlock myth, the mental conceptualization of Sherlock Holmes and of detective stories as a genre. They significantly add to the series' popularity and also signify the past that is tied to the myth. A potential reason could be the status that some people see in their knowledge of the classic stories and their recognition of those objects, which grants them a status as being an ›*expert*‹ or ›*insider*‹.

The transmedial relations that can be found in *Sherlock* are not to be seen as an exhaustive presentation of the transmedial processes, as their number is seemingly indefinite and largely dependent on the viewer. Clearly, not all of these four examples fit into the common idea of transnarrativity or even transmediation. Rather, they expand on the common concept of transmediation by including the transformation of unstable, highly performative media, such as cultural artifacts, values and conventions determined by source media. Mediated culture demands a complex transmediation, and transmediations can supply the viewer with additional information for the semiotic process. Thus, it can achieve greater similarity between the understanding of the meaning of both the target medium and several source media, which is achieved in *Sherlock* in various forms, especially in the multimodal representation of how one sends text messages and the cultural value that this activity has. This further develops Lund's model of transpositioning basic media,[18] since *Sherlock* includes digital technology and mental representations by reproducing thoughts on the screen via text.

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18 | Hans Lund: »Medier i samspel«. In: Hans Lund (ed.): *Intermedialitet. Ord, bild och ton i samspel.* Lund 2002, p. 9–24.

Materiality of *Sherlock*

At first sight, a TV series might not seem very *material*. In contrast to the example of the Black Forest cake, the series does not exist in itself as an object. Rather, it appears as a process of moving images perceivable through a material frame, namely the screen, but also through the perceptive faculties of the human body. When watching the TV series, the crucial senses activated are seeing and hearing – and, additionally, the sense of *feeling*, as watching the series triggers emotions in the perceiver, which is the intended purpose of the intermedial rhetoric here. This rather vague description reminds us of the lack of research on emotions that has endured for a long time,[19] but which has recently been addressed, for example by Kappelhoff through his idea of a poetics of affect. Kappelhoff links perceiver reactions to genre typical aspects and cultural backgrounds and their role in the meaning-making process, which is useful for an analysis of *Sherlock*.[20] This concept becomes important again later when considering sensory ethnography and performativity.

Since, in the case of *Sherlock*, it is difficult to define materiality and its impact in the process of semiosis, the question arises as to how its materiality manifests itself in people's mental representations. Building on the insights from analysing the transmedial processes, one could consider even materiality itself as context-related, and »entertainment media [as] circulating witnesses of cultural memory«.[21] First, the TV series has spatial dimensions that are manifested in the technical medium, but the viewer's ability to imagine and experience makes him/her see the events on screen as if they had depth too. One perceives what the medium refers to, not what it is. This can be called a virtual space, one that does not exist outside of the spectator's perceptions. Thus, it is reasonable to speak of appearances or manifestations in a dynamic sense that takes, among other factors, imagination into account. Therefore, the argumentation regarding materiality developed by anthropologist Daniel Miller becomes relevant, when one considers the agency and power of objects manifested with respect to how they are interacted with, that is, how they are performed.[22] Things are not just tangible and lasting, but have to be considered in their ephemeral, imaginary and theoretical forms as well,[23] as illustrated by this paper. *Sherlock* exemplifies this, demonstrating a non-tangible and performative materiality. Avoiding a strict subject-object divide, the dynamic human agencies and their perceptions and intentions are emphasized, which is an approach often taken in performative studies.

Performativity

According to Karen Barad, performativity is based on the significance of relations, transmedial relations being a specific form of such. Objects only appear in a material-discursive way, which means the understanding of meaning becomes a matter of shifting, not static, codes.[24] In other words, an understanding of meaning is part of an ephemeral performance that depends on all its transmedial relations and contexts. Barad's agential realism

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19 | Ed S. Tan: *Emotion and the Structure of Narrative Film: Film as an Emotion Machine*. New York 2013.

20 | Kappelhoff: *Genre und Gemeinsinn* (ref. 1), p. 113–132.

21 | Ibid., p. 10, translation S. W.

22 | Miller: »Materiality: An Introduction.« (ref. 3), p. 11–13.

23 | Ibid., p. 41.

24 | Barad: »Posthumanist Performativity« (ref. 5), p. 801–831.

questions conventional epistemological and ontological concepts; her approach acknowledges the importance of the expected viewer and his/her background, as well as the various source media it remediates.[25] This paper exemplifies and supports this approach. The idea of performativity dissolves the static subject-object divide. There is still the phenomenological notion of perceiving the self as a subject surrounded by objects, but it is the interdependent interrelations between objects that shape and connect things that create understanding. For example, the stories' messages in the various episodes of *Sherlock* are steered and influenced by the producers, but not determined by them; rather, it is a performative act, as what is happening in the process of meaning making is not dictated by pre-established rules.[26]

Besides the example of the Black Forest cake, another illuminating metaphor of this performative becoming is a plasma lamp, which reacts with lightning-like connections when being touched. It exemplifies performativity in the sense that it is a constantly changing object reacting to its surroundings and its perceiver, and is interacted with from many different directions.

Picture 2: Example of Plasma lamp

Performativity applied to *Sherlock*

Regarding the case of *Sherlock*, part of its performance is the popular status and myth surrounding the series itself. Both have developed due to the fact that the well-established BBC produces it, that it is set in modern day London and that the series uses nostalgic objects and involves famous actors.[27] Clearly, *Sherlock* is more than a generalized fabula of a specific story; it is a compositional performance, realized through a number of transmedial processes. This thesis is also supported by the fact that the digital series

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25 | Ibid.

26 | Chris Brickell: »Masculinities, Performativity, and Subversion: A Sociological Reappraisal«. In: *Men and Masculinities* 8.1 (2005), p. 24–43.

27 | N.a.: »About Sherlock.«, n.d.
http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/3FvspTyBoYHhtN7MRns2Fm/about-sherlock
(last viewed on 29.06.2017).

needs the active input of the receiver to put the series into playing mode, requiring his/her participation in the performance in order to influence the pre-given spatiotemporality. In the moment that the series is watched, the meaning-making process removes a big part from the producers' power to imbue meaning. This raises the question as to whether the series as a medium is actually *there*, if its ability to transmit a message is not activated. In other words, how much of a cake is already there when the cake mixture exists in its physical materiality? Hence, one could argue that performativity and a medium only exist when perceived as such. This concept is true for film in general, but it is particularly strong for *Sherlock*, expressed by its high interactivity. *Sherlock* activates its viewers to use their cultural knowledge and backgrounds, and it positions their perspectives and self-orientations actively and through very expressive modalities, for example, the tempo, or the suspense in the plot or filming angles.[28] Furthermore, a series as such already unsettles the unity of a media product, as it is not closed. It overcomes the escapist unity of a film and permeates deeper into the viewer's daily life through reoccurrence and re-engagement with it. It performs a process rather than being a static object, and as this paper shows, this involves much more complex and abstract processes that have the potential of influencing the meaning-making process, which ties back to Kappelhoff's idea of combining expressive modalities in film.[29] Part of this is also enhanced through the social media channels used for its promotion.

In order to work with a concept of performativity, an awareness of the structuralistic categories that are arbitrarily imposed on reality helps to define, frame and describe the series, e.g., through its genre or physical appearance. Making the navigation of reality easier through categories is a function that results in a static perception of the world, which it itself is not. However, the relativity that is inherent in this idea of materialization is not endless, as objects can only emerge through interactions that are actually taking place. Not everything just happens randomly, and it is possible to steer this emergence in certain respects, for example, through the use of intentionally chosen intermedial relations. These can be, as taken up in some of the previous examples: (i) content related transmediation, (ii) structural transmediation, or (iii) the hybridity of genre and cultural conventions in one media product. Here the producers can act out a certain influence. Viewers recognizing traits and details of (and fulfilling expectations about) the character, as well as any other aspect of the series, will value it more highly and will more likely disseminate and therefore reproduce it in their daily lives. This is something the producers can facilitate, by consciously choosing potential transmediations.

This shows the performative construction of the series identity in a compositional and dynamic manner, based on recognition of narratives and cultural traits made by the recipients. The word recognition here emphasizes the integrated and active position the viewer is taking. Recognition is not just seeing, it is drawing on prior knowledge, taking in new information and combining all context into an *interactive* mental activity. This interactivity is further heightened by the fact that the series is a recurring aspect in people's lives, given that they actively follow it. It is therefore interwoven with daily life more than a film would be. Clearly, there are a number of aspects arguing for the idea of materiality as established foremost in people's minds and imaginations through its interrelations, the above described transmedial connections and to other more or less tangible things. Thus, combining these arguments, one can explain the series' materiality through performativity, transmediation and cultural context.

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28 | Refer here to Kappelhoff's and Sobchack's film theory. Kappelhoff: *Genre und Gemeinsinn* (ref. 1), p. 121–123.

29 | Ibid, p. 104.

Ethnographic Perspective

Borrowing from a qualitative fieldwork methodology, one can expand on the role and position of the viewers' and the producers' positions as the main human actors in the process of creating the message and aesthetic experience of *Sherlock*. In his text »The Translator's Task«, Walter Benjamin both relies on intuition and the imaginative powers of receivers, and he acknowledges the translator or researcher and his influential powers on ›texts‹ being ›transformed‹.[30] These are useful thoughts as they imply that the perceiver needs a certain cultural literacy in order to be able to understand the multimodal means of communication within and around the series/text. The understanding that »[t]he translator's task consists in this: to find the intention toward the language into which the work is to be translated, on the basis of which an echo of the original can be awakened in it.«[31] This also implies a certain similarity in the way Benjamin and Elleström see the transfer of characteristic aspects of one media product into a new composition as such, creating a new media product with a similar, ›echoing‹ representation.

Language in the sense of cultural codes is used to put meaning into a different language so that it can be decoded and a similar meaning conveyed. In the case of *Sherlock*, these shared codes contain ideas about the principle of sending texts, the way detectives usually work, or about the walks of life one is confronted with in a big city. Regarding *Sherlock* without a certain sociocultural background, a viewer would miss a lot of transmedial hints, and would create his/her understanding of the series without them. To develop further what Benjamin says about translating and the translator's role, but also Elleström's notions on transmediation as a process,[32] one can apply methods derived from ethnography and applied cultural analysis. In applied qualitative and empirical social research, one has to deal with transmediation quite often, and the issues being discussed in intermedia studies are quite similar to those that one encounters in cultural analysis. Transmediation is one method that is constantly applied in cultural analysis. Essentially it *is* cultural analysis, as the most obvious and essential transmediation in this research form is gathering data in the field and turning it into information that is understandable and useful for the client. As a researcher of the series *Sherlock*, one interprets how social reality is represented in the media products, just as one would interpret actual social reality on behalf of a client as a cultural analyst.

Qualitative ethnographic research supports the idea of a performative creation of meaning and communication, because interviews, focus groups or observations are never a medium in themselves that produce data. Interviews, for example, are always highly context-related, involving representations and interactive productions.[33] Researchers in the field become an influential part of its production and process, and the momentary decisions being made there highlight the performative character of qualitative fieldwork. One example would be the time-consuming classic method of transcription. Performing the traditional form of transmediation in ethnography, putting spoken words into written text is by no means a »just write it down« activity. It actually involves a lot of decisions

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30 | Walter Benjamin: »The Translator's Task«. In: Steven Rendall (trans.): *Traduction, Terminologie, Redaction* 10.2 (1997), p. 151–165.

31 | Ibid., p. 159

32 | Elleström: *Media Transformation* (ref. 4), p. 24.

33 | Charlotte Aull Davies: *Reflexive Ethnography: A Guide to Researching Selves and Others*. London 2008.

on how to transform the audio track into a written text,[34] which is why a transcriber, to a certain degree, becomes visible though not always recognizable in the transcribed words. The key insight here is that one can never be objective, as the own interpretation and the choices that are made are always influencing the message that is being conveyed,[35] be it in cultural analytical projects or when watching an entertainment show.

Walter Benjamin essentially says that translators can use different tools to build up meaning, creating the same end product.[36] In other words, one can convey a message to someone using, for example, either sounds, words or any other sign, as long as they make sure the cultural knowledge of the audience will make them understand the message in a similar way. Nevertheless, meaning never lies in the text, and everyone always understands things individually and a bit differently.[37] The notion of the »same end product« therefore needs to be used with care. There is no absolute, true meaning; it is always performative. This can be reinforced by returning to my notion of how emotions are involved in the formation of meaning.[38] It is important to mention this, as this approach takes into account the importance of individual perceptions and their influence on the creation of meaning when watching a TV series, and that these perceptions are mostly formed through affects that are being triggered. One good example is the phenomenon of interpreting pictures, which cannot always be put into words and which is a highly emotional process. A cold atmosphere for example, when conveyed using only words, there is often more of a predetermined interpretation, whereas pictures are more active on the viewer's part, and thus also more enigmatic. This also increases the immersion of the perceiver and lets him/her see what he wants to see, as he/she recognizes what is important to him/her, and what he/she is affected by. Kappelhoff agrees, defining movement as the materiality of audio visual images and the by different modalities constituted rhythm, or atmosphere, as the key to understanding the film or series.[39] This reinforces an argument for materiality and understanding being ephemeral and performative, as it explains why there is no overarching structure on how meaning is constituted through specific media. It may be triggered through signs in a specific medium, in this case a series about criminal cases, but nevertheless it always depends on the viewer's sociocultural background and the emotions tied to these signs and shaped by his/her experience.

Targeting similar ideas, the use of sensory multimodality in ethnographic fieldwork is being facilitated partly due to the technological and digital developments of recent decades, and it is encouraging major changes in the way ethnography is carried out.[40] The inclusion of different sensory areas, for example audio tracks, visuals, material objects or smell, can bring the experience that the researcher or informant has and is talking about closer to an audience. In this way, the recipient is getting closer to *experiencing* something that is mediated, and the chance of using one's own phenomenological perception and emotions is given greater possibility. Watching a film is highly emotional, but how

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34 | Marie Bucholtz: »The Politics of Transcription«. In: *Journal of Pragmatics* 32.10 (2000), p. 1439–1465.

35 | Tom O'Dell and Robert Willim: »Transcription and the Senses: Cultural Analysis When It Entails More than Words«. In: *Senses and Society* 8.3 (2013), p. 314–334.

36 | Benjamin: »The Translator's Task« (ref. 30), p. 151–165.

37 | Ibid.

38 | Refer to Kappelhoff's distinction of »Emotion, Affekt und Gefühl«. Kappelhoff: *Genre und Gemeinsinn* (ref. 1), p. 117–119.

39 | Vivian Sobchack notes: »Die im Medium filmischer Bilder generierte Bewegung gewinnt im wahrnehmenden Körper der Zuschauer eine andere, physische Realität als leibliches Sinnesempfinden des Affiziert-Seins«. Qtd. in Kappelhoff: *Genre und Gemeinsinn* (ref. 1), p. 121.

40 | Tom O'Dell and Robert Willim: »Transcription and the Senses« (ref. 35), p. 314–334.

that works on an intermedial level is not very clear. Taking the notion of performativity a step further, this means that when something is transmediated, the understanding of the researcher towards the source medium as well as the target medium are crucial influences on the transforming process.[41] Applied to *Sherlock*, this means the producers put the text messages in the frame for a reason, as well as the other demonstrated transmedial processes and probably many more. However, it is just one of many aspects contributing to the performativity of the series being shown, perceived and made sense of. Altogether, this is a unique and unrepeatable phenomenon.

Discussion

Social reality, seen as a form of culture – a way of living – is a constant performance and reproduction, where »the imposed knowledge and symbolisms become objects manipulated by practitioners who have not produced them«.[42] In other words, all materiality that people deal with is work in progress, and if one wants to understand these processes, for whatever reason, they need to explore their modalities, to use Elleström's term.[43] In conclusion, it can be said that the plurality of possibilities in the means of communicating a message via new technologies clearly has an impact on the materiality of modern literary texts. Combined with the highly performative character of the series leading to greater immersion and interpretative freedom, this lends weight to an argument for a more flexible concept of how a media products can convey messages. In order to support these thoughts, the meaning-making processes in *Sherlock* can be compared to the ones that would take place if one were to read the original *Sherlock Holmes* novels and stories from a hundred years ago; the process is essentially not different, but more complex and both consciously and subconsciously heightened in its performative nature.

Of course, the sociocultural background and individual perception and interpretation are just as crucial when understanding and imagining a story from a book. However, the message drawn from *Sherlock* is more dependent on what the reader knows from other sources, making the meaning making process even more complex and indeterminable – which is expressed in a higher level of performativity. First of all, a book is tangible. There is of course a technical medium involved in both the novels – respectively the short stories and the series – but the relation between technical medium and narrative with a book is, at least in case of *Sherlock Holmes*, much more static in comparison to a digital series or even just a film.[44] Also, as mentioned before, the audiovisuality of moving pictures offers a great potential to include hidden hints, which enhances especially the genre of crime stories. The viewer has to decide by himself/herself, if a certain object or action is significant for the plot or not. This is often pre-suggested in a novel, whereas the readers' attention is directed more to certain activities. Production aspects like cutting and lighting have, on one hand, a lot more influence in creating the atmosphere that again triggers certain directions in the viewers' interpretations, but, on the other hand, as indicated before, the prior is much more reliant on phenomenological reactions from the reader.

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41 | Elleström: *Media Transformation* (ref. 4), p. 16–17.

42 | Michel De Certeau. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Steven Rendall (trans.). Berkeley 1988, p. 32.

43 | Elleström: *Media Borders, Multimodality and Intermediality* (ref. 11), p. 15.

44 | Klaus Müller-Wille: *Sezierte Bücher. Hans Christian Andersens Materialästhetik*. Paderborn 2016. Müller-Wille investigates how stories play with their own materiality, such as Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* (1865) or the tales of H.C. Andersen.

Conclusion

This paper argues that the series' materiality and value is mainly constructed through the relationships and transmedial processes interacting with the culture the receiver is embedded in. The examination of the TV series' materiality points to the fact that it transforms aspects of not only one, but various source media into a form that the media properties of a digital TV series are capable of representing, thus supporting the idea of an expanded transmediation concept. *Sherlock*'s materiality only exists in people's imaginations, and it is highly performative because of a plurality of transmediations and interpretative fluidity. This is due to the great variety of sociocultural contexts and information exchanged between and about each other in our postmodern times. These arguments were developed with an interdisciplinary approach, which enhanced the understanding of performativity and the fluidity of how materiality is perceived.

On a metalevel, this paper even supports the thesis that reflexivity and an openness to interdisciplinary ideas can broaden our understanding of culture and its intermedial relationships. It has explained that the series as a medium should be considered in its performative context, rather than as a media object. Thus, a performative approach to the production of meaning and understanding, regardless of the respective cultural context or specific media product, should be pursued for understanding modern literary texts. It is important to disentangle and link questions about where we get our messages and meanings from, and how they are being reinforced. An awareness of how information flows and shapes culture through the media products that surround humans today is crucial for reflecting on emerging and shifting cultural values. In summary, the perception of transmediations between media products forms a crucial part of cultural processes, their meaning and their constant performance, just as the taste, the texture and the time put into the process of making a cake would largely be meaningless without someone being able to eat and enjoy it.

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