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"IT´S A-ME, ANOTHER BAD REVIEW!": ASSESSING THE PERCEIVED FAILURE OF THE VIDEO GAME ADAPTATIONS BASED ON THE CINEMATIC ADAPTATIONS OF *SUPER MARIO BROS.* AND *MAX PAYNE*

MA Thesis

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"I hereby confirm that I am the sole author of the thesis submitted. All the works and conceptual viewpoints by other authors that I have used, as well as data deriving from sources have been appropriately attributed."

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Introduction

Video games and films are both media whose production processes and facilities are nowadays very similar and which, at first sight, could suggest that these two media are very similar as well (Picard, 2007, p. 1). Yet, it appears that there are many aspects that make video games successful but may be difficult to translate to the film medium.

There are many articles, forum threads, and video discussions complaining about how bad the video game adaptations are, and truly, many of these films did get negative reviews and made a small profit. On the other hand, there might be hope for this genre to redeem itself as it appears that a few recently made live-action adaptations of video games have started to please the audience more than before. These films include, for instance, *Sonic the Hedgehog* (2020) and *Pokémon Detective Pikachu* (2019) which both have received good reviews and appear to be commercially successful.

However, it cannot be ignored that many of the film adaptations of video games are still by many considered to be failures. It is because they were often not only box office failures and a disappointment for the fans of the source material, they were also negatively rated and reviewed by the film critics and the rest of the audience. While the box office failure is not the only criterion of failure, focusing on this aspect alone for now, we can see that there are many of these adaptations that failed specifically in this aspect. The beginning of the film adaptations of games dates back to the 1990s when the film *Super Mario Bros.*[1] (1993) was released as the adaptation of an evergreen classic, *Super Mario Bros* which was released in 1985 on the NES (Nintendo Entertainment System) platform. The film was a commercial failure as its budget was $42 million and it grossed merely $20 million (Picard, 2007, p. 2). However, as I will illustrate in chapter 2.3, there were many other problems associated with both the production and reception of the film. Other examples of box office failures are *Blood Rayne* (2005) which grossed $3 million against the budget of $25, *House of the Dead* (2003), *Doom* (2005), *DOA: Dead or Alive* (2006), and many others which earned back only a fraction of their production costs (Picard, 2007, p. 3).

Video games that are adapted to film have usually gained a certain level of popularity before being adapted. It is because of the fact that adapting something that was "already financially successful" can often be seen as a "safe bet" in making a profit, knowing that the

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[1] For the purpose of better readability, the period mark will be removed in the further mentions of this title.

source text has gained recognition and a decently big fan base (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 5). Furthermore, the gaming industry has now become bigger than the film industry and this is another financial reason why there is an increasing number of adaptations that are based on popular video games (Stewart, 2019).

However, adaptations are often problematic because if the audience has been familiarized with the original source, based on which the adaptation was made, it is highly possible that they will have certain expectations or a specific image in their mind of how this product should look or be like. These expectations are often not met because when adapting something from one medium to another, there are often many changes that need to be done in order to better adjust the product to the new medium. These changes are, however, inevitable as "the very process of filmmaking already generates an automatic difference" to the source text (Stam, 2000, p. 56). However, these differences can influence the audience´s reception negatively, and therefore, it is common that an adaptation, regardless of the medium, is likely to be considered "never as good as the original" (Hutcheon, 2006, p. XII). Regarding this, Thomas Leitch has also argued that nothing that comes after can ever take the place of the original, because " the source texts will always be better at being themselves" (Leitch, 2003 p. 161).

This concern has also appeared in connection to adaptations of literary texts as both audiences (of video games and literary text) are highly likely to approach and judge the film adaptations based on the source material they are acquainted with and their expectations. As Christian Metz describes the relationship the reader of literary text has with the adaptation, when someone has formed a relationship with the source material and later they are introduced to the adaptation which was created based on someone else´s phantasy, the adaptation becomes a "bad object" (Metz, 1977, p. 12). Furthermore, another danger of adaptations comes with the issue of fidelity. It is often used as a criterion based on which the viewers tend to judge an adaptation, however, it is not an ideal tool for evaluation of a film´s quality as it does not allow for an objective assessment (Stam, 2000, p. 55). Furthermore, the fidelity discourse often expects that the adaptation simply aims to copy the source text and then negatively perceives its "failure" and "inability" to do so. Often, if the adaptation does not capture the viewer as much as the original product did, they may begin to negatively judge the film because it was not faithful enough (Stam, 2000, p. 54).

However, often it is not only the fans of the source material who write negative reviews for these adaptations and give them low ratings. MacDonald suggests that "film critics have often relished the opportunity" to negatively criticize "bad" film adaptations of video games (MacDonald, 2018). Often the negative response comes also from film critics and other audience members who have not played the video game before. Therefore, it is important to look at different types of audiences and their reasoning behind finding the film "bad" to get a more general overview of what is causing the negative reception. The reviewers who are not familiar with the source text could be possibly a little more reliable and objective because they will not base their reviews and ratings on the fidelity of the adaptation to the source text.

There can be several reasons for the perceived failure of many film adaptations of video games. In this research, I am going to explore the economic and commercial side of "failure" of two film adaptations that were based on popular video games. Given the negative reception that I have begun to highlight, I am interested in finding out the possible causes of the unsuccess of these adaptations, be it box office failure, bad reception, or disregard from the side of fans. In this thesis, I am going to be focusing on Hollywood live-action films.

I will be analyzing two film adaptations based on video games. The first adaptation is called *Super Mario Bros (1985)* which is based on the video game of the same name released in 1985 on the NES. The second adaptation is *Max Payne* (2008) based on the video game of the same name released in 2001, originally for Microsoft Windows and later for other platforms as well. These films are interesting subjects for this research because the games on which they are based belong to two very different genres, representing contrastingly different game eras and different complexity of the narrative.

Super Mario Bros (1985) is a 2D scrolling platform game where the player has to jump on different platforms or ledges and fight the enemies in order to reach the end of the level. The story of *Super Mario Bros* (1985) is very simple and short. Two Italian brothers Mario and Luigi find themselves in the Mushroom Kingdom where their task is to save Princess Toadstool from the villain called Bowser. The narrative in the game is secondary to the game structure as the players are thrown into the game and only as they reach the end of each world they get a message from Toad informing them that princess is in another castle and at the end of the game the princess thanks them for saving her. Apart from that, there are no other narrative devices present in the game.

On the other hand, *Max Payne* (2001) is a third-person shooter with a much more complex narrative structure and with a clear film noir and hard-boiled detective novels´ influences. Featuring elements such as the character´s voice-over narration, low-key lighting, criminal underworld, and socially critical depiction of contemporary urban life. The plot revolves around a police detective Max Payne, who is trying to solve a case of the tragic murder of his wife and daughter.

I am going to use two approaches in finding out what is often seen as a common cause for unsuccessfulness concerning the films based on video games. First, I will draw out some of the negative reception via discourse analysis. The materials used for this analysis will be collected from online newspapers, articles, and different film and video game reviewing platforms such as Rotten Tomatoes, IMDb, or GameSpot. These will include reviews from professional film critics but also film-goers and gamers who look at these films from more of a personal, rather than from a professional and technical, point of view. By analyzing the film reviews I will illustrate the common patterns in critical reception and pinpoint the most common problems that the audience and critics have with these adaptations. Of course, I am aware of the fact that only a small fraction of the viewers rate and review the film. Furthermore, not all of the reviewers may express their own opinion as people´s opinions can change after seeing the opinions of others. They may either "shift their opinion towards what appears to be the average of the opinion distribution" or be "put off by the majority and adjust their opinions away" from them purposefully (Pradelski et al., 2018). However, the discourse analysis that I am applying here is still a very useful tool in order to get an overview of what partially influenced the negative reception and what the reviewers claim to be the negatives of the given product. Furthermore, by analyzing the reviews of the video games I will find out what aspects made the audience like these games and whether those aspects could be or were adapted into the film. Also, if certain aspects were adapted, I will illustrate how they influenced some of the reviewers´ critical judgment of the adaptation.

Second, I will analyze the two films via close textual analysis to explore from which elements the journalistic reception, box office failure, and fan backlash could potentially emerge. The level of fidelity to the source text will be addressed as well, and the analysis will further focus on the translation process of the adapted text and on different concepts that are related to audience´s reception.

The two adaptations that will be analyzed, are based on two very different video games and their analysis can, therefore, offer two illustrations of a larger problem between the film industry concerns and the journalistic and fan reception.

Chapter 1: Theoretical Framework

1.1 Introduction to the Relationship Between Video Games and Films

The relationship between the two audiovisual media, video games and film, is a complicated one. However, for the purpose of this thesis which aims to analyze films that are based on video games, it is necessary to address this topic in more detail. It will help to better illustrate what are the possible struggles of analyzing such adaptations and point at the best ways to approach these films. Therefore, this chapter will give an overview of this relationship´s background and discuss how the two media have been influencing, inspiring, and affecting each other.

Video games can have a strong impact on the human experience as they engage with our instincts, cognitive abilities, and emotions while providing us with the feeling of control (Flanagan, 2016, p. 2). However, it is a very diverse media, which can challenge the video game studies´ researches and their search for the best fitting methodological approach (Aerseth, 2001). Aerseth describes video games as the "perhaps the richest cultural genre we have yet seen" and explains that because games are considered such a mixed genre and there are extensive media differences within this field, it is almost impossible to find a common denominator. Therefore, making general claims about video games or using traditional medium perspectives is difficult (Aerseth, 2001).

Films are, however, an equally complex medium. Cinema has been considered as an intriguing form of art, more impactful than literature or theatre. In 1911, cinema was discussed by Ricciotto Canudo as the "Sixth Art" combining aspects of the other five arts (architecture, sculpture, painting, music, and literature) that were named previously by Hegel (Canudo, 1911, pp. 58-66, Gance, 1912, pp. 66-67, Speight, 2014, p. 105). However, after further considerations of including dance, it took sixth place and cinema has become known as the "Seventh Art" (Canudo, 1923, pp. 294-303). After that, the traditional subdivision of the Arts is as following: Architecture, Sculpture, Painting, Literature, Music, Performing, and Film.

Furthermore, Canudo considered cinema to possess the potential of becoming a universal language with multiplying possibilities of expression and ability to transmit emotions (Canudo, 1923, pp. 295-296). Therefore, films also have a strong impact on the human experience as they engage with the viewer on multiple levels. The power of cinema

on human experience was well described by Abel Gance who writes that cinema can affect people transnationally and across different cultures (Gance, 1912, pp. 66).

However, game studies, or ludology, is a fairly new field of studies that began in the 1990s and it is important to mention that the relationship between cinema and video games played an important role in the development of video game studies as an academic discipline because it kept pushing games further into academic discourse (Fassone et al., 2015, pp. 5-6). However, when this new discipline emerged, the existing tools of Film Studies were not directly applicable to games, and therefore, engaging with the video game medium was problematic for the film scholars. (Fassone et al., 2015, pp. 5-6).

The fact that both these media are complex and diverse, not only when compared to one another but also on their own, complicates the process of comparing video games and films. Therefore, there are no precise or recommended guidelines that can be followed when trying to pinpoint the differences or similarities between these media that could generally be applied to analyses. Therefore, a close textual analysis of specific case studies is one of the possible ways to approach this conundrum.

However, despite the fact that the relationship between video games and films is complicated, their connections are undeniable as they are interconnected in both the textual fabric (concerning their influence on each other in form and contents), and in their practices and the theories that accompany them (Fassone et al., 2015, p. 5).

In 1997, Mark J.P. Wolf pointed out that the relationship between cinema and video games is not based solely on characters or plotlines, which was a common belief or the most general assumption (Wolf, 1997, p. 11). This relationship also concerns other important dimensions such as aesthetics, visual codes, iconographies, practices, and social spaces, and this complexity can also complicate the relationship between video games and films (Fassone et al., 2015, p. 5).

According to Wolf, the close relationship between these media is reflected in one of the medium´s names (Wolf, 2008, p. 3). Generally, there are two variations of the name "video game" and "videogame". The first variation reflects the ludic tradition and can point to other types of games such as board games. The second variation can be considered to highlight the audiovisual nature of this medium recalling artefacts such as videotapes (Wolf, 2015, p.3; Fassone et al., 2015, p. 5).

Besides the names "video game" or "videogame" there have been other names for this medium which are "computer game" and "digital game". However, according to statistics, the term "video game" is the most common and has been used in the majority of scholarly articles (Perron and Arsenault, 2015, p. 28). Besides the name, these media also show similar production models, share professional figures, and display familiar consumption behaviors (Fassone et al., 2015, p. 5).

In his essay published in 2015, Wolf explores the influence of the film theory on video game studies. The usage of film theory in video game studies has been very dominant, mainly because many scholars studying video games had a background in film and television study programs (Wolf, 2015, p. 15). Fassone et al. discuss Wolf´s essay further, claiming that because the name of the medium includes the term "video" (which is a category of Film Studies and film history), video games can be seen as a part of film´s development (Fassone et al., 2015, p. 10). Therefore, the medium´s name can appear as a tool that constrains the interpretation of video games to the cultural series of cinema (Fassone et al., 2015, p. 10). Similarly, Perron and Arsenault have expressed that it is important to decenter the common cinematic view and find new and more medium-specific analytical approaches in studying video games (Perron and Arsenault, 2015, pp. 25-36).

This would suggest that video games have been often suppressed as a medium and not analyzed separately from Film Studies. Such approach could be tied to further misunderstandings about the platform and influence the choices in relation to the way of adapting it onto the cinema screen because video games have been framed in the light of cinema not only by scholars but also producers and designers (Perron and Arsenault, 2015, p. 25). Therefore, it is important to consider that this all might have influenced filmmakers when adapting video games and that in terms of this research, video games and films need to be recognized as two different media. Each requires a specific approach in order to better pinpoint the possible causes of bad reception or valuations over the execution of the film adaptations based on video games.

However, it can be argued that even though many differences between the two media can be pointed out, they still share many similarities that also affects the process of adaptation from one medium to the other. For the reason that their relationship goes further, beyond the surface similarities such as characters and plot, when comparing the two media

it is important to explore them both in order to choose correct aspects and concepts for close analysis.

1.2 The Differences and Similarities Between Video Games and Films

When looking at the possible key differences that could influence the video-game-to-film adaptation it is important to consider what elements video games or films usually emphasize. As I discussed, characters or narrative should not be the only point of focus when discussing the relationship between these two media. However, what needs to be addressed is the role that these two qualities play in these media.

Characters and narrative are clearly important dimensions of film. However, even though many games nowadays rely on characters and narrative, Jenkins suggests that the video games´ core characteristics tend not to emphasize these dimensions as much in the majority of video games (Jenkins, 2001). This could potentially be one of the reasons why adapting a video game onto the cinema screen might be difficult. In most cases, video games, unlike films, rely on other sets of qualities such as gameplay and interactivity. However, in many of the currently popular games, such as *GTA5*, *The Witcher*, *Tomb Raider*, etc., characters and narrative are very important as video games are becoming increasingly cinematic. Yet, in the case of older games such as *Super Mario Bros*, the gameplay is arguably more important than fully developed characters.

In further relation to the characters and narrative as one possible reason for difficulty when adapting a video game to film, it is important to look at the translation process backward. In the process of making video games based on films, the video game creators can take the ready-made characters and story elements and easily carry them over into the video game while adding an interactive dimension (King, Krzywinska, 2002, pp. 151-152). However, this effect is much harder to achieve when trying to carry over character and story elements from video games into films (King, Krzywinska, 2002, pp. 151-152). Even though this dynamic is apparent, King and Krzywinska write that the reason why carrying these elements from video games to film is difficult cannot be determined without falling into subjectivism (King, Krzywinska, 2002, pp. 151-152). However, considering the way video games are structured (especially those made in the past) they mostly revolved around the gameplay. Thus, characters and story elements were more secondary and could appear

possessing less depth than would be required for the creation of a film. Therefore, they could not be simply carried over without any additional alterations and additions. On the other hand, many contemporary video games strive to be more cinematic and while they are still games and the focus of the game creators is to provide the players with interactive and good-quality gameplay, at the same time, in many games these days the story possesses great depth and the characters are well fleshed out. Therefore, many contemporary video games can appear as films with the inclusion of the interactive dimension.

King and Krzywinska (2002, pp. 141-153) explore the relationship between video games and cinema and focus on their similarities and differences which could serve as a useful tool when analyzing video-game-to-film adaptations. The main similarities that they point out are the use of cinematic cut-scenes, digital animation, and point-of-view structure, which can also be approached from the perspective of Film Studies. On the other hand, the key differences that they discuss are the notion of interactivity and the role of narrative. Furthermore, the remediation of cinema is addressed which can be understood as a way of media to absorb and repurpose other media forms. This is important to understand when discussing video games such as *Max Payne* (2001), that are very cinematic in nature, but also when generally studying adaptations related to video games (Flanagan, 2016, pp. 3-4).

Concerning remediation, it is clear that video games have been borrowing certain elements from cinema which is a common feature for the new types of media (Bolter and Grusin, 1999). Because of remediation, the video games that implement many cinematic elements can be viewed as media that enable the player to enter the world inside of the cinema screen (Bolter and Grusin, 1999). It can be thought of as if a film was expanded, allowing for a more interactive approach and a variation of perspectives (King, Krzywinska, 2002, p. 149). Generally, the video games that offer cinematic dimensions, including *Max Payne* (2001), would often be praised if their creators incorporated more cinematic elements (King, Krzywinska, 2002, pp. 149-150). On the contrary, in terms of remediation, it seems to be the exact opposite for films implementing video game elements as video games tend to be seen as a "deleterious influence especially in terms of the alleged erosion of qualities such as character and narrative in Hollywood action-adventure cinema" (King, Krzywinska, 2002, p. 150). This way of seeing the influence of video games on cinema and vice versa began around the year 2000 when home consoles began to gain popularity and began to pose a threat to television and film industries, which were dominant providers of domestic entertainment (Anderson, 2015, p. 76). During this time, new tropes about gaming emerged

in cinema. These tropes included beliefs that playing video games are connected to antisocial behavior, violence, or addiction, and therefore, video games have often been seen as "bad objects" (Anderson, 2015, p. 76).

This suggests that films based on video games might have been put into a difficult position from the beginning if they were judged by the audience based on similar beliefs – that video games are a deleterious influence on cinema and especially Hollywood action-adventure cinema. Yet, the influence of cinema on video games is mostly praised. However, this also raises the question: why do the popular and well-reviewed cinematic games such as *Max Payne* (2001) struggle to be popular and well-received film adaptations? Particularly as they are already cinematic to begin with, which should allow the filmmakers for an easier translation to the cinema screen.

The video game and Film Studies have been struggling in order to find an appropriate way to approach the relationship between the two media. There certainly are limitations when it comes to finding adequate methodological and analytical tools in studying the relationship between these two complex media. However, in recent years new research methods have been constructed.

1.3 The New Analytical Tools for Approaching Films Based on Video Games

Recently, several scholars have begun proposing new ways of approaching the relationship between film and video games. There is one, especially important work that needs to be addressed because it is a very useful tool in approaching the relationship between these two media.

In 2015, Enrico Gandolfi and Roberto Semprebene intended to give scholars a more holistic perspective when studying the video-game-to-film processes by using concepts from Media Studies, Semiotics, Cultural Studies, and Game Studies. Their aim was also to establish a multidisciplinary tool for scholars from different disciplines and explain the key factors that occur when video games are made into films. In their essay, they propose consideration of four basic grounds. The first ground is the production of both video games and their film adaptations, which encompasses the target audience and the efforts put into creating and promoting the text. The second ground to consider is the agential dimension, which focuses on "the translation of video game accounts and rules" into film dynamics. The

third is the representational dimension which is "the cultural system embodied by the video game and film as a symbolic assembly of connotations and influences". The fourth and last is the economic and cultural impact of the film and video game which concerns reception and box office success. (Gandolfi and Semprebene, 2015)

Furthermore, for the second and third grounds, Gandolfi and Semprebene suggest four more elements for a better comparison, which they call the narrative, aesthetic, encyclopaedian, and dynamic operative fronts.

When applying the narrative operative front, Gandolfi and Sembrebene recommend Greimas´ (1983) narrative program in which five different phases are recognized in the narrative. These phases are contract, competence, performance, achievement, and sanction. Within this narrative program, six different types of characters are recognized which are the subject, object, sender, villain, helper, and receiver. The reason why Gandolfi and Semprebene recommend this narrative program is because of its abstraction that allows crossing media boundaries beyond their specifics and peculiarities. (Gandolfi and Semprebene, 2015)

The aesthetic operative front is aimed at recognizing the style of art and its identity in representing the text. Two main categories are pointed out as the realistic and the iconic. The realistic style puts emphasis on representing subjects in a realistic manner, while the iconic tries to stay close to the original style of the genre where the text comes from. (Gandolfi and Semprebene, 2015)

The encyclopaedian front is characterized by the information that will affect how the audience will interpret the text and the final, dynamic operative front is aimed at the analysis of how well the video game mechanics that define the experience can be achieved by that media and its translation into film. (Gandolfi and Semprebene, 2015)

Besides this already complex way to approach the film adaptations of video games, there are two continuums based on which Gandolfi and Semprebene explore the result of ludic films. These are the coherence, which refers to fidelity to the original text and dependency referring to the amount of knowledge of the original text that the audience needs to possess to understand the references and concepts introduced in the adaptation. Furthermore, in judging the film´s position in the two continuums, three levels in relation to coherence and dependency are determined: low, medium, and high. Based on the level of coherence, it can be decided whether the specific film adaptation might achieve success with

a wider audience or within a limited circle consisting mainly of fans of the original text. Too high dependency can also badly influence how wide will the audience be because if too much knowledge will be expected from them in order to better understand the film, the film might be suitable only for the ones who are very familiar with the source text. (Gandolfi and Semprebene, 2015)

Overall, this system of analysis of films based on video games appears to be adequately complex to approach adaptations based on video games. It is complex because it requires an analysis of the important elements that are being translated while also taking a closer look at the film´s production and economic situation. Furthermore, it pays attention to how all these elements in the process of adaptation can affect the two types of audiences: the audience which is familiar with the source media or source text and the audience that is not. It includes many of the issues and concepts that one can encounter when analyzing these films and their reception. Therefore, this model will also be applied to this research. However, this analytical tool could be taken a little further as there are a few other concepts that might be important to be discussed in the analysis. Especially, when exploring what was perceived by many as a failure of these film adaptations.

1.4 The Concepts for the Analysis of the Relationship Between Video Games and Film

The tools and aspects that will be chosen as the base for the analysis will be inspired by Gandolfi and Semprebene´s work with the addition of several concepts that will be included in the analysis because of their importance and recurrence within the discourse on the subject of this research. In their work where they demonstrate this model for the analysis, Gandolfi and Semprebene have also chosen the 1993´s *Super Mario Bros* adaptation (among other films) as one of their case studies. While taking into consideration the outcome of their analysis of this film, it is necessary to take the analysis further as it was not extensive enough. Therefore, this thesis will discuss this adaptation in more depth with the inclusion of additional concepts for the analysis and additional sources that are the film reviews.

The additional concepts that could negatively affect the reception of the film adaptations from a video game to film that should be discussed are identification, experience, nostalgia, and perceived realism and its effect on the immersion. These concepts were chosen based on the presumption that they are connected to the way the audience can interpret the text. Each of them will be further discussed in the following subchapters in order to give an

explanation of how they can influence the way the audience will view and understand the film. These concepts, however, appear to be intertwined as their effects can combine and influence each other. Simply put, strong identification with media characters will influence our experience when watching a film; feeling nostalgic about the original text can influence the level of our identification and the quality of our experience when watching the film adaptation. Furthermore, the more realistic the film appears to the viewer within its own reality, based on the viewer´s imagination and understanding, the more immersive will be their experience. Because of this constant interplay, these concepts might appear complicated, however, they have the power to influence the audience´s emotions and judgment and can be related to the reception of the adaptations.

In the analysis part of this thesis, the reviews of the two film adaptations, *Super Mario Bros* and *Max Payne*, are discussed and used as a tool that could help to determine what seem to be the most common points of criticism concerning the reception of these films and to decide whether these additional concepts could have also had an influence on their judgment and have negatively affected their reviews.

1.4.1 Vividness of Experience and its Effects on the Audience´s Reception

Experience and its quality can influence the audience´s impression of the viewed film or played video game. It is important to discuss the concept of experience because it is a key notion in Salen and Zimmerman´s definition of video games who imply that playing video games is equal to " experiencing" (Salen and Zimmerman, 2004, p. 87).

It could be argued that because of the interactive nature of video games, the players´ experiences can leave a stronger impact than the experiences gotten while watching a film. This has also been suggested by Ian Bogost (2007), who has used the concept called "the scale of vividness" (a concept introduced by psychologist Charles Hill) where he has tried to rank different types of experience based on how real or vivid they can feel. Bogost placed playing video games right under the "actual experience" which represents our first-hand interaction with reality, while moving images with sound, as in films, were placed lower on this scale, under the experience gotten by playing video games (Muriel and Crawford, 2018, p. 85). This means that in evaluating the power of the vividness of experience, video games provide more vivid experience than films. Therefore, if the audience is familiar with the video game based on which the film was made, it is possible that playing the video game

generated stronger experience than the one they had when they watched the film. This can furthermore influence the viewer´s experience of the adaptation as they may begin to compare the two experiences and because one is more vivid and feels more involving, it may make their experience of the adaptation seem weaker and worse. Therefore, experience and its vividness can also be argued to have an influence on the audience´s reviews and opinions of the film.

1.4.2 Perceived Realism and its Effect on the Level of Immersion

The concepts of perceived realism and immersion are an important part of the discussion. The way these two concepts influence each other is worth analyzing in relation to the two different media and their effect on the consumer. In this subchapter, I will explain how the different realities within films or video games can be perceived by the consumer and how it can influence their level of immersion in the film or video game.

In order to understand how different realities work in film and video games, it is important to also discuss how realism can be defined in relation to this topic and how it can affect the consumer. Wolf defines realism as "a series of attributes or criteria which are used to compare representations of things with analogous entities in the actual or real world of lived" (Wolf, 2015, p. 17). Originally, realism was measured based on how close the representations to the real object were, however, in relation to images that are purely based on someone´s imagination and do not exist in the real world, realism is measured depending on not only a single particular object, "but on typical objects of the same type" (Wolf, 2015, p. 17-18). Therefore, realism is more about how typical a given representation is rather than whether the object represented is "realistic", as in, existing and present in the real world (Wolf, 2015, p. 18). Because video games and films often contain many fantasy elements and are set in imaginary worlds, it is important to understand realism in a different manner. Therefore, in the course of this thesis, I am not defining realism as something that necessarily needs to be realistic in our own world, it simply needs to be realistic for the viewer within the world that is presented in the film or video game. A fictional world can be perceived as realistic to different viewers or players based on their own life experiences and ideas and based on what was revealed about the given world through the narrative.

Therefore, the realism that is discussed here can be defined as "perceived realism". Shapiro et al. explain that in relation to medias such as video games, perceived realism can

depend on two types of information (Shapiro et al., 2006, p. 278). First, on the sensory information such as the looks or sound of the game, and second, "the more inferential and imaginative elements" which make the player wonder whether a certain thing or an element would "happen" the same way or "look" the same if it were real (Shapiro et al., 2006, p. 278). Furthermore, Shapiro et al. write that "it is common for people to make judgments about the realism of media stories as they view them" which relates to the possible reasons for negative reception of such stories (Shapiro et al., 2006, p. 278).

In his essay, Wolf offers his point of view regarding the experience offered by video games and cinema through the means of realism (Wolf, 2015, pp. 5-13). Wolf discusses Andre Bazin´s work called "Myth of Total Cinema" (who believed in the importance of a heightened sense of realism in cinema) and focuses on the simulated lived experience generated by playing video games and watching films. The advancements of the cinema allowed for better representation and recreation of reality, which is called simulated lived experience (Wolf, 2015, p.15). Because video games are also often striving to achieve a high level of realism, they can also be thought to provide a more immersive type of experience (Wolf, 2015, p. 16). There is research suggesting that there is a close relationship between perceived realism and immersion (Shapiro and Weisbein, 2001). Therefore, it can be assumed that if a film or a video game fails to be perceived by the viewers as realistic, it could potentially negatively influence the viewers´ level of immersion when playing video games or watching films.

However, in further relation to realism, video games should be understood as "a closed formal system that subjectively represents a subset of reality" (Crawford, 1984, p. 4). Crawford further explains how different media represent reality. Paintings and sculptures, for example, represent static reality, a reality that is frozen in time, while dynamic media such as films or dance take the representation of reality further as they represent the changing reality. However, according to Crawford, the best way to represent reality is through video games because they allow the audience to explore the reality fully thanks to their interactive nature (Crawford, 1984, p. 6-7).

When playing video games, players are subconsciously aware of the limitations of realism within the game´s world but they usually do not think of them as unrealistic as they are fully drawn into its world. Video games are able to "open doors to different aspects of reality" by different means, one of them being the magic circle (Muriel and Crawford, 2018,

p. 116). The magic circle can be described as "a finite space with infinite possibility" (Salen and Zimmerman, 2004, p. 95). It acts as a border that separates the game´s world from the real world and encloses it. In this circle, the rule and boundaries of each specific game are set as they create a self-contained reality (Muriel and Crawford, 2018, p. 119). Once the players are in this circle, they become absorbed into the video game´s reality and should not sense any conflicts with realism. Therefore, video games allow for a very immersive experience where the players usually do not doubt its reality by whether something is realistic in our world or not. Thus, the video game worlds then become believable and "realistic" within the act of immersion.

On the other hand, films cannot create the same kind of immersion as video games. Therefore, if the film´s mise-en-scène, actors´ performance, or script are not convincing enough, the sense of perceived realism and believability can be disrupted or interrupted which will also negatively influence the immersion for the viewers. Films should strive to create a perfect illusion and always follow their own rules. The knowledge of social relationships and human behavior should be helpful in creating a believable and realistic experience for the audience and immerse them within the story for the best experience.

Because the immersion appears to be easier to achieve through the interactive means of video games, it is possible that it will be more difficult to achieve a similar level of immersion through film adaptations. This could furthermore negatively influence the reviewers´ ratings of the film.

However, adapting a video game into a film with its specific rules that can be seen as defying realism (e.g. coming back to life each time the character dies in action) can be complicated. The translation of the video game´s realism that works inside its magic circle might not work outside the circle, in a film medium. As a result of that, if the reality inside the film appears to be following rules from a video game too closely, the audience could find the film illogical, unrealistic, or unbelievable which will negatively impact their immersion. This can further negatively influence their opinion of the adaptation and that is why it is important to consider how the translation of the video game´s rules and reality was accomplished in the adaptation and if it allows for an immersive experience.

1.4.3 The Influence of Identification with Media Characters on the Reception of Film Adaptation

Identification with media characters is a concept that plays a very important role in the audience´s capability of experiencing, understanding, and interpreting text from the inside and because it engages the audience during the reception (Cohen, 2001, pp. 245, 261). If identified with characters from films, games, or other media, one can experience social reality from different perspectives, which also contributes to the development of their self-identity (Cohen, 2001, p. 246). Based on works of different scholars, Cohen defines identification as "an imaginative experience in which a person surrenders consciousness of his or her own identity and experiences the world through someone else's point of view" (Cohen, 2001, p. 248). It is also described as "an imaginative process through which an audience member assumes the identity, goals, and perspective of a character" (Cohen, 2001, p. 261). However, according to Adrienne Shaw, it is important not to think of identification as a static and measurable connection to a character but more as seeing ourselves relating to images of others and being reflected in the world (Shaw, 2014, pp. 70-71).

Therefore, judging this concept based on these definitions, it appears that the process of identification with media characters could be a good tool for evaluating how "well" these characters are designed or written in films and how well can they pull the audience member into their world. If characters and their motivations appear to be well justified, logical, or realistic it can be assumed that the chances of the audience members identifying with them will be higher. This should then allow the audience to understand and interpret the text from the inside and let them experience social reality from new perspectives and improve their experience of the film. Therefore, after going discussing the reviews, it is important to determine based on these reviews and comments, whether the audience had trouble identifying with the films´ characters, which could have negatively affected their judgment.

1.4.4 The Role of Nostalgia in the Video Game and Film Discourse

Nostalgia can be defined as "the emotional by-product of change" (Fenty, 2008, p. 21). It can be understood as the desire to return to some past event or period because the situation has already changed since then (Fenty, 2008, p. 21). Nostalgia is an important cultural concept to discuss within the discourse of both films and video games. The ways that these two media reconstruct memory are very similar and video games are even capable

of reconstructing "memories of older cinematic moments or styles" (Taylor and Whalen, 2008, p. 10). A good example of this is the video game *Max Payne* (2001) which clearly "invokes the mood of film noir, reconstructing its generic qualities in the formal constraints of gameplay and the graphic novels that serve as interstitials" (Taylor and Whalen, 2008, p. 10).

Nostalgia has also been connected to improving the size of the success of certain media presentations as the desire for it is very common among consumers. Therefore, nostalgia can be seen as a "tool of consumption" where earlier experiences are recreated through products evoking it (Suominen, 2007). Therefore, many companies profit from producing nostalgia-evoking products such as remasters and remakes of video games that were popular in the past. An example of this is the Japanese company Square Enix that often re-releases and remasters many of their popular video games such as the titles in the franchise of *Final Fantasy*. Similarly, popular films also become re-released on new platforms, such as Blu-Ray.

In these terms, adaptations can also be thought of as nostalgia-evoking products because they can refresh memories of the audience in connection to the source text and take them back in time to those past events they desire to experience again. However, because adaptations are not limited in terms of creative liberty, they might fail at providing the audience with a good nostalgic experience that they might be expecting.

Nostalgia can play a role in the way the audience perceives an adaptation. Therefore, the film adaptations should also be analyzed from the perspective of whether they are able to offer a satisfactory nostalgic experience to the audience if they were to expect it. This can be measured by analyzing the level of fidelity in terms of story, characters, setting and more, and the number of elements implemented from the source text as well as the aesthetics of the film and how iconic they are in relation to the original source. Besides that, the reviews should also be helpful in deciding whether the audience felt a sense of nostalgia if they refer to the video game in their film reviews and how they describe their experience of the film adaptation.

Chapter 2: *Super Mario Bros*

2.1 *Super Mario Bros* **(1985): Video Game Overview**

Before further discussing and closely analyzing the reviews and films, it is important to first look at the original video game based on which the 1993´s film adaptation was made. This is because the film´s ties to the original source are important for this research when discussing the game to film translation process. Therefore, in this summary, the main elements that define the video game will be described in order to maintain a clearer vision of what aspects of the source material were adapted.

First, the audiovisual style will be discussed. The 1985 version of the game which was first available for the Nintendo Entertainment System (NES) was a colorful 8-bit adventure with a distinctive audiovisual style. In this thesis, I will mainly refer to this version of the game as it can be considered to be the most classic one. Despite the fact that the possibilities of audiovisual effects in the case of 8-bit video games were at first very limited, the sound-effects design in *Super Mario Bros* could be labeled as genre-defining (Nitsche, 2008, p. 130). The whole adventure is accompanied by music which changes according to the area in which the main characters, Mario or Luigi, are. When players do certain actions or interact with in-game objects, different sound effects can be heard. These actions include jumping, swimming, damaging or killing opponents, shooting, dying, gathering coins or items, and more.

In terms of visuals, the enemies, structures, items, background elements, and characters are easily distinguishable. The animations are simple but smooth which allowed for comfortable gameplay. Among the different environments that are present in the game, the Mushroom Kingdom lets the players explore mountainous green lands, areas situated in the clouds, underwater places, and castles filled with obstacles and lava.

The second important element of the game is the characters, both the protagonists and antagonists as they have become icons of the NES video game era. The main playable characters are Mario, a plumber with a mustache wearing a hat, red longsleeved shirt and a pair of overalls, and his brother Luigi, who is also a plumber and looks very similar to Mario except for the green color of his shirt. Originally, in the early games, this was the only thing that made him distinguishable from Mario. Mario and Luigi can gain special abilities such as shooting fireballs, increasing in size, or becoming invincible and immune to damage after having collected certain items in the game. Mario and Luigi are on a quest to save

Princess Toadstool who is also known as Princess Peach. In the 1985 release, she appears as a girl with red hair wearing a long white dress. In later games in the franchise, her design is changed into a blonde character wearing a pink ball gown. Another character that is worth mentioning is Toad, a character who looks like a half-human half-mushroom creature and appears in the franchise sometimes as a playable and sometimes as non-playable character. Toad is an inhabitant of the Mushroom Kingdom striving for the wellbeing of the Princess Toadstool (Peach). To name some other protagonists that are important in relation to the film there is Princess Daisy, a princess of Sarsaland, who first appeared in 1989's *Super Mario Land* on Game Boy platform, or a creature called Yoshi with an appearance of a green dinosaur that Mario and the other characters can ride who was first introduced in 1990´s *Super Mario World*, originally developed for SNES (Super Nintendo Entertainment System). The main antagonist of the game is King of the Koopas, also known as Bowser, who has the appearance of a big turtle with a spiky shell and an ability to breathe, fire among many others. The most well-known enemies in the *Mario* games are creatures called Goombas which are short, brown mushroom-like creatures and Koopas Troopas, yellow-green turtles walking on two feet. Bowser is the king of the latter.

While there were not many story elements or narrative devices in the 1985´s version of the video game, the players could learn more about it through paratext in the form of a booklet that came with the video game in which the beginning of the story was described. Based on Gérard Genette´s work called "Introduction to the Paratext", paratexts can be defined as "reinforcement and accompaniment" of the main body of the work which "surround and prolong it in order to present it" (Genette, 1991, p. 261). Video game paratexts can thus be understood as additional material which gives the player more information about the video game, its world, story, characters, and more which could not be included in the main body of the work and present it to the player (Flanagan, 2016, p. 6).

This paratext, in the form of a video game instruction booklet, comes with additional information (see Appendix 1) that was not included in the game because of the technical limitations of early video games in the 1980s works as a means of, what Flanagan calls, "guaranteeing a game's intelligibility". In the case *of Super Mario Bros* (1985), it gives the players more information about the upcoming adventure, informs them about the goal of their journey and may explain Mario and Luigi´s motivation to keep pushing through their quest but also for the player to finish the game and find out how the story ends (Flanagan, 2016 p. 5).

Even if the story does not play a big role in the *Super Mario Bros* video game, because "it lacked the beginning/middle/end narrative structure" and it can be almost completely ignored while moving on from level to level, it is important to keep it in mind, in order to see how has the original concept and story been adapted in the 1993´s film (Kohler, 2016, p. 54).

Finally, the gameplay features will be described. In the 1985´s video game, there are 8 in-game worlds, each involving 4 levels. The player´s task mostly comprises of jumping on different platforms, killing or avoiding enemies, gathering coins and trying to get to the end of each level in hopes of reaching the castle where Princess Toadstool is being imprisoned. Brick walls and brick blocks are placed all around the levels that Mario and Luigi can break by jumping and hitting them. This rewards the players with coins or special items hidden in or behind them which can also grant their characters extra lives. At the end of each level, once the player has reached the goal pole, his or her points are counted together. These points could have been gotten for gathering items, killing enemies, or the overall time that it took them to complete the level. Rewards and scoring systems are important in games because they have the power to create an environment in which the players can feel a sense of achievement and empowerment which can shape the way that players experience the game (Muriel, 2018, p. 72).

2.2 *Super Mario Bros* (1993): Film Overview

Super Mario Bros was released on 28 May 1993. The film was directed by Rocky Morton and Annabel Jankel and written by a team of three people: Parker Bennet, Ed Solomon, and Terry Runté.

The film is initially set in Brooklyn and later in a dark parallel universe known as Dinohattan. These two parallel universes were created as the result of a meteor that hit the Earth about 65 million years ago. After this event, those dinosaurs that survived the impact began evolving until they reached a humanoid form, however, they were separated from the universe where the humans lived.

Mario (Bob Hoskins) and Luigi (John Leguizamo) are two brothers working as plumbers in Brooklyn. One day, Luigi meets a girl called Daisy (Samantha Mathis), who is an archaeologist researching dinosaur bones, and invites her out on a date. Later, he and

Mario learn that she needs their assistance with a flooding excavation site and they set out to help her. When they arrive at the excavation site, they manage to fix the problem, however, Daisy gets kidnapped by the henchmen of King Koopa (Dennis Hopper), Iggy (Fisher Stevens) and Spike (Richard Edson), who take her to the parallel universe, Dinohattan. Mario and Luigi follow them into Dinohattan in hopes of saving Daisy, however, Iggy and Spike drive off with her. King Koopa possesses a powerful de-evolution machine that can return creatures into their ancestorial form. With this machine, King Koopa turns his enemies and henchmen into a less intelligent, lizard-like creatures called Goombas who then serve him. The reason why King Koopa kidnapped Daisy is that she is a descendant of a royal family and holds a meteorite pendant that has the power to unite the two parallel universes together.

In the end, Mario and Luigi manage to infiltrate King Koopa´s castle and save Daisy. Daisy´s father (Lance Henriksen) returns into a normal state, as he had fallen a victim to the de-evolution machine and became a giant fungus stretching across the parallel universe. Daisy sends Mario and Luigi back into Brooklyn and decides to stay in Dinohattan to fix all the damage that King Koopa has done and to get to know her father more.

After some time, Daisy returns to Brooklyn and asks Mario and Luigi for help. The reason why he needs help is not stated, however, this scene is there to symbolize a potential sequel to the film, which, however, was never created because of the film´s commercial failure.

2.3 *Super Mario Bros*: Discussion of the Reviews

This part of the research provides a discussion concerning the reception of the *Super Mario Bros* film which was released in 1993 and the 1985´s *Super Mario Bros* video game. The reviews and comments will furthermore help in the analysis of the film, to better understand the possible cause of the negative reception.

Furthermore, it is important to discuss what are the key positive elements that are pointed out by the audience about the *Super Mario Bros* video games. This allows for exploration of what might be perceived by the audience as either badly translated into the film or missing altogether. According to the reviews available online, mainly on GameSpot, the aspects that were liked by the players will also be discussed.

Judging the *Super Mario Bros* film based on the gathered reviews, it can be stated that this film adaptation of a video game was negatively received. The film has earned the score of 4/10 on IMDb based on 46,687 user ratings, on Rotten Tomatoes´ Tomatometer 23% score currently (February 5, 2020) based on 40 ratings and reviews written by professional film critics and 29% based on the reviews and ratings from 173,199 (February 5, 2020) audience members. For the purpose of researching this film´s reception reviews were collected from different platforms such as IMDb, Rotten Tomatoes, TV Guide, The Guardian, The New York Times and other websites dedicated to film reviews.

After organizing the reviews and searching for patterns, it appears there were multiple points of criticism aimed at the film that were repeatedly expressed by multiple reviewers and critics and therefore will be the ones that will be pointed out.

For the reason that the *Super Mario Bros* is an adaptation, the first important criterion that appears to be problematic is faithfulness to the source material. In her work called "The Theory of Adaptation", Linda Hutcheon suggests, that the thing which draws the audience toward adaptations could be the fact that it is a "mixture of repetition and difference, of familiarity and novelty" (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 114). Yet, the general audience, as the reviews indicate, often focus only on one side of the equation, bringing out adaptations´ resemblance to the so-called original. Deborah Cartmell suggests that a good adaptation for the audience is evaluated based on what was added using the artistic freedom, instead of what was missing in comparison to the source text (Cartmell, 2012, pp. 7-8). However, as the reviews of *Super Mario Bros* show, often the difference, novelty, and artistic freedom can be one of the common causes of the audience´s disapproval of the adaptation.

Regarding the reviews of *Super Mario Bros*, in the majority of the reviews, the audience and critics were to a certain degree comparing the adaptation to its source material and negatively rating it based on the elements that were not faithful. In its adaptation, many apparent changes have been done in relation to the source material. These include changes in the characters´ appearance or their relations after which they could be unrecognizable by the audience familiar with the games.

Based on the reviews of the 1993´s *Super Mario Bros* found on Rotten Tomatoes, it is clear, that the audience has expressed disapproval of the way the characters were depicted in the film. According to the user reviews on Rotten Tomatoes, the film´s audience was strongly bothered by the appearance of several characters: "The sets are okay, some of the

special effects and animatronics aren't that bad despite Yoshi looking like a Jurassic Park character reject" (Jacob B, 2018). Yoshi´s appearance is disliked because in the film he was designed to look more like a tyrannosaurus rex, rather than a mix of tyrannosaurus rex and brontosaurus. The reviewers also seem puzzled by the fact that Mario and Luigi are of two different races in the film while based on the game they are supposed to be two Italian brothers. Another problematic character seems to be King Koopa who was portrayed as a human with certain odd features such as a long tongue. Furthermore, the film´s design of Goombas is disliked as their appearance is the complete opposite of the video game counterpart: "Heck, the goombas had massive bodies with small heads, which is the opposite that it should be! It's almost like they tried to make it as bad as possible" (Daniel A, 2019). The appearance of the main characters was a target of complaints, too: "They look nothing like Mario or Luigi. This is a disgrace to the video game community" (Denzel B, 2019). This review, among some others, seems to indicate that some viewers believe that film adaptations like this can be seen as a disgrace to the video game community. This can be interpreted in a way that the fans of the game can see themselves as the main target group for whom these films were made in order to satisfy them as the fanbase and that these adaptations should distribute a positive and accurate image of the game that they were based on.

Multiple reviewers also negatively point out that Princess Toadstool (Peach) makes no appearance in the film. Instead of Princess Toadstool, Princess Daisy appears who is more of a side character in the video games rather than part of the main characters: "...they used the little-known Daisy character from the games instead of Princess Toadstool (Mario's love interest) so the younger "brother" could get the girl and appeal to the audience..." (MaximumMadness, 2011).

Considering all these complaints, it appears that the choice of characters that were included in the adaptation as well as their appearance are one of the most common reasons for the film´s negative reception.

Apart from the faithful depiction of the characters, fidelity concerning the atmosphere and the world that were a part of the original game has also shown to be an issue for the viewers watching the film adaptation. The setting of the game is completely different from the one presented in the film. "All the magic of the Mushroom Kingdom is replaced by an awful *Blade Runner* style sci-fi future" (Atom G, 2019). "Instead of the bright and happy

setting you might expect, we're given a filthy city setting..." (bregund, 2002). It is suggested, that video games "are both representations of space and representational spaces", they are "based upon rules and code, but they are also representational environments which are there for the gamer to explore and experience" (Muriel, 2018, p. 100-101). This suggests that playing games can be often viewed as "spatial experience". This experience can generate memories and feelings of nostalgia through space or setting where this experience played out which then gives the setting a certain value or meaning. For the players that can recall visiting the world of the *Super Mario Bros* video game, the setting seems to play an important role in their experience of that specific digital space or world. Therefore, instead of seeing the magical, bright, happy, and colorful world of the Mushroom Kingdom from the game, the viewers of the film are presented a dirty and dark city setting which appears to have nothing in common with their previous experience of the *Mario* world. It appears that this change of setting has negatively influenced their reviews and ratings of the film adaptation.

Based on the results that arise from the reviews, it is clear that in the case of the film adaptation of *Super Mario Bros* one of the reasons for the film´s negative reception is connected to the infidelity of the adapted text to the source material. Additionally, something that seems to be the problem for the audience of these film adaptations is when new concepts or characters are introduced. Often, the audience believes that the original game has enough content for the creation of an adaptation. After all, video games are often much lengthier than films. A game can be played for many hours while film usually lasts only about an hour or two. If not enough of the original concepts are included in the adaptation and many new ones are implemented, it can change the way the audience views the product. It might distance itself from the source material so much that it will not be recognized by the audience as an adaptation of it anymore. Therefore, among many reviews, there are complaints about the film having to do nothing with the game as it only "pretends to be *Mario*" related (LuigiIII, 2007).

Another negatively criticized aspect of the film was the plot. The audience that mentions the plot in their reviews seems to be bothered by some of the themes that were introduced: "The ebullient Bob Hoskins does his best to buoy the faltering plot, but alas even his considerable talents cannot save the film. There is some claptrap about a meteorite stone, evolution and de-evolution, and a burning desire for the underworld to take over the land of the humans." (bregund, 2002) Furthermore, to show that the plot is a very important aspect

of the film for the audience and that mixing many new different themes has made the audience see the film negatively, Brayton states in his review: "But in terms of how eagerly it befouls the source material in favor of a messy conglomeration of incompatible tones that has no natural audience whatsoever, and a plot full of lazy shortcuts and rookie mistakes, it is probably the most hurtful of all the movies in its notorious subgenre" (Brayton, 2010). In addition to these complaints, in her review, Maslin writes that in the last half-hour of the film, the plot turns "barely comprehensible" (Maslin, 1993). These reviews seem to be indicating to the fact that the film´s themes do not well fit together, the film´s writers have made some mistakes and because of all this, the plot can, in the end, feel incomprehensible. These are some of the main reasons why many audience members complain about the film´s plot which negatively affects their ratings and reviews.

The following point of negative criticism that is going to be discussed is aimed at the film´s script. According to Keith Stuart who has researched the situation during the filming of the 1993´s adaptation, there were many problems concerning the writing of the script (Stuart, 2018). The film had numerous scriptwriters and directors which has resulted in many issues. The script was rewritten many times as there were eight script concepts before the creative team decided to implement the dystopian setting and storyline (Dumesnil, 2018). All these shifts in the script lead to the fact that the film has become too fragmented and it took a lot of effort to make it into a coherent piece. The actors supposedly disliked their lines and in many scenes the dialogue was improvised. Besides that, the team was badly organized. "The production designers and special FX people didn't know what they were building, the actors had arrived [to the set] and they didn't know what they were playing" (Stuart, 2018). The unprofessional approach and different visions of the people who were working on the 1993´s adaptation have clearly caused many difficulties for the filming process. However, considering other issues that have been discussed in this thesis, the bad co-operation and script are clearly not the only possible cause for the unsuccess of this but also other films based on video games.

Interestingly, many reviewers have written recommendations not to watch the 1993´s live-action adaptation *of Super Mario Bros*, but to play the game or watch the *Mario* cartoon TV series instead. There are three cartoon TV series in the *Mario* franchise which are titled *The Super Mario Bros Super Show!* (1989), *The Adventures of Super Mario Bros 3* (1990) and *Super Mario World* (1991). Different reviewers mention that there seem to be many aspects that do not translate well from a video game to film. However, because of these

recommendations and good reception of the TV series, it appears that a translation from a video game to cartoon might be easier and could possibly result in better reception and quality. This can also be explained by what Scott McCloud writes in *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* about identification. According to McCloud, the less realistic an image of a person is, the easier it is for the people to see themselves in this image and identify with the characters that are portrayed (McCloud, 1993, p. 36). Therefore, the less realistic-looking cartoon characters can provide more room for identification which could positively affect the audience. Supported by the reviews, the cartoon series were received better than the live-action film. *The Super Mario Bros Super Show!* has earned the rating of 6.1/10 on IMDb, *The Adventures of Super Mario Bros 3* has earned the rating of 7.0/10 on IMDb and *Super Mario World* (1991) has earned the rating of 6.6/10 on IMDb while the live-action 1993´s film has earned the rating of 4.0/10.

A close connection between video games and animation can be seen especially in Japan, where many popular animated series (animé) have been adapted into video games, while many of them were also distributed to Europe and North America (Picard, 2007, p. 4). One of the possible reasons explaining why animation might be more suitable for the adaptation of video games than live-action films could be that animation seems to often appeal to the audience of video games. This trend has also been spotted in Japan as their animation is popular, even outside Japan (Picard, 2007, p. 4). On the other hand, the reason for this could be that in animation it is easier to achieve similar aesthetics to the ones of the video game in regards to the character design and spatial representation. Especially, concerning video games such as *Super Mario Bros* which have simple, aesthetic features, perfect for the adaptation into animation because animation has nearly unlimited possibilities in the case of aesthetics.

What might be of interest is another negative aspect pointed out in the reviews of the 1993´s *Super Mario Bros* film there is "bad humor" which means that the reviewers have clearly found that the humor in the film adaptation was weak or lacking despite the obvious efforts of the filmmakers in creating a sci-fi comedy. However, considering the possible relationships between the different media, in case of humor, the animation could possibly have an advantage. There are easy ways to generate humor through the means of animation. It is easy to exaggerate facial expressions and create ridiculous and in real life impossible situations. Popular animated comedies such as *Tom and Jerry* or *Looney Tunes* can be thought of an example of how animation can be a good choice of a tool for humor. When

looking at the animated adaptations of *Mario* video games, they appear to be aimed at the young audience, however, what is striking is its constant effort in generating humor.

Besides animation, it was suggested by some reviewers that a CGI animated film could be a better medium for a *Mario* film adaptation and a CGI animated film is already being worked on, which has been officially announced by Nintendo. Its release date is planned for 2022. Nintendo will co-operate together with Illumination Entertainment and the original creator of *Mario*, Shigeru Miyamoto will be also working on this film. This concept has been praised by many *Mario* fans across different platforms in hopes that it is going to be better than the 1993´s live-action.

Even though the film was received badly at that time, it has since become a cult classic. The film has been since its release date revisited by an audience who could appreciate it for its quirkiness and lightheartedness because there are still many aspects that can be enjoyed about the film. These include artistry, costume design, production, and acting skills of the cast. (Dumesnil, 2018)

The audience is important when it comes to the film´s success because the film relies on its support and reception which can act as the means of measuring its success. Every film has its intended audience based on different aspects such as age category, gender, or interest in the given topic or story that the film portrays. Therefore, it is important to consider who was the intended audience for the *Super Mario Bros* (1993) adaptation. Video games can often be seen as intended for children and therefore when video games are adapted the audience might consider such films to be intended for younger audiences. However, based on the articles published in *The Guardian* and the *Old School Gamer Magazine* the filmmakers intended to create a film that would also draw in the adults and make them interested in video games. Therefore they approached the film similarly to how comic book films were translated at that time. Films such as Tim Burton´s *Batman* (1989) appeared on screens with similar dark tone including "sharp injections of humor and color strategically placed through-out" (Dumesnil, 2018). Similarly, films that were based on comic books were also striving to catch the attention of more mature audiences even though children were at that time the key demographic (Dumesnil, 2018). Adapting comic books in such manner has worked out for Hollywood, even today film adaptations of Marvel and DC comic books are very popular and have received very positive reviews. However, taking inspiration from the way comics were adapted and using "a more grounded approach" did not work out well for

the creators of *Super Mario Bros* (1993) (Dumesnil, 2018). The audience did not recognize the video game in the adaptation anymore and even the attempt to make the film attract the more mature audience has failed as according to the reviews many reviewers still found this adaptation to be "childish". This can be also supported by the review that appeared in *The New York Times* in 1993, a day after the film´s premiere writing that:

> Eleven-year-old boys, the ideal viewers for this vigorous live-action comic strip, will no doubt be impressed with the expense and energy that have gone into bringing "Super Mario Brothers" to the screen. Other viewers may wonder how they came to be watching a film about parallel universes, punitive devolution, creatures who eat grilled salamanders on hot-dog rolls, and one memorably disgusting character who has been transformed into a ball of slime. (Maslin, 1993)

This article clearly appears to suggest that the audience that would be possibly entertained by this film would be children.

In conclusion, the majority of the reviews that were analyzed can be well summarized by the review written by Michael Wilmington published in the *Los Angeles Times* in 1993 who wrote that this film is "split in two" (Wilmington, 1993). While it is "wildly accomplished on one level" it is "wildly deficient on another" (Wilmington, 1993). "The cinematography, the sheer density and bravura of the production design" are worth high marks, however, judging the film on the writing, the score would be very weak (Wilmington, 1993).

Reviewing a game is quite different from reviewing a film. The experiences differ and there are different qualities to each of them which need to be addressed. In the case of *Super Mario Bros*, one of the most liked qualities is the variety it offers in terms of world, level, and enemy designs. The world inside the 1985´s *Super Mario Bros* is considered to be unique and diverse with much to explore. Many of the players and reviewers compliment it for the good visual style and detailed designs.

The gameplay is described as fun and simple with the appropriate level of difficulty so that it can be easily picked up by anyone. In relation to the research done by Isabela and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi on flow, in order to well experience something, a balance between the challenge presented to someone and their skills is necessary (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988). In relation to video games, Charles et al. (2005) explain this theory of flow and the appropriate level of difficulty as something that creates a balance between complexity and boredom and with the adequate amount of challenge the players can feel joy when they make it through different challenges (Charles et al., 2005).

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Overall, this video game is still enjoyed by different generations and types of players even today. "The catchy background music" is still remembered by many people and according to some reviewers: "it's the kind of music that gets inside your head and stays there for a long, long time" (NeoJedi, 2006). Some reviewers still enjoy playing the 1985´s version as according to them "it is a classic game" and is still "a joy to play" (Hogan, 2019). For some of the reviewers, "the value of this game is priceless" as "many childhood memories flow into" their mind when writing about it (NeoJedi, 2006). All of these qualities are the result of different player experiences which also bring them the feeling of nostalgia.

2.4 *Super Mario Bros* (1993) Analysis

The analysis will consist of two main parts. The first part of the analysis will follow Gandolfi and Semprebene´s analytical framework. The second part of the analysis will explore the film from the perspective of additional concepts: identification, experience, immersion and perceived realism, and nostalgia with the help of reviews written by film critics and audience. These additional concepts are important to consider in order to explore more of the possible causes of the negative reception of this film adaptation.

2.4.1 The Economic and Cultural Impact of *Super Mario Bros*

The cultural impact of the film will be researched through the reviews. By looking at the reviews written by critics right after the premiere of the film in 1993, it becomes clear that the film was considered to be "bad" already upon its release. It is still disliked by many fans of the franchise, which is also reflected in the reviews and user comments that were discussed (see chapter 2.3). However, at the same time, it has since become a cult classic and is appreciated by quite a few people today. A good example of that is a website (www.smbmovie.com) which is dedicated to this film and whose authors are trying to make people appreciate the film more and to better understand what the film producers attempted to do in their vision. Although this film was not that well-received, it can be regarded as the beginning of Hollywood live-action adaptations of video games. Furthermore, on the subject of economic impact, the film failed commercially as it domestically grossed only around $20 million while its production costs were approximately $42 million (IMDb).

2.4.2 Production and Marketing of *Super Mario Bros*

The first aspect that will be discussed is the film´s production including the available marketing and promotional efforts, cast, budget, and the target audience. This can all give a better overview of how much work was done by the production team in hopes of achieving success. The estimated budget that the creators of *Super Mario Bros* (1993) had was approximately $48 million (IMDb) which can be considered fairly good for that time considering the budgets of other feature films that were released the same year. For comparison, *The Fugitive* (1993) had an estimated budget of $44 million (IMDb) while *Jurassic Park* (1993), which used a lot of CGI had an estimated budget of $63 million. Furthermore, after calculating the inflation, the budget of *Super Mario Bros* would be in 2020 equal to approximately $85,740,600. The budget was good enough in order to include many different special effects in the film, which is one of the things the creators are proud of and which they are praised for by the critics (Stuart, 2018). The cast and their performance were also some of the aspects that earned positive feedback from the critics and audience. Bob Hoskins who plays Mario and John Leguizamo who was cast as Luigi are overall complimented in different reviews for their performance. Furthermore, it is also important to look at all the effort that was put into promoting this film, to determine whether one of the possible causes of failure could be insufficient promotion.

On a website dedicated to the *Super Mario Bros* (1993) film (www.smbmovie.com) can be found a copy of a rare promotion guide (see Appendix 2) that was given out to theatres in order to showcase how the film was supposed to be marketed. This promotion guide is well structured, contains information about the film´s plot and characters as well as tips on how the theatre should design and decorate their lobby during the premiere. Additionally, it lays out what promotional items can be offered, how the theatres should adjust their menus (combos and prices) by taking inspiration from the film, and information on what contests they can organize for the customers. According to this campaign, the theatres should have designed their lobbies with orange cones and buckets, pretending they are having problems with plumbing and await the help of the two plumbing brothers, Mario and Luigi, to help them out. Furthermore, they should have borrowed a plumber´s truck and parked it in front of the theatre. Concerning the menu, "Super" combo was supposed to be offered for a discount price if a customer would order two "Super" popcorns and two "Super" drinks. It was also advised for the cinema workers to be dressed in overalls that are iconic for the two main characters. According to the brochure, the popular chain of supermarkets, 7-Eleven

was promoting the film as well. Besides all this, people who work as plumbers were supposed to be invited to the film´s screening and be offered free popcorn when presenting their invitation letter. Overall the film´s promotion guide was well detailed and designed to give the audience an enjoyable experience when visiting the theatre.

Interestingly enough, while the film producers aimed to make the film more appealing to the adults, the film´s merchandise was mainly aimed at the younger audience. In 1993, a toy company called Ertl produced a line of action figures and toys based on the *Super Mario Bros* film which also can be seen as means of its promotion. These toys were also advertised in commercials. Furthermore, children´s picture book telling the main story of the film was published, as well as sticker and coloring books. Besides all these means of promotion, the film was also advertised, as it is common, through flyers, posters, and a trailer.

All this information points to the fact that the film´s promotion campaign was quite extensive, offering discounts, fun, and contests that were all somehow connected to the film´s context. However, the fact that the film was based on a video game and its merchandise was mainly focused on children could have potentially discouraged some adults from watching it. As I mentioned in the reviews´ discussion, the target audience that the film producers were aiming for was adults, however, the film appeared to many critics and reviewers as intended for children. This could have potentially influenced the box office sales negatively, however, overall it appears that insufficient promotion was not one of the main reasons for its failure.

Concerning the production and its team, many problems occurred during the filming (see chapter 2.3). Even though it appears that the production team put a lot of effort and thought into the film´s creation, some of the actors deemed that the directors were very unprofessional because of a lack of competence, communication, and constant changes in the script (Stuart, 2018). Therefore, the production team can be deemed responsible for several difficulties during the process of filming which have probably negatively influenced the quality of the film.

2.4.3. The Agential and Representational Dimensions of *Super Mario Bros*

This subchapter will focus on the translation of the *Super Mario Bros* video game´s accounts and rules into film dynamics (Gandolfi and Semprebene, 2015). Overall, the film

appears to be quite distant from the video game, however, there are certain aspects that they share. The agential and representational dimensions will be explored through the four fronts suggested by Gandolfi and Semprebene (2015): narrative, aesthetic, encyclopaedian, and dynamic.

Narrative front

It is important to compare the narrative phases and character roles between the source text and the adaptation mainly because many commentators and reviewers complain about the film not being related to the *Super Mario* franchise as its story and characters may appear different. Therefore, to see whether their claims are true, this comparison is necessary. When analyzing the narrative operative front and how it is similar or different regarding the source material, it will be analyzed through the five phases: contract, competence, performance, achievement, and sanction, as suggested by Gandolfi and Semprebene (2015). Furthermore, the role of the different types of characters (subject, object, sender, villain, helper, and receiver) will be compared between the film and video game.

The first phase, contract, represents the mission that the protagonist takes on. In this case, the main mission is similar in both, the film and video game: Mario and Luigi are trying to save a princess who was abducted by the villain and to help restore her world back to normal. In the video game it is Princess Toadstool (Peach) and her Mushroom Kingdom, in the film it is Daisy and her Dinohattan. However, besides this, the film´s mission features an additional element to the contract, which is Daisy´s pendant. Therefore, Mario and Luigi are not only saving the princess, but also her pendant, which has the power to merge the two parallel universes.

The second phase, competence, which represents the way the protagonists prepare for the mission, together with the third phase, performance, do not share almost any similarities. In the video game, the protagonists have to overcome many different levels, visit several castles and collect extra lives, or find different power-ups in order to find the princess and beat Bowser. In the film, such elements are not present, and their way to the villain´s stronghold is much different, for example, they end up in prison, dance at a bar or are chased while driving a police car.

Because of the fact that the contract (mission) phase is different in the film and video game, the fourth phase, achievement, is different as well. In the game, Mario and Luigi manage to save the princess, in the film, they save Daisy, her pendant, manage to separate the two parallel universes (which were for a short time merged together), and help Daisy´s father to return back to human form.

The last phase, sanction, refers to the judgment of the protagonist´s performance. In both, the video game and film, Mario and Luigi become heroes, while one of them wins the heart of the princess and earns her kiss. In the film, Luigi is the one who becomes rewarded with a kiss and love of the princess while in the video games it is typically Mario. In the video game, the protagonists usually stay in the Mushroom Kingdom, in the film Mario and Luigi return to Brooklyn.

Concerning the roles of the characters that appear in both, the video game and film, they are quite similar. Mario and Luigi are the "subject", as in, the protagonists who set out to complete their mission. Princess Daisy (in the video game Princess Peach) is one of the several "objects" that Mario and Luigi need to save in the film (alongside Daisy´s pendant and the future of the two parallel universes). King Koopa (in the video game Bowser) is the villain who abducts the princess and together with the help of some of the Goombas and other creatures tries to stop Mario and Luigi in succeeding at their mission. The role of the "sender" (the one who sends the protagonist on the mission) is not present, because, in both, the video game and film, Mario and Luigi decide to set out on the mission on their own. In the role of the "helper", we can see Toad, who in the video game informs Mario and Luigi that the princess is in another castle, and in the film, he helps Mario and Luigi to save Daisy. The "receiver", is the one who usually judges the performance of the protagonists and rewards them. In the video game, the princess thanks Mario and Luigi and gives them a new quest. In the film, Mario and Luigi earn respect from the people of Dinohattan and gratitude of Princess Daisy. After a few weeks, Daisy visits them in Brooklyn and asks for their assistance again which also can be seen to represent a new quest.

While the narrative operative front of the video game and film share some similarities, at the same time they are distinguishable because of several differences. The similarities that they bear could easily stay unapparent and lost in the more complicated narrative and story that are present in the adaptation. This is the case because of the plentitude of new concepts that were introduced in the film. Therefore, after applying this

method of comparison, the similarities between the narrative front of the video game and film become more apparent. However, on a larger scale, they are still rather negligible, as these similarities and parallels might be too difficult for the audience to recognize with all the distractions that are the result of the film producers´ addition of many new concepts.

Aesthetic front

Concerning the aesthetic front, it needs to be determined whether the adaptation relies on iconic or realistic visuals. Attention should be paid to all the details including color, art style, and all the features that characterize the product.

In the overview of the *Super Mario Bros* video game (see chapter 2.1), the colorful and iconic world that defines the franchise was described. However, in the reviews, several reviewers were complaining about the shift from the magical Mushroom Kingdom to the dark and dirty city setting of Dinohattan featured in the film. The film´s color palette in comparison to the one in the video game presents much duller colors. When comparing the character´s appearance, in the film, their costumes are lacking bright colors as well. In the World of *Mario*, the bright and bold colors are something that defines its characters and world. Bright red, yellow, green, pink, and blue are probably the most noticeable element of the *Mario* video games. However, these iconic colors were not used in the adaptation, which was rather inspired by cyberpunk.

Regarding the art style, the CGI models of characters such as Goombas or Yoshi can be mentioned. The way they are depicted in the film is very different which was another common complaint from the reviewers. Aesthetically, there are very few elements in the film that are iconic for the franchise. Some of these elements are the costumes that Mario and Luigi wear (the blue overalls combined with red or green T-shirt) or the appearance of the bomb monster Bob-omb that was very similar to its original design used in the *Super Mario* video games.

Besides that, there is probably not much more that would aesthetically remind the viewers of the source text. Therefore, naming the film after the video game, while leaving out many visual references to the game, might appear like false advertising to the audience. It is because many negative reviews were related to the issue where the reviewers were not able to see almost any aesthetic similarities to the *Mario* franchise.

Encyclopaedian front

In relation to the encyclopaedian front, the focus will be put on determining what effect do the video game references in the film adaptation have on the viewers and their interpretation of the text. These references can either offer the viewers an insight regarding the video game culture or the specific video game title or become an obstacle that would confuse them if they, for the first time, were met with too many new concepts they are unfamiliar with.

While in the *Super Mario Bros* (1993) there are some references to the video games, overall the film is very independent of its source text. The references that can be found in the film mostly do not work as a barrier for the audience unfamiliar with the video game. As it was already mentioned when discussing the narrative and aesthetic front, there are very few similarities between the *Mario* video game and film. In the film, there are almost no references to the video game mechanics, however, there are some exceptions. For example, the scene where Mario and Luigi are being chased by the police while driving a police car can remind the audience of racing in the *Mario Kart* games, or the scene where Mario and Luigi are fighting against Koopa and thanks to their special shoes are able to jump very high (which is characteristic for them in the video games). However, none of these references need to be associated with the source text by the audience, as they should not complicate their interpretation of the film if they were unfamiliar with the video games. Unfortunately, while they should not confuse the viewers´ interpretation of the film, they probably would not give them insight into the franchise either, as the number of these references is too small or they can be too difficult to notice even by those who are familiar with the *Mario* video games. The lack of references is also reflected in the reviews, as some reviewers blamed the film for only "pretending" to be a *Mario* film or being related to the video game franchise only by its name.

Dynamic front

Regarding the dynamic front, it needs to be addressed how the rules and logic of the video game were implemented into the film.

Not many of the video game rules were implemented into the *Super Mario Bros* film. However, one of them was the high jump, which is an important gameplay element in the video game, as it helps Mario and Luigi jump on platforms, break boxes, or defeat enemies. In the film, however, this gameplay element was made more realistic as Mario and Luigi wore special shoes that allowed them to jump high while in the video game they do not need any special equipment for this. However, in the film, the high jump also helps them beat their enemy as it allows them to dodge his attacks. Therefore, another of the video game mechanics in the film was the act of defeating enemies, however, in most cases, Mario and Luigi tried to outsmart their enemies instead of confronting them with physical attacks like in the video game. Another similar dynamic that is worth mentioning is traveling through the pipes. In the video game, Mario and Luigi can enter pipes to travel to different locations, or they can serve as a shortcut in order to skip some parts of the game so that the player can progress through it quicker. In the film, the pipes are used in a similar manner. For example, in one of the scenes, Mario is saving the women who were abducted by Koopa. To escape from Goombas, they all slide down a pipe together, which is similar to the game mechanics where pipes serve as means of transportation. However, in this case, they were presented in a more realistic manner, because in the video game they serve more like a warp device where the player cannot see the transition from one end to the other, whereas in the film the camera follows Mario and the others on the whole journey down the pipe. Therefore, it does not seem like a magical teleport or a warp device, but as a normal pipe that was just used for quick transportation.

In conclusion, there are clearly a few cases where the film creators tried to implement the video game logic or rules into the film, however, these mechanics were made more realistic given the medium.

2.4.4 The Effect of the Video Game Experience on the Audience of *Super Mario Bros*

In order to be able to evaluate the quality or vividness of the audience´s experience when watching the *Super Mario Bros* film, it is necessary to consider the reviews. Many of the reviewers mention and compare the film to the video game. Unfortunately, most of them use this comparison in order to draw out negative aspects of the film and justify their claim by saying that the film was not as good as the video game.

Based on the way the tendencies of the reviewers related to how they address their experience with the film and the video game, there can be seen three different approaches that are common. The first is the tendency to point out that the film "felt" different from the video game and because of this the reviewers find it to be a bad film: "Worst adaptation from video games to film! Does not feel like the game!" (Jean-François V, 2011). However, because of medium difference, it is natural for the film to feel different from the video game. Therefore, it appears that the viewers rather do not realize that the film medium works differently and cannot give them the same experience as playing the video game.

The second way the reviewers seem to express their experience of the film is by implying that they had a better experience when playing the video game rather than when watching the film. They would also recommend playing the video game instead of watching the film. However, they are still able to appreciate the film for its own approach toward the source material and it does not bring their rating down. An example of this tendency is the following user comment: "While obviously the video game is better, this isn't as bad as many people say, it's actually a quite bizarre take on the *Mario* world, and it's surprisingly entertaining" (Greyson M, 2011).

The third type of reviewers are those who argue that if the film was adapted with a high level of fidelity, it would not have been good. They believe that the producers did as much as they could in order to translate the video game into film and are aware of the media difference. This type of reviewers is rather pleased with the outcome:

> For those who say it isn't like the game at all, would it have been better if it had followed the game? Just Mario hitting blocks and collecting coins, while occasionally battling bosses? I felt the idea of turning Mario into a movie was a dead-end concept, but they managed to do the best they could and it really isn't that bad (even though I felt Daisy was extremely annoying). (James O, 2011)

It appears that for many of the reviewers, the video game was a better or more enjoyable experience in comparison to the film. However, while in some cases it was clearly the reason for their negative review or rating, there are also reviewers who are aware that the two media work differently and had a better experience when watching the film. None of the comments seem to point to the fact that their video game experience was more "vivid", however, it could be argued that the vividness of the activity of playing the video game was so strong that it made several reviewers recall it in a more positive way or that it made many of them mention the game in their reviews. The more vivid experience can be also a result of a strong immersion in the video game. Therefore, it appears that many reviewers may not have been

aware of the differences of the two media which negatively influenced their opinion of the film.

2.4.5 *Super Mario Bros* and the Effect of Perceived Realism on the Level of Immersion

It appears that the film producers attempted to implement several *Mario* video game and story elements into the film in a more realistic manner while also using many sci-fi elements. In this subchapter I will discuss how the more "realistic" elements together with the sci-fi elements affected the audience and their immersion in the film.

The way the film producers approached portraying the world and its own reality of *Mario* could be argued to be a significant component in causing the negative reception. It appears from the reviews that the audience was expecting a more faithful representation of the video game´s reality and its world. Many of the fantastic elements were taken away instead of which they were presented with either a more realistic or sci-fi explanation. However, from the reviews it appears that the new reality that the film presented did not make sense to the viewers and was perceived as unrealistic within their own imagination:

> This could have been amazing film if it followed the game way more closely, but no they took a realistic approach which makes zero sense, the alternate dimension thing was cool as a multiverse believer but that still wasn't enough for me to save & redeem this trainwreck. (Jesse L, 2019)

Because the viewers did not perceive the different representation of the video game´s reality believable or realistic within its own enclosed reality, it appears to have disrupted their immersion in the film world, and therefore, they could not enjoy the film.

I will now draw out some examples of how the depicted reality of the film has distanced from the reality presented in the video game and how it might appear confusing and unbelievable to the viewers. For example, in the video game, Mario and Luigi possess, or can gain, superhuman abilities in the world of Mushroom Kingdom. They can jump high, shoot fireballs from their hands, and even defeat enemies by jumping at them. The power of Mario and Luigi to jump high in the film is, however, explained by special shoes which allow them to do that. The characters in the film do not have the ability to shoot fireballs from their palms but use guns instead. Furthermore, they defeat the enemies by outsmarting them as the enemies have been de-evolved and often lack the intelligence to realize it. What can be confusing, however, is the explanation of the parallel universe of Dinohattan. The

film takes on a sci-fi approach when explaining its universe. In the film´s story, Dinohattan and all its different creatures are explained by an evolution theory according to which dinosaurs and reptiles have evolved into human-like creatures (e.g. King Koopa) and some of the common creatures known from the video game, such as Goombas, were a product of a de-evolution process. The de-evolution process could be done in a Devo Chamber owned by King Koopa. Furthermore, in the film, princess Daisy was born by hatching from a dinosaur egg. Some of these elements create confusion and disbelief in the viewers and potentially they become an obstacle when it comes to immersion into the story. Many reviewers mention that the "more realistic" approach has not only failed in what it was trying to accomplish but has also made them regret watching the film:

> At best, *Super Mario Bros* could only have been unendurably forgettable; but thanks to the out-of-place darkness of so much of the design, and the weird feints to realism – relative to the games, anyway – it has the epic feeling of Truly Wrong Filmmaking, where seemingly every new cut introduces some element that we deeply regret having watched. (Brayton, 2010)

Furthermore, all of this is worsened for many viewers by the mix of all the genres in the film as the reviewers and critics have also complained about the mix of comedy elements and a dark sci-fi tone which do not make the film feel believable in their opinion:

> Either way, it doesn't work, the tone both through the comedy and through the presentation are so constantly at-odds that it makes for a surreal watching experience, rather than an enjoyable one. (Hogan, 2019)

Another reviewer has a similar opinion. For this viewer, the film mixes too many weird elements in its plot and fails to provide the audience with a coherent and believable narrative:

> The whole atmosphere of this "Dinohattan" is too weird, chaotic, and cold to be engaging. This may sound bad enough, but the movie's biggest mistake is its failure to provide anything in the way of a coherent (or compelling) narrative. The plot is a jumbled mishmash about meteorites, alternate universes, and fungus that spends too much time indulging in its own stupidity rather than offering some intelligence. (JTurner82, 2005)

Therefore, it appears that the attempt of the filmmakers at depicting the video game´s reality differently (and at times more realistically) was unsuccessful as it also negatively influenced the reviewers´ immersion in the film´s reality. This can be also seen as another aspect related to the difference of the media. While the 1985´s version of *Mario* video game barely explains any of its concepts that may appear weird or illogical (as it barely features any narration), it

is possible that because of the higher level of immersion offered by video games, its reality becomes more believable to the players as they are enclosed inside its "magic circle".

2.4.6 Identification with the *Super Mario Bros* Characters

As aforementioned (see chapter 1.4.3), identification with media characters is important because it allows the viewers to experience the story from a different perspective and to understand and interpret the text from inside the film´s world. Therefore, it can also affect their reception and judgment of the film. In order to be able to answer the question of whether it is probable for the audience to identify with the characters in this film, the reviews will be revisited again. Attention will be paid to how the audience found the characters to be, which encompasses how they were written or portrayed. This can point at whether the reviewers´ negative comments could be influenced by the fact that they could not identify with the characters which could deprive them of experiencing the story from a different perspective and possibly, again, reduce their immersion.

In this adaptation, many characters have undergone changes that were one of the most common points of negative criticism of the film. The characters are negatively criticized not only because their appearance and design were different in comparison to the video game, but also because of how they were written and represented. The following excerpts from the reviews demonstrate the opinions of some of the reviewers on the characters:

> Certain characters like Yoshi were changed in ways I can abide, but other characters like Bowser and Toad are highly cringe-inducing. The comedy moments weren't funny, and the romance between Luigi & Daisy wasn't romantic. (Atom G, 2019)

> Instead of the bright and happy setting you might expect, we're given a filthy city setting, some nonsense about dinosaur bones, two-dimensional villains courtesy of rent-a-villain (I think they're listed in the end credits), two bumbling shlubs (what corny movie would be complete without them?), and one sloppy lead character, just like all the other sloppy lead characters you've seen thousands of times. (bregund, 2002)

Based on these reviews, it appears that for the viewers who have expressed their opinions online, it could be difficult to identify with the characters from the film, as some of them describe them as illustrated above and find them to be badly represented. Furthermore, many reviewers found the character dialogues bad as the dialogues did not help to further develop the characters but also because the humor and many of the jokes felt childish:

His dialogue also further dumbs down the character, making King Koopa very much a missed opportunity as a villain. Samantha Mathis has some moments of heart and charm but is pretty bland on the whole... In fact, the script generally was poor, with childish and sometimes misplaced humour and dialogue that clunks badly. (TheLittleSongbird, 2016)

None of the reviewers mention or point to the fact that their dislike of the characters would have a negative impact on their understanding of the film. However, it can be assumed that because the character interactions and dialogues were not captivating for them (as they describe), they did not identify with these characters. The inability to identify with them furthermore appears to be negatively influencing their experience of the film. Additionally, as the reviews suggest, the bad character interactions and dialogues made the film less enjoyable.

2.4.7 *Super Mario Bros* and Nostalgia

In this subchapter, the capability of the *Super Mario Bros* adaptation at delivering nostalgia to the audience will be explored. A very helpful tool in this regard are, once again, the reviews that were analyzed for the purpose of this research. Nostalgia, as it was already defined earlier (see chapter 1.4.4), is the desire to return to some past event or time period because the situation is not the same anymore. Therefore, we can see adaptations as a means of returning to the past experience of a certain product, in this case, the original video game.

By closely looking at the positive reviews of the video game, it was possible to reveal what aspects of the *Super Mario Bros* video game many commentators enjoyed. It is important to consider these aspects because nostalgia is usually connected to the memories or situations that we would like to re-live, and therefore we can assume that it would be induced by positive memories. Whether the film adaptation is able to take those audience members who formerly played the video game back into the past can be decided based on the aspects that the audience seemed to appreciate and like about the video game. Furthermore, searching for clues in the film´s reviews will also help to explain the stance that the audience holds regarding nostalgia toward the adaptation.

As previously discussed (see chapter 2.3), the audience enjoyed the visual style, world and enemy design, 1985´s *Super Mario Bros* video game. In the chapter discussing the aesthetics of the film, it appears that the world design and visual style differ from the ones in the video game. While it is possible to recognize some concepts that the audience

could be familiar with, such as the Mario and Luigi´s iconic overalls or the red-white hat that Toad wears, their relation to the video game is not well visually emphasized and their relationship could easily go unnoticed. Therefore, it is possible to feel a sense of nostalgia regarding some of the visuals, however, the audience complained in the film´s reviews that the magic of the Mushroom Kingdom they remember from the video game was missing. Judging by the visual style, costume design, or setting, the resemblance to the *Mario* video games is weak, but not impossible to recognize. Therefore, it appears that it is possible to feel some sense of nostalgia toward some of the visual aspects, however not much.

With a focus on the audio, the very iconic theme of the *Mario* franchise also appears in the film. It can be heard at the beginning, during the opening credits. Because this soundtrack is so iconic and well-known it can be a powerful mediator of nostalgia. However, it can be only heard for a very short time.

Gameplaywise, even though the film cannot be played, certain scenes can feel nostalgic for the audience members who are familiar with other video games in the *Mario* franchise, such as the racing classic, *Mario Kart*. In this case, it would be the scene where Mario and Luigi are driving a police car while they are being chased by Koopa´s forces. Scenes like this, that are more action-based and dynamic can possibly better resemble the nature of the video games and make the audience feel a similar feeling of a thrill as if they were playing *Mario Kart*. However, again, these scenes and elements are just a small fraction in comparison to the full length of the film. Therefore, by focusing on the gameplay, the potential of the audience feeling nostalgic toward the *Mario* video games is rather low.

In order to present the thoughts and feelings of the viewers in regards to nostalgia, their opinions can be showcased through their reviews: "While it did a decent job on Plot and SFX, it was lazy on story, characters, and especially nostalgia and accuracy to the Video Game series" (Luke L, 2019). Another reviewer writes in connection to nostalgia: "A very strange take on the video game that has few ties to the game and never captures the nostalgia of it" (Ryan T, 2012). Furthermore, some other reviewers find the film to induce nostalgia while implying that there was not much that they liked: "It's a great novelty; as a fan of the video game, it was fun to reminisce. Besides nostalgia, there's little here for fans to enjoy" (Stephen J, 2016).

It is clear that in the 1993´s *Super Mario Bros* film adaptation, there are references to the video games that can take the members of the audience back and remind them of the

time they played the video game. However, many negative comments in connection to this topic are expressing that the film has very little to do with the *Super Mario* franchise and therefore it does not capture its nostalgia.

Nostalgia is an important commercial tool that can help to secure better sales, and therefore, it should be considered when adapting a product that has gained a lot of popularity. By stripping the audience from more available and noticeable connections to the *Mario* video games, the chances of inducing the feeling of nostalgia are low. Based on the reviews, it is clear that one of the possible failures of this adaptation could be the failure to satisfy some of the audience´s need for nostalgia.

2.4.8 *Super Mario Bros*: Coherence and Dependency

Finally, as the last point of the analysis, the result of the film´s analysis will be decided by exploring it according to the two continuums: coherence and dependency as suggested by Gandolfi and Semprebene (2015). Situating the film on these continuums can help to determine how the changes and different aspects of the film adaptation influenced the audience.

According to Gandolfi and Semprebene, the level of coherence is decided based on how faithful the film is to the video game. Therefore, regarding coherence, its level is low because as I have discussed it in the analysis, the film has very much distanced from the source. As Gandolfi and Semprebene suggest, a high level of coherence is important for fans of the video game (Gandolfi and Semprebene, 2015). This claim was proven by the reviews and therefore it can be concluded that low coherence was one of the factors that influenced the film´s reception negatively.

The level of dependency is determined by how much knowledge of the source text do the viewers need in order to understand the film. It appears that the level of dependency would be somewhere between low and medium. The film does not use much of the game logic that the audience would need to know in order to understand the film. The film is very independent of the *Super Mario Bros* video game and therefore, the film should be open to a wider audience.

In conclusion, it appears that according to the levels of coherence and dependency, probably the bigger part of the audience that was familiar with the video game would be

disappointed by the film. It is because it would not offer much in terms of nostalgia or a similar experience to the video game that they could be expecting. Furthermore, the film should be easily approachable by the general audience as the audience should not need much knowledge of the video game culture in order to understand the film. However, it is possible that some part of the general audience could have been discouraged by watching a film based on a video game as it may have appeared to them as childish.

Chapter 3: *Max Payne*

3.1 *Max Payne* **(2001): Video Game Overview**

The first *Max Payne* game was developed by Remedy Entertainment and released in 2001. The game was successful and two additional titles (*Max Payne 2*, *Max Payne 3*) were published in 2003 and 2012. For this research, only the first *Max Payne* game will be discussed.

The story revolves around Max Payne, a former New York police officer, who has transferred to the DEA in order to find the ones responsible for his wife´s and child´s murder which was done by a group of drug users. The killers were under the influence of a drug that was yet unknown at the time: Valkyr, V. Three years after the murder, Max gets a tip that a gangster Jack Lupino, who is a part of the Punchinello Crime Family, is the trafficking the drug. After receiving this information, Max goes undercover and gets a call from his DEA (Drug Enforcement Administration) partner B.B. who tells him to meet up with Alex who also works in DEA in order to discuss some important information. Max finds Alex at a subway station but he is shot right in front of Max´s eyes by an enemy. Afterward, Max is framed for Alex´s murder and the police begin to search for him. However, Max continues to search for the source of the mysterious drug and begins taking down one enemy after another, until he finds out who the leader in this operation is. During the game, Max also learns that B.B. betrayed him and Alex. Because of this betrayal, Max kills him. On his journey, Max also kills Jack Lupino and meets Mona Sax who works as an assassin. Her mission was to kill Angelo Punchinello who is the leader of the Punchinello Crime Family. Later, Max learns about Project Valhalla which is a military program that was run by the US government. In this project, the Valkyr drug was developed and tested on soldiers. He also learns that his wife found documents about this project which could incriminate Nicole Horne, the current leader of the project. These documents were the reason why the gangsters were sent to kill her. Max is later contacted by Alfred Woden, a US senator, who has been guiding Max throughout the game by giving him information over the phone. Woden calls Max over to meet him and reveals his identity, as all of his previous calls to Max were anonymous. Max learns that Alfred Woden is a member of the Inner Circle who was involved with the beginning stages of Project Valhalla. However, after the project had been stopped, the leader of the Aesir Corporation, Nicole Horne continued working on it on her own and she is now the source of the drug trafficking. Now that Max knew the name of his main enemy, he set out to kill her, which he achieves at the end of the game.

Concerning the audiovisual elements, the video game is very dark and cinematic. The game is set in New York which is well reflected in the design of different levels in which Max explores tall buildings, subway, clubs, and the city streets. The setting has a dark *film noir* undertone that is also supported by the fact that heavy rain and snowstorm has been crushing the city at the time of the story events. Players can see smoking cigarettes in ashtrays, running washing machines, or short film segments on TV which all add to the cinematic environment and helps create a believable story world. The added immersion is achieved by the fact that the surrounding reacts to player´s actions (e.g. glass shatters when shot, people can be heard talking when the player is in their proximity, TV stops working after being shot, fire extinguishers begin to spray out foam when damaged, etc.).

Furthermore, the video game uses comic panels as one of its narrative devices (besides cut scenes and in-game character conversations). For these comic panels, real-life photos were used which were then edited and turned into more of a "comic-esque" pictures with the addition of speech bubbles and captions. Overall, the video game´s audio-visual elements have the power to create quite a believable experience for the players.

Regarding the gameplay, there are many possibilities for the players in terms of interactivity. The players can interact with many objects such as doors, buttons (e.g. in the elevator), slot and vending machines, many types of guns, and other long-range or close-range weapons (e.g. grenades, Molotov cocktails, baseball bats), boxes, cupboards, wardrobes and more. Inside cupboards, wardrobes, and other objects Max can find guns, ammo, or painkillers that can he can use if he gets hurt in action. Max can run, jump, crouch, roll, shoot, reload weapons, throw objects, hit things, and interact with different objects. However, there is one gameplay element that the game is most famous for and that is the "Bullet Time" inspired by *The Matrix* (1999) which came out a few years before the video game. Taking inspiration from *The Matrix* further shows that *Max Payne* was influenced by cinema and can be seen as a cinematic video game. When the player engages the Bullet Time, time around Max Payne slows down and the player can aim their bullets more carefully which gives them the advantage over the enemies. However, there is a limit to how much Max can use the Bullet Time in order to keep the gameplay balanced and exciting. Therefore, Max needs to recharge the Bullet Time by killing enemies in order to use it again.

3.2 *Max Payne* (2008): Film Overview

Max Payne (2008) is a neo-noir action detective film directed by John Moore and written by Beau Thorne.

The film is set in New York and its story revolves around the main protagonist, Max Payne (Mark Wahlberg), who is a detective with a dark past. Years have passed since his wife and child were murdered and he is still trying to find out who killed them. Working as a detective for the NYPD he continues to investigate this murder. Max visits one of his informants at a party where he meets Natasha Sax (Olga Kurylenko) and her sister Mona Sax (Mila Kunis). He leaves the party with Natasha who is found dead the next day. She had Max´s wallet in her possession which she stole from him without him knowing. In the investigation of her murder, Max meets his former partner Alex Balder (Donal Logue). Later, Alex calls Max that he had found a connection between Natasha´s and his wife´s murder, however, he is murdered before Max can meet him in person. Because Max was the person found in Alex´s house the night he was murdered, he became a possible murder suspect.

Afterward, Max begins working with Natasha´s sister, Mona Sax (Mila Kunis) who also wishes to find the murder of his sister. Max notices that many people have been marked with the same tattoo (including Natasha) which depicted the wing of a Valkyrie. Later on, Max finds out that his wife has been working for a pharmaceutical company called Aesir Corporation. This company developed a military drug Valkyr and tested it on several subjects. Under the effect of this drug, the people would feel extremely powerful, become aggressive, and start seeing winged demons. Among the test subjects was also a man called Jack Lupino (Amaury Nolasco) who continued using and dealing the drug. Max decides to confront him as he believes that he was also involved in the murder of his family. While Max was fighting Lupino, BB Hensley (Beau Bridges), who was pretending to be Max´s friend, appears and shoots Lupino. Afterward, Max learns that BB was the one behind his wife and child´s murder and in the end, Max kills him in order to avenge them.

3.3 *Max Payne*: Discussion of the Reviews

The film adaptation of *Max Payne* has been received negatively by many film critics. The film´s overall Tomatometer score on Rotten Tomatoes is 16% (12 April 2020), its

Metascore on Metacritic is 31 (12 April 2020), and, as another example, it has earned 2 stars on the online review by William Thomas who writes for Empire. The audience scores and reviews were a little more positive. On Rotten Tomatoes the audience score for *Max Payne* was 30%, on IMDb 5.4/10 and on Metacritic 5.2.

As opposed to *Super Mario Bros*, low fidelity to the source material is not one of the most discussed negatives among the audience and critics because the film adaptation of *Max Payne* is much more faithful to its source. While several reviewers did complain in this regard, writing that the film could have been closer to the video game, they seem to be aware of the fact that the film is in many aspects loyal to its source material. Similarly to *Super Mario Bros* reviewers, some of them recommend playing the video game instead of watching the adaptation as they do not find it as good: "Stick to *Max Payne* on your computers and consoles… Because there's not much to see here..." (Pocock, 2008). This is interesting considering that the film is quite close to the game on several levels. The aesthetics are similar in their dark tone, the plot is close to the one in the video game, several characters from the game appear in the film and they also play very similar roles to those in the source material. Yet, many reviewers were still not satisfied. This shows that trying to appeal to the existing fan base has its pros and cons because there are always going to be presumptions and expectations that the viewers desire to be met.

A very common point of criticism that many of the critics point out is that the film, while trying to be visually impressive, falls short in terms of plot and writing. They describe the film as "empty-headed", "devoid of wit", or "brainless entertainment" (Cline, 2008; Cerritos, 2008). They suggest that while the film does a good job using its budget to create some good action scenes involving slow-motion effects, the film can feel "boring" and "dragging" as the story headed in a "banal and bleak" direction (Rocchi, 2008; Hicks, 2008; Johanson, 2008).

Therefore, drawing out from these responses, they could be suggesting that the game logic might be intervening with the film medium which did not work out well for the film. The *Max Payne* video game is a third-person shooter, so naturally, shooting and action are the main focus of the game. The film appears to be trying to replicate that with the inclusion of several shooting and action scenes. When playing shooter video games, shooting enemies is a natural action for the players in this genre and with a high possibility, because playing video games can be a very immersive experience, they do not question why they shoot

dozens of enemies at every step. On the other hand, such logic can appear to be weird in film.

Some reviewers have pointed out that in the adaptation, Max often shoots aimlessly without knowing whom he could kill. An example of this is the flashback scene where Max noticed that someone had broken into his house. As soon as someone jumps out, Max shoots at them, even though his wife and kid were inside the house and he could have ended up shooting them by accident in this manner. Because of such scenes where the characters shoot without knowing whom they are targeting, the commentators also found it difficult to find the film believable. Besides that, although it is also natural to fill action thrillers with action and shooting, if there are too many such scenes and if the film appears to be losing its focus on conveying the story, the viewers might begin to question this logic and lose interest.

This connects to the discussion about reality and immersion (see chapter 1.4.2) where I discussed how video games can present different types of reality and enclose them inside a "magic circle". Immersed inside this magic circle, the players do not question realism as the magic circle separates the video game´s reality from the real world. Similarly, in this case, what might feel realistic and believable for the players of the *Max Payne* video game, might not feel the same for the viewers of the *Max Payne* film. Because of the lack of interactivity when watching films, the audience´s immersion in the film can become disrupted by the scenes that are heavily influenced by video game logic. Therefore, if the video game logic intervenes too much in the film, it can pull the audience out of its enclosed reality and become less believable. Afterward, the audience might think of the film as illogical or "empty-headed" (Cline, 2008).

Many commentators were dissatisfied with the portrayal of some characters and with the lack of character development. The reviewers called the characters "shallow", "passive", and "expressionless" (Jake A, 2017; Parker R, 2014; C.Lawson, 2008). For some of the viewers, some characters were there only "to die" and were left underdeveloped (Brandon W, 2015). Furthermore, they were lacking further purpose, and therefore, it was impossible for them to connect with the characters emotionally (Wolven_StarScream, 2008). Many commentators complained about some of the characters´ portrayal: "The character in this movie was not Max Payne in any way except by name" (edgecrusher02, 2009). They disliked that Max seemed to never show any emotions and that he felt different from the video game Max who is a "man who loses everything" and "who doesn't care about anything but personal

justice anymore and just fights his way through, getting in a worse condition every minute - he gets beaten up, he gets shot and drugged and yet he never gives up" (a-seiwald-1, 2009). From comments like these, it appears the commentators were missing certain qualities in the main character. Other characters were targeted as well: "The great characters from the game seem all ridiculous, like Nicole Horne (the evil mastermind) acts like the friendly ant from next door, B.B. is not nearly the cool suit he should be... also the extremely precious sideline characters like Vinnie (who was such fun to meet in the game) seem all wrong" (a-seiwald-1, 2019). This seems to be indicating that many of the reviewers think that the way the characters were portrayed in the film is very different from the video game and they dislike these changes.

Furthermore, many commentators were lacking an emotional connection with the characters which could suggest that they had difficulties identifying with them: "...you never really connect with any of the characters and so you can never really feel any overwhelming emotion about their situation" (Wolven_StarScream, 2018). "None of the main characters evoked any sympathy or emotion from me (unlike the game) and the villains were conspicuous in their relative absence" (Tibokan, 2008). This could be pointing to the fact that some of the reviewers were not able to identify with the characters in the film, which negatively affected their experience when watching the film.

The audience also seems to dislike changes in the plot which decreased the level of suspense in the adaptation: "Instead of Max being a cop with "nothing to lose" and on the run like the original story suggests, he is merely a suspect in his partner´s murder. Therefore, getting rid of the suspense of the whole cop on the run thing" (edgecrusher02, 2009). While in the film Max was a possible murder suspect and he was free, in the video game he was being constantly searched for by the police as he was framed for murder. Therefore, this slight change in the plot has a big impact on the film´s dynamics and the level of thrill. The film, being categorized as an action thriller, is described by many as boring and slow-paced which could possibly be explained by the change in the script. The way Max is portrayed in the game, as a man on the run consumed by the thirst for revenge, allows the player to be constantly thrilled and worried about what is going to happen next. It is also because the range of enemies is wide, coming from both the side of crime (drug users, murderers, and traffickers) and the side of judgment (police forces). Thus, more pressure is put on the player and the story might feel more dynamic. In the film, however, for the most part, Max only fights the criminals. This is because Max believes that B.B. and the NYPD are his allies until

he is deceived near the end of the film. Therefore, some of the strong pressure and burden that was put on the video game Max has been lifted from the film Max´s shoulders. Possibly, this could be one of the reasons why the film felt for many less thrilling or slow-paced.

Another negative point that is often discussed is connected to the script, as several viewers found the unfolding of the events to be too predictable which can also be the reason behind the lack of suspense that several reviewers have pointed out: "I'm not sure why I sat through it. The ending was utterly predictable… and not the kind that makes you feel clever for figuring it out. I knew who the 'bad guy' was the second he walked on screen" (baobabble, 2009). The audience knows what to expect which could be why many of the viewers describe the film as "boring" and "dragging" (Rocchi, 2008; Hicks, 2008). Some reviewers suggest that the plot twist was not surprising at all, even to those who have not played the video game: "Those that have not played, will still be able to see the twist coming from a mile away as the story is pretty straightforward and predictable" (szamarin, 2008). Furthermore, many viewers believe that because the film left out many of the important enemies that were present in the game, the film´s plot lost its complexity. With many subplots and characters left out, the audience also notes that the film lacked closure as they felt that it ended abruptly: "Also, the abrupt nature of the ending leaves much to be desired" (Dan-121, 2008). While closure is not a part of every narrative, "it is often a key element in what makes such stories exciting" (Carrol, 2007, p. 15). Therefore, the lack of closure might be another reason for why the audience felt disappointed by the film.

The addition of supernatural elements in the film was also negatively received. The supernatural elements appeared in the form of winged demons that people could see under the Valkyr drug´s influence. Even though the appearance of the demons was logically explained as a side effect of the drug, many reviewers were disturbed by their appearance in the film. The reviewers also suggest that there was no need to add a supernatural aspect to the film that did not appear in the video game. Furthermore, after finding out that the supernatural elements are not real because it is just the effect of hallucinations caused by the drug made the audience question, even more, why such element was included: "Once finding out that the winged creatures are merely hallucinations, it becomes irksome when they keep appearing just to take up screen time" (Geiger, n.d.). This is quite interesting considering that many times, films based on video games are trying to rid themselves of supernatural elements and strive for a more realistic approach as it was discussed in relation to the analysis of *Super Mario Bros*. However, another example of this tendency is the film *Tomb Raider*

(2018) which is an adaptation of the video game of the same name released in 2013. In its film adaptation, the effects of a curse were explained by a disease rather than supernatural powers. Therefore, it is interesting to see supernatural elements being added rather than removed in case of video game adaptations. However, it is likely that the demons in the *Max Payne* film were added to increase the visual appeal of the film.

Another aspect that the audience disliked and that was mentioned by several reviewers was the change of the parental guide rating (PG). While the video game was rated (M) for "mature" audience, the film was rated PG-13. This can also be seen as a sign of different media. If the film was rated M, it would be excluded from the mainstream exhibition which is why many films try to avoid it. Yet, with games, it is likely that a child can still convince parents to buy it, even if it is not suitable for their age. As some studies suggest, it is not uncommon for parents to be stricter about a film age rating than the one for a video game (Yin-Poole, 2018). However, because of the different age rating, several viewers complained that it made the film worse as it lacked a higher level of violence or blood and made the film seem like a "children´s edition" (a-seiwald-1, 2009). Because of the fact that the main character´s name includes a pun (Max Payne stands for maximum pain), the lack of violence and pain as one of the main themes appears to have disappointed some of the fans of the video game.

A small detail that several reviewers agreed on was that they did not find the slow-motion scenes, including the use of Bullet Time, to be as good as they were in the game. One reviewer explains that "instead of following Max in slow motion", like in the video game, the camera "preferred to follow the bad guys" (mndt, 2009). This, according to the reviewer´s words, made it "hard" for them "to connect with Max" (mndt, 2009). Furthermore, some reviewers find the scenes including Bullet Time "anticlimactic" (Hogan, 2008).

In conclusion, it appears that most of the negative points that were discussed by many of the reviewers and critics were related to the film´s script. While many of them appreciated the film for its visual effects and shots of the atmosphere, the majority did not like the way the story was told and found the plot to be "weak and stretched-out" (Brian Gibson, 2008). Furthermore, the fans of the video game seemed to be lacking certain themes in the film, such as strong violence, blood, and pain. Besides that, it was mentioned by many reviewers that did not find the game logic working well in the film.

The reception and reviews of the *Max Payne* (2001) video game shall be discussed as well. It appears that the aspects that the reviewers did not like about the film are the same as the aspects the players loved about the video game – the script and pacing. One of the most liked aspects of the game according to the reviewers is the story and the way it is told. In the review of the game published on IGN´s website, Tal Blevins writes that the story in the 2001 *Max Payne* video game is "so well told and so involved" that it feels like actually playing an action film (Blevins, 2001). Furthermore, telling the story through many different elements such as cutscenes, comic panels, or conversations during the gameplay has helped the game establish a unique style (Blevins, 2001). Greg Kasavin who wrote a *Max Payne* review for *GameSpot* has also complimented the fast pacing of the game as well as the "constantly changing scenery and surprise encounters" (Kasavin, 2001). Furthermore, Kasavin writes that because of these elements and high attention to detail, the game creates many good memories which indicates that the video game has a nostalgia-inducing value for some players (Kasavin, 2001). Besides these elements, the graphics were also complimented in multiple reviews because they achieved to depict a realistic environment. Music, sound effects, and voice-over were complimented as well.

Overall, the reviews for *Max Payne* (2001) were very positive, praising the game for multiple elements including gameplay, graphics, camera, story, writing, and sound in terms of the product´s quality. In terms of the quality of the experience for the players, the reviewers commend the game for its immersive digital world, a good level of interactivity, and for being an object that can bring back good memories (Blevins, 2001; Kasavin, 2001).

3.4 *Max Payne* (2008): Film Analysis

The analysis of the *Max Payne* adaptation will follow the same pattern as the analysis of *Super Mario Bros*. Therefore, the first part of the analysis will follow Gandolfi and Semprebene´s multidisciplinary analytical tool as it allows for the exploration of many different dimensions that might be connected to the film´s unsuccess. The second part of the analysis will explore the film through the following concepts: identification, experience, perceived realism and immersion, and nostalgia with the help of reviews and comments available online. It should allow for further understanding of how the adaptation was interpreted and viewed by the reviewers in relation to the concepts that are connected to the viewer´s perception.

3.4.1 The Economic and Cultural Impact of *Max Payne*

The film adaptation of *Max Payne* has gained many negative reviews and ratings from film critics but also from the rest of the audience which was demonstrated in the chapter discussing the reviews (see chapter 3.3). However, despite the negative criticism, the film managed to do quite well commercially regarding the box office sales. While the estimated budget was $35,000,000 (IMDb) the film grossed $87,066,930 (IMDb). While this profit is not very high, it is very good considering its negative reviews. However, the reason for grossing that much might be connected to the fact that it had a good opening as it was the No. 1 film at the box office during the weekend it was released (Rich, 2008).

3.4.2 Production and Marketing of *Max Payne*

Concerning the film´s production and the choices that were made in this regard, an interview with the director, John Moore, can give an insight into what was his vision when adapting the video game into the film. In the interview for *RTÉ.ie*, Moore mentions that making a film out of a video game can be "dangerous" because the filmmakers are "taking the control away from a player" while they need to make sure they are "putting something of value back into their hands" (Moore, 2008). This is an important point because as I have discussed earlier (see chapter 1.4.2), it appears that the different media offer different types of immersion. Therefore, by removing the interactive element when adapting a video game into a film, it should be somehow compensated for in order to keep the audience entertained and immersed. With this comment, Moore expressed his belief that providing the viewers with a good emotional experience could be a suitable way to replace the gameplay and offer something of a similar value (Moore, 2008). The three main aspects that Moore focused on when directing this film were visual impact, emotional experience, and entertainment (Moore, 2008). Furthermore, Moore mentions that for him it was important to make the film based on what works for that medium, and because of that, it is necessary to "abandon the game" at a certain point (Moore, 2008). Concerning the fans of *the Max Payne* video game, Moore´s goal was to first make a film that the people who do not know the game could appreciate, hoping that he would also manage to please the fans (Moore, 2008).

From this interview, it can be concluded that John Moore tried to make a film that would appeal to the general audience. Furthermore, the film was primarily rated "R"

(restricted) by the MPAA, however, in order to make the film available to a wider audience, the production team worked on some changes to get a PG-13 rating.

According to the reviews, it is clear that the audience is aware of the visual quality, however, the film did not manage to entertain many of them and was labeled as "boring" and "slow-paced" (Tia L, 2016; Jayakrishnan R, 2015; Brandon M, 2015; peter1885, 2008). While Moore and the production team´s plan to fill the film with emotional impact and make it appealing to the general audience had potential, they did not manage to entertain the majority of the reviewers and critics, according to their ratings and comments.

In comparison to *Super Mario Bros*, there does not seem to be much information about the marketing of *Max Payne* (2008) except for a few magazine articles, posters, and trailers. However, judging by the comment section of the official trailer for *Max Payne* (2008) on YouTube, the audience generally liked the trailer. According to the comments, many viewers found the trailer to be really good but once they watched the film, they were disappointed: "For anyone who hasn't seen this, you'd get better value for money paying full admission to watch this trailer loop for 90 minutes than watch the movie" (Elan, 2017). The viewers write that the trailer gave them false expectations about what the film was going to be: "This was the best looking trailer ever. I thought it was going to be a darker grittier sort of Constantine-esque movie. I was disappointed it was just about drugs and nothing supernatural" (midnight15086, 2015). However, it is clear that the trailer was generally liked by the audience and worked in favor of the film´s presentation and promotion: "They should have let the guy who cut the trailer make the film, cause it was really an awesome trailer that actually captured a pretty good image of the original Max Payne style" (a-seiwald-1, 2009).

3.4.3 The Agential and Representational Dimensions of *Max Payne*

This subchapter will focus on the translation of the *Max Payne* video game to the film medium. Unlike the adaptation of *Super Mario Bros*, the film appears to be much closer to the video game, and therefore, the reviewers have also mostly aimed their criticism at different aspects of the film. The agential and representational dimensions will be explored through the four fronts suggested by Gandolfi and Semprebene (2015): narrative, aesthetic, encyclopaedian, and dynamic.

Narrative front

Concerning the narrative front of the film, it will be analyzed through the aspects that were suggested by Gandolfi and Semprebene (2015). The narrative phases and character roles of the *Max Payne* adaptation will be analyzed and compared with the video game to see the similarities and differences. This comparison is important for portraying what main changes were made in relation to the narrative program. It is important because, in relation to the film, some reviewers and commentators complain about the unfaithfulness to the source material, so it needs to be addressed whether the story and the roles of characters are very different from the video game to see what might be the issue for these reviewers. The five different phases that I will be focusing on are the contract, competence, performance, achievement, and sanction. Furthermore, the six different types of characters are the subject, object, sender, villain, helper, and receiver.

The first phase, contract, slightly differs in the film and the video game. In the film, Max is trying to find the third gangster responsible for the murder of his family while in the video game he is looking for the source of the Valkyr drug as he knows that the killers of his family were under its influence.

One of the important things that need to be mentioned is that the contract was introduced in great detail almost immediately at the beginning of the video game while in the film its full extent is revealed much later. However, the viewers were given some hints at the beginning of the film which briefly introduced what Max is after. The video game´s narrative begins in medias res, after which the story is told through flashbacks. The first flashback takes the player straight to figuring out what Max´s mission is. The player gets to find out how his wife and child were murdered and that his objective is to find the ones responsible for it. However, in the film the flashback showing these past events that can help the viewer better understand the motivation behind Max´s actions appear near the middle point of the film. The viewers find out that Max was only a few minutes late to arrive home to find his wife and child murdered. While he manages to kill two of the gangsters that were responsible for the murder, the third one escapes and Max tries to find out his identity.

Because the exposition was fully revealed so late, it could have negatively affected the audience of the film, not knowing what really motivated Max´s character and his actions for over half of the film. However, this is possibly another case of the media difference. It is because, in film, it could be seen as a way of building up the suspense. By delaying an

important scene and foreshadowing it in the beginning, it can leave the audience in suspense, guessing what might have happened and how will it influence the character´s actions. However, judging by the reviewers´ comments who found the film boring (see chapter 3.3), it is possible that it is another case of the audience misunderstanding the media difference and the changes that were made in order to adapt the video game into the film medium. While in the *Max Payne* video game the suspense is constant as the enemies can be found in every area, providing the players with obstacles on their mission, in the film the suspense is built more gradually and most of the action happens in the second half of the film.

The second phase, competence and third phase, performance are similar in both the film and video game as Max arms himself with weapons and prepares for his mission by searching for information through different people that would lead him to his target. In relation to the performance, in both the film and video game he kills many people on the way so that he can keep moving forward and survives some heavy injuries and traumas.

In relation to the fourth phase, achievement, in the film Max successfully finds out that B.B. was the third gangster who was responsible for the murder of his family and kills him to avenge them. In the video game, Max finds out that Nicole Horne was responsible for the continued distribution of the drug and manages to kill her. Because the contract was different, these two phases are different, too. It is possible that in order to make the film more emotional, which was Moore´s aim (see chapter 3.4.2), making Max kill B.B as the main villain (who was pretending to be Max´s friend) would make a bigger emotional impact on the viewer.

The fifth phase, sanction, in the film represents Max finding peace within his soul which is portrayed by a scene where Max can see his wife and child in his mind peacefully calling out to him, telling him it is not his time yet. However, in both, the film and video game after the villain was killed, the snowstorm stopped and the sky became clearer. In the video game, Max gets arrested, cuffed, and taken into a police car knowing that his ally Alfred Woden, who is a powerful man would help him stay out of prison while in the film he was surrounded by SWAT team and the audience did not get to know more about his trial or sentence, however in the after scene it is revealed that Max is free. Using the scene where Max can see his family in peace is possibly another way of adding more of an emotional impact to the story.

In terms of the characters and their roles, there are several changes. The subject is the same in both the video game and the film, *Max Payne*. The object is different, as it was already mentioned that Max is after different people in the film and the video game and because of this also the main villains are different. In the film it is B.B. and in the game, it is Nicole Horne. B.B. was a villainous character in the video game as well, however, Max´s main objective was Horne. In the film, Horne plays a minor role, however, it is foreshadowed in the post-credit scene that she might be Max´s next target if there was a future sequel to the film. In the film, Max´s helper is Mona Sax, however in the game, while she does save him from being shot, she also betrays him and stays away from him most of the time. Therefore, in the video game, the role of the helper is filled by Alfred Woden who was guiding Max through calls and other means. Woden´s presence in the video game also added more mystery to the plot as Max would often get calls from him, not knowing who he was or why was he helping him. While many of the characters and their roles are similar to the ones in the video game, many of them have a different personality in the film which has quite changed their character. Furthermore, many of the characters that were present in the video game were not used in the film.

In conclusion, while there were several changes in terms of the narrative front, there were still many similarities to the source text. The intent of the production team to create an emotional story (which was discussed in the chapter on production and marketing) for the viewers can be recognized by the changes that were done. For example, making B.B., Max´s "friend", the main villain who was part of the gangsters who murdered Max´s family makes the emotional impact stronger. However, a slight problem can be seen with the late reveal of exposition. Because Max´s backstory and motivation were revealed later, probably as a means of building suspense, it is possible that the audience would have a problem with connecting to Max´s character emotionally. Furthermore, by leaving many important characters out of the story, the plot can appear flat.

Aesthetic front

In terms of comparing the aesthetics of the *Max Payne* video game to its film adaptation, the use of colors, art-style, and visual representation of setting and characters will be discussed.

The setting of the film is aesthetically very similar to the one in the video game. Because the settings are very detailed, there will not be much space to discuss it, however, some examples will be given to demonstrate that the setting depicted in the film is visually tied to the video game´s setting. Both are set in New York and there are many places that appear in both the video game and film. Some of these are the city streets, subway station, Aesir company building, or Max´s house. The city streets always appear dark and cloudy in both the video game and film as it is nearly constantly raining and snowing outside. In both, the film and video game, the subway station is dirty, there is litter on the floor, its walls and objects have graffiti on them and the lights are dim. The Aesir building also looks very similar in terms of both interior and exterior.

The film and video game share a murky and mysterious atmosphere. The colors are dark and cold regarding both the setting and the characters. Furthermore, it is important that the three colors that are very characteristic of the *Max Payne* video game (black, red, white) are primarily present in the film, too. While black and white were present almost everywhere in the film (dark buildings, white snow, black costumes of the characters...) the color red appeared more sparsely. Because the film was rated PG-13, unlike the video game which was rated M, the film included much less blood. However, there were different methods of adding the color red. For example, it was added in the form of a red color flash appearing throughout the scene and between the scene transitions where Max got attacked and beaten up to represent the character's pain and to probably substitute blood. Similarly, it was used in a scene where one of the gangsters from the subway got killed by the incoming train, to represent the blood that was spilled, and his death.

While the aesthetics share many similarities and there are several visual references to the video game and many similar places, there are certain visual aspects that defined the video game. It is the comic panels that were used as storytelling devices that did not appear in the film, but are very iconic for the *Max Payne* video game. Apart from this, the film was close to the video game in terms of the aesthetics, however, the film put even more emphasis on the dark color palette. Therefore, the aesthetics should not be one the target of negative comments in relation to being because they were quite similar to the video game, creating a similarly dark atmosphere.

Encyclopaedian front

In terms of the encyclopaedian front, the effect of references connected to the *Max Payne* video game or video game culture should be discussed. These references can either enlighten the audience by introducing them to some video game themes or create a barrier between them and their understanding of the film.

Overall, *Max Payne* can be viewed as a stand-alone film. Even though there are many references to the video game, they do not appear as a potential object that would generate confusion in general audiences. The film is very similar to other detective films or thrillers and despite taking its inspiration from the video game it should be easily understood by the general audience.

Dynamic front

In relation to the dynamic front, the way the video game logic was implemented into the film will be discussed. There are several cases where the connection between the video game and film can be seen in relation to the game mechanics.

First, it is important to keep in mind that the video game is a third-person shooter and most of the gameplay revolves around shooting. Max is the main character and throughout the game, he fights alone against hundreds of armed enemies. He can fight them off on his own, even though he is just a single human being driven by pain and thirst for "justice". In the film, Max´s character works similarly. Max is several times caught alone in the crossfire and handles all the enemies that attack him all on his own. Of course, there are some exceptions. When Max faces Jack Lupino in the film, he gets beaten up by him and is saved by B.B. who comes in and shoots Lupino. Even though Max is able to handle dozens of enemies at once, Lupino is problematic for him to beat because of his brute strength and his close-range weapon. Therefore, because Lupino represents a strong foe for Max, he can be seen as an in-game boss. In *Max Payne* (2001) bosses are stronger characters who need to be shot with more bullets than regular enemies or they need to be beaten in a more specific way. They may carry signature weapons that give them a certain advantage. For example, in the game, Lupino carries a special shotgun that allows him to fire two rounds at once which can cause more damage. In the film, Lupino uses a machete which makes him a difficult enemy to beat as Max cannot use his long-range weapon while he is being pushed to the ground by Lupino and attacked by a close-range weapon. Therefore, B.B. saves Max by shooting Lupino a few seconds before Max would have been killed in battle.

Another time when Max is saved by someone in the film happens in a scene near the end of the film where Max infiltrates the Aesir building, gets shot, and is hallucinating because he had taken the Valkyr drug. Mona comes to his aid and shoots an enemy who was aiming at Max. Therefore, while Max feels strong in both the video game and film, his vulnerability is shown in both media. In the video game, Max is also saved by Mona near the end of the game when he did not notice an incoming enemy. Max can also die easily in the video game if he is hit by specific weapons. Furthermore, when he becomes hurt he acts similarly in both the video game and film. When Max gets shot in the video game, his movement becomes slower and he begins to limp. In order to return to normal and to be able to move quickly again, he needs to take painkillers which rid him of the pain and he can continue to fight as if nothing happened. In the film, he deals with pain and damage in a similar manner. While he does not use painkillers in the film, he drugs himself with the Valkyr Drug out of desperation right after he had almost drowned in freezing water. This drug was invented to improve the performance of soldiers and therefore it appears to give Max superhuman energy to continue fighting and not freezing to death. Furthermore, Max also seems to be affected by pain similarly in the film. When confronting B.B. on the roof of the building at the end of the film, B.B. shoots at Max several times, and then runs out of ammo. Max, even though he got hit with several bullets, still stands on his feet, however, he slows down and begins to limp. He walks up to B.B. to kill him and get his revenge. Just like in the video game, being hurt affects his movement but he is still able to function and continue fighting.

Furthermore, in relation to the shooting, some of the scenes appeared to mimic video game logic and the behavior of players. There are several occasions where Max runs into a room and begins to shoot without thinking which is very much like the actions that players would take when playing the video game. Not knowing what might be hiding behind the door, one might shoot beforehand in order to avoid getting their character damaged by an enemy hiding in the next room. However, this does not work that well in the film and might appear as illogical or odd. For example, while in the Aesir building, Max jumps into BB´s office shooting the gun several times only to realize that the room is empty. In another scene at the subway station, Max is trying to catch a gangster who has hidden in the subway´s bathroom. In order to get to him, he began to shoot the locks on the toilet doors one by one until he found him.

Bullet Time is another mechanic that was used in both, the video game and film. In the video game, the Bullet Time was also used in combination with "Shootdodging" which can be described as a shoot dodge dive in slow motion that can be done while moving into any direction. Time around Max slows down and allows him to dodge bullets while aiming in real-time. In the film, Max utilizes Shootdodging in several scenes. For example, when invading Lupino´s hideout, Max becomes targeted and shot at by a man standing behind him. Max realizes this and the time slows down for the viewers as Max begins to fall on his back to shoot the man aiming the gun behind him above his head. With this maneuver, Max avoids the bullet and manages to shoot the attacker. In another scene, the time slows down, Max rolls forward and dodges bullets shot at him by armed forces while he shoots an electric security lock on the door in order to be able to escape. In this scene, Max is also shot in the arm, however, he does not seem to be affected by this in any way further on, which is another example of how game logic seems to apply in terms of wounds quickly disappearing.

There are also some small details to consider regarding Max´s inventory. In the game, Max needs to collect ammo as he does not have infinite bullets at his disposal. They go into his inventory, however, they are not visible on his character model. Therefore, the players cannot see Max carrying these items or guns. This is common in many video games where the characters can carry hundreds of items but they are not visible outside the inventory. In the film, Max is also walking around barehand. While he has a gun on him, the huge amount of ammo that he would need in action, as he often keeps wasting his bullets, is not seen which is another example of the video game logic in the film.

3.4.4 The Effect of the Video Game Experience on the Audience of *Max Payne*

Despite the fact that the film's plot, characters, and setting are fairly faithful to the video game, many of the audience members complained that they did not get a similar type of experience by watching the film. This is, however, impossible also because of the fact that the video game offers a different type of immersion in comparison to the film which was highlighted before.

The *Max Payne* video game was highly inspired by films and as a result, it was very cinematic and the plot and storytelling devices played a very important role. As was previously discussed, for the reviewers of *Max Payne* the storytelling elements were one of the most liked things about the video game. On the other hand, in the case of the adaptation,

the audience was disappointed by the plot and the way it was delivered. The video game itself was already close to the film medium because of its heavy accent on the plot and character dialogues. Because many reviewers of the film found the film's characters underdeveloped and the script uninspired, their experience of the film was worse. Having played the game, their reviews were influenced by their own experience with the source material which made them compare the two. Their positive experience with the video game has given them expectations which were not met and resulted in disappointment and low ratings.

Furthermore, according to many reviewers, the adaptation of *Max Payne* had too "little action" in comparison to the video game which was disappointing for them (atredbaron, 2008; lekgolah, 2010). Many of the viewers who have played the video game compared their experience when watching the film to the one when playing the video game. One reviewer writes that "the film never at any point emulates the sense of enjoyment and immersion that the game provides" (Tibokan, 2008). The main cause for this is possibly the difference in the media as they allow for different types of immersion. However, another reason for it connected to the media difference could be the different pacing that the film offers. The video game´s pacing is very dynamic if the player constantly keeps following the story. There are always plenty of enemies to keep the players engaged, the comic panels with voiceover step in quite often, keeping the player interested in the unfolding events and adding more context to the clues that Max finds, or presents the dialogue between Max and the characters he interacts with. On the other hand, the film felt for many of the viewers slow. Their "underwhelming" experience when watching the film could be affected by the high level of interaction provided in the game where the player must stay attentive at all times because they are constantly in danger. Because the video game is very interactive, it requires the players´ attention, on the other hand, the film can feel more passive if it feels predictable or there is nothing to catch the attention of the audience. However, while for some of the viewers the slow pacing was a reason for their negative ratings, there were also some reviewers and commentators who understood that the dynamic of a film works differently, and the different types of experience and slower pacing did not negatively affect their ratings. One commentator writes that while the film "was a little slow in the beginning" films need to be "built up to the suspense and action" and therefore it was understandable that the pacing of the film felt different from the video game (bddmnky, 2008).

However, what many of the commentators seemed to agree upon is the fact that while the pacing and action were understandably more slow and sparse in the film, according to their comments, they were missing the dialogues and storylines from the video game (eldosechackovadath, 2010; chuck_denyer, 2008). This has also been underlined in Honeycutt´s review, as he writes that "the emotional underpinnings and psychological depths of great detective fiction get tossed aside for a wallow in stylistic excess" (Honeycutt, 2008). Therefore, because the film put emphasis on different elements than the video game, the audience´s experience was different as well. While many of the viewers do compare their experience of watching the film to their experience of playing the video game, as Honeycutt suggests, the different experience does not have to be connected to the infidelity. It is because the film´s script simply was not well written and the film rather focused on its aesthetics. As Robert Stam suggests, the viewers are often not disappointed because of the infidelity of an adaptation, but simply because some adaptations fail at delivering a good script including interesting plot points or strong character developments (Stam, 2000, p. 54). However, the audience often refers to infidelity as an example of their disappointment (Stam, 2000, p. 54).

3.4.5 *Max Payne* and the Effect of Perceived Realism on the Level of Immersion

Based on the comments and reviews of the *Max Payne* film adaptation it can be assumed that many reviewers were not well immersed in the film´s reality mainly because of the script and media difference. One of the aspects that had possibly an influence on this was the inclusion of the supernatural elements. According to Roeper, the film unsuccessfully mixes realistic and unrealistic elements in a way that confuses the viewers (Roeper, 2008). The film first lets the audience believe that these creatures are real and that the film unfolds "in a supernatural underworld", then later makes them think that they are caused by the drug and returns them "to a semi-realistic (if hardly believable) New York" (Roeper, 2008). The way Roeper refers to the way New York was depicted is interesting, as he does not find the way it was depicted to be believable. This is one of the elements that are hinting at the fact that the "reality" represented in the film was not well constructed because it is not well understood by some of the reviewers and they find it unrealistic in their own imagination. Therefore it is possible that it negatively influenced the level of immersion for the viewers.

Many reviewers also complained about the characters behaving in an unnatural way and about the script not being plausible: "The visual design and action scenes are neat, but

the rest of the film staggers around with passive characters and a script that doesn't exhibit even the slightest ounce of plausibility" (Parker R, 2014). Kirk Honeycutt writes that there is no logic in the film, the villains are easy to find, clues are too obvious to be noticed so late by Max and he always seems to run into very important events (Honeycutt, 2018). Because of all these reasons that the reviewers have pointed out, it can be assumed that the reality within the *Max Payne* adaptation has failed to be perceived as realistic in the viewers´ own imagination.

In addition, there were many other aspects that seem to be problematic for the viewers, preventing them from immersing themselves in the film´s world which could be connected to the heightened sense of video game logic in the film. An example of this is Max´s invincibility to bullets even though he is just a normal human. Meanwhile, Max never runs out of ammo and can shoot dozens of enemies. Furthermore, Roeper writes that in the end, it is unclear whether Max has become a "superhero with special powers" or whether his ability to survive multiple gunshots and icy water was gained through his anger related to his memories of his murdered family (Roeper, 2008). While such aspects emerge from the video game logic, they are not explained or addressed in the film which can lead to the viewers´ disbelief concerning the film´s events and further negatively influence their immersion as the result of a scenario that could not be perceived as realistic.

Therefore, this finding can be also pointing to the medium difference where video games offer a different experience than films. In the discourse analysis of the video game reviews, it is not very common for the players to complain about something being not plausible or believable in relation to a negative experience with the product. This can be explained by the type of immersion that the medium offers. However, if the video game logic is applied outside of that enclosed reality and that magic circle of the video game, it can become a barrier between the consumer and the immersion. The reviewers of films more often seem to be pointing to the fact that they did not understand something in the story or that something appeared to be illogical. Therefore, this another case of the different effect of the two media on human experience, understanding, or interpretation.

3.4.6 Identification with *Max Payne* Characters

According to the reviewers the film was predictable and illogical which also affected the way the audience saw the characters. This has furthermore influenced their ability to

identify with them. Many reviewers complained about Max´s character. According to the commentators and reviewers, Max is cold and "bland", does not speak much and it was he who let the third murderer escape and he does not see through B.B.'s s betrayal (Calan P, 2013). One of the reviewers also brings out a scene where the new colleague, Jim Bravura asks Max to go out for a beer after work with him and Max does not even respond to him. Max's character in the film has become kind of lifeless.

Therefore, while appearing very similar and close to the source material, on the deeper level there can be seen big differences in the adaptation in relation to the characters, especially, Max. The video game Max is very different from the film Max. While they both are emotionally scarred by the murder of their family, which empowers them to keep fighting and bringing the case to the end, they feel like two very different people. In the video game, Max can be often seen with a smirk or a grin on his face. The emotional "scar" that he carries with him has changed him into a person who acts as an anti-hero with a quite strong villainous attitude. He uses people and everything at his disposal for his ultimate goal, no matter what the price. He forces people to help him access places where he normally could not get himself, because of special access requirements in situations where he knows they will be killed (e.g. an exploding building). When he accomplishes beating his enemy in the end, in the final comic panel photo, the players see Max with a mischievous grin on his face knowing that he is going to avoid prison. It appears as if the revenge filled him with happiness, which together with the dark tone of the music playing in the background creates more of a dark and twisted ending.

In the film, Max is a less developed and less interesting character. He acts emotionless but does not have those same villainous traits. He does threaten people, however, the viewer never sees him intentionally force them into a dangerous situation or kill them, unless they attack him. In the film´s ending, instead of exhibiting dark aura and pleasure of killing the villain, he appears to have reached peace in his soul. His facial expression is more relaxed and in his mind, he "sees" his wife and child being happy. Because of these traits, the two protagonists can appear as very different characters. Furthermore, in the video game Max appear to be wittier, making sarcastic and ironic remarks, and more intelligent in following the clues and evidence and finds out himself that B.B. was a traitor. In the film, however, he did not suspect him and his betrayal was revealed to Max by B.B. himself.

Apart from this, the viewers mention in their comments that they are missing more meaningful interactions between the characters. Furthermore, many characters such as Jim Bravura (Chris 'Ludacris' Bridges) or Mona Sax appear only for a short amount of time and feel as if they had no major purpose in the story. This results in the fact that there is almost no character development and the plot and characters´ action become predictable. All these things work as a barrier between the viewer and the characters and make identifying with them difficult. Some reviewers have expressed that because of the "bad writing and editing" of the film, they could not connect with the characters and feel any emotions towards them (Wolven_StarScream, 2008).

Furthermore, many members of the audience found that characters felt flat, and they did not care for them. Therefore, it is clear that many viewers had issues also with identifying with the characters as they did not care about what was happening to them or felt no connection to them. It is clear from their reviews that the inability to connect and identify with the characters is one of the reasons why they were not able to enjoy the film.

3.4.7 *Max Payne* and Nostalgia

To determine what could be the possible nostalgia-inducing elements for the viewers familiar with the *Max Payne* video game, it is important to return to the video game and the elements that the players seemed to enjoy the most according to their reviews. Furthermore, the film reviews will be helpful in determining in what way the audience seems to refer back to the video game and whether there were (for them) any positive connections with the film.

While many elements differed in the film (e. g. soundtrack, pacing), they still shared many similarities (plot, characters, setting). In relation to fidelity to the source material, the film has a good potential of bringing back memories of the video game to some viewers, especially through its aesthetics. One commentator wrote that the film made them feel as if they were playing the actual video game ("Max Payne Reviews.", 2017). This could have also been accentuated by the strong sense of video game logic present in the film which could possibly make the viewers better see the connections to the video game.

Not many reviewers and commentators referred to nostalgia or the film´s ability to bring back good memories regarding the video game. Therefore, it is difficult to determine whether the film worked for them in this way, however, there are some reviewers for whom

the film felt as if they were playing the video game again. While it is difficult to determine the film´s quality as a product of nostalgia, it can be assumed that the film has a fairly good potential to bring back memories of the video game through the aesthetics, story elements, and game logic.

3.4.8 *Max Payne*: Coherence and Dependency

To conclude the analysis of the *Max Payne* adaptation, its place on the two continuums, coherence and dependency will be discussed. In this case, the adaptation appears to have a medium level of coherence as it is close to the source material in many ways. The level of dependency is also medium because the adaptation does not require the audience to have video game knowledge, but because it has implemented video game logic in several aspects, it can create a barrier between the audience unfamiliar with the games who might be missing some logical explanations or more closure.

Even though the film was placed in the center of the two continuums and it should be acceptable for both the general audience and loyal fans of the source material, it appears to have failed to entertain many viewers. The writing in relation to character dialogues and storytelling were some of the most common complaints concerning the adaptation. Therefore, it seems that even if the film tries to appear similar to the source material on the outside to satisfy fans while trying to stay understandable for the ones who are not familiar with the video game, it is not enough if the script is not convincing and engaging enough and if the characters are not well developed.

Chapter 4: *Super Mario Bros* and *Max Payne* Comparison

The two adaptations were analyzed in terms of different aspects related to the path they took in their translation of the source text and the way they were received by the general audience and critics. All the results of the analysis will be compared between the two films to see which aspects seem to have influenced both audiences negatively.

Looking at the economic impact of the two film adaptations, neither of them did exceptionally well. However, while *Super Mario Bros* managed to only earn money equal to only about half of its budget, *Max Payne* made more than twice as much as its initial budget. Therefore, judging by the profit only, it can be said that *Super Mario Bros* failed in this regard while *Max Payne´s* profit was fairly good. As was mentioned in the chapter discussing the similarities and differences between the film and video games, video games can be seen as having a deleterious influence on Hollywood action cinema. It is possible that after the 1990´s the general audience has become more welcome to films based on video games and such films are being viewed by larger audiences. In terms of cultural impact, meanwhile the 1993´s adaptation of *Super Mario Bros* was badly received at the beginning, it has become a cult classic (as many consider it to be "so bad it's good") and is appreciated by more people today. The adaptation of *Max Payne* has generally earned very low ratings and bad reviews, especially from critics.

Concerning the production of the two films, it is clear that the production teams tried to make the films more available to general and wider audiences. It is by introducing more complex topics and trying to make people of different age categories interested. Furthermore the filmmakers often try to keep the age rating low, making the film available to both younger audiences and adults. Both of the production teams have made changes to the source material in hopes of making the source material more fit for the film medium. In the case of *Super Mario Bros*, the producers added more substance and complexity to the plot while the producers of *Max Payne* tried to put together an emotional and visually powerful experience. While the *Super Mario Bros* had a detailed marketing campaign including the production of toy figures and books related to the film, most of the items appear to be aimed at younger audiences which could have also lowered the appeal of the film for the adult audience. Information concerning similar objects regarding *Max Payne* was not found but it appears that there were no similar objects produced for the promotion of the film. The film´s trailer, however, was generally liked by many viewers but in some cases it gave them false

expectations regarding the film´s plot. Furthermore, many viewers deemed that they liked the trailer more than the actual film.

In terms of the narrative front, both adaptations appear to be similar to their source material to a certain extent. Many of the characters´ roles are similar and the narrative phases are similar, too. While there were many creative changes in the narrative front of the *Super Mario Bros* adaptation, it still shared some characteristics of the plot and characters with the original. However, because of the plentitude of changes and the introduction of new concepts, the audience seemed to have more problems with seeing these similarities. On the other hand, *Max Payne* was much closer to the original source considering the narrative front, yet still, some fans of the video game did not accept these similarities, saying that the film´s story and characters are very different. Therefore, it appears that the reviewers often complain about infidelity to the source text if the film was not capable of capturing and absorbing them into the story the same way the original did. Furthermore, the structure of the film´s plot was reorganized in a way that kept the audience from knowing the main character´s motivations and the details of his tragic past for a longer time. In the video game, Max´s motivations in relation to his tragic past were revealed in the beginning and allowed for the audience to understand Max and identify with him earlier. It also appeared to have a negative impact on the viewers of the film, as they were not fully aware of the dramatic events that happened in Max´s past. Because of that he also appeared to some viewers as an unlikeable character. However, this is another case of the medium difference. In order to build suspense in the film the tragic events are foreshadowed in the beginning through flashbacks but are revealed later in order to keep the audience in anticipation. On the other hand, in the video game action is present nearly without a break to challenge the players and keep them active. It is possible that the reviewers were expecting more action throughout the film that would make it more similar to the video game, not realizing that the two media work differently. Therefore, many reviewers deemed the film to be boring and slow-paced.

In relation to the aesthetic front of *Super Mario Bros*, there were many points of negative criticism from the audience. The changes in the characters´ appearance was a very common point of criticism. Furthermore, the colorful world of Mushroom Kingdom was turned into dark Dinohattan which disappointed many fans of the video game. Overall, many of the reviewers felt that visually, this adaptation was too distant from the source material and they did not feel the same atmosphere coming from it. On the other hand, the production team of *Max Payne* has created a very similar setting to the one in the video game. The colors

and tone were similar and the mise-en-scène created visually a very faithful representation of the video game. The visual quality was complimented by many of the reviewers.

When discussing the encyclopaedian front, in both cases the adaptations are self-sufficient, stand-alone films. The audience should not need any video game knowledge in order to be able to understand the films. In *Max Payne* there are many more references to the source text than there are in *Super Mario Bros*, however, they should not create any barrier between the audience and their interpretation of the film.

While the video game references should not be problematic for the audience in terms of understanding the film, it is clear that when analyzing the dynamic front of *Max Payne* (2008), there are many instances where the video game logic was implemented into the film, which was negatively commented on by the reviewers. The appearances of the game logic in the film were likely intentional which would show the filmmakers respect for the source material as they thought of how to implement the video game aesthetics and mechanics into the film medium. This, however, according to the reviews and comments distracted many film viewers. Illogical actions from the characters such as absent-minded shooting or the invincibility of the main character who does not ever seem to run out of ammo were seen negatively by the audience according to their comments and reviews. Furthermore, it appears to have affected their level of immersion. Therefore, by negatively judging the game logic in the film, the reviewers were critical of the film´s fidelity to the video game. This is interesting, considering the fact that the audience is usually displeased with the lack of fidelity, not with its presence. *Super Mario Bros* has also implemented several mechanics from the video game. However, contrarily, they were made more realistic and appear more natural in the film medium. This way, the film has strayed from the video game rather than imitated its logic.

In terms of the influence of the video game experience on watching the film adaptation, it is clear that many of the audience members compare these two experiences which affects their ratings and reviews. This happened in the case of both film adaptations. If some elements were very different from the original source, it would lead to complaints and lower ratings from many reviewers. Many of the viewers seem to have been hoping to re-experience the video game. This again points to the fact that many reviewers are often unaware of the differences between the two media which offer two different types of experience. Yet, there were also some viewers who understood that the film medium works

differently and some changes were necessary. Therefore, they also appeared to enjoy the film more as their ratings of the films were not negatively influenced by the difference. However, it is certain that the viewers often base their negative critique on their previous experiences with the source text.

Another concept based on which the film adaptations were analyzed is perceived realism and its connection to immersion. It appears that both films failed at providing many of the viewers with an immersive experience in the world inside the film. In the case of *Super Mario Bros*, the audience showed disapproval with the more realistic and sci-fi approach that the film producers took. The reviewers also complained that the film mixes many different themes together. Furthermore, the reviewers have expressed that they were missing more of the fantasy elements from the video game. They have expressed that the multitude of different elements made the film confusing, not believable, and unentertaining. Therefore, the different *Mario* universe which was created for the film was not perceived as believable in the viewers´ imagination. This also disrupted their immersion in the film. On the other hand, in the case of *Max Payne,* the audience felt distracted and confused by the addition of supernatural demons (as they were also not present in the video game) and by the excessive implementation of video game logic. The audience found many elements illogical in terms of the film also in relation to passive characters and the way the story unfolded.

While it is rare to see the players complain about something being unrealistic in video games, it appears that this is another case of the way the two different media affect the consumers. The video games provide a different type of immersion also by allowing the player to be an active agent influencing and controlling the characters, their surrounding, and (to a certain extent) the outcome of the story. This can potentially distract the viewers from judging if what they are perceiving feels realistic. However, for the viewers of a film, illogical elements may easily cause disbelief and negatively affect their immersion. The disrupted immersion further makes their experience less enjoyable.

Concerning the ability of the viewers to identify with the characters, in the case of the viewers of *Super Mario Bros*, it appears that many reviewers could not identify with the characters. The reason for this was often that the reviewers found the characters´ portrayal to be unfaithful to the video game but also because the audience did not find their dialogues and interactions to be good. Therefore, it can be assumed that they had difficulties identifying with them, however, it is unknown whether it negatively affected their

understanding of the film. The viewers of *Max Payne* had problems identifying with the characters in the film, too. They thought the characters were not well developed, many of them did not have a greater purpose in the story, and the dialogues between them were shallow. Some of the reviewers mentioned that they were unable to connect with the characters emotionally or that they did not care about their fate. This indicates that they did not identify with them which also negatively affected their experience of the film. By identifying with characters, it is possible to explore the film through them from the inside. Therefore, by not being able to identify with them, it is another example of how the level of immersion can be weakened.

It appears that the potential of the *Super Mario Bros* adaptation as a nostalgia-inducing product is low, meanwhile, in the case of *Max Payne*, it is fairly moderate because of the higher number of references to the source text. Many reviewers of *Super Mario Bros* commented that the film did not provide them with a nostalgic feeling which could be one of the reasons why the adaptation was not enjoyable for them. The reviewers of *Max Payne,* however, did not discuss nostalgia and it was not easy to determine whether they experienced nostalgia through the film.

Overall, even though fidelity seems to be one of the common reasons for the negative criticism, the fact that the adaptation of *Max Payne* was more faithful to the original, its overall score and reviews on multiple online platforms were not better. There were even cases where being too faithful was also a reason for negative criticism. It appears that while fidelity matters to the audience, there are many equally important aspects that they consider. These include the quality of the script and its believability, relatable characters who have meaningful interactions and dialogues, and the overall atmosphere that the film creates.

Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to research film adaptations of successful video games and the cause of their commercial and financial failure. Furthermore, it was important to create a good analytical framework for analyzing the relationship between video games and films as there is a lack of proper analytical research tools in this regard because it is still a developing field. Therefore, I have expanded and further developed the analytical framework of Gandolfi and Semprebene with additional concepts for analysis to explore the complex relationship between games, films, and the audience even more accurately. In order to provide an answer to the research question by finding patterns and similarities between the negative receptions, two films were chosen, analyzed, and compared.

By comparing the results of the two analyses, it appears that one of the most common reasons why the audience has a negative experience with the film adaptations of video games is caused by not understanding the medium specificity and the difference between the two media. Adapting video games comes with many necessary alterations when carrying the text over to the film medium. It appears that many reviewers were expecting the film adaptation to feel similar to the video game or that it would provide them with a similar type of experience. However, because they are two different media, it is impossible. To support this claim, the reviews show that those viewers who were aware of the differences between the two media also gave the film a better rating.

Furthermore, the two media offer the viewers different levels of immersion. It appears that video games often provide an immersion for the players that is more difficult to disrupt. On the other hand, if the viewers find the film to be illogical, or the narrative not compelling, it disrupts their immersion and makes their experience less enjoyable. It is also because the consumers often expect different things from video games and films.

While the complaints regarding infidelity were very common among the reviewers, it is often because the film simply failed to deliver the viewers a good quality script together with meaningful character dialogues and character developments. The disappointment of not being able to connect and identify with the characters in the film can be also seen as a common reason causing negative reception. Therefore, it is the quality of the film that often does not appeal to the viewers rather than infidelity. Another proof of this is the fact that in some cases the adaptations can be too faithful to the source and still be received negatively. An example of this is the implementation of the video game logic into the *Max Payne*

adaptation. By adding many such elements, the viewers found the film to be flawed and illogical. Therefore, if the films were fully faithful to their sources (which is not possible) many aspects implemented from the games would probably appear to be too unnatural for the film medium.

In conclusion, the *Max Payne* and *Super Mario Bros* video games were more successful in their respective genre because they were able to better catch the audience's attention. They furthermore offered a different type of immersion and more interactivity to the players which generated an enjoyable experience. On the other hand, the film adaptations appear to have failed because they were possibly (at times) too faithful to the source and not paying such close attention to the elements that are important for the film medium such as character development, narrative motivation, or coherence and logic of the narrative which would create a believable and enjoyable experience for the viewers.

In order to further develop this thesis, future research could analyze other film adaptations of video games that were perceived as unsuccessful. It could show whether the negative reception of other adaptations was influence by the same aspects. These adaptations could be analyzed using the same analytical framework with addition of new concepts that could also be influencing the viewers´ reception of such adaptations.

Summary in Estonian

**Filmide *Super Mario Bros* ja *Max Payne* adaptatsioon videomängudest:
teooria, tulemus, hinnang**

Selle uurimistöö eesmärk on uurida kahest edukast videomängust *Super Mario Bros.* (1985) *ja Max Payne* (2001) tehtud filmiekraniseeringute *Super Mario Bros.* (1993) *ja Max Payne* (2008) taset ning sellest johtuvalt nimetatud filmide ärilise ja loomingulise ebaõnnestumise põhjuseid.

Teoreetilises ülevaates analüüsin üldlevinud arvamust, et videomängudest kohandatud (edaspidises tekstis *adapteeritud*) filmid on „halvemad". See seisukoht tuleneb tihti sellest, et nii filmikriitikud, videomängude fännid kui ka lihtsalt juhuvaatajad annavad selliselt sündinud filmidele negatiivse üldhinnangu. Arvestades asjaolu, et samalaadsete adaptsioonide arv on kiires kasvutendentsis, usun, et selline teemapüstitus on vägagi aktuaalne – eriti täna, mil videomängude tööstus kaalub mahuliselt üles Hollywoodi ning mil sarnaste filmide tegijail on praktiline võimalus lihtsa kasumi saamiseks. Tõe huvides tõden siiski, et paljud sellistest õnneotsijatest ei osutu selles vallas edukateks.

Videomängude ja filmide omavahelised adaptsioonisuhted on suhteliselt uus teadusharu, seetõttu leidub akadeemilist lähenemist ja teaduste kste sel alal vähe. Näiteks videomänge on filmiteadlased uurinud läbi aktsepteeritud filmiteooria – see aga pole paljude teoreetikute meelest kõige täpsem viis kahe erineva meediailmingu (film, videomäng) kooskäsitlemiseks. Just seepärast olen käesoleva lõputöö teoreetilises raamistikus võtnud ülesande võrrelda neid kaht erinevat meediavormi, tuvastades nende erinevused ja sarnasused. Lisaks sellele on adaptsioonilise uurimise käigus nende võimaliku vastuvõtukriteeriumi (näiteks negatiivsete) põhjuste kohta lisateabe saamiseks vajalik kehtestada sobiv lähenemisviis.

Nüüd ma kirjeldan selle töö teoreetilist raamistikku. Nimetatud kahe filmi analüüsimisel osutus väga kasulikuks analüütiline tööriist, mille on välja töötanud Enrico Gandolfi ja Roberto Semprebene (2015). Gandolfi ja Semprebere leidsid meetodi, kuidas analüüsida videomängude ja filmide vahelist suhet läbi erinevate võtmemõistete, mis aitasid neil paremini lahti seletada, kuidas sellised adaptsioonid on erinevate publikurühmade poolt erinevatel viisidel vastu võetud. Kuid minu töö raamistiku jaoks pidi seda suunda laiendama. Seetõttu lisan ma selle töö raamistikku rohkem uusi kontseptsioone ja mõisteid, nagu nostalgia, kogemus, identifitseerimine, realismitaju ning vaatajate kaasamine. Need mõisted

olen valinud eeldusel, et nad on otseselt seotud filmivaataja tajumis- ja vastuvõtmisvõimetega.

Selles töös olen uurinud ülalnimetatud kahte filmi kahel meetodil: läbi diskursuseanalüüsi ja tiheda tekstianalüüsi. Esmalt analüüsin adaptsioonide ebaõnnestumist kriitikute ning juhufilmikülastajate retsensioonide kaudu. Lähtuvalt negatiivsetest retsensioonidest jõuan ma järeldusteni, mis aitavad paremini aru saada, miks need filmid publikule ei meeldinud. Seetõttu näen ma lähemalt, miks retsensentide arvamused pooldasid nägemust sarnaste filmide kehvast adapteerimistasemest.

Teine meetod kasutab aga tihedat tekstipõhist analüüsi. Samuti analüüsin nende filmide tootmisprotsessi, reklaamide kvaliteeti, filmide kultuurilist ja majanduslikku mõju, seda, kuidas nad erinevad algsest videomängust ning kas neil on mingit potentsiaali ligi meelitada teatud tüüpi vaatajaskonda. Veel analüüsin neid filme lisakontseptsioonide kaudu, et näha, kas vaatajad on suutnud samastuda filmi tegelaskujudega. Samuti uurin, kas vaatajad on leidnud kinnitust filmi usutavuses ning kas nad on tundnud nostalgiat jne või leidnud üleüldse, et nende kogemus videomängudega on mõjutanud neid andma negatiivse üldhinnangu filmidele.

Pärast mõlema filmi analüüsi ning retsensioonide võrdlust olen võimeline järeldama, millised elemendid on kõige tihedamini kaasatud ning seotud kriitikute negatiivsete arvustustega. Lähtudes analüüsi tulemustest, leian, et üks levinumaid põhjuseid, miks vaatajaskonnal on videomängude filmiks adapteerimisega negatiivsed muljed: retsenseerijad ei mõista, et erinevad meediumivormid võivad töötada lausa üksteise vastu või siis teisiti, erinevalt. See hõlmab endas vajadust paljudeks muudatusteks, mida filmitegijad peavad arvestama, kui videomängu filmiks kohandavad.

Retsensioonid näitavad ka seda, et paljud retsenseerijad ootasid, et filmivaatamise kogemus sarnaneks videomängule või siis videomängu mängimisele. Aga arvestades, kuivõrd filmid ja videomängud üksteisest erinevad, on sarnane kogemus mõlema puhul ilmvõimatu. Kõige paremini hindasid filmi need arvustajad, kes said aru sellest, et filmitegijad peavad adaptsiooni harrastades ja arendades arvestama kindla kriteeriumiga, et tehakse filmi, mitte videomängu.

Ehkki kaebused n-ö žanritruudusetuse kohta olid arvustajate hulgas väga levinud, on põhjus lihtne: film ei suutnud vaatajatele pakkuda kvaliteetset stsenaariumi koos sisukate dialoogide ja tegelaskujudega. Seda, et filmivaataja ei leidnud filmitegelastega vahetut sidet

ega samastumisvõimaluse efekti, võib pidada filmis üheks pettumuse ja negatiivse vastuvõtu põhjustajaks. Just seetõttu ei meeldinud vaatajatele filmi kvaliteet – ja hoopiski mitte see, et film polnud truu videomängule. Selle tõestuseks on asjaolu, et mõnelgi juhul võivad kohandusepisoodid olla väga allikatruud ja ometi võetakse neidki vastu negatiivselt. Näidis sarnasest situatsioonist ilmneb, kui lähtuda arvustusest filmile Max Payne. Kuna Max Payne on palju ustavam videomängu materjalile, siis videomängu reeglite rakendamine filmis näis retsenseerijale vigane ning ebaloogiline. Seega, kui filmid oleksid oma allikatele täielikult truud (mis objektiivselt pole võimalik), siis näivad paljud mängudes rakendatavad aspektid filmide kontekstis siiski liiga ebaloomulikena.

Lisaks pakuvad mõlemad meediavormid erinevaid võimalusi vaataja kaasamiseks. Näib, et videomängud võivad pakkuda seda sagedamini – neid on raskem häirida. Samas, kui vaatajad leiavad, et film on ebaloogiline või kui narratiiv ei ole veenev, võib see lihtsasti häirida nende kaasumist ja empaatiavõimet, muutes filmikogemuse vähem nauditavaks. Tihti võib mõjufaktoriks olla tarbijate ootus videomängudest ja filmidest – need on sageli täiesti erinevad ootused-lootused.

Kokkuvõttes, Max Payne ning Super Mario Bros on edukamad videomängudena, kuna suudavad paremini publiku tähelepanu köita. Lisaks pakuvad nad mängijatele teist, inimlikumat tüüpi kaasatust ja rohkem interaktiivsust, mis tekitab nauditava kogemuse. Samas näib, et adaptsioonid on läbi kukkunud, sest nad püüdlevad liigtruudusele algallikale. Sellisel juhul näib, et lihtsalt ei pööratud nii suurt tähelepanu elementidele, mis oleksid filmi vaatamisest andnud meeldivama ning usutavama elamuse, näiteks filmitegelaskujude detailsema väljaarendamise, narratiivse motivatsiooni ning filmisüžeede täpsema sidususe läbi.

Appendices

Appendix 1: *Super Mario Bros* Paratext

One day in the kingdom of the peaceful mushroom people was invaded by the Koopa, a tribe of turtles famous for their black magic. The quiet, peace-loving Mushroom People were turned into mere stones, bricks, and even field horsehair plant, and the Mushroom Kingdom fell into ruin.

The only one who can undo the magic spell on the Mushroom People and return them to their normal selves is the Princess Toadstool, the daughter of the Mushroom King. Unfortunately, he is presently in the hands of the great Koopa turtle king.

Mario, the hero of this story (maybe) hears about the Mushroom People´s plight and set out on a quest to free the Mushroom Princess from the evil Koopa and restore the fallen kingdom of the Mushroom People.
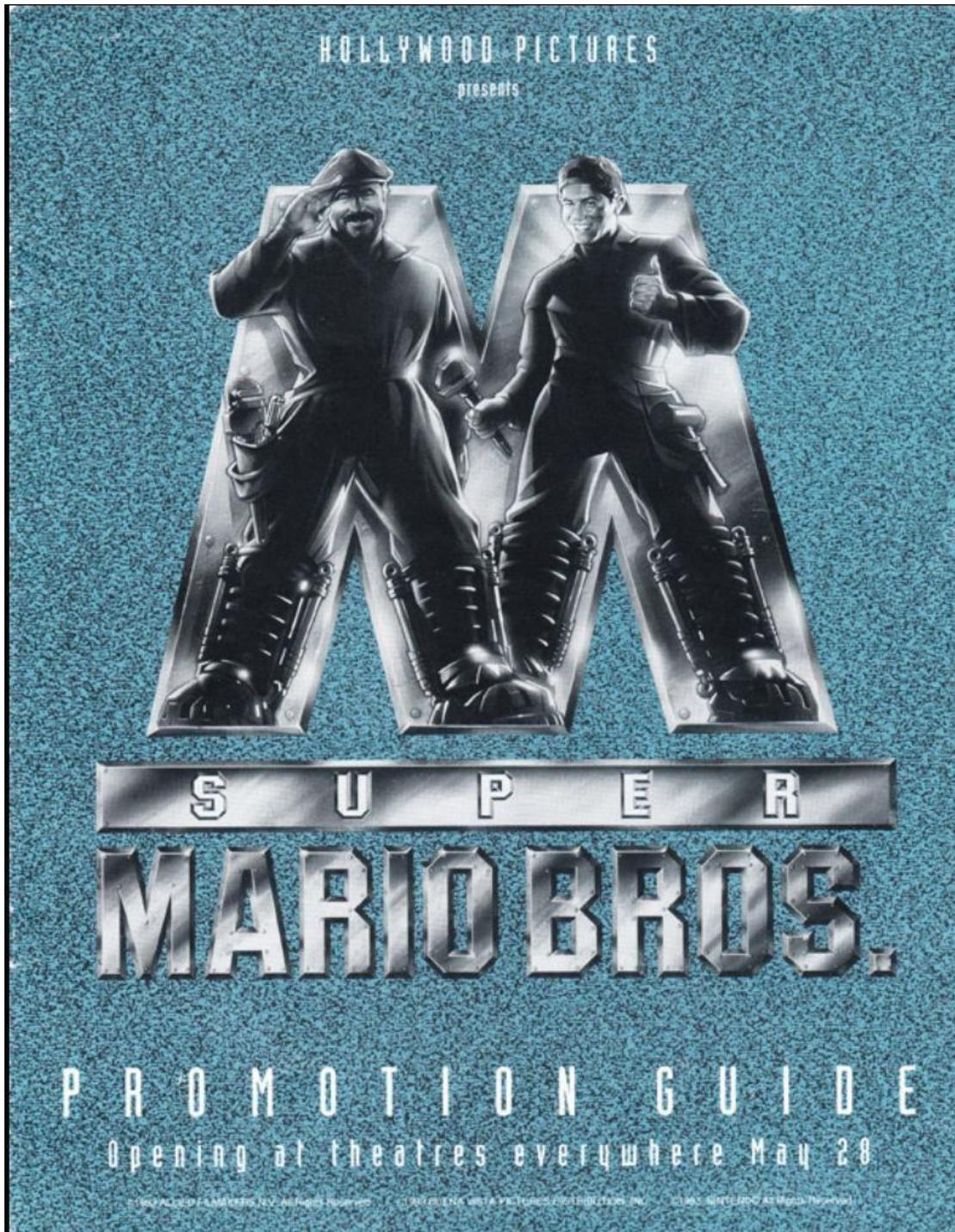
You are Mario! It´s up to you to save the Mushroom People from the black magic of the Koopa!

(*Super Mario Bros.*, Instruction Booklet, 1985)

Appendix 2: *Super Mario Bros* **Promotion Guide**

The full promotion guide is available here:
http://www.smbmovie.com/SMBArchive/merchandise/promo.html

(Ščasná, Bernadette 2020, "*Super Mario Bros* Promo Guide Title Page", screenshot of Super Mario Bros Movie Archive webpage, May 24, 2020.
http://www.smbmovie.com/SMBArchive/merchandise/promo.html.)

<h1 style="text-align:center">Works Cited</h1>

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