



Merits of Gamification

Transmediality and Spatiality of *Walden, a Game*

Renata E. Ntelia

School of Computer Science, University of Lincoln, Lincolnshire
rntelia@lincoln.ac.uk

ABSTRACT

This paper examines gamification as the remediation of an already published text into a game. It expands on the original understanding of the term by positioning it within the discourse of transmedia storytelling. Using *Walden, a Game* as a case-study, it is argued that it is better approached as a gamified rendering of the titular text in a virtual environment rather than a self-contained game. This argument is supported through formal analysis of the game's spatial design and comparative analysis with other game adaptations of published books as well as *Walden*, the book as the source text of the game. It is shown that *Walden, a Game* constitutes a superficial and limited remediation of its original text if it is considered as a game. Instead, it is proposed that it provides a gamified access to its source material and it is in this facilitation wherein its contribution lies. In this, gamification is extrapolated as an alternative entry point to an established work with its own affordances and merits.

CCS CONCEPTS

• Digital Games; • Walden; • Transmediality;

KEYWORDS

Gamification, Game, Walden, Thoreau, Transmediality, Worldness, Space

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1 INTRODUCTION

Gamification has been defined as “the use of game design elements in non-game contexts” [1, p. 9]. As a term, gamification first originated in digital media marketing to describe the employment of game elements in other applications with the intention of increasing the user's engagement. Gamification stemmed from the assumption that games are fun and entertaining with the ability to hold the attention of the player for a significant amount of time, therefore it would be advantageous if products that are not games used game elements to achieve the same effect. The above definition

implies that if a set of game elements exists then any system can be potentially gamified [2]. This understanding of gamification begs the question, paradigmatically evidenced in the case of meta-game achievement systems where games themselves are gamified [3]. In the descriptive words of Ian Bogost, gamification becomes then bullshit (sic) since “-ifying things makes applying that medium to any given purpose seem facile and automatic” [4, p. 67]. Yet, games are complex and versatile objects and there is no systematic consensus as to what formal properties make a game.

Huotari and Hamari [2] set out to escape this conundrum by focusing not on the method but on the goal of gamification. For Huotari and Hamari, “gamification is not always carried out through any particular concrete elements alone” (p. 25). Approaching the term from a service marketing perspective, they define gamification as “a process of enhancing a service with affordances for gameful experiences in order to support users' overall value creation” (ibid). This meaning of gamification sees it as a potential instead of a property, which fits better how games operate. Calleja and Aarseth [5] have argued that games resist any categorical definition and are instead spaces that afford a variety of practices, many a time mutually contradicting. Moreover, game design and game experience are two distinct phenomena. A space might not have been designed for a game but still be experienced as a game. When a space has been designed for a game, it enables particular gameful practices that take precedence over others. Yet other practices are still afforded, and these practices can be gameful in a different way or not gameful at all. Equally, when a space has not been designed for a game, it is still possible to be reappropriated as a game and/or afford gameful behaviours.

Based on the above, this paper expands on the understanding of gamification to include the process of encompassing texts in digital spaces that afford gameful experiences; a remediation [6], that is, of a text into a digital space with gameful affordances. To reappropriate Huotari and Hamari's definition, gamification is here proposed as a transmedia process of enhancing a text with gameful affordances in order to support the partaker's overall engagement. This process is demarcated from designing game adaptations in spatial terms. To show what this means, *Walden, a Game* [7] is used as a case study. The paper performs a formal analysis of the title's spatial design and a comparative analysis with other game adaptations and the source text itself. It is posited that *Walden, a Game* is better perceived as a gamification of a philosophical text because of how it treats space. It is specifically argued that *Walden, a Game* constitutes a gamification of Henri Thoreau's eponymous work: a digital space based on Thoreau's text that affords some gameful experiences through which the partaker's experience of the text is enhanced. This overall study results in a varied and broader understanding of gamification and its merits as a process.

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2 TRANSMEDIA STORYTELLING

Mario Vargas Llosa in one of his essays [8] describes the effect literature has on our imagination. He claims that reading fiction makes us more engaged because we have to put more mental effort to transform the written words into worlds unlike when we are passive spectators: “Memory is the decisive proof. The fictions of my Bolivian childhood are more vivid in my memory than flesh-and-blood people. [...] The currents of air that propel the balloon of Phileas Fogg on his journey round the world, just in time to win the bet” (p. 35). In the novel by Jules Verne [9], Phileas Fogg never uses an air balloon. The hydrogen balloon was added to the story in the 1956 film adaptation [10]. A trifle mistake from the author’s part; unlucky coincidence that he made it while trying to argue in favour of the strong imprint literature has on memory in comparison to the superficial impact of the image. Yet, this innocuous lapse is quite telling of how transmedia storytelling is shaped. Llosa claims that reading made him a reader, but his reader memory is augmented by his spectator memory. In this sense, he is not just the reader of *Around the World in 80 days*, the novel, nor simply the spectator of *Around the World in 80 days*, the movie. Indeed, he is a partaker of the fictional world that comprises *Around the World in 80 days*.

This world has at least two entry points, one being the novel and one being the movie. Anyone who has read the book and/or watched the movie has an experience of this world. Undoubtedly, their experience is dictated by the affordances of each medium. Nevertheless, the perception of this world is cumulative. As was shown in the example of Llosa, the representation of a world in our minds is rarely unambiguous. Apart from the fact that the mental images we create through the process of experiencing a world may be, and most probably are, affected by factors that have nothing to do with the text itself, it is also the intertextuality of cultural input and references that make us conceive of an opus as a transmedia storyworld rather than a unimodal product.

Understandably, this effect is much more widely witnessed today, in the era of multimodality [6]. Manuel Castells [11] contends that the nature of the media we now consume, predominantly the Internet, train our minds to work in a hypertextual manner, having “the material capability to access the whole realm of cultural expressions—select them, recombine them” (p. 202). However, this hypertextual consumption has been around for much, much longer. Henry Jenkins [12] shows how in Middle Ages the vast majority of people who were illiterate encountered the story of Jesus not in a single book but multiple instances: stained-glass windows, psalms, sermons, icons (p. 128). It was a cultural assumption that they already knew Jesus and his story from someplace else. Even further back to the Homeric epics, Jenkins continues, when the Greeks heard stories about Odysseus, they did not need to be told who he was, where he came from, or what his mission was. Through oral tradition, they were already knowledgeable about him.

Transmedia storytelling is not the result of new technologies. New technologies serve this need for transmedia storytelling instead; a need that has been accompanying how people consume stories for millennia. It may even not be too farfetched to contend that the Internet and other multimedia and hypertextual applications, games included, have been developed and continue to expand in popularity exactly because they replicate the way our brains

work. This does not mean that all transmedia storytelling is de facto successful. As Jenkins discusses, in transmedia storytelling each new text should respect its medium’s affordances and be a novel contribution: “In the ideal form of transmedia storytelling, each medium does what it does best: [...] each franchise entry needs to be self-contained so you don’t need to have seen the film to enjoy the game, and vice versa” (p. 102- 103). In the example of *Around the World in 80 days*, the sole entryway to the story used to be the novel. Later movie adaptations came, followed by TV series, comics, and games.

In 2014, Inkle published *80 days* [13], a text-based, steam-punk themed game, in which the player assumes the role of Passepartout, the French valet of Phileas Fogg. The premise is the same: the heroes need to travel the world in 80 days moving from city to city by various means of transport. What changes is the execution. The game does not blindly replicate the novel. It turns the original linear text into interactive fiction. The player can choose which route to follow and what means of transport to take. Additionally, in every destination they can explore, buy and/or sell items, and get involved in mini adventures which affect the overall progression of the gameplay, while trying to keep their master alive and well.

80 days is a valid instance of transmedia storytelling. It offers a new entry point to the classic story by making use of the advantages of the medium it employs. If someone only played *80 days*, they would have a completely different experience of the same material with its own approach and interpretation of the source world. If someone read the book and played *80 days*, they would have a more intricate and thorough interaction with the story by various methods of engagement. By playing the game, they would not simply experience the text in a gameful manner. They would instead experience a new way to partake in the narrative and thus explore it and be affected by it even more. Their reading and their playing *80 days* would be distinct but complementary encounters.

How does gamification fit within transmedia storytelling? As argued in the introduction, it is proposed as a process of enhancing one’s engagement with a source text with gameful affordances. As such, gamification is a process of reappropriating an original material by employing opportunities of gameful communication with the text but without introducing a fully fleshed-out and unique representation in the form of a game. Gamification enhances the experience of the source text by means of a ludic approach without the need to provide a self-contained game based on the source material which would offer a novel experience of its storyworld. In 2020, Nerial developed *Animal Farm* based on Orwell’s book [14]. It is a representation of the source text with additional audiovisual and interactive elements based on strategy games. The player gets to manage the famous animal farm and takes on the difficult task of making it successful. Yet the possibilities for the player and the results of their actions are very limited. This is an intentional design-choice since the application wanted to stay true to the dystopian spirit of the novel. In this sense, the player does not actually manage the farm. They only do so within the limited framework as this was imagined by Orwell and documented in his work. The player’s experience is still dependent on the original text of the book, albeit now their access to it includes some ludic potential.

Unlike *80 days*, *Animal Farm* does not constitute a separate experience with different affordances. For someone who did not read the

book, the nuances of the message conveyed in the process would most probably be lost amidst the frustration of the game's rigidity. In *80 days*, the player has a vast array of actions, and these actions result in different outcomes within the game's setting. In *Animal Farm*, the actions are limited, and their results are used to provide an enhanced interaction with the source text. This makes it an instance of gamification, as the term is unpacked here. This is a descriptive definition and not a categorical one. There is no attempt to define what a game is and should be and what a game is not. Understanding *Animal Farm* as gamification is a suggested approach which allows its merits to be properly acknowledged and its features to be analysed and contextualised, while it pre-empts any criticism due to its limited playability.

Yet what are the discernible features of gamification that will enable a heuristic application of the term and not merely a descriptive one? As already mentioned above, there are two main considerations: the scope of available actions provided to the player and the weightiness and consistency of their results in the game world so as to make its experience unique to the player. These considerations are a matter of degree. They are positioned within a spatial nexus of reference according to which the spatial design of a transmedia adaptation is proposed as the main field of analysis within the framework of gamification and gameness. To show what is meant with that, *Walden, a Game* is used as an appurtenant case study of gamification in the context of transmedia design process. What makes *Walden, a Game* an interesting example of gamification is the fact that its gameful affordances revolve around spatiality and worldness. In this, the position of spatial design as the intelligible gauge of the dialectical relationship between gamification and gameness becomes all the more pertinent.

3 WALDEN, A GAMIFICATION

Walden, a Game, designed by Tracy Fullerton, is based on Henry David Thoreau's book of the same name. It is set in a 3D environment in first-person viewpoint. It is aimed to provide an experience of Thoreau's chronicle of his time spent living alone in the woods surrounding Walden Pond, USA. Thoreau's choice to go and live alone in the woods was an experiment. His intention was to show how people could do better near nature without the corrosive influence of society and its prescripts. *Walden, a Game* tries to simulate this vision of Thoreau through a slow-paced interaction with the virtual environment in which reflection takes the leading role. Indicatively, its tagline is "Play Deliberately" [7]. The premise of *Walden, a Game* is fascinating. Assuming the role of Henry Thoreau and get to be him can achieve a level of engagement with his personality and theory that no other medium has to offer. Yet it would be unfair to consider *Walden, a Game* as a game. The whole experience revolves around providing another means to the player to access the source text. It is not about playing a game that is inspired by *Walden* but instead playing with the text of *Walden* in a digital environment that includes some gameful affordances.

The interactor, in the role of the author himself, spends a game year living as the author did in his cabin in the woods. The emphasis is given on the philosophical reminiscence of this experience rather than in game activities. Indeed, the scope of interaction is quite

limited; most of the time is allotted to chopping wood and fishing. The consistent form of interaction concerns glistering arrows spread throughout the game environment, which once activated by the player trigger voiced-over excerpts from the book that are conceptually connected with that part of the virtual world. These serve as quotes that familiarise the player with Thoreau's ideas. In this regard, they constitute a hypertextual remediation of his work. In *Walden, a Game*, the material of the book has been broken down to chunks of text and redistributed in a non-serial fashion. Given its very limited playability, *Walden a Game's* transmedia contribution proves to be sparse and its impact and potential underdeveloped. It still has merits, yet if considered as a gamified version of *Walden* instead of a full-fledged game. Not only does it exhibit its strongest qualities then, but it also makes a case of the possibilities gamification as a process possesses within the context of transmedia storytelling.

This does not hold a value judgement. It does not assume that *Walden, a Game* is not good because it is not a game but a gamified version of *Walden*. It does not negate *Walden, a Game's* ability to be called a game either. As discussed in the previous section, there is no effort to demarcate what should be called a game. Instead, it is argued that perceiving *Walden, a Game* as an instance of gamification allows for a better understanding and more thorough analysis of its features and transmedia potential.

As a game, *Walden, a Game* would fall short of how it translates an experience of reading a book to an experience of playing a book rather than to a free-standing adaptation of the source text. *Walden, a Game* gamifies the access to Thoreau's textual descriptions instead of making a game based on them. The difference resides in the scope of the affordances its space facilitates. Most games offer to the player a set of actions in accordance with pre-existing intentions. Both these bodily enactments and goals are represented via the playable character. James Paul Gee [15] describes *Thief* as an example of "a world of many shadows and hiding places [...] designed to interact with Garrett's powers and limitations in terms of specific affordances and disaffordances (p. 258). The world of *Thief* is experienced according to what Garrett, the avatar, can do. By proxy, the player, who controls Garrett, experiences the game world based on this in-game body. More importantly, the player can perceive the in-game world as a world because of the avatar's body which is an interlocutor of affordances with its environment. This in-game body is inexorably linked to specific body movements but also intentional tasks, which are conveyed to the player as goals in the game.

However, as Gee notes, a player may sometimes disregard the goals of the avatar and instead chase different goals of their own. Even in doing so, "your own personal goals must become Garrett-like goals, goals that flow from his (virtual) mind and body as they are placed in this specific game world" (p. 259). Most games combine the intentions of the avatar with the game progression to keep the player interested and invested in the game. Lankoski argues that this "goal-related engagement" [16, p. 296] creates an emotional attachment between the avatar and the player since they both strive towards the same end. Yet, as Lankoski comments, giving the player a set of goals that match those of the playable character "does not mean that the emotions or goals of the [avatar] and player are always the same" (p. 298). In other words, performing the same

actions will not necessarily result in the player having the same thoughts and experiences.

In *Walden, a Game*, the player is supposed to live like Thoreau. They are given the primary task to build a hut and gather resources to survive, much like Thoreau did while living alone in the woods. Yet having the player live like Thoreau does not necessitate that the player will have the same experience of Walden as Thoreau. The photorealistic environment of *Walden, a Game* does not overcome its fictionality. The player cannot feel the wind on their face, they do not get tired by handiwork to appreciate the respite that comes afterwards nor do they get hungry and cold. The player could perceive *Walden* as a counterpart of their physical environment only if its space allowed for a variety of affordances that would enable the player to perform within this designed space according to their own goals and intentions inspired by and as a reaction to it.

The designed space of *Walden* is not the physical space of Walden Pond. The player can never have the same experience Thoreau did by simply recreating the actions performed by Thoreau and documented in his book as these are infused with physicality. The designed space of *Walden* would need to incorporate a simulation of actions that would have the same, or similar, effect. This becomes more complicated with *Walden* being a philosophical text. In the case of *Thief*, when Garrett hides from the guards, the player can also experience agony and tension because their in-game actions have similar effects: if Garrett gets caught, he will face repercussions, while the player will lose time and effort already spent in progressing the game. In *Walden*, the player does not get the same experience with Thoreau when chopping wood. Firstly, chopping wood in *Walden's* virtual environment is a completely different action from chopping wood in the physical environment, not in terms of believability per se but in terms of performativity in space. Secondly, because the philosophical ruminations that Thoreau associated with the action, and his time spent in the woods in general, are a product of deliberate thought and reflection and not an immediate product of the experience. In the following sections, these statements are unpacked by means of formal analysis of *Walden, a Game's* treatment of space and world-building.

4 SPATIALITY AND WORLDNESS IN WALDEN

The importance of space in the design of *Walden, a Game* is evident in the words of its lead designer, Tracy Fullerton. She repeatedly calls *Walden* a world and refers to its design process as world-building [17]. It is also in these terms that she differentiates *Walden* from other games: “In the case of *Walden, a game*, however, the process of creation for the world was deeply rooted in historical research, and the ultimate goal was the translation of a nonfiction experience rather than the creation of a fictional one,” (p. 94). Fullerton describes *Walden, a Game's* raison d'être as “a desire to create a world where we might all have the opportunity to “go to the woods” and discover the essential facts of life – not literally but virtually, and in a way that might turn the technologies that have so complicated our lives to a different purpose” (p. 96). This approach does not seem much different from the process of –ification described in the introduction. It assumes that building a virtual environment in which the player can act similarly to how Thoreau lived while in Walden Pond would result in a game about Thoreau's experience.

Yet, the quality of worldness is not automatic. Worldness in games is not much different from worldness in our physical world. Phenomenologically, we understand the environment we inhabit as a world because it is the space of our intentionalities, of our bodily actions that we perform with a certain aim [18]. Games are not sui generis virtual worlds. They constitute virtual worlds on the basis that they enable the intentional bodily actions of their agents, namely the avatar and, through it, the player [19]. The more scope of in game actions, the higher the embodiment and, thus, the quality of worldness this artificial world achieves. What *Walden, a Game* lacks is this engagement with its environment. It does not accommodate enough agency for the player to be perceived as a game world, particularly given its duration of over six hours.

As Espen Aarseth [20] notes when commenting on *Azeroth*, the world of *World of Warcraft*, a game world is all about functionality and playability (p. 118). The playability *Walden, a Game* offers is too thin for such a long game time, so the game soon becomes a tedious and monotonous repetition. The player gets a glimpse of Thoreau's writing and learns about his family and friends, and events in his life that affected him deeply. However, the design of the game rather than making the player interested in Thoreau's work results in the player feeling forced to appreciate it. It is telling that the way the game tries to familiarise the player with Thoreau's work is through written excerpts from his book. Also, the player is prompted to read passages from books that inspired Thoreau's ideology, such as the *Iliad*. The virtual space of *Walden* is not used as much to play as it is to read. Clara Fernández-Vara and Matthew Weise [21] in constructing a methodology about world-building in games argue that: “A game world (fictional or not) cannot really include all the details of the world it is based on” (p. 77). This is not a technological limitation but a functional one: “The worlds of the Grand Theft Auto series are supposedly realistic, but they do not include getting fined for skipping a red light, while the driving mechanics often defy the actual laws of physics – and that's precisely why they are compelling” (ibid). Players' actions in games need to be meaningful and purposeful in order for the game to achieve the intended effect. At the same time, there are games that include very detailed simulations of particular actions, like flying simulators, and are enjoyed and played exactly for this reason. Yet *Walden, a Game* does not do this either: it does not include a very detailed simulation of fishing or building a hut, for example, but it does not include an abstracted version of those actions either. It remains somewhere in between; offering some gamefulness but not exactly. Notwithstanding Fullerton's vision of what *Walden, a Game* should do, as Fernández-Vara and Weise contend, the experience of any game is based on the actions it offers: “The verbs of a game, what the player actually does, is what a game is about, beyond what is on the blurb description of the game,” (p. 83). This once again shows that *Walden, a Game* fares much better when considered within the context of transmedia gamification instead of game adaptation.

As we saw, games affect players through agency and *Walden, a Game* provides very little of it. This does not mean that agency should by default be equated with a vast array of in-game actions. Let us take the example of *Dear Esther* [22], another game with very limited gameplay. *Dear Esther* is a first person exploration of a seemingly deserted island. Actually, the in-game actions are far

fewer than in *Walden, a Game*. There are no obstacles, goals, and/or puzzles. The path for the player to follow is clearly designated with no deviations and the end is totally predefined. But in spite of the limited gameplay, *Dear Esther* retains a space of interpretative possibilities. Just like *Walden, a Game*, *Dear Esther* contains voiced over texts with the difference being that these are original. Most importantly, in *Dear Esther* the player is not told what to think through text. Its textual elements are scarce and rather complementary than dictating. *Dear Esther* uses its virtual environment to speak for itself. Games are very good at creating emotional and cognitive reactions by indexes in their environments [23–25], what Jenkins in particular calls environmental storytelling [26, p. 121]. *Dear Esther* does this exemplarily well because it uses its environment as the source of its narrative. It is the story of its world, which occurs just as the story of our world unfolds, by experiencing it.

On the contrary, *Walden, a Game* employs its environment as a prompt to expose the player to the thoughts and musings Thoreau had while experiencing the same environment. It is primarily for this reason that *Walden, a Game* suffers from insufficient agency; because it attempts to dictate the player's actions in order to achieve a specific experience, which is notational in nature. As explained before, enactment does not necessitate psychological and conceptual synergy. Not everyone who would live alone in the woods could reach Thoreau's level of theorisation. Claiming the opposite would debase Thoreau's intellectual uniqueness.

Actually, Thoreau himself did not reach his philosophical conclusions by merely living in the woods. His experience of Walden Pond documented in his book is a highly constructed and well-thought representation. It is the representation of his experience rather than his experience that is the basis of his work. This representation is deeply interconnected with the medium he used to manifest it: the written text. The effect this observation has on *Walden, a Game*'s perception as an instance of gamification is further analysed in the following part.

5 SPATIAL REPRESENTATION IN WALDEN

H. Daniel Peck [27] provides a very precise analysis of what Thoreau attempted in his book:

In a work written, in part, to “wake my neighbors up” (84), landscape might just put them to sleep, by speaking directly to their expectations and inviting their most predictable responses. One of the implicit challenges that Thoreau faced in writing “The Ponds” was to refigure landscape description in such a way as to deepen it to the level of his reformist and utopian purposes,” (p. 91).

The environment in Thoreau's *Walden* is described in such a way as to invite specific philosophical interpretations made possible through Thoreau's meticulous textual representation. In *Walden, a Game*, the landscape creates, at best, a serene, and, at worst, a boring, experience of the lake and surrounding woods. As explained before, simply including excerpts from Thoreau's book is not enough to *wake the player up*. By experiencing the pond in the game, the player has all the *predictable responses*: enjoys the photorealistic environment and enacts some of the activities Thoreau performed while living there, like fishing and harvesting seeds. Yet they do not

necessarily, and most probably, have the same thought processes Thoreau assigns to this experience. The reader has to read Thoreau's punctilious wording in order to experience Walden Pond as Thoreau describes it.

Thoreau “enacts philosophy in his prose,” Peck informs us (p. 100). His description of *Walden* and the experience of *Walden* are inseparable. If it were not for Thoreau's “deep description” (p. 91), *Walden* would not have the same effect and impact. Thoreau is aware of this importance, this is why in his book the chapter devoted to Walden Pond and its neighbouring ponds is the second largest (p. 92). At the same time, Peck poses the question why in a book titled *Walden*, this chapter comes almost midway: “we have to wait more than 170 pages for an extended description of the actual landscape of the Pond” (p. 90) and “it is striking to consider how little we learn about the landscape of Walden and its neighbourhood prior to “The Ponds,” (p. 91). It is because Thoreau knew how important the description of the ponds was in his philosophical movement. Thoreau wrote most of the chapter almost at the end of his eight-year composition of the book: “Very little of “The Ponds” was written during his two year stay (1845– 47) at Walden” (ibid). Peck explains that this “suggests that Thoreau withheld the view that it affords, in some sense, even from himself, and that he was able to offer such a view only when the passage of time had enabled his revisioning and remembrance of the Walden experience” (ibid). As such, Thoreau's experience of Walden in *Walden* is not Thoreau's experience of Walden but Thoreau's experience of Walden while writing *Walden*.

Thoreau introduces the pond by saying that it merits “a particular description” [28, p. 154]. Peck invites us to take him at his word: “description is the category of thought into which Thoreau is now taking us. And if we are also going to be lifted into the realm of the lyrical or even the miraculous, it will be description that gets us there” [27, p. 93]. It is the description of the pond, rather than its experience, that provides the philosophical linchpin of *Walden*. One cannot have the experience of Thoreau's *Walden* without his *particular description*. Without Thoreau's intervention, Walden would remain a passive landscape. It is not in his experience that we can find the sublimity of Walden but in his description. In *Walden*, we do not get the experience of the pond; we get Thoreau's methodical representation of it. In this, our experience of Walden is inexorably linked to how Thoreau represented it, in his words, rhetoric, and textual gestures.

On the contrary, *Walden, a Game* is an embodied experience. The player controls Thoreau and through phenomenological telepresence [29, 30] the player experiences the space of *Walden*. The player's immediate experience of *Walden*'s virtual environment is through their body; by receiving and responding to all the different stimuli this environment entails. This takes precedence over any other superseded reflection of it. As N. Katherine Hayles [31] claims, reading demands deep attention, which is, “the cognitive style [...] characterized by concentrating on a single object for long periods (say, a novel by Dickens), ignoring outside stimuli while so engaged, preferring a single information stream, and having a high tolerance for long focus times” (p. 187). As such, Thoreau's textual description of Walden cannot resonate with the player as deeply as it does with the reader, whose only mode of engagement is the written text. If a game wanted to recreate the effect of the

experience reading *Walden* has, then it would need to base it on a different modality, namely embodied agency and intentionality. As discussed previously, *Walden, a Game* does not do that since it tries through limited spatial actions to recreate a superfluous experience of Walden's landscape. In that, it becomes another way to read *Walden*, the book; a more playful way.

This way cannot cater to an equally deep engagement, but it has its own advantages. It creates a multisensory representation of what Thoreau's environment was. This becomes valuable given how dramatically the landscape of the pond has changed since Thoreau's days; our access to Thoreau's Walden forever lost in the physical world. Additionally, *Walden, a Game* allows an entry point to Thoreau's work that is more accessible. Someone who cannot read *Walden*, for whatever physical or cognitive reasons, possesses another means to interact with the text, albeit in a more limited manner. Similarly, someone who is not very keen on the visceral embodied experience games provide can have an inconspicuous encounter with virtual *Walden*. They can perform some of the actions Thoreau describes and even experiment with some what-if scenarios, which is especially pertinent in educational contexts. For example, in my playthrough I ignored my meagre hut in the pond and for the most part I spent my days lingering around Concord, eating cherry pies my mum made and having her mend my clothes. It was my way to demonstrate the white, cis-male privilege infused in Thoreau's experiment; a contingency I would not have been able to explore had it not been for his work's virtual counterpart. Yet my actions had no discerning, or extranoematic [32], result in the game's world but only in my perception of it. This is again proof that *Walden, a Game* is experienced more like a book rather than a game; or, aptly, like a gamified book.

It is in this capacity that, *Walden, a Game* exhibits its best qualities, when seen as an intertext: not a game, not a book, but a playful intermediary that allows through the process of gamification a gameful interaction with *Walden*'s content and themes. At the same time, this case study positions gamification as a valid means of transmedia storytelling in its ability to provide entry points to established works with its own distinct features and merits of accessibility. This (re)opens discussions regarding not only what gamification is but also what game is as well as the appropriate means to analyse, conceptualise, theorise, and eventually design both.

6 CONCLUSION

To conclude, this paper proposed an expanded understanding of gamification as a transmedia process of enhancing engagement with an established text by means of gameful affordances. *Walden, a Game* was examined as a case study of gamification within the context of transmedia storytelling. It was argued that *Walden, a Game* offers a gamified version of the text of *Walden*, the book: a space that the player can explore the text of *Walden* through some mechanics that are typically game-related, as in collecting resources and exploring a virtual environment. It was proposed that the discerning feature between gamification and gameness resides in the treatment of spatiality and worldness. On these grounds, it was argued that the merits of *Walden, a Game* are best perceived when it is considered as an instance of gamification. In this, it builds

into the cultivation of a literacy to analyse and create transmedia artworks in a manner that promotes media convergence, while retaining each medium's affordances and value.

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