

Crossmedia transfer and narrative in the “*WWE SmackDown! vs. Raw*” videogame franchise

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Abstract

WWE SmackDown! vs. Raw (THQ/Yuke's 2004-2010) is a videogame franchise, developed by Yuke's and published by THQ for multiple videogame consoles, based on a license to use *World Wrestling Entertainment* (WWE)'s intellectual property: talent names, images, likenesses, slogans, wrestling moves, and logos that are popular thanks to WWE's television broadcasts and live shows.

After providing an introduction to professional wrestling and the WWE, this paper will discuss WWE's crossmedial production and focus on the process of content transferring from the WWE's television broadcasts and live shows to the videogames. This process was addressed differently in different editions of the franchise, particularly regarding the narrative elements. As an example, we will examine the first and the currently last episodes of the franchise. We will define what is being transferred (universe, events, objects, characters), discuss the different structures of the events in the games by applying the taxonomy proposed by Aarseth (2009), and analyze the franchise as a series of “documentary games” (Aarseth 2009), an approach that will extend the understanding of the transfer by considering the possibilities for *counterfactuality* or *metafactuality*.

Keywords: WWE, pro wrestling, *WWE SmackDown! vs. Raw*, content transferring, documentary games

An introduction to WWE and professional wrestling

The World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE) is today's most popular professional (pro) wrestling *promotion* (a company that books pro wrestling shows). Their main business is not only to organize live events, but also to produce TV shows using footage from those events. Currently, the WWE produces four weekly TV shows, *SmackDown!*, *RAW*, *ECW* and *WWE Superstars*, and fourteen annual pay-per-views (the most important one being *WrestleMania*), which are directly sold to customers. WWE's commercial success brought the company at #122 of Forbes' 200 Best Small Companies. (Forbes.com)

The main competitors to WWE global market dominance are *Total Nonstop Action Wrestling* (TNA) in the United

States, while other notable promotions are the Mexican *Consejo Mundial de Lucha Libre* and the Japanese *All Japan Pro-Wrestling* and *New Japan Pro-Wrestling*. Pro wrestling is therefore a phenomenon spread in different parts of the world, with minor promotions working in various European nations. Originating from a legitimate contest, pro wrestling is today a “performance genre” (de Garis 2005), a spectacle where the participants enact in a bout, with the results being pre-decided. “Wrestling is not a sport, it is a spectacle” (Barthes 1967). One of the key aspects of pro wrestling is the *kayfabe*: a specific fictional frame that constantly negates wrestling's fictionality, keeping the belief that professional wrestling is a legitimate competition. “There is no stepping outside the fiction, no acknowledgment of the production process or the act of authorship. When the performers are featured in *WWE Magazine*, they are profiled in character. Story segments are told in the form of late-breaking news reports or framed as interviews. The commentators are taken by surprise, interrupted by seemingly unplanned occurrences” (Jenkins 1996). “Breaking kayfabe”, an event occurring when a wrestler acts out of character or reveals secrets of the business, was considered a potential harm for the entire wrestling industry. In his biography, Bret “Hitman” Hart (member of the WWE Hall of Fame and considered to be one of the most important wrestlers ever) writes about his wife's limited knowledge about the topic: “I'd never really come clean to her as to all the ins and outs of keeping the wrestling “real”, and my silence stood between us like a wall. Finally, [...] one night I told her everything there was to tell about the business.” (Hart 2008). The kayfabe was kept secret, to some extents, even to family members of the people in the business, and everything was done to keep the wrestling fans unaware of its existence. Approximately during the end of the 90s', the existence of the kayfabe became a widespread knowledge, to the point where wrestlers occasionally voluntary broke kayfabe. The reason for this shift is to be found in the augmented possibilities that internet offered to the fans to share knowledge, but also to the fact that breaking kayfabe proved not to be so deleterious for the business. Contemporary pro wrestling has been redefined by the WWE, which was previously known as World Wrestling Federation (WWF). Led from 1982 by Vincent Kennedy McMahon, the WWE took over the professional wrestling business by breaking the established, unwritten rules that divided the United States in different territories, each one covered by one promotion and featuring a certain set of wrestlers. Thanks to an aggressive business policy, the WWE was able to compete on a national level, producing televised broadcasts and national tours. Starting from the 80s', the WWE wrestlers enjoyed high popularity and where seen as celebrities, as a part of the television stardom. WWE's wrestling brought to new level the dramatic content of the performance. “Wrestling presents man's suffering with all the amplification of the tragic mask. The wrestler who suffers in a hold which is reputedly cruel (an arm-lock, a twisted leg) offers an excessive portrayal of Suffering: like a primitive Pietà, he exhibits for all to see his face, exaggeratedly contorted by an

intolerable affliction.” (Barthes 1967). The wrestling performance builds dramatic tension on the spectacle of violence. However, this quote refers to wrestling as intended in France during the ’60s: a non-televised spectacle, pretty different from the one offered by WWE’s multi medial entertainment industry. The television broadcasts are narrative constructs, filmed with a direction that omits badly performed moves so to augment realism, and live commenting underlining and explaining potentially misleading events. Using the live performance to build a televised narrative product, the WWE also made it a serialized narrative, “heightening the melodramatic tensions of the staged fights and transforming televised wrestling into a form of serial fiction for men.” (Jenkins 1996). This narrative structure is commercially used with pay-per-views, where the storylines for all the shows are resolved.

WWE’s cross-media production

In 2008, the WWE declared \$526.5 million net revenues, divided as follows (dollars in millions) (WWE Investors Report 2009):

	December 31, 2008
Net Revenues	
Live and Televised Entertainment.....	\$ 331.5
Consumer Products	135.7
Digital Media	34.8
WWE Studios	24.5
Total	<u>\$ 526.5</u>

The live shows and the revenues coming from their television (pay-per-views, television right fees, advertising) are the core source of income for the WWE. However, the WWE media offering includes “consumer products” (home videos, magazines, licensed products like videogames), “digital media” (which includes advertising on the WWE.com website and all the merchandising sold online, like apparel, home video, and more), and even a movie production section, *WWE Studios*, which produces movies starring the WWE Superstars (like *See No Evil* with Kane, or *The Marine* with John Cena). The following panel break down the “consumer products” category (from the WWE Investors Report):

	December 31, 2008
Home Video	\$ 58.5
Licensing	60.5
Magazine Publishing	15.4
Other	1.3
Total	<u>\$ 135.7</u>

In this sector, the most profitable segment is “licensing”, which includes the *WWE SmackDown! vs. Raw* franchise, with \$60.5 million.

We will use Aarseth’s analysis of cross-media productions to address WWE’s offering, which, as seen, is fully involved into “the economics of cross-media

financing, licensing, marketing and distribution” (Aarseth 2006). WWE’s IP is a content transferred in different medias. But ““content “ is a tricky word. When used it usually signal the importance of something other than it refers to, usually the container.” (Aarseth 2006). Aarseth also draws a distinction between synchronous and asynchronous productions: “productions that produce the media versions in parallel [*synchronous*], and productions that take place sequentially [*asynchronous*]”. WWE’s containers are various, as indicated by the split between “live and televised entertainment”, with the latter being a synchronous production (since the live show is staged and taped in parallel, or even broadcasted live). However, the live show is clearly “made with cross-media migration in mind” (Aarseth 2006), to the point that the un-televised WWE live show is an exception, known in the wrestling jargon as “dark match”, an event where usually no primarily important storyline is presented. WWE’s core business is therefore already divided across medias, and the synchronicity of production between WWE’s live shows and televised events makes for a pretty consistent content transferring. This “Crossmedia Transfer Table”, proposed by Aarseth, defines four elements that may or may not be lost in a crossmedia transfer: Storyline, Events, Universe, Character.

element	Ride to movie	Book to movie	Movie to game	Game to movie
Storyline	No	Ok	Not really	No
Events	Hardly	Ok	Hardly	Ok
Universe	Ok	Ok	Ok	Ok
Character	No	Ok	Partly	Expanded

Crossmedia Transfer Table (Aarseth 2006)

The term “universe” is used as “an open word, [...] that allows for the possibility of only a rudimentary compatibility between the content of the two productions. However, even here the term is a metaphor at best. There is no “world” or “universe” as such being transferred between media platforms, only partially or more or less faithfully represented elements.” However, while the other three categories are more common practices in the media industry, an unusual example is made in this table: the crossmedia transfers occurring from an amusement park ride to a movie (Disneyland’s *Pirate of the Caribbean*, a ride that inspired the famous movie). The movie does not have characters, storyline, and hardly any event present in the ride. Also, the ride is not a narrative, “but obeys other laws of presentation”. There is nothing in common between the movie and the ride, “except the title and the logo”. When considering non-narrative merchandising goods like the “WWE Reusable Bag”, it is true that not much of WWE’s content, apart from the brand, is actually being transferred. A similar, but peculiar case, is the WWE Studios section (previously known as WWE Films),

which produces movies, reasonably a narrative product. According to WWE's corporate home site, "WWE Films was established in 2002 to explore options in filmed entertainment in order to promote our Superstars and capitalize on our intellectual property and fan-base." (WWE Studios Homepage). The only transferred content between WWE and the "WWE movies", apart from belonging to the same company, is in the protagonists of the movies, which are wrestlers.

element	WWE Live and televised entertainment to <i>See No Evil</i>
Storyline	No
Events	No
Universe	No
Character	Same "Finishing Move", and mentioned in some paratexts

Applying this table to WWE's movies reveals that, even if they are produced by WWE Studios to capitalize on their IP, the content being transferred is nearly none. Let's consider *See No Evil*, the first movie produced by the WWE Studios.



"See No Evil" movie poster

The movie was terribly reviewed, achieving the very low result of 17 out of 100 on Metacritic.com, with comments like "The movie's target viewers aren't the type who read reviews, if they read at all." (New York

Post). However, in the movie, a character called Jacob Goodnight, interpreted by WWE Superstar Kane (real name Glenn Jacobs), attacks a group of delinquent teenagers in a hotel. Jacob Goodnight and Kane are two distinct characters, with completely different backgrounds, but with similar personalities, being both somehow deranged and violent. Moreover, in a scene from the movie, Goodnight tries to perform a *chokeslam* (i.e., a wrestling move where the opponent is immobilized in a choke hold and subsequently slammed to the mat), Kane's characteristic finishing move. This ends the similarities between the two characters. But the transferring of content is further evident when analyzing some paratexts of the movie, like the movie poster (fig. 1). In the poster, Glenn Jacobs is referred to as "Kane", and the headline "This summer, evil gets raw" presumably contains a reference to the WWE brand *Raw*, where Kane was working at the time. The real name of the protagonist is omitted from the movie poster. To fully understand how a character is transferred between WWE's live show and televised events and a movie, we have to consider the specific kayfabe term for characters: *gimmick* (i.e., the character played by a wrestler). "The character and the people performing, all become interrelate, they're one and the same. If you go to a movie premiere and get to shake hands with Tom Cruise, you're shaking hands with Tom Cruise, not with Jerry Maguire. If you shake hands with Ric Flair, you are shaking hands with two facets of Ric Flair: the actual and the fictional one. The actor and the character are the same" (Morton 1998, interview from *The Unreal Story of Professional Wrestling*). Morton's claim is not formally substantiated (indeed, the actor and the character are not the same), but it can be used to understand the effect caused by a character, like a gimmick, that exists framed by the kayfabe, which has said constantly negates its fictionality (Oliva and Calleja 2009). This effect is sufficiently strong on the public to justify WWE's marketing and production strategy. To promote *See No Evil*, the WWE included the movie's existence in the kayfabe, creating a storyline where Kane was obsessed by the date May 19 (the movie's release date in 2006), and inviting three co-stars of the movie to a WWE Raw episode (aired May 8, 2006 on USA Network).

The *WWE SmackDown!* vs. *Raw* franchise

WWE SmackDown! vs. Raw (THQ/Yuke's 2004-2009) is a videogame franchise, developed by Yuke's and published by THQ for multiple videogame consoles. The franchise have a license to use WWE's intellectual property: : talent names, images, likenesses, slogans, wrestling moves, and logos that are popular thanks to WWE's television broadcasts and live shows. Adding the *Raw* roster to the already established *WWE SmackDown!* franchise, *WWE SmackDown! vs. Raw* was introduced by publisher THQ in 2004, unifying different series of WWE videogames (*WWE RAW*, *WWE Day of*

Reckoning, *WWE WrestleMania*, and *WWE SmackDown!*) for different videogame platforms. Since acquiring the WWE license in 1999, THQ and partner JAKKS Pacific have shipped 37 million copies of the *WWE SmackDown/SmackDown vs. Raw* videogames worldwide. *WWE SmackDown! vs. Raw 2008* was the 13th best-selling game in the United States that year. (Forbes.com, THQ News Release). For the first episode of the franchise, *Metacritic.com* reports a 80 out of 100 average score, which means that the game was “generally favorably reviewed”. The game has been praised because it “manages to both encapsulate the essence of the WWE while also delivering a highly skill-based and technical beat-em-up” (TotalGames.net). The game features a total of 52 characters, with updated rosters, title holders, and “stables” (i.e., a group of wrestlers supporting each other, usually sharing a common moral alignment or facing a common enemy), representing the current situation in the WWE programming. All the *Dual Shock 2* twelve buttons and two analog sticks are used. The same button can trigger many different actions and can be combined with other buttons and directions, depending on the current in-game situation: for example, the “O” button is used for different grappling, *irish whipping*, pinning, lifting the opponent, initiating a chop battle (if standing near the ropes), throwing weapons, and more (from the game instruction booklet). The game box refers to a new features of the game, the “Match Tactics” system, that assigns a moral judgment to specific actions available for the player. It is possible to fight “dirty” or “clean”: the terminology is adapted, respectively, from the terms “heel” (bad guy) and “babyface” (good guy), that are widely used by wrestling fans, but refers to wrestling’s fictionality, placing them outside the kayfabe and therefore not officially contemplated by the WWE. However, some actions are commonly associated with a heel or babyface behavior. Any spectacular, crowd-pleasing move involving jumping from the top rope is usually synonymous with a babyface, while using a weapon is a dishonest action, typical of a heel. The game links those and other kind of actions to a meter, that once filled permits to execute a special attack, encouraging the player to roleplay according to the wrestler’s moral alignment. Every wrestler can switch between babyface and heel, depending from the player’s choices. During the game, the player will be presented with a set of answers to chose from in different situations; the chosen option will trigger different “clean” or “dirty” storylines, depending on the moral value associated with the answer. This feature will be dropped in the subsequent editions of the franchise.

WWE SmackDown! vs. Raw is today recognized as the most important wrestling videogame franchise, with five iterations produced up to now for almost every available videogame console. According to *Metacritics.com*, the latest episode of the franchise, *WWE SmackDown! vs. Raw 2009*, received an average score of 79 out of 100 (for the Wii and Xbox editions) and 78 out of 100 (for the Play Station 2 and 3 editions). The game is also available for the Nintendo DS and Sony PSP platforms, but is a largely different product and for the scope of this

paper it will not be taken into account. Reviews were again generally favorable: “To all the SmackDown haters out there: If you’re going to jump back in the ring, this is the year to do it.” (1UP.com). Others pointed out that “I can’t shake the feeling that I’m playing last year’s game” (IGN.com). The game box stresses new features, “Interactive Entrances and Victory Scenes” and “Road to Wrestlemania”, the latter being critically praised: “the single best story mode I have ever played in a sports game” (Planet Xbox 360); “one of the greatest story modes a wrestling game has had in years” (IGN.com). In this mode, the player can pick a wrestler, choosing from eight options connected to eight specific storylines, and fight his way through a pay-per-view, where he will win a title belt.

Linear Narrative vs. Open Narrative

As seen with *See No Evil*, the transferring of WWE’s content across media can produce peculiar results. We will now consider what happens with WWE’s videogames, taking as examples *WWE SmackDown! vs. Raw* and *WWE SmackDown! vs. Raw 2009*, the first and the currently last episodes of the franchise.

Aarseth notes that “only certain types of film become games. Keywords here are action, science fiction, horror, war; in other words, spatial spectacle. Interestingly, games don’t seem to afford the transfer of many genres that we recognize from book-to-film: romance, psychodrama, period/historical, biography” (Aarseth 2006). Pro wrestling is indeed a “spatial spectacle” involving lots of “action”. However, this claim reveals the problematic nature of content transferring from the WWE or pro wrestling in general, because of the highly dramatic content of pro wrestling, which has been defined “masculine melodrama” (Jenkins 1996) and compared with Greek drama (Barthes 1957). We will again use the cross transferring table to look at what has been transferred:

element	WWE Live and televised entertainment to <i>WWE SmackDown! vs. Raw</i> franchise
Storyline	No
Events	No
Universe	Yes
Character	Yes

It is possible to apply this table to all the games in the *WWE SmackDown! vs. Raw* franchise. The storylines from the TV shows are not directly imported in the game, but are based on updated rosters, title holders, and “stables”. The events follow a similar destiny, being created *ex-novo*. The universe, as loosely defined the term can be, is present in the game, with, for example, arenas filled with fans cheering for the wrestlers. Also,

the characters are transferred into the game, with their specific moves, moral orientation, networks of “friends and foes”.

Even if this table works for all the games in the franchise, some differences exist between *WWE SmackDown! vs. Raw* and *WWE SmackDown! vs. Raw 2009*, in regard to the transferring of storylines and events. To address those differences, we will refer to Aarseth’s “Narrative Theory of Games” (Aarseth 2009), which classifies the way events are present in games. By event, we mean “the fundamental unit of the action” (Abbott 2008). An event can be a “kernel” or a “satellite” (Chatman 1978), “two fundamental kinds of events in narrative. [Kernel] events are essential to the forward movement of the story [...]; they are not all necessary “turning points”, but at the least they are essential to the chain of events that makes up the story. [Satellite] events are not necessary to the story; they seem to be an extra.” (Abbott 2008). In a videogame, the events are influenced by the player’s agency, “the capacity of an entity to cause events” (Abbott 2008). This can happen by various degrees:

- fully plotted (pure story)
- dynamic satellites (playable story)
- dynamic kernels (multipath games)
- no kernels (pure game) (Aarseth 2009).

Having defined the tools, we will focus on two “modes” of play from *WWE SmackDown! vs. Raw*: the “*Season Mode*” and the “*Challenge Mode*”. The first mode offers the possibility to play an entire season, which is divided in various matches fought during normal televised shows and a number of PPV, culminating with *WrestleMania*, the happening that closes the season. In this mode, the game is an example of a multipath game: the player can influence kernel events. Through a system that offers the player to choose which path to follow, the player can choose different paths leading to different events. For example, the *General Manager*, Kurt Angle, may decide to give you a title shot, an opportunity to face the champion and win the title, at the next PPV. The player can choose two options: act as a babyface, and thank the GM for the opportunity; or act as a heel, pretending an immediate match. After the choice is taken, a different path will be triggered, and the character will subsequently become a babyface or a heel, until a new “turning point” will be reached. However, this turning points are not only present through direct question, delivered in cut scenes when the player can only choose between two options; the game uses the “Match Tactics” system to trigger different paths, depending if the player decides to act as a babyface or a heel. However, in this mode, the storylines are roughly the same with all the wrestlers, and, when a season is ended, the same events will be represented again and again. Those limits are not present in the second mode of the game, the “*Challenge Mode*”, which is a short playable story: the player can only influence satellite events. In this mode, the player has to take on specific competitors, match types, and locations, recreating famous matches in WWE’s history.

For example, the player can choose to compete in a “*Wrestlemania 18 Rematch*”, putting The Rock vs. Hollywood Hogan in a single match at the *Wrestlemania 18* arena. The player could manage to use heel actions (such as weapons), changing satellite events: a heel The Rock defeating Hollywood Hogan. Still, the kernel event, in this case, The Rock defeating Hulk Hogan, would be unchanged.

The playable story mode has been considerably expanded for *WWE SmackDown! vs. Raw 2009*. In his review published on 1UP.com, Michael Donahue affirms that “the best improvement is by far the revamped story mode entitled “Road to WrestleMania.” [...] the storylines for the top-carders are *almost* WWE-quality”. Considered an improvement from the previous episodes, in this mode the player can pick a wrestler, choosing from eight options connected to eight specific storylines, and fight his way through the *WrestleMania* tournament, where he will win a title belt. This mode is an evolution of the “challenge mode”, and present fully customized storylines for the eight selectable characters. If the player loses in important matches, the game will restart, and the storyline will not progress, because those events are kernels. However, some events are satellites, and the storyline can proceed regardless of winning or losing specific matches. This feature is emphasized on the box of the game, and has been critically praised. However, a mode with dynamic kernels is still present in the game, called “*Career Mode*”. In this mode, no cutscene are used, and the possibility to be babyface or heel has been dropped. However, it is still possible to choose between different paths.

Comparing the two editions of the game in regard with the differences present in the modes addressed in this chapter, it seems that the relationship between the dynamic satellites (playable story) modes and the dynamic kernels (multipath games) modes has changed. The franchise switched the focus of its attention, and the more marketable features, from having a consistent multipath game to a fully customized playable story.

WWE SmackDown vs. Raw as a “documentary game”

To further extend the analysis of the events in the *WWE SmackDown vs. Raw* franchise, we will consider them in light of Aarseth’s analysis of “documentary games”, that are games that “refer to historical events and existents (Aarseth 2009)”. An example is *JFK: Reloaded* (Traffic Software 2004), where the player performs in a reenacting of the assassination of John F. Kennedy, and gets scored depending on how close his version will be with that presented by the official investigation on the case. Other examples can be any game involving the World Wars, such as *Red Orchestra: Ostfront 41-45* (Tripwire Interactive 2006). In this kind of games, however, it is this unlikely to find *factuality*: that is, an exact transfer of events from the referenced historical happening. It seems that the relation between the original events and the ones present in the game can be described

in terms of *counterfactuality* and *metafactuality*. It is possible for these games to present “alternative versions” of historical facts, presenting counterfactuality: “what if Hitler had been assassinated? What if the Axis won WWII? Counterfactuality is not fiction per se - it can be a valid method of inquiry, to determine what is the importance of “x” – but can of course be (and is) used in fiction” (Aarseth 2009). Moreover, documentary games can produce metafactuality, such as in historical sim games like *Europa Universalis* (Paradox Software 2000). “Historical sim games are not fictional or counterfactual but metafactual. They can produce the historical “fabula”, but they usually don’t. Does this means they are fictional? No, they’re just overproductive by design. [...] Ludic/simulated representation is a hypervolume of possible developments given a space, objects, agents, repeatability, and rules for action” (Aarseth 2009). Those games are structured so to produce an high number of possible outcomes, fictional events that are placed in a representation where other elements are transferred in a more direct way from the referenced event.

This analysis of documentary games can also be fruitfully applied to videogames that are part of a crossmedia transfer, like a movie-to-game process; in this case, the reference will be from a fictional product, and not from a real, somehow historical event. The *WWE SmackDown! vs. Raw* franchise is an interesting example for this kind of approach: the game reference a fictional product, but in a sense, *documents* the current situation in the WWE, reproducing current title holders and explicitly mentioning events; for example, *WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2009* references *Wrestlemania 25*, that took place April 5, 2009 at Reliant Stadium in Houston, Texas. The designers of the game are not interested in reproducing the events that happened in the WWE programs. Asked about the *Road to Wrestlemania* mode, THQ developer Justin Leeper declared: “Though they all have their own vibe, each story promises plenty of twists and turns while staying true to the characters players follow every Monday, Tuesday and Friday night as part of WWE programming” (interview from IGN). While the “story” will be scripted specifically for the new game, the characters will “stay true” to the originals. The “alternative storylines” take place before *Wrestlemania 25*, permitting a different unfolding of events that will lead to eight possible counterfactual versions of the PPV. In this regard, the *Challenge Mode* from *WWE SmackDown vs. Raw* is a more specific, or focused, example of counterfactuality: each challenge is a reenactment of a specific match and the player is offered the possibility to subvert the final result. As mentioned, both the *Road to Wrestlemania* and the *Challenge Mode* are multipath games, with dynamic

satellites. To different extents, both the *Season Mode* and the *Career Mode* are metafactuals. Being playable stories, with dynamic kernels, the game offers a “hypervolume of possible developments given a space, objects, agents, repeatability, and rules for action” (Aarseth 2009). The player can choose any wrestler and proceed to generate a high number of metafactual output results. To extend this analysis to other pro wrestling games, we will use another example. In *TNA iMPACT!* (Midway Games 2008), a game based on a license from the TNA promotion, the designer opted to insert a character, called Suicide, which doesn’t have any direct reference with TNA. Suicide is a playable character in a game mode similar to the *Road to Wrestlemania* mode, being a multipath game with dynamic satellites. Adding a new wrestler in the transferred roster affects the possibility for counterfactuality, with the resulting events involving the character being hardly definable as such. However, in an interesting crossmedial collaboration, the TNA used the game to promote the new character, which was later inserted into the federation as a “real” wrestler. Suicide debuted at the PPV *Final Resolution* December 7, 2008. The character is played by professional wrestler Frank B. Gerdeman (also known as Kaz, Kazarian and Frankie Kazarian), and is currently the *TNA X Division Champion*.

Applying the theory developed for documentary games can be productive to explore the transfer of “universe” between fictional products, as mentioned in Aarseth’s cross media table; even if a universe can be faithfully reproduced in a game, it can be counterfactual or metafactual, providing a further element of discerning a crossmedia transfer.

Conclusions

The pro wrestling performance is the basis for a narrative product that the WWE turned in a worldwide business. The peculiar effects of the kayfabe, which is pro wrestling’s fictional frame, affects the crossmedia transfers in the multimedial WWE’s production, including movies and games. The *WWE SmackDown vs. Raw* franchise is an interesting example of this process, and, by analyzing it through Aarseth’s taxonomy of events in games, it reveals a duality that is an example of the problematic nature of “story” transferring in games, augmented by the presence of dramatic content. A better understanding of the topic can be achieved by applying the theory developed for “documentary games”, that adds a further discerning of the transfer of content to a game, by identifying its counterfactuality or metafactuality.

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