Foreword

Most of the papers compiled in *Convergence Culture Reconsidered* were originally presented at a conference of the same name organized by the editors at the Georg-August-Universität Göttingen from 17-19 October 2013. The conference was the third in a series of transatlantic conferences initially funded by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD). It thus formed a follow-up to the conferences on *Transmedial Approaches to Space and Gender* (organized by Susan Ingram and Markus Reisenleitner, York University of Toronto, in 2011) and *Mediation and Mediatization* (organized by Jutta Ernst, Johannes-Gutenberg-Universität Mainz/Germersheim, in 2012). As platforms for exchange among (post)doctoral students from all three universities, these conferences have established a network of Canadian and German researchers based in the humanities and have thus initiated a process of interdisciplinary and intercultural convergence in itself.

The present volume attempts to capture some of the many forms convergence may assume and to reevaluate its potential as a category of analysis for the humanities and more specifically for literary, cultural, and media studies. Taking Henry Jenkins's concept of 'convergence culture' as a point of departure, the individual contributions define and refine its scope and discuss what new theoretical and practical insights the proposed framework of 'convergence' may offer when being applied to a variety of research areas. Rather than aiming at a universally valid definition, they also consider divergent facets of convergence and point out inconsistencies.

Claudia Georgi's contribution introduces Jenkins's concept of 'convergence culture' and his related notions of 'participatory culture' and 'transmedia storytelling.' It examines how these terms relate to emerging as well as established phenomena and terminology and how they affect key aspects of literary, cultural, and media studies such as authorship and originality, readership and 'prosumption' –

aspects that all of the contributors address in one way or another. Each of the three main sections of this volume is inspired by one of Jenkins's three central concepts as presented in this introduction.

The first section, "Forms of Convergence," shows the enormous scope of the framework by offering exemplary case studies on art history, ecology, media studies, and translation studies. Gorčin Dizdar employs an art historical perspective in order to illustrate that convergence is by no means only a contemporary phenomenon but instead has a long tradition. He demonstrates that mechanisms of convergence were already prevalent in Renaissance art in the form of a confluence of visual and linguistic discourses in the beholder's brain contemplating Sandro Botticelli's *Primavera*. Robert M.W. Brown relates convergence to divergence as its counterpart. Applying both terms to the context of environmentalism, he argues for considering convergence and divergence as forming a 'reticulated process.' Inga Untiks critically links convergence with standardization in an increasingly globalized art world. In her analysis of performance-based video works by the Estonian artists Kai Kaljo and Jaan Toomik, she identifies processes of aesthetic as well as economic, institutional, and sociological convergence or standardization. The first section closes with Annika Rosbach's interpretation of convergence as a dynamic zone of cultural encounter comparable to Homi Bhabha's 'third space.' Tracing problems with literary dialects in German translations of Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, she makes the case for regarding translations as prime examples of convergence culture.

The contributions of section II, "Participation and Fandom," examine various forms of readers' responses to literary texts as well as their active involvement in the production and proliferation of these. They draw on Jenkins's argument that convergence culture evokes collective processes of consumption and subsequent social interaction triggered by the consumed products. Florian Freitag investigates the issue of participatory culture with regard to a late 19th-century American illustrated monthly, thereby focussing on the representation of a particular location. Using the example of 'Scribner's illustrated New Orleans,' he identifies an early version of participatory response in the form of 'amateur' contributions. Jan-Erik Ella's interests in 'neo-Victorian' literature induce him to explore the intertextual layer of Moore and O'Neill's comic book series *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*, with the objective of establishing the authors' approaches to their source material as a kind of fan fiction that sheds new light on and critically (re)evaluates both their cultural past and their present. While also considering 'neo-Victorian' fiction and its appeal to readers, Sabina Fazli places a somewhat different concern at the centre of her attention: her essay explores the ways in which contemporary authors appropriate Victorian discourses and characteristics of Victorian fiction when they draw on and imitate the Victorian combination of fiction and advertising as well as the Victorian practice of serial publication and serial reading to give their texts the semblance of past times. Regarding the impact of fandom, here the output of fans, as an important aspect of convergence culture, Stephanie Kader

explores representative feminist Science Fiction to gather information on the variety of reader-generated creative responses to and productive extensions of the genre.

The third section, “Transmediality,” is concerned with processes that result in the transgression of media boundaries, occasionally generate transmedia(l) worlds, and are probed concerning their validity and implications. The essay by Nicole Gabriel, Bogna Kazur, and Kai Matuszkiewicz charts theoretical territory associated with ‘transmediality’ before introducing three case studies. Clearing the ground for their discussions of the transmedia(l) ‘worlds’ of *Sherlock Holmes*, *Alien*, and *The Legend of Zelda*, the authors juxtapose and deliberate the conceptual entities of ‘transmedia storytelling,’ ‘transmedial worlds,’ and ‘transmedia practice’ before interrogating each of these with regard to their respective terminological intricacies (i.e. ‘transmedia storytelling’ vs. ‘transmedial storytelling’ and ‘intermedial worlds’ vs. ‘transmedial worlds’ vs. ‘transmedia worlds’). Concentrating on Michael Nyman’s composition and subsequent re-use of his soundtrack for a video game as a piece of film music in connection with a medial shift, Andrea C. Valente presents a detailed analysis of an example of convergence culture marked by adaptation and transcoding. Finally, the impact of digital textuality on literary works is highlighted in Lai-Tze Fan’s contribution. The author explores Steven Hall’s *The Raw Shark Texts* as a narrative that draws attention to convergence culture’s significance by employing multimodality to mediate digital media and at the same time question their status.

Compiling the individual contributions into what we hope forms a conclusive whole would not have been possible without the help of Anna Bakina whom we wish to thank for patiently and proficiently formatting the manuscript.

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