

Markers of Subjective Perception in Larp

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ABSTRACT

Based on J.-N. Thon's (2016) framework for analysing representations of character's subjective perception in film, video games and comic books, this paper studies representations of subjectivity in live-action role-playing. This is a direct continuation of two previous papers, one positioning larp as a narrative medium in the context of transmedia narratology, the other researching storyworld representation / interpretation by larp participants. The hereby presented text focuses on markers of subjectivity, their three types (narratorial, content, and representational) defined by Thon and the fourth (metasymbolic) by myself. The discussion is organised in three parts, corresponding with Thon's types of subjectivity: (quasi-)perceptual point of view, (quasi-)perceptual overlay, and internal worlds. The analysis confirms Thon's observations about the transmediality of some of the markers (e.g. the use of narratorial markers in larp is very similar to their use in (audio)visual media), and reveals the larp-specific nature and/or larp-specific usage of other markers.

Keywords

Transmedia, narratology, role-playing, larp

INTRODUCTION

This paper is a continuation of two previous publications. The first one, "Live Action Role Play: Transmediality, Narrativity and Markers of Subjectivity" (Mochocki, forthcoming) frames live-action role-playing (larp) as a multimodal narrative medium, with the main focus on the creation and representation of the storyworld. The second paper, "From Live Action to Live Perception: Player Character's Point of View", shifts attention from representation to perception and interpretation. It studies how larp storyworlds are experienced by players and re-signified as perceptions of their fictional characters in standard circumstances, assuming that the character's sensorial perception works normally (Mochocki 2017). The text I am presenting here moves the discussion to non-standard situations, in which the character's perception is subjectivised not only by embodied spatial point-of-view but also by unique (physical, mental or supernatural) features.

All three papers are indebted to Jan-Noël Thon's recent work on subjective representations in film, graphic novels and video games, first published as a chapter in *Storyworlds across Media* (2014) edited by himself and Marie-Laure Ryan, then

Proceedings of DiGRA 2018

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expanded into a large section of his own book *Transmedial Narratology and Contemporary Media Culture* (2016). It is too early to predict whether his analytical framework of types and markers of subjectivity will have a profound influence on further discussions of character's perception in transmedia narratology. For the purpose of my research it seems to be a good choice. Not only is it an insightful taxonomy for the study of (audio)visual media, but also a useful tool for comparative studies contrasting character-driven recorded media with character-driven live performance. In the scope of my own studies on non-digital role-playing games I find it worthwhile to reach for video game research. Exposing medium-specific idiosyncrasies in the representations and markers of subjectivity between video games and larps helps me better understand both media. Moreover, as a general and far-reaching agenda, I would like to see more larp research in the field of transmedia narratology (see Mochocki, forthcoming). Linking new larp studies to the most recent research on transmedia may be a small step towards this goal.

Putting aside objective and intersubjective representations of a storyworld, Thon (2016) draws attention to "*the subjective representation of a character's consciousness or mind*" (238, original emphasis) – one that "suggests that the storyworld elements in question are perceived or imagined by only one character (and often in a way that is not compatible with an intersubjective version of the storyworld)" (240). He lists four types of such subjective representation: spatial point-of-view sequences; (quasi-)perceptual point-of-view sequences; (quasi-)perceptual overlay; and internal worlds. He also identifies three types of markers used by producers to signal these subjectivities to audiences: narratorial, content, and representational.

Thon (2014; 2016) uses these concepts to analyse representations of subjectivity in film, graphic novels, and video games. In the analysis extended over three papers, I consistently apply Thon's framework to larp. Developing ideas briefly sketched in the final section of my first paper (Mochocki, forthcoming), the second text (Mochocki 2017) positions *spatial point-of-view* as the basic (unmarked) type of perception for larp participants. The following text explores how larpmasters and players employ various types of markers to move from mere spatial POV to other forms of subjectivity, not covered in Mochocki (2017).

Whenever possible, I provide references to larps or larp design papers which exemplify the given categories of markers and their affordances. However, the multitude of conceptual and technical vehicles that could be employed as markers radically exceeds the repertoire documented in the collected material. Out of necessity, this paper combines the descriptive and speculative approach: description of actually implemented solutions with reflection on what else is afforded by the medium.

Section 1. "Basic Terminology" summarises the types of markers and the prototypical model of larp defined in Mochocki (forthcoming). Sections 2. "Quasi-perceptual POV", 3. "Internal Worlds", and 4. "Quasi-perceptual Overlay" discuss the respective *marked* forms of subjectivity. Section 5. "Conclusion" wraps up the main findings.

1. BASIC TERMINOLOGY

The *spatial point of view* is the "least subjective" of the four types of subjectivity (Thon 2016, 259) In many cases, what is classified as a subjective spatial POV will include "an intersubjectively valid version of the storyworld" (Thon 2016, 259). This frequently

happens when two larpers stand close to each other so that their spatial locations offer nearly identical views of the game area. Their perception of sights, smells, sounds, tactile objects, etc. will be virtually the same – except for the fact that each player identifies with his/her own character as the perceiving "I". The intersubjectivity of perception may be enhanced by inter-immersive communication with co-players upholding the same fiction (Pohjola 2004, 89). This adds even more significance to special *markers* used to signal transitions from spatial POV to one of the remaining three forms of subjective representation. The unique nature of such perception must be somehow communicated to the involved player and/or to co-players. This is the purpose of signals (markers) of subjectivity, designating certain objects, spaces, people, actions or entire scenes for non-standard perception. Otherwise, the players assume that all characters are perceiving the storyworld normally, and this assumption incurs the risk of unwanted metalepses (as will be explained below).

1.1 Markers

As cited in Mochocki (forthcoming), Thon identifies:

1. Narratorial markers, e.g. character's internal voice spoken on audio (279) or written as text (293).
2. Representational markers (nonnarratorial), "such as filters, blurred lines, or unusual coloring in order to communicate the subjective quality of what is being shown" (259).
3. Content markers (nonnarratorial), "where what is represented rather than how it is represented communicates the different ontological status of the following or the preceding segment(s) of the representation (263), e.g. character falling asleep, or taking a hallucinatory drug

To this I added a fourth category: *metasymbolic* (in the first paper by the name of *symbolic*) markers, which "require the player to imagine storyworld elements signified by arbitrary signs according to a game-specific code established between the GMs and players" (Mochocki, forthcoming). For instance,

1. Symbols which are unique for a particular player may represent quasi-perceptions for this character in a way unnoticed by co-players (simultaneous markers).
2. Other symbols may be pre-defined as beginnings and ends of subjective sequences (contextual markers).
3. Symbols pre-defined as (simultaneous) markers of somebody's quasi-perceptions may be used to signal to co-players that their characters cannot perceive those elements – or that they perceive it differently (see larp *Delirium*, Heebøll-Christensen, Thurøe & Munthe-Kaas 2011, 85).
4. [Meta]Symbolic markers may be combined with narratorial markers in *metatechniques*. (ibidem)

Thon's terms *simultaneous* and *contextual* describe the temporal relation between a marker and the subjective sequence it marks. Markers are simultaneous when used during the subjective sequence. Contextual – when they appear before (*a priori*) or after (*a*

posteriori) the sequence, signalling its beginning or end. Ultimately, "all three categories (narratorial, representational and content) may appear in each of the three temporal relations (contextual a priori, simultaneous, or contextual a posteriori), as markers of any of the four ways of representing subjectivity" (Mochocki, forthcoming).

There is, however one important difference. "According to Thon, *intersubjective* representation is the standard (unmarked) mode in all three (audio)visual media he studies, whereas the use of *objective* and *subjective* modes needs to be marked with specific signals (markers) for the audience" (Mochocki 2017, 160). In larp, by contrast, it is spatial POV – one of the *subjective* modes! - that comes unmarked. Markers of subjectivity will apply only to three of the four types of subjective representation.

1.2 Prototypical Larp

Given the multitude of forms and genres of live-action role-playing (see e.g. Harviainen 2012, 17; Bowman 2017), I have focused my analysis on a prototypical model, characterised by:

1. Game master's authority
2. Player-character unity: One player impersonates one character, experiencing the whole game from the character's point of view. A new character may only be adopted when the original character drops out of the game world (dead, or permanently incapacitated, or banished etc.). This extends to player-character *perceptual* unity: at least part of the player's sensorial input is supposed to be identical with character's.
3. Presence of NPCs
4. No external audience
5. Iconic representation: Storyworld elements are represented mainly through iconic signs, i.e. character's body and actions are represented by player's body and actions, and physical elements of the storyworld by physical props and features of the game area. Symbolic and indexical signs are of secondary importance.
6. Pre-defined characters
7. Pre-defined storyworld
8. Pre-defined game mechanics (Mochocki, forthcoming)

1.3 Perceptual Unity and Metaleptic Effects

Throughout the following discussion I will draw attention to player-character *perceptual* unity as a creative agenda that limits the use of representations / markers of subjectivity in multiplayer locations. When the contents of one character's subjective perception (e.g. hallucinations) are communicated to his/her player, no other co-player should see or hear this communication. If they do, they will have to mentally separate what they saw from

what their characters would see or hear. ("I – player – heard the gamemaster speaking to Adam as the voice of his dead mother, but my character did not hear a thing, so I must role-play my character as if I knew nothing about it.") Such intentional separation of player's perception from character's perception is a breach in their perceptual unity – and may result in unwanted metalepses when neglected or mishandled. The best way to prevent that is to activate subjective perception only when the target player is alone (or alone with NPCs), with no regular co-players around.

Only some games strive for maximum perceptual unity. Many tolerate or even encourage the co-presence of several players and one character's (quasi-)perceptions in one room, with markers of subjectivity enabling the players to differentiate between somebody's subjective (quasi-)perceptions and the "real" storyworld perceived by all characters. It may be assumed that the players will correctly recognise the (quasi-)perceptions and be able to navigate around them, e.g. not touching objects or interacting with people that are only *imagined* by someone else's character. Objects or creatures imagined by character A should never be perceived by character B, let alone touched, addressed, or commented on. If a player accidentally acts out - as his/her character! - a physical contact or any direct interaction with elements which do not exist in his/her version of the storyworld, it results in a *metalepsis*: a serious breach in the world's diegetic coherence.

Following Werner Wolf, I understand metalepsis as "*a usually intentional paradoxical transgression of, or confusion between, (onto-)logically distinct (sub)worlds and/or levels that exist, or are referred to, within representations of possible worlds*" (Wolf 2005, 91; original emphasis; also referred to by Thon 2016, 65). Summarising the original Genettian distinction, Kukkonen (2011, 2) explains:

“Ontological metalepsis” occurs when character, author or narrator are relocated across the boundary of the fictional world; “rhetorical metalepsis,” when they only glance or address each other across this boundary.

Limoges reaches for terms "physical" (equivalent to ontological) versus "verbal" (rhetorical) metalepsis, adding also "visual" and "auditory" variants to the verbal mode (2011, 201). This distinction may be useful in the analysis of multimodal media. To this Thon (2016, 66) adds:

epistemic metalepses occur when characters are represented as possessing “impossible” knowledge of “higher- order” subworlds, the fact that they are “merely represented,” or the narrative representation itself . . . , *autopoietic metalepses* occur when characters within a subworld of the storyworld are represented as narrating, writing, or otherwise bringing about that very subworld.

Metalepses may be included in the creative agenda, be it in Shakespearean theatre (see Klimek, 2009, p. 175-176) or in larp metatechniques (see below). Larp and theatre, however, are also subject to the risks of unintentional transgressions. Drama, according to Klimek:

invites unintentional metalepsis-like confusions between reality and fiction because it is performed live. If actors make a mistake, they have to integrate it into the play with the help of improvisation without the spectators noticing. Moreover, it is possible that (the real) spectators by mistake believe

non-fictitious events to be part of the play and only realise later that this was not the case (Klimek 2009, 177)

Larp falls prey to metaleptic transgressions not only due to mistakes and accidents in dramatic performance, e.g. when "an actor in a play hurts himself and cries out in pain in his own person, not as the stage character he actually plays" (ibid., 171). Larp-specific mistakes happen also when players misread – or fail to notice – markers of subjectivity, as will be discussed repeatedly under "Metaleptic Considerations".

For such unwanted transgressions Klimek prefers the phrase "metalepsis-like confusions", insisting that "one cannot speak of a metalepsis because the intrusion . . . was not intentional. Intentionality is a crucial criterion for metalepsis" (177). I do not entirely agree: the phrase "*usually intentional*" in Wolf's definition seems to imply that unintentional metalepses exist too, but fewer in numbers. I will, therefore, talk about metalepses / metaleptic effects whether they are intentional or accidental.

1.4 Semiotic Representation in Larp

This paper will repeatedly refer to four types of semiotic representation of larp storyworlds: iconic-identical, iconic-representational, symbolic, and indexical. This is my modification (Mochocki 2017) to previous work on larp semiotics by Loponen & Montola (2004); Waern, Montola & Stenros (2009); Harviainen (2012); Lukka (2015); also inspired by semiotics of theatre (Elam 2005) and of general embodied performance (O'Neill 2008).

1. Iconic-identical: Physical objects in the game area are assumed to have identical function and qualities as their fictional counterparts in the larp storyworld. So do player's behaviour and actions, assumed to be identical with his/her character's.
2. Iconic-representational: Physical objects, behaviours and actions in the game area resemble – more or less closely – the analogical objects, behaviours and actions in the storyworld. E.g. a safe latex sword is re-signified in the players' minds as a lethal steel sword.
3. Symbolic: Fictional objects, behaviours or actions from the storyworld are represented by (previously agreed-upon) symbols used by players or gamemasters in the game area. E.g. the gesture of arms crossed on the chest is a sign of invisibility.
4. Indexical: As in Peircean semiotics, indexical representation happens when one sign points to another to which it is necessarily related – causally or contextually. E.g. the smell of smoke indexically signifies the presence of fire. In a larp, smoke smelled by players in the game area first becomes an *iconic-identical* sign of identical smoke smelled by characters in the storyworld, and then *indexically* read as a sign of fire in the storyworld.

For a more extensive discussion, see Mochocki (2017).

2. (QUASI-)PERCEPTUAL POV

(Quasi-)perceptual POV combines the above-mentioned spatial POV with additional verbal / pictorial / audial / other representations of character's subjective emotions,

feelings, imaginings, distorted or enhanced vision (Thon 2016, 259-260). In all audiovisual media discussed by Thon, it is a marked case, frequently combining contextual content markers for spatial POV with representational markers "such as filters, soft focus, or various (other) kinds of postproduction effects on the filmic image" (Thon 2014, 75) suggesting a unique subjective perception. So do comic books with "fuzzy" or "wavy" borders of panel frames (2016, 285), and video games with "a (partial) red filter to represent the player-controlled character's pain when he is being hurt" (2016, 307).

Larp does not need to mark spatial POV, but it will need markers to signal distortions or limitations of perception (from pain, sickness or supernatural influence), or enhanced perception of characters equipped with technology, magic or special abilities. From the perspective of the player, it means s/he will continuously experience the larp in spatial POV of their character, switching to (quasi-)perceptual POV only for these elements of the storyworld which are *marked* for such perception. From the perspective of larp creators (organisers), it means they should select markers in advance and explain them to players to avoid misunderstandings (except for content markers, which should work without explanation but face the problem of physical metalepses; see 2.2.). (Quasi-)perceptions may be divided into four types:

1. Higher perception: character perceives elements factually present in this storyworld but not perceived by others,
2. Hallucinatory quasi-perception: character perceives elements which do not really exist in the storyworld (imaginary objects, imaginary creatures),
3. Quasi-nonperception: character does not perceive elements which do exist in the storyworld and are normally perceived by others,
4. (Quasi-)misperception: character differently perceives the qualities or behaviours of factual objects or characters (e.g. sees different colours, shapes, sizes, proximity, functionalities, identities, actions).

This assumes that the peculiar (quasi-)perceptions apply to only one character, as in Thon's definition of subjective perception: "the storyworld elements in question are perceived or imagined by only one character (and often in a way that is not compatible with an intersubjective version of the storyworld)" (2016, 240). Had there been a second character with the same power, the situation would suddenly adopt a high degree of intersubjectivity. This reaffirms the idea of subjectivity as a scalable quality. Spatial POV is therefore not the only mode of subjectivity open for an "intersubjectively valid version of the storyworld" (Thon 2016, cited above), (quasi-)perceptual POV can also do that. In large larps it happens frequently, as there are classes of characters who can identically detect magic, sense evil, etc.

In the discussion below, I will not repeat this distinction in every section. It should be generally assumed that each of the following markers *can* be used for a single player to mark elements of the storyworld perceived/imagined by only one character – but they also can be addressed to several players to be intersubjectively perceived by several characters.

2.1. Narratorial

Gamemaster-generated: Extradiegetic narration is the easiest form of informing the player about elements of the storyworld which are perceived or imagined only by his/her character. A larp organiser (usually with marked extradiegetic *off-game* status) whispers directly to the player's ear, or via headphones, or hands in a written note, or sends a text message (if the game includes electronic communication). The narratorial marker may be simultaneous with the (quasi-)perceptual sequence when the larpmaster is narrating in the present tense ("You can see that..."), or delivered a priori before the player enters such a sequence (e.g. "You will no longer recognise any familiar faces"), or a posteriori (e.g. "The memory of the person you spoke with got blurry, as you realised s/he was not really there"). GMs may use narratorial markers in all three ways identified by Thon: to represent the character's mind, or his/her (quasi-)perceptions, and also as "*narratorially framed representation of a character's internal voice*" (Thon 2016, 256).

The GM may also speak as a disembodied voice in the character's head – not narrating events but commenting, asking questions, making demands, etc.. The player may even start responding to this voice, turning this into a dialogue (Edland, Lindahl & Raaum 2011, 103). This would not be a narratorial but dramatised (live acting) representation of an inner voice(s).

Player-generated: Larp players enjoy a higher degree of authorial control than players of video games (compare: Thon's comment on Neitzel's idea of player's authorship gained in the act of playing a game, 2016, 380). They constantly invent and improvise new utterances, behaviour and events which immediately become part of the storyworld ("emergent authorship" in Pearce, 2016; compare co-authorship in improvised theatre in Ryan 2001, 319 or Talmy 2000 I, 430). Typically, this is represented through live action/acting, e.g. the player who pretends to be delusional or blinded improvises adequate behaviour; this will be discussed in 2.2 as 'simultaneous content markers'. But narration is also possible: player's in-character narration may frame a delusional sequence in advance (a priori), e.g. telling co-players how s/he had just taken narcotics and expects to "get high", or a posteriori when the character retrospectively describes how s/he experienced the past event. Such narratorial markers may also be given in writing by "intradiegetic homodiegetic writing narrators" (as in Thon 2016, 198) when the characters write notes, diaries, letters, e-mails or text messages.

Player-generated, if afforded by gamemasters: Among metatechniques used by advanced larp designers, some are created specifically for player-directed narratorial intrusions, e.g. the monologue box (Edland, Lindahl & Raaum 2011, 103). "Whatever the player says within the monologue box is counted as unspoken thoughts, which separates the communicating player's behaviour (speaking) from that of his/her character's (not speaking). This also breaks the player-character perceptual unity for co-players: they could hear it but their characters could not" (Mochocki, forthcoming). The monologue box, or a similar technique 'insides/outsidest' (Wrigstad 2008, 136), "can be compared to soliloquies on stage, narration boxes and thought bubbles in graphic novels, and voice-over in film (see Thon 2016, 389)" (Mochocki, forthcoming). Also in the theatre narratorial intrusions have been recognised as a convenient way to represent subjectivity (Groff 1959, 279-281; Richardson 1998, 204).

Metatechniques are "a special form of live action addressed to the live perception of players but not their characters", so "their use is *marked* as different from the standard in-character communication" (Mochocki, forthcoming). In general, the use of narratorial voice is considered non-prototypical in larp but prototypical in freeforms ("Freeform"

2014). Metatechniques, such as bird-in-ear or monologue box, lower the perceptual unity between the player and character but expand the player's exposure to the storyworld¹ by giving access to another character's mind: to perceptions as well as emotions and judgments.

Mixed Markers

Narratorial markers may be applied in combination with other markers. For example, a player role-playing a psychic who can see ghosts can follow a ghost around the house and verbally describe the ghost's actions to other player characters. This would not cease to be a dramatic (live action/acting) representation of the psychic's behaviours, which could qualify as a simultaneous content marker (see below). At the same time, the player's voice would constitute a simultaneous narratorial marker (with the character speaking as intradiegetic and homodiegetic speaking narrator).

Metaleptic Considerations

In games that do not keep subjective perception secret from co-players, larpmaster's and player's narratorial markers may be spoken out loud for co-players to hear. Such is the assumption in metatechniques (e.g. monologue box; bird-in-ear; see "The Dictionary"). This, however, breaks the player-character perceptual unity: the other players have to remember that their characters did not hear this – by doing so they are blocking the metaleptic effect. Otherwise – when a player behaves as if his/her fictional character did hear the extradiegetic narratorial markers – this turns into an 'auditory' (see Limoges 2011, 201; 205) metalepsis.

2.2. Content

Player-generated: As mentioned above (2.1 Narratorial), representation of subjectively perceived/imagined elements of the storyworld may be left (partially or entirely) in the hands of the player. Contextual content markers are a case in point. As I have argued elsewhere,

Larp may . . . replicate the use of a priori contextual content markers from other media (Thon calls them "fairly transmedial", 2016, 269): 1. before the player starts acting out their narcotic delusions, s/he pretends to be taking drugs, which provides meaningful context for the forthcoming behaviours. 2. Analogically, s/he may use an a posteriori contextual marker, pretending to be waking up with a headache and no further delusions (Mochocki, forthcoming)

All this can be executed through iconic signs in live action (or live acting), with no damage to the player-character perceptual unity for co-players.

¹In view of the six types of immersion described by Bowman (2017), I would say that such metatechniques decrease immersion in character (by breaching player-character perceptual unity) but simultaneously increase immersion in narrative and/or community (by increasing exposure to 'secret' narrative information). It is beyond the scope of this paper to study the (possible) impact of subjectivity markers on player's immersion, but it is an interesting thread to explore in the future.

Live action/acting may also be used for *simultaneous* content markers – this, however, is much more challenging. "We have access to the minds of our fellow human beings through facial expressions, bodily positions, gestures, the tone of their voice, and so forth" (Alber 2016, 99). "Hence the player may use body language, acting, movement etc. to represent being blinded, held in place by invisible powers, chasing or being chased, or talking to someone nobody else can see" (Mochocki, forthcoming). Body language may communicate not only *what* the hallucinating character perceives but also how s/he *feels* about it, e.g. with "a face filled with emotion that goes unexplained by dialogue or diegetic context" (Chatman 1990, 162). Co-players witnessing the player acting out (audiovisual and kinaesthetic representations of) interactions with (quasi-)perceptual hallucinations are likely to recognise the intended message. However, the process of re-signification is fairly complex – and begs for a detailed example.

Example: E.g. a player or NPC is acting out a hallucination by talking to an empty chair across the table, as if there was an interlocutor sitting there.

1. Game Area: The player/NPC performs live actions (talking, body language). Co-players see the player/NPC speaking to an empty chair.
2. Player's Minds: The co-players re-signify all this as identical live actions (*iconic-identical* re-signification) of the player's/NPC's character perceived by their characters.
3. Storyworld: The co-players imagine their characters in the storyworld seeing the other character speak to an empty chair.
4. Player's Minds: Co-players may easily conclude (by means of *indexical* re-signification) that this character must be perceiving an interlocutor whom their characters cannot see or hear².

Gamemaster-generated: Larp organisers may use all the above means through non-player characters (NPCs), i.e. staff instructed to role-play characters with whom regular player characters could interact. An NPC may use live action/acting to generate contextual and simultaneous context markers in the same way as regular players.

More interestingly, GMs can also use simultaneous content markers directly, by introducing physical objects, phenomena and NPCs that will tangibly represent a player's (quasi-)perceptions. Tangibly, i.e. visible, audible, touchable and interactive – to the same degree as 'normal' and intersubjectively valid parts of the storyworld. If hallucinations include ghosts, monsters, magic or other supernatural elements suddenly appearing in a rational and materialistic storyworld, it would be the pure form of "simultaneous content

²They may not know if the character is hallucinating, or has an ability to sense the interlocutor who is real in the storyworld but invisible to other characters, or maybe is not subjectively perceiving anything unique but merely pretending to be in order to make fun of the other characters. Nevertheless, using such content (behavioural) markers as indices of subjective perceptions is possible, and the efficiency of such communication will depend partially on the context (which may foreground specific interpretations, e.g. in a ghost story players will be more inclined to "read" this exemplary situation as conversation with a ghost), partially on the content and quality of the live action (details of the conversation may point to the identity of the invisible interlocutor), partially on the co-presence of other markers of subjectivity (e.g. the player may simply tell the other players "I am talking to the spirit of the landlord who came out of the portrait in the hall", which will have the qualities of a narratorial marker).

markers" (Thon 2016, 193), as long as the player's experiential (sensorial) contact with them does not deviate from the default spatial POV (if it did, this would be a mix of content + representational marker).

Thus, the GMs could send in NPCs who are figments of this character's imagination, play sound recordings with the 'voice of God', etc., which the player could recognise as non-factual only by noticing that "the represented events quite clearly fail to follow the rules of the previously established diegetic primary storyworld" (Thon 2016, 193). It may easily be arranged by GMs and NPCs for a single player in isolation from co-players. However, the same task becomes quite an ordeal when attempted in a space shared with other regular players. The intended ontological metalepsis between the 'factual' storyworld and imagined hallucinations suddenly becomes entangled in a web of possible unwanted metaleptic transgressions (visual, auditory, physical, etc.) between one player's hallucinations and another player's perception. See below for a thorough discussion.

Metaleptic Considerations I

In a prototypical larp which strives for diegetic coherence (no metalepses allowed), there should be no direct interactions between quasi-perceptions (hallucinations) of one character and the physical body of another character. Figments of someone else's imagination should not be intradiegetically seen, heard, let alone touched. If the larp also strives for player-character perceptual unity, no co-players (not just characters – co-players!) should be able to perceive the quasi-perceptions of another player's character.

If it is a pure form of simultaneous content marker (not a mix of content + another type), the 'hallucinating' player should not be able to distinguish between factual and hallucinated elements in other ways than through the unusualness of the content. And if this unusual storyworld's content is not *marked* either by narratorial or representational or metasymbolic signals, then not only the target (hallucinating) player but also co-players would assume that their characters can also see, hear and interact with it – which would change the status from subjective to intersubjective perception.

This is why GM-controlled "pure" simultaneous content markers of quasi-perceptions seem to work with only one regular player in the room (reminiscent of projects of digital virtual reality for single players; see Ryan 2015, 226; Kelso, Weyhrauch & Bates 1993). Only this can guarantee there would be no perceptual or physical contact between the representations of a player's (quasi-)perceptions and the bodies of co-players.

Non-prototypical larps such as jeepforms may overcome these difficulty by allowing co-players into the area off-character (analogous to theatre audience watching a dramatisation of a character's inner life; Groff 1959, 274-277), or as different characters, or by playing with the metalepses as part of the creative agenda.

Mixed Markers

Content markers may be included inside other markers, communicated in a different mode than live-action role-playing. For example, the appearance of a supernatural monster may be announced by a narrator (narratorial marker), displayed on an augmented reality device (representational, see 2.3.), or signalled by a special sign (symbolic, see 2.4). Simultaneous content markers (could be called 'behavioural markers') may be accompanied by narratorial markers (Wrigstad 2008, 129-130). These combinations,

however, would significantly reduce the *marking* function of the content marker, which is based on "what is represented rather than how it is represented" (Thon 2016, 263). Switching from live-action role-playing to a narratorial, representational or symbolic mode of marking is a change of the "how".

Metaleptic Considerations 2

If GM-controlled simultaneous content markers are not "pure" but combined with other types, would it then be possible to use them in a space shared with other non-hallucinating players? If present, the co-players could have been properly instructed on how to recognise 'invisible' characters and interact around them without exposing their quasi-perceptual nature to the central player. For these players, the recognition "this is someone's hallucination not visible to my character" would be based either on a symbolic marker displayed in the quasi-perceptions (as red colour in *Delirium*, see 2.4), or a narratorial marker from the GMs. After all, pretending not to see invisible characters is a widely accepted practice in larping (see 2.4., below).

Theoretically, quasi-perceptions could still work as simultaneous content markers for the target player, as long as co-players succeed in avoiding contact with the quasi-perceptions. The very fact that no other character can perceive these elements would even be another content marker pointing to the non-factual nature. However, an invisible character would still share the factual physical reality with all characters – s/he could be heard, touched, or accidentally bumped into. A quasi-perception is just an imagination, so any physical contact between an imaginary NPC and another regular player would be an ontological metalepsis.

Such illusion could easily be maintained in the theatre – but not in a larp where the 'hallucinating' player has non-scripted agency (Bowman 2015). If s/he really does not know that the imaginary friend is not real, s/he would expect the friend to normally interact with other characters. Pre-instructed co-players and imaginary NPCs may try as they might to avoid any metaleptic contact, but the central player may nevertheless force them into it. It is enough that s/he:

1. takes an item from the imaginary NPC and hands it over to a regular PC, for whom neither the NPC nor the item exist;
2. bounces a factual item against the body of the imagined friend, and the regular PC will see the item bounce back from the NPC's body which in the factual diegesis is thin air,
3. forces the imaginary friend to shake hands with a regular PC.

All these situations would result in physical (ontological) metalepses.

2.3. Representational

Unlike audiovisual media, larp does not have post-production and editing. The character's perception of the storyworld is generated live and shaped primarily by the player's sensorium – all eight senses (Taiwo 2009, 110; Mochocki 2017, 152). Many interactions

with co-players, and perceptions of the immediate surroundings, are *unmediated* on the perceptual level: the player can see, hear, smell etc. directly through his/her senses. It is only on the interpretive level that the player imaginatively transforms their perception as "mediated by the character's gaze" (as in Chatman 1990, 155). If larpmasters want the player to activate (quasi-)perceptual vision in this interpretation, they can use a metasymbolic marker s/he will see in-game (see 2.4. Metasymbolic), and the player will imagine the required (quasi-)perception. Representational markers, by contrast, do not ask the audience to *imagine* a perceptual filter – they really change the way the image and/or sound appears to the senses. Recorded media can use a darker colour, red filter, different framing, muffled sound, or reduced quality. If larpmasters want to signal character's (quasi-)perception with genuine representational markers, they must target the player's live sensorial perception – as the game is progressing live.

Gamemaster-generated: Based on live interactions between players, costumes, and props, larp has limited means of affecting player's senses. It can be as simple as putting a semi-transparent cloth over the player's eyes to simulate clouded vision (e.g. *After Midnight Shadows Moan*, see Płaszewska 2016; Mochocki forthcoming), using earplugs to impair hearing, or inducing a short-term blindness with an intense flash of light. In radical approaches, larpmasters may try to distort the overall sensory perception of the player by physical exhaustion or sleep deprivation (e.g. *Panopticon*; Gerge & Widing 2015, 93), or loss of track of time by keeping players in a dark room for many hours (*Delirium*, see below). Real alcohol may be brought to get the players drunk (*Stairway to Heaven*, see below). One can also imagine using real hallucinatory drugs for this purpose (I know such an example but will not name it here). In all cases, the idea is to modify the player's embodied sensations, so it must be physical and have immediate effect.

Interestingly, even though the affordances of live-action role-play are limited, they may be expanded by the inclusion of other media, such as wearable / mobile technology. Goggles with nightvision, or a mobile phone with a ghost-hunting augmented reality app given to one player will make sure s/he will see more elements of the storyworld than others. Technology may introduce filters and/or digital images similar to those used on film and in video games. UV flashlights used to represent the power of seeing the invisible may reveal hidden elements written on objects and walls with UV ink (if it reveals descriptive text, this would be representational + narratorial marker). In gamemaster-controlled design this would be only gamemaster-generated. In the Nordic collaborative design also players could be given this agency.

Metaleptic Considerations

Special effects of light, sound or smell are another option. For example, (quasi-)perceptions of rays of light in *A Beautiful Mind* mentioned by Thon (2016, 275) could be replicated as a pictorial representation in a larp (with access to a technological device able to project such rays to be seen by a player). This, however, faces the already-mentioned problem with physical co-presence of other players (see 2.3. Content). A personal quasi-perception is invisible to other characters, so either the rays of light should be projected only for the eyes of the target player, or co-players should be able to recognise (by some other markers) that the rays are not seen by their characters.

Fortunately, representational markers generally are free from the danger of metaleptic collisions with co-players, as is the case with content markers represented by NPCs and props (see 2.3.). Some representational markers, such as quasi-perceived sounds, smells,

colours, or lights, can be ignored by co-players with a relative ease – as long as they know they should. This could be communicated by a symbolic marker that signals to co-players that they perceive the item differently than the central player (like red colour in *Delirium*, see below). This would only break the perceptual player-character unity, without a metaleptic breach affecting characters on the diegetic level. Other representational markers, such as darkness or thick smoke in the room, would be difficult for co-players to circumnavigate.

2.4. Metasymbolic

In a sense, all markers are symbolic, i.e. constructed within semiotic codes and media conventions shared between creators and audiences. However, I found the need to create a fourth category of markers, not present in the media discussed by Thon. Initially (Mochocki, forthcoming) I called them *symbolic*. Following a reviewer's advice, I have decided to rename it here.

The *metasymbolic* type is based on an 'internal' code created by organisers for a particular game. Many larps have a set of signals taught to players in pre-game workshops, oral briefing or written materials. As discussed by Lopenen & Montola (2004), semiotic communication in larp is complicated by its division into the diegetic and extradiegetic level: "the player has to be able to create an extradiegetic interpretation about how the sign seen by the character differs from the sign seen by the player, and what was the sign's intended meaning both within diegesis and outside it" (47).

In low-budget larps for economic reasons, or in any larp as an aesthetic preference, storyworld's objects, buildings and creatures may be represented by symbolic props, labels and name tags, e.g. a row of school desks and chairs may become a fortress. In larps aiming for the unattainable ideal of 360-degree visual illusion (Bienia 2016, 80; Koljonen 2015), code-based signals are usually limited to replacing potentially dangerous or unpleasant interactions, or to frame off-game moments. Examples include word-based code 'green - yellow - red' to regulate the intensity of simulated violence; gesture-based *ars armandi* to represent sexual intercourse by caressing the arms; arms crossed above the head as an off-game marker etc.. None of these are signs of character's subjectivity – but similar signs can be used for this purpose.

Player-generated: For example, the gesture of arms crossed on the chest is a commonly used marker of character's subjective visual perception. Popularised by *Mind's Eye Theatre* rulebooks (e.g. Bowen 2005, 188), it has become a conventional sign of invisibility. When an 'invisible' character stands close to others to overhear their conversation, the real players can obviously see him/her coming - but as characters they cannot. This is a breach in the player-character perceptual unity (could result in a visual metaleptic transgression). The 'first-person audience' should understand that their character's (inter)subjective perception is unaware of the spy's presence. Unless one of them has a special ability of seeing the invisible: this character's (quasi-)perceptual representation of the storyworld will include the coming of the spy who is actively using the power of invisibility – and it is then legitimate for the 'all-seeing' character to act upon it.

Gamemaster-generated: Larpers are accustomed to using imagination to fill in gaps in the representation of the storyworld, including representations of magic, superpowers, futuristic technology etc. If the process of code-based interpretation can intersubjectively

establish crossed arms as a sign of invisibility for all players, then a secret set of markers taught to selected players may become vehicles for (quasi-)perceptual POV. The organisers may then use the secret code in-game to communicate information with a simple symbol, which the player will interpret as an additional element of the storyworld perceived by the character. If a graphic symbol represents magic, then a character with 'detect magic' skill will identify magical objects by finding the symbol in their ornaments. Symbols may also be drawn in UV paint, detectable by players equipped with a UV torchlight. Sensing the presence of evil creatures may be represented by a proximity sensor connected to emitters carried by all evil NPCs, with a LED light hidden in the character's garb indicating that a monster is nearby. If such secret coding is read by several players, this should perhaps be classified as intersubjective perception (as in Thon: perceived by a group of characters). If used by one player only, this would be a case of genuinely subjective (quasi-)perception.

GM and players, jointly generated: An interesting case is colour-coding used in *Delirium* (2010). Part of it was the change of lighting from white to red as indicative of 'normal' and 'deviant' phases, which was addressed to many characters. In addition to that, several in-game objects were painted red to activate a (quasi-)perceptual POV for one person holding the object:

Red objects are used to represent the mental instability of the patients in a physical way. The red objects are malfunctional objects painted red to symbolize their special nature. The idea is that everybody except the player holding the object should react to it as if it is a standard object of its type (e.g. the red cup with holes in it is just a standard cup like any other). Thus a character finding herself with the very small red blanket, when going to bed, would be the only one seeing it as such, whereas everybody else would see a normal blanket and not understand the complaints from the character. Furthermore as a rule the character is not allowed to express the actual problem with the red object only her discomfort with the situation (Heebøll-Christensen, Thurøe & Munthe-Kaas 2011, 85)

Symbolic markers can easily be distinguished from content markers in prototypical larps which rely on iconic signification, with character's body and actions represented by player's body and actions, and physical elements of the storyworld represented by physical props and features of the game venue. Content markers work without changing the mode of representation, so whenever a quasi-perception is represented iconically in an icon-dominated larp, it should be classified as a content marker, e.g. fake pointed ears denote an elf, green body paint denotes a goblin, and both humanoids are represented by living and breathing humans who can be interacted with (even if only by the hallucinating character). Whenever a quasi-perception in the same larp is marked with a non-iconic symbol, it can no longer be a content marker (or not *only* a content marker), because the marking would happen on the level of *how* things are represented – not merely on *what* is represented. This distinction loses clarity in larps in which the use of symbolic (non-iconic) signs is normally used to represent some factual elements in the storyworlds, e.g. "tape larps" using lines of tape to delineate walls and doors, similarly to Brechtian theatre ("Tape larp" 2015). In this case, the use of symbols does not constitute a difference in the way of representation, so they could work as content markers (if the different ontology is suggested by unusual content).

3. INTERNAL WORLDS

The next type of subjectivity, equivalent to *fantasy worlds* or *F-universes* in fiction (Ryan 1991, 119) or *dream sequences* in the theatre (Groff 1959, 277), refers to:

the full- fledged "representation of internal worlds," where what is represented is contextually and/or representationally marked as being neither the factual domain of the storyworld nor a character's perception of it but rather as consisting "exclusively" of quasi-perceptions such as hallucinations, memories, dreams, and fantasies" (Thon 2014: 75)

If the non-factual (illusionary) nature of the character's vision is determined in relation to the 'factual' domain (Ryan's TAW), the factual storyworld must first be established as the point of departure. The prototypical larp would begin in the factual storyworld with factual characters perceiving the environment in default spatial POV (see above). Transitions from this shared factual domain to the subjective personal subworld (Ryan's *F-universe*) must therefore be *marked* for the players so that they could apply the interpretive strategy of subjectivisation (Alber 2016, 51).

A major problem with representing internal worlds in live-action role-playing is the physicality of the game area. The internal world is supposed to have no perceptual connection to the primary factual domain of the larp, and yet many elements the physical environment in the game area will stay the same. Even if the GMs temporarily block some passageways and remove all moveable objects, the large physical obstacles remain in place: buildings, walls, and landscape features. This means that character's live perception of these features, even if re-signified as contents of the internal world, will essentially work as (quasi-)perceptual POV of the primary storyworld – except for internal worlds which thematically are dreams about the primary storyworld, in which case a high degree of physical overlap does not threaten the ontological coherence. Moreover, redecorating a part of the game area as one character's internal world makes this area (and involved players) inaccessible for other characters in the factual storyworld. For these reasons, the representations of internal worlds:

1. are usually placed beyond the regular game area (in metarooms),
2. and/or communicated beyond the loop of in-character live action / live perception (in other modes/media),
3. and/or role-played in the freeform/jeeppform manner.

Representation of internal worlds can reach its fullest potential in jeepforms or freeforms (compared to psychodrama by Montola & Holopainen 2012, 14), which are prone to artistic experimentation (see Wrigstad 2008). Not only do they employ a variety of metatechniques but are also willing to break established conventions, such as player-character unity or diegetic coherence. For example, the space in *A Bitter Aftertaste* is divided between a balcony, which represents the factual diegesis shared by two lovers, and an adjacent open area for role-playing imaginary "fears running in the other person's head" (Harviainen 2007, 4). They represent potential threats to the relationship one of the lovers *imagines* as potentially coming in the future. Yet another affordance of jeepforms is positioning co-players as personifications of thoughts and emotions, with the entire scene representing the inner workings of a character's mind; an idea championed by one of my students in GAMEDEC: Game Studies & Design.

The jeepform / freeform / blackbox movements are far from the prototypical model of larp, and "plenty of angry debates have been held on the topic of whether freeforms are larps or not" ("Freeform" 2014). Nonetheless, the discussion of subjective internal worlds cannot ignore the cases of large-scale larps which are prototypical in the representation of the main factual storyworld, and temporarily switch to freeform and metatechniques to represent internal worlds (e.g. *Stairway to Heaven*, see 3.3.).

3.1 Narratorial

Gamemaster-generated: A GM narrator may frame a following sequence as an internal world (e.g. dream) in an introduction (a priori contextual marker). In this case, all players present in the scene (not just NPCs) would drop their characters and adopt new roles in the fantasy. Then, the narrator may step in again to announce the end of the dream sequence (a posteriori). Both can be compared to narratorial prologues and epilogues in drama (Richardson 1988, 195). In the factual domain of the larp, only the character of the hallucinating player would remember the events from the dream, while the other characters should have no access to it. This solution may easily be used in a small larp / jeepform with all players in one room. It would be problematic in a larp with multiple locations, because players dropping their main characters to play in someone's internal world become unavailable for interaction for characters in the main storyworld. This problem will not exist if the hallucinating player interacts only with temporary NPCs, not regular co-players.

Player-generated: A player him/herself may start describing to co-players what s/he is experiencing in his/her mind. This narration may be framed as happening in the factual domain (intradiegetic), with the character lying asleep and talking in the dream (or even answering questions under hypnosis). In this case, other characters present in the room can hear the words in their default focalised spatial POV. Unlike in the previous case, the loop of character's live action and live perception is unbroken (nobody steps out of their main character), and the flow of action between multiple locations in the primary storyworld is diegetically coherent.

It is also possible for a player to narrate his/her dreams extradiegetically, not speaking in-character and not performing any live action other than speaking. This can be narrated only to gamemasters, with co-players having no clue about the contents of the dream. If co-players can hear the narration, they should not include this information in their characters knowledge (unless the characters have magical or technological methods of "seeing" events imagined by someone else's mind).

Gamemaster-generated: Analogically, a gamemaster may verbally narrate the whole sequence happening to the character in the imagined storyworld. This may be narrated only to the perceiving player, or also to co-players whose characters can "see" inside the perceiving player's mind, or also to co-players whose characters will not have access to this knowledge. Gamemaster's narration may also be written in advance and delivered to the player on paper or as electronic text.

Mixed Markers

If the dream sequence is not performed through live action, only represented in extradiegetic narration (spoken or written), this could also be classified as a

representational marker which temporarily replaces live-action role-playing as the mode of presentation (see 3.2).

3.2. Representational

A change of the very mode of representation from live interaction to a non-interactive medium would be a strong representational marker: the GMs may display the character's internal visions to the perceiving player(s) in the form of film, puppet theater, stage show etc., analogically to cutscenes in video games (an entirely verbal "narratorial cutscene" – see 3.1 - may also belong here, as a mix of two marker types). Interactive media can also be used for this purpose: the GMs may prepare a video game, a Virtual Reality experience, a tabletop RPG session, or a Choose-Your-Own-Adventure-type gamebook as a representation of a character's imagined adventures in an internal world. All these choices – marking departures from the factual domain of the storyworld – are also departures from the live-action role-playing as the mode of communication. This is how larp can use its affordance for incorporation of other modes and media to achieve effects not afforded in its primary mode.

Mixed markers

Representational markers used to affect a player's live perception in the primary mode, such as change of light or cloth over eyes to mark blurred vision (see 2.3), can be used *within* dream sequences – but they are probably not enough to signify a *transition into* a dream sequence. Such markers signify only a change of perception, not an ontological transition. If they are meant to mark a journey into an internal world, they need the support of another marker: narratorial (narrator's voice announces the start of a dream sequence), metasymbolic (the representational marker was established before the game as a symbol of such transition), or an a priori content marker (the character falls asleep). Without the support of such marker, the introduction of representational markers will almost certainly be read by the player as a sign of (quasi-)perceptual POV, not an internal world.

3.3 Metasymbolic

Metasymbolic markers work just like they do in (quasi-)perceptual POV when used *within* the internal world. More important are symbolic signs of transition between worlds, explained by the GMs in pre-game communication. Any symbol (light, sound, graphic icon, gesture) may be used instead of a narratorial voice (see 3.1.) to mark the beginning and end of internal-world sequences. One such symbol seems to be unique for larp as a medium: physical movement between the main game area and a metaroom.

Jointly generated by GMs and players: The larp community has developed the metatechnique called blackboxing or metaroom, designed specifically for extradiegetic sequences, to "enrich the stories of the characters beyond the time and space of the 'main' larp, and to give players a break and an opportunity to think through their larping without having to go off-game" ("Black Box" 2015). A player enters an empty room with dark walls (blackbox / metaroom) to role-play memories from the past, or alternative events, or dreams and nightmares. The act of entering/leaving a metaroom is a contextual symbolic marker³. Metaroom roleplay may be facilitated by larp organisers / NPCs, but

³If the whole larp is played in/as one blackbox (blackbox larp as a genre), there is no entering / leaving the box within the game.

also by co-players who temporarily drop their characters or role-play the same characters in a different time and place. Not all blackbox sequences represent character's internal worlds, but they are perfectly suited to this purpose.

For example, *Stairway to Heaven* (played at larp festival Dreamhaven 2017) is set in an alternative world of youth subcultures in 1970s/1980s Poland. In the factual domain of the storyworld, the larp observes player-character unity, striving for very high and continuous overlap between player's and character's live perception. Even sleeping, eating and hygienic activities are supposed to take place in-game (Bartczak, Ososińska et al. 2017, 4). However, the characters may use meditations, prayers or drugs to leave the physical body for "psychonautic trips . . . role-played in various specifically designed BlackBoxes with an appropriate setting, stage set and music" (2017, 16, translation mine). As it is a journey into a personal internal world, the player would enter the "tripzone" alone or with a guide (with group trips available on special requests), with the whole metaroom experience crafted by the GMs for the particular player and open for his/her suggestions: "If you have an idea for a specific vision or atmosphere you would like to experience in the psychonautic journey – we'll try to take it into account" (2017, 16).

This is how Paweł Jasiński recalls one his tripzone experiences:

I quickly realised that both the tripzone waiting room and the tripboxes (sort of blackboxes) is a single-player larp: just me, music and the stage set. . . . My trip (i.e. tripboxes I was to visit) had been designed by the GMs with references to the dark history of my character, which resulted in a really bad and depressing high. Among other things, I landed in Hell where I tore meat apart with my bare hands, and went headbanging while waving some guts around to the sound of some depressing metal music. Then to the Purists' Dream, where I came across a book. I did not understand a bit of it, only smeared it with blood. Finally, there was the room of Galaxies with a vague and fleeting promise of a sense of peace. (Jasiński 2017, translation mine).

Paweł's character was a punk hitman who had mercilessly executed enemies of the revolution and now was undergoing a crisis of belief in the Cause combined with personal problems with finding his place in the New Commune (Jasiński 2017). Paweł's account gives an insight into the power of marrying a prototypical larp storyworld (Ryan's TAW) with internal worlds (Ryan's *F-universes*) created in bespoke single-player metarooms.

3.4 Content

The symbolic act of crossing the metaroom threshold may be combined with a conventional a priori/a posteriori content markers with a character who falls asleep or wakes up (just like in quasi-perceptual POV; see 2.2). In *Stairway to Heaven*, before a player symbolically entered the psychonautic internal world, s/he would first perform contextual live actions (content markers) in the factual storyworld:

We start the trip in the fireplace hall in the barn where the New Commune created the place for experiencing trips. You lie down on cushions, watch colourful things, remember to drink a lot of water, and cuddle with plush toys. In the larp diegesis, your character's body will remain in this place. So you lie down in the tripbases and relax, waiting for the acid to kick in and start the real trip. . . .When it

happens, an organiser will approach you and hand you over to the person who will take you to the tripzone. ("Psychonautyka" 2017, translation mine).

The imagined secondary storyworld has no perceptual connection to the factual domain of the primary storyworld. Everything that takes place in the internal world happens only in the perceiving character(s) mind, not perceived by any other character (save for mind-readers). In a prototypical larp, the internal world should not be perceived by other players either, and metarooms set up outside the main game area help achieve that. Firstly, the problem of immovable physical features of the game area (see 6., above) does not exist if the metaroom is located beyond this area. Secondly, other players cannot enter the off-game area in-character (and may be barred from entering the metaroom at all), which prevents 'cross-diegetic' (metaleptic) interactions between the factual storyworld and the internal world.

GM-generated: All this means that GMs have virtually unlimited power to introduce simultaneous content markers (i.e. contents incompatible with the reality of the factual TAW) through stage set, props, sound design, special effects, live action of NPCs, and any modes and media, with no limitations coming either from the presence of co-players or the shape of the main game area.

Player-generated: The perceiving player seems to have similarly unlimited freedom in communicating the contents of his/her subjective perceptions through 'behavioural' simultaneous content markers, i.e. live action/acting, movement, and gestures. Besides physical interactions (iconic-identical live action) with elements available in the metaroom, the player may pretend to interact (iconic-representational live acting) with imagined objects or characters that have no physical representation in the room (see 2.2). The audience may consist only of GMs and NPCs – or also of co-players if they are allowed to watch someone else's metaroom scenes (non-prototypical for larp, typical in jeepform).

Metaleptic Considerations

If a player tries to do the same in the regular game area where s/he is seen by co-players, analogically to (or in addition to) the use of intradiegetic narration (see 3.1), severe limitations will appear.

1. The player can use only his/her body and voice, so his/her representation of the imagined world will never reach the details of verbal narration or the richness of a metaroom equipped with sound and light technology, physical props and NPCs.
2. The physicality of the game area makes it virtually impossible to maintain the illusion of no perceptual connection to the primary storyworld. A character's body in the factual storyworld trying to act out his/her imagined actions in the internal world should behave as if s/he did not notice neither the bodies of co-players nor the physical surroundings – including walls and stairs – nor his/her own interactions with them. If a player's body moves around the room avoiding all obstacles, it suggests that the character does perceive the immediate physical surroundings, which would qualify as (quasi-)perceptual POV.

Bumping into obstacles will not solve this problem, either. If a player pretends not to see obstacles and falls into a ditch, it is not possible for him/her to simultaneously act out the illusion of walking on without falling. Being physically restrained by other characters

will make it impossible to physically act out unlimited movement. It would be necessary to translate such obstacles and physical constraints to some counterparts in the internal world, which – again – would acknowledge some (quasi-)perceptual connection to the shared factual storyworld which never happens in internal worlds. This problem can only be eliminated when the player's body is largely motionless, communicating the vision of internal world through narration (narratorial marker, see 3.1), with iconic body language (content markers) limited mainly to facial expression and tone of voice.

4. (QUASI-)PERCEPTUAL OVERLAY

Thon discusses *Fight Club* as an example of (quasi-)perceptual overlay, which represents a subjective perception of the storyworld filtered through the consciousness of the character, but shows it in third-person view (Thon 2016, 260-261). Given that larp is experienced in first person spatial POV by default, does it afford a transition to (quasi-)perceptual overlay?

In *Fight Club* we can see the central character making friends with Tyler Durden. The first character does not know (neither does the audience) that Tyler is an imaginary personification of his 'darker' side (alter ego). It is only near the end of the film that the character realises that, and recalls some of the key moments again as they 'really' happened. Having seen these scenes with two characters and actors, the audience now watches edited versions as the 'correct' memories, with only one man talking to himself or beating himself up. Is it possible to replicate this effect in larp, with (quasi-)perceptual overlay leading the player from real deception to a real moment of revelation?

Let us imagine that a player character meets an NPC who was instructed by GMs to role-play the imaginary alter ego as a flesh-and-blood person. No marker suggests the imaginary status of the co-player's character. Their interactions are recorded, then the NPC edited out on video. Finally, the player is shown the edited video and discovers s/he was talking to oneself. Larp affords all this, including the genuine revelation for the player. But the forms of subjectivity will be different than on film.

In *Fight Club*, the interactions of two actors were shown to the viewers as (quasi-)perceptual overlay. The player, however, would experience analogical scenes in the first person, which would change the status to (quasi-)perceptual POV. Witnesses to his interactions with 'Tyler Durden NPC' would see it as (quasi-)perceptual overlay - but they cannot do so in-character, because as characters they should never be able to see the imagined Durden. It is only possible when they watch the scene as an off-game audience - but an 'off-larp' observation can hardly be classified as a use of overlay 'in-' larp. "Passive observation is non-participation, and non-participation is not role-playing" (Fatland 2005, 153). In a prototypical larp (contrary to jeepforms), whenever the player stops perceiving the storyworld through his/her character's eyes, s/he drops out of the game.

What if the central player was shown the video recording from a security camera provided in the diegesis of the storyworld? One in which the player would see only himself, with the imagined Tyler edited out of the footage? This would be intersubjective representation, devoid of (quasi-)perceptual elements: all characters watching the video would see the same thing.

(Quasi-)perceptual overlay would take place if the character (or another character) could watch the *unedited* recording of his interaction with 'Tyler Durden' NPC caught on camera. Unlike recordings of factual storyworld's events in the Russian larp *Cost of Living*, which included in-larp video footage, editing and broadcasting (see Molodykh & Rybalko 2015), this footage could not exist in the factual domain of the storyworld⁴, as the camera would not have captured the imagined Durden.

The recording could be shown to the player with a narratorial marker "This is what you can recall from yesterday". In that case, the larper would indeed see his own (quasi-)perception as a third-person overlay while staying in character. However, this overlay would not be experienced through live-action – it would happen through film (making it also a representational marker). Moreover, if it is the character's *memory* – a vision re-created in the mind, not the immediate experience of the scene – it can be argued it is not an example of (quasi-)perceptual overlay but an internal world which only uses "the form of quasi-perceptions" (Thon 2016, 262). In other words: an internal world modelled on a (quasi-)perceptual overlay of the factual storyworld.

By contrast, jeepforms do allow for the rotation of players role-playing one character in turns (Wrigstad 2008, 127-128). They may also break with the no-audience rule: players who are not currently 'on stage' are watching the role-played sequence as spectators. If such is the creative agenda, the players may indeed become spectators to a (quasi-)perceptual overlay, watching his/her character performed live by another player, and still stay inside the game.

5. CONCLUSION

In contrast to films, comic books and video games analysed by Thon, larp is experienced and collectively created in first-person audience. Its physicality, immediacy and live emergence result in many limitations to the use of markers and representations of subjectivity. Among other things:

1. Live performance does not afford post-production and editing, which limits the use of representational markers as perceptual filters.
2. Similarly, it is not possible to leave the character's subjective spatial POV and stay in the larp audience, as the prototypical larp excludes out-of-character audience (off-game spectators, even if present, are not a target audience).
3. Direct access to another character's mind is not possible unless the larp allows for out-of-character communication through metatechniques, or the storyworld provides magical or high-tech means of such access in-character.

Gamemasters should know that:

1. (Quasi-)perceptual overlay is not possible in a prototypical larp, because the core tenet of first-person audience excludes third-person view.

⁴Except for storyworlds that have some supernatural or high-tech means of mind-reading and visualising someone else's (quasi-)perception in third-person view, e.g a wizard reaching inside a character's psyche and then manifesting its perceptions as a visible illusion, or a brain scan visualising it as a digital simulation.

2. (Quasi-)perceptual POV is easy to create with narratorial markers and symbolic markers (with symbols pre-defined before the game), used either a priori or simultaneously. It is more challenging (technologically) with representational ones. The introduction of content markers must be well-considered, as "Embodied perception combined with unscripted multiplayer narrative agency puts the storyworld in the danger of unwanted metaleptic contact between one character's quasi-perceptions and another character's body" (Mochocki, forthcoming).

3. Internal worlds are easy to create in separate metarooms outside the main game area, with the physical act of crossing the boundary being a symbolic marker of transition between the worlds. Representing internal worlds to the target player in the main game area is relatively easy with narratorial markers, or by using a non-larp medium (film, puppet show etc.) as a representational marker. However, this is barely possible in the presence of co-players in the same space due to the risk of metalepsis.

From the perspective of players,

1. (Quasi-)perceptual POV can be easily communicated to co-players and GMs with simultaneous and/or a priori content markers and simultaneous or a posteriori narratorial markers.

2. Internal worlds can be communicated as narratorial markers simultaneously (with the character speaking under hypnosis or in his/her sleep), or narrated a posteriori.

In any case, the selection of forms and markers of subjectivity is a part of design choices. It is up to the creators to decide how closely they want to follow the prototypical model with high perceptual unity and no metalepses. Player-character unity (personal or perceptual), access to another character's mind, as well as physical metalepses may be avoided, or tolerated, or actively encouraged by the creative agenda.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The primary credit for intellectual inspiration belongs to Jan-Noël Thon (2014, 2016), whose analytical framework forms the backbone of this paper. The discussion is informed by previous claims, findings and terminology from Mochocki (2017) and Mochocki (forthcoming). Some of the ideas for in-larp representations of subjectivity were suggested by members of "Larp Poland" Facebook group: B. Bruski, P. Jasiński, R. Jurczyk, P. Milewski, and A. Rogowska in September 2016.

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Access to online sources: Feb 2018.