Transmedial Narratology and Transmedia Storytelling

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Abstract

The notion of transmediality, when used in conjunction with narrative, can be understood in two ways. Transmedial narratology is the expansion of the discipline beyond the medium of language-based narrative for which it was originally developed, to narrative media such as film, drama, comics, and video games. Its purpose is the study of the expressive devices of narrativity in different media. Transmedia storytelling refers to the migration of narrative content across various media. This phenomenon is as old as the existence of media of communication,

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but it has received a boost through the development of digital media. The first part of this entry describes the evolution of narratology from a language-centered to a transmedial field of study, and the second examines the various manifestations of transmedia storytelling, as well as the theoretical implications of the phenomenon.

Keywords

Transmedial narratology · Transmedia storytelling · Storyworld · Narrative theory

Introduction

The last decades have seen a proliferation of narratological research devoted to the notion of transmediality (see Ryan 2013; Ryan and Thon 2014; Thon 2016; Baroni 2017; Elleström 2019). However, the use of the adjectives *transmedia* or *transmedial* varies among scholars. In the broad sense – which is the most commonly used but also the vaguest – transmedial narratology refers to the study of "narrative practices in different media" (Herman 2009: 194). This meaning is retained by Werner Wolf, who regards transmediality as a set of features common to different media:

> *Transmediality* concerns phenomena which are non-specific to individual media and/or are under scrutiny in a comparative analysis of media in which the focus is not on one particular source medium. Being non-media specific these phenomena appear in more than one medium. (Wolf 2011: 5)

Wolf distinguishes transmediality from *intermediality*, a term he uses to refer to the combination or mixing of multiple media within a single work, such as image and language in children's books, or music and language in operas (Wolf 2011) (The term multimodality is also used to describe this practice.). Here the term *transmedial narratology* will be used to describe the extension of narratology beyond language-based narrative, the medium for which it was originally developed. In a second, narrower sense, transmediality refers to the migration of narrative content across various media (Thon 2015: 440). We will use the term *transmedia storytelling* to designate this phenomenon. Pioneered by the work of Jenkins (2006), the study of transmedia storytelling focuses primarily on the large franchises developed by the entertainment industry, such as *Star Wars* or *Harry Potter*, but it can also concern any type of cross-media relation, such as adaptation. The emergence of digital technologies has not only complexified and enriched narrative forms, but it has also been a decisive factor in the creation of transmedial storyworlds.

The first section of this entry will be devoted to the development of narratology from a discipline narrowly concerned with language-based texts to a medium-conscious project, while the second section will discuss the cultural phenomenon of transmedia storytelling.

Toward a Media-Conscious Narratology

In what follows we will present the various historical stages that have marked the development of transmedial narratology, as well as the reconfiguration that the notion of narrativity has undergone through this evolution from something defined by modes of expression to autonomous cognitive representation (Some elements of this section have been partially taken from an article published in the journal Poétique, with the editor's permission. See Baroni (2017).).

A Transmedial History of Narratology

From the very beginning of narratology, story was regarded by the founding fathers of the discipline as a medium-transcending concept. As Claude Bremond observed in 1964, the seed of the transmedial ambition of the structuralist conceptualizations of narrativity was already contained in the formalist work of Vladimir Propp, who played a major role in revealing, behind the particular contents of a hundred Russian fairytales, a limited number of spheres of action as well as an invariant sequence of 31 functions. Bremond claims that through this process of abstraction, Propp discovered "a layer of autonomous significance endowed with a structure which can be isolated from the whole of the message: the *story* [le *récit*]" (We use here the translation by Prince (2014).) (1964: 4). He further explains:

> The structure of the latter is independent of the techniques that support it. It can be transposed from one to another without losing anything of its essential properties: the subject of a tale can serve as argument for a ballet, that of a novel can be brought to stage or screen, one can recount a movie to those who have not seen it. These are words we read, images we see, gestures we decipher, but through them it is a story that we follow, and it can be the same story. The *narrated* [le *raconté*] has its distinctive significant elements, its *racontants*: these are not words, images, or gestures but the events, situations, and behaviors signified by words, by images, by gestures.[1] (Bremond 1964: 4–5)

In another seminal article published in 1966, Roland Barthes asserted that narratives are found in a "prodigious variety of genres, each of which branches out into a variety of media, as if all substances could be relied upon to accommodate man's stories":

> Among the vehicles of narrative are articulated language, whether oral or written, pictures, still or moving, gestures, and an ordered mixture of all these substances; narrative is present in myth, legend, fables, tales, short stories, epics, history, tragedy, *drame* [suspense drama], comedy, pantomime, paintings (in Santa Ursula by Carpaccio, for instance), stained-glass windows, movies, local news, conversation. (Barthes 1975: 237)

[1] Although, to our knowledge, Bremond's article has not been translated in its entirety, we use here an extract translated by Gerald Prince (2014).

The neologism *narratology* was actually coined three years later when Tzvetan Todorov realized that a "science of narrative" had to cut across disciplines, because narratives can be found in "fairytales, myth, film, and dreams" (1969: 10). In its early days, narratology was thus conceived as a way to deal with the most diverse forms of narrative. Due to their cultural prominence in the twentieth century, movies, comics, and stories conveyed by pictures were going to play a major role in this project.

This first stage of narratology centered on the structures of the story (the *narrated*), and the effects of the medium (or *substance*) were often neglected. Symptomatic of this neglect is Bremond's claim that the structure of a story can be transposed from one medium to another "without losing anything of its essential properties." Yet it seems obvious that alterations to the structure of the story are inevitable in the process of adaptation. To take a trivial example, the length of a film or a play is limited by cultural and technical constraints, and the adaptation of a novel to the screen or to the stage almost inevitably involves cuts in the storyline. Another factor in the reduction of the original scope of narratology to verbo-centric conceptions of narrativity was the dominance in the seventies of a structuralist paradigm imported from linguistics. Gérard Genette, the most prominent figure in narratology, built on the opposition between the *diegetic* and the *mimetic* modes in Plato's poetics to extradiegetic (external), though film is a mimetic medium according to the preceding conception.) to defend a narrow conception of narratology, insisting that the verbal act of a *narrator* should be considered a necessary condition of narrativity. For Genette, narrative is not based of the dyad *story/discourse* but on a triad *story/narrative/narrating* (*histoire/récit/narration*) which stresses the importance of the productive act of a narrator.

> I propose, without insisting on the obvious reasons for my choice of terms, to use the word *story* for the signified or narrative content (even if this content turns out, in a given case, to be low in dramatic intensity or fullness of incident), to use the word *narrative* for the signifier, statement, discourse or narrative text itself, and to use the term *narrating* for the producing narrative action and, by extension, the whole of the real or fictional situation in which that action takes place. (Genette 1980: 27)

For Genette, this inclusion of the *narrating* act leads to a distinction between two narratologies, one *thematic*, confined to the analysis of the structures of the *story*, and the other *modal*, dealing with the structure of the narrative discourse conceived as a specific "verbal mode" of "representation" of the story, in other words, as the production of a *narrator*:

> there is room for two narratologies, one thematic in the broad sense (analysis of the story or the narrative content), the other formal or, rather, modal (analysis of narrative as a mode of "representation" of stories, in contrast to the nonnarrative modes like the dramatic and, no doubt, some other outside literature).
>
> But it turns out that analyses of narrative contents, grammars, logics, and semiotics have hardly, so far, laid claim to the term *narratology*, which thus remains (provisionally?) the property solely of the analysis of narrative mode. This restriction seems to me on the whole legitimate, since the sole specificity of narrative lies in its mode and not its content, which can equally well accommodate itself to a "representation" that is dramatic, graphic, or other. (Genette 1988: 16)

By asserting that the "sole specificity of narrative lies in its mode and not its content" and by defining this mode as the discourse of a narrator, Genette turns his back on previous conceptions of narrativity and excludes a vast territory from his analysis of narrative structures such as analepsis, focalization, speed of narration, etc. – the territory of visual mimetic media, for which, as we shall see, these concepts are fully relevant. It is indeed easy to show that many of the categories developed by Genette apply just as well to graphic or audiovisual narratives as to language-based stories. For instance, a movie represents a story in a certain order, with a certain speed, from a certain perspective, and sometimes it is even told by a narrator, as illustrated by the techniques of *flashbacks*, *cuts*, *subjective camera*, and the occasional use of *voice-over*. The narratological analysis of works representing the mimetic mode could not therefore remain long confined to what Genette regards as a thematic approach, and the first medial expansion of modal narratology was notably achieved under the impulse of film studies in the late 1970s and the 1980s.

Seymour Chatman pioneered this expansion by applying the opposition between *story* and *discourse* to the analysis of film. He suggested that nonverbal narratives share with literary fictions not only their capacity to construct a reference to existents or events – which concerns the "story" or "content" of the narrative – but also their capacity to configure the presentation of this content. This configuration represents a form of "discourse" or "expression." Chatman writes:

> Narrative discourse, the "how,". .. divides into two subcomponents, the narrative form itself – the structure of narrative transmission – and its manifestation, its appearance in a specific materializing medium, verbal, cinematic, balletic, musical, pantomimic, or whatever. Narrative transmission concerns the relation of time of the story to time of the recounting of story, the source of authority for the story: narrative voice, "point of view, "and the like. Naturally, the medium influences the transmission, but it is important for the theory to distinguish the two. (1978: 22)

Insofar as Chatman acknowledges that "the medium influences the transmission," a number of conceptual rearrangements need to be made in order to adapt to mimetic representation the modal theory for which Genette has laid the foundation. Chatman suggests, among other aspects, that flashbacks are not a simple equivalent of "verbal analepsis," because in cinema, "'flashback' means a narrative passage that 'goes back' but specifically visually, as a scene, in its own autonomy, that is, introduced through some overt mark of transition like a cut or a dissolve" (1978: 64).

Despite this early work in cinema studies, narratology as a discipline faltered in the 1980s and was slow to broaden the scope of modal approaches, because formalist and structuralist paradigms entered a period of contestation. In a pivotal article, Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan described this period of "crisis" (1989: 157) as a consequence, among other factors, of the cultural turn of the humanities, and she advocated for a renewal based on a better inclusion of the *medium* in narratological research. Another important point for future research is her pledge for intermedial comparison as a methodological tool for expanding narratology without neglecting the constraints that each medium imposes on the narrative "representation":

> The inclusion of the medium within narratology has to be at least partly comparative, exploring the commonalities as well as the differences between media and the effect both have on the story, the text, and its narration. It seems to me that 1) most of the distinctions between media will turn out to be matters of degree rather than of absolute presence or absence of qualities; and 2) what is a constraint in one medium may be only a possibility in another. (1989: 161)

Long before the development of a global (i.e., English-speaking) narratology, French film theorists André Gaudreault (1988) and François Jost (1989) proposed a framework adopting this intermedial method in order to deal with what Alain Boillat (2007) calls "filmic enunciation." Gaudreault based his reflection on a reassessment of the apparent opposition between the mimetic and the diegetic modes in Plato's *Republic*. According to Gaudreault, mimesis "is and remains undeniably a *diegesis*, a narrative, *diegesis dia mimeseos* says Plato, that is to say a narrative by the means of imitation" (Gaudreault 1999: 61). Inspired by the concept of "Grand Image Maker" (Grand Imagier) proposed by Albert Laffay (1947) to describe filmic enunciation, Gaudreault (199: 91) proposes a notion of "monstrator," which can be considered as an analog to a "narrator," but whose domain is the building of a narrative "by the means of imitation."

Jost also made an important contribution to the early extension of modal narratology by showing that *focalization*, in order to be applied to filmic representation, needed to be reconceptualized, leading to a clearer distinction between the *knowledge* provided by the representation – the instances of focalization outlined by Genette – and the *perception* of the scene – the analysis of subjectivity, when a narrative seems to be filtered by a character-focalizer. Jost shows that audiovisual representations use specific techniques for representing subjectivity, which can be signified by internal *ocularization* (a visual angle associated to the point of view of a character) or by internal *auricularization* (a modulation of the soundtrack indicating a subjective audition).

Both Gaudreault's and Jost's contribution to narrative theory are examples of how a transmedial approach helps to renew the concepts and methods of a general "science of narrative." They did not simply extend the application of narratological concepts to the study of mimetic narratives by bracketing off the effects inherent to the "substance," like Bremond, and Chatman to a certain extent; they also used an intermedial comparison of the specific ways verbal and audiovisual narratives deal with narrative transmission, leading to the introduction of new narratological concepts such as *monstration*, *ocularization*, and *auricularization*. On the scale of a general conceptualization of narrativity, their works also showed that some concepts needed to be rediscussed when adopting a non-verbo-centric conception of narrativity: for instance we should rethink the opposition between *mimetic* and *diegetic* modes, or the distinction between *perception* and *knowledge* in the study of focalization. In the late 1990s, in an effort of synthesis and generalization of those principles, Philippe Marion set the foundation of a media-conscious narratology (*narratologie médiatique*), which includes a reflection on media-specific affordances – labeled "mediativity" (*médiativité*) – and on narrative contents considered

"mediagenic" because they contribute particularly well to the "expressive and communicative potential developed by the medium" (1997a: 80).

The turn of the century has witnessed a rise of interest for nonverbal narrative and an explosion of studies on media such as comics, drama, and video games. The study of "graphic narratives" has been particularly prominent, due to the change of artistic reputation of this medium from lowbrow to highbrow (Chute 2008). After the wide success of works such as Art Spiegelman's *Maus* and Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home*, many narratologists – the majority of whom still belong to literature departments – recognized that graphic novels have literary qualities, but that the first task should be to explore the specific ways this medium tells stories or represents itself (Stein and Thon 2013; Kukkonen 2013). Narratological tools developed for other media proved to be useful to some extent – with the importation of concepts such as "monstration" (Groensteen 2010) or "ocularization" (Mikkonen 2012) – but new concepts needed to be developed for each medium. Several studies explore the effects of the spatialization of the narrative progression, leading to the exploration of "braiding effects" (Groensteen 2016) and of nonlinear form of narrative progression (Baroni 2016b). There is also great interest for the study of subjectivity in graphic narratives (Horstkotte and Pedri 2011; Mikkonen 2012) and for the exploration of graphic forms of enunciation – or "graphiation," a term coined by Marion (1993). This term describes indexical reference to the gesture at the origin of the image, an effect of major interest in autobiographical forms of storytelling (Baroni 2021; Horstkotte and Pedri 2011).

Two particular narrative forms were also the subject of intense discussions, insofar as they appeared to be borderline cases for a narratological model: isolated still image and instrumental music. The former raises issues because of its lack of temporal extension in the representation of the story, while the latter, when not dependent on text as in the opera or songs, draws heavily on the hearer's imagination, due to the lack of intrinsic signification of its sound substance. Thus, both forms challenge the basic definition of narrativity as an interplay between the temporalities of discourse and story, as expressed, for instance, by Meir Sternberg:

> I define *narrativity* as the play of suspense/curiosity/surprise between represented and communicative time (in whatever combination, whatever medium, whatever manifest or latent form). Along the same functional lines, I define *narrative* as a discourse where such a play dominates: narrativity then ascends from a possibly marginal or secondary role. .. to the status of regulating principle, first among the priorities of telling/reading. (1992: 529)

Yet, in mentioning the "manifest or latent" nature of these two temporal dimensions, Sternberg opened the door to media that are only capable of representing a single moment of the narrated time – like photographs or paintings – or that convey stories only in a latent form, like instrumental music. Therefore, studies of pictorial and musical narrativity have focused on elements that elicit the active participation of the audience, leading to the elaboration of more or less variably imagined storyworld (Baroni and Cobellari 2011). Wolf calls these element "narremes" (2017: 90) and Marion "incitants narratifs" (Marion 1997b: 134).

As we can see, the evolution of narratology toward a transmedial exploration of the "structure of narrative transmission" has raised an awareness of the constraints that each medium imposes on the message, thus leading to what Marie-Laure Ryan and Jan-Noël Thon have described as a "media-conscious narratology" (2014). This new framework, under the label of "transmedial narratology," has led to the redesign of established concepts to make them flexible enough to be adapted to multiple or even to all media, while developing a reflection on the specific ways in which each medium deals with aspects such as character-building, spatial representation, anachronisms, the representation of subjectivity, etc. A narratology attentive to the effects of media must be aware of the limits of media determinism and avoid essentialization. Wolf suggests that a comparative media approach can "help to avoid one-sided generalizations which could be observed in previous mono-medial research, be it focused exclusively on verbal texts (as has been the case in literary studies) or on the visual arts (as has been the practice of most scholars of art)" (2003: 193).

Toward a Reconceptualization of Narrativity

The existence of narratives that combine multiple media, as well as the possibility of expressing narrative meaning through different media, suggests that this meaning is the product of a fundamental cognitive ability rather than depending on particular formal devices or specific modalities of expression. As Elleström explains:

> Media obviously have their communicative capacities because of our cognitive faculties, and it is almost absurd to suggest the notion of a cognitive system working in such a way that representations of events through one kind of medium could not in any way be matched by representations of events through other media forms. A brain that harbors a cognitive system composed of secluded, media-specific strata of information would be dysfunctional.
>
> However, we do have the capacity to communicate about things through different forms of media in such a way that narratives in various media types connect to each other in highly meaningful ways. (2019: 4)

If we admit that narrativity is a media-transcending cognitive construct and that, contrary to Genette's position, comics, films, images, or plays are incarnations of narrativity in different media, it becomes obvious that an artefact is a *narrative* because it tells a story, and not because it uses a specific mode of expression. The presence of a *narrator* remains therefore only optional for narrative artefacts. The basic conditions of narrativity reside instead in the representation of characters or objects, the presence of change, and the embedding of these events in a network of explanations involving causality, intentionality, planning, or other such factors (Ryan 2004: 8–9).

According to Monika Fludernik (1996: 12), this network of interrelated semantic elements expresses the fundamental function of narrative artefacts, which she defines as the representation experientiality. By this term she means "the quasi-mimetic evocation of 'real-life experience'" (1996: 12). In this model, "*narrativity is a*

function of narrative texts and centers on experientiality of an anthropomorphic nature" (1996: 26). Fludernik insists on the transmedial applicability of her definition and on the importance of the process of "narrativization," which describes "a reading strategy that naturalizes texts by recourse to narrative schemas" (1996: 34).

This constructivist conception of narrativity regards no media object as narrative per se. It is well-suited to account for the very diverse forms of medium-specific experiences, which involve varying degrees of effort to *narrativize* an artifact. Obviously, the narrativity of a painting or of a piece of instrumental music may involve greater efforts to construct than that of a Hollywood movie or a detective novel, and some audiences can even refuse or be unable to recognize it, especially since the narrative ability of these media is quite limited, compared to that of language and film. But as Fludernik shows, even modernist novels, such as James Joyce's *Ulysses*, can challenge this process of narrative naturalization by problematizing the application of familiar narrative schemas.

Interactive or serialized forms of narration, as well as the implicit stories conveyed by music, photographs, or paintings, also invite us to apprehend these basic elements of narrativity as dynamic experiences correlated to cognitive schemas rather than as structures inscribed in the artefacts. The content of a narrative should be seen as an "ontologically unstable matrix of possibilities" (Dannenberg 2008: 13) rather than as a fixed structure inherent to story content. This cognitive and dynamic definition proves to be extremely important for the study of transmedia storytelling, which is serialized, more or less improvised, often collectively managed, and systematically "dispersed" over several media. In this case, the configuration of a coherent and stable plot represents a cognitive challenge rather than as a stable horizon easily accessible to the audience.

Among other aspects of narrativity recently discussed in the light of transmedial narratology, we have seen a growing number of scholars contesting the importance of the figure of the narrator, not only for narratives belonging to the mimetic mode, but also for verbal representations that do not refer explicitly to the act of *narrating* (Patron 2021). Fludernik insists on the fact that, unlike Chatman, she "emphatically refuse[s] to locate narrativity in the existence of a narrator (even if implicit, implied or covert)" (1996: 26). This raises the question of the status of the avatars of the verbal narrator created in theories of filmic (or graphic) enunciation. While it seems logical to talk about a *narrator* when a character in a movie (or in a comics) is shown telling a story within the story, we can question the status of a "covert narrator" (or "monstrator," or "Grand Imagier") when it is the implicit origin of a first-degree narrative representation. In such cases, it seems that there is no need for differentiating this narrative function from the real creator of the narrative artefact, be it single or collective, as in a movie production. If so, the "monstrator" or the "covert narrator" would just be avatars of the author, whether real or "implied." Three medial conceptions of narratorhood can thus be distinguished: (1) a narratorial instance is an obligatory feature of narrativity (Genette, Chatman); (2) a narratorial instance is obligatory in verbal media, because language needs to be uttered by an agent, whether anthropomorphic or not, but optional in visual media – it is present in voice-over narration, or absent otherwise (Ryan 2022) – (3) a narrator is optional in

all media. In language-based narratives, it occurs only in first-person narration (Patron 2021).

Another important field of research concerns the study of focalization, which proves to be of particular interest because the representation of subjectivity is a highly media-specific aspect of narratives (Thon 2016). While literary texts use the same stylistic techniques for representing thoughts, feelings, or perceptions (Rabatel 1998), narratives belonging to the mimetic mode offer their own forms of codification for these different aspects of subjectivity. As already seen, Jost has raised attention to the way visual perception can be rendered by a process of ocularization, while the rendering of the sense of audition uses techniques of auricularization. Filmic and graphic narrative have also developed a variety of technique for the evocation of nonvisual or nonauditive mental activity (Horstkotte and Pedri 2011; Mikkonen 2012; Alber 2017; Reinerth and Thon 2017). For instance, graphic narratives use medium-specific forms of codification for emotions such as "emanata," a kind of ideogram, or stylistic modulations of the drawing, such as expressing anger, surprise, or fear through an expressive color in the background. Moreover, thoughts in movies (in comics as well) can take the form of a voice-over or that of scenic depictions of a memory, of a projected future, of a dream, or of a desired but impossible action.

Other fields of investigation include the building of characters, the representation of the temporal and spatial dimensions of the storyworld and the exploration of the specific ways each medium deals with the parameters of fictionality and factuality. Transmedial approach to characters shows that mimetic media offer more complete visual and auditive representation than verbal narratives, while the opposite prevails with the representation of mental life, but mimetic media also involve possible conflict between the physical embodiment of a character by an actor and the way the actor or the audience imagines this character (Reis and Grünhagen 2021). The appearance of a character in multiple storyworlds also raises the question of the identity of this figure, which can vary tremendously from one incarnation to another yet without losing its identity, as we will see in the next section.

Another element that is codified very differently in different media is time. Its involvement in the receptive process ranges from the "heterochronic" experience of textual and graphic narratives, where the user determines the pace of reading or viewing, to the "homochronic" experience of theatrical performance or film screening, where the audience has no control over the temporal unfolding of the narrative. This distinction is subverted by digital technologies, which, by offering new ways to navigate or pause the narrative, makes possible an increasing number of "polychronic" artefacts (Gaudreault and Marion 2013). Each medium has its own way of arranging the order, determining speed, and modulating the rhythm of narrative representation, and a transmedial exploration of narrative time includes paying attention to specific elements that segment, configure, accelerate, or decelerate time. Crossmedial comparisons can also shed new lights on previously neglected parameters of a general theory of narrative time. For instance, as we saw with Chatman's discussion of flashbacks, film studies have drawn attention to a distinction in the functioning of analepsis between recounted *past* (with the event being

simply evoked verbally by a narrator or a character) and *enacted past* (where the event is *shown* in the form of an autonomous scene, as if it happened in the present). We can extend such a distinction to the study of novels, since a verbal representation can be just a rapid, retrospective evocation of an event, or alternatively can lead to a shift of its deictic center to the past in the case of "dramatized" forms of analepsis (Baroni 2016a).

A final question concerns whether some media are intrinsically more fictional than others, or whether the representation of factual events simply requires different strategies in different media. While some scholars may regard a drawn picture as less truthful and therefore less factual than a photograph, because it is obviously created by the hand of an author instead of being a mechanically produced indexical sign (Ryan 2020), others are more interested in exploring the strategies inherent to graphic narratives for giving an *honest* account of a lived experience, for example, by highlighting the drawn status of the image (or its level of "graphiation") in order to remind the public that what they see is only a reconstruction of the past (Baroni 2021).

Transmedia Storytelling

In 2003, Henry Jenkins coined the concept of "transmedia storytelling," which he later developed in his influential book *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (2006). In this book, he identifies and analyzes a new aesthetics that relies on the active participation of audiences and on their ability to navigate between different media channels. According to Jenkins, "a transmedia story unfolds across multiple media platforms, with each new text making a distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole" (2006: 95–96). He then clarified its definition in a blog entry: "Transmedia storytelling represents a process where integral elements of a fiction get *dispersed systematically across multiple delivery channels* for the purpose of creating a *unified and coordinated entertainment experience*. Ideally, each medium makes its own *unique contribution* to the unfolding of the story" (2007: n. pag., original emphasis). Transmedia storytelling is an essential aspect of a larger cultural paradigm that Jenkins referred to as "convergence," an umbrella term which encompasses the technological, industrial, and sociocultural changes that have impacted entertainment in recent decades, following the rise of digital media. Convergence includes "the flow of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries, and the migratory behavior of media audiences" (Jenkins 2006: 2–3) alike. At the time of the publication of *Convergence Culture*, transmedia storytelling was epitomized by *The Matrix*. It has since developed spectacularly in the entertainment industry and has become a dominant cultural practice. American transmedia franchises such as *Star Wars,* the Marvel Cinematographic Universe (both of which belong to the Disney company), or *Harry Potter*, whose narratives unfold across films, television series, novels, comic books, and video games, are raking in huge profits. Japanese media franchises have also gained international popularity using multiple media.

Narratologists have shown a keen interest in transmedia storytelling in the last few years, probably because it resonates with a speculative model that they believe applies to narrative comprehension in general: the mental reconstruction of storyworlds using textual cues (Herman 2009). Insofar as they are based on sophisticated world-building strategies, transmedia stories offer a concrete and top-down coordinated expression of what remains implicit in "classical" narratives, namely, the projection of storyworlds by audiences who fill in the gaps left by what is actually represented by the narratives. Transmedia storytelling is a process that focuses on "the art of world making" (Jenkins 2006: 22; Wolf 2012) or "world-building" (Jenkins 2006: 114). Creators are encouraged to design "compelling environments that cannot be fully explored or exhausted within a single work or even a single medium" (2006: 114). Transmedia world-building can therefore be regarded as the epitome of what Matt Hills refers to as "hyperdiegesis" (2002: 104): the virtually infinite and perpetually expanding storyworld is no longer coextensive with a single narrative. As Jenkins puts it, "The world is bigger than the film, bigger even than the franchise – since fan speculations and elaborations also expand the world in a variety of directions" (2006: 114). Marie-Laure Ryan suggests that the success of transmedia storytelling is due to the rewarding experience it provides:

> [T]here is also a reason for popularity that operates not only in the case of transmedial storytelling but also in regard to serials and monomedial transfictionality: once we have invested sufficient mental energy to construct a storyworld, we want to collect the dividends of our efforts by being able to return to this world as often as we want. Immersion takes some time to develop, but with transmedial storytelling, serials, and transfictionality, we are already immersed when new events are told, because our imaginations have built themselves a long-lasting home in the storyworld. (Ryan 2013: 385)

Hence the need for a transmedial narratology: in this context, it has become essential to develop "media-conscious" tools of analysis (Ryan and Thon 2014), in order to grasp the narrative issues not at the level of a single medium, but within an ecology encompassing a number of different media.

The purpose of this section is to examine how the theoretical framework of transmedial narratology has been used to dialogue with, enrich, and/or nuance Jenkins's notion of transmedia storytelling. In its original formulation, Jenkins' model is based on an ideal conception of what transmedia storytelling *should* be: a top-down coordinated project based on collaborative authority and developing coherent storytelling, free of logical inconsistencies and redundancies. This model, which applied only partially the defining principles Jenkins identified, failed to consider how the entertainment industry actually uses transmedia. Narratologists generally seek to distance themselves from the promotional dimension of Jenkins' writings and to develop approaches accounting for existing practices of production and reception.

Transmedia Storytelling, Adaptation, and Transfictionality

Whereas transmedia storytelling is often associated with the new possibilities offered by digital media, Jenkins acknowledges that it is not an entirely new phenomenon (2011). He states that its history goes as far as the Bible or the Homeric epics (2009a, n. pag.). Transmedia storytelling now has its archeologists (see Scolari et al. 2014): many scholars have diachronically examined early examples for transmedial storytelling from nineteenth-century and twentieth-century media culture, even though they were not labeled as such. Citing the many apocryphal adventures of Frankenstein or Sherlock Holmes and the transmedia strategies used by early television, Jason Mittell stated that "the strategy of expanding a narrative into other media is as old as media themselves" (2014: 253). In an attempt at historicizing the concept, Matthew Freeman (2016) studied early examples from the twentieth century (*The Wizard of Oz*, Superman). Following such perspectives, transmedia storytelling should not be conceived as a break with previous modes of narration, but rather as their historical continuation. According to Jenkins, digital technologies are only one of the factors explaining its contemporary success:

> The current push for transmedia has emerged from shifts in production practices (shaped by media concentration, in some cases) or reception practices (the emergence of Web 2.0 and social media), but it has also come from the emergence of new aesthetic understandings of how popular texts work (shaped in part by the rise of geeks and fans to positions of power within the entertainment industries). (Jenkins 2011, n. pag.)

However, Ryan objects that if one accepts Jenkins' normative definition of transmedia storytelling as a top-down coordinated process, biblical stories, Greek myth, or retellings of Sherlock Holmes cannot be regarded as such since they "are not the result of a deliberate decision by an authority to distribute narrative content across different media; rather, they are the result of a bottom-up, grassroots phenomenon" (Ryan 2015: 2). Furthermore, those historical antecedents do not satisfy another core principle of transmedia storytelling: the fact that it should offer a "unified" experience, relying on "additive comprehension" (Jenkins 2006: 127), meaning that every installment has to bring new information to/about the story. Transmedia stories are, in this definition, supposed to create cohesive and coalescent storyworlds, which de facto excludes most early instances of transmedia storytelling that emerged from TV or comics, since they essentially consisted of retelling preexisting stories. This apparent contradiction requires a differentiation with regards to Jenkins' definition of transmedia storytelling. He initially stated that there is a key difference between transmedia storytelling and adaptation: "for many of us, a simple adaptation may be 'transmedia', but it is not 'transmedia storytelling' because it is simply re-presenting an existing story rather than expanding and annotating the fictional world" (2009a, n. pag.). In contrasts to transmedia storytelling, which relies on narrative continuity across various media channels, intermedial adaptations such as the *Harry Potter* or *The Lord of The Rings* movies would thus be characterized by a logic of redundancy and would have more

to do with crossmedia storytelling, which consists of telling the same story using a different medium.

Jenkins' clear-cut distinction between transmedia, crossmedia, and adaptation has led to much discussion by scholars who have taken more nuanced positions. Christy Dena was the first to argue that "adaptation is not always (or ever) redundant" (2009: 160) and that it "resonates with the spirit of transmedia" (2009: 156). Ryan also sought to bring flexibility to the rather rigid model proposed by Jenkins. Rather than excluding adaptation altogether, she defines transmedia storytelling as a hybrid of adaptation and "transfictionality" (2013, 2016), using Richard Saint-Gelais' proposed term to refer to the sharing of fictional elements (characters, locations, events, etc.) by two or more texts (2011).

Ryan relativizes the notion of transmedia storytelling as a process that is unified and coordinated from the very beginning. In addition to the transmedia franchises planned top-down such as *The Matrix*, she identifies a principle she calls the "snowball effect": in those cases, the initial story is adapted in a different medium after hitting commercial success, generating in a secondary way a franchise involving media different from the medium in which the story was first created (2013: 363). Novel-based franchises such as *Harry Potter* or *The Lord of the Rings* are common examples of the snowball effect. Transmedia franchises thus often include an adaptative component, since they "typically present lots of overlap between documents" (2016: 5). She adds that "because every medium has different expressive power, no two retellings will convey the exact same information" (2016: 5).

On the other hand, transfictionality, meaning the migration of fictional entities across different texts, is not necessarily transmedial. In fact, most of the works that Saint-Gelais studies in his book are monomedial literary narratives. Ryan regards transmedia storytelling as "a special case of transfictionality – a transfictionality that operates across many different media" (2013: 366). According to her, transfictionality involves three semantic operations with respect to the initial text, which she borrows from Lubomír Doležel (1998): *expansion* adds new stories that take place before (prequel) or after (sequel) the original story, or even in between (midquel), *modification* involves changes of the original story's plot, and *transposition* keeps the same plot, but changes the temporal and/or spatial setting. She claims that expansion is the main operation used in transmedia storytelling because it "is the only [one] that preserves the integrity of the storyworld" (2015: 3), but modifications and transpositions can also be observed, especially in "snowball" transmedia projects (Thon 2015: 33). Jenkins has himself challenged his initial definition by stating that transmedia storytelling is not limited to transmedia franchises that construct a strong sense of continuity. It can rely on a logic of "multiplicity" using alternative retellings or parallel universes (2009b: n. pag.). "Multiplicity" is described by Jenkins as a "liberating" concept that allows to extend transmedia storytelling to operations other than the mere expansion and to grassroots expression such as fan fiction. Following Dena's reflections, his views have also evolved toward a less binary and more scalar conception of the distinction between adaptation and extension: "It might be better to think of adaptation and extension as

part of a continuum in which both poles are only theoretical possibilities and most of the action takes place somewhere in the middle" (2011: n. pag.).

Transmedia Storytelling and Transmedia Marketing

Since Jenkins' notion has been largely popularized in the entertainment industry, narratologists have often adopted a cautious – even suspicious – attitude toward it. For instance, Ryan wonders if it is an "industry buzzword" rather than a "new narrative experience" (2016). Indeed, even though transmedia storytelling is not limited to big commercial franchises – since according to Jenkins, it can be developed within a "high end transmedia system", like a media franchise, as well within a "low end transmedia system", like a low-budget or independent project (2011: n. pag.) –, it is often used by media conglomerates that own the intellectual property of the characters and works produced. Setting up coordinated fictional universes requires heavy commercial and legal operations. According to Colin B. Harvey, transmedia storytelling is the result of "legally framed interactions," i.e., "transactions between owners of intellectual property (IP) rights, in-house operatives, licensees, and, of course, consumers" (2014: 280). In such a context, the line between transmedia storytelling and licensing or branding is somehow fuzzy: is tie-in content transmedia storytelling? What about by-products such as toys and other merchandise, or promotional materials?

Jenkins insists on the creative aspects of transmedia storytelling and regards it therefore as distinct from marketing strategies and brand extension (2011): it serves a narrative purpose and relies on co-creation and collaboration, whereas licensing is essentially used to promote the brand. He thus values the vision of synergy that shaped *The Matrix*, which he contrasts with the licensing system that typically generates products "governed to much by economic logic and not enough by artistic vision," "redundant," "watered down," or "riddled with sloppy contradiction" (2006: 105). In the same way, Jason Mittell states that "we need to avoid confusing general transmedia extensions with the more particular mode of transmedia storytelling" (2014: 254), drawing on Jonathan Gray's study of "media paratexts" (2010): promos, trailers, posters, etc. are created to produce "hype" and have mainly a teasing function and not a narrative one.

Matthieu Letourneux, in turn, proposes a reverse perspective: he links the current use of transmedia storytelling in the entertainment industry to the shift toward a post-Fordist economy and regards it as a displacement of value toward the brand. He suggests that transmedia universes should therefore be regarded as a branding strategy giving an overall coherence to the range of products offered by the brand coordinating them (Letourneux, Matthieu. 2020: §13). Transmedia storytelling is therefore first and foremost a commercial trend and should be understood not as a phenomenon different from branding, but as one of its subcategories. Some argue that those "paratexts" should not be excluded from a narratological approach of transmedia storytelling. This is because, on the one hand, paratexts often have a proto-narrative function: trailers, even posters or book covers, create suspense or

curiosity and contribute to the construction of the storyworld (see Goudmand 2018; Baroni 2020: 201–203) and, on the other hand, because excluding paratexts would amount to artificially and normatively isolating the more "noble" narrative contents from the other products even though they serve the same commercial purpose. Some characters are indeed explicitly designed not only to expand the storyworld, but also to make cute toys in order to multiply profits (see BB-8 or Grogu "Baby Yoda" in *Star Wars*).

Transmedia Storytelling, Transmedia Worlds, and Storyworld

Even though Jenkins stresses the importance of "world-building" (2006: 114), he still considers narrativity as a fundamental part of transmedia experience: transmedia storytelling aims at creating both a unified world and a unified story, "a narrative so large, it cannot be covered in a single medium" (2006: 95). His analysis of *The Matrix,* for instance, is based on a very classical conception of narrative. He shows that the content of the different media (films, *anime*, video games) form a cohesive story arc with an initial state, complications, and a resolution (2006: 95). He stated elsewhere that transmedia storytelling creates in fact a serial in which the plot is distributed across various media channels: "We can think of transmedia storytelling then as a hyperbolic version of the serial, where the chunks of meaningful and engaging story information have been dispersed not simply across multiple segments within the same medium, but rather across multiple media systems" (Jenkins 2009c: n. pag.).

However, as Florent Favard has shown (2020), such a conception is not unproblematic from a narratological perspective, since transmedia projects never focus on a single sequence, nor even on the different sequences of an overarching story. This is not even the case for *The Matrix*: the video game *Enter the Matrix*, for example, is a sequel to the second film of the trilogy, but some episodes of the computer-animated series *The Animatrix* break away from the main story and offer autonomous developments. This is why Lisbeth Klastrup and Susana Tosca prefer to focus on "transmedia worlds," defined as "abstract content systems from which a repertoire of fictional stories and characters can be actualized or derived across a variety of media forms" (2004: n. pag.) rather than on transmedia storytelling. They thus question the centrality of narrative, which is qualified as a secondary or even optional feature. For the same reason, Ryan rejects the connection between serial and transmedia storytelling in favor of the unifying concept of the storyworld: "Transmedia storytelling is not a serial; it does not tell a single story, but a variety of autonomous stories, or episodes, contained in various documents. What holds these stories together is that they take place in the same storyworld" (Ryan 2015: 4). She argues that the transmedia experience is more exploratory than narrative, and she goes as far as calling the expression "transmedia storytelling" a "misnomer":

> [T]ransmedia storytelling is not a game of putting a story together like a jigsaw puzzle, but rather a return trip to a favorite world. It satisfies the encyclopedist's passion for acquiring

> more and more knowledge about a world, or the collector's passion for acquiring more and more souvenirs, but not the detective's passion for reconstructing a story out of disseminated facts. The term "transmedia storytelling" is therefore a misnomer: the phenomenon should rather be called transmedia *world-building*. (Ryan 2015: 4–5)

Ryan contrasts "plot-dominated" genres, such as tragedy or jokes, with "world-dominated" genres (2015: 5), such as fantasy and science fiction: transmedia projects generally favor the latter, which are better suited for to the creation of multiple stories. The storyworld, rather than the plot, is "what holds together the various texts of the system" (2013: 363).

According to Ryan, transmedia storytelling differs from other narrative forms because of the specific way the storyworld relates to texts. Storyworlds can indeed bear three types of relations to texts (2013: 365):

- A one-text/one-world relation: the text is the only mode of access to the determinate storyworld.
- A one-text/many-worlds relation: the text is indeterminate and can inspire many interpretations.
- A many-texts/one-world relation: this relation is typical of the multiple retellings of the same story in oral tradition, but is also the one developed in transmedia storytelling.

In order for a "one-world/many-texts" system to work, audiences have to assume that the storyworld is ontologically unified despite the semiotic plasticity of its setting and characters. For example, the young padawan Ahsoka Tano was created for the computer-animated series *Star Wars: Clone Wars*, where she is voiced by actress Ashley Eckstein. She later appeared, among others, in a novel and a video game and, as an adult, as a supporting character in the computer-animated series *Star Wars: Rebels.* She returned again in the live-action series *The Mandalorian* where she was interpreted by actress Rosario Dawson, who not only provided her voice, but also her face. Recipients are encouraged to assume that live-action Ahsoka is the same character as animated Ahsoka, and not a different version of the character or a "counterpart," to use the logicians's terminology. Thon (2015: 29, 2016: 61) applies Kendall Walton's "principle of charity" (1990: 183) as a hypothesis to explain why these differences of representation do not affect the experience of transmedia storyworlds: audiences will rather ignore the evident semiotic disparities of the storyworld than disregard it as paradoxical or illogical.

Thon points out, however, that the concept of the "single (story)world" (2015: 24) is insufficient to address the complexity of transmedia franchises and their numerous logical inconsistencies. In his views, these franchises are better understood using a gradual model distinguishing between:

- The local medium-specific storyworlds of single narrative works
- The "glocal" and noncontradictory transmedia storyworlds constructed out of multiple narrative works

- The global and often contradictory transmedia storyworlds, which he calls transmedia "universes"

He also draws a distinction between the "*local work-specific characters*" (specific instantiations of characters in a single text), the "*global transmedia character networks* consisting of work-specific characters, some of which may, under certain conditions, coalesce into a single transtextual or even transmedia character" and, on the even larger scale, the "transmedia figures" they are connected to (2022: 142, *original emphasis).* This model has the advantage of being more in line with the majority practices of the transmedia franchises, which are regularly reshaped by various operations such as reboots or "retroactive continuity" – especially the "snowball" franchises, which rely a lot on redundancy and modification. But it is also useful to describe more precisely the functioning of global and noncontradictory (or at least generally noncontradictory) storyworlds. For instance, the term "Mandoverse" is used by the Star *Wars* creative teams to refer both to *The Mandalorian* and its spin-offs (*The Book of Boba Fett*, *Ahsoka*, etc.). The "Mandoverse" is therefore designed as a "glocal" subworld within the global overarching *Star Wars* universe. Similarly, Raphaël Baroni uses the term "local coagulation" (2020: 213) when he talks about the Marvel series building their own coherence on their broadcasting platform, Netflix (*Jessica Jones*, *Luke Cage*, *Iron Fist*, etc.). Marvel Studios, inspired by the strategy previously implemented in the comics, has taken this logic a step further by assigning numbers to the different subworlds that contradict each other (Earth-616, Earth-838, etc.). These worlds coexist within a global universe in which the existence of parallel realities and timelines – as well as the possibility to move from one to another – is established as a scientific truth. For example, in *Spider-Man: No Way Home*, Peter Parker from the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU), interpreted by Tom Holland, meets Peter Parker from Sam Raimi's trilogy (Tobey Maguire) and Peter Parker from Marc Webb's films (Andrew Garfield). This narrative stratagem, labeled "Multiverse" by Marvel – which is only possible due to agreements between the studios that produced the different films (Columbia Pictures, Sony Pictures and Marvel Studios) – allows to retroactively reinstate films that did not initially share the same universe within the "single, multidimensional storyworld" (Thon 2022: 146) of the MCU.

Media Convergence/Hierarchy Between Media

Another aspect of Jenkins' model that has been widely commented on is the normative idea of a lack of hierarchy between the different media channels of the transmedia system. According to Jenkins, all elements should have the same importance, regardless of the medium. But this goal is in fact unattainable: the distinction between core works and peripheral works persists insofar as the actual recipients are rarely able or willing to navigate seamlessly between all media. For the transmedia projects to move beyond a niche audience, the core medium must retain some autonomy from the others.

In his analyses of transmedia strategies in television, Mittell has shown that the hierarchy between texts and paratexts cannot be eliminated: he contrasts the *balanced transmedia* prevalent in Jenkins' conception with the *unbalanced transmedia* used in television in order to attract a large audience (Mittell 2014: 294, original emphasis). This remark applies not only to television franchises such as *Lost*, but also, more generally, to all transmedia franchises (see Goudmand 2018: 569).

In order to differentiate between core texts and secondary ones, many scholars have adopted a naval metaphor that has become conventional in the entertainment industry: the core text is referred to as the "mother ship." Mittell indicates that transmedia strategies aim "both to protect the mother ship for television-only viewers and to reward participation for transmedia-savvy fans" (Mittell 2014: 256. See also Jenkins 2011, Ryan 2016: 7). In other words, the experience of transmedia franchises remains monomedial for a significant part of the recipients, who only watch the core works (movies, TV series) and ignore the transmedia tie-ins. Even *The Matrix*, though Jenkins's prime example, takes into account the varying investment of audiences: the films can be watched on their own and are understandable to viewers who do not play the video games or watch the anime. Most transmedia expansions thus have an ancillary function.

The term "canon" also refers to the hierarchy between multiple works: it designates the institutional distinction, made by the authors, the owners, or their representatives within the franchise, between sanctioned texts and apocryphal texts. When a transmedia franchise has reached an advanced stage of development, the canon can be subdivided into different hierarchical levels. The best-known example of this process is *Star Wars*: in 2000, facing increasing fan demand for coherence and continuity, Lucas Licensing commissioned longtime fan Leland Chan to create the "Holocron continuity database" in order to organize the rather chaotic "Expanded Universe." The different works were classified into six levels of canonicity: the higher levels were the audiovisual works that stood closest to George Lucas's "vision" (G-Canon for George Lucas Canon, T-Canon for Television Canon), while the lower levels were represented by books, comics, video games, and other media. Following the acquisition of LucasFilm by Disney in 2012, however, the whole "Expanded Universe" was excluded from the canonical domain and rebranded as "Star Wars Legends," mainly because numerous works contradicted the new movie trilogy which was then under development. In this perspective, the canonical texts represent the factual domain of the fictional universe, while the legends represent what could have been – non-actualized possibilities.

Yet, as Thon explains using the example of *Star Wars* (2022: 39), one must be careful not to overestimate the importance or the operative use of the term or concept of "canon," since the institutional hierarchy between works is bound to evolve as expansions occur. It is not in itself sufficient to guarantee the coherence of the global storyworld (see also Letourneux 2017: 497). This is the reason why Baroni (2020) considers the concept of plot, which has often been disregarded in transmedia storytelling studies as the most relevant tool for understanding the different degrees of integration of storylines. Contrary to Ryan's insistence on the predominance of the storyworld, he asserts that plot continuity is an indispensable criterion for discerning

core narratives from peripheral narratives (2020: 206). For instance, in *Star Wars*, video game characters can be affected by events that take place in the movies (such as the explosion of the Death Star in *Star Wars: Battlefront II*), but their actions cannot impact the plot of the movies, which forms the core of the narrative system. Similarly, for Goudmand (2015: 16–17), the exclusion of the "Expanded Universe" from the *Star Wars* canon proves that the storyworld remains dependent on plot continuity. The goal of this operation was precisely to be able to tell new stories in the sequels of the initial trilogy without risking redundancy or inconsistency.

Transmedia Storytelling and Participation

Within the highly hierarchical transmedia systems, fan creation is typically perceived as marginalized, despite Jenkins' emphasis on participation, since it does not enjoy the same legitimacy as licensed works: "fan fiction by definition is not canonical" (Ryan 2016: 5). For Ryan, equating transmedia storytelling with fan participation, as if they were equally defining characteristics of the same phenomenon, is inaccurate, since not all transmedia works generate fan fiction (she takes the example of a German project much less popularized than the big commercial franchises, *Alpha 7.0*) and since, conversely, single-media narratives can generate fan fiction (2015: 11). She argues that "fan fiction is a by-product rather than a core constituent of transmedia storytelling" (2015: 11). She nevertheless insists that it is an interesting field of narratological study: the operations of expansion, modification, or transposition can also be used to analyze how the works of fans relate to storyworlds. However, while most narratologists use the notions of storyworld or plot to theorize the differentiated integration of elements in transmedia projects, Maria Lindgren Leavenworth takes the opposite approach in her study of fan fictions around *The Vampire Diaries*: "the concept of storyworld holds great potential for allowing a leveling of hierarchies between sanctioned and unsanctioned products" (2014: 315). She claims that "fanon" – meaning the unlicensed fan productions that have gained legitimacy within the fan community, even if they contradict the canon – should not be considered inferior to authorized works. In her perspective, fan interpretation participates in the construction of the storyworld in the same way as the sanctioned instantiations. She concludes that "in a contemporary media climate that encourages audience participation in meaning-making processes, it seems worthwhile to stress the importance of seeing texts on par with each other rather than in hierarchical terms of original and copy, derivation and influence" (2014: 329).

Conclusion

An important part of a media-conscious narratology is the distinction between medium-free concepts (i.e., semantic concepts that apply to narratives in all media because they define narrativity, such as character, action, setting, causality, motivation), transmedial concept (i.e., concepts applicable to several, but not necessarily

all, media, such as narrator, focalization, and interactivity or concepts inspired by another medium, such as camera-eye narration), and medium-specific concepts, such as frame, gutter, and speech bubble for comics. Another part of the project is the comparison of the expressive power of media with respect to narrative content. Different media consist of different types of signs. Transmedial narratology therefore dovetails with semiotics: it asks what language can do that images cannot and vice versa (Chatman 1978); what moving images can do that still ones cannot; what kinds of stories are best fitted for interactive media, compared to noninteractive ones; how this and that aspect of narrative can be rendered with sound alone, as in radio narrative or with moving images without language, as in mute film and mime; and how space can be represented in purely temporal media such as language and music and time in purely spatial ones such as paintings (Lessing 1984 [1767]) and single-frame cartoons. Transmedial narratology studies how constraints are overcome in semiotically poor media (McLuhan's [1996] cool media), how multiple modalities are coordinated in the service of narrativity in semiotically rich media (McLuhan's hot media), and how media try to imitate each other to expand their narrative resources.

Despite the large amount of work that has been devoted to transmedia storytelling in recent years, it remains a relatively new field of study that presents many challenges for narratology. First, it requires researchers to develop skills in multimedia analysis, whereas they are often trained to study only one or two media. Second, the important size of most media franchises in the entertainment industry makes them difficult to understand in their entirety (Ryan 2016: 7) and adds the challenge of integrating operations pertaining to the domain of marketing and licensing into the theoretical framework of narratology. In a context where transmedia stories are constantly evolving and expanding, a narratological approach can no longer be limited to the study of the narrative representations enclosed within a given text: it must also take into account the marketing strategies of the entertainment industry as well as the participation of audiences. Narratologists dealing with transmedia face a Herculean task: ideally, they should be well versed in law and economics as well as in media studies, fiction theory, fan studies, and cognitive science in order to gain a holistic view of transmedia storytelling. Such a task can only be achieved through transdisciplinarity and collaboration between scholars, as Jared Gardner suggests by rephrasing Jenkins' definition: "*Transdisciplinarity* represents a process where integral elements of research get dispersed systematically across multiple scholarly channels for the purpose of creating a unified and coordinated understanding of transmedial stories. Ideally each *scholar* makes her own unique contribution to the unfolding of the story about the story" (Gardner 2017: 87, *original emphasis*).

Cross-References

► Adaptation and Sound
► Citational Aesthetics: for Intermediality as Interrelation

- ▶ Intermediality and Cognitive Semiotics
- ▶ Intermediality and Computer Simulation
- ▶ Intermediality and Digital Fiction
- ▶ Intermediality and Liveness at the Turn of the Twentieth Century
- ▶ Intermediality and Medium Specificity
- ▶ Intermedia, Multimedia and Media
- ▶ Intermedial Studies and Genre Theory
- ▶ Intermediality, Semiotics and Media theory
- ▶ Intermediality in Theme Parks
- ▶ Intermediality and Metamediality – From Analog Representations to Digital Resources
- ▶ Literature between Media
- ▶ Media Borders in a Post-Media Age: The Historical and Conceptual Co-Evolution of Cinema, Television, Video and Computer Screens
- ▶ Reformulating the Theory of Literary Intermediality: A Genealogy from Ut pictura poesis to Poststructuralist In-betweenness
- ▶ The Narrator: A Transmedial Device
- ▶ The Qualified Medium of Computer Games

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