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Storyworlds across Media

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Storyworlds across Media

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Storyworlds across Media

Toward a Media-Conscious Narratology

EDITED BY MARIE-LAURE RYAN
AND JAN-NOËL THON

University of Nebraska Press | Lincoln and London

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Patrick Colm Hogan’s contribution to this volume, “Emplotting a Storyworld in Drama: Selection, Time, and Construal in *Hamlet*,” first appeared in Hogan’s *How Authors’ Minds Make Stories* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2013. Print).

Jesper Juul’s contribution to this volume, “On Absent Carrot Sticks: The Level of Abstraction in Video Games,” contains portions of his chapter “A Certain Level of Abstraction” in *Situated Play: DiGRA 2007 Conference Proceedings*, ed. Akira Baba (Tokyo: DiGRA Japan, 2007. 510–15. Print).

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Introduction

Popular culture has accustomed us to narratives that refuse to leave the stage, returning repeatedly for another round of applause and for another pot of gold. For examples, think of the many installments of the novel-based franchises of *The Lord of the Rings* and *A Song of Ice and Fire*, the movie-based franchises of *Star Wars* and *Indiana Jones*, the comics-based franchises of *Batman* and *Spiderman*, or the video game-based franchises of *Tomb Raider* and *Warcraft*. Each of the sequels, prequels, adaptations, transpositions, or modifications that make up the body of these franchises spins a story that provides instant immersion, because the recipient is spared the cognitive effort of building a world and its inhabitants from a largely blank state. The world is already in place when the recipient takes his or her first steps in it, once again.

Following the established custom of the sequel, this book builds upon another book one of us edited in 2004, *Narrative across Media*. We decided to call the present book *Storyworlds across Media* instead of *Narrative across Media II*, though, in order to reflect the new directions that the study of the multiple medial incarnations of narrative has taken in the meantime. The replacement of “narrative” with “storyworld” acknowledges the emergences of the concept of “world” not only in narratology but also on the broader cultural scene. Nowadays we have not only multimodal representations of storyworlds that combine various types of signs and virtual online worlds that wait to be filled with stories by their player citizens but also serial storyworlds that span multiple installments and transmedial storyworlds that are deployed simultaneously across multiple media platforms, resulting in a media landscape in which creators and fans alike constantly expand, revise, and even parody them. Another difference between the present volume and the original *Narrative across Media* is the scope of the term “across.” In *Narrative across Media*, it referred to the comparison of the expressive power of

different media with respect to the cognitive construct constitutive of narrativity, for stories and their worlds are crucially shaped by the affordances and limitations of the media in which they are realized. Now, however, “across” is taken in both this comparative sense and in an additional sense that refers to the expansion of transmedial storyworlds across multiple media.

Thinking of storyworlds as representations that transcend media not only expands the scope of narratology beyond its “native” territory of language-based narrative (native both because language was among the first media in which stories were told and because classical narratology was developed primarily with literary fiction in mind) but also provides a much-needed center of convergence and point of comparison to media studies. The explosion of new types of media in the twentieth century and their ever-increasing role in our daily life have led to a strong sense that “understanding media” (McLuhan) is key to understanding the dynamics of culture and society. Media are widely credited with the power to shape opinions and to participate in what has been called the “social construction of reality” (Berger and Luckman). But where, might we ask, does this power to construct social reality come from? For narratologists, the evident answer from media’s ability to transmit stories that shape our view of the world and affect our behavior. The stories transmitted by media do not have to concern the real world to produce real behaviors. Indeed, one only needs to look at the fan cultures that develop around the sprawling fictional narratives of film and television or at the distinctive social habits of the diverse groups of players who immerse themselves in increasingly complex game worlds to find examples of a much more direct interrelation between “fictional” narrative representation and “real” social interaction.

The proliferation of the term “media convergence” (Jenkins) in the discourses of advertising and academia has created the sense that media are currently entering a new phase of control over culture and over our lives, capturing us in their increasingly thick web. But until we are able to tell what it is that media converge around, the term will remain a buzzword—as it was in the slogan of a 2003 technology exhibit in New Orleans: “Come worship at the altar of convergence” (Jenkins 6). In *Storyworlds across Media*, we take the deliberate step of placing narrative at the center of media convergence. This center can be conceived of

in both a concrete and an abstract sense. In a concrete sense, it consists of a specific story or rather, to use the other concept of our title, of a specific storyworld; different media converge around this world by presenting different aspects of it. This form of convergence is illustrated nowadays by the previously mentioned tendency of popular narratives, such as *The Lord of the Rings*, *Star Wars*, *Batman*, or *Tomb Raider*, to migrate from medium to medium in any imaginable order. But while particularly widespread in contemporary culture, this practice is not unique to it, as the multiple medial incarnations of Greek myths or biblical stories demonstrate for Western civilization.

The other way to conceive of the center of convergence is to associate it not with a particular narrative but more generally with the abstract type of content constitutive of “narrativity,” a content that we can define as that which all stories share. Here, again, the concept of storyworld plays a prominent role, for it captures the kind of mental representation that a text must evoke in order to qualify as narrative. David Herman describes narratives as “blueprints for a specific mode of world-creation” (105), but it would be more appropriate to say “world imagination,” for while the author creates the storyworld through the production of signs, it is the reader, spectator, listener, or player who uses the blueprint of a finished text to construct a mental image of this world. The convergence of media around a common center that we may call “narrativity”—a center that is itself organized around a storyworld—will serve as an opportunity to capture their distinctive narrative resources. In this case it is not convergence per se that we are interested in but the divergences that the common center reveals. To parody the title of an article by Seymour Chatman, the leading question now becomes: what can medium *x* do in terms of storyworld creation (or representation) that medium *y* cannot?

Any attempt to adequately discuss the manifestation of narrative meaning in different media must begin with the assessment of the relations between narratological concepts and media categories. We would like to suggest that these relations cover, at least theoretically, a scale ranging from “medium free” to “medium specific,” with various degrees of transmedial validity in the middle. Or to put it another way, the transmedial applicability of narratological concepts ranges from “all media” to “one” or perhaps even to “none.” (This case would apply to the narratological description of media that have yet to be invented, such as a

medium that would allow users to touch the head of characters in a visual display and see a three-dimensional [3-D] film of their thoughts.) Solid candidates for the *medium-free* pole are the defining components of narrativity: character, events, setting, time, space, and causality. A good example of a *transmedially* valid yet not medium-free concept is interactivity. It is applicable to video games, improvisational theater, hypertext fiction, tabletop role-playing games, and even oral storytelling, if one considers the impact of the audience on the narrative performance, but not to literary narrative, print-based comics, and film. *Medium-specific* concepts, finally, are explicitly developed for a certain medium, but they can occasionally be extended to other media through a metaphoric transfer. For instance, the concepts of gutter, frame, and the arrangement of panels on a page are tailor-made for the medium of comics. But since narratologists hardly ever agree on the definition of any term, the borders between the three types of concepts are relatively fuzzy. As a point in case, some narratologists regard a “narrator” as constitutive of narrativity, which makes it medium free, while others regard it as a transmedial concept applicable only to narratives with a language track. Furthermore, there is usually ample latitude for transferring seemingly medium-specific concepts to other media, just as there is often a need to modify seemingly transmedial concepts with regard to the specific affordances and limitations of a particular medium.

The essays collected in this volume are all concerned with the representation of storyworlds across media and with the further development of a media-conscious narratology, but they can be grouped into three parts according to their specific focus.¹ The first section addresses theoretical problems of mediality and transmediality, the second section deals with issues of multimodality and intermediality, and the third section discusses the relationship between media convergence and transmedial storyworlds. To help readers plan their journey through this book we present a brief sketch of the theoretical background and core arguments of the various chapters.

Part 1: Mediality and Transmediality

The first section, “Mediality and Transmediality,” is devoted to the expansion of classical narratology, which has traditionally been concerned with literary narrative, into what we have called a “media-conscious nar-

ratology.” The particular focus of the section is on the distinction—or, rather, the interrelation—between medium-free, transmedially applicable, and medium-specific terms and concepts. The first chapter, Marie-Laure Ryan’s “Story/Worlds/Media: Tuning the Instruments of a Media-Conscious Narratology,” provides a common theoretical basis to both the project of a media-conscious narratology and to the chapters to come by proposing definitions of the two leading concepts of the title—*media* and *storyworld*. Aiming to expand media theory beyond the purely technological approach that currently dominates the field in the United States—an approach that, for example, cannot justify regarding comics as an autonomous medium since they rely on the same technological support as print literature—Ryan suggests that *medium* is best understood as an inherently polyvalent term whose meaning involves a technological, semiotic, and cultural dimension. The degree of prominence of these three dimensions differs from medium to medium, but all of them must be taken into consideration in the description of a medium’s narrative affordances and limitations. Ryan’s discussion of storyworld similarly reveals two different possible conceptions of this notion—the logical and the imaginative. In a *logical* conception, storyworlds admit no contradiction. Thus if a text rewrites an existing narrative, modifying the plot and ascribing different features or destinies to the characters, it creates a new storyworld that overlaps to some extent with the old one. While a given storyworld can be presented through several different texts, these texts must respect the facts of the original text if they are to share its logical storyworld. In an *imaginative* conception, by contrast, a storyworld consists of named existents and perhaps of an invariant setting (though the setting can be expanded), but the properties of these existents and their destinies may vary from text to text. Whether logical or imaginative, however, the concept of storyworld will only earn a legitimate place in the toolbox of narratology if it opens new perspectives on the relations between media and narrative. To demonstrate the theoretical usefulness of the notion, Ryan examines the interplay of world-internal and world-external elements in various media.

Among transmedially valid concepts, few have caused as much controversy as the seemingly intuitive concept of the *narrator*. Debates have been raging about whether it is medium free—that is, constitutive of all narratives, limited to media with a language track, or even optional

within these media. Several scholars have spoken of a cinematic narrator, or narrator-*ersatz*, but comparatively few have applied the concept to drama, as does Patrick Colm Hogan in his contribution to this volume, “Emplotting a Storyworld in Drama: Selection, Time, and Construal in the Discourse of *Hamlet*.” Hogan believes that his notion of dramatic narrator is not essential to the main point of his chapter, but the reasons that lead him to speak of a narrator, even in the case of discourse spoken by a character, are worth examining for what they tell us about drama. Traditionally, drama is taken to represent dialogue between characters; this dialogue supposedly takes as much time on stage as it does in the storyworld. Against this overly realistic conception, Hogan argues that the speech of the characters is not limited to communicative speech acts and that time does not necessarily pass at the speed required by the dialogue. Soliloquies are a prime example of a noncommunicative use of speech, if one conceives of communication as transmitting information to other people native to the same world. Much of what is said in soliloquies is actually addressed to the audience. Moreover, soliloquies provide far more extensive access to the mind of a character than what one can infer from most spoken discourse. Hogan’s reasoning can be reconstructed as follows: if the information provided by Hamlet’s speech were offered in a novel, it would be presented as a report of thought, and we would attribute it to an omniscient narrator. By analogy, Hogan proposes to speak of a dramatic narrator who can turn off and on the power to read the mind of characters and to transpose the result of this reading into what looks like speech. As already mentioned, however, we do not have to accept this conception of the narrator to follow Hogan’s analysis of the emplotting strategies—that is, the presentation of events that aims at achieving a particular effect on the audience—in *Hamlet*. The concept of storyworld plays a major role in this functional approach insofar as the idea of a large world containing far more facts, thoughts, and events than the play can represent is essential to the notions of selection and construal. These operations represent the work of the playwright (or implied playwright or dramatic narrator) as deciding what to show and what to keep hidden in order to arouse certain affective or purely aesthetic emotions. In reading (or watching) *Hamlet*, then, it is as if William Shakespeare contemplated a complete world in his mind, a world where specific events took place, and out of the many ways to em-

plot these events, he chose the one that would generate the greatest interest of the audience.

Not only are narrative representations emplotted by a (real or represented) narrating agent, but also they provide, as one of their most salient prototypical features, what has been described as “experientialities” or “qualia.” It comes as no surprise, then, that both classical and contemporary narratology have given the problem of *subjectivity*—or, more precisely, of the various strategies that a narrative representation may employ in order to represent the mind of a character—a considerable amount of attention. Accordingly, Jan-Noël Thon’s “Subjectivity across Media: On Transmedial Strategies of Subjective Representation in Contemporary Feature Films, Graphic Novels, and Computer Games” examines what can be described as transmedial strategies of subjective representation. These strategies allow the spectator, reader, or player to assume a specific kind of direct relationship between the narrative representation and a character’s consciousness. Arguing against the prolonged use of terms such as “point of view,” “perspective,” and “focalization,” which have become increasingly vague and open to misunderstanding over the past four decades, Thon begins by introducing a heuristic distinction between subjective, intersubjective, and objective modes of representation that allows for a bottom-up analysis of local, as well as global, structures of subjectivity. If *intersubjective* representation can be considered the unmarked case in which storyworld elements are represented as they are perceived by a group of characters, objective representation and subjective representation are both marked cases, albeit on opposing ends of a continuum of subjectivity. While *objective* representation implies that the storyworld elements in question are not perceived or imagined by any characters at all, *subjective* representation implies that the storyworld elements in question are (subjectively) perceived or imagined by only one character. In a second step, Thon identifies and discusses a number of particularly salient pictorial strategies of subjective representation such as “point-of-view sequences,” “(quasi-)perceptual point-of-view sequences,” “(quasi-)perceptual overlay,” and the “representation of internal worlds.” Finally he examines the medium-specific realization of these transmedial strategies of subjective representation in the conventionally distinct media of contemporary feature films, graphic novels, and computer games, emphasizing the dual perspective of a narra-

tology that is both transmedial in analytic scope and media conscious in methodological orientation.

Even if one accepts the idea of transmedially valid narratological concepts, then, these concepts usually need to be fine-tuned to the medium to which they are applied. Comparable to Thon's contribution, Frank Zipfel's "Fiction across Media: Toward a Transmedial Concept of Fictionality" examines the medium-specific realization of the transmedial concept of *fictionality* for literature, theater, and film. Zipfel proposes a multilayered approach to fictionality based on three components: a *world criterion*, which stipulates that in order to pass as fictional, the storyworld must comprise invented elements; a *cognitive criterion*, according to which readers or spectators must engage in a game of make-believe; and an *institutional component*, describing the cultural practices and representational conventions that relate to the medium. While the world criterion remains basically identical for the three media, Zipfel shows that make-believe takes on different nuances in theater and film, where the make-believe of the actors induces make-believe in the spectator, as opposed to literature, where it is a unilateral action of the reader responding to the text. When it comes to the institutional component of fictionality, however, medium-specific differences are much more substantial. One of these differences relates to the number of worlds involved. Theater, as a performance art, depends on a tripartite distinction between the fictional world of the invariant text, the production world imagined by the director, and the highly variable world created by the actors in every performance. A second institutional difference concerns the role of the text, which is major in literature and theater, since drama can be read as a form of literature, but minor in film, since scripts are usually not published. A third difference lies in the possibility to present both fictional and nonfictional worlds. This possibility is available in literature and film but not in drama, as even the most historically accurate play departs from the real world through its use of actors to impersonate the characters.

While Thon and Zipfel explore the various manifestations of subjectivity and fictionality in different media, Werner Wolf's "Framings of Narrative in Literature and the Pictorial Arts" investigates the medium-specific clues that lead audiences to apply a narrative frame to the interpretation of a text. *Frame*, in Wolf's terminology, has both a macro-level

and a micro-level manifestation. On the macro level, it refers to the global cognitive model that users activate to make sense of a text; this type of frame corresponds, broadly, to the narrative and descriptive text-types, both of which can be realized in either language-based or visual texts. On the micro-level, frame refers to the internal or external clues that activate a certain type of macro-frame. A particularly salient type of clue resides in paratextual devices such as genre labels for literary texts (“novel,” “memoir,” “biography”) or titles for a painting. Yet as Wolf shows, in some contexts the paratextual indicators are either absent or ambiguous. Many paintings lack titles, or their titles may be deceptive; think of Marcel Duchamp’s *La Mariée mise à nu par ses célibataires, même* (*The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even*), an abstract work that mocks the narrativity promised by its title. In literature, while the term “novel” sends the reader on a search for narrative design, this search may be frustrated (as in some postmodern novels), or the generic label may be neutral with respect to narrativity. Such is the case, Wolf argues, with lyric poetry. While Wolf’s investigation could select any medium capable of both narrative and descriptive manifestations, his choice of literature and pictorial arts is particularly illuminating, because it pits against each other two media with strongly contrasting features: literature is a temporal art with immense narrative resources, while painting is a spatial art with limited narrative potential. While paintings can suggest stories, either these stories are known to the spectator from other sources, or, as Wolf observes, they correspond to stereotypical scripts, such as the seduction (or rape) of a young woman depicted in a pair of paintings by William Hogarth. Through his choice of media, Wolf situates his analysis in the time-honored tradition of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing’s *Laocoön*, whose distinction between temporal and spatial forms of art should be regarded as one of the cornerstones of a media-conscious narratology.

Part 2: Multimodality and Intermediality

Moving beyond the rather fundamental distinction between medium-free, transmedial, and medium-specific narratological concepts, the chapters in the second part of this volume focus on two different kinds of relationships between media that seem particularly relevant for the project of a media-conscious narratology—multimodality and intermediality. Through *multimodality* (a term that is currently replacing multi-

mediality; see, e.g., Kress and van Leeuwen), different types of signs combine within the same media object—for example, moving image, spoken language, music, and sometimes text in film—while through *intermediality*, texts of a given medium send tendrils toward other media (see Rajewsky). These tendrils can include cross-medial adaptation (film to video game), references within the text to other media objects (a painting playing an important role in a novel), imitation by a medium of the resources of another medium (hypertext structure in print), and ekphrasis, or other forms of description of a type of sign through another type (music or visual artifacts described in language).

Multimodality is found on two levels—the level of the medium and the level of genre. The distinction between medium and genre is admittedly difficult to define (for an attempt see Ryan, *Avatars* 27–28), but given this distinction, the two types of multimodality are easy to understand. On the one hand, multimodality is a feature of medium when the specific nature of the latter implies multiple types of signs; for instance, inherent to the medium of film is its inclusion of images, language, and music. On the other hand, multimodality is a feature of genre when both monomodal and multimodal works are possible within the same genre (and of course within the same medium, since medium is a defining feature of genre). In this case, multimodality is an innovation with respect to a standard monomediality that creates a new subgenre. Consider a musical composition that includes narration such as Sergei Prokofieff’s *Peter and the Wolf* as compared to a Beethoven symphony or a novel that includes images compared to a traditional text-only novel.

Wolfgang Hallet discusses this generic type of multimodality in “The Rise of the Multimodal Novel: Generic Change and Its Narratological Implications.” Hallet observes that, with its combination of text and images, the multimodal novel comes closer to perception and cognition than monomodal novels do, since our “ways of worldmaking” (Goodman) involve all the senses in addition to language. It is indeed interesting to note that the rise of the multimodal novel coincides with developments in cognitive science that put on equal footing visual and language-based thinking—in stark contrast to the structuralist and post-structuralist claim that language is the foundation of all mental life. Hallet’s chapter focuses on three recent American novels whose heroes are children with exceptional cognitive abilities: a savant with Asperger’s

syndrome, a young inventor, and a genius cartographer. All three characters construct the world much more by means of the photos, maps, diagrams, and tables of data shown in each novel than through language, though language remains the principal narrative mode of signification. Take away the pictures and you still have a story, but take away the text and you have only a disparate collection of visual documents that do not cohere into a whole. Yet if the multimodal novel comes closer to perception and cognition than the monomodal novel does, it still cannot be said to offer a simulation of perception, as does the multimodality of film, because the novel's various signs are presented in distinct frames rather than fused into a homogeneous stream. Consequently it takes an interruption of the process of reading or scrutinizing, one that Hallet compares to the hypertextual practice of jumping from lexia to lexia, in order to pass from text to image and vice versa. This breaking up of linear continuity results in a much more acute *meta-semiotic awareness*, or *modal self-referentiality*, than the fluid and perceptively much more natural multimodality of film, drama, or computer games.

In contrast to Hallet, who discusses an occasionally multimodal genre, Jesper Juul's "On Absent Carrot Sticks: The Level of Abstraction in Video Games" deals with an inherently multimodal medium, since most video games involve haptics, visuals, music, spoken language, and written text. For Juul, video games are not stories—at least not stories in the sense that films and novels are—but rather fictional worlds in which a variety of actions can take place. The common notion of a fictional world forms the basis of a comparison that highlights the (medium) specific features of games on the one hand and novels and films on the other. Borrowing Ryan's principle of minimal departure (MD), as expressed in *Possible Worlds* (chapter 3), Juul claims that both players and readers engage in acts of imagination that conceive of the fictional world as fuller than its strictly textual representation. When a novel mentions a knife lying next to carrots in a kitchen, you imagine that it should be possible in this world to cut the carrot into sticks. MD would tell you to make the same assumption for a game that takes place in a visually represented kitchen; yet, and this point is where an important distinction between "interactive" *game worlds* and "traditional" *fictional worlds* kicks in, the player may find out that the knife can only cut carrots, not turnips nor people's heads, and that it can only cut them into slices. While the game depends

to some degree on MD (to facilitate the learning process), it resists its full application. Playing a game in a fictional world therefore means learning which aspects of the world have rules attached to them and which ones do not; thus the proportion of world features attached to rules determines a game's level of abstraction. The rules of video games, Juul reminds us, are abstract principles implemented by the computer through calculation; yet unless the rules allow for fascinating gameplay (as in chess), it is the imaginative act of locating oneself in a fictional world that makes many games exciting. While in novels and films immersion in the fictional world is a sufficient source of satisfaction, in games it must be complemented by a sense of achievement that the ability to play the game efficiently provides. In order to develop this ability, the player must be able to detect the abstract structure determined by the rules, a structure that attributes strategic significance to certain aspects of the fictional world and treats others as decorative, immersion-enhancing features.

While Hallet's and Juul's contributions focus on the narrative affordances and limitations of two multimodal media that could hardly be any more different from each other, Jared Gardner's "Film + Comics: A Multimodal Romance in the Age of Transmedial Convergence" examines the relationship between graphic and audiovisual narratives from a more historical perspective. Tracing the history of the intermedial relationship between comics and film from their birth at the end of the nineteenth century and their rise in popular demand throughout the twentieth century to the current situation, where film often appears to be the dominant partner, Gardner combines an encyclopedic knowledge of both film and comics history with an acute awareness of the institutional and economic contexts of convergent media culture in order to paint a precise picture of how the texts of each of these media are shaped, at least partly, by their long-standing intermedial relationship. According to Gardner, certain changes in the ways contemporary Hollywood cinema narrates its stories can be explained by the influence of comics' conventions on both directors and spectators, as the advent of DVDs increasingly taught the latter how to "read" films closely, engagedly, and repeatedly—that is, how to "read" films as comics readers tend to read comics. While comics have proved to be one of the media most resistant to digitalization, they also seem, at least to Gardner, to be the form most capable of teaching us how to explore the multimodal narratives of the twenty-first century.

ry. With their looping, elliptical, and multimodal storytelling strategies, comics have always been a medium open to experimentation, but their status as a “gutter form,” both in the formal and in the cultural sense, as well as their resistance to being co-opted by film and other media, serves as a reminder of the importance of institutional and cultural contexts for media-conscious narratology.

Jeff Thoss’s “Tell It Like a Game: *Scott Pilgrim* and Performative Media Rivalry” also deals with the intermedial relationships between film and comics, but rather than examining these relations from a broad historical perspective, as Gardner does, he focuses on a particular case—namely, Edgar Wright’s 2010 film adaptation of Bryan Lee O’Malley’s comic book series *Scott Pilgrim* (2004–10). According to Thoss, the comic book and the film version attempt to outdo each other in their imitation of a third medium—in this case, computer games. The comic book series already makes its readers well aware of the ubiquity of the intermedial references through its plot, which revolves around twenty-something Scott Pilgrim’s attempt to win over Ramona Flowers in Toronto. While this brief description may sound similar to any other tired boy-meets-girl story, it turns out that in order to “win” Ramona, Scott must defeat her seven evil ex-boyfriends in a number of ever more spectacular fights, evidently inspired by the beat-’em-up genre of video games. Moreover, the film and the comic books present a number of features, such as representational techniques, extra lives, or save points, that clearly originate in the worlds of computer games. Though these intermedial references are all already present in the comic book series, Thoss goes on to show that the film attempts to outdo the comic book series in its emulation of video game features both on the level of the storyworld and on the level of its representation. But as neither of these two works emerges victorious, their so-called rivalry appears less as a real competition than as a way to illuminate the specific narrative affordances and limitations of comics, films, and computer games.

Concluding the section, Marco Caracciolo’s “Those Insane Dream Sequences: Experientiality and Distorted Experience in Literature and Video Games” uses a more general comparative approach to capture a fundamental, almost paradoxical feature of narrative: in order to let recipients attribute mental states to the characters, stories must tap into their “experiential background,” yet at the same time narrative expands this background so that recipients can share with the characters experi-

ences that they have never had in real life. Caracciolo addresses this paradox through a close reading of two texts that focus on altered states of consciousness—William Burroughs’s experimental novel *Naked Lunch* and the video game *Max Payne*. Both of these texts represent distorted experience through textual clues that exploit the particular resources of their respective medium. In *Naked Lunch*, the reader is shuttled back and forth between the world of a character’s drug-induced hallucination and the real world through the use of three strategies typical of literary narrative: *metaphor*, *internal focalization*, and a handling of *dialogue* that brutally brings the hallucinating character (as well as the reader) back to reality. In *Max Payne*, the experience of waking up from a coma is represented through the embedding of visual panels inspired by graphic novels. This borrowing of resources from another medium reminds us that digital technology is not only a medium but also a meta-medium capable of encoding and displaying any type of signs. In addition to static graphic panels, *Max Payne* uses *cut-scenes*, a standard feature of computer games, to represent dream sequences, but it gives them an unusual twist by allowing the player a low grade of agency. Rather than watching the dream sequences as though they were movies, the player guides Max, the dreamer, in a tour of several locations. Since this tour is strictly linear, offering no choice of itinerary, the dream sequences blur the borderline between pre-rendered cut-scenes and genuinely interactive episodes in which the player must display gaming skills. This limited form of interactivity not only reflects the “painful lack of agency” that dreamers may experience but also allegorizes the illusory nature of the player’s sense of free will, since the game’s developer considerably shapes the course of events in the vast majority of narrative games.

Part 3: Transmedia Storytelling and Transmedial Worlds

In the first section of this volume, the term “transmediality” was used to describe the applicability of a theoretical concept to different media. Here we turn to another kind of transmediality commonly found in the age of “media convergence,” the representation of a single storyworld through multiple media. This specific type of transmedial phenomenon has been discussed under a variety of labels, but the terms “transmedia storytelling” (coined by Jenkins) and “transmedial worlds” (coined by Klastrup and Tosca) have proved to be most influential. According to

Jenkins, “[a] transmedia story unfolds across multiple media platforms, with each new text making a distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole” (95–96). While Jenkins tends to emphasize the coherence of the transmedia story, favoring a logical understanding of the concept of storyworld, Lisbeth Klastrup and Susana Tosca propose to understand transmedial worlds as “abstract content systems from which a repertoire of fictional stories and characters can be actualized or derived across a variety of media forms” (n. pag.), favoring an imaginative understanding of the concept of storyworld. Whether we follow Jenkins or Klastrup and Tosca, whose respective concepts may best be thought of as complementary rather than contradictory anyway, the steadily growing phenomenon of the transmedial representation of storyworlds is a highly productive field of study for the project of a media-conscious narratology.

Emphasizing that few kinds of storytelling can match the TV serial for narrative breadth, Jason Mittell’s “Strategies of Storytelling on Transmedia Television” examines how television has given rise to innovative narrative forms in the 2000s and beyond. Briefly touching on the history of transmedial representations—from biblical narratives to nineteenth-century transmedial characters such as Frankenstein or Sherlock Holmes, as well as from the comparatively rare forms of transmedial expansion in the early twentieth century to the proliferation of transmedia franchises in today’s media culture—Mittell focuses on contemporary forms of transmedial expansions whose functions go beyond merely hyping, promoting, or introducing another text to a larger audience. Acknowledging, at the same time, the challenges presented by the economic and institutional realities of commercial television and the powerful and innovative potential of some of its attempts at transmedia storytelling, Mittell examines two fairly different transmedial strategies as they are realized by the franchises surrounding the television series *Lost* and *Breaking Bad*. Mittell describes *Lost* as being primarily characterized by a *centrifugal*, or storyworld-driven, use of transmedial expansions aiming at a coherent and consistent representation of the storyworld across media. When compared to *Lost*’s focus on consistent storyworld expansion, *Breaking Bad* is primarily characterized by a *centripetal*, or character-driven, use of transmedial extensions aiming not so much at an expansion of the storyworld itself but at providing additional depths to its already well-established characters. Since the cen-

trifugal expansion of *Lost* tends to focus on a logically consistent expansion of the storyworld while the centripetal expansion of *Breaking Bad* more readily offers hypothetical scenarios and alternative story lines to the audience, Mittell concludes by suggesting that the two shows exemplify what can be described as “What Is” versus “What If?” strategies of transmedia television.

Colin B. Harvey’s “A Taxonomy of Transmedia Storytelling” engages even more explicitly and comprehensively with the variety of phenomena commonly associated with transmedia storytelling than Mittell does. Building on the well-established notion that consistency—or the lack thereof—is a central feature of transmedia storytelling, Harvey develops a taxonomy based on the legal relationship between elements in a franchise, as well as on the specific forms of collective remembering, misremembering, non-remembering, or forgetting that they engender. Emphasizing that digitalization is not a necessary condition of transmedia storytelling and that the sheer vastness of possible combinations between analogue and digital media renders a medium-based taxonomy problematic, he distinguishes between six particularly salient forms that may play a part in a given transmedia storytelling franchise: *intellectual property*, *directed transmedia storytelling*, *devolved transmedia storytelling*, *detached transmedia storytelling*, *directed transmedia storytelling with user participation*, and *emergent user-generated transmedia storytelling*. Using the *Doctor Who*, *Highlander*, and *Tron* franchises as his primary examples, Harvey shows that parts of a franchise are “authorized” in different ways and that these parts vary in the requirements they make on both the producers’ and the recipients’ memories. On the one hand, what parts of a franchise’s previous stories should be remembered is subject to negotiations not only between the producers and the recipients but also between the various parties of what one may call the “author collective.” On the other hand, legally binding contracts allow the legal owner(s) of a given franchise to control the extent to which their in-house operatives and licensees are allowed to remember, forget, non-remember, and misremember parts of the transmedia story, its characters, and its setting.

Building on their previous works on transmedial worlds, Lisbeth Klastrup and Susana Tosca’s “*Game of Thrones*: Transmedial Worlds, Fandom, and Social Gaming” explores the various ways in which fans can be involved with a transmedial world, particularly focusing on the

still under-researched area of fan participation and involvement through social media. As we have already mentioned, Klastrup and Tosca understand transmedial worlds as “abstract content systems” that can be identified via a common core of features defining their “worldness”: first, the *mythos* of a transmedial world establishes its backstory, key events that give meaning to the current situation of the world; second, the *topos* describes the world’s setting in space and time, the changing landscape, and unfolding of events; and, third, the *ethos* of a transmedial world defines its explicit and implicit norms and values, moral codices, and ethical conducts. Taking as their example *The Maester’s Path*, an online game experience designed to generate excitement for the launch of *Game of Thrones*, the TV series based on George R. R. Martin’s best-selling novel series *A Song of Ice and Fire*, Klastrup and Tosca combine qualitative and quantitative methods to explore both the development and reception of the social game and the surrounding marketing campaign that took place from February 2011 to July 2011. They show in some detail how the recipients—or fans—responded to the specific medial affordances provided by the combination of online game elements and social media in the context of a considerably larger transmedial world. Not only does Klastrup and Tosca’s contribution remind us of the importance of detailed case studies for coming to terms with the various forms of transmedial worlds in contemporary media culture, but it also sets out to illustrate how a text-based media analysis can be combined with both an interview-based qualitative and a survey-based quantitative approach to get a clearer picture of the specific patterns of use through which fans participate in transmedial worlds.

Maria Lindgren Leavenworth’s “Transmedial Narration and Fan Fiction: The Storyworld of *The Vampire Diaries*” examines the problem of audience participation in transmedia franchises from a slightly different angle, focusing on unauthorized fan contributions to the transmedial storyworld of *The Vampire Diaries*. Leavenworth’s case study, however, is different from the other case studies discussed in this section in at least two ways. First, the novel series written by L. J. Smith and the TV series produced by Kevin Williamson and Julie Plec represent fairly different stories with clearly different characters. While these differences seem to establish two distinct storyworlds rather than one, the franchise also establishes some continuities. Second and perhaps more important,

Lindgren-Leavenworth's focus on fan fiction allows her to draw attention to the fact that, even in franchises dominated by what Mittell describes as "What Is" strategies of transmedial representation, there is usually some kind of *fanon* (as opposed to "canon," the term refers to fan-produced, unsanctioned products) that produces hypothetical "What If?" narratives, thereby modifying and challenging the logically consistent storyworld of the canonical texts. This practice leads Lindgren-Leavenworth to propose that transmedia franchises should be regarded as *archontic texts*, thereby suggesting that scholars should grant equal status to unauthorized fan contributions and to the sanctioned creations of copyright holders. Another noteworthy point of Lindgren-Leavenworth's chapter is that unauthorized fan contributions are often used to question the authority of the canonical products regarding not only what is the case in the transmedial storyworld but also the moral or ideological implications of the authorized parts. The fan fiction of *The Vampire Diaries* demonstrates this rebellious spirit by regularly renegotiating and reexamining questions of gender and sexuality in ways that subvert the often rather conservative norms and values implied in many of the more recent entries in the genre of the vampire romance.

In a final extensive case study, Van Leavenworth's "The Developing Storyworld of H. P. Lovecraft" examines the transmedial storyworld that has developed around the writings of American Gothic writer H. P. Lovecraft. The Lovecraft storyworld is truly transmedial, being represented across a wide variety of media and genres such as traditional textual fiction, interactive fiction, short and feature-length films, fan art, comics, music, board games, role-playing games, computer games, and interactive environments in *Second Life*. Accordingly, the resulting storyworld is not defined by a specific story (or collection of stories) but by a common thematic focus—that is, the cosmic fear inspired by the "Old Ones," such as Cthulhu, whose very existence lies beyond the limits of human imagination. Building on Klastrup and Tosca's concept of transmedial worlds as *abstract content systems*, Leavenworth examines the defining features of the Lovecraft storyworld's "worldness" in considerable detail, focusing on three main questions: Wherein lies the appeal of the Lovecraft storyworld? How can works engage with the Lovecraft storyworld's "mythos" in familiar yet medium-specific ways? How has the development of the Lovecraft storyworld contributed to the eleva-

tion of the “pulp writer” H. P. Lovecraft into the American literary canon? In pursuing these questions, Leavenworth examines a wide range of media texts that contribute to the Lovecraft storyworld, particularly focusing on the H. P. Lovecraft Historical Society’s silent film *The Call of Cthulhu*, Chaosium’s role-playing game *Call of Cthulhu*, and Michael S. Gentry’s text-based interactive fiction *Anchorhead: An Interactive Gothic*. His contribution, then, not only illustrates the importance of detailed case studies for the understanding of the forms and functions of the transmedial representation of storyworlds but also demonstrates how such case studies can be connected to broader issues of literary, medial, and cultural historiography.

Not all of the work collected in this volume explicitly use the term “storyworld” or refer to the corresponding narratological concept developed in Marie-Laure Ryan’s contribution, but they all rely on the notion of *represented worlds* as sites of creative activity in which cultures elaborate their collective social imaginary. Storyworlds hold a greater fascination for the imagination than the plots that take place in them, because plots are self-enclosed, linear arrangements of events that come to an end while storyworlds can always sprout branches to their core plots that further immerse people, thereby providing new pleasures. As a filmmaker told Henry Jenkins: “When I first started, you would pitch a story because without a good story, you didn’t really have film. Later, once sequels started to take off, you pitched a character because a good character could support multiple stories. And now, you pitch a world because a world can support multiple characters and multiple stories across multiple media” (116).

Exploring how media old and new give birth to different types of storyworlds and different ways of experiencing them is the purpose of this volume, as well as the general concern of a media-conscious narratology that gives sustained attention to both the similarities of and the differences in the ways in which conventionally distinct media narrate. Our goal, however, is not to suggest a rigid program for a supposedly new brand of narratology but to invite readers to join a theoretical conversation focused on the question of how narratology can achieve media-consciousness.

It is now time to tune our instruments and to let the storyworlds concert begin.

Note

1. It is, of course, evident that what we propose to call “media-conscious narratology” in this volume, in order to emphasize the medium-specific features of storyworlds across media, shares at least some characteristics with what has previously been described as “transmedial narratology.” See, for example, Herman; Ryan, *Avatars*; Thon; Wolf.

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