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Where Story Resides: New Applications of Enduring Concepts

Abstract

This paper argues that by re-thinking our conception of *story* and *narrative*, particularly in light of emerging transmedia practices, we can better understand what it is that happens when we create or engage with a work. The emergence of such practices has created new opportunities for original research, allowing us to revisit and challenge previously held notions of story and narrative as fixed and determined concepts. Far from being 'the lowest and simplest of literary organisms,'[1] I argue that story is not found within the narrative structure of a work, but is instead its vital aesthetic function: the result of a user engaging with a narrative. With examples from *The Wire* and *The Matrix*, I will demonstrate how 'drillability' and 'spreadability' (concepts from the broader praxis of transmedia) can enhance the story experience, and how a cross-disciplinary approach is best suited to enhancing scholarly knowledge in this field.

Keywords: story, narrative, transmedia, aesthetic, arcology, narrative theory

Introduction

What is *story*, and what is *narrative*?

At first glance, it seems these are concepts that have been well and truly exhausted by scholars, and that the answers to such questions must therefore be readily apparent. How, then, does one approach such enduring fixtures of the literary landscape in order to make an original contribution to scholarly knowledge? In this paper, I take advantage of the emerging practice of transmedia storytelling to re-examine these concepts, and, in the process, challenge the notion that our understanding of story and narrative is fixed and determined.

Transmedia is a term coined by media theorist Henry Jenkins who defined it as a story that 'unfolds across multiple media platforms, with each new text making a distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole.'[2] It is, however, a term that comes out of a New Media discourse, which has a tendency to focus on the interplay between corporate and individual

goals in relation to the dissemination of media,[3] while story and narrative are typically linked to a tradition of literary criticism and narrative theory more concerned with the work itself and its relationship to both author and user.[4]   There are, of course, instances where the two cross over – the tension between art and commerce is longstanding – so that arriving at a place where these concepts can be discussed in relation to one another requires a similar cross-disciplinary approach, one in which key terms can be re-conceptualised to accommodate for their usage across a broader spectrum of media. However, it is not possible to simply integrate the theories from one discipline into another – to force narrative theories built on the novel to work for other types of media, for example. In a cross-disciplinary approach, one must also take care to avoid diluting terms in the interests of neutrality, as transmedia researcher and practitioner Christy Dena argues. She calls for an ontological heterogeneity in which the disparate theories of a range of disciplines act as 'portals that provide insight into the object of study.'[5]   The first part of this paper is therefore concerned with developing a model that moves us from traditional narrative theory (typically based on the novel and the reader) to a theory that is able to move across a spectrum of media, while the second half attempts to apply this model to *The Matrix* franchise and *The Wire* television series.

It should also be noted that throughout this paper, I employ the term 'user,' which I propose as a catch-all implying the intended end consumer of a work (the so-called typical user), rather than confuse by switching between media-specific terminology (the 'reader' of a book, the 'viewer' of a film, the 'player' of a game, and so on). I do so with the understanding that it is not a neutral term, having specific use as it does in discourses on interactivity, for instance. However, it is also a term that suggests a greater degree of agency for the individual engaging with a work, placing the emphasis on their active role in constructing the story and as such seems best suited to operating across disciplines.

Story is. . . ?

Leonard Nimoy said in a recent interview: 'I think there are three terribly important elements that must be given position – priority position – in science fiction as well as in any other kind of drama: the first is story, the second is story, and the third is story. Story, story, story, story, story. If the story is compelling and interesting, I think all the rest will find its place.'[6] Though this moves us no closer to an understanding of what story is, it does tell us that whatever function it does serve, it is a vital one to fictive works. We know story exists,

because we know – almost instinctively, it seems – when we are being told one. What, then, does traditional narrative theory have to say?

Story is 'the content of the narrative';[7] it '. . . consists of all the events which are to be depicted';[8] it is 'a narrative of events arranged in their time-sequence';[9] it can 'be regarded as the result of an ordering.'[10] This brief survey offers up the kind of definitions of story that have more or less become entrenched in literary criticism. What is striking about them, however, is that when laid side by side, a possible inconsistency emerges. They describe story as the events/content of narrative, story as narrative itself, and story as a result of narrative. There is little distinction of story as a concept isolated (at least theoretically) from narrative itself. While attempting to narrow down the concept, it has instead come to describe everything and nothing about fictive works, an almost meaningless concept, devalued to the point where it has come to be considered 'the lowest and simplest of literary organisms.'[11]

Highlighting this devaluation offers a usual point of entry into re-conceptualising story, especially when contrasted against the argument that it 'must be given priority position.' Within narrative theory, the problem of story seems to have been one of reduction. By this I mean the notion that narrative, because it is a structure, may be reduced to a formal system, such as we find in narratology, and because story is seen as part of this structure, it too must be amenable to a similar reduction. While the former must hold true for any work to be engaged with (that is, it requires a structure), what we find is that the latter constantly defies this process. While useful for breaking down the *structure* of a work, a reductionist approach seems at odds with a typical user's response to a work, not to mention failing to account for either the complexity of theme and character, the world building that frames all fiction (regardless of genre), or the depth and degree of aesthetic effect a single work can have on users. This is because, as I will argue, the narrative, the structure of a work, does not 'contain' a story; rather, story exists *in potentia*.[12]

The notion of story as result, as noted above from narratologist Mieke Bal, is thought-provoking, however, as it sheds light on an aspect of story that narratology alludes to, but rarely follows through with in any exhaustive way: namely, the subjective, extrapolated story (that is, the story as experienced by the reader). Bal writes that the 'phenomenon' (itself a telling choice of words) of story 'demonstrates that something happens with the fabula[13]

which is not exclusively language-based.'[14]   Likewise, narrative theorist Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan defines story as that which 'designates the narrated events abstracted from their disposition in the text and reconstructed in their chronological order, together with the participants [ie. characters] in these events.'[15]   Though these tend to follow the more traditional definitions outlined above, there is an implication that, firstly, story refers *to*, or 'designates,' rather than *is*, the content contained in a narrative, and furthermore, that this process of abstraction requires a reader to activate it.

This phenomenon of story as abstraction can be illustrated via a commonly asked question, 'what was the story about?' The potential responses to such a question are many and varied. Do we respond with a synopsis of the plot and overview of the characters, or an analysis of the themes, or a commentary on what the author did with language or the director with colour? Do we include any 'spoilers' in our response, twists, or revelations that could ruin another's enjoyment of the piece in question?

In considering these questions, it is evident that elements of the work have been abstracted, because we are able to described parts of it after the fact, and something has happened that is not language-based – that is clear from the way we convey our feelings and reactions to the text. But is even this level of abstraction – the scattered descriptions of plot, character, theme and so on – a story?

Story is...

Author and literary critic Samuel R. Delany takes this idea of the subjective story even further with an argument that, though based on structuralist theory, eschews a reductionist approach: 'A story is not a replacement of one set of words by another – a plot synopsis, detailed recounting or analysis. The story is what happens in the reader's mind as his eyes move from the first word to the second, the second to the third, and so on to the end of the tale.'[16]   In other words, a story is not simply a summary of events or content a reader abstracts from a narrative and shuffles about into their perceived chronological order. A synopsis is just that – an outline, a sketch – at best a summary of major events which therefore lacks the subtlety and complexity that a novel of several hundred thousand words affords. Because a story can never truly be reduced, it must instead be a complete aesthetic rendering of an entire work; something which is found not within the structured representation of material that can be identified as the narrative of a work, but rather existing

in potential as the vital aesthetic function of this narrative. As Bal notes: 'the assertion that a narrative text is one in which a story is told implies that the text [the structure] is not identical to the story.'[17] Story, we can therefore conclude, is a cognitive process activated by an engaged user, one that transforms a narrative into an aesthetic experience.

Delany's argument – that what we are doing as we read is building up an increasingly complex mental picture of the narrative in our minds – puts the prevailing understanding of story into a state of flux. Where narratology tended to reduce a work to its formal elements, and included story in that process, Delany's perspective allows for the subjective nature of story, for this aesthetic function to take place. The term *aesthetic*, then, is used not in reference to a system of assigning or judging value or merit to a work, but as a container for the subjective and affective qualities built up over the course of engaging with a work, as well as the techniques and processes authors and creators might utilise to elicit such responses: this 'building up' results in story.

Delany's argument also allows for a more fluid approach to the creative process, suggesting an author-work-reader paradigm in which none of these positions are prioritised over another. All are of equal worth, as story is only experienced when a work is engaged with. Therefore, in making the case that story is the aesthetic function of narrative, I am arguing that it is a process of application and response between creator and user.

There are certainly precedents for this line of thinking. The philosopher Roman Ingarden writes about 'places of indeterminacy' in a work that must be 'concretised' by the reader,[18] such as gaps or missing pieces of information that the reader is able to fill in within the context of the structure the work provides.[19] A simple example would be a stage direction in *Hamlet* that states only 'Hamlet enters.' It gives no clues as to how Hamlet should enter, what he is wearing, and so on. But as we read those two words, we immediately have a mental picture of who this person is. It may begin only with his appearance, but we quickly start making other connections and associations and have an impression of who this character is before he has even entered.

By concretising both the information that is given ('Hamlet enters') and the places of indeterminacy surrounding it (appearance, bearing, etc.), a reader builds up an aesthetic construct of the work in what Delany calls the 'mind's sensory theatre.'[20] This construct

never remains fixed, however. It is constantly being updated with every additional piece of information the reader concretises.[21] In relation to this, Lisa Zunshine has convincingly applied Theory of Mind research to the reading of fiction, based on the suggestion that 'the cognitive rewards of reading fiction' are aligned with our 'capacity to stimulate and develop the imagination.'[22]

Applications to other media

Having worked through the various positions narrative theory presents, we have arrived at a working theory, where *narrative* is the structured representation of material that constitutes a work, and *story* is its vital aesthetic function, existing *in potentia* until the work is engaged with. This re-conceptualisation operates well enough for novels and the like, but could it also be applied to other media? Delany argues that a process of 'correcting' and 'revising' our mental picture is fundamental to storytelling and what ultimately makes the novel more powerful.[23] Though he argued that film, for instance, lacked this correction/revision dynamic because audiences encounter it largely in a 'fixed' state, Zunshine, quoting philosopher Peter Carruthers, argues that 'the awareness of one's mental state makes possible the enjoyment derived from the manipulation of this state,'[24] to which I would add that any encounter with any story, regardless of media, is a manipulation of that state.

Ingarden also suggests there is scope beyond that of the written work when he writes: 'When we know the language in question well and use it daily, we apprehend the verbal sounds not as pure sound patterns but as something which, in addition to its sound, conveys or can convey a certain emotional quality. . . . One does not apprehend the verbal sound first and then the verbal meaning. Both things occur at once.'[25] That is, the process of correction and revision, the constant reconstruction, occur simultaneously. Ingarden, too, was talking about written works, but the thought still holds: the addition of sound in a film, for example, adds a layer to the mind's theatre that a novel may not be able to render as precisely. This I say with an awareness of novels, such as Toni Morrison's *Beloved,* which attempt to 'remix' the written word by including a strong sense of sound and musicality. Even in such cases, however, the novel often struggles to communicate techniques such as overlapping voices. While the metaphor and wordplay the attempt generates may be highly artistic and even very beautiful – and we would be foolish to dismiss such attempts – a strong case can also be made for the artistry of the effect's precision in film or theatre, such as the crack in an actor's voice, or the subtle use of music and sound design.

Or take digital and interactive media, whose signs are constantly in flux and would seem ripe for a process of continual correction and revision. While potential exists for an application of story as aesthetic function in these media, narrative theorist Marie-Laure Ryan notes that neither digital media nor interactivity are in themselves sufficient to generate a story. They require what she calls 'a certain type of textual architecture and a certain kind of user involvement.'[26] That is, a particular narrative structure is needed in order to present content to users in such a way that they understand how to enter and how to engage and interact with a work – a structure that helps define their role.

This concept is nothing new, as every work in every medium requires a structure. In regards to digital media, however, the activation of a process of aesthetic reconstruction in the mind of the user, which would normally occur as soon as we start reading a novel, is offset by the need for user input. This highlights the distinction between what constitutes narrative and what constitutes story, because, as Ryan says, 'the question of how the intrinsic properties of the medium shape the form of narrative and affect the narrative experience can no longer be ignored,'[27] especially when the user has a degree of control over the shaping of the narrative, such as is afforded by digital and interactive media. Even so, the requirement for a certain kind of architecture remains: one in which the control and manipulation of the narrative, and hence the process of correction and revision, does not rest solely with the creator, but places a degree of control into the hands of the user, who is now in a position to augment that process rather than merely receive it.

One such architecture that allows users to do this is transmedia. As defined earlier, a transmedia story is one that is structured across multiple media, where each text makes a distinctive contribution to the whole. As our re-conceptualisation of story demonstrated, story is 'independent' of narrative structure, insofar as a structure cannot, in itself, contain a dynamic aesthetic construction, but rather provides the components that give rise to such a construction. Such a construction then belongs to the user. In a transmedia setting, they are therefore able to carry this construction across media, expanding on it with each new platform encountered. To focus on transmedia *storytelling*, therefore, is to focus on how the aesthetic experience – the process of correction/revision – is played out across multiple media, while a focus on trans*media* is to focus on the specificity of the structure itself.

The practice of transmedia, to paraphrase transmedia researcher Marc Ruppel, shatters the notion of narrative as a fixed, determined, and single-media concept[28] because the use of multiple media means that the story is now multiply-mediated; each media has its own unique characteristics – a comic book is not a video game, a video game is not a novel, and so on. Yet, according to Jenkins,[29] the unique characteristics of each can be brought together and utilised in order to create a structure out of which a more immersive, more encompassing, story can emerge.

Narrative arcologies

As Ryan reminds us, however, a traditional conception of narrative structure is insufficient not only to describe a transmedia narrative, but also to execute one. They require a certain kind of architecture within which multiple media can be housed and made to interconnect. Such a structure, if we continue the architectural metaphor, might be termed a *narrative arcology*, where 'arcology' is a set of principles for designing enormous habitats or superstructures. Such a narrative superstructure is required if a story is to effectively unfold across multiple media, within which the subordinate structures of the media to be utilised can not only be incorporated, but also made to interlock. The narrative arcology then functions primarily as a heterogeneous interpretive framework. I suggest such a framework serves two main functions:

1. FRAMES: It frames the world in which the story takes place and outlines the rules which govern it. This comes before any consideration of genre, as any work of fiction must define the limits of its narrative world. It is within these limits that content (characters, events, etc.) can be realised, because content, according to Delany, is something which is contained and carries no significant meaning until it is put into formal relation with other pieces of content.[30]

2. INTERPRETS: The formal relations between content provide meaning and the ability to interpret and 'make sense' of a work, where a transmedia work is defined as the entire corpus of media that need to be engaged with to complete the narrative structure, and thus the aesthetic reconstruction that is the story. 'Formal relations' is simply the selection and placement of content, which the creator does with the intention of eliciting certain responses and giving rise to a desired aesthetic. As Ryan notes, 'the text must allow for the reconstruction of an interpretive network of goals, plans, causal relations and psychological

motivations around the narrated events.'[31]   Meaning is derived as we concretise these formal relations and the places of indeterminacy surrounding them.[32]

In transmedia terms, the selection and placement of content – the structuring of a narrative – occurs on two levels:

FIGURE 1 Image adapted from *Transmedia Storytelling* (Pratten and Ossikine, n.d.)

[Figure 1] The first is at the level of the individual work, where the techniques peculiar to a medium give that medium its distinctiveness, its 'shape,' so that the content make senses within the context of that medium. Comic books, for example, utilise both images and words to tell a story. But the images in comics do not function in the same way as the images in photography, though both are fixed.   The photo is a depiction, the comic image an interpretation. With this knowledge, intrinsic as it often is, we are able to begin interpreting the work.

Whole is more satisfying than
the sum of the parts: euphoria
of collecting the pieces

FIGURE 2 (ibid)

[Figure 2] The second is at the level of the arcology itself, where all the distinct media used in a project must be brought together in a cohesive manner. So rather than being an isolated work, our comic must now maintain and develop overt narrative ties to several other media.[33] As Jenkins notes, the transmedia narrative is one that 'can sustain multiple interrelated characters and their stories.'[34]

Spreadable and drillable arcologies

Many methods of structuring a transmedia narrative are currently being experimented with, and Jenkins has posited two concepts he calls 'spreadable' and 'drillable,' which I suggest are the basis for two possible arcologies. A spreadable arcology is one in which the narrative is dispersed across two or more media. *The Matrix* franchise is an example of this. A drillable arcology describes a more layered structure, one in which users would need to drill down through the layers to discover more. *The Wire* is an example of this (Figure 3 offers a visualisation of these concepts). While a spreadable arcology by definition must include the use of two or more distinct media, it is not necessarily a requirement of the drillable. Similarly, a spreadable arcology need not lack depth.
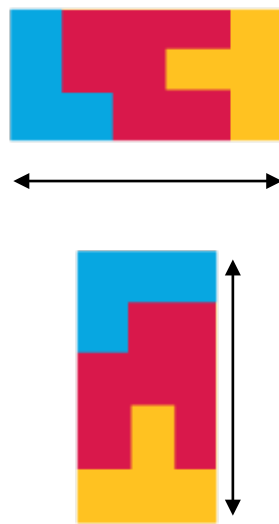

FIGURE 3: Spreadable (top) vs. drillable (bottom) arcologies (ibid)

The Wire *as drillable arcology*

The Wire was a HBO network crime drama created and produced by David Simon that aired from 2002-2008. Unlike other episodic crime dramas such as *Law & Order*, *The Wire* built up an increasingly complex structure of characters, locations and interrelated story threads across its five seasons, with each season focusing on a different aspect of the city of Baltimore. Figure 4 very simply illustrates how, once a narrative arc is introduced, it is subsequently maintained, adding layers to the arcology until the show ended its run.

SEASON					
	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5
N1	DRUG WAR	DRUG WAR	DRUG WAR	DRUG WAR	DRUG WAR
N2		PORTS	PORTS	PORTS	PORTS
N3			POLITICAL ADMINISTRATION	POLITICAL ADMINISTRATION	POLITICAL ADMINISTRATION
N4				EDUCATION SYSTEM	EDUCATION SYSTEM
N5					MEDIA/ JOURNALISM

(Left vertical label: NARRATIVE ARC)

FIGURE 4: *The Wire* as drillable arcology

The particular strength of *The Wire* is the fact that it makes no apologies for the enormous complexity that results from its drillable arcology. This complexity is managed by writers who define their working relationship as a 'collaborative ethic,' which allows for multiple voices to contribute to the series 'without losing coherence.'[35] Each season introduces a new focus, new characters, and new narrative threads while also continuing existing ones, meaning that audiences are required to work hard at correcting and refining their aesthetic reconstruction – their story – as each season progresses.

Each episode is a structure within a season, and each season is a structure within the narrative arcology: in this case, ten to thirteen episodes of roughly fifty five minutes each per season, and a total of five seasons completes the superstructure. While the episodic structure allows viewers to chart the narrative progression within an individual season (so that they can, for instance, follow the port murder case of season two), the arcology itself must provide a suitable interpretive framework that viewers can utilise to chart the progression between whole seasons and their overarching narratives. Film and television theorist Amanda Ann Klein has suggested that *The Wire* utilises the codes and conventions of melodrama to achieve this.[36]

Story in *The Wire* begins, then, with the creators at the planning stage – the decision to use long narrative arcs, to focus on different aspects of the city while continuing already-established ones, to portray characters, situations and relationships as accurately as possible. These decisions are then filtered down through the arcology to the episodic level, where individual writers and directors are concerned with specific details about character

relationships, events, dialogue, and the like. These decisions are made with specific goals in mind: the creators hope to elicit certain responses from audiences, and to engage them in certain ways. Far from being a guessing game, attributing such states of mind (in this instance, trying to imagine how an audience might respond), is 'the default way by which we construct and navigate our social environment.'[37]

The Matrix *as spreadable arcology*

This leads into the interesting case of *The Matrix* as a spreadable transmedia arcology. On those terms, *The Matrix* consists of three feature films, nine animated shorts known collectively as *The Animatrix*, two comic anthologies, a video game (*Enter the Matrix*) and a massively multiplayer online game (*The Matrix Online)*. The content covered by these works is extensive, demonstrating that what was seen in the feature films is only part of a larger narrative structure – of an arcology. It is in its conception as a transmedia experience that causes Jenkins to claim that 'no film franchise has ever made such demands on its consumers.'[38]

An oft-cited example of how *The Matrix* makes use of transmedia is how, in the animated short *Final Flight of the Osiris*, secondary characters are used to expand a seemingly minor plot point. Yet finding opportunities to expand minor details is not the only concern of transmedia storytelling. *The Matrix Online*, which ran from 2005 to 2009, was the official continuation of the storyline after the events of *The Matrix Revolutions*. Within this continuation, however, a major character, Morpheus, is killed. Not only does this reinforce Ruppel's claim that transmedia shatters the notion of narrative as a single-media concept, it also challenges the perceived authority of the feature films as a kind of 'master narrative,' even if economic factors compel them to be positioned as such.[39] An event such as this, the death of a major character, would not normally be relegated to what is perceived as a secondary medium such as a game. It also demonstrates how transmedia components do not simply 'spin-off' from a master narrative, but that all components are equal for the purposes of storytelling. Even so, the components of *The Matrix* arcology have been designed so that it is not necessary to engage with each of them in order to follow the story presented in the three feature films, but so that each component is 'making a distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole.'[40]

The purpose of *Enter the Matrix*, *The Matrix Online* and the other transmedia components of the franchise is to enhance and expand on the story of the feature films, with the aim of generating a much more immersive and participatory experience. However, there is some concern when it comes to incorporating video games as to whether or not such media can sustain a narrative, or be incorporated into one. Diane Carr notes that in gameplay, events – narratological units that refer to the imaginary world of the text – are manipulated by players,[41] whereas in other texts such as the novel or film, they are predetermined. This is an instance where traditional narrative theory cannot account for something which clearly makes use of apparatus which fall under its purview; games still incorporate character, plot, theme (among other characteristics) and seek to evoke tone and atmosphere and create an experience for those engaging with it.

Carr's claim that the gameplay of *Enter the Matrix* is compromised because it serves a broader (master) narrative, besides failing to recognise that all components are equal for the purpose of storytelling in a transmedia narrative, also serves to highlight the inadequacies of traditional narrative theory in dealing with contemporary media such as video games. The fact that narrative apparatus are calibrated differently in a video game does not preclude them from being incorporated into an arcology; rather, a theory which posits story as the aesthetic function of a narrative, however that narrative might be structured, becomes a useful tool in explaining why it is that games such as *Enter the Matrix* or *The Matrix Online* can be incorporated into a *Matrix* arcology. As Jenkins notes, transmedia provides multiple points of entry for audiences into the story, with the result being 'a narrative so large that it cannot be contained within a single medium.'[42] The analogy of the arcology demonstrates how these oversized narratives can be navigated and interpreted, as it points to an aesthetic larger than any single media can encapsulate.

Different structures – such as a comic (sequential still images) or video game (interactive) – cause meaning to be made in different ways, even within the one arcology. This is what allows the transmedia story to be an exponentially more complex one, because it is not beholden to any one narrative structure, but allows for multiple perspectives. So not only does a user have an opportunity to revise and correct his or her aesthetic reconstruction at the level of the individual component, as would normally take place if the user was reading only a comic, but also at the level of the arcology, where that comic now has overt narrative ties to

several other media. The interpretive framework of the arcology is then responsible for mediating this process, which highlights two important factors in transmedia storytelling:

1. Ideally, a project must be conceived of as 'transmedia.'
2. As an interpretive framework, the arcology is responsible for mediating the story both within and between media. In order to have the strongest and most complete aesthetic reconstruction, then, all media must be engaged with. Or rather, if the links between media are broken, or the gaps between them are too large for a user to accurately concretise, then the reconstruction is fractured and the story is incomplete.

Conclusion

While applicable even to traditional works, the re-conceptualisation of story offered in this paper also attempts to account for those components of the arcology that would not otherwise come under the purview of a traditional notion of narrative, such as social media, ARGs (Alternate Reality Games), mobile phone applications and other digital media that are often incorporated in transmedia projects. Though these have not been dealt with directly in this paper, a theory of story as the aesthetic function of narrative accommodates them by including them in the arcology (where they are equal for the purposes of storytelling), allowing them to be concretised along with the other components, and hence contributing to the story (that is, adding to the user's aesthetic reconstruction). In this way, these emerging media, which we are only beginning to understand the possible applications of, have the potential to become part of the story the user is reconstructing, if the user chooses to engage with them.

Literary theorist Nancy Easterlin argues that 'without the inborn tendency to organise information in specific ways, we would not be able to experience choice in our responses.'[43] Story is such a process of choice and response, application and engagement, and one that both a creator and user undertake to ultimately realise the potential of a work. It has the power to change the way we view the world because it is our aesthetic response to, and reconstruction of, another's perspective. We let it in, so to speak. The aim of transmedia storytelling is to engage users in a much more immersive experience than traditional narrative structures have allowed, facilitating this process of choice and response via the distinctiveness of a variety of media within the context of an narrative arcology (an encompassing structure).

Transmedia researcher and practitioner Christy Dena argues that multiple bodies of theory should be brought to bear in the study of such narrative arcologies, but that in finding a common ground between them, the complexity and dynamics of the arcology should not be diminished by reducing terminology to vague transdisciplinary jargon. In Dena's view, the aim of the researcher should be to acknowledge this complexity by studying the relationships between the arcology's various aspects. It is the ability to traverse the arcology – to engage with the whole – which is the unifying concern, she claims, and which requires the input of multiple voices and bodies of theories, of which my own is but one.[44] The re-conceptualisation of story as the aesthetic function of the narrative, or structure of a work, that this paper posits is made possible by utilising emerging transmedia practices (though I believe it need not be a theory that applies only to such practices) and is therefore offered as an original contribution to scholarly knowledge in this cross-disciplinary field.

Notes

[1] E.M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel (*Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1971), 35.

[2] Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York: New York University Press, 2008), 97.

[3] Thomas Apperley, "Citizenship and Consumption: Convergence Culture, Transmedia Narratives and the Digital Divide." (Paper presented at the *Australasian Conference on Interactive Entertainment, RMIT University, 3rd-5th December*, 2007).

[4] Gregory T. Polletta, 'The Place and Performance of Criticism.' In *Issues in Contemporary Literary Criticism*, ed. by Gregory Polletta (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1973), 1-27.

[5] Christy Dena, "Capturing Polymorphic Creations: Towards Ontological Heterogeneity and Transmodiology." (Paper presented at the *Australasian Conference on Interactive Entertainment,* RMIT University, 3rd-5th December, 2007).

[6] Lauren Davis, "Leonard Nimoy is Concerned About the State of Science Fiction on TV." *Io9* (2009) accessed Feburary 25, 2011, <http://io9.com/5376615/leonard-nimoy-is-concerned-about-the-state-of-science-fiction-on-tv>.

[7] Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (London: Cornell University Press, 1978), 23.

[8] Paul Cobley, *Narrative* (London: Routledge, 2003), 5.

[9] Forster, *Aspects of the Novel*, 35.

[10] Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative, 3rd edition* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 75.

[11] Forster, *Aspects of the Novel*, 35.

[12] It must be reiterated that this is a theoretical distinction – in practice, narrative and story must work in unison, and are indeed encountered simultaneously by audiences.

[13] Bal defines fabula simply as 'material or content worked into a story' (*Narratology*. 7).

[14] Ibid. 5, 6.

[15] Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction* (London: Methuen & Co., 1985), 3.

[16] Samuel R. Delany, "About 5,750 Words," in *The Jewel-hinged Jaw: Notes on the Language of Science Fiction, revised edition* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2009), 4.

[17] Bal, *Narratology*, 6.

[18] Roman Ingarden, *The Cognition of the Literary Work of Art*. Trans. Ruth Ann Crowley and Lenneth R. Olsen (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 50.

[19] Because there are always places of indeterminacy in a work, there is always a corresponding need to fill them in. Ingarden calls this a 'complementing determination' (*Cognition*. 51) on the part of the reader, which forms the basis for concretization.

[20] Samuel R. Delany, "Thickening the Plot," in *The Jewel-hinged Jaw: Notes on the Language of Science Fiction*, *revised edition* (Middletown, CT: Wesletan University Press, 2009), 35-41.

[21] Ingarden also raises the issue that a reader's concretisations are not necessarily always accurate or true reflections of a work – readers will 'suit themselves,' to a degree. This partly explains why no two readings of a work are ever the same.

[22] Lisa Zunshine, *Why We Read Fiction: Theory of Mind and the Novel* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2006), 17.

[23] Delany. "About 5,750 Words." 4.

[24] Zunshine, *Why We Read Fiction*. 17.

[25] Ingarden, *Cognition,* 21-22.

[26] Marie-Laure Ryan, *Avatars of Story* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 99.

[27] Marie-Laure Ryan, "Introduction" in *Narrative Across Media*, ed. Marie-Laure Ryan (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 1.

[28] Christy Dena, "Transmedia Practice: Theorising the Practice of Expressing a Fictional World across Distinct Media and Environments." (PhD diss., University of Sydney, 2009).

[29] Henry Jenkins, "Transmedia Storytelling 10," *Confessions of an ACA Fan blog*, 2007. Accessed 27 September 2011 http://www.henryjenkins.org/2007/03/transmedia_storytelling_101.html.

[30] Delany, "About 5,750 Words," 3.

[31] Ryan, "Introduction," 9.

[32] This, of course, raises the question of authorial intention, which the scope of this paper does not allow for greater consideration of. Suffice to say that transmedia narratives complicate this issue as most projects tend to be the work of a, sometimes disparate, committee. I am also reminded of Lisa Zunshine's observation that 'when we compose an essay, a lecture, a movie, a song, a novel, or an instruction for an electrical appliance and try to imagine how this or that segment of our target audience will respond to it' (Zunshine, 2006, 6), we are attributing states of mind to that audience.

[33] There is debate as to how overt and cohesive these ties must be. Dena, for example, makes a clear distinction between 'transfictionality,' which she says is characterised by allowances for discontinuity and a certain lack of cohesion, such as results in many 'spin-off' and 'tie-in' franchises, and transmedia, which, ideally, is conceived of as a coherent piece from the outset.

[34] Jenkins. "Transmedia Storytelling 101."

[35] Jukes, Peter. *Why Britain Can't Do* The Wire. 2009. Accessed February 25, 2011 http://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/2009/10/why-britain-cant-do-the-wire/.

[36] See Klein's chapter in *The Wire: Urban Decay and American Television*, eds. Tiffany Potter and C. W. Marshall. Also worth noting in regards to *The Wire* is film theorist Steve Neale's argument that the effect of melodrama is increased the longer a resolution can be delayed (Neale, 1986).

[37] Zunshine, *Why We Read Fiction,* 6.

[38] Jenkins, *Convergence Culture,* 96.

[39] By this I mean that because the feature films are the most expensive of all the media utilised in *The Matrix* franchise, the producers, studio and other financial stakeholders wish to maximise their investments by positioning the three films as 'master' narratives, with the various other ('lesser') media branching off from them.

[40] It is also understood that many audience members will not utilise many, if any, other media outside of the feature films. This is partly to do with the fact that transmedia as a participatory practice is only now becoming an expected aspect of a franchise, and certainly was not properly understood at the time *The Matrix Reloaded* and *Revolutions* were released. In this regard, Jenkins calls *The Matrix* 'a flawed experiment, an interesting failure.' See Jenkins, *Convergence Culture*, 97-98.

[41] Diane Carr, "The Rules of the Game, the Burden of Narrative: *Enter the Matrix*," In *The Matrix Trilogy: Cyberpunk Reloaded*, ed. Stacey Gillis (London: Wallflower Press, 2005), 36-47.

[42] Jenkins, *Convergence Culture,* 97.

[43] Nancy Easterlin, 'Making Knowledge: Bioepistemology and the Foundations of Literary Thoery.' In *Theory's Empire: An Anthology of Dissent*, ed. Daphne Patai and Wilfrido Corral (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 626.

[44] Dena, "Capturing Polymorphic Creations," 6.

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