
Following Marie-Laure Ryan’s 2004 *Narrative across Media: The Languages of Storytelling*, the collection *Storyworlds across Media: Toward a Media-Conscious Narratology* (2014; co-edited with Jan-Noel Thon) in its fifteen essays considers “storyworlds as representations that transcend media” (2). In this volume, Ryan and Thon distance themselves from critical approaches that emphasize the convergence and confusion of narratives and narrative structures, such as W. J. T. Mitchell’s claim that “all media are mixed media” (258), focusing instead on the divergences that emerge from specific narrative typologies. The essays that comprise this volume promote a transition from classical to a media-conscious narratology that would address a range of disciplines and media applications, such as television, comics, and computer games. This makes *Storyworlds across Media* an important volume that contributes to the formulation of a more substantially enhanced narratological consciousness, one that is significantly informed by the malleable landscape of contemporary media.

The first section of the collection, with the title “Mediality and Transmediality,” aims both to sketch the theoretical framework out of which media-conscious narratology can emerge, and to provide an enriched understanding of subjective representation and transmedial fictionality in the contemporary media landscape. This section begins with an articulation of the danger that exists with terms such as “multimedia media.” Ryan’s “Story/World/Media: Tuning the Instruments of a Media-Conscious Narratology” proposes such analytical tools that both acknowledge media consciousness and reflect the inherent complexities of current cultural discourses. “Storyworlds,” she proposes, is a term that can enable narratology to be positioned at the center of media convergence, while also reinforcing awareness of the interrelation between worldmaking and current developments in transmediality and multimodality. Through a detailed exploration of emplotment in Shakespearean plays, Patrick Holm Hogan’s essay “Emplotting a Storyworld in Drama: Selection, Time, and Construal in the Discourse of *Hamlet*,” describes drama as “not only a storyworld—thus what is represented—but also a discourse, or a means of representing the storyworld and thus how that storyworld is represented” (50). Following Hogan’s analysis, Thon, in “Subjectivity across Media: On Transmedial Strategies of Subjective Representation in Contemporary Feature Films, Graphic Novels, and Computer Games,” explores the transmedial strategies employed in various narrative representations, suggesting that they reflect the “dual perspective” of a media-conscious transmedial narratology; that of being “transmedial in analytical scope but [one that] remains media conscious in methodological orientation” (92). Section two in the volume features five essays under the title “Multimodality and Intermediality.” Actually, it seeks to avoid yet another restrictive term that would account for the complexities of developments across media, but it does regard multimodality as an approach that can efficiently reflect literary and cinematic productions of the last two decades. In particular, Wolfgang Hallet’s essay “The Rise of the Multimodal Novel: Generic Change and Its Narratological Implications” suggests that the “multiplication of semiotic modes significantly changes the notion of ‘narrative discourse’ in
the traditionally word-based genre of the novel,” and allows reading to be transformed into a “multiliterate act” (151). In essence, multimodality is viewed as “a literary practice of producing and reading novels and as a social semiotic theory” radically “challenge[s] the historical predominant role of language in literature” (156). Jesper Juul, in “On Absent Carrot Sticks: The Level of Abstraction in Video Games,” examines “the broader concept of ‘fictional worlds’” (173) as this applies to the different immersive or locative needs that readers of literature and game players seek to satisfy. Jeff Thoss’s essay “Tell It Like a Game: Scott Pilgrim and Performative Media Rivalry” suggests that the tension between comic books and their film adaptations can be viewed as an attempt “to probe media for their potential and to explore and proliferate new medial and narrative possibilities” (227). In “Film + Comics: A Multimodal Romance in the Age of Transmedial Convergence,” Jared Gardner considers the inherently multimodal nature of comics and film. Refusing to deify media convergence, Gardner argues that theorists should both recognize the emergence of the multimodal novel and the “unique century-long experimentation with multimodal narrative by comic book creators and readers” (208-9). But it is also necessary, he maintains, to treat media convergence as a range of possibilities, rather than as existing representational condition. The second part of the volume ends with Marco Caracciolo’s essay “Those Insane Dream Sequences: Experientiality and Distorted Experience in Literature and Video Games.” Focusing on William Burrough’s novel Naked Lunch and the videogame Max Payne 2, Caracciolo writes that “experientiality manifests itself in the tension between the experiences we attribute to fictional characters and our experiential background.” Thus a story can “have an emotional or cognitive impact” (246) depending on its ability to allow readers or players a sense of imaginative interaction.

The final section, “Transmedial Storytelling and Transmedial Worlds,” contains five essays which reflect on current transmedial tendencies. Lisbeth Klastrup and Susana Tosca’s “Game of Thrones: Transmedial Worlds, Fandom, and Social Gaming,” and Maria Lindgren Leavenworth’s “Transmedial Narration and Fan Fiction: The Storyworld of The Vampire Narratives,” both consider forms of storytelling and storyworld creations that emerge through interactions between unauthorized fan participation and official online media campaign strategies. Colin B. Harvey’s “Taxonomy of Transmedia Storytelling,” emphasizes the relationships between “the various agents directly involved in the creation of transmedia stories” (292) as a means of providing insights into the nature and character of transmedia storytelling. Concluding both this section and the volume, Van Leavenworth’s “The Developing Storyworld of H. P. Lovecraft” singles out Lovecraft’s writing “as a culturally important example of unauthorized, denarrativized storyworld development” (347) that has influenced diverse media texts, also demonstrating the value of transmedial analysis to notions of authorial value and narrative complexity.

One of the significant innovations of Ryan and Thon’s Storyworlds is to be found in its re-imagining of narratology. Rather than being regarded merely as a theoretical tool oriented towards literary textuality, narratology is here understood as an approach that needs to consider cultural discourses in their varying realizations across media. As the title subtly suggests, the media-conscious narratology that Ryan and Thon propose constitutes an approach to the transitory nature of the contemporary media landscape; the decoding of the complexities of the latter is ever-sought yet never fully attained. As such, the volume offers
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Works Cited