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INTRODUCTION

Transmedia narratives

Domingo Sánchez-Mesa

Professor of Literary Theory and Comparative Literature
 Department of General Linguistics and Literary Theory
 University of Granada

Jordi Alberich-Pascual

Senior Lecturer in Audiovisual Communication and Advertising
 Department of Information and Communication
 University of Granada

Nieves Rosendo

Fellow PhD
 Department of Information and Communication
 University of Granada

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Ever since Henry Jenkins published his oft-cited article on “Transmedia Storytelling” in *Technology Review* (2003), transmediality has become a crossroads and a meeting place for researchers from different disciplines (Media Studies, Narratology, Visual Arts, Marketing, Comparative Literature, Semiotics, Theatre and Performance Studies, Game Studies, Sociology, etc.) as well as authors and the public that are involved in the emerging forms of multiplatform and distributed story creation, production and participation that such transmediality involves.

Likewise, intermediality, with the phenomenon of adaptations at its core, crossmedia franchises and new theories on *storyworlds*, also form part of the space for reflection, discussion and the intersection of digital arts, communication media and interactive technologies that are put forward in this volume of *Artnodes*. The articles that make up this edition convey the complexity and variety of perspectives and objects of study and the need to revise or rebuild the methods and theoretical and critical tools that are used to construct cultural practice in the digital paradigm.

The first paper in this volume, “Transmedia (Storytelling?): a polyphonic critical review”, is the result of the dialogue between its authors (Domingo Sánchez-Mesa, Espen Aarseth, Robert Pratten and Carlos A. Scolari) on some of the fundamental issues in the debate on *transmedia storytelling*: from the need to deconstruct the two principal myths about TS (“there’s nothing new in TS” and “TS is a new and disruptive paradigm of communication”) to the gradual loss of relevance of the ‘story-’ and of the ‘-telling’, in favour of the building of the transmedia “worlds”, the characters and experience. Other issues include the growing influence of the videogame paradigm and the greater weight given to collaboration and collective participation and the role of audiences in the various phases of transmedia production. Through a critical review of new technologies and interactive immersion devices (from smartphones to virtual reality (VR), alternate reality games (ARGs) and augmented reality (AR)) in transmedia storytelling, including a look at the risks of ignoring the role that adaptation plays and the effects of demediation in the dominant discourse and practices of TS, one can conclude

that transmediality is just one narrative option, but also a growing trend in any communication strategy in the new media *galaxy*.

The article entitled “Character-centred transmedia narratives. Sherlock Holmes in the 21st Century” by Nieves Rosendo, which is based on a case study of the British TV series *Sherlock* (BBC 2010-), finds the key to the series’ transmedia expansion in its strong intertextuality with both the original work and its later adaptations and with its 19th century followers and today’s fans. The article’s main contribution is its consideration of the existence of *character-centred transmedia narratives*, as distinct from those that focus on the *world* and *world building*. Consequently, the author advocates the need to adapt current theory on transmedia narratives to fit the purposes of character analysis, basically associating it with Richard Saint-Gelais’s *transfictionality* theory and Paolo Bertetti’s ideas on the typology of transmedia characters, as well as with the concepts of adaptation and seriality.

Jordi Alberich-Pascual and Francisco J. Gómez-Pérez, in their article “Exploraciones transmedia en la creación cinematográfica colaborativa iberoamericana contemporánea” (‘Transmedia explorations in contemporary Ibero-American collaborative film-making’), review and compare some of the major international works of collaborative film-making, such as the *Blender Open Movies* or *RiP: A remix manifesto* (2008), in which unity and narrative standardisation are predominant, with Ibero-American examples of collaborative film-making from the last decade, in which the projects are developed using several media and communication platforms, a phenomenon they call *transmedia explorations*. From *The Cosmonaut* (2008-2013) to *(des)iguales* (2015-2017), the connection between the practices of what is known as *collaborative film-making* and *transmedia storytelling* demonstrates, in the view of the authors, a revolutionary expansion of the possibilities of contemporary audio-visual creation.

The article on “Transmedia narratology and transmedia storytelling” by Marie-Laure Ryan proposes the study of *transmedia storytelling* from the perspective of narratology, for which she makes a comparative study of the three types of dominant discourse on the phenomenon: the industry discourse, the fan discourse and the scholarly discourse of narratology. For this author, *transmedia storytelling*, as the combination of adaptation and *transfictionality*, can be studied by narratology both from the concepts of *storyworlds* and from adaptation theories, from the mythical structures that lie in the proliferation of transmedia narratives in the fantasy and sci-fi genres, or from active audience involvement. Lastly, she proposes that *transmedia storytelling* can be seen as a medium, in that it is a culturally recognisable form of artistic expression.

When it comes to the broader phenomenon of transmediality, and based on the case of the popular photonovel genre, Jan Baetens in his article “Between adaptation, intermediality and cultural series: the example of the photonovel” looks at transmediality as a process, more than a product: a form of *constriction* determined

by the specifics of each medium. This process can be seen both in the migration of the work of art from one medium to another (centrifugal transmediality) and in the heterogeneity or intermediality that is intrinsic to each medium (centripetal transmediality). In this migration, which requires the work to be distinct and identifiable, it will be subjected to mechanisms of adaptation and serialisation. As a potential that is inherent in any work of art, and strengthened by the creative industries, transmedia integration can and should be studied from a cultural and historical perspective. From this theoretical standpoint, the genre of the photonovel shows both its possibilities and its aforementioned constrictions, proving to be an excellent testing ground for the study of transmediality in all its complexity.

In “Transmedial museum experiences: the case of Moesgaard”, an article by Susana Pajares Tosca, the author defines and considers the ontological status of the museum experience, using a case study of three exhibitions at the Moesgaard Museum in Aarhus, Denmark. The transmedial experience, which may or may not be interactive, comes about through the convergence of the historical artefact and the fictional narrations that accompany it, spread across different media platforms. The experience is created through the emotional performativity experienced by visitors when they enter the contextual world where the historical artefact is both the key element and the origin.

Within the broad framework of the relationships between theatre and cyberculture, the article “Posibilidades de un teatro transmedia” (‘The potential for transmedia theatre’) by María Ángeles Grande Rosales and María José Sánchez Montes, contextualises various theatrical and paratheatrical pieces of recent times, of different but related genres and subgenres, such as cybertheatre, digital theatre, hyperdrama and cyberperformance. In light of this evocative question of the existence of transmedia theatre, the authors analyse a number of transmedia experiences in today’s theatre, ranging from recent shows by La Fura dels Baus and Remiendo Teatro, to interesting examples of transmedia expansion such as *Rosas Danst Rosas* (1983) as it celebrated its 30th anniversary.

The article “Intermedia/Transmedia(lidad) como modelos de un discurso literario y cultural” (‘Intermedia/Transmedia (lity) as models of Literary and Cultural Discourse’) by María Teresa Vilariño Picos takes us on a journey through new languages of art within the convergence of media, paying special attention to those languages relating to multimediality, transmediality and intermediality. Concepts such as hybridisation and mutation, virtuality and presentiality, participation and interactivity are put forward as descriptors of some artistic creations of recent years, such as *Anomia* by Mónica Ezquerro or *Deconstrucine* by Miguel Mariño, as is the influence of the digital and numerical on the so-called new textualities. The article thus invites us to alter our understanding of the newly expanded field of digital arts and humanities.

In “La experiencia transmedial según sus consonancias discursivas” (‘The transmedial experience according to its discursive

harmony”), Diego Luna Delgado takes on a challenge as important as it is complex: to understand the discursive blueprint that governs the cultural and theoretical context in which transmedia narratives are developed. The article points towards a controversial perspective on transmediality, given the potential obsolescence of the classification of *medium*, which, hypothetically, may be indifferent or defunct in this context. The triad of concepts that is put forward, each with their own theoretical discourse, to provide a framework for the discourse of transmediality – transaesthetics, transmodernity and transpersonality – mark out a space for theoretical and philosophical thinking and discussion on the potential role of transmediality in creating the conditions for facilitating aesthetic creation and (self)understanding of personality in a present that has already been defined as transmodern.

In a style approaching essay, in “What world are you from? Learning from the transmedia roots of netprov” Robert Wittig presents the results of his extensive experience in the practice and teaching of dramatic improvisation and collaborative experimentation through performance art. As the creator and practitioner (alongside Mark Marino) of a subgenre of theatrical improvisation on the internet, known as netprov, Wittig puts forward a model for the description of the workings of each of the principal spheres of cultural production

or *worlds* of creation, with original categories and using specific contributions to digital experimental creativity in netprov: literature, theatre, mass media, gaming, the internet and social media. The article therefore provides an original theoretical approach, from an important area of transmedia production that has great potential to be exported to other spheres of *transmedia storytelling*.

With this collection of articles, we would like to open up the discussion on the terminology and concepts of transmediality, transmedia storytelling, intermediality, crossmedia, expanded narrativity and the new transmedia worlds. Collaborative audio-visual creation; designing transmedia museum experiences; the new models of televised storytelling in fiction series; the influence of the videogame paradigm in transmedia production; its economic and industrial reality given its hypothetical and controversial differentiation of crossmedia franchises; the reaction of digital arts in this context; the need for a new type of literacy and reconnection between the education system and the reality of audiences (both traditional and prosumers); or the possibilities of transmedia theatre and performance art: these are some of the significant pieces of discourse in this complex transmedia puzzle – the symptom of a profound transformation that is underway in the classic system of media, in this particular emerging crossroads.

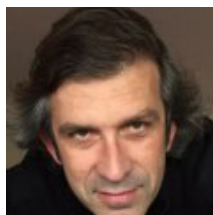
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CV

**Domingo Sánchez-Mesa**

Professor of Literary Theory and Comparative Literature
 Department of General Linguistics and Literary Theory
 University of Granada
 dsanchez@ugr.es

Facultad de Comunicación y Documentación
 Colegio Máximo, Campus La Cartuja s./n,
 18071 Granada (España)

Domingo Sánchez-Mesa Martínez is Full Professor in Literary Theory and Comparative Literature at the University of Granada (UGR). His research and teaching activity takes place both at the Faculty of Communication and Documentation, where he is supervisor of the Master on Interactive Audiovisual Media and Multimedia Journalism and at the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters, where he is part of the steering committee of the Master in Literary and Drama Studies. He is currently the director of the research project *Nar-Trans* (I+D MEC *Narrativas Transmediales: Nuevos Modos de Ficción Audiovisual, Comunicación Informativa y Performance en la Era Digital*, 2014-2017), as well as of the project *Imágenes de la inmigración en la Frontera Sur*, del Cicode (UGR) y Fundación “La Caixa” (2016-17). He is the author of a number of books and articles on the following research areas: a) contemporary Literary Theory (on Mikhail Bakhtin’s thought, *Literatura y cultura de la responsabilidad*, Comares 1999); b) inter-art comparatism, intermediality and transmediality (articles on adaptation theory: literature-cinema-videogames, and transmedial narratives), c) cyberculture and e-literature (*Literatura y cibercultura*, Arco Libros 2004); d) 20th and 21st century Spanish Narrative and Poetry (*Cambio de Siglo. Antología de poesía española 1990-2007*, Hiperión 2007); e) otherness in literature and cinema. He has just been the ILAS Edward Laroque Tinker Visiting Professor for the Fall 2016 at Barnard College (Columbia University) as well as Visiting Professor at UMass Amherst (fall 2012) and guest lecturer abroad at Graduate Center CUNY (United States), KULeuven (Belgium), Beijing-Beida (China), Bergen (Norway) or Passau (Germany), among other universities. He is also guest lecturer at various postgraduate programmes in Spain: Cinema and Television Script Writing (Carlos III University, Madrid), Comparative Literature and Cultural Studies (Santiago de Compostela) and Cinema Studies (Córdoba University). As academic manager he was director of the Spanish Language and Culture Courses of the International University Menéndez Pelayo (UIMP, Santander 2001-2005) and supervisor of the Undergraduate Programme in Audiovisual Communication at UGR (2010-2015).

CV

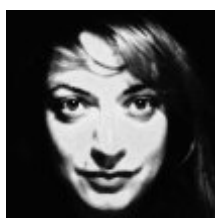
**Jordi Alberich-Pascual**

Senior Lecturer in Audiovisual Communication and Advertising
 Department of Information and Communication
 University of Granada
jalberich@ugr.es

Departamento de Información y Comunicación
 Universidad de Granada
 18071 Granada (España)

Jordi Alberich Pascual is a Senior Lecturer in Audiovisual Communication and Advertising at the University of Granada. He is the current Academic Coordinator for the bachelor's degree in Audiovisual Communication and Deputy Director of the Department of Information and Communication at the University of Granada. As a researcher, his expertise lies in new media and collaborative audiovisual creation. He is the Principal Investigator of the COMMUNICAV research group, a member of the SECABA LAB research lab and of *NarTrans. Transmedial narratives: new ways of audiovisual fiction, informative communication and performance in the digital era*. He is the author and/or co-author of more than a dozen books on communication actions in the digital era, including *Políticas de impulso a las industrias audiovisuales* (Comunicación Social, 2015), *Comprender los Media en la sociedad de la información* (Editorial UOC, 2012), *Previously On. Interdisciplinary studies on TV series in the Third Golden Age of Television* (Monográficos FRAME, 2011), *Exploraciones creativas. Prácticas artísticas y culturales de los nuevos medios* (Editorial UOC, 2010), and *Comunicación audiovisual digital. Nuevos medios, nuevos usos, nuevas formas* (Editorial UOC, 2005), among others.

CV

**Nieves Rosendo**

Fellow PhD
 Department of Information and Communication
 University of Granada
 nrs@ugr.es

Departamento de Información y Comunicación
 Universidad de Granada
 18071 Granada (España)

Nieves has a master's degree in Theatrical and Literary Studies from the University of Granada, where her final project "Towards a new narratology of the new media: Transmedial narratives" was awarded the highest mark. She also has a master's degree in Electronic Literature from the University of Barcelona, and a bachelor's degree in Spanish philology from the University of Malaga. She obtained two fellowships as a visiting researcher at the Department of Games Studies in the ITU of Copenhagen and at the Department of Cultural Studies at KU Leuven, and has taken part in international conferences on works about digital literature, narrative TV series and video games. She is coordinator for the first and second seminars on the *Nar_Trans* project, and is secretary of the 1st International Conference Narrativas Transmediales (2016). She is a member of the Research Project *NarTrans. Transmedial Narratives: new ways of audiovisual fiction, informative communication and performance in the digital era* (CSO2013-47288), and a member of the Research Group COMMUNICAV (SEJ-585).